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MSU Faculty and Staff

On Monday, Sept. 10, "Miss Cora" will be presented in Louisville at the annual conference of the Kentucky Literacy Commission. Duncan and her colleague also plan to make the production available at no charge to schools and community organizations. Booking information is available from Duncan, Performing Artist-in-Residence, Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School Project, Morehead State University, Rader Hall 205.

While studying oral interpretation at Eastern Michigan University, Duncan earned numerous national honors, including the 1987 Outstanding Performer in the United States, the highest honor accorded a collegiate performer. She also created one-woman productions based on the works of women poets, including June Jordan and Nikki Giovanni. Duncan is the daughter of two MSU education faculty members, Dr. and Mrs. John R. Duncan.

O'Connell also studied at Eastern Michigan, where he was two-time national champion in competitive performance and one of the nation's top 10 collegiate performers. He has developed a musical vaudeville show which he performs in theaters across the country.

Duncan, who has long been fascinated by the Cora Wilson Stewart story, began her research for the production earlier this year with funding support from several agencies, including the Citizens Bank of Morehead, Investor's Heritage Life Insurance Company, Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Foundation for Women, Kentucky Humanities Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Kentucky Oral History Commission, Lexington Herald-Leader, and the Office of Equal Educational Opportunity, state Department of Education.



Laura Lee Duncan and Michael O'Connell will perform in "Miss Cora," the Moonlight Lady, an interpretive production based on the life of the founder of the adult literacy movement.

The Daily Independent

Thursday, August 30, 1990 — Page 11

Adult literacy play's premiere set Sept. 7 at Morehead State

MOREHEAD — "Miss Cora," the Moonlight Lady, an interpretive production based on the life of the woman who founded the nation's adult literacy movement, will have its premiere performance at 1 p.m. Sept. 7 in Button Auditorium at Morehead State University.

Created by Morehead native Laura Lee Duncan, "Miss Cora" offers a glimpse into the personal struggle of Cora Wilson Stewart as she worked to establish and maintain the Moonlight School program for illiterate adults.

Her program, launched Sept. 5, 1911, in Rowan County, became a model for other states and Miss Cora gained international prominence in the literacy movement. But, according to Duncan, Miss Cora's commitment to helping improve the educational lot of adults was accompanied by personal sacrifices.

"She had a child die in infancy, was divorced twice at a time when society did not condone divorce and was partially ostracized by the community because she was not assuming the traditional woman's role," Duncan said. "I want to provide an insight into this side of her life as well as her heroic efforts to provide an education to Kentucky's adults."

The premiere performance will feature Duncan and Michael O'Connell with music by the White Horse String Band. A multi-media production, the premiere will feature a sculpture installation by regional artist Sam McKinney. A reception will follow the production. There is no charge for the production.

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