



# La Notizia Italiana

*POINTers in Person: Lou Costello Chapter #15*

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## ***Rome Revives Carnevale Tradition***

*Jan 28th, 2010  
Words by Pat Eggleton*

The cities of Rome and Venice will be twinned for the Carnival season this year with Rome reviving traditions that have not been seen in the city since the seventeenth century. From 6th - 16th February the streets and squares of Rome will become a massive Carnival space, peopled with masked characters, musicians, actors, dancers and horse riders.

**The fun begins on February 6th** with a procession from the Piazza del Popolo and along via del Corso, retracing the steps of the fifteenth century horse race, the Corsa dei Berberi.



There will be other parades throughout the ten days and from 6th - 11th February the Piazza del Popolo will become the "Villaggio della Cultura e della Tradizione", organized by the Accademia dell'Arte Equestre.

From 6th - 16th February the Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Navona and the Piazza di Spagna will also host commedia dell'arte performances, some of which will be especially for children.

From 9th February the Museo di Roma will host the Carnevale Romano Exhibition which will show ninety nineteenth century paintings and engravings depicting the Rome Carnival. A dress designed by Roberto Capucci and previously shown at the Museo Fortuny in Venice will also be on display along with several unpublished sketches for carnival costumes.

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The Galleria Sordi shopping mall will host musical costume parties over the ten days and there will be a special Valentine's Day Parade featuring performers from Latin American countries. Singer Angelo Branduardi will perform at the "Futuro Antico" concert which will wind proceedings up on February 16th. Oh, and we mustn't forget the fireworks!  
*Rome Carnival: 6th - 16th February 2010.*



### **Italian Carnival: Festivities, Costumes, and History**

*written by David Anderson limited rights reserved  
ViewItaly.blogspot.com*

Carnival is not widely celebrated in the US. The transgression is limited to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a beautiful city destroyed by Mother Nature and forgotten by many. Others are thinking about stocks, bonds, expanding corporate margins, reducing inventories and labor costs, and Return on Investment. I am thinking about costumes, parades, parties, scintillating conversation, dancing in the streets, eating sweets and pastries made just once a year and drinking Prosecco. The period of Carnival begins with the Epiphany on the 6th of January and lasts through the beginning of Lent, 40 days before Easter. The greatest parties and parades are either on Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras, or Fat Thursday.

Carnival is an antique festivity. As most of our contemporary holidays, the Story of Carnival predates the Roman Empire. It is a period of equalization and over the years has even been quite violent. Some of these traditions of Carnival remain part of the celebration today although they have been toned down a bit.

Over the centuries theater characters, called costumes, were introduced. These personalities represent the basic characteristic of the period and the location in which it was created. Again most things, these characters also have a political meaning. The primary costumes are: Pulcinella (Naples), Panta-

lone (Venice), Balanzone (Bologna), Brighella (Bergamo), Arlecchino (Bergamo), Colombina (Venice), Mamuthones In Mamoiada (Sardegna), Beppe Nappa (Sicily), Meneghino (Milan), Gianduia (Torino) and Stenterello (Florence).

As all things Italian Carnival has its own food, prepared exclusively in this period. There are: Chiacchiere, Cicerchie, Frittelle di mele, Frittelle di Carnevale, Migliaccio, Mini krapfen alla crema, Nastri di Carnevale, Orruviolos, Smacafam, Tortelli di Carnevale alla milanese, and Zeppole. Each pastry or sweet represents the local culture and available ingredients. They are marvelous with local wines and grappa. When they appear, Carnival is near. Their flavor is that of their land and they are favorites of children of all ages.

Some cities have well known parades and parties. Carnival in Venice is a voyage to another time. All Italians, from across the world, follow the Carnival in Viareggio. They boast massive parades with floats, costumes from centuries past and parties where the participants can experience the life of nobility.

No matter where you are Carnival can be fun, give in, leave behind the things that make you an adult and embrace your childish desires. Who knows, you may see the world in a different way.





## Carnevale in Venice

by Anthony Parente ([Italiansareus.com](http://Italiansareus.com))

The Carnevale is one of the long standing traditions of the city of Venice. There is some question as to when the first Carnevale actually took place. It was either during the 11th century when Venice struck a deal that made them one of the most powerful maritime cities in the World causing the people to celebrate, or it was during the 12th century when the Repubblica della Serenissima won its independence and people rejoiced in San Marco square drinking and dancing.

No matter when the first Carnevale actually took place this event has turned into one of the greatest festivities in the world. One of the great traditions associated with the Carnevale is the costumes and in particular the masks worn by the people. Masks became such an intrigal part that the artisans that created them were even recognized with their own guild in 1436.

Throughout the history of the Carnevale many masks have been worn. Some masks only existed briefly and can only be found in art work. While others have passed the test of time and have been worn for centuries with some slight modifications.

Masks can range from your favorite pet to aliens to figures of the Renaissance period. Of all the types of masks & costumes the *Arlecchino*, *Pantalone*, *Pulcinella* and *El Dotor* seem to be the most popular.

The Carnevale is a great opportunity for people to put on a costume and forget who they are. There are no worries of social class. You can be who ever you want to and enjoy the festivities to the fullest. The rich could mingle with the poor and in some cases men & women could go around and have sexual interludes with whomever they encountered without ever revealing their true identity.

If you are in Venice during the Carnevale and you are in need of a mask don't panic. You should be able to find them in almost every corner you visit or store you shop in. If you can't attend and want to get one for a souvenir you can try [La Fondazione](#) or [Masks of Venice](#).

In recent years there has been a revival in the creation of masks, which has carried over to the people of Venice and once again the Carnevale has returned to one of the greatest festivals in the world.

## Free entertainment and public shows

Throughout the Carnival period there is plenty of entertainment to be had around St. Mark's Square and the adjacent Piazzetta. A programme of events takes place in the Piazza, open to everyone. Apart from the organized events, there is a lot of fun to be had costume-spotting. Costumed characters parade and preen throughout the day, happily posing for armies of photographers.

To add to the festival atmosphere, there are usually refreshment stalls in the Piazza selling snacks and drinks like mulled wine, local Bellini cocktails and the local speciality *fritelle*.



## The Flight of the Turk (or the Angel)

In the mid-1500 during Carnival time a young Turkish acrobat is said to have accomplished something unheard of in Venice. He walked on a rope, with the help of a balancing rod, from a boat moored in front of San Marco square all the way to the bellfry of the belltower (Campanile) of Saint Mark. It was an astounding act and the Venetian people were so struck by it that it became a traditional event during the annual Carnival, it was called "The flight of the Turk". It usually took place on the last Thursday before Lent in front of a crowd composed of people, noblemen and the Doge.

In the following years the "flight" was always carried out by professional acrobats until some Arsenalotti (workmen of the naval dockyard) tried to do it. They took so much pride in the Flight that they specialized in the act.

Through the years the Flight changed and became an official ceremony divided into three steps, which the so-called Turk had to perform (also called Angel because of the wings he had to wear):

- 1: walk on a rope up to the top of the belltower;
- 2: come down performing somersaults to the loggia of the Doge's palace where the Doge, together with foreign ambassadors and politicians, would give him flowers or cards with poems;
- 3: walk back up to the top of the belltower.

The Doge would often give the Turk some money instead of flowers.

There were numerous ways of climbing up and down the belltower, some of them were technologically complex and used double and triple ropes, winches and tricks to compensate gravity.

The show was not always the same, during the 1680 Carnival a man called Sante da Ca' Lezze managed to climb up to the bellfry riding a horse. He then climbed up to the very top of the tower and performed somersaults. The following year, he climbed the tower on a boat, pretending he was rowing, like a real comedian and performed balancing acts in the last part of the climb.

Sometimes there were several Flights at the same time. In 1760 four men climbed the tower: the first one riding a satyr, the second on a boat, the third carried two little cannons tied to his chest and the fourth one performed such thrilling balancing acts that the crowds held their breath.

There were accidents, too. In 1759 a man named Nane Bailo, of the Arsenalotti family, fell to the ground among the horrified crowd. These accidents were the reason why the acrobat was finally dismissed in favor of a big wooden dove containing flowers and confetti to sprinkle on the onlooking crowd during its descent.

This is how the Flight of the Turk became the Flight of the Dove.

The adaptation in recent years of an old tradition involves an 'angel' (in 2007 this was a female swimming champion; in 2008 the rapper Coolio; in 2009 fashion dynasty member Margherita Missoni) swinging on harnesses from the belltower into the Piazzetta San Marco.

One of the big events is the afternoon parade of costumes on a catwalk in St. Mark's Square.

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## The Masks and Costumes

### Bauta

The Bauta wasn't only used during the carnival; for the Venetians, it was used on a variety of occasions. The Bauta consists of:

- a black veil or cloak
- a black tricorne
- a white mask

To the mask was attached a large black full-cut mantle which came down from the head over the shoulders to half-way down the body. On the head went the traditional three-cornered hat (the tricorne) and on the face a white mask which had a stretched-out protruding upper lip underneath a tiny nose which changed the tone of the voice thus making whoever wore this costume totally unrecognizable.

This mask was extremely popular with the Venetians, and they were prepared to pay large amounts to have the very best lace and the highest quality fabrics. In 1742, the "Magistrato delle pompe" attempted to stem this ridiculously wasteful practice with various decrees. The Venetians got round this decree by using their cloaks, extremely useful to both men and women, for hiding their magnificent costumes and precious jewels.



The bauta was worn by both men and women. It was obligatory for theatre-going women, but was forbidden to young girls waiting to be married.

During carnival Venetians, men and women alike, allowed themselves to

break every law and the bauta was ideal for remaining anonymous and thus for getting up to all manner of mischief. It is said that even monks and nuns wore the bauta to disguise the occasional love affair. The cloak helped to hide people breaking the law during the carnival. It doubled up over the shoulders and was made of either cloth or silk according to the season, was either white or turquoise (or scarlet if a gala was on) and was sometimes frilly and sometimes had tassels (in the military style). It was very popular with women too (dark in winter, white in summer).

### El Medico dea Peste (The Plague Doctor)

One of the worst scourges for the city of Venice was without any doubt the Plague, which struck the city on several occasions.



Because of this the "Plague Doctor" isn't a real mask but was a disguise used by local plague doctors who went on visits wearing this strange costume to people afflicted with plague.

The costume itself is quite particular: the doctor wore a tunic of pure linen or waxen cloth and gave him the appearance of a large bird (more than anything else, he was considered to be like a mournful vulture...).

He wore spectacles on the mask and furthermore always had his trusty staff with which he removed the clothes of plague-victims, thinking that in this way the terrible epidemic would not bring him any harm.

### Arlecchino (Harlequin)



Harlequin is always dressed as a humble serf or a porter as in Carlo Goldoni's "Servant to two Masters". The Harlequin costume consists of a jacket and trousers made of irregularly-shaped colored material, a white felt cap occasionally with rabbit or fox fur. He always wears a belt with a wooden spatula hanging from it. He wears a black half-mask with demonic features (legend has it that the name Harlequin derives from a demon called Alchino cited by Dante Alighieri in Inferno part of the "Divine Comedy". He sometimes has a bristly moustache and eyebrows and a large nose. A typical part of the Harlequin costume is the red lump on the head.

## Colombina



In the commedia dell'arte, a malicious yet charming servant-girl, a comical character not always a mirror of virtue like her eternal suitor Harlequin, Colombina is likeable on account of her coquetry and feminine shrewdness.

She is also known not only as Colombina but also as Arlecchina, Corallina, Ricciolina, Camilla and Lisetta and later becoming the elegant Mariornette in Carlo Goldoni's "Crafty Widow".

The costume is simple, similar to Harlequin's with numerous multicolored patches.

She wears a white cap, the same color as her apron. Sometimes, she looks like a servant girl from the 18th century and is rarely seen wearing a mask. Colombina speaks Tuscan dialect but, like her lover, doesn't disdain other dialects.

## Pantalone (Pantaloen)

This is the best-known of the Venetian masks. From its first appearance amongst the theatrical commedia dell'arte companies, Pantaloen "the Magnificent" spoke in unadulterated Venetian dialect. It is said his name derives from San Pantaleone, one of the city's most venerated saints after whom a church is even named. Others say the name comes from "Piantaleoni" referring to the merchants who went to "plant the lion" of San Marco in conquered lands, places where it was possible to establish new trade. Grevembroch affirms that the term is even older and stems from a Greek expression, "Panda Leonda" meaning "Powerful in all things".



Pantaloen is an old merchant, often very rich and highly esteemed by the nobility, but sometimes a merchant in ruin (Pantalon de' Bisognosi). In either case he is still a very special old man because despite his age he is still capable of making amorous advances which never conclude in a positive way.

He is a hard-nosed businessman, to the point of sacrificing the happiness of his sons and family harmony just so he can arrange some advantageous marriage.

The costume consists of a Greek woolen cap, a red jacket, short belted breeches with a sword, or a hanky or a bag hanging from the belt. He wears a black cloak over his shoulders lined with red on the inside, black slippers or Turkish babouches with the ends pointing upwards. The mask reveals a large hooked nose, accentuated eyebrows and a curious goaty beard, which he usually strokes with his fingers.

The Pantaloen costume is amongst the most popular during the carnival period in that it was a mask that represented something extra - at a time when the nobility was losing itself to luxury and frivolities, Pantaloen represents a commercial mind and a business acumen that was starting to take off amongst the Venetian bourgeoisie.



## Pulcinella (Punch)

This is a Neapolitan mask originating in Campania whose physical aspect make it look like a cockerel. The nose has the form of a beak which ancients called "pullus gallinaceus" It is thought the etymology of the word derives from the word "Pulliciniello" that is pulcino or chick.

Like Harlequin, Punch is a stupid servant who sometimes takes on contradictory personalities. He can be both stupid and astute, bold and cowardly and has an extremely lively expressiveness typical of Neapolitans.

Tiepolo immortalized more than one in paintings in the villa of Zianigo which can now be marveled at in the museum of the 18th century in Venice.

The costume consists of a white coat constrained by a belt, a long hat and a black mask which highlights a hooked nose and wrinkles.

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## Carnevale Recipes

No celebration is complete without food. And as we of Italian heritage know, food is a celebration in itself. The simplest of foods can be turned into a work of art. I hope you enjoy these recipes taken from *Celebrating Italy* by Carol Field, Harper Perennial, 1990.

### **Bugie - Fried Ribbons of Dough**

#### *Ingredients:*

1 1/2 cups of unbleached all-purpose flour  
 1 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter (room temperature)  
 1 1/2 tablespoons of sugar  
 Scant 1 tablespoon liqueur (rum, Cognac, or Grand Marnier)  
 1 large egg  
 pinch of salt  
 Grated zest of 1 orange  
 1 1/2 teaspoons of vanilla extract  
 3-4 tablespoons of milk  
 4 cups olive or sunflower oil  
 Confectioners' sugar

*By Hand:* Set the flour in a mound in a large bowl or on a work surface and make a well in it. Set the butter, sugar, liqueur, eggs, salt, orange zest, and vanilla in the center and mix them together.

Slowly incorporate these ingredients into the flour, a little at a time, adding whatever amount of milk is necessary to make a dough. Knead until the dough is smooth and firm, 10-12 minutes. Cover with a tea towel and leave 45-60 minutes.

With a rolling pin roll the dough out very fine on a lightly floured work surface until it is 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick. Using a ravioli cutter or a knife, cut the dough into ribbons about 4-5 inches long and 1-1 1/4 inches wide. In some places it is customary to tie a knot in the center or twist the ribbon twice and pinch it closed in the center. Elsewhere bakers cut the dough into rectangles and make two parallel short cuts in the center.

Heat abundant oil in a heavy deep-sided pan to 350 degrees F and fry a few of the ribbons at a time very, very quickly - 20 seconds at the most. Drain on plates with absorbent paper towels and sprinkle well with confectioners' sugar. (Makes 70-80 ribbons)

(These are also known as "nastri suore, nuns' ribbons." Other regional names for this dough are: "chiacchiere" (gossips in Lombardy), "chiacchiere

di suora" (nun's gossip in Parma), "bugie" (lies in Piedmont), "lattughe" (lettuces or "sfrappole" from Emilia-Romagna, "cenci" (rags and tatters in Tuscany), "crostoli" from the Trieste and Friuli areas, "galani" (Veneto), and "frappe" (Umbria).

### **Polenta Dolce:**

#### **Sweet Polenta Cake from Ivrea**

#### *Ingredients:*

6 eggs  
 1 cup sugar  
 2 cups whole-wheat pastry flour  
 3 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon potato flour  
 1/3 cup finest-grind cornmeal  
 pinch salt  
 1/2 cup raisins, soaked in 1/4 cup rum, drained but rum reserved  
 3 tablespoons chopped candied orange peel or the grated zest of 1 orange  
 1 tablespoon and 1 teaspoon honey  
 1/2 cup + 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted, cooled, sediment at bottom discarded  
 grated zest of 1 lemon or 1/2 tsp. lemon extract  
 grated zest of 1 orange or 1/2 tsp. orange extract

Whisk the eggs and sugar together over low heat until they are tepid. Remove from heat and keep beating in a mixer or with a whisk until the mixture is thick, lemon-colored, glossy, and can hold a ribbon for 3 seconds.

You'll know it is thick enough when you can write your initials and they stay there for 3 seconds. Pour the mixture - it will pour in ribbons - into wide-mouthed bowl, so you can sift in the flour without delating the dough.

Sift together the flours, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. Return to the sifter and gently sift them over the egg mixture in 3 additions, folding them in very carefully, trying to deflate the mixture as little as possible. Add the raisins and candied orange peel and when they are well incorporated, the honey, melted butter, rum, and the lemon and orange zests or flavorings.

Butter a 9 1/2-inch springform pan, line the bottom with parchment paper, and coat the sides with cornmeal or with polenta. Gently pour the batter into it. Baking: Heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Bake until the cake is lightly golden, 35-40 minutes. (Makes one 9 1/2-inch cake)



### **POINTEr in Person**

The POINTEr In Person program, an autonomous branch of **POINT - (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together)** was founded in 1992. Our group, Chapter 15, was organized in September 1996. The 21 nationwide chapters of POINTEr In Person provide genealogical researchers an opportunity to meet socially, and learn and share information pertinent to Italian research. Each chapter is independent and sets forth its own procedures and schedules of events.

We cordially invite Italian genealogical researchers to attend our quarterly meetings. Membership is open to all. In addition to regular meetings our group takes occasional field trips to genealogical research sites in the New Jersey/New York area.

Membership in our parent organization, POINT, is not a prerequisite to joining our group; however, it is highly recommended.

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POINTEr In Person

Chapter 15

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## **Calendar**

### **POINT Chapter 15 Future Meetings:**

Elmwood Park Municipal Building, 10 AM

#### **Future Meetings:**

May 1, 2010

August 7, 2010

November 6, 2010

### **Passaic County Genealogical Society:**

10 AM, Lambert Castle:

#### **February 13:** Meeting:

*"Palaeographically Speaking:*

*Getting a Grip on Difficult Handwriting?"*

*Daniel Donatucci, Presenter*

#### **March 13:** Meeting, Genealogy Club

### **Passaic County Historical Society:**

#### **March 3:** Quarterly Meeting

7 PM, Lambert Castle

*"The Titanic, Part 2: Journey to the Ocean Floor"*

*Charles Haas, Presenter*

### **Lambert Castle Events:**

#### **January through February:**

*Exhibit: A Playroom From Another Time*

#### **For more information on PCHS**

#### **& Lambert Castle Events:**

973- 247-0085 ext 200

[www.lambertcastle.org](http://www.lambertcastle.org)

### **Genealogy Society of Bergen County:**

7PM, Ridgewood Library

#### **February 22:** Meeting:

*"Exploring the 1940 Census"*

*Christopher Zarr, Presenter*

#### **March 22:** Meeting:

*"Irish Genealogy:*

*Help, the Faerie Folk Hid My Ancestors"*

*Deborah Large Fox, Presenter*

#### **April 26:** Meeting:

*"How to Trace Your Italian Ancestors"*

*Trish Mirarchi, Presenter*

#### **Additional Information:**

[www.njgsbc.org](http://www.njgsbc.org)

**E-Mail:** [gsbc@gmail.com](mailto:gsbc@gmail.com)

### **Hudson County Genealogical Society:**

#### **Future Meetings:**

11 AM: Secaucus Public Library

**February 13**

**March 13**

**April 10**