

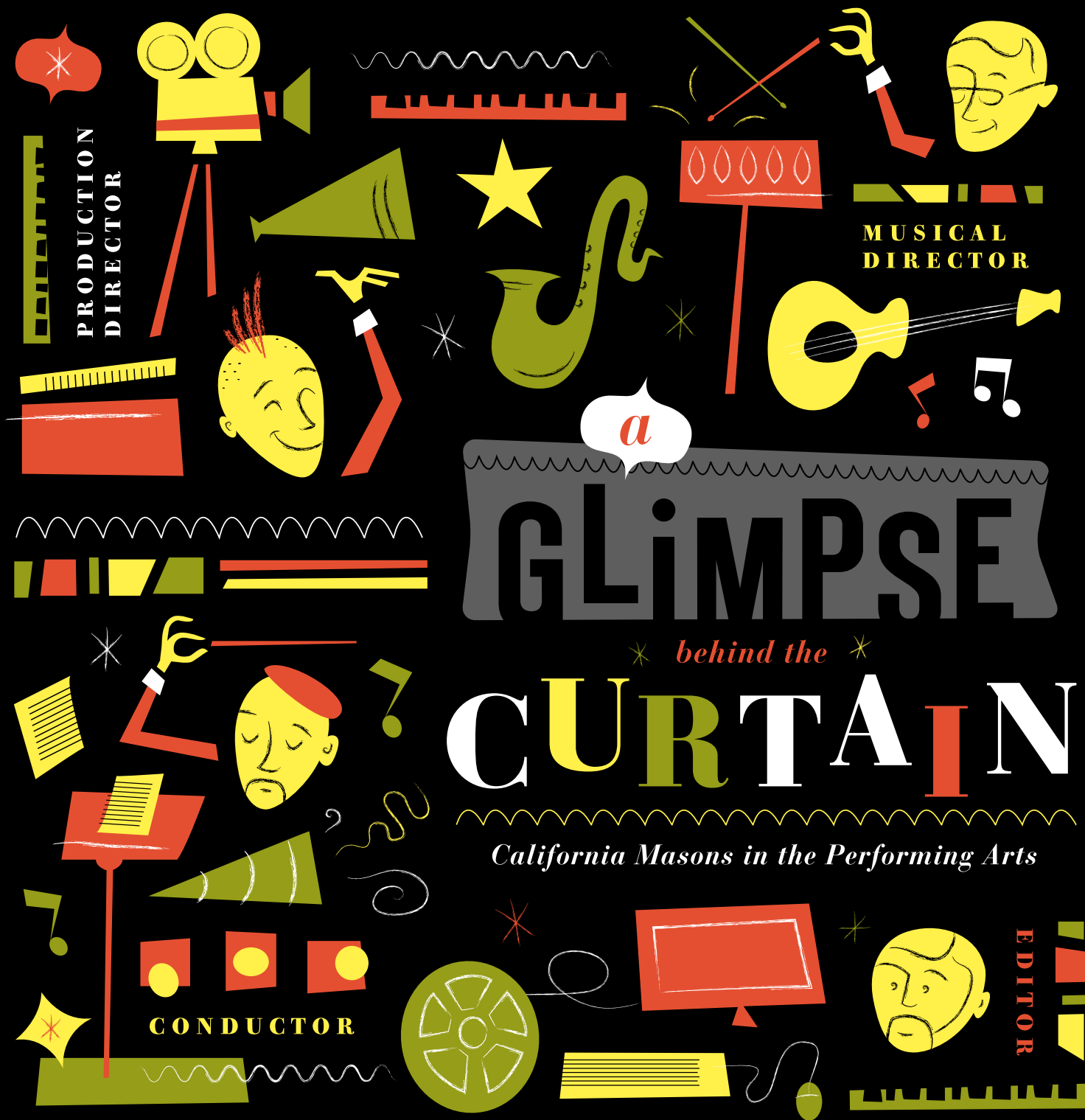
JUNE / JULY 2012



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“
Being a MASON,

I think I

SHiNE ✨

in a way that *others* don't.”

RUSSELL JAEGER

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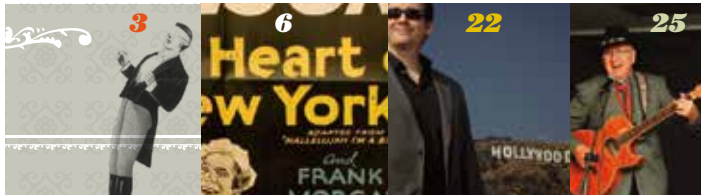
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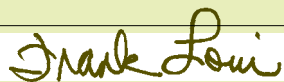
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EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Frank Loui, Grand Master



Do You Have What It Takes?

This month's issue is about the performing arts, and as you read through it, you'll notice a number of famous names – Roy Rogers, Harry Houdini, and Al Jolson, to name a few. You'll even learn some new ones, like Edward Abroms, Luciano Chessa, Russell Jaeger, and Gregory Sudmeier, who come from our current roster of California Masons. The Golden State has always been bursting at the borders with talent, and as this issue reminds us, so is our fraternity.

Yet, when I sat down to write this message, I have to admit, I was stumped. I have no experience backstage in the performing arts; I have only ever been a spectator. I admire the individuals behind the curtain – just think of everything they contribute to our culture! But beyond praising their talent, I wasn't sure what I could say.

And that's when it struck me: It requires a lot of passion and commitment to “make it” in the performing arts. Whether in film, music, or on the stage, the arts are competitive. You have to be absolutely certain you want to pursue a career in them, because it will require all of your energy and focus. In other words, you have to be willing to devote yourself 100 percent to your art. That takes courage. It takes sacrifice.

That's something I *can* relate to. We all can. Think about what it takes to “make it” in Masonry: If we really want Masonry to change us – if we want to participate in lodge in a meaningful way – we need that same commitment, passion, and willingness to make sacrifices.

Every single day, we need to remember our goals. We need to resist the temptation to do the easy thing when we are capable of doing what's right (but perhaps not so easy) instead.

The good news is that in Masonry, we have a truly amazing resource as we work towards these goals: We have each other. We are a family in the most important sense of the word, and we support each other as we strive to be the best men we can be.

My theme for the year is *Connect – Communicate – Commit*. Remember, no matter how consumed you may become with your work or individual pursuits, the lodge is a place to reconnect with your fraternal family and with your community. By *connecting* with your brothers, by *communicating* your goals to be a better man, and by *committing* to help your brothers with theirs, you will enjoy a new depth in your fraternal experience.

In fact, just the act of committing to “make it” as a Mason will enrich your life and make you a better man. It's done so for our members for centuries, and it will continue to do so for centuries to come.

Do you have what it takes? ♦

INTO THE HEART OF THE CRAFT

THE EVOLUTION OF RITUAL DRAMA PROVIDES A GLIMPSE INTO THE INNER-WORKINGS OF MASONRY

by Heather Boerner

A man enters. He is blindfolded. He steps into a room – but it's different than the way it usually looks, rearranged in a methodical manner before he arrived. It is both lodge room and Solomon's Temple. He is both a modern man – a banker or realtor or teacher – and Hiram Abiff. His trusted brothers are no longer his brothers. They are Solomon, Hiram, King of Tyre. And, most frighteningly, they are the ruffians.

The mood is somber. Apprehension coils in his back. Despite knowing his fate, he steps toward it, determined to move from the profane and into the heart of the craft.

"The purpose of ritual drama is to cause a change in a person," says Adam Kendall, collections manager at the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry. "When the candidate is in the right state of mind, you can feel the tenseness. He's not super coiled, but he is apprehensive. There is the laying on of hands. There is a transfer of energy. In the third degree, there is the use of touch and breath. This is part of the inner workings of ritual. That is how the mind becomes receptive, through fear and anticipation and energy. It's a feeling all around; voices out of nowhere. This is how we learn."

This is the heart of Masonry: ritual drama. Through the ritual, brothers are transported from present to past, from temporal to ineffable. As they work their way through the line, they learn every nuance of the story of Hiram Abiff, and assimilate its meaning and lessons.

Just as the ritual transforms men, so has the form of ritual evolved over the years. Up until the 1870s, Masons in the blue lodge conducted their degree work in business clothes, with Masonic aprons enough to transport them to another

time and place. Twenty years later, writes William D. Moore in "Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes," Masons started using costumes in their ritual dramas. By the 1920s, scores of companies had popped up to cater to the need for Masonic regalia, props, and backdrops.

What's more, circuses like Ringling Bros., whose owners were all Masons, created elaborate circus pageants featuring characters in the Masonic ritual, but with added elephants, lions, and dancing girls. Meanwhile, the Scottish Rite moved from traditional lodge rooms to specially constructed theaters, employing more costumes and turning the initiate from a participant in the ritual to an audience who received degrees en masse.

How did ritual drama change so much in just a few decades? The answer lies as much in society's relationship to entertainment, theater, and gender as it does in the needs of the brotherhood.

Three threads of change

It's hard to imagine today, with the near-constant access to television, music, radio, and email, but in the early 19th century, public entertainment was sparse, and theater a rare thing. Likewise, moralistic attitudes about theater meant Americans may not have visited theaters even if they had been available, suggests Kenneth L. Ames in "The Lure of the Spectacular," in *Theatre of the Fraternity*.

Continued next page

“But during the second half of the (19th) century,” he writes, “theatres became local institutions, and theatrical presentations, both amateur and professional, attracted large, eclectic audiences.”

At the same time, in the mid-19th century, spheres that had heretofore been male bastions were being infiltrated by women: The arts, the church, and the theater “were all feminized to varying degrees,” writes Ames. The Masonic ritual drama, however, stayed staunchly by men and for men. Ames claims that the growth in fraternal lodges was a reaction in part to the feminization of formerly male strongholds. To claim a part of the theater just for men, they turned to their ritual, he explains.

But there was also one more thread that emerged at this time: modernization. The cultural obsession with the new was just materializing in the late 19th century. The advent of trains, steamships, cars, telephones, radios, movies, central heating, indoor plumbing – all of this proclaimed that the future was in innovation. Masonic ritual, meanwhile, “depended upon a form of melodrama that was becoming increasingly passé,” claims Ames.

“What had seemed adequate or even impressive in the past began to appear second-rate and even unacceptable by the

late 19th and early 20th century,” he writes. “Although the ritual could not easily be changed without overhauling the entire structure of the fraternity, it could be packaged more effectively.”

Explosion of interest

That packaging, then, came in the form of costumes, lighting, and, for the Scottish Rite, a move to the stage. The change had an immediate and overwhelming impact: For most of the 19th century, the Scottish Rite had 10,000 to 15,000 members. By 1927, says Mary Ann Clawson, Ph.D., in her article in the journal *Heredom*, membership grew to nearly 600,000.

Brothers began expressing their love of ritual drama in theatrical terms. Edwin Booth, a 19th century Masonic actor, compared ritual drama to Shakespeare, explaining, “I have never, and nowhere, met tragedy so real, so sublime, so magnificent as the legend of Hiram. To be a worshipful master, and to throw my whole soul into that work, with the candidate for my audience and the lodge for my stage, would be a greater personal distinction than to receive the plaudits of people in the theaters of the world.”

Back to the words

Still, the core of the ritual drama is the story and the lessons it teaches, told in the poetic language of the 19th century, says Kendall.

“Any ritual like this is a psychodrama that transforms the candidate,” he says. “Craft lodge is a personal experience, a localized drama. You cannot take back what you give to that man. If it’s not handled with care, it can affect his entire experience.” ✧

THIS IS THE HEART

of Masonry:

RITUAL DRAMA

THROUGH *THE* RITUAL

Brothers are transported

FROM

PRESENT to PAST,

» FROM «

TEMPORAL to INEFFABLE



THE LODGE OF THE ARTS

IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY, A GROUP OF MUSICIANS IN NEW YORK FORMED A NEW TYPE OF LODGE FOR MASONS IN THE PERFORMING ARTS TO CALL HOME

by *Vanessa Richardson*

New York City is home to Broadway, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and other world-famous places where artists of all stripes perform. So it follows naturally that it is also home to a Masonic lodge whose members work as entertainers and artists in those renowned venues. St. Cecile Lodge No. 568 has a rich history of famous members who have passed through its doors, and today's members represent the full spectrum of New York's performing arts. Like its members, the lodge's meetings are unique: In the city that never sleeps, St. Cecile Lodge holds its meetings during the daytime.

Chartered on January 10, 1865, St. Cecile Lodge was the first “entertainers’ daytime lodge” in Masonic history. Its founding members were 12 Masonic musicians who performed in regimental bands during the Civil War. When they returned to New York City after their enlistments to work in orchestras and vaudeville, the musicians found they could not continue attending lodge because their professions required them to work in the evening, during typical lodge hours. The group began to gather informally in the afternoon at a restaurant operated by a former musician.

In time, they approached R.W. Robert Holmes, then the New York deputy grand master, and explained their idea of a “daytime lodge,” with meetings to be held between noon and 8 p.m. Holmes promised his support, but when it came to choosing the lodge’s name, he initially disagreed with the founding members’ selection of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music and musicians. As a compromise, the founding members suggested St. Cecile – the French form of Cecilia and also the name of Holmes’ French-born wife.

Over the next 50 years, St. Cecile Lodge became the inspiration for many other daytime lodges across North America, as touring performers carried the message about New York’s unique “entertainers’ lodge” to their peers in other cities. By the 1920s, almost every major town in the U.S. – as well as London and Vancouver – where vaudeville troupes played could claim a daylight lodge. Stage artists, musicians, theatre employees, and those who worked late shifts in other industries – like newspapers, gathered together for meetings while the sun was up and before they had to report to work.

A home for artists

Located on the 12th floor of a historic high-rise on West 23rd Street and Sixth Avenue, St. Cecile was located right near the heart of Tin Pan Alley, where the music publishers and songwriters who dominated popular music in the late 19th century and early 20th century had their offices. “The heartland of New York City jazz during that time was right around our old building,” says Lodge Historian Kenneth Force, whose day job is director of the U.S. Armed Forces musical program.

Many of the artists who became members of St. Cecile are now artistic legends. Al Jolson of “Jazz Singer” fame joined in 1913, followed by Louis B. Mayer, head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios in its cinematic heyday. Harry Houdini, the renowned





magician and escape artist, was raised in the lodge in 1923, three years before his death. "He was buried by the lodge, which held a ceremony at his grave," says Force.

Other St. Cecile members who changed the face of film, television, and music include: "Birth of a Nation" director D.W. Griffith; William Paley, founder of Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS); composer Feder Grofé, who orchestrated George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue"; and Albert Von Tilzer, the musical composer of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

A resurgence in membership

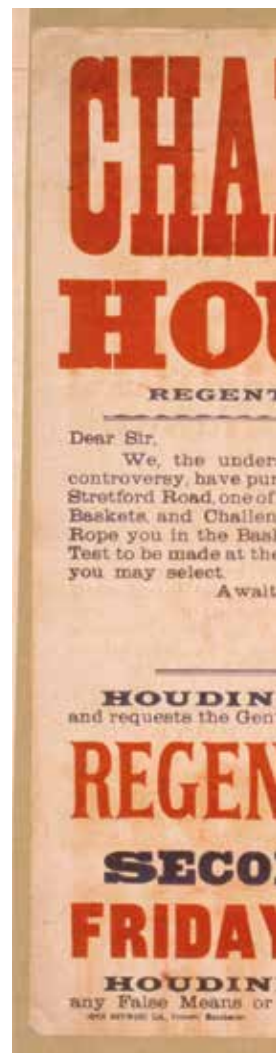
While lodge membership declined after World War II, a renaissance is now taking place. "The lodge is growing by leaps and bounds," says Force. "I'm flabbergasted by the number of young men here. They're playing jazz clubs in the Village; they're members of the city opera and city ballet orchestras. It's amazing."

Master James Kroener has served as illusion manager for the top Las Vegas draw

Siegfried and Roy, and consults to magicians performing on stage. Senior Warden Marko Garzic leads a swing band called Sly Blue, which is the only band to have played on the bell-ringing podium of the New York Stock Exchange. Desmar Santiago, the lodge's senior master of ceremonies, is the musical director of Pregones Theatre, which creates and performs musical theater and plays based on Puerto Rican and Latino cultures.

Fidel Paulino, a former drummer in a punk band who now plays Afro-Caribbean percussion, was raised last summer and says a big reason why he joined was to form closer ties with brothers engaged in similar work and with shared passions. "You find a lot of camaraderie here, because we're all going through the same struggles that musicians do in New York. We get to talk about issues we're facing, help each other out with those, and show our support by checking out each other's shows."

Learning about Masonry has helped these artistic brothers grow personally and professionally. Santiago, who joined St. Cecile in 2004, says Masonry has made him want to contribute more to society through the music he composes. "I write lyrics about everyday life in my neighborhood, my country, and about Masonry because I feel that the more the world knows about it, the better this world will be. I'm able to separate the commercial aspect of my career from the role music can play in inspiring people to improve their lives. Being a brother at St. Cecile has helped me to do both." ♦



MASONIC PARADES AS STREET THEATER

A MASON'S BEHAVIOR IN THE 'THEATER' OF LIFE IS EVER IMPORTANT

by John L. Cooper, III, Senior Grand Warden

In an issue of this magazine devoted to the performing arts it is interesting to note that in the 18th century one of the most famous controversies in Freemasonry involved what we can term "Freemasonry as theater." Here is the story.

As Freemasonry emerged into the public light in London in the years after 1717, Masons discovered a love of parading in public in their aprons and other Masonic regalia. This habit quickly gave them a publicity that they apparently enjoyed. Today, when Masons join a parade they usually receive a very positive response. We encourage lodges to make their presence known by appearing in parades, and who can resist cheering when a Shriners marching unit goes by?

The reaction of the public in the 18th century, however, was quite different. At first, curious about these men in their white aprons marching out of taverns through the crowded streets of London, some started to laugh at this strange sight. It wasn't long before groups of citizens began to form parades to mock the Masons. We have newspaper accounts of these mocking parades in the streets of London in the 1720s and 1730s, lampooning the Masons and making fun of

their weird garb. Finally the Grand Lodge had enough, and enacted a regulation forbidding lodges to parade in public without express permission from the grand master.

It is here that the story takes a different turn. A celebrated Mason, William Preston was master of one of the four old lodges which had formed the Grand Lodge in London in 1717. His lodge, later called the Lodge of Antiquity, met at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern near to St. Paul's Cathedral. It was the yearly custom of the lodge to parade from the tavern to a nearby church to celebrate St. John's Day in summer, and Preston maintained that the lodge did not need permission from Grand Lodge for this parade. As the lodge had been one of the founders of Grand Lodge, he asserted that Grand Lodge could not take away a privilege that predated the formation of Grand Lodge itself. Grand Lodge disagreed, and the quarrel escalated. Preston enraged the Grand Lodge so greatly that they expelled Preston from the fraternity!

Preston and his Masonic friends took revenge on Grand Lodge by forming their own Grand Lodge – the Grand Lodge of England South of the River Trent. And for ten years, until the quarrel was resolved, this rogue group plagued Grand Lodge. When the quarrel was over, Preston was restored to good standing with Grand Lodge, and it is a good thing that he was. He went on to publish a famous book, "Illustrations of Masonry," in 1772, which is the source of our Masonic lectures to this day. Had the quarrel never been resolved, and Preston remained expelled, it is entirely possible that our lectures today would be significantly different.

The issue behind the quarrel, however, was the concern that unregulated parading by lodges would bring the fraternity into disrepute. There was good reason for this concern. One of the famous pictures of this period was produced by Bro. William Hogarth, a member of a London lodge, and a well-known engraver. One of his engravings shows the master of a Masonic lodge, wearing his apron and jewel, going home late at night through the streets of London, accompanied by his tiler. He is obviously roaring drunk, and is singing at the top of his lungs as he staggers down the street. Hogarth adds a bit of humor to this otherwise

pathetic example of Masonic “publicity” by showing a lady at an upper window throwing the contents of a chamber pot out the window and down onto the hapless master and his tiler.

To this day there are some remnants of this era in Freemasonry. First, permission of Grand Lodge is still required for Masons to wear their regalia in public – usually granted now through the district inspector. Secondly, all Masons are anxious when some Masons forget that they are custodians of the public



NIGHT BY BRO. WILLIAM HOGARTH, 1736

Just remember that today you will be someone's idea of a Mason. What you do will make a positive difference for our image.

image of Freemasonry, and do things that reflect negatively upon our organization. It is well to remember that every time we walk out the door we will be someone's idea of what a Mason is that day. We are proud to let others know that we are Freemasons, and that pride carries with it a responsibility to exemplify the best of the teachings of Freemasonry when we are not in lodge.

The parades of Freemasonry in the 18th century were a form of “theater” for the Masons of that era. They enjoyed letting others know about their membership by parading in public. But they also attracted a lot of negative attention – some of it deserved – and for this reason we developed regulations to control our public appearances. These regulations are still in place after almost three centuries. But there is also the “theater” of how we behave in public as individual Masons. Our ceremonies are of interest to the public today, as they were in London long ago. And our individual behavior as Masons is also of interest to the public today as it was then. Just remember that today you will be someone's idea of a Mason. What you do will make a positive difference for our image. ✧

CURTAIN



**FOUR CALIFORNIA MASONS IN THE
PERFORMING ARTS: DRIVEN BY
PASSION, GROUNDED IN MASONRY**



by Laura Normand



Luciano Chessa stands at the conductor's podium and, with the flick of a wrist, makes music out of 16 unconventional instruments: unvarnished wooden boxes, a traffic-cone-sized horn, various metal pieces. His makeshift orchestra, cobbled together from pre-World War I-inspired materials, is groundbreaking. It is the first full recreation of an identical orchestra from 1913, assembled by the Italian Futurist and musician Luigi Russolo.

Known as the father of the synthesizer, Russolo used homemade orchestras to create music out of mechanical noises before the Electronic Age. Chessa has devoted more than a decade to researching and writing about Russolo's work, and how he changed music.

Continued next page

“Most of my own music is experimental,” says Chessa, an acclaimed composer himself – as well as an officer in both Prometheus Lodge No. 851 and Oakland Durant Rockridge Lodge No. 188. “Like Russolo, I’m interested in the clashing of the human element with noises that surround us.”

This drive to create, to innovate, and then to share with an audience, is something that defines a certain breed of men – and Masons.

Russell Jaeger, a production director for film and television, belongs to that breed. So does Greg Sudmeier, a musician, composer, and musical director; and film editor Edward Abroms.

From the conductor’s stand, the editing room, the orchestra pit, and the film studio, these four men are elevating their fields in the performing arts.

At the end of the day, they return to their lodges to elevate themselves.



A portrait of the artist as a young man

Chessa hails from Sardinia, Italy, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, where sacred wells dot the landscape and locals speak their own dialect. Abroms and Sudmeier grew up in California, observing their artist parents and thinking: Someday, that will be me. Jaeger, who spent scattered years in nearly every region of the United States, tried and discarded everything from law to burger-slinging before he found film.

It fascinates me that we can tell a story with images. It’s so gratifying to get all this material and craft it into something that can be funny or serious. You’re crafting something from nothing.



EDWARD ABROMS

In true artist fashion, all four men’s careers in the performing arts came about less by calculated choice, and more through a calling.

“On some level, I’ve been an artist most of my life,” says Jaeger, master of Hollywood Lodge No. 355. “I have an eye for things.”

“When I worked at a law firm, the other attorneys would have me redecorate their offices,” he laughs. “I guess that was a clue.”

Jaeger quit that law firm when an opportunity arose to work on a film crew. He quickly ascended from the bottom rung up to his current role as production designer. In this capacity, Jaeger



**GREG
SUDMEIER**



controls the overall look of a film – everything from the bones of the set to the color and style of individual props.

In Northern California, another brother got his calling much earlier in life.

“Even as a toddler, I had a connection to music and the arts,” says Sudmeier, organist for San Mateo Lodge No. 226. “Both my parents were musicians. Daycare for me was sitting next to my mom on the piano bench at Cal State Hayward, where she accompanied the choir.”

Sudmeier remembers the exact moment he knew music would be his life’s work.

“I was in first grade,” he says. “I was on my way to class, and I walked past the cafeteria, where a music teacher was giving a drum lesson to an older student. I stood and watched the whole lesson.”

He got in trouble for being late to class. But he also got drum lessons. It was the beginning of a career as a percussionist, composer, musical director, and producer. Among his many credits, he’s directed and played on Linda Ronstadt’s platinum album “Cry Like A Rainstorm – Howl Like the Wind” and participated in the Skywalker Symphony Orchestra, conducted by GRAMMY-nominated John Williams.



Creating something out of nothing

Abroms, a member of Liberal Arts Lodge No. 677, went to a different daycare. His was in the world of film. His father, the elder Edward Abroms, was an Emmy-winning and Oscar-nominated film editor. As a child, Abroms would watch over his father’s shoulder as he worked.

Today, Abroms has edited such far-ranging films and television shows as “Just Cause,” “The Cable Guy,” and “CSI: Miami.” The process has not lost its allure.

“It fascinates me that we can tell a story with images,” says Abroms. “It’s so gratifying to get all this material and craft it into something that can be funny or serious. You’re crafting something from nothing.”

Career Highlights

EACH ARTIST SHARES A FAVORITE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Edward Abroms: “In 2010 I worked on an independent film called ‘The Genesis Code,’ a story that has to do with the intersection of science and faith in the Bible. Those themes of science, faith, and history are something Masons would find very interesting.”

Luciano Chessa: “In 2009 I reconstructed Russolo’s first orchestra from Aug. 1913. I built 16 pieces and commissioned music from several composers. We previewed it in San Francisco, premiered in New York, toured Italy and France, and performed in Miami Beach with the New World Symphony.”

Russell Jaeger: “Once a year Sesame Street comes to L.A. and films a season’s worth of ‘Word on the Street’ segments with Hollywood celebrities. I work with them every year. Who wouldn’t love that? It’s Sesame Street!”

Greg Sudmeier: “A few years ago Peter Nero was scheduled to perform with the San Jose Symphony. He canceled on the day. I got a call asking what I was doing that night: Would I like to conduct the San Jose Symphony? I met with the musicians 40 minutes before the show. It was a packed audience. It could’ve been a complete disaster, but it turned out to be one of the best concerts ever.”

Abroms takes all the raw material from filming – sometimes 20 versions of the same piece of dialogue – and decides what stays, what goes, and how it will all fit together. He decides which take has the most compelling delivery, but he weighs that against the way a shadow falls across an actor’s face. It takes

Continued next page



WEB EXTRA

Ed Abroms also plays a vital role in the Liberal Arts Lodge seminar series. To learn more visit http://web.me.com/eabroms/Liberal_Arts_Lecture_series

seven or eight days to edit one episode of a television show – intense days at that. (“I block up the window in my office,” Abrams admits. “I like working in the dark.”)

This exhaustive devotion to the creative process comes with the territory. Performing arts are designed to shock, entertain, inspire, or in some way, move us. Finding the right formula takes intuition, passion – and perhaps above all, focus.

Check them out

THE COLLECTIVE RESUME OF ABRAMS, CHESSA, JAEGER, AND SUDMEIER IS FAR TOO LONG TO LIST, BUT HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU CAN EXPERIENCE EACH BROTHER’S WORK.

Abrams: As of March 2012, the faith-based dramatic film “The Genesis Code” is out on DVD.

Chessa: “Luigi Russolo, Futurist: Noise, Visual Arts, and the Occult” hit bookstores in March 2012. Chessa’s biography of the influential Italian artist took him a decade to complete.

Jaeger: The action film “Bad Ass,” based on a 2010 viral video and starring Danny Trejo, Ron Perlman, and Charles S. Dutton, arrived in theaters April 2012.

Sudmeier: As music director for Walnut Creek’s Diablo Ballet, Sudmeier has a hand in all of the company’s productions. Check diabloballet.org for upcoming performances.



“Wild horses couldn’t drag me away”

As a young man in Italy, Chessa went to a music conservatory in a former monastery. During exams, he was locked in a cramped monk’s room, alone, with just a piano and a composition assignment. At lunchtime, he rang a bell for food, which was silently delivered. It was in this environment that he first practiced composing.

Today, he writes massive operas and symphonies. When it’s time to work, he goes to his own version of a monk’s retreat.

“I don’t physically lock myself away, but the experience is very similar,” says Chessa. “It takes a great amount of energy to control larger shapes, such as an opera. It takes an hour to remember where you were, what will happen 40 pages later, 300 bars later. I have to do a full immersion.”

Sudmeier, the percussionist-turned-musical director, commonly channels his artistic energy into three or four projects at a time. At the time of this interview, he was serving as resident musical director for the Diablo Ballet, directing the musicals “The Producers” and “South Pacific” for local theaters, producing an album, and preparing to conduct a concert the following evening.

As for production director Jaeger, his work demands different skills and routines at different phases of production. In the earliest stage, he is alone at his computer for 18 hours at a time, designing sets from the floor up: “Just me and Pink Floyd,” he says.

A career in the performing arts is all-consuming work, to put it mildly. But all four men speak with passion about what they do.

“Before this, I was a paralegal; I was a waiter; I was in sales. I’d done all kinds of things,” Jaeger says. “I’ve found the job that I love. Wild horses couldn’t drag me away.”



LUCIANO CHESSA

Craft attraction

Despite the different artistic landscapes they inhabit, and despite the sometimes solitary nature of their work, all four men found their way to Masonry. How?

Chessa has his muse to thank. While researching his book on Luigi Russolo, he began reading about the reawakening of spirituality in intellectual circles in early 20th-century Europe. Not surprisingly, he kept running into Masonry.

“I found out that an important mayor in Rome, who built the entire school system from scratch, was the grand master of Masons in Italy,” he marvels. To boot, several of Russolo’s fellow Futurists were Masons. This discovery prompted Chessa to plug his information into the lodge locator on freemason.org. He was initiated shortly after, in 2004.

Sudmeier’s portal to the fraternity was sacred geometry, a subject he was studying as he searched for “a continued depth to my spirituality.”

On a tour of the Library of Congress, sacred geometry converged with architecture and Masonry for the first time.

“I was hit between the eyes,” Sudmeier says. “I ran into one of the best bookstores in D.C. and bought all sorts of books on the founding fathers.”

“When we arrived back home [in California],” he says, “I wrote a letter to the Grand Lodge and asked, ‘What do I do?’”



Straight from the art

Jaeger and Abroms were both introduced to the fraternity through friends. From the moment he was raised, Jaeger hasn’t spent a single day as a sideline – he joined the officer line immediately. As for Abroms, his timing in joining Liberal Arts Lodge was

Continued next page



ED ABROMS





RUSSELL JAEGER



serendipitous: He's currently filming and video-editing the lodge's lecture series.

"It gives me something to give back to the lodge," Abrams says. "That's really what makes a lodge: members giving back."

In many ways, Masonry has changed each man's life, and by extension, his work.

"I love the idea of being good, showing it to the world, and having a name for it," Jaeger says. "Every day we're confronted

with situations that test our mettle and our resolve, that make us ask, 'Am I really who I think I am?' Being a Mason is a constant reminder of who I am."

Filming on location in Connecticut recently, Jaeger was asked by two crew members about his involvement with Masonry.

"I explained in the broadest of terms: I don't lie, I don't cheat, I don't steal; I'm always going to tell you the truth," Jaeger recalls. "That's not always something you're going to get in the film industry."



Daily inspiration

From the fraternity's earliest speculative days, Masonry has inspired great thinkers and artists. That impact has not been lost over the centuries. Sudmeier, who lectures at nearby lodges about sacred geometry, plans to channel his subject matter through music next. He has begun brainstorming a major new piece of performing art: a concert combining a symphony orchestra with dance and multimedia.

"My goal is to expose people to these wonderful Masonic ideas, such as the concept of universal acceptance," he says. "These ideas can really affect the population."

As artists, Abrams, Chessa, Jaeger, and Sudmeier all draw inspiration from the world around them. And the experience of a packed, hushed lodge room electrifies them.

"Every time I participate in ritual, I think: When things are working the right way, when there's a right energy, there's nothing better," says Chessa.

"It's like a good opera," he adds. "When things are well rehearsed – when people are performing for real – you change lives." ✦

WEB EXTRA

Learn more about other California Masons in the performing arts, online at freemason.org.



FACES OF MASONRY

MEET GABRIEL “THE GUN” GONZALEZ: MUSICIAN, FOUNDER OF SAVED BY THE ARTS, MASON SINCE 2010

by Laura Normand

Twenty-seven years ago, an 18-year-old Gabriel Gonzalez stood alone in his room. Outside, the streets were tense and still, poised to erupt again. Gonzalez had come home to change clothes, intending to slip back out to the all-too-familiar world of gangs and drugs. Instead, his eyes fell on his trumpet. He stayed home and played music. It was a decision that he says saved his life.

Gonzalez, now a member of Greenleaf Gardens Lodge No. 670, co-founded the ska band No Doubt, and went on to work with the Steel Pulse, Tito Puente, Sean “Diddy” Combs, and many others.

Today he uses his musical talent to help save others. Through his nonprofit, Saved by the Arts, Gonzalez guides at-risk students towards music as an alternative to drugs, gangs, and violence. His band, the BackBeat Brawlers, treats Los Angeles youth to after-school music lessons. Afterwards, they talk openly and honestly about making good choices.

Like music, Masonry found Gonzalez when he needed it most. He’d just returned from a long tour, and was battling old addictions. He wanted a fresh start. He had considered Masonry before; now, he decided to commit.

“Masonry changed who I was. It made me realize that there’s more to life than being selfish,” says Gonzalez. “The self as the rough ashlar, trying to become better – I identify with that.”

Continued next page



MEMBER PROFILE

In his own words:

THE INSPIRATION FOR HIS NONPROFIT:

I was in the hospital four years ago, and lay there thinking about my legacy to my kids. I thought about how Benjamin Franklin always wrote in his to-do list “What good shall I do this day?” It clicked: I needed to try to make a difference.

WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT:

At one of our workshops, a 12-year-old girl said, “I’m glad I came today. I feel like I should pursue the arts because my entire family has succumbed to drugs and gangs.” To me, touching that life, being a positive role model for our youth, is the most important thing.

RAISING TRUST:

Being raised to Master Mason was an eye-opening and spiritual experience. But ultimately, what’s amazing is the love my fellow Freemasons have towards each other. These are guys that I just met, and I trust them more than cats I have known for years. ✧



MASTERING THE SILVER SCREEN

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MASONRY AND THE PERFORMING ARTS BOASTS HISTORIC TIES TO ‘OLD HOLLYWOOD’

by Heather Boerner

It was the early 1950s, and Glenn Ford was trying to memorize his lines: lines for the film “Time Bomb,” his first picture for MGM, as well as his ritual work for his degrees at Palisades Lodge No. 637, now Santa Monica-Palisades Lodge No. 307.

“He was running between the studio and the lodge, going through his degrees,” says Aubrey Ford, 35, a Master Mason at Riviera Lodge No. 780 and Ford’s grandson. “Our family friend Jim Juris, who was in lodge with my grandfather, described it as an exciting time, and also kind of a chaotic and hectic time in his life.”

If it was hectic, at least Ford – who acted in more than 100 movies and television shows, including Frank Capra’s “Pocketful of Miracles” and the 1978 version of “Superman” – was in good company. One of the founders of his studio, Louis B. Mayer, was a brother, though with St. Cecile Lodge in New York. As were actors Fess Parker (best known as Davy Crockett), Ernest Borgnine (raised in Virginia but now affiliated with Hollywood Lodge No. 355) and Burl Ives. Before him came Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and Clark Gable, good friends and members of Beverly Hills Lodge No. 528, as well as George Bancroft. There were the singing cowboys Edward R. “Hoot” Gibson, Tex Ritter, Jimmy Wakely, Warner Baxter (also known as the Cisco Kid), and Tom Mix. While they weren’t California Masons, prominent Masons who were raised elsewhere often visited California lodges, including Roy Rogers, Oliver Hardy of Laurel and Hardy, John Wayne, and WC Fields.



GLENN FORD IN *PLUNDER OF THE SUN*

Captains of Hollywood

And then there were the captains of Hollywood, the producers – in addition to Meyer, there was Warner Bros. co-founder Jack Warner, “Ben-Hur” director William Wyler, 20th Century Fox co-founder Daryl Zanuck, and Oscar-winning filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille. All belonged to California lodges, except for DeMille, who was raised in Prince of Orange Lodge in New York City. Regardless of their Masonic home lodges, many were also Shriners, who met at Al Malaikah Shrine Temple, home of the Shrine Auditorium and former home of the Academy Awards.

“Sometimes I get a tingle when I sit in these seats, wondering who’s sat here before

Continued next page

IN CALIFORNIA



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CLARK GABLE, ERNEST BORGNINE AS QUINTON MCHALE IN *MCHALE'S NAVY*, TOM MIX, FESS PARKER AS DAVY CROCKETT, JACK WARNER.

me,” says Sam Pitassi, master of Oasis Lodge, UD, now housed in the Al Malaikah Shrine Temple. “Just like many of the founding fathers of this country were Masons, so were the founding fathers of Hollywood. These guys built Hollywood.”

He pauses and adds, “Perhaps they wanted to be part of something real, and not just put on a show.”

Deep roots

Whatever their motivation, there's no doubt that Masonry ran deep in Old Hollywood. Even the geography shows Masonry's prominence during Hollywood's golden age. Hollywood Lodge No. 355 was next door to El Capitan Theater and on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Many studios, including MGM, had what were known as square and compass clubs – social clubs

where industry folks were invited to meet with other Masons during long shooting schedules.

As in any other part of life that takes a man from his routine and his lodge, Masonic actors who found themselves stranded away from their lodges often came together in Hollywood to form Masonic bonds, says Pitassi. There are stories of Tom Mix taking his brothers on the set out into the desert while filming cowboy films to “talk about Masonry,” says Pitassi.

There are stories about how other famous brothers became Masons. Pitassi, who characterizes himself more as a fan than a historian, says actor Richard Dix found the fraternity when he had his screen test. The person who administered it was brother Dave Butler. And brother Sidney Franklin directed his first film. “That’s how he became a Mason,” says Pitassi. “He was influenced by actors who were Masons.”

Then there was the public face of Masonry – the charitable giving, the extravaganzas put on by the 233 Club. Founded in 1926, the club was touted as a craft degree team made up of actors. Though the club met at lodges to confer degrees, it also allowed Masons a chance to use their artistic talents to bring depth to their degree work.

Treating others on the level

But for the most part, Masonry in Hollywood was as it is for every other Mason: a place, says Pitassi, to “be humble because tomorrow you may not be where you are today; treat the world the same and treat them as Masons.”

That last bit – of humility and treating everyone on the level – is the lasting legacy Aubrey Ford takes of his grandfather. It wasn’t until Glenn Ford died in 2006 that Aubrey discovered his grandfather was a Mason: He’d requested Masonic rites at his funeral. Aubrey wasn’t a Mason yet, and as his father went through Glenn Ford’s estate, he discovered an apron, dues card, and photos. The family also discovered that Aubrey’s great-grandfather was also a Mason in their native Canada. So when Aubrey joined Riviera Lodge No. 780 – the lodge where his grandfather was a charter member – he distinctly remembers

Don’t Miss It: Roy Rogers’ Masonic Legacy

Roy Rogers wasn’t just the King of the Cowboys: He was also a dedicated Mason. Through an interactive online exhibit, the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry explores Rogers’ Masonic legacy, including images and text from his biography, “Happy Trails: The Life of Roy Rogers,” by Laurence Zwisohn. In 2010, the library and museum received a generous gift of Rogers’ Masonic regalia, memorabilia, and earlier Masonic texts from Rogers’ son, Dusty Rogers.

Find out more at masonicheritage.org/exhibits/rogers.htm.

being regaled with stories of his grandfather, the great actor, serving coffee to his brothers.

“The fact of my grandfather serving coffee, treating everyone on the level, was something that mattered to me personally,” he says. “When I found out he was a Mason, it became personal. It seemed as though it was something that was not only attainable but something I should do. It’s just neat to continue that legacy on, to support those same lodges he supported.” ♦

OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT, INTO THE LODGE

THE MEMBERS OF NORTH HOLLYWOOD LODGE BRING A MASONIC PERSPECTIVE TO ARTISTIC SUCCESS

by *Vanessa Richardson*

North Hollywood Lodge No. 542 is one of the most striking and unusual Masonic lodges around. And it's also one of the most notable standout structures in Los Angeles, which is really saying something in the glitzy, glamorous entertainment capital of the world.

For 60 years, this tall, white “neo-Mayan” building has towered over North Hollywood Park. The lodge got its start

back in the 1920s (the members rented a building until they built the temple in 1950), and while North Hollywood was never a hub for movie studios or movie-star homes, it has a deep connection to Hollywood's golden age. Former heads of movie studios were members, as were some famous actors. The most notable film star was Audie Murphy, who was also the most decorated soldier of World War II. The Audie Murphy Lounge, an upstairs room in the lodge, is dedicated to his memory, displaying many of his war medals and his Masonic membership application.

Not your typical lodge

North Hollywood is now known as the up-and-coming NoHo Arts District, and the more than 160 Masons who make up the lodge may not be the members you typically see at other lodges. Many of them work in the performing arts, mostly music, and do everything from composing for TV and producing albums to performing in garage rock and heavy metal

bands. Also notable is the average age of lodge members. “I’m 48 and I’m an old guy,” says Master R.J. Comer, a lawyer by day and lead singer the rest of the time. “There are lots of active Master Masons in their 20s and 30s. This lodge is young and vibrant.” Tattoos, facial piercings, and dyed hair abound, but while they look like they should be performing in clubs on the Sunset Strip, these hip, young members fully embrace the Masonic philosophies of brotherhood, shared ideals, and community charity. Comer’s band, the Dance Hall Pimps, touts the tagline “Pimp Music Not People” – a reference to their commitment to oppose and raise awareness of human trafficking in the U.S.

What’s also unique about the members is how they became aware of the lodge. Many



NORTH HOLLYWOOD LODGE MASTER R.J. COMER IS THE LEAD SINGER OF A BAND THAT USES ITS MUSIC TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

recent Master Masons came aboard after meeting Zulu, a former lodge master who works as an L.A. tattoo artist. He himself became curious about Freemasonry after tattooing Masonic symbology on several clients, and joined in 2003. Comer met Zulu in 2006 to get tattoos, they started talking about spirituality, and Zulu invited him to come to the lodge's weekly Thursday dinner that is open to non-members.

Jeff McDonough, a former hard rock guitarist who now composes music for film and television, had been interested in Masonry but decided to take the leap after reading the *Los Angeles Times* story about Zulu and the lodge. He went to Zulu's tattoo shop in 2010, accepted Zulu's invitation to attend a Thursday dinner, and is now assistant secretary. "A lot of the philosophical lessons I've learned here are helping to enhance my creativity," says McDonough. "And it's great to meet so many other Brothers with a connection to music."

Music doesn't play a big part in lodge meetings – there's not even an organist to play music during rituals – but the members' skills in performing arts shine brightly in their charitable work outside the lodge. Take Matt Hyde, junior steward, a GRAMMY award-winning record producer and engineer. Hyde serves as musical mentor to two students at Lankershim Elementary School (one's a violinist, the other's a flutist), teaching them about music performance and theory; he also leads book drives for the school. Hyde is a big supporter of Hands for Hope, an after-school program in North Hollywood for low-income kids from single-parent homes. After learning that Hands for Hope's so-called recording studio wasn't much more than a hole in the wall, Hyde designed, wired, and soundproofed a professional studio in the space, and even



JEFF MCDONOUGH, A FILM AND TELEVISION COMPOSER, FINDS CREATIVE INSPIRATION THROUGH THE PHILOSOPHICAL LESSONS OF MASONRY.

donated some of his musical equipment. "It's great to see these kids, ages 12 and up, writing songs, singing, recording, and gaining some pretty useful musical skills."

Continued next page



WEB EXTRA

Read more about Brother Zulu in the August/September 2011 issue of California Freemason.

LODGE SPOTLIGHT



RECORD PRODUCER MATT HYDE CREATED A PROFESSIONAL-QUALITY RECORDING STUDIO FOR A LOCAL AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM.

A hip hangout

With its rich cache of talented and experienced brethren working in the arts and entertainment industry, North Hollywood Lodge's monthly stated meeting is becoming known as a hip, chic hangout for young Master Masons.

But McDonough, whose latest project is researching music that Mozart (a Mason) wrote for lodge ceremonies, says it's the

age-old traditions of Masonry that keep him connected to his lodge. "I've worked in entertainment my whole life, and it's a very self-centered world, in which it's normal for people not to return your calls unless they want something from you. As a kid in the Midwest, I was raised in a different way - to be respectful to people. It's refreshing for me to be a part of the fraternity that believes in those values I was raised with. While sometimes I feel like I'm swimming in a shark tank, Masonry recharges me and keeps me afloat." ♦

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PERFORMING ARTS

FOUR MASONIC HOMES RESIDENTS TAKE TO THE STAGE TO AGE SUCCESSFULLY

by Laura Normand

The Masonic Homes at Union City and Covina and the senior community at Acacia Creek are committed to a philosophy of successful aging: finding fulfillment socially, spiritually, intellectually, and physically, at every age.

That may sound like a tall task, but four residents have been able to check off many – if not all – of those goals through their involvement in the performing arts. In dance class and music halls, at the piano bench and on stage, they exercise their brains and bodies, using music to connect joyfully with their communities.

The honky tonk hero

Every second Tuesday, you can catch Larry Sadler live with the Four Directions Dulcimer Kindred club in Hayward. There, musicians converge from all over the East Bay for a monthly jam session, where they take turns in the spotlight to share their music. Sadler, a guitarist and vocalist, will usually rustle up another guitarist, bassist, and fiddler from the group assembled, and lead them through country classics like “Kentucky Waltz,” “Ride Me Down Easy,” and “I Don’t Believe I’ll Fall in Love Today.”

“Performing does for me what golf does for a lot of people. It’s my release,” says Sadler, 84. “I can play a five-hour gig after 9 o’clock at night, and the next day I’m relaxed.”

As a young man, Sadler spent time in Forth Worth, Texas, where he had his own radio show. He started playing guitar seriously when he back moved to California, and a drummer friend talked him into leading a band. That band, the Versatones, became

something of a fixture in Sacramento’s then-bustling honky tonk scene.

As the band’s front man, Sadler learned the ropes of managing a band, from booking

Continued next page



UNION CITY RESIDENT LARRY SADLER REGULARLY PERFORMS AT BOTH THE MASONIC HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY.



MUSIC FROM RESIDENT BETTY HIGGINS' BABY GRAND FREQUENTLY FILLS THE HALLWAYS AT THE MASONIC HOME AT UNION CITY.

a show to collecting money. But it was the performing that hooked him.

"You get on stage and sing a song, and people applaud. It's contagious," he says.

It's a habit he hasn't kicked. Besides keeping his chops sharp at Hayward's monthly jam sessions, he's emceed for the District 9 California State Old Time Fiddlers Association.

Whether he's playing for an audience or himself, Sadler stays true to the greats: George Jones and Ray Price, to name two. Incidentally, those two icons, both in their 80s, are still touring today. Sadler is in good company.

privately on the keyboard in her room, it's to the tune of 40s swing, Latin music, or "anything with a good rhythm."

"Music is the most useful and enjoyable thing that I do," she says. "It has enriched my life and introduced me to many things that I wouldn't have enjoyed otherwise."

It's a mental tune-up, too: This year, at age 88, she taught herself how to transpose songs, changing the key up or down without pausing from playing.

"I thought that was quite an accomplishment to learn late in life," she says.

Music has also been a valuable social outlet. In fact, Higgins' very first piano teacher – a family friend from her small town growing up – became a lifelong friend. As young women, the two would pair up and play side-by-side pianos at clubs. Later in life, when Higgins moved into the Home, her friend would come for regular visits.

"We always found a piano and traded songs," Higgins recalls with a smile.

The piano player

When Betty Higgins moved to the Masonic Home at Union City 16 years ago, she brought her baby grand with her. It still sits in the parlor outside her apartment, and although Higgins usually chooses another of the Home's pianos for impromptu "Name That Tune" performances, it holds a special place in her heart.

"I was six when I started taking lessons. Even though I eventually quit the lessons, I kept playing piano," Higgins says. "I played for church affairs and used music to teach Sunday school. I did more service work than anything."

Higgins has continued her service in the Home, playing hymns twice a month for residents in the on-campus hospital, and regularly accompanying sing-a-longs in the Traditions unit. When she's playing pri-

And introducing: the belly dancers

Meanwhile, two other Union City residents have stumbled – or rather, swayed – into a new calling: belly dancing. As part of a belly dance exercise class, Betty Ehly and Graciela Straussberger both performed in the Home’s talent show last spring. They were joined on stage by their instructor and



MASONIC HOME RESIDENT BETTY EHLY, 96, DEBUTED A BELLY DANCING PERFORMANCE AT THE UNION CITY TALENT SHOW.

three Home’s employees. It was their debut performance.

“Was I nervous? I was very nervous,” Ehly laughs. “I was thinking, I’m an old lady doing belly dancing – me?”

“But,” she confides, “it was lots of fun. When we came out in our costumes and pantaloons, somebody in the audience even whistled.”

Ehly, who is 96, persuaded Straussberger to take the class – and share the stage – with her.

“Betty is incredible,” Straussberger says in a thick accent (she is originally from Guadalajara, Mexico). “She has such a positive energy. Once I went to class, I said, ‘Wow, why didn’t I come before?’”

Some 25 years ago, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine led a study of seniors age 75 and older to test the success of various physical and cognitive activities in warding off dementia. The most effective activity – physical or cognitive – was frequent dancing.

Ehly and Straussberger can attest to the physical and mental workout.

“It is good exercise, believe me,” Ehly says. “You feel it from the neck down to your toes.”

“And you have to pay attention to the music,” Straussberger adds. “The music is wonderful.”

See for yourself: Both ladies said that when the time comes, they’ll be ready for their next performance. ✧

Connecting with Masonic Assistance



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Masonic Senior Outreach, a program of the Masonic Homes of California, provides the senior members of our fraternal family access to the services and resources they need to stay healthy and safe in their homes or in retirement facilities in their home communities.

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- * Information and referrals to community-based senior providers throughout California
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MASONIC FAMILY OUTREACH

Masonic Family Outreach support services are available to California Masons and their families who need help dealing with today's complex issues, such as the impact of divorce, the stresses of a special needs child, job loss, and other significant life challenges.

Our case management services are broad, flexible, and able to serve families in their own communities throughout the state. If you are in need of support or know of a family in distress, contact us at 888/466-3642 or masonicassistance@mhcuc.org.

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The Masonic Center for Youth and Families provides integrated psychological services to youth ages 4 to 17 struggling with behavioral, academic, emotional, or social difficulties. To learn more about MCYAF, visit mcyaf.org or call 877/488-6293.

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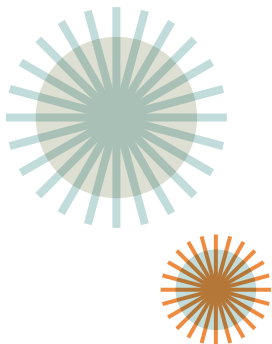
To learn more about Acacia Creek, our new senior living community in Union City, visit acaciacreek.org or call 877/902-7555.

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You may request a presentation be made at a lodge meeting about the Masonic Homes and Outreach programs by contacting Masonic Assistance at 888/466-3642 or masonicassistance@mhcuc.org.

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