



Trestleboard

February 2010

Culver City Foshay No. 467 F. & A. M .



FROM THE EAST

First, I would like to thank the Lodge for all the hard work and help in making the installation of officers an absolute success! I can't imagine it going any better than it did.

Now that everyone has been installed, at least for now, we must once again begin the most important work of the Lodge. We have many candidates waiting to receive the Degrees of Masonry and we want to be sure to provide them with the best experience possible. We have already practiced the opening and the closing of the Lodge and I feel we are looking sharp; however, it would be foolish for us to think we have nothing to learn as we inherit our new offices, appointments or stations in the line.

We are truly blessed to be members of the Culver City Foshay Lodge, especially at a time when the subject of Masonry is on the rise. New applicants are knocking at our doors and approaching our brethren with a desire to learn more and to become Masons. In fact, just the other night, while spending time with some of the brethren, a young man overheard that we were Masons and inquired how he might also become a Mason. He shared that his grandfather was a Shriner and that he had always wanted to become a Mason and felt guilty he had waited so long to ask or inquire. His contact information was taken and he was instructed to start attending our Stated Meeting dinners. I also instructed him to take time to get to know the brethren in the Lodge and that they need to get to know him. Once this has occurred, he can submit a petition for the degrees of Masonry and the process would begin.

The above story really hits on a fact that I have believed for a long time. I have learned that a man does not start his journey in the Lodge. A man begins his journey outside the Lodge when he comes across other Masons or when he is befriended by Masons who reveal to him a life that is worth looking into. When a non-Mason sees a group of brothers having a good time or hard at work in service to the community or simply setting a good example, he wants to be a part of that fellowship. Keep this in mind and let's work hard to have a good time this year while setting a good example for those around us. Let's take advantage of the fact that Freemasonry is a fraternity and let's live the fraternity life. Now when I say this, I am not referring to the Greek Letter fraternities at your local Universities, however, I am pointing out that we are a brotherhood and we should be having a good time while doing the work of the Lodge.

So, be ready for a great year as we have fun at unofficial brotherhood events that will be held throughout the year and also at official events like our Table Lodge. Think of new ways to enjoy service in our community and take pleasure in the work we do through our ritual as we teach the most important principles of our craft. Draw close to each other and bring our Masonic family in tight. This is my goal as the year unfolds. Let's work hard and play hard, but never lose focus on what the primary work of the Lodge really is...to initiate and create new Masons and as we do this, let's have fun!

Fraternally,
Jonathan P. Dilley, Worshipful Master



FROM THE WEST

The Light on The Staircase, part VI

Of all the subjects in the Staircase Lecture, music may seem the most unusual to the contemporary mind. The other six subjects deal expressly with communication and science and are clearly of practical value, while we tend to think of music as entertainment, a hobby, or a luxury that, however enjoyable, is not necessary. Take, for instance, our rituals: while they are usually accompanied by an organist, music does not seem to be a necessary component of Masonic lodge work.

To grasp the reason Masons revere music enough to include it on the Staircase, we must again return to our friends the ancient Greeks and the Pythagoreans. To the ancients, music was not just an enjoyable past time, but a technique to induce or alter emotion and thought. Commenting on the various scales known to the Greeks, Aristotle said:

The musical modes differ essentially from one another, and those who hear them are differently affected by each. Some of them make men sad and grave, like the so called Mixolydian; others enfeeble the mind, like the relaxed modes; another, again, produces a moderate or settled temper, which appears to be the peculiar effect of the Dorian; and the Phrygian inspires enthusiasm.

Music is not easily categorized as natural or artificial. Musical-sounding tones are produced in many ways in the natural world, from bird songs to the sounds produced by striking tree branches or stones. However, human constructions, such as bone flutes with holes at carefully measured intervals, are needed to produce true music by arranging tones into scales. Nevertheless, the properties of scales cannot be altered by human intervention—our intelligence allows us to create instruments that can produce musical scales, but these scales are embedded in nature, unchangeable. Whatever the origin and nature of music, its greatest fascination to the ancients was its ability to affect the human mind. Because of this property, as soon as humans could produce music, it was utilized in religious rituals.

The Pythagoreans took an analytical approach to music. They used a monochord (a single string instrument with a movable bridge that could change the length of the string) to conduct some of the first scientific experiments in human history. They learned that whatever the original length of the string, by cutting it in half, the tone would be increased a full octave. They further discovered that other precise ratios along the string, such as 3:2, 4:3, 9:8 could produce specific notes in predictable, unchangeable ways. (It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss musical theory in detail; however, those interested might consult the website <http://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/sta/sta19.htm> for a complete explanation of the basics.)

As we discussed in previous articles, the Pythagoreans gave divine attributes to numbers, and they saw the mathematical nature of music as proof that numbers were spiritually embedded in the universe itself. To them, our emotional, subjective reaction to music demonstrated that humans could “hear” the divine order and nature of the world. Their amazement only grew with further discoveries that explained harmony and discord—the tendency of several simultaneous notes in the right combination to produce pleasant sounds, while other combinations were jarring or irritating. Although they perhaps never understood the profoundness of their discoveries, the Pythagoreans uncovered the importance of wavelength in physics. Sounds come to our ears in successive waves, the greater the number of waves per second, the higher the pitch, or note, that we hear. Essentially, our brains “count” the rate at which sound waves enter our ears and perceive that information in tones, some pleasant, some not. Much later, it was discovered that we interpret light in much the same way—our brains help us “see” the wavelengths of light by assigning different colors to ranges of wavelengths. The Pythagoreans were among the first to grasp that one of the wonders of humanity was that we interpreted the world’s raw data in subjective and emotional ways.

Over the centuries, the concept of musical scale was expanded to describe the universe as a whole. The notion of the “music of the spheres” suggested that the distances between the celestial spheres to which the planets and stars were affixed could be defined by a musical scale; in effect, the universe was a single gigantic monochord on which the gods, or God, played the music of creation. Sadly, perhaps, such elegant notions have been shown to be misguided by more modern science. Still, the general idea of a musical universe may be intuitively sound; we now know that gravity itself produces waves, as do all the particles that constitute matter and energy. In fact, a branch of physics called “String Theory” suggests that all subatomic particles are in reality vibrations in a complex field of dimensions.

Of course, Masons value music for more reasons than its scientific value. The essences of music--rhythm, melody, and harmony--work together to produce an infinite world of harmony, symmetry, and balance. Musical compositions have had the power to move civilizations. It's no wonder that many of history's great composers were also Masons: Sibelius, Liszt, Souza, Haydn, Grofe, George Cohan, Irving Berlin, Gilbert and Sullivan, Mozart, and of course Beethoven, who, in adapting Friedrich Schiller's great poem “Ode to Joy” into his Ninth Symphony, gave us the greatest musical expression of the ideals of Freemasonry:

Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
We enter fire-inspired,
Heavenly, thy sanctuary.

Thy magic reunites those
Whom stern custom has parted;
All men will become brothers
Under thy gentle wing.

The next time you take part in a Masonic ritual, take note of how musical it seems in its wording, movements, and pacing and reflect on how, by symbolically incorporating music in our practices, we honor its grand scientific, emotional, and humanistic history.

Fraternally,
Curtis S Shumaker, Senior Warden

Chaplain's Prayer

Great Architect of the Universe, show us how to take our lives in their rude and natural state and dress, square, and polish them so that we might become disciplined and educated. Help us to master our destiny. Enable us to uncover the Perfect Ashlar within us by removing the superfluous material which encrusts our lives. Teach us how best to perfect our spiritual edifice. Amen.

Ed C., Chaplain



FROM THE SOUTH

From the Meridian

From the Southern most seat of the Lodge, representative of the midi or meridian sun, one cannot help it but to realize the significance of all what that lofty seat implies: Rectitude in the sense that discipline of mind will necessarily precede the height of success; and balance, in the sense that half the day has expired and half has yet to commence, and that the products of our labours will weigh one way or another on the scale that determines their value. At such a pinnacle, it is possible also to perceive what one has amassed, for good or bad, and thus to determine the effects one's product will have, according to its placement within the world, as surely as the sun descends beneath the horizon. Will the effects of our labours perish forever for lack of worth, or will they reemerge in another day in perpetuity? Furthermore, rectitude of mind tells us that the worth of some things is potential and not recognizable until their time has come.

From that position I accept with great appreciation the confidence and trust of my brethren who have placed me there. I appreciate the unanimity of opinion that has made my service as such transitional, on behalf of one whose time is close at hand, who is beloved of his brethren and whose spirit is at one with the brotherhood that surrounds him in gratitude and joy for service past and yet to come. Our eyes have penetrated beyond the veil of potential and have recognized what is truly imminent, the plumb being exchanged between one hand and another which is worthy.

Fraternally,
Merrick Rees Hamer, PM,
Junior Warden

