

Corpus christi dances in valencian community

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Corpus Christi

The festival began in 1263

Sunday, sixty days after Easter is the day of a celebration that was considered as “the great festival” of the city. Beyond the Catholic religious perspective, Corpus Christi is a demonstration of the coexistence of the religious, symbolic, metaphorical, festive spirit in Valencian society.

The festival began in 1263, but it was not until 1355 that the Bishop of Valencia, Hugo de Fenollet, (who, just five years before had baptised San Vicente Ferrer) instigated the procession.

The Dance of the “Nanos” and the “Gegants”:

A ritual dance that dates as far back as 1588; four pairs of Gegants (giants) and three pairs of Nanos (dwarves) dance to the rhythm and melody of the Tabalet and the Dolçaina (tambourine and flute). The Gegants symbolise faith in the Eucharist throughout the world. The coming together of the Nanos and the Gegants shows that people of all kinds adore and worship the Lord.



CABALGATA DEL CONVITE (INVITATION PARADE)

An invitation is extended to everyone by a priest mounted on a horse and dressed in a black cape much like Zorro sans the mask. The parade involves many medieval and baroque dances led by different groups. The most famous is **La Moma i els Momos** dating from 1459 but there are plenty others. There are so many different dances but these are perhaps the most significant:

La Moma i els Momos: La Moma is a man dressed as a woman in white with his/her face covered and the momos are men dressed in yellow and black suits with a black mask and hat representing a dragon. The momos representing the seven deadly sins dance around La Moma representing virtue and at the end the seven deadly sins are defeated by virtue.

Gegants i Nanos: This is a deeply rooted tradition that is celebrated all over Spain although it is known as Gigantes and Cabezudos in most places. The Gegants (Giants) are dressed within a tall frame and a paper mache head representing the 4 continents (Europe, Asia, Africa & America) coming together to celebrate the body of Christ. *N.B. The main photo of my blog features the giants dressed in typical Valencian clothing.* The Nanos, on the other hand, are people with an oversized paper mache head placed on top of their own heads. The Gigantes and Cabezudos parade the streets and dance to traditional Valencian music.

Els Cavallets: This dance that is thought to be from 1615 features young boys dressed in Moorish clothing inside a cardboard horse with drapes to hide their feet.

La Magrana: This is similar to a Maypole dance but in this case the pole is topped with a pomegranate, a symbol important to Judaism. The dancers, representing Jews, interweave multicoloured ribbons around the pole and at the end of the dance the Jews pay homage to the body of christ which is revealed hidden inside the pomegranate.



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