

EDITORIAL

When Great Ideas Penetrate the Heart

by John Sigerson

This is an edited version of remarks made by John Sigerson, Music Director of the U.S. Schiller Institute, on the LaRouche PAC Fireside Chat, Nov. 21, 2018.

Live with thy century, but be not its creature.

Give to thy contemporaries but what they need,
not what they crave.

—Friedrich Schiller

One of the stupidest things that's happened over the last 150 years is this idea that somehow, because reality is ugly, art has to be ugly as well. It has shot through not just in terms of the music, but in terms of opera, in terms of film, in terms of Hollywood and everything; that somehow showing the ugliness of life is going to be representative of art.

Schiller believed quite the opposite. So did Beethoven and all the great composers—Mozart, Brahms, Robert Schumann, and also J.S. Bach—these people who lived in the period leading up to the American Revolution, up into the 19th century. They all believed that *no matter how bad things get, you have to uplift people and show people and strengthen their resolve that there is something better*. Some of the greatest music that we performed on Sunday was composed during a terrible time of warfare that was raging throughout Europe. Napoleon was rampaging throughout Europe and occupied Vienna where Beethoven was living. Soldiers were all over the place; terrible battles; a real horror show for many. Nonetheless, Beethoven insisted on writing the most elevated and inspiring music known to man, as far as I'm concerned.

Some people might say about our Schiller 259th Birthday Concert in New York this past November 18, “Well, why are you spending all of this effort and this money on this concert? Why can't you just concentrate on the political organizing?” or something like that. But it is exactly for that purpose, and this does bear on the support that we need in order to do all of the things that our political movement needs to do.

Just to give you a general idea of the commitment that we had, and what we were able to muster to be able to put on a concert like this—just to give you one idea—we rented this beautiful church right in the middle of New York City, St. Bartholomew's Church. In addition, we needed a very fine orchestra of very highly trained professionals, with a few amateurs mixed in. There were 44 people in that orchestra. Now, musicians are not exempt from the kinds of problems that affect everyone else—problems with the infrastructure, or the fact that they're paid extremely poorly. People have to travel with this ridiculous infrastructure. We had a snowstorm of five inches last Thursday, on the day of the rehearsal, which entirely paralyzed the entire East Coast. I was stuck in a car for four hours trying to get across one city—Hackensack, New Jersey—in order to get to the rehearsal. Some other people who were traveling up from Virginia spent 12 or 13 hours in a car and didn't even make it, because they had to turn back. That was for only five inches of snow! When I was riding through New York City and finally got through, I didn't see a single snowplow; it was actually rather incredible.

People wanted to work with us, and we've assembled a bunch of very highly trained, professional musi-

cians who love to work with the Schiller Institute and have worked with us before. So, that's one thing that goes into this. Also, there's a tremendous amount of preparation. That goes into doing something like this as well. I don't know how much you know about Classical music, but an orchestra has violins, it has violas, double basses, flutes, all different types of instruments. At the same time, the conductor has to work with what's called a musical score, which has all of the parts written in it. Then, each of the players has his or her own particular part. With limited rehearsal time, which is what you have now, it means that you have to spend lots and lots of time—which I did—marking those parts, making sure that every single little thing that you might want in terms of shaping of phrases is indicated on the parts. Because you know that you have just a few precious minutes available to work with these professionals; and you want to get it just right. So, we did that, and it worked incredibly.

Aggression, Rough and Hostile, Is Transformed

One of the Beethoven pieces that we did is called the *Choral Fantasia*, and I would like to read you the poetry to that, because it really was, and is, quite *à propos* to the intention that we had with this concert—which is *not entertainment*; that is, when the Schiller Institute does concerts, we do not expect people to be entertained. We expect people to be challenged. We employ, sort of, a “banana peel principle.” That is, before the person sits down in their seat for the concert, you want to, figuratively, first put down a banana peel so they slip, and are, in a sense, kept off balance, because what you want to do is really challenge people to think on the level of the ideas that Beethoven and these great composers are presenting.

Music is very emotional; and yes, it's very technical. There's a lot of technical prowess and things that you can do, and that can be sort of beautiful, too. That's what Schiller calls “architectonic beauty”; that is, the beauty of something which is structured beautifully. *But that's really not what music is.* It's something else, what Schiller describes as *grace*, which is a higher order. Something which actually brings you into that higher realm.

The *Choral Fantasia* was composed by Beethoven at the time when he was thinking a lot about Schiller and about Schiller's *Ode to Joy*; but he wasn't quite ready to set the *Ode to Joy* to music—the *Ode to Joy*

being the poetry that he eventually did set for his great *9th Symphony*. The *Choral Fantasia* was sort of an exercise to begin with; and he found a poet who was a minor poet, but who was very much inspired by Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* and aesthetic writings. I just want to read you a translation into English of the poem, because I think it gives exactly this idea. It says:

Like a gentle caress is the lovely sound
Of our life's harmonies;
And this receptiveness to Beauty strews
Flowers in endless bloom.

Peace and Joy glide in friendship,
Like the waves' mutual interplay.
Aggression, rough and hostile,
Is transformed into exalted emotion.

When music's magic prevails,
And the Word's consecration speaks out,
Magnificent things must take shape;
Night and storms are changed to light.

Outward peace, inner delight
Hold sway for whoever is so fortunate;
Yet the Arts' vernal sun
Prompts light to shine from both.

Great ideas, having penetrated our heart,
Then blossom anew, more beautiful still;
Once a mind has vaulted upward,
A chorus of spirits always echoes him in song.
So, then, you beautiful souls, receive
Gladly the gifts of beautiful Art!
Only when Love and Power are wed,
Does Man deserve the Gods' favor.

And that's exactly what Donald Trump is attempting to do against the idiots who are saying that we should have a policy of “rough and hostile aggression.” So, this is extremely *à propos*. You will be able to experience the audio and video of the concert pretty soon. We're working on it right now, and then you can hear it for yourself. But the point that I want to make is that everything that we're doing is expressing this intention, and hopefully strengthening everybody who is touched by it to be able to fight for a much better paradigm of relations—amongst individuals, but also amongst nations.