

# Opening Remarks by Dennis Speed

*This is an edited transcript of Dennis Speed's opening remarks at the Concert in Manhattan on Sunday, September 8, honoring the dead on the anniversary of 9/11.*

My name is Dennis Speed. On behalf of the Schiller Institute, and its NYC Chorus, I want to welcome everyone to today's concert.

"I stand here and sing in entirely secure peace." That is one of the ideas proposed in Bach's choral motet, *Jesu, meine Freude*, which you will hear a little later today. The whole idea reads: "Rage, world, and attack. I stand here and sing in entirely secure peace. But there is no such thing on Earth—for the mortal part of us—as entirely secure peace, not even in this church, not even at this time."

Surely, that is one indelible lesson of September 11, 2001. Death may come, may be brought to us, out of the sky, for reasons that are not reasons. We are not required to accept those dubious reasons, but we are required to suffer death at the hands of them.

"Even the beautiful must die." This first line of Friedrich Schiller's poem *Nänie* (Lament)—which you will hear today in a musical placement by Johannes Brahms—confronts us with a question, which, if left unanswered, refutes the fundamental premise of human freedom itself. That question is: Why? Why do even the beautiful have to die? If there is something we must do, against our will, then our freedom is only conditional. It is not absolute.

But the Brahms setting, like the sonata by Beethoven, *The Tempest*, is not sorrowful. The *Mass in G Major*, composed by the 17-year-old Franz Schubert, if properly performed, sounds as optimistic as all 17-year-olds should be. The Mass is solemn, perhaps, but joyful, as should this occasion be.

All performances by the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus are done at the original tuning of middle C at 256 cycles, sometimes called as the Giuseppe Verdi tuning, after the opera composer who set several of Friedrich Schiller's plays to music.

The answer to the question, "Why does even the beautiful have to die?" Is given in each of the pieces performed here today. The beautiful, if it is immortal, never dies.

The African-American Spirituals, each of these selected, are placed and designed to allow you the most direct access, using the fewest words possible, to the fundamental emotion that we are intending to evoke through the whole, and each part of, the concert—that of the Sublime.

Life is perpetuated past the physical existence of an individual *by his or her choice to be immortal*. The first responders, uniformed and civilian, professional and volunteer, and in a different way, the families of the slain, demonstrate that capacity in all of us, to be immortal *by choice* not because we woke up one morning with that intent, but because, thrust upon us, that unsought choice was accepted, not on our own behalf, but for others, in-



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cluding strangers we would otherwise never know.

The Schiller Institute NYC Chorus was formed in 2014 as a response to the violent death of Eric Garner, followed by the killing of two policemen in Brooklyn. It consists almost entirely of non-professional singers and insists on a policy of no auditions. We want to extend special thanks to soloists and pianists.

This particular set of concerts originated in 2016, inspired by economist Lyndon LaRouche, a World War II veteran, who proposed a Living Memorial to those who died and are dying as a result of 9/11, in all forms and capacities. Mr. LaRouche lived here in the Village at Morton Street for many years. Mr. LaRouche passed away on Feb. 12 of this year.

We know that there are members of the diplomatic community, of the uniformed services of New York City, and others of various prominence, that have joined us today. We thank you all for your presence here today, and we hope that you all enjoy the concert.