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Hawke's Bay Research Lodge No. 305

Music, Musicians and Masonry

An Address given by VWBro Owen Brown, GLec,
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I could say that this lecture is in part a tribute to the late VWBro Victor Jones, whose lecture on Mozart I have quoted in part. Victor and I had more in common than a love of music and an organist's stool. I found that he and I were born in the same part of Southland and in the same month of the same year. So I have to confess that I have a personal interest in this topic.

I have been my lodge's organist for seventeen years and was honoured to be appointed as Grand Organist in 1999. When the organist of the Lodge is invested, he is informed that his jewel, the lyre, is the emblem of Music, one of the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, the study of which is inculcated into the Fellowcraft degree. Freemasonry has always availed itself of the aid of Music in the performance of its ceremonies and I think all will agree that it adds to the impressiveness and solemnity of the occasion. From earliest times primitive man was interested in music - his history, poetry and drama were told in folk song, legend, ballad and saga, accompanied by the basic instruments, the plucked string or the simple flute. We can imagine the inspired shepherd watching his flocks in solitude and experimenting with pipe and harp. David, the psalm singer, first won the attention of Saul with his music on the harp.

What is music? Answers range from the cynical - Dr Johnson, *Music is the costliest of rackets*, or Shaw, *Music is the brandy of the damned* - to the visionary - Carlyle, *A kind of unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the infinite*, or Confucius, *Music provides a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without*.

Von Schelling wrote *Architecture is frozen Music*, and here we come close to its value in the early Freemason composer, Ralph Vaughan-Williams, he defined music as being *A reaching out to the ultimate reality by means of ordered sound*. At the back of this statement is the concept of vision, a quest, a searching for something beyond us and which we wish to contact, and that is a Masonic Concept.

In Masonry we are searching for the lost secrets, the Lost Word. We are building a temple - ostensibly King Solomon's - but in reality we are building the Temple of our own body and spirit which needs something outside and beyond itself to be completed. That divine quest is partly served by music in the lodge room - not only the odes, but ceremonial music which can convey joy or sorrow but especially calm and dignity.

Many great musicians have served in lodges with distinction. Mozart is best known, but others include Haydn, probably Beethoven, Thomas Anne (who wrote *Rule Britannia*) and Samuel Wesley, a son of Charles Wesley. Wesley was the first Grand Organist in the United Grand Lodge of England, when the post was instituted by the Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex, in 1815. Both W.S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan were masons and Sullivan was Grand Organist in 1887. Notable as a musician, is Jean Sibelius (1865 -1957), national composer of Finland. He was initiated, passed and raised all in one day in Lodge Suomi No.1 in Helsinki. Later he was commissioned by the Grand Lodge of Finland to compose Lodge Music which was, and still is, performed in lodges there. He was Grand Organist for many years.

But the two best-known Masonic musicians and composers must be Mozart and Haydn. Joseph Haydn was initiated in 1785 at the age of 52. His friend and fellow musician, Mozart, who had himself joined

the same lodge just a year earlier, had hoped to be present but was engaged with a concert performance on the day. Of interest is that one month after Haydn's initiation, Leopold Mozart (father of the great Wolfgang) also joined the Craft. At this time Freemasonry in Austria was suffering a decline due to the strong opposition from the ruling powers. Indeed, Haydn had little or no chance of furthering his Masonic career, as his mother lodge (True Unity) was closed only ten months after his initiation. Also, France was in the throes of the Revolution. Because of pressure on his time at the Court of Prince Esterhazy (his employer), combined with the scarcely veiled opposition to Freemasonry by those on whom Haydn depended for his living, he took but little part in ceremonies - his connection being mostly social - and he resigned in 1787.

Three years later, on the death of the Prince, Haydn was free to leave and he went first to Vienna. Here he met another musician, Johann Saloman, German-born but living in England, and who was a member of the famous Pilgrim Lodge No 258, London. It was Saloman who persuaded Haydn to visit England. Before leaving, he met and dined with Mozart for the last time. We read that their parting was emotional, for Mozart was convinced that they would never see each other again. In this, his premonition was right, for one year later, aged only 35, Mozart died in Vienna while Haydn was still in London.

His friend Saloman arranged a series of concerts for Haydn, one of which was a magnificent occasion held in the Freemasons' Hall by the Academy of Ancient Music. On his return to Austria he met a young musician named Beethoven who came to Vienna to study with Haydn. One biographer of Haydn refers to the Masonic message of his work *Creation* and compares it with *The Magic Flute* of Mozart and *Fidelio* of Beethoven, saying "both by Masonic composers", but there is no real evidence that Beethoven ever joined the Craft. One of Haydn's most enduring works is his *Emperor Hymn* as the National Anthem for Austria.

Now to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - his place as composer and musician probably exceeds that of Haydn, yet his life was tragically short. Born twenty-four years after Haydn, he died eighteen years before him. It is not my task to praise his wonderful orchestral and piano works, but some of his music is specifically related to Freemasonry.

Born in Salzburg, he showed musical talent of an early age but could not find an outlet there, so he went to Vienna and it was there he became a Freemason. Freemasonry thrived in Austria in the 1780's. This may seem strange after two papal bulls against the craft, plus the fact that the Empress Maria Teresa, who reigned till 1780, was opposed to Masonry. However her son, known as Joseph II, was a man of liberal ideas and favoured the craft. He was never a mason, but under his guiding and very liberal hand, it flourished. So it was fortunate for Mozart and for Freemasonry that he came to Vienna at this time. He soon noticed that many of his friends belonged to Lodges of masons, and realised more and more that the teachings of this order agreed with his own philosophy of a life to be lived in due order, on the square and on the level, and under God.

Accordingly, on 14th December 1784, he was initiated in Lodge Charity. He took his Fellowcraft Degree in January 1785 in True Concord Lodge, whose Master was Ignaz von Born, referred to as father of Viennese masonry. Von Born was a scientist and had received a knighthood from his friend Joseph II for finding a safer and more economical method of working metal ores. Later that year, Mozart was delighted to see his father initiated into that same lodge, and we have seen that Haydn too joined that year. Mozart composed a cantata for a special meeting of the lodge to honour von Born being made a knight. His Masonic Funeral Music is one of the most deeply-felt works. It was composed for a Lodge of Sorrow, held at Lodge Newly Crowned Hope, a lodge formed by the emperor's decree, on the death of two distinguished brethren: one was a major-general in the Austrian army and a brother of Queen Charlotte, wife of George III of England; the other was Count Esterhazy, of that family who for so long were patrons of art and enabled musicians, especially, to live in grand houses in return for their composing and their performances. Of this funeral music, it is written: *One can find in its sixty-nine bars all the symbols of masonry - parallel thirds, slurs, suspensions, knocking rhythms.*

In November 1791 a new Masonic building was to be dedicated in Vienna, and Mozart wrote, though with increasing illness, what had to be a work of joyous celebration. He conducted it himself and this was his final performance - he died the next month. This ceremony was possibly the last great Masonic event in Austria before a new conservative emperor Francis II extinguished the Craft in that country.

An even greater work of Mozart associated with early masonry was also first produced in Vienna and just before the composer's death. This was the opera *The Magic Flute*. The libretto was written by a friend, Emanuel Schikaneder, also a Freemason, and the theme of the opera is said to symbolise initiation into Masonic rites and ceremonies and persecution from the political and religious powers of the day.

If there is a link between and among these Masonic musicians it is their basic musical gifts allied to a dedication to their Craft, which continued despite formidable difficulties of political opposition, family disappointments and ill-health. Their memory deserved to be treasured, along with, dare I say it, music generally in the Lodge.