



NUGGET

‘I appoint you my DC’

Summary: A homily on the role of the Director of Ceremonies and an admonition to those who feel it their right to criticise and advise; without being asked!

The other evening some old hands were reflecting on Directors of Ceremony of yesteryear who, when we were the new boys, would shout, threaten, and bully (rather like a liverish National Service Drill Sergeant) in order to encourage a perfect ritual. Indeed, thirty years ago, a Deputy Pro Grand Master addressing the Director of Ceremonies, snapped, *‘Start it all again’*, when the Second Degree Salutations went awry. No Director of Ceremonies wants that to happen twice in his life-time!

Even today, a new Brother who, at a recent meeting, had been given apparently contradictory advice about his ritual by two senior Past Masters, asked openly, *‘Which one should I listen to, without appearing to upset the other?’*. This poses a number of questions. Is perfect accuracy in ritual still an essential goal in Freemasonry? Would its attainment justify marring the evening of a fellow Mason (and indeed of others within ear shot) for his perceived error?

May we accept that the ethos of Freemasonry flows on the one hand from Constitutions, convention and a centuries-long tradition and, on the other, from a Brotherly courtesy, warmth and kindness that cannot be taught? These twins should form the firm foundation for all our Masonic thinking. It follows, as we are a purely voluntary organisation, that for reasons both of convention and courtesy it is not for any of us to openly criticise another Brother - *‘He who is without sin, cast the first stone, etc’*.

Returning to the ritual; during his year the Master will normally appoint senior Masons to oversee all the key functions... and this includes the ritual. A wise Worshipful Master does not try to tell any of them how to do their job; and neither should other Lodge members! Thoughtful Past Masters will allow each Officer to discharge his responsibilities to the best of his ability, given that each is normally very able, not least the Director of Ceremonies.

The Director of Ceremonies has been given full responsibility for directing the Lodge Ceremonies and the Lodge expects that, rather like the Conductor of an Orchestra, he will spell out in rehearsal those standards of consistency and accuracy required to create a performance of which we can all take great pride. To discharge this responsibility properly it is therefore for the Director of Ceremonies, and for the Director of Ceremonies alone to advise his team on standards, remedial errors and necessary changes. Should other Brethren differ strongly then these comments can best be expressed within the silent walls of the Lodge Committee Room; what is said there, stays there.



The Director of Ceremonies does not have it all his own way of course. A good Director of Ceremonies may need to advise, cajole, encourage, enthuse, perhaps tease, but in seeking to achieve his standards he should never admonish publicly. He should always keep in mind Freemasonry is recreational and that we are all volunteers. Remember too, to criticise a performer, also criticises the Director of Ceremonies own standards and possibly the Master who appointed him; so, let us all be cautious. Thoughtless words may hurt the feelings of more than one person.

Interestingly the members of Lodges of Instruction often elect a Preceptor and his team to govern their affairs. The Master does not appoint them. This encourages Lodge members to accept kindly personal advice from the Preceptory team without rancor.

So there we have it. In today's Freemasonry we are all volunteers, doing our very best on a recreational night out. Even if the Old-Hands know the words and role to perfection, they should keep silent and leave it to the Director of Ceremonies and those especially appointed to run the show that evening and rather sit back and enjoy it.



Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings.

They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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