

Who Was von Schiller?  
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Near the end of the 32<sup>nd</sup> degree, the newly made Master of the Royal Secret is escorted to the balustrade in the East and reminded that he has now heard the Holy Doctrine and learned the Royal Secret. He is then told “When you can read the Grand Design from the Book of Nature, the world will indeed become a most holy place to you.” “Then, my Brother, you will greet the world with the hand of fellowship and say, as did the poet von Schiller, “You millions, I embrace you! This kiss is for the world at large!”

So what is that all about? Who was von Schiller and what is that about a kiss? The German poet Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller was born in 1759 and, while trained as a physician, became a significant German dramatist, poet and literary theorist, as well as friend and colleague of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the popularly known author of *Faust* and many other works of the period. Schiller and Goethe, together, founded the Weimar Theater, the leading theater in Germany in that day. In addition to his own plays, Schiller adapted the works of Goethe and others for the stage. In recognition of his many philosophical papers, poems and plays, he was ennobled in 1802 by the Duke of Weimar and was known thereafter as Johann Christoph Friedrich **von** Schiller.

It is possible that you are already familiar with at least one of the poems written by von Schiller. He wrote the poem, *An die Freude*, in 1785, and soon thereafter Ludwig van Beethoven began planning to put the poem to music. However, this work was not completed until 1824, almost 20 years after the death of von Schiller. *An die Freude* was the basis for the last movement of Beethoven’s 9<sup>th</sup>, or Choral, Symphony. We know the poem by its English title “Ode to Joy.”

\*\*\* play music \*\*\*

The part we refer to in our degree, is from the final stanza and finale of the Choral Symphony:

Be embraced, you millions!  
This kiss for the whole world!  
Brothers, beyond the star-canopy  
Must a loving Father dwell.  
Do you bow down, you millions?  
Do you sense the Creator, world?  
Seek Him beyond the star-canopy!  
Beyond the stars must He dwell.

*(Finale repeats)* Be embraced, you millions!  
This kiss for the whole world!  
Brothers, beyond the star-canopy  
Must a loving Father dwell.  
Be embraced,

This kiss for the whole world!  
Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,  
Daughter of Elysium,  
Joy, beautiful spark of the gods.

Let me note that while not documented, many believe that both von Schiller and Beethoven were Freemasons. Schiller's coworker, Goethe, was clearly a Mason, and may well have been an influence on him, but Schiller's works may just as well have been a product of the philosophical and political thinking of this period of enlightenment. The same may be said of Beethoven, however many do conclude that there are sufficient indications that he was indeed our Brother Mason.

I would encourage each of you to read more about von Schiller and the many other significant authors, composers and philosophers of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when our Scottish Rite was developing.