

This Issue: Special Edition - Carnevale!

LICS Bollettino Periodico

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L'Osservatore Lancastriano

Salve a tutti,

February's weather is cold and often damp almost everywhere in Italy. That dampness is evident with snow in the mountains, and snow can get down into the lower elevations, too. Here in Lancaster it is traditionally very cold with the chance of a major snowfall or two. Che fortuna per noi!

Of the Italian holidays that stick to the same dates every year, February offers few occasions.

Valentine's Day isn't much of a big deal in Italy as it is here in America, although there is some recognition of it in shop windows, and younger generations are apt to give one another flowers and chocolates.

One of the biggest festivals in Italy often occurs in February. Carnevale, as it's called in Italian, moves every year according to the liturgical calendar, with dates ranging from late January through early April. This year the Carnevale dates are in late February to early March. This issue of the bollettino focuses on the traditions of various Carnevale celebrations in Italy. Enjoy!

Salute e Buon Anno! - *Rudy DeLaurentis*

Save the Date: February, 27, at The Oaks.

LICS member *Tim Austin Liddell* will present a program for us about his experience working on the archeological site of Pompeii. Details to follow in an Eblast.

Our deepest sympathies to David Ferruzza and family, on the passing of his wife, Betty. And to Michael Santivenere and family on the passing of his sister Linda Hilton.

Officers & Board of Directors Positions for Election Meeting, March 2022

Nominations Accepted:

Office	Term	Nominee
President	2 Years	Nella Seward
Vice President	2 Years	Jeannie Hubbs
Secretary	2 Years	Deb Saporetti
Treasurer	2 Years	J. D. Roda

Board Members

John Day	2 Years
Tony Fisichella	2 Years
Patti Meyer	2 Years
Livia Riley	1 Year
Dee Viscardi	1 Year
Dolores Biedenkapp	1 Year

We sincerely thank the following officers and board members who have completed their terms and are not returning: Rosemary LaFata, Pete Costanzo, Mary Cae Williams, Pete Byrne, Tony Lombardo, and Marianne Rossini. Their efforts, commitment, and service to LICS have been outstanding!



Congratulations to Dee Viscardi and family on the birth of her "great grandson **Myles**, 6 lb., 11 oz. Jordon and Ashley you are both blessed with a beautiful son."

Carnevale by Marian Caroselli

It seems that by Christmas we are already tired of winter, which is barely a week old, and we have little of which to look forward to get us through the doldrums. If ever there was a reason to visit Italy this time of year, surely Carnevale is it.



Venice Carnevale - Masked Lovers (2010)

Carnevale is an Italian word that means, literally, “Goodbye to meat!” It refers to the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, the traditional Christian period of 40 days before Easter, a period of abstaining from meat and other pleasures of the flesh. So, it was the day to get those last enjoyments in. “Mardi Gras” (French for “Fat Tuesday”) refers to the same day. Also known as “Shrove Tuesday”. Celebrations are held all over Italy from Venice and Milan down to the villages and towns of Sicily.

Starting about a month before Ash Wednesday, Carnevale in Italy brings a burst of color to the dark, cold months of winter. Every Italian city in February is invaded by parades, masks, confetti, lights and colors to create a unique party atmosphere. Revelers in Italy celebrate for multiple weekends. One must have a sense of humor “A Carnevale ogni scherzo vale” “It’s Carnival and any joke or prank is thus forgiven”! Of ancient origins, today it is a folkloric event of tradition and entertainment. You can find traditional Carnevale sweets in the bakeries and plenty of tricks and mischief.

Since fasting will soon begin, decadent food is a crucial part of the Carnevale period. Along the Amalfi Coast and throughout much of Southern Italy, people enjoy the traditional *migliaccio di polenta*, a savory cornmeal cake cooked over the stove. The succulent *lasagne di Carnevale* is a Neapolitan dish, packed with so much expensive

meat and cheese that, during Italy's poorer days, many families could only afford to make it once a year.

Throughout much of Italy, however, Carnevale is an occasion for sweet pastries, usually some sort of fritter dusted in sugar, easy to cook and even easier to eat. Though these fritters have different names in different regions — *chiacchiere* in Lombardy, *cenci* in Tuscany, and *frappe* in Rome — they're all essentially the same dessert. A dish from the Roman Empire may be their common ancestor. *Migliaccio* (lemon and ricotta cake) is like American cheesecake's lighter, fluffier cousin. *Fritole Veneziane* (Venetian Carnival fritters) are sugar-dusted donuts flavored with rum and lemon zest and contain pine nuts, raisins, and occasionally a custard, zabaglione, or pastry cream filling. *Tortelli Dolci* (baked sweet ravioli with ricotta and chocolate chips), unlike most Italian Carnevale desserts, is baked, not fried.



Cannoli (above) - Sicily's glorious, ricotta-filled fried wafers were originally a Carnevale dessert, but they're now popular year-round. *Pignolata* (fritters with honey and pine nuts) are small fritters tossed in honey, then sprinkled with nuts and festive candy confetti. They're similar to *struffoli*, a traditional Neapolitan Christmas sweet. It seems that when we in the United States are gearing up to go to the gym keeping our New Year's resolution to lose the holiday pounds we put on, the Italians are “full throttle” with their eating.

Undisputed protagonists of *Carnevale* are the **Masks**, from the Arabic “mascharà” which means ridicule or satire. Many masks still represent the typical characters of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, part of popular uses, spirit and history. These masks have survived over the centuries as they preserve aspects of local traditions.

Here are some of the best known and most

representative characters of the *Carnevale* tradition:

Arlecchino (Harlequin, pictured below) - from Bergamo/Lombardy, is a mischievous, greedy unintelligent slow thinker servant. Although less intelligent than most of the other characters, Arlecchino is never short of spontaneous and creative ideas to solve a problem in a plot. He wears a pouch on his belt called "scarsela" which is always empty and carries the "batocio" (stick).



Brighella- an eclectic young servant is a bully yet smart. Also from Bergamo, it is one of the oldest masks, dating back to the Middle Ages. The name Brighella comes from the word brigare (Italian for quarrel, trouble, intrigue).



Brighella

Pantalone (below), a 16th century Venetian mask, is a Venetian merchant, rich, greedy yet naïve. From merchant to nobleman he deals with people trying to take his gold, always losing against wit and improvisation.



Colombina (below) is another Venetian mask. Often the female version of Arlecchino. Colombina represents a lively and clever maid and is the subject of interest for Pantalone.



Pulcinella (below) from Naples/Campania is a philosophical, eternally melancholic, dreamer typical of the Neapolitan culture. Pulcinella has a spirit all of his own. His melancholic approach to life makes him coast problems, situations, live adventures. A positive approach to life is his winning strategy.



But the Italian Carnevale is not only masks, it is also floats, parades, festivals and rituals.

Among the most famous carnivals of Italy, a special mention goes to the Carnevale of Venice.

The first official document with which the Venice Carnevale was declared a public holiday dates back to 1296, and it is an edict by which the Senate of the Serenissima Republic declared a public holiday the day preceding Lent. Set up by the Venetian oligarchy to give to the population a period dedicated to fun and festivities, its dominant feature is the masking, thought to cancel any class system, sex or religion. Today the Carnevale of Venice is a picturesque festival considered unique for its history, forms and atmospheres. Known and appreciated throughout the world, the festival each year attracts thousands of tourists. During the two weeks of Carnival everyone can attend and take part in numerous events and the many open air shows that invade the Venetian city. Among the most fascinating moments of the Venetian carnival is the spectacular Angel Flight (or Flight of the Dove), which is also linked to tradition. This spectacular event includes a live acrobat making a descent from the top of the San Marco Bell Tower to Palazzo Ducale.



Puglia is the Italian region with the highest number of Carnevale celebrations: from Massafra to Gallipoli, from Dauno in Manfredonia, it is a continuous succession of masked parades and dancing. The Carnevale of Putignano, a village in the province of Bari, located in the Murgia of Trulli and caves and immersed in the Itria Valley, offers the longest ever *Carnevale* as it starts on December 26 and ends on Shrove Tuesday with an evening parade and the Carnevale funeral. This *Carnevale* dates back to 1394, making it one of the oldest carnivals in Europe. Tradition says that by acting in local dialect verses and improvised satire arose the custom of "Propaggini", a custom that is still the heart of the local carnival tradition.

For several hours in a row, dozens of poets take stage to recite satirical verses in rhyme in dialect. Putignano's carnival is also a magnificent procession of papier-mâché floats through the streets of town.



Putignano, the Carnival of the Murgia

Considered one of the most beautiful carnivals of Sicily is the Carnevale of Acireale, a magnificent baroque town in the province of Catania. The festival has an ancient tradition that began in 1500 as a big spontaneous demonstration in which the local population participated and began the custom of throwing rotten eggs and oranges on the streets. At the beginning of the 18th century this carnival practice was banned. It was refined and enriched thanks to the "abbatazzi", popular poets who improvised rhymes on the streets of Acireale. The "cassariata" was introduced in the 19th century where stately horse carriages, reserved for the city nobles, who would throw bursts of confetti to the spectators. It is only in the 1930s when papier-mâché masks pulled by oxen turned into floats surrounded by characters and satirical groups on the move. Today it is even more spectacular, as the Acireale Carnevale features flowered floats which attract thousands of tourists each year.



Floats run through the streets of Cento

The Cento Carnevale takes place in the picturesque town of Cento, in the province of Ferrara, Emilia Romagna region. This Carnevale has ancient origins as evidenced by a 1615 fresco of the painter from Cento Gian Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercin. It represents "the Berlingaccio", a local mask during a feast offered to the people on Shrove Tuesday.

The parade of floats begins in the early afternoon and crosses the old town several times. Musicians and people in masks dance the streets. This takes place on the five Sundays preceding Lent.



Ancient Roman license seems to have found fertile ground in Fano, in the Marche region, home to one of the most famous carnivals in Italy. For over a month the streets and the city's people are stripped of their usual habits as they jump into the whirlwind of parties and parades that the Fano Carnevale offers in a carefree spirit. Few know that Fano began Carnevale celebrations in medieval times, more precisely during the reconciliation of the two most important families of the city, the Del Cassero and the Da Carignano. The Carnevale of Fano is one of the sweetest carnivals in the world, as there is a real battle

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fought with tons of chocolates. Tons and tons of sweets, candies and chocolates are thrown from the floats on to the crowd.



Famous throughout Italy and abroad, is the Historic Carnevale of Ivrea, a town in the northern Piedmont region. This is one of the oldest festivals, proclaimed in 1808. The festival has several characters and historical figures enacting the battle, a rebellion against tyranny--an insurgency that finds its culmination in the spectacular historical procession and in the striking *Battle of the Oranges*, which involves the entire city and fills the air with color and perfume. The spirit of the Historic Carnevale commemorates the expulsion of the tyrant from the city which took place in the Middle Ages. The teams of orange throwers defend their squares while parading through the streets of the city. The procession of Mugnaia distributes sweets and gifts to the population.



Battle of the Oranges

Among the many attractions of the Tuscany region, The Carnevale of Viareggio greets thousands of people every year from Italy and abroad. It began in 1873 as a masked rebellion of the rich merchants unhappy to pay high taxes. Over the years its main feature has become undoubtedly the big, colorful and lively float, which features political and satirical figures of modern day. The huge caricatures feature extraordinary creative mechanics with movements and complex and grandiose scenic effects.



Carnevale di Viareggio

Carnevale di Viareggio runs from February 12– March 5, 2022. As of January 2022, the Battle of Oranges is canceled. Carnevale di Cento and Carnevale di Putignano are unconfirmed.

Carnevale sayings:

A Carnevale ogni scherzo adesso vale! – At Carnevale, anything goes!

Le maschere – The masks

Fare gli scherzi – To play jokes

Le manifestazioni – Big displays & street decorations

I festeggiamenti – Festivities

In buona compagnia – In good company

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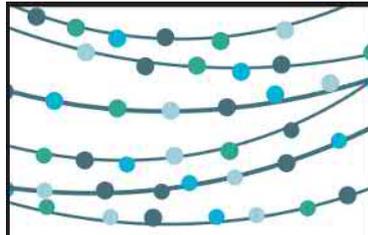


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