

Nun kommt die Schillerzeit!

A CELEBRATION ON THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE POET'S DEATH

What Is, and To What End Do We Study, Friedrich Schiller In the Year 2005?

by Helga Zepp LaRouche



The most beautiful heart that has ever lived and suffered in Germany. . . . He wrote on behalf of the great ideas of the revolution; he destroyed the Bastilles of the mind, and labored at constructing the temple of freedom—by which I mean that supremely great temple which is to embrace *all* nations, as if in one single brotherhood.” That is what Heinrich Heine wrote about Friedrich Schiller—and how right he was! “All men become brothers . . . this kiss from the entire universe!” Still today, this youthful enthusiasm of Schiller cannot fail to infect the unprejudiced reader, snatching him from the narrow world of sense perception, and lofting him high above, into the visionary world of beautiful humanity. And, we must add on a modern note, it’s a good thing, too, because that’s precisely what is most lacking in our own decadent times.

Now, there’s also a mighty chorus of people, who will have no truck with Schiller’s ideals, or with anyone today who might be filled with unbounded enthusiasm for Schiller. They range from Adorno-

Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp LaRouche wrote this article commemorating the 200th anniversary of the death of the great “Poet of Freedom,” for simultaneous publication in Fidelio and its German-language sister-publication Ibykus.

For Schiller, the theater's high purpose was nothing less than the 'moral education of the human being, and of the nation,' and the 'fostering of general happiness.' And by 'happiness,' Schiller meant this term in Leibniz's sense, and also as it is embedded in the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

*Homage to Schiller
leaving the premier of his
"Virgin of Orleans," Leipzig, 1801.*



The Granger Collection

raped academics from the aging 1960's radical milieu—people who have never grown emotionally out of the counterculture of their extended adolescence—to the barren *Regietheater* director, who for the past thirty years wouldn't think of putting on a play without including a sex act on stage; and all the way to the poor victims of these chorus-leaders, the PISA¹-dumbed-down students, who can't understand Schiller at all, because neither their parents, nor their teachers, can understand him either, and whose vocabulary consequently does not extend beyond that of a Britney Spears.

There is, in fact, nothing—absolutely nothing—about Schiller that is “outmoded” or “fuddy-duddy.” Schiller continues to communicate the most magnificent image of man ever presented by a German-speaking poet. He was, and is, the world's best psychologist, because he had a sublime idea of what it means to be a human being, and because he had very precise knowledge of what prevents human beings from realizing their true potential, and of what holds them back from being “beautiful souls.” And because he uniquely united poetry and philosophy into a new and higher species of endeavor, he possessed, as Wil-

helm von Humboldt rightly observed, an “infallible key to the innermost entrances to the human soul.” He was unmatched in his ability to raise people out of “the narrow confines of everyday life,” and to array before them the great issues confronting all humanity.

What Carlo Schmidt said at the celebration of Schiller's 200th birthday, is equally true now, on the 200th anniversary of his death—and it is a question of still greater urgency, namely: The question isn't what Schiller “can still say” to us, but rather, it is “how *we* measure up against Schiller today.” It's not Schiller who needs to be interpreted anew according to the changing times; on the contrary, it is his critics who must permit themselves to be measured against the standard set by him. And against this standard, the great majority of his modern reviewers—and also, unfortunately, most of the theater directors who have staged his works over the past few decades—are small fry indeed.

Today, 200 years after Schiller's death, Germany's situation is catastrophic. Its economy is in free-fall: With 5.4 million officially unemployed, and the real figure at over 9 million, the social moorings of the state are beginning

to break up. Germany's government is being subjected to enormous pressure from supranational institutions to brutally dismantle the social welfare state as it has been nurtured since the time of Bismarck's reforms, and which is anchored in Article 20 of our Basic Law. All institutions which citizens have taken for granted as unshakeable and permanent, are now in various stages of dissolution. The very ground of our republic seems to be trembling beneath our feet.

Even though this existential crisis has many causes—and quite a number of them are *not* home-grown—the more profound reason why we Germans, up to now, have been so manifestly incapable of reacting adequately to these threats, and of finding solutions, is because we have distanced ourselves almost completely from our cultural roots, and from our own best traditions. Want an example? Let's read the opening of an article by Jens Jensen, appearing in *Die Zeit's* special section celebrating the Schiller Year:

"It's easy to see Schiller as a fuddy-duddy. All this high-flying and highfalutin language, all this talk of beauty, of freedom, reason, all these great and long-emptied-out generalities, this great droning rush of words, speaking of now-extinguished hopes for grace and dignity, and of educating the human species. It's easy to pick out from his writings entire passages which signify, for us today, nothing, and even less than nothing. 'A noble desire must glow in us to also make a contribution out of *our means* to this rich bequest of truth, morality, and freedom which we received from the world past, and which we must surrender once more, richly enlarged, to the world to come.' And so forth and so on."

One possible reaction to this, might be for us to have pity for poor Mr. Jensen, because beauty, freedom, and reason have no meaning for him; because he has no hope of achieving grace or dignity; because he has so evidently failed to inherit a scintilla of truth or ethical values from generations past; and because he is incapable of making any contribution to the future development of human society. And, we might therefore say, he is a perfect fit for Schiller's term "stunted plants," which Schiller uses to describe people whose mental and spiritual capacities are completely undeveloped. Or, we could also make a joke at Mr. Jensen's expense, by observing that he is intent on loudly proclaiming his miserable state of mind to the world at large, instead of, as Heine would put it, having the decency to conceal his "little webbed feet."

Let it be said in Mr. Jensen's defense, that he subsequently does admit that Schiller anticipated, and continues to influence, all of the great debates of recent times, ranging from human rights to freedom of the will. Yet Jensen remains, sad to say, all too typical of our *Zeitgeist*:

For him, as for many of our contemporaries, the terms beauty, freedom, reason, and truth have no meaning whatsoever. And precisely therein lies the problem.

It was not all at once, but rather in many phases, that we distanced ourselves from the most fundamental ideas of our over-2,000-year-old Western Platonic-humanist tradition—one example being the idea that through Socratic reason, truth is knowable. This tradition reached its absolute high-point during the Weimar Classical era, and it is especially prominent in the works of Schiller, who knew how to clothe Platonic ideas in the raiments of poetic beauty. But soon there came the Romantics, beginning, at the very latest, with the "political Romanticism" that was firmly in the pocket of the post-Napoleonic Restoration, and whose chief theoretician was the fascist Joseph de Maistre. These Romantics launched a systematic attack against the ancient Greeks' idea of the unity of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The next major assault came via Nietzsche, who hated Plato, Schiller, and Beethoven, and who denigrated the times when Socratic reason prevailed, in favor of the "Dionysian" phases of human history. Next, the National Socialists initially sought to mold Schiller according to their own agenda ("Cleave, O cleave to our dear Fatherland!"); but they soon began to fear that Schiller's freedom drama *Wilhelm Tell* would be interpreted as a call for the assassination of tyrants, and so, on June 3, 1941, Hitler caused the play to be banned, by means of a secret memorandum signed by Martin Bormann.

But the far more systematic attack on the Classical tradition only got under way during the postwar period, through the combined influence of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) and the advice which the Occupying Powers were taking from representatives of the Frankfurt School. The CCF was the biggest operation ever run by the forerunners of today's U.S. "neo-conservatives." It was run under the pretext of stemming the Soviet Union's influence over cultural life in Europe and the United States, whereas in reality, its assignment was to systematically attempt to extirpate from the population, the axiomatic basis of thinking which had made it possible for Franklin Delano Roosevelt to implement his New Deal and Bretton Woods policies—i.e., a policy oriented toward the general welfare.²

During World War II, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and other denizens of the Frankfurt School worked at the Institute for Social Research at Columbia University on the "authoritarian personality" project, and defined their so-called criteria, by which, they claimed, one could recognize whether a given person was predisposed to adopting or advocating authoritarian systems such as national socialism or communism. These criteria



After World War II, Frankfurt School existentialists like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Hannah Arendt (counterclockwise from right) led an all-out assault on Classical culture, coordinated by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) under the pretext of combatting Soviet influence in Europe and the U.S.

Below: Founding conference of the CCF, West Berlin, June 1950.

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress



included the person's assertion that truth was knowable—this was fascist *per se*. And thus, in one stroke, they threw the entire Socratic method of truth-seeking out the window.

In 1950, Adorno and Horkheimer were shipped back into Germany, in order to assist High Commissioner John J. McCloy—a direct forerunner of today's neo-cons—in the “denazification” of Germany's education system and cultural institutions. Adorno went about putting into practice his conviction that if one wanted to extirpate the authoritarian impulse from the population, it would be necessary to completely dissolve the existing structure of society in postwar America and Europe. And in order to do that, any and all forms of beauty had to be removed; and in their place, there must spread a primitive mass culture which, in turn, after a while, would cause the population to suffer a complete mental breakdown.³

Adorno, in his capacity as chief representative of “critical theory,” which casts everything and everyone into doubt, was convinced that the very idea of progress in history, according to which humanity can gradually approximate a society based on reason, is not only false, but is, in fact, extremely dangerous. Adorno believed that

all social theories, and all historical periods which had ever taken as their point of departure a claim that they fostered man's liberation from his own self-imposed shackles, so that he could also free himself from the shackles imposed upon him by nature, have always ended up as totalitarian dictatorships. He insisted that any idea of development in the name of reason, was inevitably doomed to failure. Or, to put it another way: Adorno believed that the mere attempt to educate people in the principles of reason, already betrays, in principle, a fascist intent.

It will therefore come as no surprise, that he had special contempt for Friedrich Schiller, the man who had dedicated his entire life's work precisely to this idea of freeing human beings from the prison of their own sensual existence, and not only elevating people to the level of reason, but bringing people's emotions up to that level as well. Adorno wrote about Schiller that his

verbal *habitus* is reminiscent of the young man who comes up from the lower classes, and, embarrassed, starts writing things in high society in order to make an insolent spectacle of himself. His German blustering and sententiousness he borrowed from the French, but he perfected it at the German dinner-table. The petit-bourgeois, in his never-ending, relentless demands, plays himself up, identifies himself with the power that he himself does not possess, and, in his arrogance, does it one better, all the way into the absolute

spirit, and absolute horror. . . . Within humanism's innermost sanctum, there rages, as its true soul, the imprisoned maniac who, as fascist, would make a prison out of the entire world.

So, humanism is the harbinger of fascism? That's exactly what Adorno is saying. And therefore, he claims, any transposition of the sublime into the political realm, is to be prevented at all cost, because the outcome would be either terror, or fascism.

Adorno's *Kulturkampf* against the humanist tradition, Classical music, and Schiller personally, was only one aspect among the many others involved in the extremely lavish propaganda operation that was mounted in collaboration with the C.I.A., the U.S. State Department, the CCF, and the Frankfurt School. In the subsequent Cold War years, up through 1967, when the nature of this operation blew up in a huge scandal, there was nary a concert, nary a cultural event which the CCF didn't have its fingers in—or its money.

Without this background, it is impossible to understand Germany's cultural situation today. Because it has been a very long time—perhaps 30 or 40 years—since Schiller's works have actually been performed on the German stage. What we have had instead, were stagings by the so-called *Regietheater* ["director's theater"], which, even in the best of cases, only offered what Schiller would have described as *manipiert* ["contrived"] performances—i.e., it was the personal opinions of the director, the producer, and sometimes of the actors themselves, which governed their Schiller "interpretation." And if you add to this, the fact that beginning in 1970 with the Brandt school reforms, the very idea of the Humboldt educational ideal, and the study of the Classics, has been removed from the standard curriculum, then it becomes clear why two entire generations of people in Germany have great conceptual difficulty understanding Schiller.

And even though Schiller's dramas have continued to appear frequently on our program listings, these have not been the real Schiller, but instead, they have been either "alienated" performances à la Bertolt Brecht, or deliberate falsifications in Adorno's vein, or else they have simply been outbursts of mental flatulence from some theater director, intent on tacking one more "cool" novelty onto his production. One director gets the idea of cutting Act V of *Tell*, another one cuts Act IV, and yet another doesn't like the mass scenes in *Wallenstein* because they provide historical context. And so, performances are typically distorted so far beyond recognition, that we wouldn't even know that Schiller was being performed, had we not read the title on the program booklet.

With only a small handful of exceptions, all we have

had, has been *Regietheater*. Since the mid-1960's, the chief culprit—but by no means the only one—has been Hans-Günter Heyme, whose father was some sort of cultural officer attached to the American occupation authorities, and who has been a veritable cornucopia of new ways to bowdlerize Schiller's plays. Heyme is quite open about his refusal to be faithful to the play's original intent:

For us, as for Adorno, we have an obligation to keep an even better faith. And this faith . . . means that no longer must we perform old plays according to the written text, but rather we must go against the grain. To perform plays according to the text, means no longer to take them seriously for today's world. . . . In my view, our task is to rework the texts anew, while remaining responsible to the circumstances under which these works were created. . . . Nothing should be changed in the text itself, in its versification, its rhythm, or underlying poetry. But undoubtedly, you often have to alter the scenic production, in order to make plays important for us today, and, ultimately, to rescue them for us.

One such "rescue" effort was a performance of *Wilhelm Tell* in Wiesbaden in 1965, in which the Swiss citizenry appears on stage as a rowdy, fascist mob—in keeping, as always, with Adorno's thesis that wherever there's humanism, fascism will soon follow. *Tell* comes across as a cowardly murderer lurking within the ambush party; and to ensure that the point is not missed, the Rütli Oath is accompanied by a melody remarkably similar to the Nazis' "Horst Wessel Song."

The theater critic Peter Iden commented on this performance, that, "To my recollection, and up to the present day, this particular production of Schiller's *Tell* by Heyme is a great milestone, indeed a caesura, in the history of German theater. I call it a caesura, because it launched an entirely new way of formulating the Classics. Previously, we had been obliged to deal with forms dating back to the 1930's. But now, young Heyme comes along and overturns absolutely everything." Even back then, Heyme's production came as a powerful shock, because the paradigm shift associated with the 1960's generation was still not yet firmly in place. One Mr. Rühle, for example, wrote against Heyme in the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: "Do this one more time, and I'll do everything in my power to make sure you'll never put anything on the stage again." However that may have been, it was not enough to forestall similar performances of other Schiller plays. Heyme, Zadek, Steiner, and other directors continued to revise Schiller according to their own whims, and, as Heyme put it, "to disengage from the old brown [i.e., fascist] sauce that had gotten sloshed in."

What Peter Iden correctly recognized as a caesura, was but one part of a much more comprehensive para-

German “Regietheater” directors like today’s Hans-Günter Heyme (below) are continuing the CCF assault on Classical ideas. Like their mentor, playwright Bertolt Brecht (right), they aim to strengthen the audience’s sense of powerlessness and alienation.



digm shift that had been launched in the United States and Europe with the 1960’s generation—the generation whose mentors were these same Frankfurt School ideologues. It was part of a systematic transformation away from a society of producers still oriented toward Roosevelt, Adenauer, and de Gaulle, and into a society of consumers and speculators. On the economic side, for example, some years later this paradigm shift resulted in the demise of the Bretton Woods system and the introduction of floating exchange rates; and thus began the bubble economy which has now reached its bitter, fag end. On the cultural side, this shift went hand-in-hand with a massive attack on the values of Christian humanism, and of Classical culture.

It was also during this time that Hans Neuenfels started up his theater “happenings,” which made headlines, and also got him fired from the Trier Theater. In an interview with Niels Negendank, Neuenfels reminisced about those heady days:

It was a time when opinions were being reshaped—even in Trier. Young people couldn’t entirely reconcile themselves with these failed laws of prosperity. . . . And we said to ourselves: We’ve got to do something entirely different. And then we brainstormed on it. And then we hit on the idea of making a happening with bathtubs, with music, lyrics, and texts from the B Generation, and stuff like that. And each person had to draft a leaflet. And then I set myself up on the Marktplatz in Trier, and handed them out. People read it. And you could see from their reaction, that they were totally at a loss. Some of them were open about it, and asked, “What do you mean when you write: ‘Yes, you, too, you old Nazi, are welcome to come’? And what does this mean, ‘Help us tear down the Trier Cathedral!’?”

Even if that might have been a new idea the first time around—though not a very profound one—such “brainstorms,” which every Tom, Dick, and Harry have been coming up with variations on for the forty years since then, really ought to be quite worn-out by now.

Neuenfels came to realize as much in the meantime, and said so in a recent interview. In a lecture he gave in March 2002, he recapitulated his relationship to Classicism:

The title “The Idle Dream of Classicism” [a show broadcast by Deutschlandradio Berlin–HZL], if I understand it correctly, proceeds from a yearning, a hope, and not from an assertion or a distinction. From a yearning, a compulsion even, an instinct to resort to deliberately fixed, even artificially

forced forms and values, as a means of dealing with the nightmares of our accidental existence. . . . The wholesome world which we associate with the Classical idea, which allows Mozart to be turned into *Mozartkugeln* [Mozart Chocolate Balls], which propels Verdi into open-air arenas and pop concerts, which banishes the real Goethe, the real Shakespeare, and even the real Kleist, into mere statues—all this stems from the secretly cherished delusion that somewhere, in the here and now, there must exist something that is cordoned off from real life—indisputable, unassailable, coldly comforting values, which separate us from the chaos, from banality, from happenstance. Many people believe that is beautiful . . .

But clearly, Neuenfels does not see it that way. He treats Classical works as if they were a warehouse which anyone is free to plunder at whim: “The Classics are sitting there like an inexhaustible raw thematic material, always usable, always accessible, ’round the clock. So-called necessity stands there—irritating, oppressive, seducing us to storm its gates in battle, with wins and losses on both sides. That’s the attraction. That’s fair. Here we all have a chance to win.” So, the Classics are a department store where anyone can pick and choose whatever strikes their fancy.

Now, in Germany we live in a more or less democratic republic, and so these folks are free to do as they please. But since they so clearly don’t understand the first thing about the Classics, there remains the nagging question: Why don’t they just write *their own* plays? Or, to put it another way: Why aren’t the *Regietheater* fans beating down the doors to see performances of plays such as Neuenfels’ *Stuttgart oder die Fahrt nach Neapel* (*Stuttgart, or the Trip to Naples*)? Might it be because those plays just aren’t “usable, always accessible, ’round the clock”? Or

perhaps because their content gets exhausted after the very first reading or performance, and after that, all that they elicit is one great big yawn? Well, in that case, these writers ought to work on becoming better playwrights; but in the meantime, let them leave Schiller and the Classics alone!

Fresh from his attempted massacre of *Wilhelm Tell*, Hans-Günther Heyme proceeded in 1969 to inflict the same on *Wallenstein*. He took this trilogy, which requires two evenings to perform, and cut it down to three and a half hours. And in what can only be described as a deliberate falsification, he ignored Schiller's own explicit instructions on how Wallenstein's personality was to be portrayed, instead arbitrarily lifting one single aspect of his characterizations, completely out of context.

Schiller's masterful method of reflecting the full complexity of the conflict between Wallenstein and the Viennese court through the eyes of the soldiers in *Wallenstein's Lager* (*Wallenstein's Camp*), as a way of setting the stage for the dramatic action to come, was completely destroyed in Heyme's version; instead, brief encampment scenes keep popping up as interludes during the later course of the play. Some other scenes were mercilessly shortened, and many passages were spoken by different characters than in the original, so that all that remained, was not the characters, but merely "sonic tapestries"—similar to the festival that was once held in Bonn, where each resident was asked to play a recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on their home stereo, and to leave the window open, while everyone else did the same.

Since the time of Heyme's production, this idea of not presenting *Wallenstein's Camp* in its historically specific situation in the Thirty Years' War—and of changing its venue from the Nuremberg camp to somewhere else—has been repeated many times and with many variations—for example, in a performance in Mannheim a few years ago, where the soldiers were clad in uniforms dating from every war imaginable, from the German Wehrmacht to Vietnam-era GI's, and, as with Heyme's version, confronted the audience head-on, as a tramping horde. But that's simply not Schiller. In his Prologue, Schiller says quite explicitly:

His encampment explains his crime.
So, pardon the poet, if he takes you
Not all at once, with quick steps,
To the nub of the action, but dares
Instead to unroll, before your eyes,
This momentous subject
In a series of vignettes.

Schiller says that experiencing the camp is crucial for understanding Wallenstein's actions—and so, what can

justify Heyme when he simply removes this as a coherent unit, and breaks it up into little pieces? And when Heyme simply cuts out the role of Duchess Terzky altogether, and then puts some of her lines into Wallenstein's mouth, this was an entirely deliberate, intentional falsification of Wallenstein's character. Because Wallenstein was just not the cold, power-hungry general who failed; that historical fact is simply not open to "interpretation."

Why did Schiller write historical dramas in the first place? Why was he so involved in studying history, and why did he proceed to use the material he garnered from those studies, as the basis for his dramas? Because for him, both of these—history and drama—pointed out routes whereby the simple reader or viewer, caught up in his web of daily cares, could be lifted out of his littleness by the "great issues confronting humanity." Because Schiller dedicated his entire life's work to answering the question of how a failure of moral courage, such as what had just occurred in the French Revolution—when, at a "great historic moment," a "little people" were incapable of seizing this opportunity to improve the political situation—of how this problem could be overcome. For him, the theater's high purpose was nothing less than the "moral education of the human being, and of the nation," as Schiller wrote in his essay "Theater as a Moral Institution," and also nothing less than the "fostering of general happiness"—and by "happiness," Schiller meant this term in Leibniz's sense, and as it is also embedded in the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

Schiller describes the theater's mission and function: "The theater is the common channel through which the light of wisdom streams down from the thoughtful, better part of society, spreading thence in mild beams throughout the entire state. More correct notions, more refined precepts, purer emotions flow from here into the veins of the population; the clouds of barbarism and gloomy superstition disperse; night yields to triumphant light." But if the message which the poet intends to convey with his play is perverted into its opposite, as typically occurs with *Regietheater*, then the theater's purifying effect is absent, and the audience is dragged down even lower than they were before they entered the hall.

Countless passages from Schiller demonstrate that this was his ultimate, and his sole aim. In his *Aesthetical Letters*, there can be no misunderstanding his expressed conviction that all improvement in the political sphere, is contingent on the ennoblement of the individual, and that this is the special function performed by art. And in his preface to *Die Braut von Messina* (*The Bride of Messina*), entitled "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy," he writes:

True art, however, does not aim merely at a temporary play; it seriously intends not to transpose a person into a merely momentary dream of freedom, but to make him really and in fact free, and to accomplish this by awakening in him a force, exercising it and developing it, to thrust the sensuous world, which otherwise only presses upon us as crude material, bearing down upon us as a blind power, into an objective distance, to transpose it into a free work of our mind, and to achieve mastery over the material with ideas.

To awaken this power within the listener—that was Schiller’s overriding concern. In the Prologue to his *Wallenstein* trilogy, which refers to the reopening of the Weimar Theater in October 1798, and which is, quite literally, a set of stage directions for the plays, he talks about the lofty spirit which speaks out from the redesigned hall, and which excites the audience’s mind “to solemn and profound emotions,” thus fostering that special mental disposition which is the precondition for the sublime. The events about to unfold on the stage, are aimed at precisely this: to elevate the audience.

A grand exemplar awakens desire to emulate,
And to our judgment dictates higher laws.

But not only the audience is to experience more elevated sentiments; the actor, too, is called upon to do justice to the high demands placed upon him, and, be his artistry on stage ever so fleeting, “to completely fill that moment which is his alone.”

For who has done sufficient for the best
Of his own time, has lived for all the ages.
The modern era, which for Thalia’s art
Begins today upon this stage, doth make
The poet also bold, the old course leaving,
To transfer you from out the narrow sphere
Of bourgeois life unto a higher scene,
Not undeserving of the sublime moment
Of time, in which we’re moved aspiringly.
For only subjects of great import can
Excite the deep foundation of mankind;
I’th’ narrow sphere the mind becomes more narrow,
But man grows greater with his greater aims.
And now upon the century’s earnest end,
Where actuality itself is turned
To poetry, where we see potent natures
In battle for a goal of great importance,
And for great issues of humanity,
For masterdom and freedom struggles waged—
Now art may too engage in higher flight
Upon its shadow stage, indeed it must,
Lest it be put to shame by life’s own stage.

With these lines, Schiller leaves no doubt about his intent: The “goal of great importance,” the “great issue”

of humanity, is nothing less than the struggle for humanity’s freedom; and the events on stage must not be permitted to sink below the level of present history as it stood in the year 1798. He calls this “present,” this moment, “sublime,” and says that the task is to lead the audience out from the confines of daily life, and into the “great issues” which will enable human beings to grow in tandem with their own greater goals. You couldn’t ask for stage directions more explicit than that.

To conclude this point: It is no coincidence that Schiller became world-renowned as the “Poet of Freedom,” because for him, human freedom—external freedom, but especially internal freedom—was an inalienable human value. In his *Aesthetical Letters*, he writes that the construction of true political freedom is the greatest of all works of art. He defines beauty as “freedom in the domain of phenomena”—a condition in which the object is entirely in correspondence with its own inherent lawfulness, without need for external compulsion. And his chief criticism of the Kantian categorical imperative, was that it was insulting to his sense of freedom, to see how a person acting in accordance with Kantian maxims had to forcefully suppress his contending emotions, in order to be a moral person; instead of this, Schiller set forth his notion of the “beautiful soul,” for whom freedom and necessity, passion and duty, coincide.

In his essay “On the Sublime,” Schiller elaborates on the significance of this idea for world history:

Freedom, with all of its moral contradictions and physical evils, is for noble souls an infinitely more interesting spectacle than prosperity and order without freedom, where the sheep patiently follow the shepherd and the self-commanding will is degraded to the subservient part of a clockwork. The latter makes man merely into a spirited product and a more fortunate citizen of nature; freedom makes him into the citizen and co-ruler of a higher system, where it is infinitely more honorable, to occupy the nethermost place, than to command the ranks in the physical order.

Considered from this point of view, and only from this one, world history is to me a sublime object. The world, as historical object, is at bottom nothing other than the conflict of natural forces amongst one another and with the freedom of man, and history reports to us the result of this contest.

That is also precisely the point of *Wallenstein*; and any production which seeks to suppress this chief concern, by portraying Friedländer (Wallenstein) as merely a cold, power-hungry military official, is suppressing Schiller’s primary idea—the sublime aspect of history which is being addressed here: the struggle for human freedom—a struggle which, in this case, is inseparably bound up with the struggle to end the war, and to achieve peace. Schiller writes in the Prologue:

Confused by the favor and the hate of parties,
In history our image of him wavers;
But art should bring him humanly more closely
Before your eyes and also to your heart.

And thus, if a production fails to bring Wallenstein closer to the audience's heart, it will be a failure. So, what could Schiller's motivation possibly be for portraying Wallenstein in a differentiated way, creating space for a real human being, so that we might even conceivably come to sympathize with his intentions?

As is well known, Schiller did extensive research on the Thirty Years' War, and published his results in five volumes. He visited Eger and other historic sites, and immersed himself in questions of military strategy, before sitting down to write his *Wallenstein*. Over the course of his work, his own views on Friedländer underwent considerable change. At the beginning of his *History of the Thirty Years' War*, he describes Wallenstein as a boundlessly ambitious and ruthless warlord, obsessively bent on revenge against the Emperor who has deposed him. In order to carry out his plan to obliterate the Hapsburg Empire, and to arrogate imperial power to himself, he had to regain his command over his army. And in that effort, Wallenstein was obliged to make all sorts of seemingly contradictory chess moves, even going so far as facilitating the advance of Gustavus Adolphus's army, in order to exert so much pressure on the Emperor, that he would have no choice but to re-install Wallenstein as a ruler with virtually sovereign powers. Schiller then proceeds to describe the various military battles, Wallenstein's attempted conspiracies, and the counter-conspiracies launched by the court in Vienna.

But by the end of his fourth volume, Schiller writes a passage expressing a new insight:

Thus Wallenstein, at the age of fifty, ended his active and extraordinary life; elevated through ambition, ruined by ambition, with all his failings he was still great and admirable, unequalled, if he had kept moderation. The virtues of the *ruler* and of the *hero*, prudence, justice, firmness, and courage are colossally prominent in his character; but he lacked the gentler virtues of *man*, which adorn the hero, and make the ruler beloved.

And then, suddenly, Schiller puts yet another dimension of these events into play, one that sheds an altogether different light on all that he had written up to that point:

His free mind and clear understanding elevated him above the religious prejudices of his century, and the Jesuits never forgave the fact that he saw through their system. . . . Through the intrigues of monks he lost the command of the army at Regensburg and his life at Eger; through the

artifice of monks he lost perhaps, what was more than both of these, his honorable name and his reputation before posterity. For in the end, one must admit, for the sake of justice, that the pens which have provided us with the history of this extraordinary man are not entirely faithful; that the treachery of the duke and his designs upon the throne of Bohemia were not grounded firmly on proven facts, but merely upon probable suppositions. The document has still not been found, which discloses to us with historical reliability the secret motives of his conduct, and among his public and universally attested actions there is none, which in the end could not have flowed from an innocent source. Many of his most reproachable steps prove merely his earnest preference for peace . . . none of his actions *justify* us in holding his treachery to be proven. . . . Thus Wallenstein fell, not because he was a rebel, but rather he rebelled, because he fell. A misfortune for the living, that he had made a victorious party his enemy—a misfortune for the dead, that this enemy survived him and wrote his history.

It is a testament to Schiller's genius as a historian, that despite the relatively poor quality of resources available to him in comparison to today, he nevertheless succeeded in putting his finger on the crucial dynamic behind the Thirty Years' War. The actual subject, both of the history and of the drama, was not a question of fealty to the Hapsburg Empire, but rather, the question was how to find a *way out* of this awful war. And Schiller, who mentioned that he had been considering writing a book on the Peace of Westphalia, described the peace treaty which ended the warfare, as "the greatest of all triumphs of statecraft." For Schiller, this question of peace was, of course, not confined to the issues in *Wallenstein*, but was one of the "great issues" of his own day. One has but to consider Schiller's description of the anarchy of the French Revolution in his poem "Das Lied von der Glocke" ("The Song of the Bell"),* and its concluding verse: "*Peace* be the first chime she's ringing."

If, on the other hand, one permits the historical situation of the Thirty Years' War, and Wallenstein's attempts to find peaceful solutions, to recede into the background, or if one causes it to disappear entirely, thereby presenting it as mere psychodrama, or as the power-hungry Wallenstein getting his revenge, then one is depriving the drama of precisely that historical specificity that holds lessons for us today. Or, put another way: The reference to present times is not established by the fact that the soldiers in the camp sing "Cheer up, my brave comrades, mount up, mount up!" as they mount their Harley Davidsons; rather, its relevance for today lies in performing *Wallenstein* as truly as possible to Schiller's intent, to

* See translation, page 41, this issue.



Wallenstein's efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the Thirty Years' War had immediate relevance in Schiller's day. **Left:** Portrait of General Albrecht Wallenstein. **Below:** Scene from "The Piccolomini."



the best of one's abilities, and in portraying Wallenstein, "confused by the favor and the hate of parties"—and also in portraying him through the eyes of Max. Only then does it yield lessons for us who, once again today, are confronted with the real prospect of another Thirty Years' War, but this time on a worldwide scale.

It is fascinating from a methodological standpoint, to see how it was only through his dramatic reworking of the historical material, that Schiller discovered the scientifically precise key for understanding the real, historical Wallenstein. The impressive thing, is that in the course of his dramatic reworking, he arrived at a picture of Wallenstein which it took historians another 150 years, on the basis of better source materials, to recognize as the only valid one. Working in the realm of ideas, Schiller anticipated the historical truth, because, as Wilhelm von Dilthey has written, he grasped the "subjectiveness [*Innerlichkeit*] of history."

Schiller found himself confronted with the difficulty that the General *per se* did not appear as a figure whom one could bring closer to "the heart" of the audience in any straightforward way—a General, in the thick of battle:

The Empire is a ramper-field of weapons,
Deserted are the cities, Magdeburg
In ruins, art and industry lie low,
The citizen is nought, the soldier all,
Unpunished insolence makes fun of morals,
And brutal hordes, made wild in lengthy war,
Encamp upon the devastated earth.
Upon this gloomy background is depicted
An undertaking of bold arrogance
And also an audacious character.
You know him—the creator of bold armies,
The idol of the camp and scourge of countries . . .

How would it be possible to present such a figure, while remaining true to Schiller's requirement that the theater enable the members of the audience to ponder for themselves, how they would have made the same decisions of war or peace—decisions that would determine the weal or woe of many generations to come?

Schiller solves this problem by introducing two characters who were not taken from the historical record: Max, the son of Octavio Piccolomini, and Thekla, daughter of Wallenstein. They are "children of the house"—one of Schiller's other terms for "beautiful souls." These two characters were an expression of what one might describe as Schiller's own "philosophy of childhood"—his idea that children and adolescents are still in a relatively naive state of innocence, in the sense that he used that latter term in his essay "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry." Despite the tribulations of war, they had not yet suffered the damage to the soul so frequently visited upon the lives of adults, leaving them bent and crippled.

Schiller wrote that "All peoples have a history, have a paradise, a state of innocence, a golden age; yes, every individual man has his paradise, his golden age, which he remembers with more or less enthusiasm, according as he has more or less of the poetic in his nature," and in every person's youth and adolescence, Schiller saw a source of power which could be tapped throughout their lives, if only they could recover their consciousness of it. Connected to this, was his idea that every human being harbors a unique seed, a soul, a pure being, which tends to be frittered away in the course of life's adversities, but which can be re-created, in more mature form, through sharpening one's consciousness, and through aesthetic education.

Max and Thekla are beautiful souls, and their love for each other enables them to preserve the purity of their hearts, even amid the chaos of war. They represent the ideal of beautiful humanity. Schiller creates these characters, so that through them, he can portray the world after the end of the war, the hope for a better future, and the idea of the Peace of Westphalia.

Max, Wallenstein's *alter ego* throughout all three plays

of the trilogy, also represents the noble ideas which Wallenstein cherished in his own youth—ideas which he then sees personified in the young Max.

For he stood beside me, as in my youth.
He made me see reality as but a bad dream.

And conversely, Max speaks of his vision, in which he sees himself standing at Wallenstein's side:

Soon will his dismal realm come to an end!
O Blessed be the prince's earnest zeal,
He'll intertwine the olive branch i'th' laurel
And donate peace to a delighted world.
Then his great heart has nothing more to wish,
He has performed enough for his renown,
Can live now for himself and for his own.
To his estates he will retire. At Gitchin
He has a lovely seat, and Reichenberg
And Friedland Castle both lie happily—
Up to the Riesenberge foothills stretch
The hunting ranges of his wooded lands.
With his great drive for glorious creation,
Can he then unrestrainedly, freely comply.
As prince he can encourage all the arts
And give protection to all worthy things—
Can build, and plant and watch the stars above—
Yes, if his daring power cannot rest,
Then he may battle with the elements,
Divert a river, and blow up a rock
And clear an easy path for industry.
Our histories of war will then become
The stories told on lengthy winter nights—

Max paints a picture of what Wallenstein, in Schiller's view, envisioned for the future after the war's end. Had Wallenstein not, at some point in the play, articulated his vision to Max, then he would never have been able to win over the young man to his aims—and these were quite explicitly the ideas of the Peace of Westphalia, making the rivers navigable again, and rebuilding anew atop the war-scorched earth.

Over the course of the six years which Schiller devoted to *Wallenstein*, repeatedly interrupted by bouts of illness, he also continued to develop his aesthetic and dramatic theory in a series of groundbreaking essays, including the *Aesthetical Letters*, "On Grace and Dignity," the "Kallias Letters," "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry," a critical review of Bürger's poetry, and more. One basic conviction that grew in Schiller's mind over this period, was the necessity to "idealize" his dramatic material and his *dramatis personae*.

For Schiller, the challenge for the Classical poet, lies in extracting and refining the human being's innermost core, as bequeathed to him from childhood on—to liber-

ate the pure individual from everything accidental and detrimental, and thus to portray the person in possession of his or her full ethical potential.

One of the most hideous manipulations practiced by the advocates of *Regietheater*, has been to trivialize this concept of "idealization" into something closer to "embellishment," or into transporting the object of interest into a misty utopian realm, a sort of artificial aesthetic superstructure—an ideological quirk on Schiller's part, which is best ignored. But by eliminating this "idealization" from the production, they are also removing precisely what is essential and special about Schiller. Because "idealization" means nothing other than to elevate pure nature to the level of what is universal and necessary, bringing it to the level of the sublime, and addressing the universal within every listener. Only in this way, Schiller thought, can the poet be certain of the effect he will have on the audience; and if he does not have that certainty, he does not deserve to call himself an artist.

Hans-Günter Heyme's contrary view, was that anyone who wanted idealization, should by all means sit through a two-evening-long performance; but that, personally, he was only interested in portraying a power-hungry Wallenstein, destined to failure in a war which is supposed to get on our nerves—and which indeed does so, when the whole stage blows up. But what is the effect when Max, instead of revealing the ideal of postwar peace as Wallenstein's better side, appears as a despairing youth who sees no way out, and who can no longer endure the situation? All that remains in the *Regietheater* productions, is hatred, ugliness, cynicism, hopelessness—and, when all is said and done, indifference. The horrors of war have never succeeded in preventing warfare, but a vision of peace can indeed do so, and Max says this quite clearly:

For, where should the peace begin,
If not in the war?

The alternative is a state of permanent warfare, which the oligarchical tendency has always preferred anyway, as a means of consolidating their power.

The poet must offer a vision of a more beautiful humanity, because who else could provide this? He has to think like Plato's philosopher-king, who embodies the unity of the greatest wisdom with the most refined sense of justice. Schiller says this quite clearly in "On Bürger's Poems":

All that the poet can give us, is his own personality; it must therefore be worthy of being presented to the scrutiny of society and posterity. The task of ennobling that personality to the highest degree, of refining it into the purest, most splendid humanity, is the first and most important business he must address, before he may venture to stir members of

the elite. There can be no greater value to his poetry, than that it is the perfected imprint of a truly interesting disposition of a truly interesting, perfected mind.

Only when the poet, at least during those moments when he composes, and the director as he directs, and the actor as he acts, is able to personify his species-existence, can his play, his poetry, have the beneficent effect which Schiller speaks about in his “Theater” essay. The *Regietheater* proponents are unable and unwilling to do that, because their intentions lie elsewhere. But Schiller places nothing less than this heavy responsibility squarely onto the artist’s shoulders. In his poem “Die Künstler” (“The Artists”),* he says:

The dignity of Man into your hands is given,
Its keeper be!
It sinks with you! With you it will be risen!

Now, the dignity of man has fared quite badly in the hands of the *Regietheater* proponents, and in the hands of the poor actors who have been forced to work under their dictates in order to eke out a living. (There are, admittedly, a few exceptions, such as Maria Becker.) Their personalities have decidedly *not* been worthy of being presented to the world. But when we consider the political connections enjoyed by such people as Adorno and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, then we must conclude that, in a perversion of Schiller’s preface to *The Bride of Messina*, they were aiming not at a “temporary play,” but rather, by seeking to eliminate precisely what makes Schiller special—i.e., his determination to raise his audience to the level of the sublime—they are doing their part in the effort to “make men really and in fact *unfree*.”

What we need to do today, is precisely what Adorno and his consorts wanted to prevent, namely, to convey the idea of the sublime into the political domain. Because it is only on that level, that any way out of today’s existential crisis, comes into view. Political life in Germany today is

* See translation, page 49, this issue.

the best demonstration for Schiller’s thesis that, “In the narrow sphere, the mind becomes more narrow.” And who today would dispute the fact that we are once again dealing with the “momentous issues facing humanity”? And there is no better teacher of how to think and act on the level of the sublime, than Schiller.

The 200th anniversary of the death of our beloved poet, is a good occasion to chase the *Regietheater* rabble out of the temple of culture, to boycott their productions, or else to give our vegetable farms a good incentive to expand their tomato crops. And if the PISA students, or Mr. Jensen still don’t understand Schiller at that point, then we can only echo what Wilhelm Furtwängler would tell his orchestra when they bungled a piece they were rehearsing, “Once more, from the top!”:

All preceding ages, without knowing it or aiming at it, have striven to bring about our human century. Ours are all the treasures which diligence and genius, reason and experience, have finally brought home in the long age of the world. Only from history will you learn to set a value on the goods from which habit and unchallenged possession so easily deprive our gratitude; priceless, precious goods, upon which the blood of the best and the most noble clings, goods which had to be won by the hard work of so many generations! And who among you, in whom a bright spirit is conjugated with a feeling heart, could bear this high obligation in mind, without a silent wish being aroused in him to pay that debt to coming generations which he can no longer discharge to those past? A noble desire must glow in us to also make a contribution out of *our means* to this rich bequest of truth, morality, and freedom which we received from the world past, and which we must surrender once more, richly enlarged, to the world to come, and, in this eternal chain which winds itself through all human generations, to make firm our ephemeral existence. However different the destinies may be which await you in society, all of you can contribute something to this! A path toward immortality has been opened up to every achievement, to the true immortality, I mean, where the deed lives and rushes onward, even if the name of the author should remain behind. (*from* “What Is, and To What End Do We Study, Universal History?”)

1. In the year 2000, the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, issued a report on the results of the past decades’ educational reform, or dumbing-down policy, in Germany. According to PISA, one-quarter of all 15-year-olds were categorized as a “risk group,” whose knowledge of mathematics was insufficient to hold a job. Forty-two percent had never read a book for pleasure. This result also meant that many teenagers do not have even an inkling of Germany’s Classical tradition, and that they cannot even recognize the names Lessing, Mendelssohn, Schiller, or Heine.

2. For the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), see Steven P.

Meyer and Jeffrey Steinberg, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom: Making the Postwar World Safe for Fascist ‘*Kulturkampf*,’” in *Children of Satan* (Leesburg, Virginia: Lyndon LaRouche PAC, 2004), along with other articles reprinted from the pamphlet “Children of Satan III: The *Sexual* Congress for Cultural Freedom.”

3. On Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School, see Michael J. Minnicino, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and ‘Political Correctness,’” *Fidelio*, Winter 1992 (Vol. I, No. 1), and “The Nazi-Communist Roots of Post-Modernism,” *Fidelio*, Summer 1993 (Vol. II, No. 2).