

# Schiller Birthday Celebrations

Cultural celebrations of the 239th birthday of Friedrich Schiller, the great German “Poet of Freedom,” held across the U.S. and Germany by the Schiller Institute in early November, had a special focus on Schiller’s insights into the role of Classical drama in crucial periods of political crisis, such as our own.

As Lyndon LaRouche has recently emphasized, Schiller used “the awfulness of the tragic failure on stage, to fill the audiences emerging from the theater with the joy of knowing that they had become better people leaving the theater, than had entered it before. . . . In that more fortunate state of mind, we are committed to discovering the right thing to do, to avert that doom which the unchecked fatal passion might bring upon our society.”

In Germany, where Schiller is as beloved as Shakespeare is in the United States, the Schiller Institute’s *Dichterpflänzchen* (poetry recitation group) presented special celebrations featuring “The Song of the Bell”—Schiller’s poetic commentary on the tragedy inherent in the French Revolution—in Mainz and Wiesbaden, drawing an audience of over a hundred in each city.

In the U.S., events were held in Chicago,

Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Houston, San Francisco, Seattle, Norfolk, and Reston, Va.

## Ennoblement of Character

The most elaborate event took place at the Community Center in Reston, a suburb of Washington, D.C. The three-hour program was devoted to what Schiller called the “ennoblement of character” of the audience, through staging of the *punctum saliens*, or turning-point scene, of each of three of Schiller’s most powerful tragedies: *Don Carlos*, *Maria Stuart*, and *The Virgin of Orleans*.

In *Don Carlos* and *Maria Stuart*, we see the failure of the tragic hero to overcome his or her passions, to rise to the level of agapic, creative reason. In the *Virgin of Orleans*, we witness the peasant girl, Joan of Arc, make the heroic decision to accept God’s calling, and lead her nation to battle the invading English—an effort later tragically betrayed by the French nobility.

In addition to the dramatic scenes, the Reston program, which was viewed by an audience of about 100 children and adults, included excerpts of Schiller’s aesthetic writings, letters on Classical tragedy, numerous poems, and several performances of Classical music.



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**Top:** King Philip/Marquis of Posa scene, “*Don Carlos*,” Reston, Va. **Center:** Camp scene, “*Wallenstein’s Camp*,” Houston.

**Above:** Baritone Dorceal Duckens, accompanied by Ya Mao, performs Brahms lieder and Spirituals, Houston. **Right:** Chorus takes a break, as emcee Lynne Speed displays one of three volumes of Schiller translations published by the Institute, New York City.



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# Focus on Classical Tragedy

## U.S. Celebrations

Highlights of other U.S. celebrations included:

- **Houston:** performances of poetry, music, and scenes from Schiller's *Wallenstein's Camp*. Pianist Ya Mao and baritone Dorceal Duckens also performed.

- **Chicago:** excerpts of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, performed by children of Schiller Institute members, opened the event. Scenes from *Don Carlos*, *Maria Stuart*, and *The Virgin of Orleans* were interspersed with poems recited and sung in both English and German musical settings.

- **Philadelphia:** two musical settings of Schiller poems by Franz Schubert, "Unending Joy" and

"The Punch Song," performed in traditional German Mannerchor (men's chorus) style.

- **Baltimore:** recitations of Schiller's poetry were followed by an exposition on "Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives: Gethsemane*, as Schiller Would Treat It."

As Schiller Institute president Will Wertz said in introducing the Reston program, "There is no better way to become a true, world-historical citizen of a republic, than to celebrate the birthday of Friedrich Schiller, by passing his gift to us, on to our fellow citizens. For, as Schiller correctly maintained, it is only through beauty that we proceed to freedom."



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**Top:** *Joan of Arc, Prologue, "The Virgin of Orleans," Reston, Va.* **Above:** German "Dichterpflänzchen" group, Mainz performance. **Left:** Queen Elizabeth/Mary Stuart scene, "Mary Stuart," Reston, Va. **Below, left:** Schiller Institute Children's Chorus, Reston, Va. **Below:** Schiller Institute String Trio performs movement from Beethoven Trio in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3, Reston, Va.



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