

# The Beethoven Experience

Part V: B.A.C.H.D.N.A  
*Beethoven's Love of Bach-  
Examined and Expressed*



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# THE PROGRAM

## String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 18, No. 3

*I. Allegro*

*II. Andante con moto*

*III. Allegro*

*IV. Presto*

*Recorded at Suntory Hall - Tokyo, Japan*

*June 2013*

## String Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3

*I. Andante con moto – Allegro vivace*

*II. Andante con moto quasi allegretto*

*III. Menuetto (Grazioso)*

*IV. Allegro molto*

*Recorded at Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum - Boston, MA*

*April 2010*

### THE BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

NICHOLAS KITCHEN, KRISTOPHER TONG, VIOLINS

MAI MOTOBUCHI, VIOLA

YEESUN KIM, CELLO

# PROGRAM NOTES

by Benjamin K Roe

## B.A.C.H.D.N.A: Beethoven's Love of Bach – Examined and Expressed

*“His name ought not to be Bach, but Ocean, because of his infinite and inexhaustible wealth of combinations and harmonies.”*  
- Beethoven

### "The immortal god of harmony."

Just as Nicholas Kitchen has so persuasively demonstrated Beethoven's careful and deliberate use of underlines in the expressive markings of his manuscripts, so too did he add underlines to his correspondences when he wanted to make a particularly emphatic point, as he did about Bach in an 1801 letter to his publishers, the storied Leipzig firm of Breitkopf & Härtel.

As evidenced by the two quotes above, Beethoven's admiration for Bach was well-known in his time; the “not Bach, but Ocean” is a play on the German word, as Bach translates as a “small brook,” such as might flow from a wellspring. And truly, Bach was a foundational source. As biographers Lewis Lockwood puts it, “*The Well-Tempered Clavier* had been a musical Bible for Beethoven since his Bonn years.” That was thanks to the Leipzig-born organist Christian Gottlieb Neefe, who started giving Beethoven keyboard lessons at the age of 10. Biographer Jan Swafford notes that, “while outside Leipzig J.S. Bach's reputation languished in the shadow of his famous sons, Neefe understood the older Bach's stature and importance and synoptic quality of his *Well-Tempered Clavier*, a work in those years known only to a cultish few.”

And Beethoven apparently was a quick study, for just two years later the following notice appeared in a Mannheim newspaper:

Ludwig van Beethoven..a boy of eleven years and of most promising talent. He plays the clavier very skillfully and with power, reads at sight very well, and...plays chiefly the *Well-Tempered Clavier* of Sebastian Bach, which Herr Neefe put into his hands. Whoever knows this collection of preludes and fugues in all keys - which might almost be called the non plus ultra of our art - will know what that means.

The strands of Bach's D.N.A. that run through Beethoven's string quartets are sometimes nuanced, sometimes starkly evident, and overall central to his music. Because he had so thoroughly absorbed the 48 preludes and fugues of the WTC, biographer Swafford postulates that “It was from Bach that Beethoven learned “invention, in which the whole of a piece elaborates a single idea.” **The String Quartet No. 3 in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3** is the most Haydn-like of Beethoven's early quartets, “the gentlest, most consistently lyrical of the set,” in the words of annotator Michael Steinberg. But it already differs from the so-called “Classical Viennese” quartet in its more advanced use of Bach-inspired counterpoint, which by the late-18th century was viewed a “old-fashioned, inexpressive, and charmless, as symbolized by CPE Bach's nickname for his father: “The Old Wig.” Listen for the little contrapuntal flourishes in the cello in the first movement, and the energetic middle section of the final movement, which bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Mexican Hat Dance*.

**The String Quartet No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3** is the only one of the three “Razumovsky” quartets to contain both a slow, brooding introduction (not unlike Mozart's “Dissonant” Quartet), as well as a breathtaking fugal finale. But before we get to that, my ears hear another Bachian influence in the extraordinary second movement, which has the both the slow 6/8 rhythm and emotional depth of a *Sarabande*, the Baroque dance movement that Bach reserved for his most profound utterances in his cello and keyboard suites. As for that last movement, perhaps we could call it a hybrid, “fugue-invention,” with Beethoven channeling a bit of Bach: “Rather than contrasting themes, or a second subject, [Beethoven] breaks up his theme into fragments, and puts these through their developmental paces in a variety of textures.” The result is hands-down one of the most exciting movements in all of chamber music.

# 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 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.



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.