



**MASTER'S SPEECH AT ELECTION DINNER  
DRAPERS' HALL, THURSDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023  
Michael Shapiro**

Wardens, Principal Guest, Your Excellency, Fellow Masters, Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, Chris, thank you so much for what I knew would be an engaging and erudite speech. You have been at the forefront of City life for many years and have done your best for this wonderful City of London. As Chair of Planning and Transportation some years ago, you enabled the skyline of the City to change without compromising the views of the magnificent buildings that surround us. The juxtaposition of the old and new works well, and much credit for that goes to you. It was said of Sir Christopher Wren that if you wish to see his memorial, look around you. If you wish to see Chris's legacy, then go stand on the southern end of London Bridge and look across the River. Thank you again for speaking to us this evening and please accept this token from me with gratitude.

And thank you, Zoe, for a lovely toast to our guests.

This Saturday, I am halfway through my year as Master. I have been to 78 events, not all eating and drinking, which might be why my waist size has stayed the same. I cannot believe that it is nearly 6 months since I was standing up at Mansion House and outlining my plans for the year. I read that speech again last weekend, and I am pleased that there was nothing I said about the Company or my intentions over the year that I would change. We still have the same Prime Minister, and I managed to move to a new law firm in February during the one week when I had no engagements.

I have been honoured to represent you all at many City events over the past few months, not only eating my way through numerous lunches and dinners but also going to lectures, discussions, scholarship awards, visits and other interesting events – for example, the recent memorial service to mark the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of Sir Richard Whittington comes to mind.

We as a Company have had some memorable events too – for instance, our celebration of International Women's Day at Goodenough College was a resounding success, packed with guests from the Livery and elsewhere, and we have made some City Visits to different places encompassing my theme of The Richness of World Trade.

The number of people coming up to the City during the week, and the cost of putting on events has meant that we have reduced the number of events, but those that we have had have been well-supported.

I am privileged as your Master to have been present at events at some of the finest halls in the land, attended services at St. Paul's Cathedral, dined at The Mansion House, and I am conscious that this is a privilege accorded to very few. Jill and I are greatly looking forward to being at the Coronation Garden party at Buckingham Palace next Wednesday afternoon.

Behind my desk, I have a large mug that is inscribed with Samuel Johnson's immortal words – "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life". The last 6 months have told me that I am never tired of London.

One of the things that I am proud of are the younger members of our Company. They come to events, challenge us with their questions and organise and participate in everything. We had our World of Work Conference at Birkbeck College on Tuesday and I spoke in front of around 70 very bright year 10 students from some of the schools that we support. What gave me pride was seeing how many of our Journeyman (those under 27) and other younger members of the company were speaking. It's great to see so many of you here tonight – you are a real credit to the Company and you give me confidence that all will be well with the Company for many years to come.

Our annual flagship event, the 36<sup>th</sup> Tacitus Lecture, is now just under three weeks away in Guildhall on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May. As you all know, our speaker will be Rory Stewart and the title of his lecture is *Populism, Poverty and Hope in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. We already have well over 600 people booked in, and it is being live streamed and will be recorded. Rory believes that “it is now possible to end extreme poverty within our lifetimes”. As he says, “this should be the great mission of our age. We should recover a confidence and take that chance.” I know that we have a treat, and maybe a challenge, in store so if you haven't booked to be there, please do so.

A couple of weeks after that we are off on the annual Master's trip, and 46 of you are joining me for 4 days in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, which I know everyone is looking forward to. Jill and I spent a couple of days there last week – although booking is closed for our trip, I would recommend a visit, and I don't work for the tourist board. It is a wonderful destination, a historic town made for wandering around, with more cafés, cake shops and bars in such a small area than I have ever seen, with a dynamic and creative economy and friendly people. I want to say a big thank to you, Mr. Ambassador, and all your staff at the embassy here, at Invest Estonia and at Enterprise Estonia in Tallinn. You have all put so much thought and effort into our trip, including setting up a few surprises and in the process, we have becoming friendly with you all. Vilyar, you might even persuade me to try out an outdoor sauna! Thank you.

We have other events coming up – our annual day out at RAF Benson is as usual, fully booked weeks in advance, and in June we have our thanksgiving service and summer lunch. In July, it is Common Hall, ( our AGM) followed by a rooftop summer party overlooking Tower Bridge. We recover in August, when we are sneaking away for a week, before we start looking forward to our own Past Master Michael Mainelli becoming Lord Mayor, subject to election, and we as his mother company will be doing all we can to support him and Elisabeth in their roles.

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted on us. Our Company budget is being looked at ever more closely, but fewer people resigned than we predicted post pandemic. As you have seen, we admitted several new members earlier this evening, and there is a good pipeline of interested people wanting to join us over the next few months.

We must celebrate successes, not just as a Company but throughout the country, something we Brits are not very good at. I have heard the Lord Mayor speak many times about making lasting changes , as he says, “to secure the Square Mile's success” and this is something we World Traders must be a part of.

On a personal note, there are three people I want to thank. Firstly, Rabbi Helen Freeman, who said Grace before Dinner. Welcome back to Drapers' Hall where I know you have been a Master's Chaplain. I appreciate you making Grace at both my formal dinners, and a very warm and heartfelt thanks to you.

My next thank you goes to my wife and consort. Jill is revelling in the role. I'm so pleased that you have become involved with City Consorts. In February, you had more engagements than me. After I had been Master for a few weeks, Jill asked if there was something she could do to help me. I replied that there was, to liaise with our contact at the Estonian embassy and then those coming on the trip in relation to the airline and the hotel. She agreed. This has turned out to be no mean feat, so thank you very much for that and all your support.

I was looking through some notes I made when I went on the Master's training course 18 months ago. The speaker said the most important thing is to get on with your Clerk. I believe I do. Fellow Masters, I suppose we might start to worry if we overheard our clerk saying to a fellow clerk that they enjoy working with their Master and are looking forward to working with their successor. A big thank you, Gaye, from me for all you do for me as Master, and for the Company. Please join me in a round of applause for her.

The formal part of the evening is nearly at an end. Thank you to Mark, our photographer, for stepping in for Andy with 24 hours' notice, to Corinne and Jenifer, the wardens' consorts for showing us the beautiful portraits and ceiling before dinner, to our Beadle, Rod Brafield, and to Marta and all the staff here at Drapers' Hall. And Thank you all so much for being here at our Election Dinner.

As my late friend Herbert Kretzmer, the lyricist for Les Misérables, wrote in the song "Drink with Me" - "Let the wine of friendship never run dry."

Thank you.