

## Fassenacht in Mainz

### Fastnacht first timer: Behind the scenes of Mainz famous carnival

#### A long tradition

Mainzer Fastnacht is one of the oldest and largest Carnival celebrations in Germany, but what truly differentiates it are its political underpinnings, from costumes designed to poke fun at Napoleon's French soldiers to parade floats infused with political satire. Knowing the current climate of the EU, I was curious to see how this would take shape at Fastnacht 2019.

Our ears perked at the sound of a nearby marching band and we beelined toward it. Sure enough, a Fastnacht club – its members dressed in the typical red, white, blue and yellow attire – was parading past the Mainz Cathedral.

We followed until we arrived at some kind of gathering. Conversing in broken German and English, we learned it was a celebration of the Mainzer Ranzengarde, the oldest Fastnacht club in town. Members socialized, drank *Weinschorle* (the Rhineland-Pfalz version of a wine spritzer), and ate cold cuts on bread as children sang and danced. My husband and I turned to each other, satisfied; we'd finally gotten a glimpse of the "real" Mainzer Fastnacht.



One of the many political floats in Mainz on Monday, provocatively depicting the abuse scandal of the Catholic Church.