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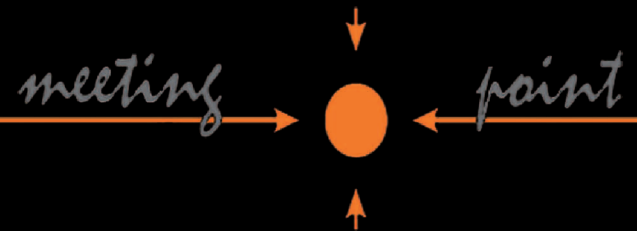


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La Paz – Bolivia, March 2011



GLOSSARY

1. CHOLITA Traditionally dressed Bolivian woman recognised by her braids, bowler hat and layered skirt
2. CHOLA PACEÑA Same as above, from La Paz
3. CUARESMA Lent - 40 days before Easter, traditionally for fasting
4. CERVEZA PACEÑA A popular lager from La Paz
5. CAPATAZ Slave-driver who leads the Caporales dance whilst cracking his whip
6. VIRGEN DEL SOCAYON Virgin of the Cave who, legend has it, appeared close to Oruro and became the key figure of devotion
7. ENTRADA The procession in which dancers parade through the streets during Carnival
8. ESPUMA Canned foam commonly blasted into the face of a gringo at Carnival at the hands of a local Bolivian child
9. CH'ALLA Ceremony that involves burning a pile of tabaco, and throwing flower petals and confetti to bring luck and prosperity. Takes place on the Tuesday of Carnival and seems to be an excuse for setting off a lot of fire crackers
10. SAPO A symbol of a toad believed to bring prosperity
11. GRAN PODER La Paz's biggest 'entrada' with a Carnival feel, held in May in devotion to the Señor de Gran Poder i.e. Jesus
12. ANATA Aymara word for 'celebration', which in Carnival occurs twice - combining the Nacha anata (grand celebration) and the Jishi'anata (little celebration)

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EDITORIAL

BY MADS RYLE

Before I arrived in Bolivia, you said 'carnival' to me and I'd have thought Rio de Janeiro. I might have been vaguely aware that New Orleans Mardi Gras had some kind of connection too, but I had no idea that London's Notting Hill Carnival in August came from Trinidad & Tobago's wildly sumptuous pre-Lent festival, or that Bolivia itself celebrates 'el Carnaval' more than Christmas. All the carnivals that recently took place around the world are set by the Christian calendar, and derive from the feasting and worship that traditionally take place before the period of self-denial during Lent, which began this year on Wednesday March 9th. But as you can read in the interview with historian and former Culture Minister Fernando Cajias on page 6, Carnival has its origins in Classical Greece and Rome (and perhaps, it is claimed, in ancient Egyptian worship of Isis and Apis). The requirement to use up all your meat, butter and eggs recalled those earlier pagan festivities, periods of Saturnalia between what later became Christmas and Easter, during which license and liberation were celebrated and the usual social order turned on its head. The chance to go wild under disguise was as tempting to our ancestors as it still is to Bolivian teenagers (and grandmothers) armed with cans of **espuma**. Meanwhile the February harvest period in Bolivia - like the impending spring in the northern hemisphere - helped enmesh the Catholic carnival which the French and Spanish brought to the New World with the cycles of nature and the animist beliefs which celebrate them in Andean society.

Along with the rest of the BX crew, I spent the Saturday of el Carnaval in Oruro (you can find first person accounts of the event on page 16, and a feast of photographs throughout). It was such an unbelievable sight that I outright forgot I'd only had an hour's sleep the previous night. As with carnival everywhere, very particular circumstances - to do with the mining industry and an appearance by the Virgin of the Candlemas in a certain cave - have given Oruro its idiomatic ceremony, and the slightly awkward-sounding accolade of 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' which UNESCO has bestowed upon it. The sheer effort that has gone into this spectacularly visual celebration is mind-boggling, with handmade costumes that defy belief as well as gravity (read more about how these are painstakingly created on page 12). To be able to handle the high heels, huge headpieces, or heavy heat of a bear costume (symbol of ancient beliefs of the local Uru population) while dancing the Morenada or Tinku all day for three days straight is no mean feat. Dancing, music, and a liberal dose of alcohol are the key features of 'el Carnaval' for most foreign visitors. But given the deeply symbolic nature of the dances - which include Caporales, Diablada, Kantus, Kullawada, Llamerada, Morenada, Potolo, Pujllay, Suri Sikuris, Tinku, Tobas and Waca Waca - what's it like to take part in one as a foreigner? Find out in our interview with two French participants on page 14. Back in La Paz we ate pancakes on Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras, Martes Gordo) to the accompaniment of a million fire-crackers, part of the enactment of the ch'alla. In Aymara tradiiton this is the day of Pachamama and Kunduru Mamani in which talismans are bought and flower petals scattered to bring luck and prosperity at work and home. So all it remains to say is enjoy our carnival Special, good luck to you, and put that chocolate down, it's **Cuaresma!**

Photo offer: Please note that the stunning Carnival photo featured on our back cover is available for sale, signed and framed. The profits will be split between the Bolivian Express project and the victims of the recent landslide in La Paz. See the back cover for contact details.

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in the glossary on page 3

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THE PEOPLE LIVE EL CARNAVAL

Dr. Fernando Cajias de la Vega is former Culture Minister for Bolivia, currently Professor of History and Deacon of Humanities and Education Sciences at San Andres University in La Paz, and a member of a Carnival collective. As such he's something of an authority on carnival traditions, and we were lucky to get time with him to tap into his expertise. Read on for a deeper insight into el Carnaval's history, economics, demographics, gender politics and more...

*N.B. 'carnival' (the English spelling) is used throughout to refer to the universal idea in its manifold instances. 'Carnaval' and 'el Carnaval' refer to specific instances of this phenomenon, especially those taking place in Bolivia.

TEXT: MADS RYLE - PHOTO: CAMILLA SWIFT



BX: Tell us something about the origins of the carnival, and the syncretism of Andean and Catholic traditions...

FC: Some call it syncretism, but others prefer to call it a religious symbiosis, more of a living experience than a union of two faiths. Carnival started in the West. It recovered the tradition, from the Saturnalias and Dionysian festivals of classical Greece and Rome, of the world in reverse, of transgression: night becomes more important than day, the streets are for dancing and not for cars...The Christians annulled many Roman festivals, but it's impossible to eliminate them all. Because for human beings to be festive is part of our nature. And the medieval festival that grew the most was carnival.

Carnival was brought here by the Spanish. 'Carnival', from Latin, means to say goodbye to meat prior to Lent, so its date is the same in the whole Christian world: the three days before the start of the forty days of Lent. But here, the Christian carnival united with Andean festivals or '**anatas**' of fertility and harvest. In the Andean farming cycle harvest starts in February, and with the union with Christianity the key date became the 2nd February, which is that of the Virgin of Candlemass. This

was the first union. But later, in Oruro in particular, the Virgin became associated with mining production. The Virgin of Oruro is the **Virgen del Socavón** [Virgin of the Cave] - the Virgin of the miners - but it is still the Virgin of Candlemass. But the other major association is with Tio de la Mina [a subterranean idol modelled on popular conceptions of the devil], who, for Aymaras and Quechuas, is the god of the mines.

In Oruro now the Virgin of Socavon is much more prominent than Tio de la Mina. A large majority believe that by dancing for the Virgen del Socavón they can obtain many more of their heart's desires. Which is the Andean idea of reciprocity: I dance for you, you help me. I invest in you, you help me. The most important dance in Oruro is the Diablada. The Diablada represents the Archangel Michael in battle against the cardinal sins. But in the Andean vision the devil is also Supay, the god of the underworld who, since it is carnival-time and everyone is distracted, comes up here and takes on a human appearance in order to dance.

The second most important dance is the Morenada...there is a dispute as to whether or not it represents the history

of black slavery, but in reality - since it costs so much, in terms of the costume, the band - what it represents these days is power.

BX: Isn't it said that this is an elitist dance - because only a certain group can become part of these fraternities?

FC: As with all festivals there are people who have money, and others who have to borrow it in order to dance. There are Morenadas with a lot of money and others who have less. But in the end, on the day of the parade everyone is equal, no? And it wasn't always like this. Before the Fifties there were two 'Carnavales', the elite and the popular. In Oruro they came together. Another important dance is the Caporales, in which there are also powerful groups, but above all it is a dance for young people.

BX: And what about women?

FC: In the last 20 years there has been this feminisation of the festival. Before then the men took part, and the women accompanied them without dancing. Today the women dance as much as the men, but there are male and female roles inside each dance. For example in the Diablada

the cardinal sins are represented by men, and the virtues are represented by women. But on the other hand the Archangel cannot be played by a woman. And the worst devil is a man disguised as a woman, la China Supay, who is the wife of Supay. There is positive and negative machismo. Women can't represent lust nor can they be the Angel.

There are dances in which men and women dance in the same way - the Morenada, the Kullawada are in pairs. The sense of the two in the Aymara cosmology is very strong, that you cannot have someone on their own. But in other dances, for example in the rural Carnaval of Tarabuco, men are warriors and women *ñustas* [virgins of the Incas who held a sacerdotal role], who accompany them to heal their wounds. But now in Oruro and La Paz, there are women who dance as warriors. This doesn't go down well in the countryside.

BX: It's an effect of modernity...

FC: Of course. And in the music bands, it was always the men who played all the instruments. There are more women in the dances each year, 60 per cent women for 40 per cent men

perhaps. But in the bands it's 80/20 the other way. But in general the incursion of women is enormous...if one removes a bear's mask [the bear is one of the personae in the Diablada], you often find women underneath. And women participate now as power, but also as a symbol of liberation, of beauty, of sensuality. Before it was impossible to see such short skirts... Now nearly all the dances have the female as their principal figure. In Santa Cruz the main figure is the Queen of Carnaval. But this exalting of feminine beauty also happens in Oruro and La Paz.

BX: How is Carnaval in Santa Cruz different to that in Oruro?

FC: In Oruro, el Carnaval is very folkloric - the Diablada, the Morenada, the Caporales, the Llameros, the Kullawas. They are traditional dances that have been transmitted generation to generation and in which the same costumes are maintained. In Santa Cruz, Carnaval is a little more like in Rio: the samba school has its rhythm but the theme changes each year. You can make effigies of football players, or comment on current affairs. The same thing happens in Santa Cruz. Each fraternity chooses a theme of the

moment, but they maintain a structure that includes the dance - the taquirari - and the Queen of Carnaval.

In La Paz it's more playful, it's the language of fun. The disguises, the masks. The central character in La Paz is 'el Pepino' [which literally means 'the cucumber'], a kind of Pierrot figure who can do what he wants during Carnival because he's masked.

BX: Where does the Pepino figure come from?

FC: There are records of him from the start of the 20th Century, but he probably existed before. El Pepino has more of an urban origin, more of a French influence, like a harlequin...They say that the people in La Paz are shy, and so putting on the Pepino mask transforms them. They play a lot of jokes. What's bad is that it goes to the other extreme. It's difficult to go and see el Pepino because he likes to play too many tricks with water.

BX: What do you think el Carnaval means for Bolivians in 2011?

FC: There is a division. There is a section of the Bolivian population which believes that the fiestas do us a lot of

harm, because there are many festivals throughout the year. So they think that in Bolivia we are too festive and should work more. But in reality when you compare our calendar, understanding that the fiesta is like a day off in European cities, they have more free days there than here. I think that festivals, by helping people to forget all their problems, allow Bolivia to be a much more peaceful society. And moreover, festivals are an important refuge for identity because in daily life I think many people have adopted Western habits, especially among young people. Whereas the fiesta is a great preserver of identity, that takes one back to different cultures outside of our globalised one.

It's important to note in these fiestas the social groups that represent themselves. The **chola Paceña**, the Afro-Bolivians dance as themselves. But in many other dances they appropriate another identity, for example the university groups - they dance the rural dances: the Llamera, the Kullawada, the Caporales. But the youth have given something new...the rhythm is the same, but the young people provide another kind of force. They have greatly urbanized the rural traditions, but I think it's for the good, because the rural keeps itself going. The urban is another thing. But still it recalls the rural, which serves greatly towards understanding the country.

BX: And I presume Carnival has a major economic importance for Bolivia? For tourism...

FC: It generates a lot of employment, for example among the costume makers, the musicians. In Oruro there is also touristic activity. But we fail to take more advantage of tourism. We're missing the politics in order to take advantage like in Rio, no? Because in the cultural industries Bolivia is weak...It's difficult to find economic data but yes, many millions get spent during Carnival. Those that spend most are the businesses, the beer companies. But they recover their investment.

BX: And the municipal governments of the various towns, do they spend a lot on Carnival?

FC: In Bolivia, since the country's founding, we have a weak state and a strong society. The same goes for the Carnival. Partici-



"THE ORURO CARNAVAL IS SET UP THUS: THE FRIDAY (BEFORE LENT) IS THE DAY OF TIODE LA MINA:

THE SATURDAY IS THE DAY OF THE VIRGIN OF SOCAVON. THE SUNDAY IS A DAY OF NO GODS, THE ONLY DAY SIMPLY FOR CARNIVAL, FOR THE GOD MOMO, THE GOD OF JOY. AND SO THE DEVILS CAN, FOR EXAMPLE, TAKE OFF THEIR MASKS TO DRINK ON SUNDAY. THE MONDAY IS THE DAY OF THE DEVIL. AND NOT ONLY FOR DANCES, BUT FOR ALL RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVIL. THE TUESDAY IS THE TUESDAY OF CH'ALLA, THE TUESDAY OF MOTHER EARTH, WHICH ALSO HAPPENS HERE IN LA PAZ. MOTHER EARTH AND KUNDURUMAMANI, THE ONE WHO PROTECTS WHAT ONE HAS. FOR EXAMPLE YOUR WORK, BUT BECAUSE ON THE TUESDAY EVERYTHING IS CLOSED. MANY PEOPLE PERFORM THESE RITES ON THE FRIDAY. IN ALL THE OFFICES. AND THE WEDNESDAY IN ORURO IS THE DAY OF SAPO AS WELL. BUT IT IS ALSO ASH WEDNESDAY IN THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR. FOR CHRISTIANITY IT ALL FINISHES ON ASH WEDNESDAY. BUT NOT IN ANDEAN COSMOLOGY, IN WHICH CARNAVAL CONTINUES UNTIL THE SUNDAY. HERE IN LA PAZ THE SUNDAY IS THE BURIAL OF PEPINO, AND IN THE RURAL WORLD THEY FINISH ALL THE RITES OF THE FIRST HARVEST."

pation by the state is minor. It's impossible that the municipality of Oruro could cover the costs involved...now what do they put in? Prizes, setting up the streets, clearing the rubbish (which is a major investment!). Before the state was at the margin of these events. But since these festivals became urban megafiestas, the President never misses them, nor the mayor, the magistrates or the members of parliament.

Communication media as well now plays an important role. At the start of the 20th Century, the media would say, "no, el Carnaval is something indigenous... how long are we going to go on with these customs?" Today the media has changed enormously, they celebrate carnival, and they cover it in its entirety. Thankfully here we haven't reached the point where the media controls the event. In other carnivals, like Rio itself, you can see that the media decides the timetable. Here they don't, but because they don't pay...In Rio the profits of each carnival group come from media rights. Here the government has said no.

BX: Any final thoughts?

FC: It's interesting to see that, before, carnival existed in all of Christian Europe and America. But this has been diminishing. Many cities and societies no longer have a carnival. Under the military dictatorships, in the Seventies, they suppressed carnival in Buenos Aires and Santiago. But as they say in Argentina, why have carnival, if it's for fun, since you can get this every weekend in the large cities anyway? And it's true.

So in the countries that maintain the carnival tradition, the fun is very important but there are other forces at work too. And in the case of Bolivia it's the search for identity...We have spoken about the major ones, but there is Carnival in every city, in each town and village, and each has its identity. The miners have their own Carnival. Those in the countryside have their Carnival.

So undoubtedly 'el Carnaval' is understood as diversion, as something that liberates and is a change from your daily existence. But here it has many identities, and the people live el Carnaval. And because of this it keeps going.

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL

PHOTO: Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic



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BX: Is your tattoo a representation of the Carnival Devil in Bolivia?

I: Yes, it's the famous figure from the Diablada, which is a 100% Bolivian folk dance. It is one of the most representative cultural symbols of Bolivia, especially in its relation to el Carnaval.

BX: What can you tell us about this Carnival character and its importance to Bolivian culture?

I: The devil mask is used in the Diablada, which is a dance which represents the fight between good and evil through the characters of angels and devils. This figure represents the joy of the Carnival de Oruro, which is part of our cultural heritage.

BX: What's the secret as to why Bolivians are so devoted to Carnival?

I: It seems to me that Carnival is a fiesta in which, for one weekend, people can forget their problems and dedicate themselves to celebrating life and its pleasures. It's a party that is very easy to fall in love with!

BX: What made you want to have a design with this meaning on your body forever?

I: I chose this image because for me it is a symbol of the fiesta which unites all Bolivians in celebration. It's a representation of Bolivian culture.

The principal figure of Carnival in La Paz is the beloved **Pepino**. Children in La Paz love this harlequin type character due to his mischievous nature - he is a real joker and loves to play tricks and pranks on people.

The disinterring of the Pepino is an old tradition that comes from a similar custom in Spain, where a sardine is dug up and then re-buried as a symbol of the beginning and end of the fiesta. Here in La Paz the Pepino is resurrected at the beginning of Carnival by being lifted out of a coffin into a burst of confetti. Dressed in a disheveled suit from his burial last year, the Pepino quickly changes costumes and plunges into the crowd with acrobatics and antics, his identity unknown until he removes his mask. Two years ago, Bolivia's first elected indigenous president, Evo Morales, delighted the parade by playing the part of the Pepino!



The Oruro Carnival is best known for its spectacular **Diablada** (Dance of the Devils). The Diablada is led by two lavishly costumed dancers representing Lucifer and the Archangel St Michael, followed by hundreds of devil dancers who leap and prance through the streets in brightly embroidered, multicoloured costumes. Amongst them are groups of she-devils known as China Supay, a carnal temptress. The Diablo dancers wear intricate masks festooned with bulging lightbulb eyes, long twisted horns, tangled hair and leering mouths.

The origins and meaning of the Diablada are multiple, which makes it an interesting example of the combination of Christian beliefs and Andean folklore. In essence, it represents the struggle between good and evil; The Archangel Michael triumphs over the Devil of Christian belief, but the dance is also a celebration of the devil as an incarnation of Huari, the pre-Columbian god of the underworld (closely related to El Tío de la Mina) who is the owner of the mineral wealth of the mines and the jealous patron of the miners, who dance in his honour.

Wearing a golden crown and carrying a sceptre as a symbol of authority, the **Rey Moreno** is the key figure of the Morenada dance. Their masks are sculpted and painted using various traditional African features, and the body of the costume comprises of multicolored disks that resemble fringed tambourines in a vertical accordion shape. The costumed Oruro dancers perform the Morenada dance in a slow and erratic stumbling motion from side-to-side, representing the forced labour of the mining slaves centuries ago.

The oral history of the countless folkloric festivities, in which the Morenos (Morenada dancers) have participated, is preserved in this image of the Rey Moreno.

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DANCING DEVILS AND CRAZY CUCUMBERS

TEXT: Camilla Swift

PHOTOS: Bianca Otero

TAKING TIME TO LEARN ABOUT SOME OF THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES OF CARNIVAL LEADS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE AND SINCERITY OF THE HOMAGE THAT ORURO - AND OTHER BOLIVIAN COMMUNITIES - PAY TO ITS HISTORY EACH YEAR.

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CREATING CARNIVAL

TEXT: Camilla Swift
PHOTO: Bianca Otero

Since arriving in Bolivia in February, I've been looking forward to Carnival, and my experience in Oruro last weekend certainly didn't let me down. Colourful streamers, confetti and banners lined the streets where children, armed with **espuma**, were spraying any unsuspecting passers by (gringos being amongst the most popular targets), and **cholitas** were selling **Cerveza Paceña** and a variety of typical Bolivian street food. Thousands of high-spirited spectators, dancers wearing the most colourful, eccentric costumes I have ever seen, accompanied by several bands, in the folklore capital of Bolivia: El Carnaval in Oruro was an amazing sight.

Everyone looks forward to Carnival but, for most, the three days of party and excitement are gone in a blur, while for the artisans who intricately create the costumes by hand, it is the culmination of months and months of hard work.

My second day after arriving in La Paz I went to Calle Los Andes to meet the artisans in their workshops, where everyone was busily working away on all the beautifully hand-

made carnival costumes. So elaborate and colourful are these outfits that, at first glance, it's hard to believe that they are indeed done with needle and thread. After having met these skilled artisans, and seen their work in action, I learnt that they are not only beautiful works of art but that each contains a wealth of meaning and tells its own story.

With Carnival less than a month away, for every craftsman time was precious. But between extremely busy schedules I was fortunate enough to be able to speak to artisans in three different workshops about their work. Genoveva Paredes and her nephew Franz Machicado specialize in embroidery, while Saturino Ibañez Paredes is a metalsmith, and Hilarión Casas a young man whose talent lies in making masks.

Genoveva Paredes, 40, whose parents also worked in embroidery, tells me about the process of making costumes from scratch: "After the measurements are taken, the fabric is put into a wooden frame, it is here that we start the embroidery,

using various components including pearls, sequins and beads. We make the costumes in large quantities, a hundred costumes per week, all embroidered by hand. We work from six am until one o'clock the following morning."

"Each dance tells a story" her nephew Franz Machicado, 34, explains, "The Caporales come from the Yungas - there's the **Capataz** for example, who managed the slave labourers, and the Diablada from the mines - all this is represented within the dance." His favourite dance is the Morenada: "I would love to dance the Morenada in Oruro, for the rhythm, music, the dance and its history, everything." He adds, "It's not only those who have money who dance, but of course those who have the dance in their heart, those who have devotion to the **Virgen del Socavón**."

Having worked on these costumes since October of last year, the beginning of Carnival is now only three weeks away but, despite the looming **entrada**, Machicado tells me that he and his family are feeling relaxed:

"As we get closer to Carnaval, at times it can get stressful, but we are also happy. We are excited to present the costumes and share them with everyone. It is satisfying to see all these costumes that we have made with care by hand, being

used by the dancers in Carnival. We travel to Oruro for Carnaval too, so we get to see it all in action which makes us feel joyful and satisfied."

A costume costs around \$240 - 270 and prices can vary due to the fluctuating price of material, but Machicado tells me that they lead a normal, simple and humble life, like any other person.

It's a family tradition that goes back generations. However, as Machicado explains, when someone wants to work in crafts but doesn't come from a family of artisans, they are taught step by step how to do everything: "It's like a school purely for embroiderers - a personal private school because there are no institutions."

I suggest that the relationship between a veteran embroiderer and his pupil is much like any master-apprentice relationship, where the apprentice is trained by the master passing on his knowledge. "It is similar," says Machicado, "but an experienced embroiderer always keeps something back. He doesn't reveal all his secrets when he teaches; he always keeps something under his sleeve!"

When asked what advice he would give to someone who knows nothing about Carnival and can't decide whether to go, Franz Machicado's eyes light up: "Come and see the most beautiful Carnival

that we have in Bolivia, and keep it in your heart forever, for the rest of your life" he responds with great enthusiasm.

Saturino Ibañez Paredes, 68, showed me his designs and detailed etching in metal - it is evident that he is extremely passionate about his work. What is different about Paredes is that there is no family business built around his trade. As he explains, his parents "didn't work in this field, I learnt it alone. I learnt a few techniques from a toy-maker who worked in metal, then I taught myself the rest and started working on Carnival masks and metal work." I asked him what 'life lessons' being a craftsman has taught him: "You learn that no-one is perfect; we want to improve all the time, every-day we learn something new."

Crafts and mask-making are wonderful artforms that Hilarión Casas hopes to pass on to his children. "Our culture is shown through our work, and to be recognised as an artisan is a gain for art and for manual work," he told me.

It is so easy, when caught up in all the celebration and spectacle of Carnival, to overlook the dedicated work of the artisans. At the event itself in Oruro, their costumes looked incredible and made Carnival what it is. I feel lucky to have met the people who created this visual focal point of Bolivia's biggest fiesta, and seen how it all comes together.



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DANSE AVEC EUX

“LIVE THIS JOYFUL MOMENT – AND SHARE IT WITH FRIENDS”

TEXT: CAMILLA SWIFT

PHOTO: BIANCA OTERO



Pierre, far right, dances the Tinku

The Oruro Carnival is Bolivia's biggest cultural event of the year, but what's it like to be a foreigner dancing in the opening parade of this hugely significant festival?

Margaux Dupont, 26 and Pierre Ligonie, 24, came to La Paz several months ago to work and have been learning to dance the Tinku, a traditional Andean dance, with one of the Carnival fraternities here in La Paz.

One Thursday evening I went down to watch a lively and enthusiastic rehearsal in which sixty or so dancers had gathered under street lamps in Plaza Bolivia, while others came off the street to join in an impromptu workshop. After allowing them to

catch their breath, I sat down with Margaux and Pierre to find out more about their experiences.

BX: Why did you decide to dance the Tinku?

Margaux: I had seen the Carnival before and it was one of the dances that I liked. So it was partly because of this and partly by coincidence, because I had friends - also from outside Bolivia - who had previously danced Tinku in the Gran Poder with this fraternity. One of them wanted to dance again, so we joined in as well. Because when you want to dance in Carnival, it's not that easy to know where and how etc. It's much easier when you know someone. I

think the Tinku has more character because of its history. Other dances like La Morenada and Caporales, for example, for me are more repetitive, whereas the Tinku has so much variety within the dance. Also I love everything that it represents, and the combat aspect of it too. This dance has so much meaning. I wouldn't want to dance in a mini-skirt either!

P: Why the Tinku? Because I wanted to flirt with Margaux! I wanted to dance a Bolivian folk dance and also to dance in the opening of the Carnival. I met Margaux and her friends and she introduced me to the dance group. I really liked the dance, and it's also a good way to meet people, other Bolivians, and learn about their customs in an interesting way.

BX: How many hours have you been rehearsing each week?

P: That depends on us! And on the rain!

M: There are lots of rehearsals but we don't go to them all. Now, in the last weeks leading up to Carnival, it's every day for an hour and a half, so we go on the days that we can. There are other fraternities that dance whatever the weather, but ours is more relaxed. Written on our shirts is the word 'jaira' which I think means lazybones in Quechua or Aymara! Because we are really lazy so they've made special shirts for us!

BX: What do you think it's going to be like dancing in the Oruro Carnival? What are your expectations?

P: First of all, to live it from within. The atmosphere with all the spectators makes the opening an incredible experience. The connection with the public is so upbeat, and to see people dancing along feels great and gives you so much energy. And I think Oruro has the most impressive **entrada**. Oh, and also to see the other dances and costumes. It will be really interesting to live this joyful moment - and share it with friends.

M: Yes, for me it's pretty much the same; the Oruro Carnival is the main event of Bolivian cultural life. I remember the first day I arrived in Bolivia, it was ages until Carnival, but people were already talking about it. The first time I experienced Carnival I loved it, and now for me it's a way of completing a cycle - I danced first in the **Entrada Universitaria**, then in the **fiesta de Gran Poder** in La Paz, and now finally I'm dancing in the **Carnaval de Oruro**. So it's about having this experience, enjoying ourselves and sharing it with the group

P: The physical effort is unbelievable, you feel as though you're climbing a mountain or running a marathon.

BX: How does it feel to be a foreigner dancing in the Carnival? Do you feel part of the group?

P: Good question! Within the group there are people who include us, and those who don't so much. I don't know whether it's because we're foreigners, or whether they just don't get along with anyone! At the beginning I felt really foreign, like 'who is this gringo who wants to join in...' but in the end, they see that you are sticking with it - I think that you have to prove yourself to them a bit too. But many people are happy that foreigners want to participate. Overall there are good friendly relationships, and with the leaders of the group too. In the **entradas**, the public seem excited to see gringos, and when you pass they cheer you on... I feel super popular to be a gringo dancing and to have this contact with people here.

M: Generally, I think that many people are happy that foreigners are interested in their culture to the point that they want to join the dancing. It's difficult to know, but I do think that from their perspective it can't be easy because

the gringos are always coming and going, whereas the Bolivians are always still part of it. Even if we want to live the experience, and we are willing to make the same effort, perhaps for us there is not the same compromise involved. I admit that we don't go to all the rehearsals.

BX: The Bolivians dance in devotion to the **Virgen del Socavón**, so it's their motivation and not yours...

M: We are becoming part of it but I'm kind of afraid as our style is different. Even if we manage to get the steps, something is missing. I look up to the other girls, who do the steps really well, as role models.

P: The difference perhaps is that for them it's something really important and serious, whereas we only stay for a short while, and it's out of curiosity and just for the experience.

BX: What's your motto?

"Quienes somos? Lisos somos!" (Tricky to translate but basically means "Who are we? We're the cheekiest!")

A FEW DAYS AFTER CARNIVAL, I SAT DOWN WITH MARGAUX TO FIND OUT HOW IT ALL WENT AND WHETHER IT LIVED UP TO HER EXPECTATIONS!

"IT WAS WONDERFUL," SHE SAID, "A REALLY GREAT EXPERIENCE BUT ALSO SO TIRING. PHYSICALLY IT WAS VERY HARD." SHE TOLD ME THAT ON THE SECOND DAY, THERE WAS ONLY HALF THE GROUP STILL DANCING BECAUSE, ONE BY ONE, PEOPLE HAD DROPPED OUT DUE TO EXHAUSTION, HEADACHES OR BECAUSE THEY DRANK TOO MUCH! "IT WAS A CHALLENGE TO CONTINUE DANCING UNTIL THE END, SO WE WERE REALLY HAPPY THAT WE COMPLETED IT," SHE ADDED.

I ASKED MARGAUX WHAT THE FUNNIEST OR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT WAS FOR HER: "WELL THE MOST SHAMEFUL FOR ME WAS WHEN WE WERE DANCING IN THE MAIN SQUARE WHERE ALL THE TV CAMERAS WERE, I TOTALLY MESSED UP AND WAS DOING COMPLETELY THE WRONG THING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA! THAT WAS FUNNY. I ALSO REALLY LIKED DANCING DURING THE NIGHT ON THE FIRST DAY, WITH ALL THE FIREWORKS AND LIGHTS AND EVERYTHING."

I TOLD MARGAUX THAT FOR ME WATCHING, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS GREAT: THERE WAS SO MUCH ENERGY, NOT ONLY AMONGST THE DANCERS, BUT THE CROWD TOO. "YES, IT REALLY WAS FANTASTIC" SHE REPLIED, "THERE WAS A REAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DANCERS AND THE PUBLIC. THE CROWDS WERE SO LIVELY AND REALLY ENCOURAGED YOU."

"IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR US BOTH. WE LOVED IT."



After the first hesitant steps in the crowded streets, we make our way amongst the beer-selling **cholitas**, the kids having fun splashing gringos with their foam sprays and waterguns, and the mobile food stalls. Settled in the stands, we start to feel the growing atmosphere and let ourselves be dragged into a swirl of shimmering colours, glitter and amazing costumes: with the brass bands' constant buzz, and the cries of the crowd all around, we get filled with a child-like wonder. It's impossible to reach the main square, where the party is at its fullest, due to the mass of people. Amongst the hot sun and sandwiches and the cold rain and beers, the hours seem to fly. But the ambience of this day of celebration hardly hides the poverty that is rife here, and I found it hard to ignore the beggars that are lying on sidewalks full of holes (though this may have been exacerbated by Carnival)... When the evening comes fireworks are launched and the atmosphere peaks. Soggy and exhausted it's time to go back to La Paz, our heads full of noise and colour...

TEXT: ROSALIE BONNEFOI

CARNIVAL – FIRST HAND

TEXT: CIARAN RAYMER

PHOTOS: BIANCA OTERO

Oruro. Sounds tropical doesn't it? Well, if you're ever lucky enough to be in Oruro to experience the Carnival, an extra layer of clothing will go a long way! Alternatively you could take advantage of the beer specials and forget all about the chill (2 for Bs.15 - yes please!). But for my friends and I, the main focus of this expedition was to take a dip into Bolivian culture.

To set the scene, Oruro is a small city that had been converted into a festival ground for its annual celebration. The streets were filled with vendors in stalls selling everything from bowler hats to local cuisines (llama steak, anyone?), while the longest of the streets had been lined with stands so that people can sit and enjoy the spectacle created by the dancers. Each dance group had their own moves to flaunt, and consisted of people of all ages - toddlers and the elderly included.

One of the traditions of this event consists of lots of foam and lots of water. Kids were running around with water guns and balloons, while teens preferred to wield canned foam that sprayed a soapy cloud onto whoever it was aimed at. Fun at first, but after the twentieth face-full, humours were failing and the cold in the air was cutting deeper into our soaking skin. As the sun set and darkness descended, the sky was set ablaze by fireworks to mark the beginning of the night's "fiesta". My friends and I arrived back to our flat at 3 o'clock the next morning - tired, wet, cold, and all smiles. The Oruro Carnival was an incomparable experience that I recommend to anyone who has yet to see it first hand.





Away from the more popular image of Carnival - as a pounding, overcrowded riot of colours in which there is no distinction between those who dance, drink, chuck water or shout desperately for the next dance group - we discover a new atmosphere. Different, exotic and charming in every sense; a small town carnival ready to dance for thirty people caught up between the cold beer they are holding and the heat of the moment, the beating sun and the scattered confetti. Hands begin to rise and a happiness is shared through festive laughter. It doesn't matter the place, or which roof we find each other under, Carnival is enjoyed at every far flung point of this enchanting country. The masks are more than enough, and the brewer's spirit is at large. In a village carnival like this, the costumes are hand crafted by local artisans and are finished with haste but with a touch of added value. Dancers are spontaneous, floating along in practised improvisation and the challenge of the dance between the one plaza and a small church, that without doubt is part of the people's festivity. Between the glitter, water, colour and magic their movements dazzle before your eyes, injecting the unique sense that is 'Carnaval'.

It makes me happy to present to you: **COROICO IN CARNAVAL.**

TEXT: IVAN RODRIGUEZ P.



Cultural Calendar

TEATRO MUNICIPAL "ALBERTO SAAVEDRA PÉREZ" Calle Jenaro Sanjinés, comer w Calle Indaburo

Fri 18, 19:30

Ballet Oficial

German choreographer Manuela Berndt, who studied in and lives in Leeds, UK, brings together guest dancers from across the country in a display of classical dance under the title of 'The World of Movements'.

Entry: Stalls:20Bs/Circle:15Bs/Upper Circle:10Bs

Tues 22-Thurs 24, 19:30

Hommage to the Cueca

The Cueca is a traditional regional handkerchief dance. The Folklore Ballet of La Paz, directed by Victor Hugo Salinas, presents "Cuecainomanía" together with the cast of Los Traficantes de Cuentos [The Merchants of Stories] and the "Cuecainómana" Orchestra, formed by Andrés Fossati and Yuri Morales. A work of live music and dance containing a special performance from Yuri Ortuño and the singer Matilde Casazola.

Entry: Stalls:35Bs/Circle:25Bs/Upper Circle:15Bs

Fri 25, 19:30

Chilean Guitar Recital

Chilean guitar master Sergio Sauvalle Echavarría, considered one of his country's most brilliant players, comes to La Paz to perform Cueca folksongs, verse and typical songs from our sister country. Sauvalle is also Director of the Guitar Festival of the Americas.

Mon 28, 19:30

Nativa: Sounds of the World

'The Peoples of Water' is the title of this musical piece by the group 'Nativa', a collective that has absorbed different music styles around the world while demanding the protection of human rights and the environment. This performance looks to raise awareness among the urban population about the careless use of water resources and its implications. This concert provides the opportunity to hear music from the Mapuche, India, Romania, the Navajo and Hopi Indians of North America and the Afro-Caribbean, among other styles.

TEATRO MODESTA SANGINÉS Casa de la Cultura Franz Tamayo, Calle Mcal. Santa Cruz, comer w Calle Potosí

Tues 22, 19:30

A Night of Jazz

US-based Bolivian trombonist Jonatan Cuenca returns to La Paz to take part in this performance with a group of talented players of jazz, Latin jazz, salsa and reggae.

Weds 23, 19:30

Performance by Los Huaycheños

With the support of the National Radio of Bolivia, folklore group Los Huaycheños of Puerto Acosta have put together a tribute for Father's Day of typical songs from the north of the La Paz region. With a special appearance by Freddy Chalar.

Entry: 15Bs

MUSEOS MUNICIPALES

Tues to Fri, 9:30-12:30 & 15:00-19:00. Sat & Sun, 9:00-13:00.

Mar 25-Apr 15 in temporary gallery, ground floor
Exhibition: **Women Artists of the Twentieth Century**
Featuring works from Rosmary Mamani, Ada Donato and Mónica Mamani

Entry: 10Bs/Students 5Bs/Weds 2 for 1

MUSEUM TAMBO QUIRQUINCHO

Until 30 Mar

Exhibition: 'Carnaval Past and Present in the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo'

Show of pictures from the collection of the Pedro Domingo Murillo municipal competition on the theme of Carnival, plus works by previous winners. Collective exhibition including the following guest artists: Javier Fernández, Max Arequipa, Fernando Montes, Jaime Guzmán and Rosemary Mamani.

Until 30 Mar

Photographs of the Carnaval of Antaño

From the collection of Julio Cordero, this show allows an appreciation of the costumes used in carnavales at the start of the last century. Includes photographs of carnival dances and the carrying out of **ch'alla** in different parts of the city of La Paz.

Until 30 Mar

Photographs of Carnaval: 'Fiesta, joy and tradition'

This exhibition is composed of photographs of movement from the collection of Javier Palza, in which one can enjoy images of the different dances that form part of the fiesta of Carnival.

CINE TEATRO MUNICIPAL '6 DE AGOSTO', Av. 6 de Agosto near corner w Calle Rosendo Gutiérrez

Tues 22-Sun 27, 19:30

Slumdog Millionaire

Dir: Danny Boyle, UK, 2008. Winner of eight Oscars
Jamal is a participant in the Indian version of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, presented by Prem Kumar (Anil Kapoor). He has already won ten million rupees and is on his final question, to win twenty million. Following Kumar's lead the police suspect Jamal of cheating, since the other possibilities - that he has sufficient knowledge or luck - seem too improbable...

Entry: 10Bs/Students 5Bs/Weds 2 for 1

CENTRO SINFÓNICO NACIONAL, Calle Ayacucho

BOX RECOMMENDS: STAR WARS in Concert

The 2011 season opens with an event combining John Williams' famous composition with a lightshow and multimedia spectacular. The complete score of Star Wars interpreted for the first time by the National Symphonic Orchestra in a mise en scène the likes of which has never been seen before in La Paz. The Orchestra, plus choir, under direction of conductor David Handel, will perform alongside a specially created montage of fragments from the throughout the saga, allowing the audience to relive the best-known moments and get to know the characters from a new perspective.

Guests will also have the chance to see an exclusive exhibition of figurines, clothes, accessories, artifacts and collectors films.

Entry: from 15-70Bs



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