

Grandmothers Dance the Creation of the Universe

By

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Music (copyright) by Susanne Cimone
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Unending Appreciation to:

Sally Hussey, Rita Khlar, Monica Kaufer, Ruth Pease

Jim Conlon and **Sophia Center** at Holy Names College, Oakland,

Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry's *The Universe Story:
From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era,
A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos*

and **InterPlay**, the improvisational creative process and philosophy that gave form to this wonderful structured improvisation.
(for info contact bodywisdom.org)

Participants:

A Musician or some good CD's and an DJ.

3-7 Grandmothers

A Master or Mistress of Ceremonies

Prop List:

one long dark starry fabric (5 yards) extended across the front of stage
a stool or chair
votive candles for audience members
a basket of percussion instruments

For Each Grandma:

A Scarf-stole of shimmering fabric
small shoulder bags for props
stardust elements: lots of metallic and colorful bits of fabric
a votive candle
a taper and lighter for the grandmother who lights the stars
one balloon each for all but one grandmother
with Sun, Mercury, Venus, Pluto written on it.
and for the grandmother who gets the party going- 6 balloons with Mars,
Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune
(written in permanent marker)

*" Whenever we try to pick anything out by itself
we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."
John Muir*

Opening

Dancer *Dance Prayer (Soloist)* with Singer
Singer

**My body, my blood, and my bones by Susanne Cimone
like the earth, the river and stones.
are the voice of the universe
singing loud and clear.**

**The spaces are the silence.
The pulse, the heart, the beat
The flow creates the rhythm
the fire, the stars, the heat.** (repeat both verses)

Audience Warm up:

(adapted from Johanna Macy, John Seed's Earth Prayers)

MC Welcoming Words....

What are you? What am I? Intersecting cycles of water, earth, air and fire, that's what I am, that's what you are.

Take a deep breath. Take another deep breath and let it out with a sigh.

Air-that's what we are. The gaseous realm, the atmosphere, the planet's membrane. The inhale. The exhale. Oxygen kissing each cell awake, atoms dancing that dance of the air cycle, breathing the universe in and out again, is what you are, is what I am.

Take a deep breath. Shake one hand. Now shake the other. Shake a foot. Shake the other foot. Shake whatever you are sitting on. Shake out your voice.

Fire! Fire from our sun that fuels all life... The inner furnace of your metabolism burns with the fire of the Big Bang...the same fire as the lightening that flashed into the primordial soup catalyzing the birth of organic life.

Now feel your feet on the floor. Your hips in the chair-solid. Bring an arm up in the air and make a shape. Change it to a new shape. Change it. Look at this shape. You are matter.

Earth- Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Earth pours through us, replacing each cell every seven years. We ingest, incorporate and excrete the earth. I am Earth! You are Earth!

Bring your hands to your face- and give it a little massage. Massage your scalp. Notice moisture around your eyes, in your mouth, moisture in your palms.

Water- blood, lymph, mucus, sweat, tears, inner oceans tugged by the moon, tides within and without. Moisture pouring in and through and out of you, of me, in the vast poem of the hydrological cycle. You are that. I am that.

You were there. I was there, for each cell of our bodies is descended in an unbroken chain from that event. Earth, Air, Water, and Fire! Thomas Berry, the contemporary theologian and Earth mystic in his book The Great Work says,

All these phenomenon of the natural world fling forth to the human a challenge to be responded to in literature, in architecture, ritual, and art, in music and dance and poetry. ...a response beyond that of rational calculation, beyond philosophical reasoning, beyond scientific insight... a response that rises from the wild unconscious depth of the human soul. A response that artists seek to provide in color and music and movement.

For that very reason we catch the challenge of creation and seek to tell the story, the story of the creation of everything! a story that our great grandmothers had in their bellies... a story that too few people knew until now.

(MC or singer teaches the chorus of the song by lining it out one line at a time.)

**My body, my blood, and my bones
like the earth, the river and stones.
are the voice of the universe
singing loud and clear.**

THE DREAM

Grandma One Enters: In the beginning there were 5 grandmothers...

Celestial Music begins

Grandmothers walk onstage. As if dreaming they come to a place and rock themselves. Soon they are naming things they would love to have in created form.

**Grandmothers: I want a redwood tree
I want a bathtub with a view of the ocean
I want a giraffe, a butterfly, a sparrow...**
Grandmothers continue naming many things until...

Grandma: I want a baby!

Grandma: Well, let's make one!

PRIMORDIAL SOUP

Music sound effects

Grandmothers gather center stage as if over a boiling pot, stirring, adding ingredients and making wild sounds and throwing their hands up.

Grandmothers: Churn, churn, stir, gurgle, burp, spit, stir
(*roaring loudly together*) **ONE, TWO, THREE, BANG!!!**

Grandmothers, with stoles flying, run wildly in opposite directions to the edges of room and splat on the walls.

Grandma: Wait, wait, that's not right! Too much expansion. We've got to pull it together here. Slower, slower! We need more gravity!

Grandmas regroup, huddle. Stir it up again, gurgle, etc. and yell out together

All Grandmas: ONE, TWO, THREE.... BANG!

Grandmas turn and move out with great difficulty, as if expanding in slow motion.

Grandma: No, no, that's not it either. Too much gravity. We'll never get anywhere if we go that slow. It's got to be more like a dance, a beautiful dance with balance.

Grandmas regroup, huddle. Stir it again, gurgle, etc.

Grandmas: One, Two, Three, Bang!

BIG BANG - FLARING FORTH

Music for Dancing

Grandmas dance-

A free dance with scarves. Begin with walking, running, and stopping, playing and connecting with each other. Let the dance evolve. and continue

until a grandma interrupts everything....

**Grandma: OK, OK, it's been a few billion years.
Lets get on with it!**

SECRET INGREDIENTS: HYDROGEN AND HELIUM

Grandma: OK, what's next?

Grandma: Its time for magic, the secret ingredients!

Grandmas cluster to center again and reexamine the primordial soup pot.

**Grandma: (One grandmother finds and pulls out a speck of hydrogen)
Hydrogen!**

**Grandma: (Another Grandma finds and pulls out a speck of helium)
Helium!**

**A Grandma (making up a chant on the spot)
Hydrogen.....helium...
Hydrogen and helium.
Hydrogen and helium.
Hydrogen and helium.**

**All Grandmas Hydrogen and helium.
Hydrogen and helium.
Hydrogen and helium.
Hydrogen and helium**

*As they sing, the grandmothers do a group hand dance with each other,
their hands playfully dancing in, out and through one another's hands.*

*(note: Hydrogen is known as an innately spontaneous center of activity, a
new presence that appears on the scene, to weave a new universe.
Helium,as invisible as a sneeze but roaring with activity allows light to shoot
through it.)*

Then, one grandmother gets one side of the audience to sing along with the
chant-while another grandmother leads the other side to sing a descant on
top.

**The galaxies are born!
The galaxies are born!
The galaxies are born!
The galaxies are born!**

BIRTH OF THE GALAXIES

Once chant and descant are established the grandmothers do a whirling dervish dance, their stoles stretching out across the back of their arms. They spin like the galaxies until they get dizzy.

Grandmother: I'm dizzy!

Other grandmothers make complaining comments to this effect.

Grandma: Feels like morning sickness. What's next?

Grandma: Maybe its just time for us to listen.

DENSITY WAVES AND BLACK HOLES

Quiet, Stately Music for the Solemn Procession

One grandmother picks up an end of the long fabric that is extended across the front of the stage. She walks slowly. Each grandmother connects to the fabric and carries it behind her. They solemnly process as Grandma One spirals in. Soon, they are all wrapped up in this black hole like a blanket, close enough to be in touch with each other, but not too tightly wound. Making a tableau with all faces toward the audience, their heads can rest on each other.

There is Silence...and listening....silence.....listening

(note: The great density waves that swept through the universe as well as the presence of the black holes are part of what gave rise to the stars. Fundamental pieces of the mystery central to the creation of our universe, a black hole is what holds the center of our Milky Way galaxy.)

Grandmas take three deep audible breaths together

CREATION OF THE STARS

Grandma: I've got it. Stars! There's got to be stars. Yes, there has to be stars!

**All Grandmas: Yes, there has to be stars...
Because if there were no stars...**

(making up your own star connections)

**...there would be no Milky Way.
And how would sailors navigate at sea?
If there were no stars there wouldn't be any twinkle, twinkle little star..
Or stars in our eyes....
Or Hollywood stars.....
And what would pinnochio wish upon?**

Star Music for candle dance

Grandmother: I think I have a star right in here somewhere.*(reaches into bag)*

Grandmothers let fabric drop to floor as one grandmother after another remembers her votive candle in her bag. One grandmother lights the candles of the others and then the grandmothers light the candles of the audience.

A star dance commences by making shapes and holding moments of stillness in the space, eyes on their star-candle until the music finishes and they create a candelabra to end.

CREATION OF TIAMAT: MOTHERSTAR

Grandma: Yes, there's got to be stars. But not just ANY Star. We need a great big star, a Mother star, a great star to create the giraffes and roses and butterflies and elephants and trees and mountains and humans and...

Handing their candles to audience members, the grandmas assemble themselves as the great Mother Star Tiamat. One gets a chair or stool and

places it centerstage. One Grandmother playfully gets the big Universe Fabric, climbs up and holds the fabric about herself like a giant star shaped goddess or Mary image. Two grandmothers position themselves in front of her arms out stretched, Other grandmothers hold out the ends of the fabric like wings.

Grandmother One: *(like a proclamation)*

Welcome Tiamat of the Virgo Cluster of the Milky Way. We call you Tiamat...TIAMAT, THE MOTHER STAR THAT GIVES BIRTH TO MORE STARS. TIAMAT IS BORN!

**All Grandmas: TIAMAT IS BORN!
TIAMAT IS BORN!
TIAMAT IS BORN!**

Grandma: Lets sing her Happy Birthday.

Grandmas and audience sing Happy Birthday

Grandma: Now everyone, (to audience) Make a wish, a wish for the earth. Think of something in nature that you would really, really like to have. Imagine it, just imagine it and at the count of 3 blow out your candle...

All Grandmas: One Two Three (blow)

Tiamat implodes. The grandmothers collapse. As they do they talk noisily like getting ready for a surprise birthday party, reaching into their bags for stardust.

THE ELEMENTS

All Grandmas (in a loud whisper) **1, 2, 3-- SURPRISE!**

The Elements!!! The Elements!!!

Everything is Stardust!

Grandmas dance about tossing and flinging shiny bits of fabric (the stuff of stardust) They call out the names of elements and exclaim intermittently

STARDUST!

Each grandmother may memorize set of three or four elements: These include

Tungsten, Copper, Vanadium

Fluorine, Astatine, Bromine

Cesium, Silver, Silicon

Magnesium, Osmium, Gallium, Rhodium, Titanium, palladium, germanium, cadmium

phosphorus, oxygen, sulfur,

carbon and nitrogen

Grandmas (*eventually grandmas slow down and begin bitching again*) **I'm tired.**

Aren't we done yet?

I'm tired.

Aren't we there yet?

This is taking too long.

Grandmothers (*all plop down on floor*) **We're working too hard! We need to play more! Yeah! Maybe we just need to lighten up. Yeah and party!**

Grandma: (*reaches into her bag and gets a balloon*) **Hey we could blow these up!**

Grandmothers blow up balloons together, make sounds with them, let them go and retrieve them.

Grandma: I think we're gonna need some help with this party. Anyone out here with some extra hot air!

CREATION OF SOLAR SYSTEM

A grandma goes to the audience to get 6 people, reaches into her bag and gets six balloons, asks them to blow them up and tie them. All grandmothers blow up their balloons and make jokes about hot air and how all this is a little chaotic but a lot of fun. MC passes out percussion instruments to audience.

Grandma who introduces the planets: May I now present the greatest chorus line of them all....

The line will begin with the Sun Grandma standing on the chair, extending out to the left from the audiences point of view so that the solar system can orbit in the counter clockwise direction.

Drum roll

One Grandma: First, in the starring roll-our Sun!

Sun grandmother gets on the chair and does several poses. Everyone applauds. Grandmother who plays Pluto will start mopping up star bits into the area of the chair.

Grandma: Next we have Mercury---what a hottie!

A grandma runs into place sweating and bowing to everyones applause and rhythm makers

Grandma: I present to you Venus! Beautiful, but hard to live with.

Another Grandma gets in line, voguing and bowing to applause.

Grandma One: And then we have the best all around planet- Earth!

Audience member whose balloon says Earth gets in place and bows.

Grandma: And those great outer planets-

**Mars,
Jupiter,
Saturn,
Uranus,
Neptune,**

Grandmother One helps these planets(indicated by the name on their balloon) get in line with applause.

Grandma: And last but not least- Pluto- the planet who is really out there!

Grandmother Pluto puts her broom aside and runs to the end of the line.

**Grandma: And now, Ladies and Gentlemen...
The Solar System!
Let the Dance Begin!**

ORBIT DANCE

Percussion begins with someone on a lead drum

(Any in the audience who have been handed percussion will join in while Planets orbit the sun counterclockwise in a lively dance. The introducing grandmother may pull the planets into orbit and join in the dance herself. After a full rotation or two the drums will end. This is a free and lively rhythmic dance.

Grandma: Let's give the solar system a round of applause. Take a Bow!

All Grandmas: Thank you !Thank you! Thank you!

Grandmothers collect the planets and bundle them up in the big black star cloth near the center chair.... All but Earth!

Grandmother: Audience, will you join us in a circle?

(A Grandmother holds up the Earth balloon)

CREATION OF THE EARTH

**Grandmother: (to audience) Do you remember what you wished for?
Your wish for nature? What you want on the Earth?**

**Grandmothers: a redwood tree
a bathtub with a view of the ocean
a giraffe, a butterfly, a sparrow.....a baby!**

Grandmother: What about you in the circle? what did you wish for?

Audience name their wishes aloud.

One Grandmother makes a short spontaneous prayer for the Earth, that with care all of our wishes and desires for the Earth will continue to come true.

**Closing song: My body, my blood, and my bones
like the earth, the river and stones.
are the voice of the universe
singing loud and clear.**

**A grandmother or cantor:
The spaces are the silence.
The pulse, the heart, the beat
The flow creates the rhythm
the fire, the stars, the heat.**

(repeat both verses and conclude with first verse)

The grandmothers or others may dance on behalf of the earth

Grandmothers: We did it! Its all here..... (hugs)

**MC: Everyone take a deep breath and lets give a Round of applause
to these grandmas for all they have created here today!
For each Grandma: (SAYING THEIR NAMES)
For the musician and last but not least for the Universe and all of
creation.**

*"we are awash in creation
spumed with diamonds
shot through with beauty
that survived the deaths of stars."
-Pat Mayne Ellis*

Notes:

Text: We relied heavily on Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry's *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era, A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos*, Harper San Francisco, 1992. chapters 1-3. The challenge of both telling a non-linear scientific creation story from the point of view of particular grandmothers was both exciting, rewarding, and we hope a good way to make this information accessible to intergenerational groups that have not yet made the universe story a part of their greater mythology and spirituality. If grandfathers wanted to get involved we would welcome that.

Creative process: This is a structured improvisation. The script should be kept alive and improvisational. Let grandmothers play with their own humor and way of saying things. The dances are also improvisational forms. The

forms we used from the InterPlay methodology are

Babbling Things we want

After the big bang- Walking stopping and running that becomes dance

Hydrogen Helium Group Hand Dance

Hydrogen Helium Singing a Chant with a repeatable phrase

Star Dance Shape and Stillness

Black Hole Contact and Stillness

Ending Dance Dance on Behalf of-solos