



RELIC

~ *The Dawn of Time* ~

Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Washington International School | Washington, D.C.

Friday, January 24, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Takoma Park Community Center | Takoma Park, MD

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 2:00 PM

In memory of Craig Messersmith

Ingleside at Rock Creek | Washington, D.C.

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 7:00 PM

St. Paul's Episcopal Church | Alexandria, VA

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 3:00 PM

St. Mark's Capitol Hill | Washington, D.C.

Acknowledgements

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RELIC | *The Dawn of Time*

January 10-26, 2025

Concert Program

~ *Chaos and the Elements* ~

Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747)

Chaos from *Les Élémens*

André Cardinal Destouches (1672-1749) and

Michel Richard Delalande (1657-1726)

Selections from *Les Élémens*:

Water: Prelude

Earth: Musette

Air: Air pour les Zephirs

J. F. Rebel

Fire: Chaconne

~ *Heaven and Earth* ~

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

Acte III Ritournelle from *Hippolyte et Aricie*

J. P. Rameau

Prologue from *Les fetes de Polymnie*

J. P. Rameau

Air pour Zéphire from *Les Indes galantes*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Sonatina from *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*, BWV 106

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Adagio and Allegro from *Concerto à 4 Violini No. 2*, TWV
40:202

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Country Dance from *Water Music*

J. P. Rameau

Entrée de Polymnie from *Les Boréades*

~ *Storms and Seas* ~

J. P. Rameau

Thunderstorm from *Platée*

J. P. Rameau

Thunder from *Hippolyte et Aricie*

J. P. Rameau

The trembling of the waves from *Hippolyte et Aricie*

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Storms from *Alcyone*

G. P. Telemann

Thunderstorm from *Der Tag des Gerichts*

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Largo from *Concerto No. 4 in F minor, Op. 8, RV 297, "Winter"*

~ *Birds and Beasts* ~

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (1644-1704)

The Frog from *Sonata violino solo representativa*

G. P. Telemann

Allegro from *Violin Concerto in A Major, TWV 51:A4, "The Frogs"*

William Williams (1675-1701)

Adagio from *Sonata in Imitation of Birds*

J. P. Rameau

The Bird Call from *Pièces de Clavecin*

Carlo Farina (c. 1600-1639)

The Cat, The Dog from *Capriccio Stravagante à 4*

A. Vivaldi

Largo from *Violin Concerto in E major, RV 269, "Spring"*

C. Farina

The Hen, the Rooster from *Capriccio Stravagante à 4*

J. P. Rameau

The Hen from *Suite in G major*

~ *Humankind* ~

Andrea Falconieri (c. 1586-1656)

Folias echa para mi Señora Doña Tarolilla de Carallenos

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644-1704)

The dissolute company of all kinds of humor from *Battalia à*

10

Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)

Largo from *Sonata II a 5*

Thomas Morley (1557-1602)

Joyne Hands from *Consort Lessons*

A. C. Destouches

Tambourin from *Telemaque*

J. P. Rameau

Contredanse très vive from *Zoroastre*

Musicians

Kako Boga*, violin

Toma Iliev*, violin

Natalie Rose Kress*, violin

Rebecca Nelson*, violin

Lauren Nelson, viola

Georgeanne Banker, bassoon

Cullen O'Neil*†, cello

Sue Yelanjian, double bass

Cameron Welke, baroque guitar and theorbo

Robert Warner, harpsichord

*Relic founders

†Elizabeth Upjohn Mason chair

Notes on *The Dawn of Time*

by Cullen O'Neil

Creation stories have existed for at least as long as recorded history, which dates back to the Mesopotamians' clay tablets in 3200 BC. All across the globe, different peoples, cultures, and religions maintain their own explanations for the world's beginnings, and many of these stories have striking similarities with one another despite originating on different continents. Such is the nature of mythology – an extraordinary glimpse into the shared human psyche.

Today's program harnesses the uniquely expressive power of Baroque music into a celebration of creation mythology. The program is chock-full of character pieces intended by the composers to mimic specific things: the din of chaos; the pattering of rain; the meowing of a cat; the disorder of drunkards; and so on. These pieces – and other more abstract ones – have been arranged and recontextualized within the greater story that this program tells. "The Dawn of Time" is thus a bricolage both of Baroque styles and of world myths; yet the overarching sequence of chapters is one shared to varying degrees by creation stories from all corners of the earth.

I. Chaos and the Elements

In the beginning, Nature appeared the same throughout the whole world. It was Chaos: a raw confused mass, an inert weight, the discordant atoms of all things in utter disharmony. Then God and the greater order of Nature resolved this discord by untangling the elements, freeing them from the obscure mass, and uniting them in harmony, each in its proper place.

-Ovid's Metamorphoses, Ancient Rome

The program begins with one of Baroque music's most shocking moments: a supremely dissonant cluster chord pulsating incessantly in representation of primordial chaos. *Les Élémens*, written in 1737 by French composer Jean-Féry Rebel and inspired by the Genesis creation narrative in the Bible, depicts the four elements – water, earth, air, and fire – emerging gradually from the confusion.

Sixteen years earlier, in 1721, Rebel's colleagues André Cardinel Destouches and Michel Richard Delalande had partnered to create an opera-ballet by the same name, *Les Élémens*, and with a similar structure: a prologue about chaos (albeit one much less visceral than Rebel's version) followed by four sections each dedicated to an element. The "water," "earth," and "air" from this chapter are sourced from this earlier work, before we return to the Rebel for "fire."

II. Heaven and Earth

The primordial state of Chaos coalesced into a cosmic egg for 18,000 years. Within it, the perfectly opposed principles of yin and yang became balanced and Pan Gu, a hairy giant with horns and tusks, emerged from the egg. Pan Gu separated yin from yang with a swing of his giant axe, creating the earth and the sky. To keep them separated, Pan Gu stood between them and pushed up the heavens. With each day, the sky grew ten feet higher, the earth ten feet thicker, and Pan Gu ten feet taller.

-Ancient China

This chapter utilizes low and high registers to represent earth and the sky. In the opening ritournelle, the bass group plays the first statement of the theme followed by progressively higher entrances in the treble instruments, representing the sky being pushed away from the earth. The earth and the sky become even more distinct from one another as the high instruments and low instruments take turns in the spotlight throughout the chapter. In the end, the bass and treble come together once again in a soaring interlude from Rameau's *Les Boréades* (the Wind Brothers), suggesting ultimate harmony between the newly separated earth and sky.

III. Storms and Seas

Awonawilona is the living sky, the most supreme force, whose genderless, fluid essence gave life to the earth. In the beginning, Awonawilona existed in a world of nothingness. By expansion of thought, Awonawilona first created mist and then transformed into the sun. As the mists formed, they gathered into clouds and began to rain, and the resulting storms were so immense that they covered the emerging earth in water. This water became the source of new life.

-Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico

The drip-drop of light rain in the first Rameau interlude gathers into a massive storm in the second, ultimately flooding the earth with water in the third. Undulating scales and arpeggios in "The trembling of the waves" depict the rising and swirling of the newly formed seas. A second storm breaks out in Marais's interlude, gradually dying

away in the Telemann until only a light shower remains in the Vivaldi. A warm and hopeful violin solo over the pattering of the rain alludes to new growth on earth, a result of the water's life-giving properties.

IV. Birds and Beasts

The Titan brothers Epimetheus and Prometheus were awarded for their loyalty to Zeus with a great responsibility: the creation of the first animals and men to roam the earth. Epimetheus sculpted the animals using dirt, clay, and water, and was careful to give every creature a unique ability to thrive. He quickly exhausted the supply of gifts allotted for the task, leaving none for Prometheus's masterpiece, mankind. To the birds he gave wings with which to fly, to the land animals thick fur to keep warm, and to the amphibians he gave webbed feet to navigate the rivers and seas.

-Ancient Greece

Various animals emerge, their voices mimicked by musical instruments in a broad selection of character pieces. Using musical instruments to create sound effects or to recreate natural noises may seem like a very modern compositional approach, but it was actually quite popular for composers to experiment with these techniques in the Baroque times. Some of the most extraordinary examples of this sort of experimentation appear in Carlo Farina's *Capriccio stravagante*, published in 1626—several decades before any of the other pieces heard in this chapter. Farina uses slides, rhythms, and several daring dissonances to imitate cats meowing and fighting, a dog barking, and hens and roosters clucking and cockadoodledooing.

V. Humankind

The god Obatala, who had created land and animals, was sent once again to earth to create humans. He dug into the sand and found clay with which to mold figures like himself. After many hours of work, he grew tired and decided to take a break. He made wine from a nearby palm tree, and drank bowl after bowl. Not realizing he was drunk, Obatala returned to his task of fashioning the new beings; because of his condition, he fashioned many imperfect figures. The chief god Olorun breathed life into all the clay figures, and soon the land prospered and became a city.

-Yoruba People, West Africa

A folia by Italian composer Andre Falconieri sets the scene for Chapter V, representing the industrious sculpting and molding of men from clay. All soon falls to shambles in a movement from Heinrich Biber's Battalia, which Biber intended to depict the commotion of drunkards loudly singing over one another. In this chapter, the movement has been recontextualized to illustrate the god Obatala growing drunk off of palm wine. Out of the confusion, a stunningly beautiful piece by Albinoni suggests the breathing of life into the newly sculpted figures. Finally, three jubilant pieces celebrate the birth of humankind and the prospering of civilization.

Text Sources:

Ovid trans. by A.S. Kline; Yanzi Geng; The Tony Hillerman Portal; The Theoi Project; Gateway Africa; Nairaland Forum

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About Relic



Relic is a period instrument chamber orchestra founded in 2022 by six Juilliard graduates with the mission of bringing live performances of early music to communities in every corner of the country (and the world!). Currently in its third season, Relic has quickly built a reputation for its intimate, dramatic, and cutting-edge performances of both well-loved and lesser-known masterworks of the Baroque era. Members of Relic play on historical period instruments and are fluent in the stylistic idioms of music from the Renaissance through the Romantic eras. Historic music performed by Relic is thus infused with the same excitement as if it were created in the present; in fact, much of the music is conceived here and now, as the ornamentation and harmonic realization are improvised according to historical practices — just as they would have been back then. Experience 1630s London, 1760s Paris, and more on a journey through time with Relic!

RELIC

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