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Beethoven's Ninth Symphony Was Dedicated to Benjamin Franklin

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

The accompanying eulogy to Benjamin Franklin by the Eighteenth-Century German humanist and Franklin acquaintance Georg Forster is printed here for a double purpose. In general, Forster, a leading German figure of that period, attests in this piece to the kind of impact Franklin had throughout German humanist circles. More specifically, crucial features of Forster's eulogy prove beyond doubt that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was dedicated to Benjamin Franklin.

On the general point, Forster's eulogy speaks for itself. Concerning Beethoven, the reader should compare Forster's writing with my own earlier article in this newspaper on "The Secret of Ludwig van Beethoven"[1] and Anno Hellenbroich's study of the Ninth.

"God's spark" is the image of Franklin as "the Prometheus of the Eighteenth Century," "the father of electricity," which was commonplace among educated Europeans during that period. The *Götterfunken* in Beethoven's Ninth can mean nothing but the Prometheus-Franklin image. Furthermore, Forster's repeated emphasis upon *freedom* and *joy*, in which *freedom* is identified strictly as creative scientific discovery, is the essential point of the Ninth Symphony as a whole.

The extent of the image of Franklin as the "Prometheus of the 18th Century" is perversely attested to by the fact that Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* was written as a vicious "zero-growth" slander against Franklin—and also against her husband, the poet Shelley, whose grandfather had

Benjamin West's c. 1816 painting, Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky *(Philadelphia Museum of Art).*

1. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "The Secret of Ludwig van Beethoven," *New Solidarity*, Vol. 8, No. 21, May 10, 1977.

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been an acquaintance and admirer of Franklin. Mary Wollstonecraft herself was a miserable creature with direct family connections to Franklin's leading enemy, Jeremy Bentham, the same Bentham who, together with William Pitt, attempted to eradicate Franklin's writings from Europe.

Beethoven himself first came under the influence of Franklin during the 1780s at Bonn University,[2] the hotbed of Neoplatonic humanism at which Karl Marx later studied. There the philosopher Herder introduced Franklin's conceptions to an overwhelmingly receptive audience. Beethoven's continuing affiliation to the humanist circles is indicated by a fact which has puzzled some Beethoven scholars, namely that some of the books found in the deceased Beethoven's library seemed to them to have no explainable reason for being there. Anno Hellenbroich has identified these as books on the "reading list" of the suppressed Illuminati. Franklin admirers were also among Beethoven's personal associates in Vienna. It was through the same circles—his teacher Neefe, in particular—that Beethoven came directly into contact with Mozart, under whom he was to have studied in 1787, and was in communication with others within the orbit of Herder throughout Germany and Austria. Once this political side of Beethoven's outlook is recognized, many otherwise unexplained features of his life fall entirely into place.

Georg Forster in 1781, age 26, painted by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein.

Once this connection is understood, it is not difficult to discover directly why no good art has been produced during the 20th Century. Great European art, from the early Renaissance onward through the beginning of the 19th Century—including the case of the "French" humanist Goya—has been produced by great Neoplatonic humanists in the main. Wherever the humanist current was suppressed, as in 18th-Century England, the ability of national culture to produce good art has been directly affected for the worse. The beginning of the Nineteenth Century was the time of the great, profound break in organized European humanism. Hence, the greatness of Beethoven. That achievements comparable to his own, Bach's, and Mozart's have not been approached since, is no miracle. We have mislain the cultural wellsprings of Neoplatonic humanism, without which real artistic achievement is impossible.

Nothing could be more absurd than the thesis of "art for art's sake." From Leonardo da Vinci through Beethoven, all great artists have been fed by Neoplatonic humanist currents, whether in painting, sculpture, literature, or music. To be a humanist throughout that period was a passionate political commitment. It is not any political commitments as such that produce art, but Neoplatonic humanist commitments which, because they are humanist, reject politically the masturbatory rituals of "art for art's sake."

To discover conclusive proof, for which the Forster eulogy provided the final link, that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was dedicated to Benjamin Franklin, is a truly beautiful thing. The only decent next thing to do is to make Beethoven's Ninth Symphony the United States' national anthem. Who could object to that? For an American to deny Franklin's authorship of the United States is to become in principle a kind of bastard.

I say: Let's do it! Now that we know the U.S. has a national claim to the greatest symphony written by the greatest composer who has ever lived, why need the United States settle for less?

Benjamin Franklin

by Georg Forster

The following is an excerpt from the 1793 book by Georg Forster (1754-1794), Erinnerungen aus dem Jahre 1790, in historischen Gemälden und Bildnissen (Memories from the Year 1790, in Historical Paintings

2. Bonn University was first established in 1818. Earlier, Bonn did have a *Gymnasium* that was founded in 1777, and Beethoven, while not matriculated, must have been familiar with both students and teachers there.

and Portraits), *as translated by John Sigerson of the LaRouche Legacy Foundation.*

Eripuit cœlo fulmen, mox sceptra tyrannis.[3]

Whoever might have imagined the man "who robbed the sky of its lightning and the tyrant of his scepter" to be a Titan's son, a hundred-armed giant, or a conqueror drenched with human blood, would hardly be able to believe and comprehend that the features shown in the accompanying portrait are those of this performer of miracles. But as paradoxical as it may sound, there does exist a method of disarming the thunderers and their earthly representatives, without wielding a half million disciplined, obedient Myrmidons and inexhaustible funds. Yes, and what is more, when one comes across a man with an appearance such as *Benjamin Franklin's*, then one can be rather certain that he is well acquainted with this method. To begin with, we will let a poet interpret the features of this remarkable man:

> His open visage is friendly to all men,
> An inner peace rests lightly on his brow,
> And, like a peak which clouds can never cover,
> Above the Earth his pure forehead seems to hover:
> The rust of the Earth, the traces of blind passion
> The stream of time has long since washed away.
> If a royal crown for him were ever fashioned,
> And he need but seize this occasion any day,
> His hand would not reach out. To greed immune,
> By no fear affected, nor by any pain,
> To this clear soul the truth alone is plain,
> This soul absorbing Nature, and with her in perfect tune.
>
> —Wieland[4]

Benjamin Franklin—as long as the human species is in need of an example to follow, this name will live on and influence men. *Benjamin Franklin* belongs to the small number of lofty men within whom the value of human nature has appeared in its full splendor. If the title of sage can be given to any mortal, then it is appropriate for this man, who in our age created such a great circle of personal influence, without, however, allowing himself to cause the slightest detriment to that of anyone else; who unpretentiously devoted his long life to the teaching of his countrymen; who had learned to renounce private wants, and nonetheless worked with untiring activity; who, with incorruptible Reason, until the end of his life preached Freedom, Justice, Peace, Fraternity, Love, and mutual Toleration, and himself set great examples in each of these virtues.

America is fortunate that, so soon after the formation of its cultured states, it witnessed the emergence from its womb of this sage, whose inner harmony, as it were, was subjugated by Nature, who led him to the discovery of the truth in all matters and destined him to be a teacher of his brothers. The Americans could have won independence from the British Parliament without him, too; their moral Freedom, however, their holy regard for the Reason latent within every individual human being, and their inner recognition of the duty to honor each person's convictions and beliefs—all this, along with so many instructions in practical wisdom and so many simple household inventions which contributed to comfort in these budding colonies, they owe to *him*.

The light he radiated penetrated into every part of the world. His insight into the internal coherence of Nature came also to the aid of our physical weakness, and, by proving that the material of storms is identical with that of the delicate fluidity which we know to exist in resin, in amber, and in glass, and already knew how to conduct through metal, he taught us at the same time a means of securing our buildings against the igniting lightning bolt. But what he said in favor of the rights of reasoning beings, in favor of the highest jurisdiction of Reason itself, in favor of the Freedom of the human species, and then with irrefutable grounds proved this for his fellow citizens in detail and as clear as day—this is also firmly established on our side of the ocean as an eternal dam against tyranny and despotism.

America, who bore him, has the first claim to him, and he himself recognized this in its broadest implications; his love for his fatherland was his primary virtue. He subordinated his private opinions to his duty to serve his fellow citizens. In 1777 he personally told me at Passy that "we are fighting thirty years too early." His antipathy to everything which costed blood was based on this conviction; for, within his understanding he had

3. "He seized the lightning from Heaven, and the scepter from the Tyrants," from a 1778 statement about Franklin by the French statesman Anne Robert Jacques Turgot (1727-1781).

4. Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), German poet, novelist, playwright, and associate of Friedrich Schiller.

clearly developed the idea that only Reason and Virtue, *and without blood*, could someday have won independence. His apprehension over lengthening the war therefore restrained him from making the kind of acerbic remarks about the Versailles Cabinet which his fellow ambassador Silas Deane dared to make, with fortunate success, on the occasion of the signing of the peace treaty.

You miserable ones, for whom a drop of human blood on your conscience cries out for revenge, how gladly would you give your two Indians in exchange for the consciousness of a sage who encompassed all his fellow creatures with love, and who was never guilty of the death of a single reasoning being! You gods of this earth, who do not shy from countering Reason with your violence, how you will be driven to despise yourselves if you ever return to your senses, since you will look up to the man who never liked to give physical vent to his own personal opinion, and who nonetheless found in the rights of fully equal man a boundless trust, faithful devotion, and firm attachment! You poor rulers of the one hemisphere who still yearn in vain to possess the other one, how enviable, when compared to yourselves, is this American, who is ever lauded as greater, wealthier, and happier than you, because he had no such desire for it, and whose mind could soar high above it and above you!

Permeated with the teachings of the wisest and most kindhearted occupant of that hemisphere, accustomed by his six decades of instruction to honor themselves in the most noble portion of their being, to regard their Reason as superior to their muscular strength, to test out everything calmly and in control of their passions, to choose what is best and, in unconditional obedience to the force of Reason, to find their true Freedom, his fellow citizens attained the highest pinnacle of fame to which men could ever aspire—in the year 1788 they created a new Constitution *which cost not a drop of blood*; an unbespattered sacrifice, more worthy of being offered to the Deity than everything delectable or detestable which has ever smoked upon its altars.

Reason—along with Virtue, which is only possible through Reason, and is therefore only once again Reason and *nothing* but Reason—this is the magic with which Benjamin Franklin conquered heaven and earth; *Reason* is the subjugator of tyrants, and one day will exultantly sing its song of triumph round the Earth; *Reason* is the only element in which the human species can attain its destiny. Reason, Virtue, and Freedom are inseparable, and the one is never complete without the others. The tyrants therefore hate Reason, since they hate Virtue and Freedom. They would have gladly extinguished Reason from the face of the earth long ago, if they thought they could have gotten along with the services of Unreason; but to their anguish they did need half-reasoning servants, and from this tiniest remaining seed Reason was thus able to grow to its full development.

Benjamin Franklin! Venerable spirit! May you yourself teach the population with your great, unforgettable example. I can hear your voice now; I can still make out your words:

"Children of Europe! Honor the divine spark of Reason within you, and perfect yourselves through its use. Freedom can only be attained by Virtue: Virtue is only possible through Reason. Rage and hatred can only spill blood; you can not buy Freedom, however, with blood. No, you will only purchase shame, remorse, suffering; you will kill your Joy and your Peace; therefore, what costs blood is not worth blood. Once the spirit of Reason in you becomes free, then external Freedom will follow in due course. Carry in your breast the consciousness of your own value; chain your desires and passions to the dictates of Reason. Children! I say to you, then you will not have believed, hoped, and tolerated in vain; for God—love and honor Him—God is just! Be united, as is fitting for brothers, love and help each other amongst yourselves; be calm and serious in your fortune, moderate in pleasure, steadfast and cheerful in misfortune; be diligent, moderate, temperate, wise. Then you will attain Mankind's historic goal; despotism and violence disappear, you are happy, you are free!"