

CASANOVA: A PROVEN FREEMASON, ROSICRUCIAN

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In all the volumes of The Encyclopedia Britannica, there are very, very few mentions of ANYONE being a "Freemason" in their personal biography. One man who actually is mentioned of being a member of the Masonic Order is Giacomo (James) Casanova...or in full: Giovanni Giacomo Casanova de Seingalt. It is somewhat regrettable that most of today's modern Society equates the simple surname of "Casanova" with a lady's man or 'womanizer.' It can be assumed that Giacomo Casanova sowed his wild oats: he wrote about his exploits, but he also noted his regrets. Furthermore, most people do not realize that the man was a writer, soldier, spy, diplomat; and in his youth he was even preparing for an ecclesiastical career at St Cyprian's Seminary. He was taken under the wing of a prominent Archbishop; but was later dismissed, due to his wandering eyes. Even so, Giacomo Casanova still kept friendships with Cardinals, Popes, Ambassadors and Kings.

Jacques Casanova was admittedly a flawed man; yet he was also a principled man in some areas of life. His reputation has spanned the centuries. His charisma is envied by both women and men. Additionally, he was definitely not alone in his carnal weaknesses. The famed actor and fellow Freemason, Bro.: Clark Gable (1901-1960) was married five times. Additionally, Bro.: Gable was rumored to have had his illicit affairs and allegedly fathered a daughter out-of-wedlock by actress Loretta Young, as a consequence of a sexual affair. However, Gable's overall reputation as a handsome actor is not tarnished in any way.

Like Bro.: Gable, Bro.: Casanova was equally handsome and cultivated a 'following' of admirers/adorers/lovers. Bro. Gable traveled. Bro.: Casanova traveled. In an Age before the conveniences of modern travel methods: Casanova ventured far and wide across Europe: to Paris, France; then Dresden, Germany and on to Prague, the capital in Bohemia {and now the capital of the Czech Republic} and Vienna, Austria.

In his book, "The Other Casanova," author Paul Netti states that Jacques Casanova "didn't intend to stay long in the Bohemian capital," but he was captivated by the worldly culture that surrounded him, the arts, the historic St. Vitus Cathedral, the rich diversity of music. Further, this widened Casanova's own sense of appealing to a wider circle of the populace. In opera circles, he described himself as a "violinist." In more Baroque settings, he described himself as a "fiddler." For a period of time, Casanova even became an 'Impresario' who organized and even helped finance concerts.

Jacques Casanova was a son of actor and dancer Gaetano Giuseppe Casanova and the actress Zanetta Farussi, who was also an opera singer and composer. As noted, Jacques (Jacob/James) Casanova aimed to enter the priesthood as a young man, but his somewhat bawdy behavior prompted his expulsion. As a boy, he suffered from nosebleeds which sometimes continued into adulthood. His father died at an early age, and Casanova's mother abandoned him to pursue a career on the stage.



He enrolled in the University of Padua, Italy, around age 11 and graduated at age 17. He was intelligent, witty, yet at times naive. In his memoirs, he claimed that while he was studying for the priesthood, Casanova had long curly hair that girls wanted to run their fingers through. Casanova even claimed that sisters and nieces of Catholic priests even took a liking to his charms. However, Casanova was not totally a cad who was obsessed with the flesh: he tried to conceal the identity of almost every woman he mentions in his writings --- and he said "Without speech {intelligence} the pleasure of love is diminished by at least two-thirds..."

Casanova traveled around, and returned to Venice where he was falsely accused and imprisoned in 1755 for witchcraft, and sentenced to five years in the Piombi -- the prison under the lead metal roof of the Doge's Palace. One year later, in 1756, he escaped and fled back to Paris. Despite his reputation as a 'playboy' (by modern scholars) ---an examination of his writings reveal more flirtatiousness than actual womanizing. In several cases in his 'Memoirs,' he muses about women whose son(s) or daughter(s) might have been his --- yet throughout the years, no specific progeny ever came forward to make a legitimately proven claim to Casanova achieving fatherhood, despite rumors.

Furthermore, Pope Clement XIII bestowed on Casanova the Papal Order of the Eperon d'or {the Order of The Golden Spur}, which is rarely bestowed and only awarded to those who have rendered distinguished service in promoting the Catholic faith, or have contributed to the glory of the Church, by armed defense of the faith, by writing, or by some other notable achievement. A few notable recipients include the famous artist Raphael (1483-1520); and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) (and a fellow Freemason ---who Casanova actually met in-person). Casanova frequently displayed the impressive Papal Cross and Ribbon on his chest....one moment with pride, and other times with a cavalier attitude. He also met Voltaire, another notable Freemason. It is important to mention that the Pope Conferred this Papal Honor on Casanova AFTER Casanova had been briefly imprisoned. So, the chances of the Pope being unaware of Jacques Casanova's full character, travels and escapades is rather slim. All of this, fosters the notion that Casanova's prowess as a notorious "love 'em and leave 'em lover" were somewhat inflated. Obviously, portions were true, but like many dime-store novels of centuries later: rumors turn into myths....and myths turn into Legends that are almost regarded as gospel.

Jacques Casanova used the embellished name: "Jacques Casanova, the Chevalier de Seingalt" for the remainder of his lifetime.

If there were any whiff of blatant and provable immoral scandal: it is almost certain that such a papal honor would not have been bestowed. And, Casanova never had any Masonic censure from his Lodge: he had a clean Record. Granted, some of his exploits may have been undiscovered. Yet, it is worthwhile to note that with a reputation of 'courting' (shall we say) over 200 women ---Casanova seemed charming and irresistible to all.



He later traveled to various parts of Germany...including Cologne and Stuttgart. He briefly went to Marseilles, France; and then made a circuit of towns in Italy including Genoa, Florence, Rome, Naples, Modena, and Turin. He briefly visited England in 1763 hoping to peddle a lottery scheme, but that effort failed: yet, the sly fox managed a private meeting with King George III in London. Thereafter, Casanova went back to France {where he met King Louis XV} Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland. He then traveled eastward to Warsaw, Poland and St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia -- where he met Catherine the Great, but she wasn't interested in his lottery scheme. That venture bore him no profitable gain. So, Casanova went to the country of Turkey as well as to the city of Riga {now in the country of Latvia} and again achieved little or no success. Casanova traveled to Prussia where he met the famous King Frederick the Great {said to be Patron of the earliest degree-structure of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry}. Clement Wood, author of the book "Casanova" published in 1928, states that, "The Monarch of Prussia made Casanova an offer of a very insignificant post, at a very inadequate salary. Casanova, much amused, received the offer with dignity, but did not accept it." Wood continues: "Whatever business Casanova was engaged in, whether free lance diplomacy or the fraternalism of Freemasonry, this always came second to his {romances}." Although Jacques Casanova has often been labeled a 'spy,' the inverse is closer to the truth. Clement Wood goes on to give an example in his book that Lia of Turin, "a Jewess," often collaborated with her father, who was a horse-dealer --- and she would often utilize her feminine charms in mixing romance with business, even going so far as to aid her father in supplying armies with horses for personal profit. Reportedly, Casanova grew "annoyed with her tantalizing tricks" and eventually moved on. Again, Casanova was turned-down.

He was expelled from Spain, returned briefly to Rome and lastly found refuge in Bohemia. He drifted in many locales, finally coming to reside for the last 14 years of his life at Dux Castle {Duchov Chateau} about 8 miles from Litvinov, in today's modern Czech Republic. He worked in the Castle's library as librarian to Count von Waldstein {who was also a Freemason} and resided there on the premises, as well. He spent his final years there, writing his Memoirs, musing about his adventurous youth (perhaps with a degree of flair or embellishment). He died there in 1798 and is buried in an unmarked plot, although the Castle has a plaque on its wall stating his name, with a "Christian Cross" his dates of birth & death; and that he died at that spot.

Normally, I am not too impressed by authors who wrote anything about Jacques Casanova beyond the year of 1930. In most cases, such were literal pup fiction, along the lines of comic books. However, the author, John Masters, in 1969, wrote a biography of Jacques Casanova. He compared it with a theatrical "Play." I am not certain I would agree entirely with Mr. Masters in all respects but it is fair to generally describe Casanova's common theme or 'Modus operandi' as: 1) Discovering a damsel in distress by a brutish or jealous lover. 2) Casanova would then use his crafty tongue and improvising skills to free her from her anguish; and the grateful woman would allow Casanova to woo her. 3) An exciting affair would ensue. 4) Boredom would set-in and Casanova would often plead his "unworthiness" and often propose that the woman find a more suitable husband. 4) Often, Casanova would reputedly claim that his former lover(s)



found excellent husbands and had children and many years of happiness together; yet he would then move on to his next flirty conquest. This cycle would repeat and repeat itself, time and time again.

It is oddly amusing that quite often Casanova would talk about the joys of exotic foods almost as much as his love of women. So, it is entirely likely that many of his so-called 'romances' and 'rendezvous' were greatly blown out of proportion and embellished.

Casanova was a student of History, a seminarian, ---eventually an abbe {a low-ranking clergyman}, an alchemist, and a gambler. He advised all young men, well-born, who wished to be of value in society to become Freemasons. He defended the Fraternity against critics who falsely labeled it political or subversive. Casanova admonished young men to "choose well the Lodge, for although bad company cannot work in the Lodge, it may however be found there and the candidate ought to guard himself against dangerous associations". A reader of this Presentation must bear in mind that Casanova was initiated in Lyon, on his way to Paris, France, where he was Raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. Moreover, his travels took him to numerous countries, including Italy, where legitimate Masonic groups and clandestine Masonic groups were often easily confused {and this confusion, to some extent remains to this day}. So, Casanova's warning is akin to the old saying: "A few bad apples exist in every group." So, it is wise to choose a Lodge carefully and guard yourself accordingly.

According to the Masonic scholar Bro:. and Sir Knight Albert G, Mackey, 33° and a Knight Templar, Jacques Casanova was made a Master Mason in Lyon France circa 1750. In his "Memoirs," Casanova states that word quickly spread in Venice of his reputation of "being a Freemason."

Despite his philandering {of which, Casanova was hardly alone in that respect} --- the man DID have redeeming virtues. Casanova clearly articulated a finer-point that many people take-for-granted. In his "History of My Life," Casanova notes that "where the public welfare is concerned, no oath is binding". Similarly, in Freemasonry, our fraternal Obligations allow us to protect the public welfare {and contrary to conspiracy-theorists: we do not shield cases of treason, murder or other hideous conduct}. So, Jacques Casanova was correct that the public-good comes first.

Bro:. Ira Gilbert, a Past Master and a Past District Deputy Grand Master (Illinois – Chicago area) gave a lecture entitled: "Giovanni Giacomo Casanova, Libertine, Gambler, Spy, Statesman, Freemason." In those remarks, Bro:. Gilbert said that: "Mystery is the essence of man's nature, and whatever presents itself under a mysterious appearance will always excite curiosity and be sought." Bro:. Gilbert even quotes Casanova as saying that IF Papal persecutions against Freemasonry had never occurred, the Fraternity may not have reached the pinnacle of importance and prominence "if it would have (otherwise) been left alone." Bro:. Gilbert states that Bro:. Casanova was enthralled by a Masonic Apron for its honor to the wearer. And, Casanova mentioned greeting one of his most cherished acquaintances and said: "I embraced him affectionately and in our greeting, I discovered that he was a brother Mason."



Interestingly in that same book mentioned earlier {"History of My Life"} Casanova imparts a story where a young man in 1748, approached him and urged Casanova to see his father's natural history collection, including a model of Noah's Ark, numerous medals, including one of Sesostris {a king of ancient Egypt}but what was "kept under lock and key was the paraphernalia of Freemasonry" that the boy's father owned. Bear in mind this was just a mere two years before Casanova's initiation into Masonry, so it is highly likely this visit helped spur his interest in the Craft. He later met a girl named Mimi, who Casanova described as "charming"....and that "Rosicrucians held her in high esteem" because she did not impede or mock their studies into Science or Philosophy. Casanova reported that he translated the works of Michael Sendivogius {studies on what was later discovered to be 'Oxygen'} from the Latin language into the French language for the benefit of other scholars --- and Mimi did not report Casanova to the authorities, who (then) regarded such studies as heretical. Later, such studies greatly enhanced modern Medicine, Science, and Industrial fields. Bro.: Ira Gilbert credits Casanova's liaison with Madam De Pompadour, and that she "helped further his position in society." Yet, in the final analysis -- Casanova's abilities rested with himself. There is no evidence that he entered into any nefarious conspiratorial cliques. The man simply liked to live, love, and socialize ---as well as to learn and have a certain flair in which he approached daily life. Even Bro.: Gilbert states that Casanova's Memoirs suggest that he "wished to live..as a just an upright Mason." both Bro.: Gilbert and I believe, independently, that our generation and subsequent generations will have to make up their own opinions in regard to Casanova's overall character and soul. His last words were reportedly: "I have lived as a philosopher and die as a Christian."

Rightly or wrongly, Casanova leaves a "legacy" far beyond being labeled a "Lady's Man" {at best} or a "libertine" {at worst}. He leaves a greater ---largely unknown legacy --- a legacy as a lawyer, poet, mathematician, translator, and observer of the World. The man had his faults, but in other areas of life: he excelled. That is what we can learn by studying the life of this complex man, Mason, and Rosicrucian.

Sources / References / Exhibits /Recommended Readings:

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- "THE MEMOIRS OF JACQUES CASANOVA." Edited by Madeleine Boyd. Introduction by Ernest Boyd. Published 1929 by The Modern Library, a division of Random House. This particular book was purchased by Frater James A. Marples, VIII° in March 2015, by a seller in San Francisco, California. It was found wrapped in a newspaper from 1947 and well-sealed in wooden crates. The previous owner was a veteran of the United States Navy, and served as an engineer on the USS California during World War II. An extremely nice hardbound book, complete with dust-jacket.
- Masonic Lecture by Bro.: Ira Gilbert entitled: " Giovanni Giacomo Casanova, Libertine, Gambler, Spy, Statesman, Freemason. webpage: http://chicagolodge.org/masonic_articles/casanova.pdf
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