

-serving in the Civil War, Samuel Porter, Class of 1864, wrote his father in June 1863, asking him to be sure to purchase the set of photographs of his classmates.

The Class of 1881 failed to publish, perhaps due to lack of resources; according to a 50th anniversary history, the advertising (sponsors) section was expanded the following year.

The advent of “coeds” saw the women students represented, minimally, in the yearbook. In 1910, they began issuing an annual of their own, the *Croceus*. The Classes of 1942 allied for the *Interpres-Croceus*, 14 years before the *Campus* and *Tower-Times* merged as the *Campus-Times*.

The 1936 edition is particularly beautiful. Printed with blue accents on each page, four chalk manner lithographs of the River Campus act as a visual preface, and dramatic linocuts divide the sections. The artwork was created by Ralph Avery (1907-76), at the time serving as president of the Rochester Art Club.

Designing the covers and interiors provided an opportunity for professional and amateur artists alike. Julia Robinson contributed drawings for the 1891 yearbook, edited by her brother Charles. The sketches of James Havens were used in his Class of 1922 yearbook. Although illness would prevent Havens from finishing his degree, he would become a professional artist, and his work has been featured in exhibitions at the Memorial Art Gallery and elsewhere.

Not to be outdone, students at the Eastman School of Music and the School of Nursing have also issued yearbooks (*Score* and *Meliora*).

The *Interpres* through 1980 can be found online, along with the *Croceus*, at [rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/yearbooks](http://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/yearbooks).

### Need History?

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**NO FOOLING:** European court fools were complex figures, says historian Dorinda Outram: sources of mirth, tellers of truth, and victims of extraordinary cruelty by the nobles they entertained.

## Reasonable Fools

### How did court fools fare in the Age of Enlightenment?

By Kathleen McGarvey

Every April 1, the 18th-century townspeople of Dresden, in the German state of Saxony, would have an egg fight with a man called Joseph Fröhlich.

It was April Fool’s Day in the truest sense. Fröhlich was the court fool to the Elector of Saxony. A miller by trade, he became a wandering conjuror before being taken up by the elector as a juggler and fool.

His fame wasn’t confined to the court. He was immortalized in portrait busts and on the porcelain that was being manufactured on a large scale, for the first time, in Saxony.

Ordinary people were interested in him “because he was one of them,” says Dorinda Outram, the Gladys I. and Franklin W. Clark Professor of History. A specialist in 18th- and 19th-century European history, Outram is at work on a book about the history of fools in the so-called “Age of Reason.”

“But the Age of Reason was often accompanied by irrational goings-on,” she says. And fools were “on the cusp of all the contradictions in the Enlightenment: animal and human, old and new, court and people, and reason and unreason.”

By the 1700s, court fools had died out in England and France. But in the German states, they were still going strong—and did right up until the time of the French Revolution.

Why they declined is a matter of speculation. “I think it may be something very fundamental changed in the spirit of the times. I hate using

words like that, but I can’t see any other way of getting there,” says Outram.

Usually lower-class, and almost always men, court fools played tricks and had tricks played on them. And when the fool was the butt of the joke, the tricks could involve physical pain and public humiliation. In his 1789 autobiography, *Leben und Ereignisse*, or *Life and Events*, court fool Peter Prosch describes undergoing a public enema and being set aflame, among other abuses. “There’s violence and sadism, but that’s 18th-century humor. It’s what they thought was funny, though we now think it’s shocking and terrible.”

While court fools endured real agonies, they also brandished real power.

Court fools had a function that made them the envy of others: unfettered access to the king as he dined.

“They’re there to entertain the court, and they do so by having what’s known as a right to approach the royal table and have unlimited conversation with the king that can go anywhere,” Outram says. “It was called *Narrenfreiheit*, or ‘fool’s freedom.’”

That freedom gave him importance and made possible one of his other roles: truth telling.

It came with risks. A misplaced comment could land a fool in prison or worse.

Truth telling, then as now, was perhaps best meted out in small doses.

“It was always held in reserve,” she says. “Someone who was speaking truth all the time would be given short shrift and kicked out. There’s a line along which you can see them walking.”