

A painting of a coastal scene. In the foreground, a large, dark, rocky outcrop or lighthouse base is visible. The ocean is a deep blue-green color. In the distance, a whale is breaching the water, creating a splash. Several white birds are flying in the sky. A bright sun or moon is visible in the upper right corner, casting a glow over the scene.

Concerts at the Point
presents ...

**BORROMEO
STRING
QUARTET**

NOVEMBER 5, 2023, 3:00 PM

WESTPORT POINT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1912 MAIN ROAD, WESTPORT POINT, MA

THE IMAGE ON TODAY'S COVER is "Children of a Common Creator: Deathless Spirits," a work from Fairhaven artist Ron Fortier.

Ron Fortier was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and spent his early childhood in New York City with his mother, an aspiring singer. There he was exposed to an abundance and diversity of art, music, and the cultures of people of various races, ethnicities, and countries of origin.

He holds a B.F.A. from Southeastern Massachusetts University in Painting and an M.F.A. from the University of Miami in Painting.

After a decades-long career as a marketing and advertising practitioner and educator, Ron expatriated to Portugal, where he continues to be represented by the Galeria O Rastro.

He now resides in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, and is represented in the United States by the Blackbird Gallery in Detroit, Michigan.

<https://ronfortier.net/about-me/>
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Concerts at the Point

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2023

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

Nicholas Kitchen, violin
Kristopher Tong, violin
Melissa Reardon, viola
Yeesun Kim, cello

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK I,
PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN G MAJOR
ARRANGED BY NICHOLAS KITCHEN

J. S. BACH

STRING QUARTET NO. 6 IN D MINOR, Sz. 114

BARTÓK

Mesto – Più mosso, pesante-vivace
Mesto – Marcia
Mesto – Burletta
Mesto

INTERMISSION ...

STRING QUARTET NO. 12 IN E-FLAT MAJOR,
OP. 127

BEETHOVEN

Maestoso—Allegro
Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Scherzando vivace
Finale



Admired and sought after for both its fresh interpretations of the classical music canon and its championing of works by 20th and 21st century composers, the Borromeo String Quartet has been hailed for its “edge-of-the-seat performances,” by the *Boston Globe*, which called them “simply the best.”

Inspiring audiences for more than 25 years, the Borromeo continues to be a pioneer in its use of technology, and has the trailblazing distinction of being the first string quartet to utilize laptop computers on the concert stage. Reading music this way helps push artistic boundaries, allowing the artists to perform solely from 4-part scores and composers’ manuscripts, a revealing and metamorphic experience which these dedicated musicians now teach to students around the world.

NICHOLAS KITCHEN, VIOLIN

Violinist Nicholas Kitchen leads a many-faceted career as violin soloist, chamber musician, educator, video artist, arranger, arts administrator, and technology innovator. He has performed throughout the world; worked on projects with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Library of Congress, and "Performance Today;" and initiated many innovative collaborations, combining multiple forms of artistic expression with performance.

A passionate educator, he often leads discussions enhanced by projections of handwritten manuscripts, investigating with the audience the creative process of the composer. He has lectured and given master classes across the globe, encouraging audiences and students of all ages to explore and listen to both traditional and contemporary repertoire in new ways. He is on the faculty of the New England Conservatory and Artistic Director of the Heifetz International Music Institute.

KRISTOPHER TONG, VIOLIN

Kristopher Tong has been hailed as a performer of "exceptional insight and creative flair" (*Boston Globe*). As second violinist of the Borromeo String Quartet, he has performed in hundreds of concerts across the United States and around the world to critical acclaim.

From 2002-2004, Tong was Principal Second Violin with the Verbier Festival Orchestra, with which he toured throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas. He has played under the baton of some of the world's premier conductors, including James Levine, Christopher von Dohnanyi, Kurt Masur, Mstislav Rostropovich, Wolfgang Sawallisch, and Charles Dutoit. He has also performed with Mizayaki Festival Orchestra in Japan and the New York String Orchestra, and as a guest soloist with the Verbier Chamber Orchestra under Dmitri Sitkovetsky and Yuri Bashmet. Tong was a member of the original cast of Classical Savion at the Joyce Theater in New York City, a collaborative project with tap dancer Savion Glover. He currently resides in Brighton, Massachusetts, with his wife, pianist Miki Sawada, and their dog Shakira. He is a 2:53 marathoner.

MELISSA REARDON, VIOLA

Grammy-nominated violist Melissa Reardon is an internationally renowned performer whose solo and chamber playing spans all musical

genres. Melissa is the Artistic Director of the Portland Chamber Music Festival in Portland, Maine, Artist in Residence at Bard College and Conservatory, and a founding member and the Executive Director of the East Coast Chamber Orchestra (ECCO). Lauded by *Classical Voice* for her “elegant” and “virtuosic” performances, the Massachusetts-born musician won first prize at the Washington International Competition, and is the only violist to win top prizes in consecutive HAMS International viola competitions.

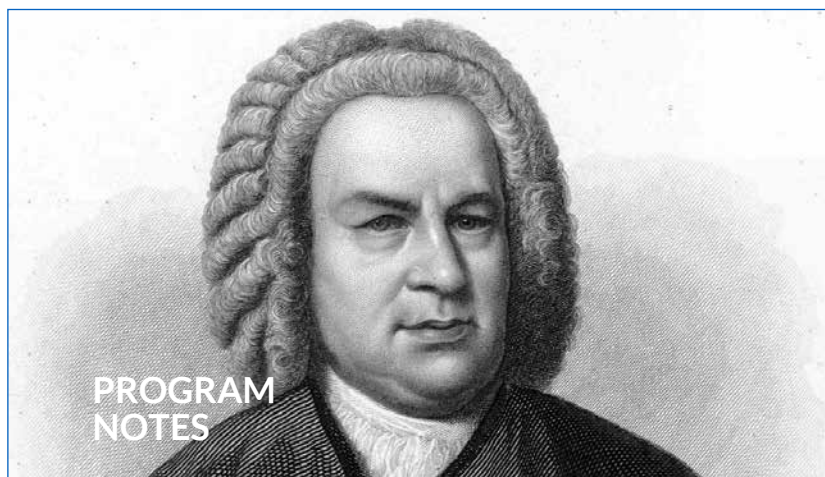
A sought-after collaborative musician and teacher, Melissa has appeared in numerous festivals across the United States and around the world, and has toured with Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Ensemble and with Musicians from Marlboro. She held the post of Associate Professor of Viola at East Carolina University from 2007-2013, and earned degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and the New England Conservatory. Melissa is married to the cellist Raman Ramakrishnan and they live in Rhinebeck, NY/NYC, with their nine-year-old son Linus.

YEESUN KIM, CELLO

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 has had extensive involvement with NPR's “Performance Today,” the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York, and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. She currently serves on the faculty of the New England Conservatory, in the cello and chamber music departments, and teaches each summer at the Taos School of Music in New Mexico. She plays a Peregrino Zanetto cello, circa 1576, one of the oldest in the world.





JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1732-1809)

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK I, PRELUDE AND
FUGUE IN G MAJOR (1722)

ARRANGED BY NICHOLAS KITCHEN

Johann Sebastian Bach was the most celebrated member of a large family of north German musicians. Although he was admired by his contemporaries as an outstanding harpsichordist, organist, and expert on organ building, Bach is now generally regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time, thanks to his numerous masterpieces of church and instrumental music. Appearing at a pivotal moment in the history of Western music, the late Baroque, Bach was able to bring together the principal styles, forms, and national traditions that had developed during preceding generations and, by virtue of his synthesis, enrich them all.

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER is a crown jewel of the Baroque era. It is a vivid collection of two distinct sets of preludes and fugues (Book I and Book II), forty-eight short pieces in all twenty-four keys, major and minor. Bach originally presented his collection as a pedagogical work for advanced students, “for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study,” he wrote on the title page for Book

One. Twenty years later, he wrote a second complete set of preludes and fugues in all keys, Book Two. Both volumes were hand-written, hand-copied, and widely circulated during Bach's lifetime, but were not published in printed form until fifty years after his death.

In the Baroque era, "clavier" was the generic name used to indicate different types of keyboard instruments, including clavichords, harpsichords, and organs. The meaning of "well-tempered" is more controversial. Baroque keyboards were tuned differently than today's pianos, and the performer had many choices. Depending on the method of tuning, some keys sounded better than others, so utilizing all keys theoretically available was revolutionary.

Nicholas Kitchen is first violinist and a founding member of the Borromeo String Quartet, which has performed his acclaimed transcriptions of Bach's Goldberg Variations and the Well-Tempered Clavier Book I internationally. The Quartet released the latter on a 2017 premiere recording that hit the billboard charts. Notes one reviewer, "Transcription repays in spades in the complex and multi-voiced fugues. ... Kitchen's choices of dynamics and tempos seem exemplary while his distribution of the string parts is imaginative and immediately engaging." Please see musician biographies for more about Mr. Kitchen.

Sources and excerpts from: dw.com/en/300-years-of-johann-sebastian-bachs-well-tempered-clavier/a-62188220; daily.jstor.org/happy-birthday-well-tempered-clavier; borromeoquartet.org/about/900; Chamber Music Media Review www.cvnc.org/article.cfm?articleid=8640.





BÉLA VICTOR JANOS BARTÓK (1881-1945)

STRING QUARTET NO. 6 IN D MINOR , Sz. 114 (1939)

Mesto – Più mosso, pesante-vivace

Mesto – Marcia

Mesto – Burletta

Mesto

Béla Bartók – pianist, composer, and Hungarian patriot – was one of the most original and versatile musicians of the twentieth century. He collected folk music from most of Eastern Europe and beyond as one of the pioneers of ethnomusicology. Bartók's music reflects two trends that dramatically changed the sound of music in the 20th century: the breakdown of the diatonic system of harmony that had served composers for the previous two hundred years, and the revival of nationalism as a source for musical inspiration. Bartók turned to Hungarian folk music, deciphering the melodic, rhythmic, and textural elements that exerted a potent influence on his own musical language.

STRING QUARTET NO. 6 IN D MINOR is one of his most deeply expressive and personal works, written at a dark time in history and in his personal life. Composed in 1939, the quartet was begun just days before the German invasion of Poland and onset of the war in Europe. It was the last string quartet Bartók wrote before his death in 1945 and the final work completed in his native country, in that he and his

family immigrated to the United States and settled in New York City shortly after its completion.

The form is ingenious: each movement is preceded by an introductory section marked *Mesto* (mournful), with increasing complexity at each appearance. The *mesto* theme functions both as a motto and as the source of much of the quartet's thematic substance.

The sad introductory theme in the first movement is played initially by solo viola, whose last notes are the germ for a unison statement by all four instruments. The first theme is in quick triplets that are chromatically sinuous. The second theme is a folk-like melody, with a prominent short-long syncopated rhythm. The movement ends simply with a reprise of the first theme, now detached and musing.

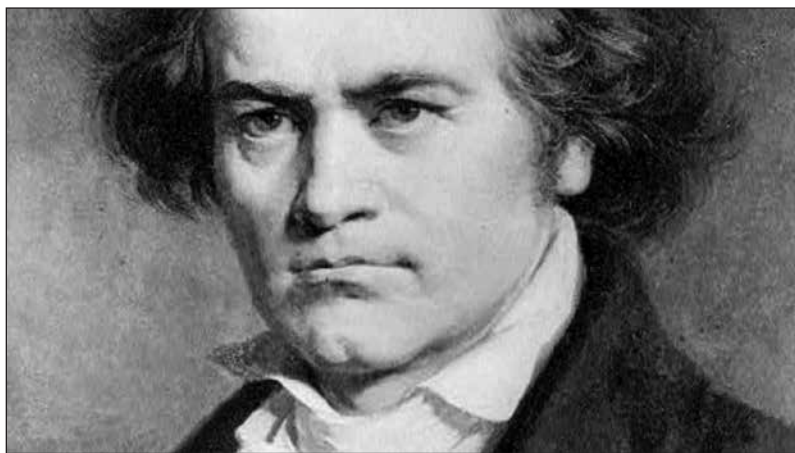
The *mesto* introduction to the second movement is in two-part counterpoint, the cello stating the melody accompanied by upper strings in a tremulous counter-melody. The subsequent *Marcia* (march) is bitter and ironic, and the out-of-step rhythm is prominent. Some have suggested that the almost comical march represents a spoof on the goose-stepping German invaders. The middle section suspends the propulsive march as the cello rhapsodizes on a variation of the second theme, accompanied by high trills from the violins and harsh, guitar-like strumming on the viola. The return of the march is bizarre, with extremely high octave doubling from the first violin. It is said that Bartók used this work to satirize his Hungarian roots and by association, the politics of signing a worthless non-aggression pact with Hitler.

For its third appearance, the *mesto* reprise is in three-part harmony and leads to a rude *Burlesca*, with stamping rhythms. The second theme moves within a narrow interval range, evoking the Arabic melodies Bartók collected in North Africa. A rhythm from the first movement is considered before the burlesque returns entirely in *pizzicato*. At the conclusion, an attempt to sound the syncopated theme is shouted down by angry chords.

In the slow finale, the *mesto* melody, now in four parts, continues on to become the entire movement. The second theme recalls the unison motto of the first movement. The triplet theme is also recalled, now in

a setting of profound desolation. With the return of the *mesto* theme, there is a moment of half-hearted protest that dwindles to resignation. The cello ends it all with a question mark, plucked chords based on the *mesto* motto.

Excerpted from All Music Guide, Bartok Quartet notes, Mark Satola, 2016.



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

STRING QUARTET NO. 12 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 127 (1824-1825)

Maestoso—Allegro

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Scherzando vivace

Finale

Born in Bonn, Beethoven's musical talent was obvious at an early age. Initially he was harshly and intensively taught piano by his father. After a difficult childhood, he moved to Vienna at age 21 and studied composition with Haydn while gaining acclaim as a virtuoso pianist.

If Haydn is today called the 'father' of the String Quartet, and Mozart took the form to new heights, then Beethoven completely transformed it. BEETHOVEN'S QUARTET OP. 127 is the first of his legendary

“late quartets,” six quartets that comprise his final and perhaps greatest musical achievement. He had not worked in this genre for over a decade, and all six were written during the last three years of his life. In the interim, Beethoven had composed his final piano sonatas, the *Missa Solemnis*, and the Ninth Symphony.

By comparison with the ineffable nature of his late quartets, Beethoven’s personal life at the time was woeful. By 1816, he was totally deaf, a fact that only increased his isolation. He had suffered an unrequited love, an obsessive legal battle over his suicidal nephew Karl, and problems with his publishers, finances, and physical health. Yet he never gave up and, in December 1822, the composer’s Russian patron, Prince Nikolas Galitzin, offered the commission that would ultimately yield the Quartets in E-flat major (Op. 127), A minor (Op. 132), and B-flat major (Op. 130). Galitzen gave Beethoven a fair amount of leeway, inviting him “to compose one, two, or three quartets, for which labor I will be glad to pay you what you think proper.”

The six late quartets seem to leave behind everything that came before. Beethoven experiments with form and harmonies, incorporates counterpoint and other complex textures, and expands the quartet to epic lengths. Their first performances left audience members perplexed. One musician remarked, “We know there is something there, but we do not know what it is.”

Although Op. 127 comprises four movements, it is anything but conventional. The opening movement largely follows a first-movement sonata design, but presents a somewhat strange polarity between the gentle lyricism of the main theme and bold declamatory chords that announce the music and brashly interrupt it again three more times with transformative effect. The main theme concludes with a surprising and poignant turn of delicate grace more like Mozart than Beethoven.

The second movement places us squarely in the realm of late Beethoven with six rhapsodic variations on a chorale-like theme. Sustained lyricism spans great arcs of loosely braided contrapuntal textures. Set in A-flat major, the movement is filled with sudden, far-reaching key changes in what is ultimately an extended emotional song. Movement

three, a bristling *Scherzando vivace*, propels us forward with rhythmic complexity full of stops and starts and a darker, quicksilver trio reminiscent of wild dance.

The shortest of the movements, the Finale is oddly without tempo or character markings. It features two themes, one buoyant and lighthearted, the other insistent and heavy with stomping accents. But something special happens at the end. Beethoven writes a coda with magical trills and a sudden change of key, meter and tempo, driving the quartet home with a transcendent lightness of spirit.

Poorly received at its under-rehearsed Vienna premiere (March 1825), the music fared much better at its next performance by the Böhm Quartet. Böhm reported that it was rehearsed “under Beethoven’s own eyes ... for the unhappy man was so deaf he could no longer hear the heavenly sound. ... With close attention, his eyes followed the bows and therefore he was able to judge the slightest fluctuations in tempo and rhythm and correct them immediately.” The masterwork enjoyed a number of performances during Beethoven’s last years.

NOTE: Concerts at the Point is delighted to present four Beethoven string quartets during its 27th Season. We urge you to learn more about them at the Parker Quartet’s YouTube channel. “Beethoven Illuminated,” contains 19 professionally recorded lectures (about 4 minutes each) by members of the Quartet, highlighting each quartet with context and musical analysis.

Sources and excerpts from: earsense.org/chamber-music/Ludwig-van-Beethoven-String-Quartet-No-12-in-E-flat-major-Op-127; laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/3694/string-quartet-no-12-in-e-flat-major-op-127; classicfm.com/composers/beethoven/guides/beethovens-music-string-quartets; thelistenersclub.com/late-beethoven-revelations-string-quartet-no-12-op-127; Parker Quartet, “Beethoven Illuminated,” YouTube videos 1, 2, 17.



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