

# Fifth Manhattan: Further Light in July

by Ryan Rodriguez Wiggins, DDGM  
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The impact of the past couple of years has been felt in our communities, in our professions and in our Craft. The Fifth Manhattan District Team began with an idea from our District Deputy Grand Master, RW Ryan Rodriguez-Wiggins: “Let’s do an event that brings all our Lodges together and shows that the Craft is not only alive and well, but flourishing, blossoming and growing in our District!”

With that, our District Team forged ahead and tapped into the Masters of each Lodge. It is an age-old formula, but a true one: if you show a vision, support will follow. Together. That was our cement. Together. That was our driving force. Together. That is what we chose to lean into at all times. No great feat can be accomplished without everyone taking a piece of the weight. From Master of Lodge, to AGLs current and past, Grand Lodge Staff Officers current and past, to recently Raised Master Masons, all took on what was needed.



The Fifth Manhattan turned to our trusted Assistant Grand Lecturer team, VW Greg Feldman—who offered wise counsel at every turn—and our adept ritualist VW Tarantino Smith—who cast and rehearsed all over a two-month period. He brought on two incredible Masons (who are also incredible ritualists), W Matt Minor, the current Master of George Washington Lodge 285, and Past Master of Carpenter Emmanuel, W William Flores, to assist in the many complicated planning efforts.

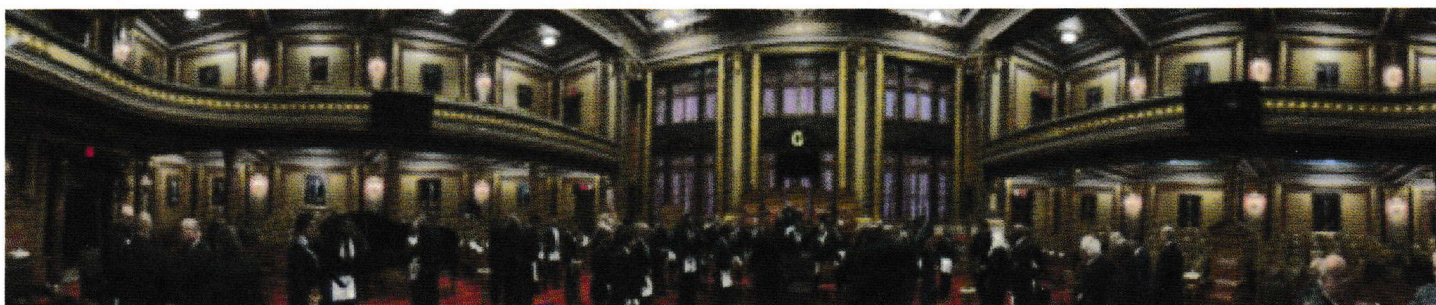
On Saturday, July 23 the Fifth Manhattan assembled in the Grand Lodge Room to offer a District-wide Third Degree. We enlisted an All-Star Team. Past AGL VW Reynardo Gutierrez of True Craftsman Lodge 651 was Senior Deacon; VW Jim



Roberts of Bunting Charity 727 sat as Junior Warden; Past Worshipful Master of Amity Lodge 323 W Steven Shapiro sat as Senior Warden; the conferral was offered by RW Bro. James William Gregg, the Grand Sword Bearer of the Fifth Manhattan and Past Master of the hosting George Washington Lodge 285. An amazing layer of artistic piano by our Past AGL VW Robert Gengerke of Scotia Lodge 634 made the day flow with musicality that resonated throughout the Hall.

More than 100 Masons gathered to witness and participate in a full Third Degree, which offered a personal Raising for each of the nineteen candidates, and a full Drama whose cast reflected every Lodge of the Fifth Manhattan. W Hunter Shelburne, Past Master of Scotia Lodge 634 gave a restrained, yet powerful J-M, Bro. Shawn O'Connor of George Washington Lodge 285 was an anchor as the First Craftsman, and W Robert Yee, current Master of Continental Lodge 287, breathed life into a riveting portrayal of Hiram King of Tyre. RW James William Gregg continued his participation in the role of the Narrator and used the full space to continually engage our new Brothers witnessing the Drama. The Grand Lodge Room offered such wonderful theatrical opportunities.

Our District Deputy Grand Master, the Right Worshipful Ryan Rodriguez-Wiggins, also a Past Master of George Washington Lodge 285, and VW Greg Feldman, current Worshipful Master of Amity Lodge 323, offered the Worshipful Master's Instruction. Finally, Brother Jano Tantongco inspired our new Brothers with a heartfelt Historical Lecture, followed by a beautifully artful Q&A by Brother Sean Farrow and Brother Eli Dardis. Each of the Brothers above hail from







George Washington Lodge and each received the Ritual Coin Award our Assistant Grand Lecturers bestow for excellent ritual. W William Morales, the current Worshipful Master of True Craftsman Lodge 651, brought us home with a powerful Charge.

It was just under seven hours and all supported each other through the important day. As our District Deputy Grand Master offered his words before closing, he mentioned the importance and magnitude the day represented. Our theme this year in the Fifth Manhattan is focused on the twenty-four-inch gauge (and our District coin highlights this important tool). This day reflected the importance of each of the three eight-hour periods our twenty-four-inch gauge offers. Afterwards, all met for a much-needed collation and

several toasts were offered to the many moments of success we all experienced.

Together the Fifth Manhattan assembled. Together we harnessed our strengths and reveled in excellence. Together our Lodges became something larger through our positive actions of support. Together, the Fifth Manhattan today is strong and will be still stronger tomorrow. Together.

None of this would be possible were it not for the blessings and grace of our Most Worshipful Richard J. Kessler, who gave his support and enthusiasm for the work in the quarries we were performing. Brothers are asking for more events of this kind. We will continue to bring Freemasonry to the heart of the State of New York.

