The Beethoven Experience
Part IV: A Sacred Song of Thanks
Beethoven’s Spirituality, Explored & Expressed

Don't miss a note of our 48 concert virtual festival: VIEW FULL CONCERT SCHEDULE
THE PROGRAM

STRING QUARTET NO. 15 IN A MAJOR, OP. 132
I. Assai sostenuto – Allegro
II. Allegro ma non tanto
III. "Heiliger Dankgesang eines genesenen an die Gottheit, in der Lydischen Tonart." Molto Adagio – Andante
IV. Alla marcia, assai vivace
V. Allegro appassionato

*Recorded at the Mt. Desert Festival of Chamber Music
Northeast Harbor, ME | July 21, 2015

THE BORROMEO STRING QUARTET
NICHOLAS KITCHEN, VIOLIN
KRISTOPHER TONG, VIOLIN
MAI MOTOBUCHI, VIOLA
YEESUN KIM, CELLO
"Only art and science," later wrote Beethoven, “can raise men to the level of gods.” As biographer Jan Swafford writes, “He [Beethoven] never claimed that God imbued him with his gifts. He believed his talent came from nature – God’s nature. At the same time...his idea of God evolved along with his life and art. The older he got, he more he turned toward faith in a God who was present and all-seeing...and who listened to prayers.” In the five-movement **String Quartet No. 15 in A minor, Op. 132**, it was a God whom Beethoven evidently must have felt had answered his prayers that spurred one of his most explicitly devotional creations: The third-movement **Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der Lydischen Tonart** – “Sacred Song of Thanks to the Divinity on the Part of a Convalescent, in the Lydian Mode.”

Beethoven is said to have shed a tear on to the pages of this manuscript, and much ink has been spilled about this otherworldly movement, unique in all sixteen of his quartets. Our pre-concert Symposium will delve more thoroughly into the origins and meanings of this music, but suffice to recall here an entry from Beethoven’s Tagebuch: “In order to write true church music, go through all the ecclesiastical chant of the monks.” Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that what gives this music its particular flavor is that its melodies are based on ancient Gregorian Chant – in the Lydian mode (the forerunner to what we understand as musical scales), no less, which purportedly is associated with healing.

We’ll leave the last word on spirituality to Beethoven, who despite his rough manners was known during his lifetime as being moralistic to the point of prudishness. “Man, help yourself! When men fulfill their duties to men, they fulfill thereby God’s commandments, that they are consequently always in the service of God, as long as their actions are moral...It is utterly impossible to serve God otherwise.”
Nicholas Kitchen

Borromeo Quartet became Quartet-in-Residence.

Music since 1992, when at the conclusion of their studies the

concerts. Nicholas has taught at the New England Conservatory of

been extremely energetic in combining teaching activities with his

Lincoln Center, and the Avery Fisher Career Grant. Nicholas has

Auditions. The Quartet also received the Cleveland Quartet Award

International Quartet Competition and the Young Concert Artists

New England Conservatory of Music and won prizes at the Evian

founded the Borromeo String Quartet that went on to study at the

in the conducting courses of Otto Werner Mueller. Kitchen co-

violinist and conductor Szymon Goldberg, as well as being included

importantly spent five years working intensively with the great

musicians as Felix Galimir and Mieczslaw Horsowski, and

Institute faculty member David Cerone and coached with such

studying at the Curtis Institute where he worked with Heifetz

solo violinist, chamber musician, teacher, video artist, technology

active and innovative performers in the music world today, as a

Times as “thrilling, vibrant and captivating.” He is one of the most

Heifetz2020 Cello Faculty; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)

Hailed by the New York Times for her “focused intensity” and

“remarkable” performances, cellist Yeesun Kim enjoys worldwide

acclaim as a soloist, chamber musician and teacher. A founding

member of the Borromeo String Quartet, Ms. Kim has performed in

over 20 countries, and in many of the world’s most illustrious

concert halls and Festivals. Ms. Kim is a graduate of the Curtis

Institute for Music, as well as the New England Conservatory. Ms.

Kim currently serves on the cello and chamber music faculties at

the New England Conservatory. She has collaborated with various artists including violinist Joshua Bell, cellists Lawrence

Lesser, pianist Christoph Eschenbach, Leon Fleischer, Rudolph

Serkin. She also has had opportunities to perform with the esteemed members of the Guarneri and Julliard String Quartets.

She is a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chamber Music

America’s Cleveland Quartet Award, Lincoln Center’s Martin Segal Award, and the Evian International String Quartet Competition as a

member of the Borromeo Quartet. Individually she was the winner of the Ewha and Jungagng National Competitions in Korea, and the

Seoul Young Artists Award for achievement in music and academics. Ms. Kim currently performs on a Peregrino Zanetto cello, circa 1576, one of the oldest in the world.

Yeesun Kim

Heifetz2020 Viola Faculty; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)

Mai Motobuchi has earned distinction as a soloist, chamber

musician, and teacher in her native Japan and the United States.

Currently Motobuchi is on viola faculty at the New England

Conservatory and Tenrikyo Institute of Music in Japan. She has

collaborated with many esteemed musicians including, Yo-Yo-Ma,

Seiji Ozawa, Leon Fleischer, Kim Kashkashian, and many others.

She joined the Borromeo String Quartet in 2000 and since then has

toured extensively with them. She has won numerous awards

throughout her career including the All Japan MBS Youth Music

Competition in 1989, the Henri Kohn Memorial Awards from the

Tanglewood Music Center, and while she was a student at Rice

University received the John and Sally Cox Award, the E. Dell

Butcher Awards, and the Willie Muery Award, in addition to being

named an Alice Pratt Brown Scholar. Motobuchi began playing

violin and studied at the Tenrikyo Institute of Music in Japan during

her formative years. She eventually went on to study viola at

Michigan State University and Rice University in Houston where she

earned her Master of Music. She followed with an advanced

performance diploma from the Internationale Meisterkurze

Koblenz in Koblenz, Germany. She currently performs on a Moes

and Moes viola dated from 1988.

Mai Motobuchi

Heifetz Institute Artistic Director; Violin Faculty & Chamber Music

Coach; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)

Nicholas Kitchen’s musicianship has been hailed by the New York

Times as “thrilling, vibrant and captivating.” He is one of the most

active and innovative performers in the music world today, as a

solo violinist, chamber musician, teacher, video artist, technology

innovator and arts administrator. At sixteen, Nicholas began

studying at the Curtis Institute where he worked with Heifetz

Institute faculty member David Cerone and coached with such

musicians as Felix Galimir and Mieczslaw Horsowski, and

importantly spent five years working intensively with the great

violinist and conductor Szymon Goldberg, as well as being included in

the conducting courses of Otto Werner Mueller. Kitchen co-

founded the Borromeo String Quartet that went on to study at the

New England Conservatory of Music and won prizes at the Evian

International Quartet Competition and the Young Concert Artists

Auditions. The Quartet also received the Cleveland Quartet Award

from Chamber Music America, the Martin S. Segal Award from

Lincoln Center, and the Avery Fisher Career Grant. Nicholas has

been extremely energetic in combining teaching activities with his

concerts. Nicholas has taught at the New England Conservatory of

Music since 1992, when at the conclusion of their studies the

Borromeo Quartet became Quartet-in-Residence.

Nicholas Kitchen

Heifetz 2020 Viola Faculty; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)

Originally from Japan, Mai Motobuchi began studying violin at

the age of 12, and went on to win various national competitions in

Japan. She followed with an advanced performance diploma from

the Internationale Meisterkurze Koblenz in Koblenz, Germany.

Currently Motobuchi is on viola faculty at the New England

Conservatory and Tenrikyo Institute of Music in Japan.

Heifetz 2020 Viola Faculty; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)

Mai Motobuchi

Heifetz2020 Viola Faculty; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)

Kristopher Tong has been praised for his depth of insight,

virtuosity, and creative flair. Tong has appeared under the baton

of some of the world’s most premiere conductors including

Christoph von Dohnanyi, Kurt Masur, Paavo Jarvi, Charles Dutoit,

Mstislav Rostropovich, and James Levine. He served on faculty in

2005 at the Yellow Barn Festival and from 2002-2004 was the

Principal Second Violin of the Verbier Festival Orchestra. Tong

began studying violin when he was 11 in a public elementary

program and when he moved to Utah became a student of

Leonard Barbin. He received his Bachelor of Music from Indiana

University Bloomington, where he studied with the late Franco

Gulli, Miriam Fried, and Yuval Yaron. He completed his Masters

Degree at the New England Conservatory of Music under Ms. Fried.

Kristopher Tong

Mai Motobuchi