

Schiller Institute Commemorative Concert, September 10, 2021

Beethoven's *Agnus Dei*: Peace for Ourselves, and the World

by Margaret Scialdone

Sept. 11—The Schiller Institute NYC Chorus continued its tradition of annual 9/11 commemorative events with an amazing hybrid concert on September 10, featuring both live and virtual performances. It was titled, “Beethoven’s *Agnus Dei*: Peace for Ourselves, and the World.” The concert venue was the beautiful Our Lady of Pompeii Church, not far from the World Trade Center, in Greenwich Village, New York City, where thirty choristers and instrumentalists presented a program of both European and American classical music.

The program opened with the founder of the chorus, Diane Sare, conducting the chorus singing “America the Beautiful” in a little-known [setting](#) by Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), co-founder of the National Association of Negro Musicians and collaborator of Antonín Dvořák in the National Conservatory of Music in America. Next, Jennifer Pearl, chair of the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus, read a



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Schiller Institute NYC Chorus founder Diane Sare conducts the chorus in a performance of “America the Beautiful” in a little-known setting by Nathaniel Dett.

powerful statement from Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche—it follows here—in which she expressed the hope and confidence that we could emerge from this chaotic moment in history with a more human and more loving state of affairs among nations.

Pearl then introduced a video greeting from Terry Strada, National Chair of the 9/11 Families and Survivors United for Justice Against Terrorism, who for twenty years has been a leader in the fight to uncover the truth about how and why the attacks took place on September 11, 2001. Her message is also printed here.

Next was Franz Schubert’s exquisite “Litany for the Feast of All Souls,” sung beautifully by Maria Ines Rodriguez Rey, a Schiller Institute Chorus member from the National Institute of Music of Panama, followed by a live performance of Schubert’s expressive and poignant “Arpeggione Sonata,” played by cellist Molly Aronson and pianist Dura Jun.



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Maria Ines Rodriguez Rey (soprano) and Felix Ruiz (piano) perform Franz Schubert’s “Litany for the Feast of All Souls.”

The chorus then took the stage to sing three pieces that could all be considered spirituals. The first was Harry T. Burleigh’s setting of “Deep River,” expressing the longing for “that promised land, where all is peace.” Next, Nancy Guice conducted Robert Schumann’s “Gypsy Life” (“*Zigeunerleben*”), portraying the nomadic existence of a people living in diaspora, marginalized by society. Finally, chorus Music Director John Sigerson conducted “*Va, Pensiero*” (“Go, Thoughts”) from Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*, in which the exiled Jews of Jerusalem lament their lost home. This section had a powerful effect on the chorus itself, several members of whom had joined since the pandemic and had not yet participated in a live ensemble with other chorus members.

The crowning event of the concert was the much anticipated final sections of Beethoven’s Opus 123, the *Missa Solemnis*, the “*Sanctus-Benedictus*” and the “*Agnus Dei*,” which concludes with Beethoven’s operatic “*Dona Nobis Pacem*.”

Master of Ceremonies Jennifer Pearl gave this introduction:



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Molly Aronson (cello) and Jun Dura (piano) perform Franz Schubert’s “*Arpeggione Sonata*.”



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Music Director John Sigerson conducts the chorus in “*Va Pensiero*” (“Go, Thoughts”) from Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*.

Our next two—and final—selections are the final two movements of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*. We began working on this great choral work in January of 2020 with the intention of performing it for Beethoven’s 250th birth year, but had to pivot quickly into virtual performances and rehearsals due to the pandemic. Here we are 18 months later, and presenting the final two movements, the “*Sanctus-Benedictus*” and “*Agnus Dei*.”

As we wrote in the invitation to the concert, Beethoven’s inscription above the “*Dona Nobis Pacem*” section in the sheet music calls for inner and outer peace [*Bitte um inneren und äußeren Frieden*], a plea for both spiritual and worldly peace. The final movement’s words end with “*dona nobis pacem*,” grant us peace. Nothing could be more fitting as a way of ending tonight’s memorial concert than a call for peace. But peace isn’t just the absence of violence or war. It has to be a principle of overcoming the cycle of violence and wars that have been perpetuated by the old paradigm of imperialism for centuries. Combine that with an active commitment to uplifting and improving the living conditions and culture of future generations.

These final movements of the *Missa*

Solemnis, a choral piece which Beethoven worked on and perfected over a five-year period, contain the drums and conflict of war, the assertive entreaties following the stormy orchestral interlude, and more. But what is most surprising is how it ends. It almost ends with a humble question, a seeming lack of resolution of *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Therefore the resolution must

come in your own mind and action. And now, the final two movements of the *Missa Solemnis*.

Two tumultuous decades after the 9/11 attacks, let us work toward finding that path to peace through the mutual and friendly development of all sovereign nations.

The program is available [here](#).

The concert may be viewed [here](#).

9/11 Memorial Concert

Messages of Determination and Hope

This is a transcript of remarks made by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and President of the Schiller Institute; and Terry Strada, National Chair of the 9/11 Families and Survivors, United for Justice against Terrorism, as part of the 9/11 memorial concert presented by the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus at Our Lady of Pompeii Church, in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City on September 10, 2021. The entire concert may be seen [here](#).

Jen Pearl: Welcome to the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus 9/11 Memorial Concert, titled, “Beethoven’s ‘Agnus Dei’: Peace for Ourselves and the World.” My name is Jen Pearl, and I am the current chair of the board of the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus.

Our concert tonight comes on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the horrific September 11th, 2001 attacks. In 2016, the Chorus performed four consecutive performances of Mozart’s *Requiem* for the 15th anniversary of 9/11, and since then has been committed to performing a memorial concert every year. Tonight, we both remember and reflect upon those lives lost in that tragic event, and those who suffered the aftermath. And we also, through listening to and participating in great, Classical music, find the inner strength to fight to ensure this type of terror never happens again.

I will now read a statement from Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche, for this occasion.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: These last 20 years, starting with the attacks of 9/11—an event which seemed to be unfathomable before it occurred, followed by a series of “endless wars,” which hopefully will now have come to an end—have brought enormous harm

and sorrow over millions of people, both in the U.S., as well as in the countries targeted by these wars. This agony can not be undone.

There may be nothing that will give humanity more comfort and elevation than the Classical music of the great composers of the world, who represent the most lofty ideal of what mankind must be striving for: that better vision of the true purpose and identity of man as the only being capable of love, beauty of the soul, and reason. It is not an idle hope, that the human species—as the only one that has proven through its existence that creativity is that quality which can transcend all seeming limitations—will soon leave conflict, aggression, and war behind it, and we become truly human.

These last 20 years are hopefully the final chapter in the adolescence of humanity, followed by adulthood, where people and nations relate to each other based on the creative potential of the other, thus bringing out in themselves the best they can be. To learn to think that way requires an elevated state of mind in all of us, to think from above, from that higher One of humanity which shows the way to a future, in which all nations and all people will create peace on Earth and colonize the stars together.

Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* incarnates that spirit. It evokes that sanctuary in which we have to find home, country, and peace among nations in the world.

[The Chorus performs Nathaniel Dett’s [arrangement](#) of *America the Beautiful*.]

Pearl: I would like to now introduce Terry Strada, National Chair of the 9/11 Families and Survivors United for Justice against Terrorism.