

Fassenacht in Mainz

Fastnacht first timer: Behind the scenes of Mainz famous carnival

Rosenmontag, renowned as the highlight of Fastnacht, entails a lengthy procession of floats and people through the city. The parade began promptly at 11:11 AM per tradition, despite an unfortunate weather forecast.

Howling wind, sporadic rainfall and intermittent blue skies matched the day's excitement. Children lined sidewalks, hoping to catch candy tossed from passing floats. A cacophony of competing sounds filled the air. Traditional Fastnacht floats complete with marching bands and confetti-shooting cannons contrasted those with themes like Star Wars and ABBA.

An intersection of old and new

Strolling home from a friend's place, I let my mind wander. Bars filled up as people tired of standing out in the cold. Streets were littered with garbage, confetti floating on puddles of rainwater.

Savvy locals maneuvered the crowds, collecting bottles to exchange for cash. I watched as city workers stoically continued keeping things in order – true heroes! A seamstress worked away in her shop despite young party-goers poking fun through the storefront window.

I contemplated the marked absence of immigrant participation in such an outsider-friendly community: was this a matter of exclusion or cultural mismatch?

While I enjoyed the traditions of Fastnacht, ultimately I also appreciated the contemporary aspects, from the costumes and commentary to the intermingling of generations. Witnessing an intersection of old and new is what makes cultural experiences like this meaningful to me. I look forward to attending Fastnacht in a year, five years, maybe even ten, to observe what will change by then – and what won't.