



HEADMASTER'S
GRADUATION
BALL SPEECH

As Headmaster of ECP I love being here at this annual event to celebrate the Graduation Ball with you. Despite seeing it for the first time ten years ago, it still really impresses me. You impress me. Because it is you and your organising committee (and Mrs Švejsová) that has made it happen. I also love the fact that your parents, your teachers, your friends are all here to witness your successes so far and to share with you a wonderful evening, but most importantly, to imagine what next steps you might take.

I took about 8 steps to come across the stage to get here to talk to you. But what about the many steps that you will be starting to take as you follow your own path into adulthood. Your path is your and yours alone and only you can take those steps. Only you can choose which path you take. So what will you make of it? What will it be?

Is it a staircase - forever upwards and onwards? School up to university, up again maybe to a master's degree. Turn the corner and onwards and upwards to a job. Up again to promotion, pausing perhaps to get married, have children before climbing ever further upwards. If this is your path, don't be afraid of the climb, embrace the challenge, rest when you need to, for each step you take strengthens you for the next. Enjoy the view and think of all the things along the way you would have missed if you had simply taken the lift.

Maybe your path is more like a meandering garden path. You've been given the tools and the seeds – your education, your values, your passions. Now it's time to cultivate your direction. It won't always be straight; there will be forks and unexpected turns. Be patient, be persistent, and nurture your dreams. Weed out the doubts and cultivate resilience. This path and how you got to where you will be going may in time become lost and overgrown but you will always know what it was like to be on it and how important it was to you.

Maybe your path is like a river crossing. You're standing on one side, a new land of opportunity, you can see but challenges lay in your way. You might choose to build bridges – careful planning and strategic action. Or you might choose to navigate the currents – adapting to change, learning to steer. Perhaps you'll even learn to swim – diving in, embracing the unknown waters with courage and determination. There might be rapids, there might be calm waters. You don't know but isn't that the fun of it?

Perhaps most appropriately for tonight, maybe your path is like a dance, a waltz. Like our student-teacher dance tonight. Steps forwards, steps sideways, steps backwards when things go wrong. You may stumble or need to improvise (when your partner gets it wrong, which in my case it is pretty much certainly, sorry, Elin, but at least my bow tie matches). But it's the movement, the rhythm, the feeling that matters.

So take the next step up, cultivate your path, cross the river, and most importantly, dance your dance - not caring how it looks, so long as it feels right and good for you. Your path is yours and yours alone. The only thing it shares with your classmates on either side of you is a little sign at the beginning saying, "This is the way to the rest of your life" and if you look closely, there is a little note from us, teachers, scrawled on the bottom, saying "Please come back this way to visit us someday". Enjoy your evening!

Nigel S Brown

Dr. Nigel Brown

