

In the grand tradition of popular exposition, astrophysicist Hubert Reeves explains current scientific understanding of the deepest mysteries of the universe in terms that will excite, stimulate, and educate the nonscientific reader. When it was first published in France in 1981, this book quickly became a best-seller and was avidly embraced by the popular press. The reviewer for L'Express, for example, wrote that Reeves turns astrophysics into an epic saga, a metaphysical fresco, a story in the fullest sense of the word. [He can do this] because he forgets to be a professor. Facing the sky, his eternal home, he recounts the titanic struggle of primordial forces that, over the course of billions of years, formed the cosmos and all it contains.... The book falls into three broad sections. The first explores the implications of the discovery that the universe does indeed have a history - that the night sky that so excites our wonder is not static but has both a beginning and an end. The second uncovers the layers of evolution that comprise that history, from the cosmic phase in the first few moments of the universe when energy first transformed itself into matter, to the biological phase when matter transformed itself into life. The third goes behind the scenes of the universal drama to examine such basic concepts as time, energy, and chance. Reeves style is metaphorical, determinedly naive, and even slightly anthropomorphic. Music becomes a metaphor for all of the orderliness in the universe that might just as easily have been cosmic noise if there had been no guiding principles at work. To understand those guiding principles, and to gain a fuller appreciation of the music that they produce, is the goal of this enlightening and poetic book. Hubert Reeves was born in Montreal and educated in Canada and the United States. Since 1966 he has been director of research at France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique while continuing research at the Centre d'Etudes Nucleaires de Saclay.

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