
Beauty Is the Food of the Soul

by Diane Sare

I can report on the Schiller Institute NYC chorus, which finally restarted—of course, it's taken everyone some time to get their feet on the ground with all of the very dramatic changes in our lives with the quarantine and the restrictions on activities, which I will underscore, are very necessary right now until we know the magnitude of this disease, and until we actually defeat it.

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Schiller Institute

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We did finally have our first online rehearsal of the *Missa Solemnis*. Beethoven is extremely important, not only because he was, up to the present time, the greatest Classical composer that has existed, and he was the greatest composer because of his extraordinary love of mankind. It's not the case that you can be a great artist and not have a passionate commitment to the fate of mankind as a whole.

I think music, particularly Classical music, in this moment is going to be extremely important to the population. Because what is about to happen to us is something which is really hard to imagine, but as I think Helga may have mentioned already, in Spain, in Italy, in Peru, they are now calling out the military to help remove the corpses, because the morgues have overflowed.

How does one deal with a situation like that emotionally? How do you find the strength to remain human, to not be jaded or cynical or flippant?

We know from studying the Middle Ages and the plague that people had peculiar ways of responding to it; either by becoming completely hedonistic and saying, "Oh well, I'm going to be dead in a few days anyway, I'm going to do whatever I want." Or, by running around beating themselves and saying, "We've all sinned, and this is our punishment," and continuing to spread the plague in that way. Neither of those is an appropriate response. What we also see by the nature of this disease, is that there is really no such thing as being isolated.

And for younger people who thought that they were immune to this, we're finding now in Italy and the United States, that many younger people—people under the age of 50, who don't have pre-existing conditions—are becoming severely ill. So, everything that we think we know, we have to throw out the next day.

Beethoven Speaks To Us All

When Beethoven composed the *Missa Solemnis*, it was supposed to be for his patron, who had been consecrated as the Archbishop. Beethoven was really committed to making sure that the meaning of the words in the mass was conveyed in the music. So, it ended up

taking him four years to compose the *Missa Solemnis*; and the piece ended up being an hour and a half long. I think after this composition, many people were quite hesitant to compose another mass, because it was thought, "Who could deal with this more profoundly, more thoroughly?" And I think this mass is going to be something absolutely crucial to be performed, once we have come to the other side of this, which we are going to do.

The rehearsal went very well. I was very pleased with responses from members of the chorus. If you've sung in a chorus, it's a really delightful social process. You may not really know a whole lot about what the members do outside of the chorus, but because each of you is singing your voice part, there is a very deep appreciation for what everyone brings to the whole. So, it's a wonderful social process, and a lot of us were missing it terribly.

When I sent out the email that said we were going to be doing this online, people were emailing back smiley faces and five exclamation points. I can report that the attendance at our first online rehearsal was absolutely excellent. I think we're going to be able to accomplish a great deal.

Also, for people watching who want to participate in the Schiller Institute NYC chorus, now that we're holding rehearsals online, I think many of you can join and start learning the *Missa Solemnis* with us. When we get through this, we'll be very impressed with what we have learned, and how big the chorus is.

So my commitment, as I think everyone's is, is not only that we defeat this virus, but that when we come to the other side of what is going to be a horrific crisis, each one of us is a much better person than we were when the crisis began.

Zepp-LaRouche: I think that is the spirit which we have to have.

I would hope that the weakness of the present breakdown crisis turns into a cultural renaissance. I really think Leibniz was right: a great evil always evokes in people the desire for a greater good. So, join with the New York chorus and learn to sing the *Missa Solemnis*.