Laura Lee Duncan — A native of Morehead, Kentucky, Laura is the daughter of John and Gretta 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 oral interpretation from Eastern Michigan University. In 1987, she was named Outstanding Performer in the United States, the highest honor possible for a collegiate performer.

In 1989, she toured with a one-woman performance based on the poetry of June 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 Caves, Kentucky and treats every day of her life as living art.

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 his own musical vaudeville show in theatres throughout the country. In addition to "Miss Cora," Michael and Laura also perform childrens' shows, storytelling, and music concerts. Together, they will be performing original, interpretative works internationally for adults and children. He is a lover of waterfalls and Gypsy folktales.

Eloquent Kentucky Woman

"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

"Miss Cora"
The Moonlight Lady

An interpretative performance based on the life of Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of the Moonlight School Movement.

created and performed by

Laura Lee Duncan
with
Michael O'Connell

music by White Horse String Band

The creation, performance, and tour of "Miss Cora" are made possible through the generous support of Morehead State University, in conjunction with the Citizens Bank of Morehead, Investor's Heritage Life Insurance Co., Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Foundation for Women, Kentucky Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Kentucky Oral History Commission, Lexington Herald-Leader, and the Office of Equal Education Opportunity/ Kentucky Department of Education.

Cora Wilson Stewart
1875-1958

Reared in Farmers, Kentucky, Cora was the daughter of Dr. Jeremiah and Annie E. (Halley) 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 moonlit 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 moonlit night the world has ever seen." She had expected 150 students. But more than 1,200 men and women came to the 50 Moonlight Schools. The youngest 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 texts for her students.

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

Ms. Stewart died in relative obscurity in a nursing home in North Carolina in 1958. During her life, she was responsible for shaping the educational values and growth in this nation. Her urgent message and action for literacy, women's rights and social change have altered the quality of life worldwide.

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"Miss Cora" is one of the first dramatic productions to illustrate the literacy movement of the early 1900's. As such, it is an original and vital depiction of our Appalachian heritage.

- Dr. John C. Philley
Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
Morehead State University

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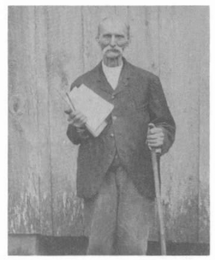
Laura Lee Duncan brings to life the historic account of an Appalachian heroine.



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

Pupils of Rowan County Moonlight School, 1912. This float won "most unique float " in a Louisville parade.

"Uncle Ed," a mountain student of Bell County, Ky., challenged "Aunt Patience" to a spelling match and won. "Schoolmates," but not so congenial after the spelling battle.

Laura Lee Duncan

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"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:

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APPEARING
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