

Il Calascionario di Pratola Peligna

In Comm.2027 it was stated that the colascione/calascione had become obsolete by the 19th C.

A recent monograph 'Quattro Colascionate' by Mauro Gioielli published in 'Utriculus', year 10, #39, July- September 2006, pp 18-39 (Note 1) includes an image of a calascione player from a photo taken during the 'Settimana Abruzzese' (Abruzzi Week) folk festival event of 1923 in Castellamare Adriatico. The calascionario in question was one of a visiting group of calascionari from neighbouring Pratola Peligna.



The image is of poor quality being a photocopy of a photocopy of the original but it does give a good idea of the geometry and features of the calascione identifying it as the type of double soundhole large bodied instrument seen in the iconography of 18th C Naples (see Comm. 2027 as well as Comm. 2037 by Martyn Hodgson). The instrument has a large lute shaped body with a relatively narrow neck about equal in length to the soundboard. It appears to be fitted with four (?) single, closely spaced, heavy gauge strings tied to a relatively low positioned bridge that spans the sound board width. There is one centrally placed sound hole with a smaller diameter auxiliary sound hole located on the bass side of the sound board close to the bridge. The calascionaro, in traditional garb, appears to be striking the strings with a plectrum. There is no sign of a shoulder strap so perhaps there is some other device, obscured from view, which is supporting the instrument (Note 2)?

Does this mean that the calascione continued to maintain an unbroken tradition as a folk instrument in Southern Italy (formerly the Kingdom of Naples) well into the 20th century or were the colascionari of 1923 a group of enthusiasts attempting a renaissance of the instrument following a period of obsolescence during the 19th C?

Notes

- 1) Mauro Gioielli is a folk singer and author of many articles about the traditional folk instruments and music of Southern Italy. The article 'Quattro Colascionate' may be found listed under 'Utriculus' on his website at www.maurogioielli.net or by a 'Google search'.
- 2) An alternative possibility might be a gut string loop tied tightly around the back of the bowl between buttons fitted at the neck and tail blocks – a string that is then placed over a button or hook on the players clothing to provide support – a feature sometimes found on Baroque lutes.