

Taking a Lesson from the Professionals

Our creative and talented Brothers, Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, knew how much people liked to be entertained. In the latter part of the 1800s, their productions were the talk of the town.

In addition to entertainment, plays can be, and generally are, highly educational. More often than not, they leave a lasting impression. Many of us can recall plays (and movies) that we will never forget.

This fact answers the question as to why our early Brethren chose to make plays a part of our Masonic ritual—they are the absolute best way to impart something that will never be forgotten. Keep in mind that all three Masonic Degrees are “plays.” The fact that a candidate actually becomes a character in the plays was a stroke of genius.

The problem with this concept is that if the quality of a play is poor, then so will be the impression it leaves. We quickly forget plays we did not care for.

Most of us have likely seen our “plays” performed at various levels of efficiency—generally very poor (sometimes they even cause embarrassment). This could be (and likely is) the reason many candidates fail to carry on in our lodges.

Although we can sort of get by with the actual conferring of degrees, the Ritual of the Third Degree is a different story. It is a properly choreographed production, such as what would be created by the eminent Brethren featured here. In their time, things were very different, and if they were to see what we are now doing they would not be pleased.

The answer to this dilemma might be to have dedicated degree teams within a district or Grand Lodge jurisdiction. As the old saying goes, we need to clean up our act.



William Gilbert
(1836–1911)



Arthur Sullivan
(1842–1900)