

History of Venetian Carnevale Masks in Period

Class by Lady Isabetta Orsini

<https://isabettaorsini.wordpress.com> email: schnibb77@yahoo.com

- I. Carnevale: A time to have fun and let loose before the beginning of Lent
 - A. Carnevale season from December 26 through the beginning of Lent
 - B. 1094: 1st mention of Carnevale in Venice
 - C. 1296: first recorded celebration of Venetian Carnevale
 - D. Etymology
 - E. Roots of Carnevale may reach back farther than we know
 - F. Liston: parade of costumes/wealth taking place at the beginning of Carnevale
 1. Excesses in displays of wealth lead to sumptuary laws
 - G. Shrove Thursday & Shrove Tuesday
 1. Held masquerades, bullfights, acrobatics, bridge battles, performances, dances, regattas, comedies, fireworks, etc
 - H. Discourse Against Carnevale, 1607
- II. Mask Wearing
 - A. Up to 6 months of the year masks were permitted
 - B. Masks worn in multiple places, not just for frivolity and revelry
- III. Mask Legislation: much of what we know/presume about masking in Venice is due to the legislation that survived
- IV. Mask-Making as a Profession
 - A. April 10, 1436: Painter's guild reorganized to include mascareri
 - B. Between 1530-1600 11 new members joined the Painter's Guild/Mascareri
 - C. Worked on volti/"faces" in fine, waxed canvas or oil cloth or papier mache
 - D. Tommaso Garzoni's Piazza Universale di Tutte le Professioni del Mondo 1585
- V. Common Types of Masks/Costumes
 - A. Etymology of word mask
 - B. Bauta/Larva/Volto: "noble" or "national" mask of the Serene Republic
 - C. Moretta aka Muta: black velvet mask held in place by a button/bead in mouth
 - D. Gnaga: primarily worn by men dressing as women
 - E. Mattasin aka Il Mattacino:
 - F. "Spiriti Folletti": traditional Venetian short cape aka zendale
 - G. Commedia d'ell Arte Mask - not commonly worn by everyday citizens as considered to be for the stage only
 - H. Plague Doctor Mask: believed to be French in origin
- VI. The End of Mask Wearing
 - A. Downfall of the Venetian Serene Republic in July 1797
 - B. 1930's the fascist dictatorship completely outlawed even private balls
 - C. 1980's Carnevale was resurrected



Carnevale revelers wearing forms of the bauta/larva/volto masks with hats and veils, 1610 Giacomo Franco. Image courtesy of the British Museum.

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