“Miss Cora” The Moonlight Lady

An interpretive performance based on the life of Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of the Moonlight School Movement. Created and performed by Laura Lee Duncan.

Cora Wilson Stewart

1875-1958

Raised in Farmers, Kentucky, Cora was the daughter of Dr. Jeremiah and Annie E. (Hubley) Wilson. "Miss Cora" was the founder of the Moonlight School Movement, a plan to educate illiterate adults. Initially, the moonlight school classes were conducted only on moonlight nights so the students could see to travel. For this reason, Cora Stewart called the classes the Moonlight Schools.

The Moonlight Schools began on September 5, 1911 in Rowan County, Kentucky. Cora Stewart later said, "It was the brightest moonlight night the world has ever seen." She had expected 10 students, but more than 1,200 men and women came to the 50 Moonlight Schools. The younger was 18 years old and the oldest was a schoolgirl of 86. Stories about the success of the Moonlight Schools spread around the state. Other counties set up schools and Cora wrote adult tests for her students.

Cora Wilson Stewart was the first woman President of the Kentucky Education Association, and the Kentucky Illiterate Commission. She continued her commitment to improve illiteracy by serving on the board of the National Education Association and headed the Illinois section of the World Conference on Education. Cora was the second woman to be nominated for President of the United States.

Laura Lee Duncan brings to life the historic account of an Appalachian heroine.

Laura Lee Duncan — A native of Morehead, Kentucky, Laura is the daughter of John and Cora Duncan. Coming from a family of educators, the role of women in education is of particular interest to her. Currently, she is a performing Artist-in-Residence at Morehead State University. Laura received her training in and interpretation from Eastern Michigan University.

In 1997, she was named Outstanding Performer in the United States, the highest honor possible for a collegiate performer.

In 1998, she toured with a one-woman performance based on the poetry of Jane Jordan. Benefit performances of this show made it possible for a continuing theatre scholarship to be available for students entering Morehead State University. Laura was awarded a major grant in 1990 from the Kentucky Foundation for Women to further her work as a performing artist. She lives in an isolated one-room cabin near Carter Cove, Kentucky and teaches every day of her life as living art.

Laura Lee Duncan

Michael O’Connell — At Eastern Michigan University, Michael was a two-time national champion in competitive performance and was named one of the top ten collegiate performers in the nation. Since that time, Michael has performed in over 150 repertory shows in theatres throughout the country. In addition to "Miss Cora," Michael and Laura also perform children’s shows, storytelling, and music concerts.

Together, they will perform original interpretive works internationally for adults and children. He is a lover of waterfalls and Ginny Hollows.

Laura Lee Duncan

Michael O’Connell

music by White Horse String Band

Uncle Bob Ronan, 76 years of age, learns to read and write.

Apparition Eloquent Kentucky Woman

"Miss Cora" offers one and two-day residencies as well as single performances. These residencies include a variety of performances, storytelling, and writing workshops. Longer residencies can be arranged. For booking information, contact:

Laura Lee Duncan
Performing Artist-in-Residence
Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School Project
Morehead State University
604 Radio Hall
Morehead, Kentucky 40351-1869
Telephone 606-783-2793
or
Laura Lee Duncan
Sugar Mountain Artist Colony
P.O. Box 17
Ellijay, KY 40351
Telephone 606-286-2200

"Miss Cora" The Moonlight Lady

"The story of the Moonlight School is so outstanding that it is only a matter of time until poets, sculptors and artists will here find a theme for their art."

-Cora Wilson Stewart, 1913