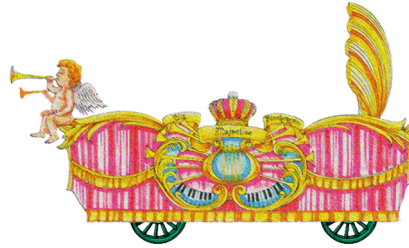


REX 2024 "THE TWO WORLDS OF LAFCADIO HEARN"



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. In the early years of the New Orleans Carnival, Rex's float was redesigned each year. The current King's float, one of Carnival's most iconic images, has been in use for more than fifty years.



2. HIS MAJESTY'S BANDWAGON - From this traditional float, one of the Royal Bands provides lively music for Rex and for those who greet him on the parade route. One of those songs will surely be the Rex anthem: "If Ever I Cease to Love," which has been played in every Rex parade since 1872.



3. THE KING'S JESTERS - Even the Monarch of Merriment needs jesters in his court. Rex's jesters dress in the traditional colors of Mardi Gras – purple, gold and green. The papier mâché' figures on the Jester float are some of the oldest in the Rex parade and were sculpted by artists in Viareggio, Italy, a city with its own rich Carnival tradition.



4. THE BOEUF GRAS - The Boeuf Gras ("the fattened ox") represents one of the oldest traditions and images of Mardi Gras, symbolizing the great feast on the day before Lent begins. In the early years of the New Orleans Carnival, a live Boeuf Gras, decorated with garlands, had an honored place near the front of the Rex Parade. The Boeuf Gras returned in 1959 as a stately papier mâché sculpture.



5. THE BUTTERFLY KING - Since the earliest days of Carnival, butterflies have been popular symbolic design elements, their brief and colorful life a metaphor for the ephemeral magic of Mardi Gras itself. The invitation to the 1882 Rex ball added butterfly wings to the King of Carnival, creating the enduring image of "The Butterfly King." The Butterfly King float, introduced in 2012, was the first new permanent float to join the Rex procession in many decades.



6. TITLE FLOAT: "THE TWO WORLDS OF LAFCADIO HEARN: NEW ORLEANS AND JAPAN" - Lafcadio Hearn lived and worked in New Orleans from 1878-1887 and brilliantly chronicled its unique culture; his insights defined New Orleans for readers worldwide. He later moved to Japan, where he immersed himself in and wrote about that culture. His evocative writings, filled with unforgettable images, characters, and folklore, inspire the 2024 Rex procession, honoring this literary figure's contribution to two different worlds.



7. LAFCADIO HEARN - This float introduces our subject to the residents and visitors of the City of New Orleans. Hearn's portrait appears among books containing his writings. Images of his two worlds, New Orleans and Japan, adorn the float while a raven, Hearn's nickname inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven," flies through flowers native to both worlds—lotus blossoms, swamp lilies and magnolias.



8. DAWN OF THE CARNIVAL - Hearn cast his evocative gaze upon the beautiful and the grotesque images of Mardi Gras, capturing its kaleidoscope of masked faces and feathered finery. The masterful scribe captured the essence of this ephemeral celebration, where goblins and fairies dance together in a bewitching waltz in the perfumed air of Rex's Palace until "the blue day puts out the trembling tapers of the stars and the lights of the great ball."



9. BOUNTIFUL PURSUITS - Hearn's keen eye observed the ethereal tapestry of bayou life in his narrative "Rod and Gun." As Spanish moss weaves its silvery tendrils through ancient cypress trees, sportsmen pursue wild game and fish amid the sportsman's paradise of southern Louisiana. Hearn described a city that, unlike any other in America, offers endless natural bounty, from alligators and ducks to all manner of feathered and scaled game.



10. A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE - Streetcars are an important symbol of New Orleans, and this iconic float honors the best known of all New Orleans' streetcar lines. This permanent float depicts "The Streetcar Named Desire," made famous by the playwright Tennessee Williams. Self-powered, it is the only Rex float not pulled by a tractor.



11. LA CUISINE CREOLE - Lafcadio Hearn extended his literary palette to savor the rich flavors and cultural tapestry of Creole cooking in New Orleans. Hearn served readers a literary gumbo, blending recipes with vivid anecdotes, capturing the essence of Creole gastronomy as a vibrant expression of cultural amalgamation. This float features the figure of celebrated chef Nellie Murray, a once-enslaved cook who rose to culinary stardom.



12. NIGHT OF ALL SAINTS - Lafcadio Hearn paid tribute to Marie Leveau, who had been sensationally characterized as "Queen of the Voodooos." Hearn described her as a skilled Creole practitioner of natural medicine, aiding countless sick with her elixirs and remedies. This float also draws a parallel between All Saints Day's remembrance of the dead and the float depicting Botan-Doro, the Japanese festival of lanterns which also honors the dead.



13. THE FESTIVE - Hearn's writing vividly portrayed New Orleans' bright colors and sweet scents, but he also noted her pesky irritants like mosquitoes and cockroaches. About cockroaches, he observed "...five hundred thousand means have been invented for his destruction; but none availeth." Their penchant for drowning in food and drink might be likened to the occasional Carnival over-indulgence.



14. THE ROYAL BARGE - Reminiscent of a grand Viking ship, and complete with Royal Gryphon, the Royal Barge is one of Rex's iconic permanent floats. This float is the last remnant of the Royal Navy, once a feature of each Rex Parade.



15. MOMOTARO - An elderly couple discovers a little boy in a giant peach. Momotaro grows up, and with the help of a dog, a monkey and a pheasant sets out to defeat ogres who terrify the land. Together, they overcome challenges and defeat the ogres, bringing peace to the land. Their victory symbolizes good triumphing over evil, making Momotaro's story a significant and enduring part of Japanese folk culture.



16. JAPANESE GARDEN - Hearn's "Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan" offers insights into 19th-century Japanese customs, traditions, and aesthetics. His book describes the beauty of Japanese gardens and nature's role in Japanese art and life. Hearn's fascination with cultural nuances and Japan's spiritual connection to nature is evident in his appreciation for the aesthetic and philosophical elements of Japanese gardens.



17. SPRING LOVER AND AUTUMN LOVER - The Japanese folk tale of the Gods of Autumn and Spring showcases the cycle of seasons through a narrative where the two Gods vie for the affection of a fair princess. She ultimately chooses the youthful Spring God, whose modest robe magically blooms with fragrant wisteria. This allegory, symbolizing the changing natural world, is a fundamental element of Japanese cultural traditions.



18. YUKI-ONNA - In Hearn's adaptation of a Japanese folk tale, Yuki-onna (sometimes called "snow woman") is a cold figure with flowing hair and an ethereal allure. Hearn describes Yuki-onna's encounter in a snowstorm with Minokichi, a woodcutter. She agrees to spare his life on the condition that he never speak of their encounter. Hearn's narrative emphasizes the enigmatic and whimsical nature of this legendary winter spirit.



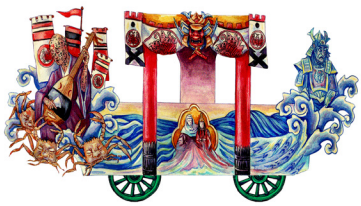
19. JIU-ROKU-ZAKURA - An old samurai took his own life, hoping to save his ancient and beloved cherry tree. His spirit entered the tree and it bloomed again, but for just one day each year, on the 16th day after the New Year (Jiu-Roku-Zakura refers to "the cherry-tree of the Sixteenth Day"). For generations, the old samurai's family decorated the tree with Shinto *shide* (zig zag paper pieces) and *shimenawa* (enclosing rope) to honor the tree.



20. SHIPPEITARO - In a time of fairies and dragons, a warrior found a village terrorized by demon cats who demanded an annual human sacrifice. The warrior recruited a brave dog, Shippeitaro, and outwitted the cats by substituting the dog for the villager in the sacrificial cage. The evil cat opened the cage, expecting to find a villager, and instead found Shippeitaro. Together, the warrior and the brave dog defeated the demon cats and saved the village.



21. URASHIMA - One day, the fisherman Urashima Taro rescued a turtle that had become ensnared in his net. The grateful turtle transformed into Otohime, a princess who lived in the undersea Dragon Palace. Otohime took Urashima to her palace, where time passed differently. When Urashima returned to his village, centuries had passed. He opened a forbidden box given to him by Otohime, and immediately grew old and died.



22. HOICHI THE EARLESS - In Hearn's retelling of this folk tale, Hoichi is a blind biwa (Japanese lute) player, telling stories in song. He is tricked into performing for ghosts of the Taira clan, but his patron tries to protect him by covering him with protective sutras (tattoos). He forgets to protect Hoichi's ears, which the evil spirits claim. The story explores artistic devotion, the enchantment of storytelling, and history's persistent influence.



23. KITSUNE - Hearn's "Kitsune" explores Japanese folklore and the legendary kitsune, fox spirits capable of transforming into human form. He explores the dual nature of kitsunes, combining benevolence and mischief, and the intricate human-kitsune relationship. The story, blending the supernatural with reality, offers deep cultural insights into the allure of these mystical and enigmatic figures in Japanese mythology.



24. LORD BAG O' RICE - In this story, a courageous hero encounters a man menaced by a venomous, giant centipede. Equipped with just a bow and three arrows, he valiantly fights and slays the monster centipede. The thankful man rewards him with a magical bag of rice, which will never be empty. Hearn's storytelling skillfully portrays themes of bravery, ingenuity, and the interplay between humans and mystical beings in Japanese folklore.



25. SERPENT WITH EIGHT HEADS - Hearn tells the story of Susa, a disgraced god who is banished from the heavenly realm. Susa encounters a grieving couple whose daughters have been killed by an eight-headed serpent. He devises a clever plan, slaying the beast after plying it with eight vats of beer. Susa saves the couple's last daughter, finding redemption.



26. HORAI - The concept of Horai, an idealized realm of peace, harmony, and transcendence has been influential in Japanese literature, art, and philosophy. *Horai* is often depicted as a place to which mortals aspire and where the immortals reside, a world of lush landscapes and perpetual springtime, free from suffering and death.



27. KAPPA - Hearn tells the story of an encounter between a young boy and a kappa, a water-dwelling creature with a dish-like depression on its head filled with water. The boy must navigate the creature's peculiar habits and cunning ways to ensure his safety. Hearn's tale captures the essence of these supernatural beings, a complex blend of mischief and danger.



28. BOTAN-DORO - Hearn's "Botan-Doro" unfolds as a poignant supernatural love story deeply rooted in Japanese folklore. The tale follows the tragic romance between a man and a mysterious woman who appears at night carrying a peony lantern. Their union is challenged when it is revealed that the woman is actually a ghost; their love will come to a tragic end.



HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL CALLIOPE - The Calliope provides a lively and traditional musical counterpoint and conclusion to the brilliant array of bands in the Rex Procession.