

# The 2009 Rex Procession: "Spirits of Spring"

**Tuesday, February 24, 2009**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana**

**1. Rex, King of Carnival, Monarch of Merriment** Rex's float carries the King of Carnival and his pages through the streets of New Orleans each Mardi Gras.

**2. His Majesty's Bandwagon** From this traditional permanent float one of the Royal Bands provides lively music for Rex and for those who greet him on the parade route.

**3. The King's Jesters** Even the Monarch of Merriment needs jesters in his court. Rex's jesters dress in Mardi Gras colors—purple, green, and gold.

**4. The Boeuf Gras** This is one of the oldest traditions and images of Mardi Gras, symbolizing the great feast on the day before Lent begins.

**5. Title Float: "Spirits of Spring"** As New Orleans continues its process of renewal and rebirth, the 2009 Rex Procession illustrates the universal appeal of that theme, with beautiful images of Springtime and renewal. From Persephone to Poseidon to Eostre, ancient cultures created legends, myths, and festivals celebrating the arrival of Spring after the harsh winter. Flowers, butterflies, and bears awakening from hibernation--all are portrayed in this tribute to the renewing joys of Spring.

**6. Golden Honeycomb** The shrine of the Goddess Aphrodite was located on Mount Eryx, and one of her symbols, the Golden Honeycomb, was displayed in the temple erected in her honor. The temple's priestesses were known as the melissae, or bees. Aphrodite's sacred number was six, symbolized in the hexagonal honeycomb chambers.

The Golden Honeycomb: Kline

<http://tkline.pgcc.net/PITBR/Latin/AHoneycombForAphrodite.htm> - Toc47264992

Bee Lore: Tribe

<http://tribes.tribe.net/b9b544af-89e5-4aa7-8dec-c917f83c3bd7/thread/4b0c62fc-0f5d-449a-8b6a-12c9767accfe>

**7. Venetian Carnavale** Many elements of the celebration of Carnival in Venice would be familiar to our Mardi Gras celebrants--elaborate masks, elegant balls, costumed processions, and a crescendo of celebration ending at midnight on Shrove Tuesday. These lovely Venetian traditions date back to the Middle Ages.

Carnival of Venice: Portale de Venezia

<http://www.carnivalofvenice.com/area.asp?>

[id=4&desc=The+Venice+Carnival+Indepentent+Guide+since+1998](http://www.carnivalofvenice.com/area.asp?id=4&desc=The+Venice+Carnival+Indepentent+Guide+since+1998)

Carnival of Venice: Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnival\\_of\\_Venice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnival_of_Venice)

**8. Vernal Equinox** Literally, “equinox” means “equal night,” one of the two days each year when days and nights are nearly equal in length. In nearly every culture the Spring Equinox is observed and celebrated as the end of the long winter and the beginning of warmer weather, longer days, and the beginning of the fertile growing season.

Vernal Equinox: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equinox>

Rite of Spring: Infoplease

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/riteofspring1.html>

**9. Poseidon, God of Rebirth** When Cronus and Rhea divided the universe among their offspring, Poseidon was given dominion over the sea, the birthplace and cradle of life. Poseidon, trident in hand, is usually portrayed riding in his watery chariot, pulled by sea-going horses (the hippocampi), and accompanied by dolphins.

Poseidon: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poseidon>

Poseidon: About.com

<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/poseidonmyth/p/Poseidon.htm>

**10. Eostre** The early Anglo-Saxons worshipped the Goddess Eostre (or Eastre), associated with Springtime, dawn, and the Spring equinox--the month now known as April once bore her name. A similar Germanic Goddess, Ostara, symbolized birth and fertility. One of her symbols was the rabbit, a precursor of today’s Easter bunny.

Eostre: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostara>

Easter Origins: History.com

[http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content\\_type=Minisite\\_Generic&content\\_type\\_id=686&display\\_order=3&mini\\_id=1072](http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content_type=Minisite_Generic&content_type_id=686&display_order=3&mini_id=1072)

**11. Narcissus** There are many versions of the story of this vain God, but all include his falling in love with his own reflection in a pool. By one account he died of thirst because he would not disturb his reflected image by drinking from the pool. The beautiful narcissus flower grew from the spot where he died.

Narcissus: Encyclopedia Mythica

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/n/narcissus.html>

Narcissus: Greek Mythology Link

<http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/Narcissus.html>

**12. Phoenix** The Phoenix, a magnificent bird with vivid plumage of purple and red, lives for hundreds of years. In its nest, built of cinnamon twigs, it dies in flames, only to be reborn into a beautiful new life. Variations of this story of rebirth and recreation, “rising from the ashes,” is told in many versions in many cultures.

The Phoenix: Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix\\_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix_(mythology))

The Phoenix: The Medieval Bestiary

<http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beat149.htm>

**13. Rhapsody of the March Wind** This float is a recreation of one originally designed by Ceneilla Bower Alexander for the Rex Procession of 1914. As the winds of March announce the coming of Spring, the sprites and nymphs begin to awake from their Winter slumber. The original design for this float can be found in the Special Collections area of the Tulane Library.

Brors Wikstrom: New Orleans Public Library

<http://nutrias.org/exhibits/mg2002/prointr.htm>

**14. The Streetcar Named Desire** This permanent float honors the most famous of all of New Orleans' streetcar lines.

**His Majesty's Royal Calliope** The Calliope provides a lively and traditional musical counterpoint to the brilliant array of bands in the Rex Procession

**15. Chalchiutlicue** In Aztec mythology this Goddess was associated with water—lakes, rivers, streams, and floods—as well as birth and life itself. Also known as “She of the Jade Skirt, this venerable Goddess was often portrayed bringing forth a prickly-pear tree laden with fruit.

Chalchiutlicue: Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_River)

Chalchiutlicue: About.com

<http://atheism.about.com/od/aztecgodsgoddesses/p/Chalchihuitlicu.htm>

**16. Freya, Nordic Spring Goddess** Also known as Freyja, this Nordic Goddess was the leader of the Valkyries, bringing the heroic dead to Valhalla. Also associated with Spring, she flew over the earth, shaking Spring flowers from her blonde hair. She was often portrayed riding in a chariot drawn by cats, one of her symbols.

Freyja: OurWorld

[http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/L\\_P\\_Swepston/Freyja.htm](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/L_P_Swepston/Freyja.htm)

Freyja: Valkyrie Tower

<http://www.valkyrietower.com/freyja.html>

**17. Persephone, Goddess of Spring** The daughter of Demeter and Zeus, Persephone was abducted by Hades and taken to the Underworld. To escape, she had to agree to spend part of the year with Hades. In her absence, the earth becomes sterile, and only comes back to life when she returns. Persephone is often pictured carrying a sheaf of grain, symbolizing the arrival of Spring and the growing season.

Persephone: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persephone>

Persephone: pantheon.org

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/p/persephone.html>

**18. The Green Man** Also known as The Foliate Head, this symbol exists in many forms and in many cultures as a symbol of Spring and rebirth. The most common form is that of a man's features completely obscured by leaves, branches, and vines. Carvings of the Green Man date at least to Medieval times.

Green Man: Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Man)

Green Man: Encyclopedia Mythica

[http://www.pantheon.org/articles/g/green\\_man.html](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/g/green_man.html)

**19. Las Fallas** Celebrated in Valencia, Spain, since the Middle Ages, this mid-Lenten festival of parades and fireworks culminates on March 19. Neighborhood groups compete in building fanciful figures of papier mache' and wax called *ninots*. These figures become part of *fallas*, elaborate constructions which are set afire as the grand celebration draws to a close.

Las Fallas: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falles>

Las Fallas: CyberSpain

<http://www.cyberspain.com/life/fallas.htm>

**20. Ma-Ku** Ma-Ku is the Chinese Goddess of Springtime, and personifies good in all people. It is said she took land from the sea and planted it with mulberry trees. She is also known as the Goddess of the Rain Cloud, since Spring is the rainy season in China.

Ma-Ku: aboutmetaphysical.com

<http://aboutmetaphysical.com/Goddesses>

Ma-Ku: Magialuna

<http://www.magialuna.net/godm.html>

**21. All Fools' Day** References to this day of jokes and hoaxes appear as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but its exact origins are unclear. It may have begun when calendars were changed to make the year begin on January 1 instead of a date nearer to Easter. Those beginning the year according to the old calendar were considered "April Fools."

All Fools Day : Museum of Hoaxes

[http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/Hoaxipedia/April\\_Fools\\_Day\\_-\\_Origin/\\_-Introduction](http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/Hoaxipedia/April_Fools_Day_-_Origin/_-Introduction)

All Fools Day: Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April\\_Fools'\\_Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_Fools'_Day)

**22. Wings of Spring** What better symbol of the renewal of life than the butterfly, emerging from its cocoon to take beautiful flight. Many cultures attribute magical qualities to butterflies, seeing in them the personification of the soul. Some believe that if a butterfly lands on you it will bring good luck.

Butterfly: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterflies>

The Butterfly Site

<http://www.thebutterflysite.com/>

**23. Zephyrus and Chloris** The Anemoi were the Greek wind Gods. Zephyrus, the God of the West Wind, was the gentlest of winds and was known as the messenger of Spring. Zephyrus carried away the nymph, Chloris, and gave her dominion over Spring, and made her the Goddess of newly growing plants.

Chloris: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chloris>

Anemoi: Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boreas - North wind .28Boreas.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boreas_-_North_wind_.28Boreas.29)

**24. Spring Flowers** As flowers begin to burst forth with the warming temperatures of spring our gardens fill with the perfect symbol of rebirth after the long, cold winter. Flora (Roman), and Chloris (Greek), are the Goddesses of Springtime and flowers. This Rex float might as well be a rolling flower garden.

Flowers: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flowers>

**25. The Red Dove** The Greeks worshipped the Goddess Aphrodite (Venus was her Roman counterpart), who lived on Mount Eryx. Doves lived in her temple, and each year they would fly away. The returning doves were led by Aphrodite, who took the form of a Red Dove. Aphrodite's return to her temple officially ushered in Spring.

The Red Dove: Google Books

[http://books.google.com/books?id=RLhP7pURPw4C&pg=PA185&lpg=PA185&dq=%22Red+dove%22+spring&source=web&ots=DU2MeS9f61&sig=J4cMGFogMpb0hLAX2wXc2LtSuA4&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=10&ct=result-PPA185,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=RLhP7pURPw4C&pg=PA185&lpg=PA185&dq=%22Red+dove%22+spring&source=web&ots=DU2MeS9f61&sig=J4cMGFogMpb0hLAX2wXc2LtSuA4&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=10&ct=result-PPA185,M1)

**26. Hibernating Bears** Bears (and many other animals) conserve energy during the long winter months by falling into a deep sleep. With Spring's warm temperatures the slumbering bears awake and leave their dens.

Hibernation: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hibernation>

Bears: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bear>

**27. The Royal Barge** Complete with Royal Gryphon, the Royal Barge is one of Rex's permanent floats. This float is the last remnant of the Royal Navy, boats carried on wagons that were part of the earliest Rex Processions.