

Music at Banquets, Dinners & Ceremonies

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These notes are taken from some of Nigel Pullman's own notes and are not set in stone as every Livery Company has their own traditions of carrying out their proceedings, particularly when it comes to dinners and banquets.

Of course, the playing of music at Livery Dinners is a matter of taste, and some Masters may have their own enthusiasms. This simply serves to set out a few thoughts and guidelines on the subject, for there are pitfalls. The music at a Livery Dinner may be divided into four different parts:

1. Before dinner
2. During dinner
3. Accompaniment to sung grace, national anthem, loving cup
4. After dinner entertainment.

Before dinner: Typically a pianist or string trio/quartet will play in the background during the pre- dinner reception. It may be considered something of a luxury, and reserved for the grander banquets. Bear in mind that if a pianist is also to play during dinner, the location of the piano may present a problem.

The procession into dinner or banquet may be to a piece of music, ie Scipio by Handel, which would often be accompanied by a rhythmic handclap until the top table is at their places. Listen to this link by the Grenadier Guards. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzUTpyquTMA> Scipio by Handel is a regimental slow march.

Procession into dinner or banquet may also be by handclap only.

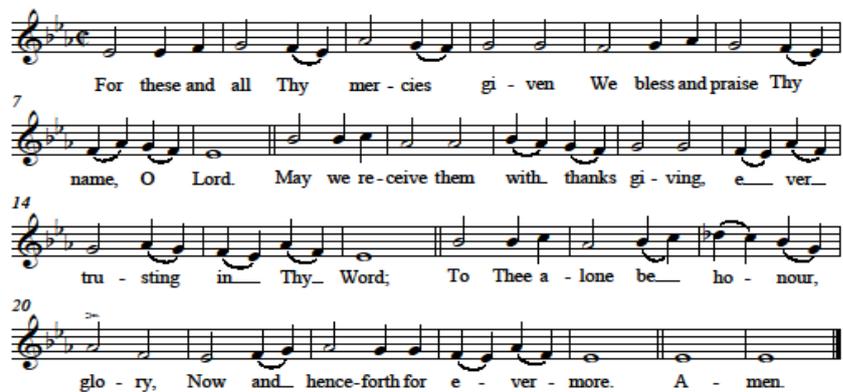
During dinner: If you are to have a pianist (or other musicians) present for Sung Grace (which many believe is best accomplished with musical accompaniment), there may be an argument for asking the musicians to also play in the background during dinner. If the choice is a more substantial band or small orchestra (probably only practical in Guildhall, Mansion House, or the largest livery halls) then be aware of their impact on conversation for the diners placed near them. It is a frequent criticism at large dinners that "the music was too loud"; only countered by those at the other end of the room saying "We couldn't hear the band".

Accompaniment to Sung Grace, the national anthem or, The Loving Cup: This area is a minefield for inexperienced Livery Dinner musicians and you will want to fully brief them. For Sung Grace, if *Laudi Spirituali* is played too slowly, it can sound like a dirge; played well is a great help to guests unfamiliar with the tune. Sung Grace without accompaniment is risky. Please follow this link to hear a solo male rendition which is a trifle slow! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_ODOZaUI-s

After dinner entertainment: An area with scope for things to go wrong. Good manners dictate that guests will quietly listen during such performances. However not all will be musically minded, and the entertainment provided will need to be sufficiently good and appropriate to retain everyone's attention. Few things are more embarrassing at a dinner than the guests losing interest in the "cabaret" and reverting to chat. It can be avoided with a little care and forethought. The size of the hall is relevant to the style of the music. A string quartet playing serious classical music, or similarly a concert pianist, may not work in a large hall, though it might in a more intimate venue. Middle of the road "songs from the shows" may sound safe, but unless performed with real style, can be little more than time filling. "Verdi's Greatest Hits" can become overly familiar and predictable.

Grace

from "Laudi Spirituali" 1545



For these and all Thy mer - cies gi - ven We bless and praise Thy
7 name, O Lord. May we re - ceive them with thanks gi - ving, e - ver -
14 tru - sting in Thy Word; To Thee a - lone be - ho - nour,
20 glo - ry, Now and hence - forth for e - ver - more. A - men.