

9/11 Memorial Concert

Peace Is the Question of Our Time

On the evening of September 10, 2023, the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus, the Bergen Symphony Orchestra, and Asiana Sinfonia held a concert to commemorate the 22nd anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, and generally the importance for peace in the world today. Performances included selections from Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert, Hall Johnson, and Eugene Simpson. The concert was performed to a live audience at St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church in New York City, as well as broadcast live over the internet. The concert can be viewed [here](#).

What follows are the opening remarks delivered at the event.

Jen Pearl:

Good evening everyone, good to have you here. My name is Jen Pearl, and I chair the board of the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus. Tonight's concert, "Never Forget: 9/11 Memorial Concert," features a collabora-

tion between the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus, conducted by Maestra Megan Dobrodt, and the Bergen Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Woomyung Choe. I'd like to extend a special "thank you" to the Saint Paul and Saint Andrew Church for hosting this concert today, and a special "thank you" to our collaborative pianist Dura Jun, for all her work.

The Schiller Institute NYC Chorus is committed to presenting a 9/11 memorial concert each year so that the memory of that horrific day continues to prompt us to both stand for justice, for an end to violence and permanent war, and to always honor those who died, sacrificing their lives on that day and in the aftermath. I will now turn the podium over to Dennis Speed of the Schiller Institute.

Dennis Speed:

Thank you. It's always useful and an honor to make any remarks on the occasion of 9/11, a process we've



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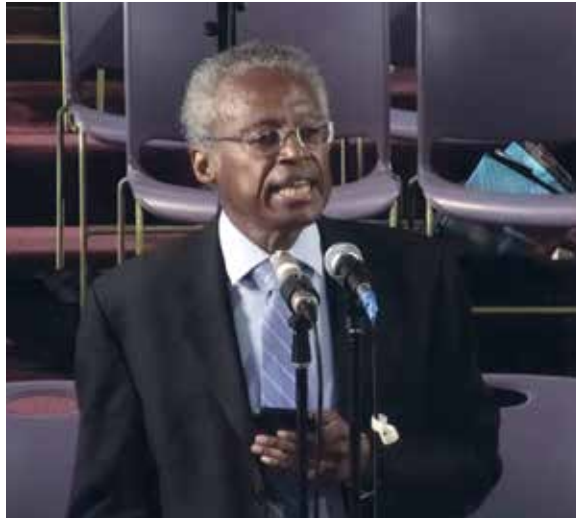
Board Member Megan Dobrodt conducts the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus in concert with the Asiana Sinfonia and the Bergen Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Wolfgang Mozart's Solemn Vespers, K. 339, as part of "Never Forget: Concert in Memory of the 9/11 Attacks on the U.S.," Sept. 10, 2023.

been involved with as the Schiller Institute, since 2016 in particular. But this year in particular, given what is happening not merely in Ukraine, but all over the world in so many different ways. This year poses a very important occasion for us to say a few things.

Sixty years ago, the human race almost disappeared from the face of the Earth during October of 1962—something called the Cuban Missile Crisis. Three people, Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, John F. Kennedy, the United States President, and Pope John the 23rd of the Catholic Church, spoke out on behalf of peace in a unique way. Their dialogue happened in the aftermath of October 1962. It's not talked about very much these days, but here's what it resulted in. On September 20th of 1963, President Kennedy made a nearly forgotten proposal to the adversary against whom he had nearly felt compelled to do the unspeakable—to use thermonuclear weapons in defense of what were called the strategic interests of the United States. Here's what he said then [before the UN General Assembly]:

In a field where the United States and the Soviet Union have a special capacity—in the field of space—there is room for new cooperation, for further joint efforts in the regulation and exploration of space. I include among these possibilities a joint expedition to the Moon. Space offers no problems of sovereignty; by resolution of this Assembly, the members of the United Nations have foresworn any claim to territorial rights in outer space or on celestial bodies, and declared that international law and the United Nations Charter will apply.

Why, therefore, should man's first flight to the Moon be a matter of national competition? Why should the United States and the Soviet Union, in preparing for such expeditions, become involved in immense duplications of re-



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Dennis Speed of the Schiller Institute set the tone for the concert: Solidarity, harmony, and brotherly love is the symphony that we as a human race have to aspire to. "That is the answer, not war."

search, construction, and expenditure? Surely we should explore whether the scientists and astronauts of our two countries—indeed of all the world—cannot work together in the conquest of space, sending someday in this decade to the Moon, not the representatives of a single nation, but the representatives of all of our countries.

Now that proposal on September 20th was rejected by Nikita Khrushchev all through October until the beginning of November of 1963

when he accepted that proposal, one week before John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

Many times we hear it said that war is not the answer. But that depends on what the question is. If the question is: What is the most efficient way to eliminate the largest number of people, to cause the greatest division, to sow century-long hatreds, to justify the most base atrocities in the name of a higher principle of so-called justice, then the answer usually, in fact, is war. We saw that in the aftermath of 9/11. Yes, there was a great injustice, but what was it met with? Where are we now in the world, some 20 years later?

If, however, the question is: How can the human race benefit the universe in the most efficient way? How can we as human beings ensure the greatest possibility for the survival of living beings on our planet and throughout the universe? How and in what way could we best expect to visit, explore, and discover the nature of the universe that surrounds us and that is in us? Then yes, war is not the answer. The answer is love, and a harmony of human interest that requires a cultural revolution in mankind.

That was the viewpoint of artists like Ludwig van Beethoven, whose music is most typical of that outlook. Beethoven completed his great Ninth Symphony despite the fact that he couldn't even hear! And that's because music is not *located* in sound. It's only *transmitted* through sound. Beethoven's music came from his soul, and that was the miracle of the Ninth Sym-

phony. It is a miracle not only of musical performance, but of universal solidarity and brotherhood expressed through a musical performance. It was Beethoven's solidarity and brotherhood with humanity that gave him the inner peace to compose that symphony for us. Despite the fact that he never "heard" it, he always heard it. Now it is that symphony, that we as a human race have to aspire to, not the Ninth Symphony, but that symphony of love and of harmony. And if we do that, that is the answer, not war.

Thank you.

Monsignor Jamie Gigantiello:

Good evening everyone. My name is Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello, and I'm fire Chaplain for the Fire Department of the City of New York. I was also down on 9/11, 2001, from about 8:30 in the morning until midnight. So I experienced that horrific day like many of you maybe have experienced, whether it be in person or on television.

As we come here today, 22 years later, and as our city and nation and even the world remembers what happened that day, I always like to remember Sept. 12, because that was the day when our city, our nation, and our world was One, for a brief period of time. When we came together, people of all races, all nations, religions, ethnic backgrounds, everyone came together in unity and peace. Unfortunately, it did not last. But I do ask you to always remember Sept. 12 when you remember Sept. 11, 2001.

As we come here and throughout the city and nation, to remember all those that lost their lives—innocent citizens, ordinary people that got up to go to work that day, to school, and never came home—we also remember in a very special way, all of our first responders, all those who raced *into* the buildings when everyone else was racing *out*; those who gave, who made the ultimate

sacrifice of their lives for strangers, for their neighbors. It is true that peace will never be won on the battlefield; peace can only be won in this world when each individual makes it a priority in their lives. As Saint Francis of Assisi told us, we are all "instruments of God's peace."

Let today's performance, let tomorrow's remembrances throughout our nation, remind us that love always wins out over evil. Let us pray:

God, source of all good and love: We come together today to remember those horrific events 22 years ago. We ask you, Lord, to always remind us what happens when we let evil enter our hearts and minds. We ask you also, Lord, to



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Monsignor Jamie Gigantiello, Chaplain for the Fire Department of the City of New York, delivered remarks and the Invocation. "Let today's performance, and tomorrow's remembrances remind us that love always wins out over evil."

remind us what we can do, when we work together, when we live together as one people. Regardless of where we come from, any histories we may have, our sexual orientations or whatever that we see that may divide us, we are all your children. Help us to live together as one. And may we rise from the ashes of 9/11 and be people of peace and love. We ask you, Lord, to help us always to live by your ultimate law, the law of love. We ask you, Lord, to bless all peacemakers, all of our armed forces that are doing what they can to

ensure peace for all peoples of goodwill throughout this world. We ask you, Lord, to help us to remain the nation where we welcome all who are in need. Help us always to open our hearts and hands to those who are struggling in this world. We ask you, Lord, to bless this great city of New York, the mosaic of all nations. We ask you to bless the United States of America and help us always to be the land of the free, and the place where justice is for all. Amen.