



# The Beethoven Experience

*Speaking to God:  
Beethoven's Spirituality, Explored & Expressed*



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# THE PROGRAM

STRING QUARTET NO. 2 IN G MAJOR , OP. 18 NO. 2

*I. ALLEGRO*

*II. ADAGIO CANTABILE - ALLEGRO - TEMPO I*

*III. SCHERZO: ALLEGRO*

*IV. ALLEGRO MOLTO, QUASI PRESTO*

STRING QUARTET NO. 8 IN E MINOR, OP. 59, NO. 2 "RAZUMOVSKY"

*I. ALLEGRO*

*II. MOLTO ADAGIO*

*III. ALLEGRETTO. MAGGIORE - THEME RUSSE*

*IV. FINALE. PRESTO*

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## THE BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

NICHOLAS KITCHEN, KRISTOPHER TONG, VIOLINS;

MAI MOTOBUCHI, VIOLA; YEESUN KIM, CELLO

# PROGRAM NOTES

by Benjamin K Roe

## The Beethoven Experience III: Speaking to God

"Most heavenly music! It nips me unto listening, and thick slumber hangs upon mine eyes." - Shakespeare, Pericles

The first book ever devoted entirely to the subject of Beethoven's string quartets appeared in 1885, from German musicologist Theodor Helm. It was titled "Beethoven's String Quartets: An Attempt at a Technical Analysis of these Works in Association with their Spiritual Content."

"The title may sound quaint in modern times, where it has become fashionable for contemporary music theorists to disdain the interpretations of their 19th-century predecessors as "Solemn Germans breathing philosophical hot air." Yet in Beethoven, a true child of the Enlightenment, (which is to say a believer in Christianity but not theocracy), there is a surprisingly powerful thread of spirituality and faith that runs throughout his sixteen quartets. All the more striking because the genre of the string quartet, then as now, was viewed as the most cerebral (and implicitly, secular) of musical expressions.

Take for example, the beautiful *Adagio cantabile* second movement of the **String Quartet No. 2 in G major, Op. 18, No. 2**. The opening measures evoke a sturdy German hymn, with all four instruments moving in a steady, prayerful pace. But as if not to take things too seriously, a lively *Allegro* section suddenly breaks up the solemnity. It's as if the musicians have stepped out onto the sidewalk for a smoke before heading back inside to complete the service, as indeed the thoughtful mood returns, this time with far more embellishments and flourishes from the four instruments. Although he was no churchgoer in his adult life, Beethoven was intimately familiar with the church's liturgies, rites and rituals. He started working as an assistant organist in the court chapel in Bonn when he was just 11 years old!

If the *Adagio* movement in the second quartet is the only truly serious episode in a piece that otherwise is a playful jab at 18th-century musical mannerisms, the **String Quartet No. 8 in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2** occupies an entirely different realm. The overall work has been described as "tense and inward-looking," at times lyrical, tragic, passionate, and there's even a whiff of religious fervor. Beethoven pledged to include a Russian folk song in each of the three "Razumovsky," in tribute to the quartets' dedicatee, Count Andrey Razumovsky. In the third-movement *Allegretto*, the "*Thème Russe*" that Beethoven chooses is the Russian hymn "Glory to Thee, Creator On High," a fast fugal treatment that NPR critic Ted Libbey calls "fantastic and unforgettable." The same tune will turn up again to powerful effect in the Coronation Scene from Modest Mussorgsky's Boris Gudunov.

# THE PERFORMERS



Yeesun Kim

*Heifetz 2020 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 Fleisher, 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 Junggung 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.



Mai Motobuchi

*Heifetz 2020 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.



Nicholas Kitchen

*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 Horszowski, 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.



Kristopher Tong

*Heifetz 2020 Violin Faculty; Ensemble in Residence (Borromeo Quartet)*

Considered on the most exciting musicians emerging today, **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 Braus. He received his Bachelors degree at 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.