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MASONRY AND MUSIC

by

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Music, one of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, has always had a place in Freemasonry. The first Book of Constitutions of the premier (or Moderns) Grand Lodge of England, compiled by Dr. James Anderson and published in 1723, included four songs. Subsequent editions and also the various Pocket Companions published in the mid-eighteenth century, all contain a section of similar songs.

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As most of these were set to popular airs, one imagines that they were performed on Masonic occasions in much the same manner as domestic music, i.e. brethren sitting around the table with song books before them, often taking the note from one brother and singing unaccompanied. Toasting was an integral part of the rehearsing of ritual Lectures in Lodge at this time and many examples of songs for particular toasts survive, the present Masters' song and Entered Apprentices' songs being of this type. It is not until the latter part of the 18th century that we find reference in Lodge Minutes to the use of organs or other key-board instruments in Lodge. Bands of instrumentalists are known to have taken part in processions of the Annual Grand Feast until such processions were proscribed by Grand Lodge in the 1740's. The manuscript score of the orchestral music used at the dedication of the first Freemasons' Hall in 1776 is still preserved in the Grand Lodge Library.

Music continued to play a part in Masonic ceremonies throughout the 19th century. However, the matter of vocal music, in particular the introduction of hymns and anthems into Lodge ceremonies, became the subject of discussion in Grand Lodge in 1875. The general consensus of opinion appears to have been that too many innovations were being made by the introduction of such music and that the use of music from religious services was contrary to the non-sectarian spirit of Freemasonry. As a result, a ruling on the use of vocal music was made by Grand Lodge, and this was re-stated in 1903 and 1916. Finally, in 1963, Grand Lodge ruled:- " it has never objected to the use of Opening and Closing Hymns, the National Anthem and Hymns, Responses and Anthems at Consecrations; but care must be taken that vocal music is such that it is not identified exclusively with a particular form of divine worship and that it does not offend the susceptibilities of a particular creed, since Masonry is open to the adherents of every faith which requires a belief in the Supreme Being."

I was fortunate last year, during a visit to Great Britain, in being able to attend several Lodge Meetings. Processional music was played during the entry of the Worshipful Master and his Officers, I found this interesting and impressive. When the Master and Officers reached their stations an opening Ode was sung. I have a tape, which I shall now play, it is not a master piece but gives an idea of what I am speaking of. It has been said music associated with early meetings of Fraternal bodies has not on the whole generated much interest on the part of Masonic or musical historians, much of it being or considered of not artistic merit. An exception to this has to be the Works of Mozart, Sibelius, Haydn and Beethoven to mention a few.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg in 1756. Most of his early

life was spent travelling around Europe studying and giving concerts as a child prodigy. From 1776 - 1781 he was Court Musician to the Archbishop of Salzburg. After a quarrel with his employer in 1781 he moved to Vienna where he was to remain until his death, at the early age of 35 in 1791.

Mozart was initiated into Freemasonry on the 14 of December 1784 in Lodge ZurWolthatigkeit, Vienna. Soon afterward, he introduced his father and is believed to have been instrumental in introducing Haydn into Freemasonry. In addition to attendance at his own lodge he was a frequent visitor to other Vienna Lodges. He began composing music for Masonic occasions in 1785 and was to continue in this field until his death, his last completed work being a Masonic cantata. Mozart's music includes works composed especially for Masonic Meetings, such as Masons Joy, Odes for Opening and Closing Lodge, Freemason Little Cantata and Masonic Funeral Music which was composed for the "Lodge of Sorrow' upon the death of Brothers Duke George Von Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Count Franz Esterhazy in 1785. His opera the Magic Flute has been associated with Freemasonry, one can pick out certain similarities, such as 3 doors, Reason, Nature, Wisdom in the Opera, A Test of Silence - and finally Light over Darkness. Johann Emanuel Schikaneder, the Librettist of Magic Flute and also a Mason, sang the Part of Papageno in the original cast, which was First Performed, September 30, 1791 in Vienna.

Sibelius, Jean - 1865 - 1957

As Finland had been under Russian Domination for most of the 19th century, Freemasonry had been banned from 1822 until the nation once more became independent after the First World War. On 11.

18th August 1922, Suomi Lodge No. 1 Helsinki, (Warranted by the Grand Lodge of New York and founding Lodge of the Grand Lodge of Finland) was Consecrated and some twenty-seven prominent Finnish citizens, including Sibelius, were passed through all three degrees of Craft Masonry.

For a number of years Sibelius was Grand Organist of the Grand Lodge of Finland and in 1926, he was persuaded to write down some of the music he had played extempore during meetings of Suomi Lodge. This resulted in what is usually referred to in catalogues as the Musique Religieuse Op. 113, commonly known to Masons as the "Masonic Ritual Music". Originally arranged for small orchestra, the nine pieces were fully orchestrated and performed at a meeting of Suomi Lodge on January 5, 1927. In 1950, Sibelius completely revised the original nine pieces and added a further three including the setting of Masonic words to the hymn melody from his symphonic poem 'Finlandia'. The 1950 edition is arranged for tenor soloist, small choir and piano, organ or orchestra. The copyright of the work now belongs to the Grand Lodge of New York which publishes the vocal score.

Most of you have heard of John Phillip Sousa. His father's name was Samuel Ochs. Sousa got his name from using Samuel Och U.S.A. S.O.U.S.A.

I have a few items on the tape which I will play, you may find them interesting.

Finished and we all shall close with the Masters' Song.