

Will the Next Beethoven Be an American?

José Vega interviewed Diane Sare on Sept. 18. José Vega has just graduated from high school, and is a youth activist for the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture. Diane Sare is a member of the LaRouche PAC Policy Committee, and the choral director of the Schiller Institute's New York City Community Chorus.

José Vega: First things first. Where did the chorus come from? The idea of it,— why start a chorus in New York City?

Diane Sare: Well, we have a chorus,— the Schiller Institute has had choruses for a long time, and we have had a small chorus in New Jersey for a number of years. What happened was that in the Winter of 2014 you had the situation in St. Louis with the police shooting of a young, unarmed African-American, and the riots that followed, and then the case here in Staten Island with the strangling of Eric Garner. After the grand jury came back and said that there was nothing indictable [in the Garner case], there was a great deal of anger, justified anger, but not yet to the point to which various elements wanted to fan it. That is, we thought there was a danger that New York would be divided against police, against the African-American population,— the typical divisions that are played, frankly, when you have an economic collapse.

We decided to do a sing-along of Handel's *Messiah* at that time, which we pulled together in six days, and to my surprise, about one hundred people showed up to sing. In the course of organizing it, I found some old friends of ours, particularly people like the accompanist Robert Wilson. It turns out that he had been the accompanist to Carlo Bergonzi, and knew about the Schiller Institute since 1988 in Milan,— our campaign for the lower tuning. It was clear there was really a great poten-



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Diane Sare conducting members of the Schiller Institute Chorus in Manhattan in January 2015, shortly after the chorus-building process began.

tial to pull something together. After that sing-along, someone who attended said, “I would like to sing in your chorus, but I don’t want to go to New Jersey. Why don’t you organize a community chorus in Manhattan?” Given that Lyndon LaRouche had just launched the Manhattan Project, it seemed like the natural thing to do. So I decided to create a community chorus in New York City, and that was the origin of it.

Ending Violence through Music

Vega: So, basically it’s about bringing people together, ending violence through music. Is that where the concert came from, also,— the one we recently held at four different churches, the Mozart *Requiem*?

Sare: Yes, and I would say, in a sense, our chorus was lucky to participate in this event sponsored by the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture,— and I would say the question of ending violence is not simply the idea of “let’s not be violent.” The question of ending violence, of why shouldn’t human beings be violent, is polemical; a lot of animals are quite violent. The point is

that human beings are not animals. What you see in the music of the great classical composers, and particularly for the United States, the traditional African-American spiritual, is a demonstration that human beings are not animals, and are, as Schiller said, “born for something better.”

The African-American Spiritual

Vega: That leads me to my next question. Why use the spirituals before the *Requiem*?

Sare: Well, of course one could say that the *Requiem* stands alone. It is an extraordinary, beautiful piece,— but what many people said to me afterwards is that the spirituals prepared them to actually hear the *Requiem* in its intent. I think, especially in a moment like this, when you have a President of the United States who is committed to every act of violence and a complete disregard for human life, and a country therefore which is reflecting that with more and more killings, more and more crimes of human beings against each other, and a culture of despair generally, the thing about the spirituals is that,— because they are really American, they are in English, they come from the United States. They come from this nation, and they express something very powerful. That is, they were sung by people who were under absolutely hideous conditions of brutality, yet there is not a shred of brutality that is reflected in this music. The spirituals are, in that respect, sublime, because they express a quality of humanity which overcomes the brutality and degradation that people were forced to suffer.

So in a sense, I think there is a great potential, and you really saw it at these events, that the population can really resonate with this music. It is very moving, and while on the one hand it seems very simple,— the words are simple, there is not counterpoint in the sense you would see it in a Bach fugue or the Mozart *Requiem*,— yet there is a certain richness to the voices and the interaction of them, or the harmony, I guess you could say,— but it’s a way to really reach the American people at this time. I think that’s extremely



Antonin Dvorak in New York City in 1904.

significant, and you could see that in the response of many people in the audience to the spirituals.

The Next Beethoven

Vega: Okay, well, I think you did succeed in that. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Sare: I would like to say that when Dvorak came to the United States, he recognized in the melodies of these songs, the spirituals,— and also, he said, in the native American music,— that they contain everything that is necessary for, I think the words were, “a great and noble school of American classical music,”— very much in the way Brahms had found it in the folk music of Europe. Dvorak, who was a collaborator of Brahms, attempted to establish an American Conservatory of Music with largely African-American musi-

cians. Because of the setback during Reconstruction, the backlash to that, the British imperial racists, Jim Crow, etc., and then later, in 1913, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan,— what happened is this National Conservatory process was crushed.

But you had a handful of people,— and ironically, many of them worked out of Manhattan. That is where Dvorak was. People like our accompanist, Robert Wilson, worked with some of the people who were students of this process directly, as did some of the people I have recently come into contact with as a result of this work, like the choral conductor, singer and music professor, Dr. Eugene Simpson, who worked as accompanist and as a singer with Hall Johnson for the last eleven years of Hall Johnson’s life. Johnson was one of the arrangers of the spirituals that we did. William Dawson was another one. What we are tapping into, in a sense, is a legacy which was to have become an American Conservatory of Music, a national movement in the United States for classical music. I think that may be the most important aspect of this. It is just the beginning of something which potentially will grow to be much greater after we have had a generation or two of excellent musicians. Maybe the next Beethoven will be in the United States.