

“La Casa dels Gegants” (the House of the Giants) was the product of a will to create a space where it would be possible to bring together the city’s collection of *comparsa* (procession and festival) figures. These play a special role in the city’s *Festa Major* (main festival) and, along with other groups, *comparses*, elements and festive motifs, form part of the traditional folk culture of Lleida.

At “*La Casa dels Gegants*” you will be able to see:

“*Els Gegants*” (giants) which form part of the current group of “*Gegants de Lleida*”.

“*Els Capgrossos*” (creatures with big heads) from the municipal *comparsa*.

“*Els Cavallets*” (hobby-horses) from the *Ball de Cavallets* (Dance of the Cavalry).

“*Les Trampes*” (medieval kettledrums) and “*El Penó*” (pennant), the costumes of the “*Heralds*” (heralds), “*Signífers*” (standard bearers) and “*Pregoner*” (town crier).

“*Els Marraquets*” (*capgrossos* with dragon heads) of Lleida.

And “*Lo Marraco*” (fire-breathing dragon) which is present through graphic material, given that its large size means that it is not possible to store it here.

The *Ball de Bastonets* (baton dance), the Dance of the Moors and Christians, and the *Moixiganga* (a dance including gymnastic movements and human constructions).

Timetable

Mondays, from 10 am to 2 pm.

Tuesdays to Fridays, from 10 am to 2 pm and from 5 pm to 8 pm.

Saturdays, from 11 am to 1.30 pm and from 5 pm to 8 pm

Sundays and public holidays, from 11 am to 1.30 pm

Information and bookings

Telephone 973 700 393

Email festes@paeria.cat

THE HOME OF THE GIANTS

GROUND FLOOR

THE GIANTS

The current *comparsa* of municipal giants can trace its origins back to the 19th century. However, the presence of giants in the city's festivities goes back even further than this. The oldest references that we have date from the 17th and 18th centuries; from the years 1637 and 1702, to be precise. These first giants were probably not municipal. There are, for example, references dating from the 18th century that refer to the parish church of Sant Joan (Saint John) and to the guild of canvas sandal makers, which had

pairs of giants that participated in the festivities and celebrations of the city. It was not, however, until the 1830s that the first information appeared that made reference to a municipal *comparsa* of giants. We do not know how many there were (perhaps only a pair) or what they looked like. According to the information available, these first giants were replaced by another pair that were made in 1840 and which are the oldest members of our present *comparsa*.

After this first pair, the others were gradually incorporated during the second half of the 20th century.

Chronogram

1840 The construction of the current Roman giants, attributed to the sculptor Ramon Corcelles. They initially had the appearance of Turks or “Moorish giants”.

1898 The image of the giants was modified and they were dressed as Christian monarchs.

1906 The giants made by Corcelles were again modified, this time adopting the appearance of Egyptian pharaohs.

1924 The giants changed again and assumed the appearance of Roman patriarchs that they have conserved until the present day.

[1943] - [1946] Two new giants with appearance of Japanese people joined the municipal *comparsa*. These are popularly known as the “chinos” (Chinese) giants.

1949 New giants arrived in the city and the first of these was baptised Jaume I.

1950 Jaume I's wife, Elionor de Castella (Leonor of Castile), was presented.

1951 In this year, two new giants came to the city. The first to arrive was the female giant Violant.

1951 A day after the presentation of Violant, the *comparsa* was further extended with the incorporation of the giant Moor.

1952 The companion of the giant Moor joined the group; she was given the name of Donya Zobeida.

1958 The male giant Berenguer was added as the companion of the female giant Violant.

1995 The last incorporation of giants, which closed the current configuration of the current *comparsa* of giants.

Other Giants

As well as the previously mentioned ones, Lleida's municipal *comparsa* of giants has had other members which, either because they have not lasted until the modern day, as a result of their lack of artistic or aesthetic coherence with the wider group, or because they have not been particularly well-received by the local citizens, do not, at present, form part of the city's group of giants. These include some giants from before 1840, which have not been conserved, and also those representing *Don Quijote* and *Dulcinea*, which were acquired in 1977, and the female giant which was supposed to symbolise Human Rights, which was acquired in 1998.

POSTERS OF GIANTS

Romans

Marc Anthony

Cleopatra

Presentation date: 24th June, 1840

Builder: Ramon Corcelles (attributed)

These giants have had four different appearances, first that of Turks or Moors, then a king and queen, after that Egyptian pharaohs, and finally Romans.

Chinese

Chinaman

Chinese woman

Presentation date: [1943]-[1946]

Builder: Giants by the *El Ingenio* workshop, where the main sculptors of that time were Lambert Escaler, Lluís Sabadell and Domènech Umbert.

Along with the Romans and the Ancient Egyptians, they represented characters that were unusual amongst the iconography of giants in our country.

According to the magazine *Ciudad* (volumes IV and V - 1950), the Chinese giants were created in memory of the Chinese giants of the *Santa Infancia* (Holy Infancy), which disappeared during the Spanish Civil War.

King and Queen

Jaume I

Elionor

Presentation date: 10th May 1949 and 10th May 1950

Builder: Giants by *El Ingenio*, where the main sculptors at the time were: Lambert Escaler, Lluís Sabadell and Domènech Umbert

Both arrived as gifts to the city; the first was a gift from the Civil Governor and the second as a donation from a group of local citizens who wished to remain anonymous.

Moors

"The Moor"

Doña Zobeida

Presentation date: 10th May 1951 and 10th May 1952

Builder: Giants by *El Ingenio*, where the main sculptors at the time were: Lambert Escaler, Lluís Sabadell and Domènech Umbert.

As with the king and queen, the Moorish giants were donated to the city by the civil governors of the time. The giant Moor, unlike his companion, has never had a name of his own.

Large Giants

Berenguer

Violant

Presentation date: 5th October 1958 and 9th May 1951

Builder: Giants by *El Ingenio*, where the main sculptors at the time were: Lambert Escaler, Lluís Sabadell and Domènech Umbert.

The giant Violant, who was incorporated several years before her companion, initially did not have a partner and in the years before the arrival of the giant Berenguer, she used to parade between Jaume I and Elionor, as if she were their daughter.

Pharaohs

"Ancient Egyptians" or "Pharaohs"

Presentation date: 10th May 1995

Builder: Agustín Serrano and Víctor Echarri (*El Ingenio* workshop)

These two giants were built with the intention of recovering the Ancient Egyptian giants that Lleida had had between 1906 and 1924. The male giant originally had a beard, but in the final restoration this was removed because it was thought that the figure would thereby gain in aesthetic impact and characterisation.

LO MARRACO

Origin

Lo Marraco was originally a fantastic, but also malevolent, creature and a resource used by adults to scare their children. Calling upon *Lo Marraco* to serve this purpose was not exclusive to Lleida, it was also called by this name in El Maestrazgo and in Menorca, with the variant of *marreco*, when adults wanted to scare youngsters. To invoke *Lo Marraco* in the Catalan speaking territories was tantamount to invoking the *Coco* (bogyman) in the Spanish-speaking territories.

Within the framework of a wider process of revitalising the festivities, the pharaohs were modified in 1906 and then in 1908 new festive elements were created to revitalise the cortege of the *Pregó* (proclamation). In 1907, a group of local citizens, led from the City Council by the Republican vice-mayor, Manuel Soldevila Carrera, decided to give physical form to the fantastic being. And thus, *Lo Marraco* was born.

1907-1912 /1915

The first *Marraco* was constructed with real difficulties. Initially, it was mounted on a carriage for transporting the dead and was made with a sub-structure of wood that was initially covered with plaster. However, a storm that occurred five days before the *Festa Major* (main festival) destroyed the creature and so its body was finally covered with kraft paper. It was presented on 10th May, at the beginning of the *Pregó*.

This *Marraco* turned out uninterruptedly until 1912 and then reappeared for the last time in 1915. After that, its reappearance was continually requested; for example, in a plenary session of the City Council, Councillor Costa called for its return for the *Festa Major* of 1932.

1941-1955

In 1941, *Lo Marraco* reappeared, in response to an order that was placed by the *Festivities, Fairs and Markets Commission* with the Barcelona workshop of A.

Domènech, a craftsman who was a specialist in making imaginary creatures and festival floats. The body was made from a plaster mould over metallic cloth and mounted on the chassis of an old lorry. The cost was 6,152.35 pesetas.

This *Marraco*, like the previous one, was pulled around by a group of men rewarded by the city council. What it had in common with the previous *Marraco* was that its main function was to swallow up children through its mouth and then to expel them via its tail, which worked like a toboggan. On their way out, the children received a sweet.

1955 was the last year in which this *Marraco* took to the street. In the following year, the festival commission retired it because of the difficulties of mobility that it suffered and the high cost involved in taking it out. The commission did, however, also accept a commitment to build a new one as soon as possible.

1957 –1992

As a consequence of this promise, the city council studied how the new *Marraco* should be constructed, deciding that it should have wheels and legs, in the style of other Catalan festival creatures.

As the result of a survey, and with the aim of modernising the beast, it was decided to motorise it, mount it on an automobile chassis and give it a moveable head and neck, fit it with eyes that would light up and make it bigger than the previous version. The new *Marraco*, which definitively lost its main characteristic: that of swallowing children, was constructed under the orders of the municipal architect Lluís Domènech i Torres. It was presented on 14th May 1957.

Its official presentation was a memorable event. At 6 pm on 14th May, it went out in the street procession - which had to release the beast that had supposedly been captured in the "Serra of the Pinell" by a Burmese palaeontologist - accompanied by musical bands, bikers from the Moto Club and Vespa Club, giants, baton dancers, "capgrossos", the explorers who had captured it and wild animals from the *Italian Circus*, which was in the city at the time. *Lo Marraco* managed to escape from its chains in the Plaza San Juan square, emitting a frightful roar, in the midst of a spectacle including the sound of bands and fireworks.

The new *Marraco* remained active until 1992, although it had had to be completely rebuilt in 1982 as a result of flooding; this task was carried out by Josep *Pepín* Cano.

1993

The *Marraco* that we now know is the product of a renovation of the flagship of the bestiary of Lleida that was carried out in 1993. Joan Miró, who had also worked on many of the other elements of Lleida's festive imaginary, such as its giants, *capgrossos* (bigheads) and *cavallets* (hobby-horses), changed its plaster, metallic mesh and wooden body for a fibreglass replica.

Today, *Lo Marraco* is still very much alive and has, without a doubt, become one of the icons of Lleida's festivities. It can be a mysterious element that helps us to get our children to be more obedient and also serves as a symbolic marker for them as they

get older, with the handing out of lollipops when the giant beast appears in the streets of Lleida in the middle of its *Festa Major*.

STAIRS

The *Marraquets* (small dragons)

Presentation date: 1st October, 2005

Builders: La Xamba: Sergi Herrera and Agustí Ortega

Wanting to create some fire beasts for the City, the *Marraquets* were presented in 2005, coinciding with the 8th Great Night of Fire of the Autumn Festivities of that year. According to legend, they hatched from two giant eggs that had been incubated by *Lo Marraco*.

The *Marraquets* are *capgrossos*, which are the spitting images of *Lo Marraco*, also have tails. It is possible to see the points on their heads and tails where pyrotechnical devices can be mounted.

GROUND FLOOR

THE *FESTA MAJOR* (MAIN FESTIVAL) OF LLEIDA

Lleida celebrates its *Festa Major* in honour of the patron saint of the city, San Anastasi, on 11th May. This festival was first celebrated on 9th May, 1627, the day on which its *Seu Vella* (Old Cathedral) was inaugurated by means of solemn oath made by the cathedral chapter and the "*paers*" (equals, or councillors) to celebrate the festival of 11th May, in honour of Sant Anastasi: son, patron and protector of the City.

The *Festa Major* of Lleida originated in 1627. In that first year, the celebration was made solemn by means of a series of civic and religious acts in honour of the patron saint that took place between 10th and 12th May. These included a call, or decree, to announce the festival, the morning service and procession of the saint, the afternoon/evening ceremonies of 11th, the fireworks and various other attractions. Some of these acts are still celebrated today.

Initially, this was one of different elected festivals that the city of Lleida had (others included, for example, those of Sant Sebastiá, Mary's Christmas, Santa Cecilia and the Immaculate Conception, etc.)

It was during the 18th century that the festival in honour of Sant Anastasi became the *Festa Major* of Lleida. It stood out over the others to the extent that some of them disappeared in the course of the 19th century, or at least saw their civic and popular celebrations diminish.

The contemporary festival, as we understand it today, developed during the last third of the 19th century, when the City Council, at first rather cautiously, but later more decidedly, assumed responsibility for the events within the festival programme.

It was at that time that the programmes and posters announcing the festivities began to be published. Although the City Council was able to take on the organisation of several events (and above all the most formal and ceremonial ones), others were organised by the different institutions and civic entities, such as the parishes, guilds and associations, while some other activities even had to a certain private dimension (such as the social dances held on private premises).

The *Festa Major* of Sant Anastasi has gradually evolved over the last few centuries, based on a ceremonial structure that has remained relatively unchanged. This skeleton has two main axes: that called public, or the *Pregó* (proclamation), which announces the festival in the streets of the city, and the acts in honour to the patron saint, on 11th May.

Within this festive structure, the *comparses* (processions), dances and appetisers have always played a significant role.

"BALL DE BASTONETS" (STICK DANCE)

The stick dance or *ball de bastonets*, as it is historically known in Lleida, is the most deeply rooted festive dance and the one which has remained an active part of the *Festa Major* for the longest time. There are references to it dating from the year 1701. Whereas most of Lleida's festive dances disappeared at the end of the 19th century and during the first half of the 20th century, the *ball de bastonets* (stick dance) survived and only ceased to be performed in the 1970s, being recovered a few years later.

From end of the 19th century, and for most of the last century, this dance was promoted by residential institutions of the *Diputació de Lleida* (provincial government) and, in particular, by the home of Sant Josep and amongst the children cared for by these institutions, who were the people responsible for dancing it.

At present, there are two groups in the city that interpret the stick dance at the *Festa Major*: the *Centre Cultural Lleidatà de Dansaires*, which recovered it in 1992, and the group called the *Bastoners del Pla de l'Aigua*, which was created in 2008. The stick dance of Lleida has traditionally had three choreographies of its own, known as: *Lo Tiritiero* or *Pim-piloto*, *La Cosidoreta* (the seamstress) and *La Pastora Galana* (the gallant shepherdess). Nowadays, the groups have also incorporated other choreographies which have been added to the three more traditional ones.

DANCE OF THE MOORS AND CHRISTIANS

Lleida's Dance of Moors and Christians is a spoken dance. This type of festive representation is characterised by the use of words, in dialogues or monologues involving different characters, to give dramatic form to an argument or story. They constitute a form of popular, traditional, Catalan, festive, street theatre that was very popular throughout the 19th century. As its name indicates, this dance spins out a story of confrontation between the two religions which have coexisted on the shores

of the Mediterranean Sea for over a thousand years. The main argument of the dance is intertwined with others, such as the secular fight between good and evil and a satire of day-to-day life and work.

The Moors and Christians dances, or other similar ones, such as that of the "*turcs i cavallets*" (Turks and knights) are frequent in Catalan festivities. Even so, at the moment, the only spoken dance of Moors and Christians that we can see is that of Lleida.

The first references to our dance date from the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. Even so, we do have intermittent reports of such performances associated with the majority of the festivals of Lleida over a period of more than one hundred and fifty years. It was performed for the last time in 1945. In 2010, however, thanks to the initiative of the *Aurembiaix* Association for Popular and Traditional Culture, and in collaboration with various other people and organisations, such as the Association for the Festival of Moors and Christians of Lleida, the dance was recovered.

THE "MOIXIGANGA"

The *Moixiganga* of Lleida is one of the most popular and unique of all the dances to be found in the territory of Catalonia. It consists of five stages denominated "*arcs*", "*plats*" (plates), "*dansa*" (the dance), "*la morra*" (a traditional finger-counting game) and "*l'enterro*" (the burial). Unlike the majority of the *moixigangues* of Catalonia that are currently performed at *Festa Majors*, that of Lleida has no religious connections and could be considered to have been conserved practically unaltered over time or, at least, that is what our documentary evidence seems to reveal. The different stages correspond to an eclectic set of elements that make use of numerous performance resources. The dance sometimes presents itself as a humorous, or even grotesque, spectacle, while at other times it may assume a more solemn, or even serious demeanour, without renouncing the spectacular sight of the risk inherent in its human constructions.

The first news we have of this dance dates from the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. Its presence at the festivals and celebrations of Lleida, including the *Festa Major*, was practically a constant throughout the 19th century and during the first years of the 20th century. Even so, its appearances declined from the 1910s onwards and its last recorded performance was at the *Festa Major* of 1946. Now, this dance has been recovered by the *Esbart Dansaire Sícoris* - Ballet Ciutat de Lleida, and since the *Festa Major* of 2011, it has been possible to see it again in the streets and squares of the city.

CAPGROSSOS (BIG-HEADS)

Presentation date: 26th September 1997 and May 1998

Builders: Jaume Aluja (the demon), Ana Bòria (the black woman), Solé Bosquets (the fishmonger and the fireman), Cristina Colilles (the local policeman), Enric de Bas (the boy), Sergi Herrera (the gypsy and the fortune-teller), Joan Miró (the Chinaman, the

heiress and the spinster) and Joan Teixidó (the smallholder farmer). The finishing touches to almost all the *capgrossos* were made by Joan Miró.

Over the past two centuries, the city of Lleida has had various different *comparses* (dancing processions) of *capgrossos*. Almost all of these have belonged to the city council. The great majority of the old *capgrossos* have deteriorated with age and now hardly any of them remain. The current set was created between the 1997 and 1998; they are products of the workshop run by the artist Joan Miró and represent a number of fun, entertaining, archetypical figures.

TRAMPES (DRUMS) AND PENÓ (PENNANT)

The present "*trampes*" (kettledrums) probably date from the year 1719 and are, without a doubt, the oldest kettledrums still in use in Catalonia. The municipal archive of Lleida conserves an official purchase order dated 2nd June 1719, which accredits the construction of three pairs of drums. Given the characteristics of the present kettledrums, it is highly probable that the order was precisely for these instruments.

The old drums, which have been used as instruments at the solemn official ceremonies and celebrations of the city since the Middle Ages, were historically known by the name of "*trampes*". There were initially three pairs of drums and they never went out unaccompanied, but with a group of flutes, whose number varied between two and four. Together, the kettledrums and flutes constituted the group of musical instruments used for official ceremonies of *La Paeria* (Lleida City Council). From the 18th century onwards, their number was progressively reduced. The kettledrums were reduced to a single pair and the flutes (which were also known as "*clariners*" or "*pregoners*") definitively disappeared during the second half of the 20th century. The progressive introduction, from the 19th century onwards, of modern music bands also increasingly contributed to the relegation of these musicians to the status of simple festive figures. Even so, their ceremonial function has been maintained through to the present day within the context of the *Festa Major* and in the concert during the cortege of the *Pregó*, one of their most important historical functions.

PENÓ (PENNANT)

Date of construction: It was first presented on 10th May 1908 and, despite several restorations and adjustments, the same one is still paraded at each *Festa Major* today. The Pennant is one of the ceremonial elements of the *Festa Major*. It heads the cortege of the *Pregó* and bears the coat of arms of the city, with its emblem of three fleur-de-lis. The Pennant stands out for sumptuous nature of its metalwork and for its cloth, embroidery and precious stones.

THE DRUMMER AND THE DRUM CARRIERS

THE HERALD, THE STANDARD BEARER AND THE TOWN CRIER

At the current *Festa Major*, we find a series of ceremonial figures that represent the city. They are characterized by their sumptuous Renaissance-style clothes, with their

dalmatics, coats and tufted hats. They are the Drummer and Drum Carriers, the Herald, the Standard Bearer and the Town Crier

The **Timbaler** (Drummer) is the person who plays the “*trampes*” (kettledrums) accompanied by the two drum carriers who hold them so that they can be played while in motion.

The kettledrums also accompany the municipal corporation during the official parade and in the procession of Sant Anastasi.

The **Pregoner** (Town Crier) is also accompanied by the kettledrums and is the person whose job it is to read the mayor's official decree which invites all of the local citizens to the *Festa Major*. This reading takes place during the cortege of the *Pregó* and at different points along the route. In the past, this *Pregoner* was also a flute player.

The **Herald** and the **Signifer** (Standard Bearer) are the people who carry the pennant. In the past, the Signifer, as the name indicates, was the person charged with carrying the pennant on horseback and the Herald was responsible for guiding the horse. Both characters were created for the *Festa Major* of 1908, with the aim of giving greater prominence to the cortege of the *Pregó*. Nowadays, the two characters dress and act in the same way.

THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

Presentation date: 9th May 2007 and 8th May 2008.

Builder: Joan Miró

The present “*Ball de Cavallets de Lleida*” (hobby-horse dance) has its origins in the evolution of the *comparsa* (procession) of the hobby-horses, which was first presented in 1997. This *comparsa* of hobby-horses recovered the memory of the old *comparsa* of four hobby-horses that was performed at the *Festa Major* of Lleida from 1961 and throughout the subsequent decade. The hobby-horses of 1997 were figures produced in series and acquired from the *El Ingenio* workshop of Barcelona and they brought the number of hobby-horses in the *comparsa* to six in total. In 2006, they modified this *comparsa*, which until that time had been allowed to evolve freely, converting it into a dance with music and its own choreography. It was following this change that it was decided to build some new, original hobby-horses, and to increase the number of figures to eight: the present ones, shown here, which were presented between the years 2007 and 2008. These hobby-horses, unlike the previous ones, are figures that are exclusive to our city. This new group of hobby-horses was accompanied by a total reform of their characterisation and of the dancing elements which, from this moment on, would carry small flags with the coat of arms of the city.