



The Mythology of MUMMERS

*“Here we are to play you a Play.
Let us pluck your dreams,
And dance you away!”*

The street theatre of Mumming is ancient indeed. In Europe there are a number of ways that mumming took place around the village and town square. These are best identified during the medieval period where the mummern’s play was a great treat for the humble people of the town.

Mumming also appears to derive from a play on the word “mum” or to hush, to keep one’s mouth shut, to go silent with a secret. During Vinotok, as in British villages, the working-class Mummerns are anything BUT silent! During special celebrations and times of year the poor would rise up and take over the village, dancing, singing and playing for folks in hostelries, pubs and mead houses. And, most often the plays they performed had some very direct commentary about the ruling class, the injustices of life and humorous roasts, toasts and jabs at the Powers that Be.

Here in our village during Vinotok the Mummerns dress in the traditional “motleys”, or colorful regalia sewed together of bright fabrics, furs, leather, bells wild greens and more. You will not see princesses or lords in the streets during Vinotok. Instead, the common folk proudly display their jester’s regalia, animal natures and the symbols of the sacred fool’s place being “outside the class system.” This tradition is also the source of the phrase “motley crew” an anarchic, joyous ragtag troupe who create spontaneous theatre, plays and commentary for the working-class folk.

The Mummerns process down our main street and through the neighborhoods, calling out the good folks, entering pubs to entertain, beg a drink and a bite of food and playfully entice all and sundry to “Follow the Heartbeat out into the street!”

As the Vinotok parade pauses to perform and draw others into the wild and wonderful celebration theatre, the Passion Play--or healing mythology of our community--is performed by torchlight and drum. The Embodied Archetypal characters are introduced, one by one and the entire village resounds with lusty laughter, high-jinks and mirth.

*“So bring your lovers and deepest desire,
Dance through the streets and around the Bonfire.”*

by Vinotok Godmother and Founder, Marcie Telander