



Midsummer Moon –  
*Dancing  
through Time and  
Space*

This Document Includes:

Five Reasons that now is the Time  
For *Midsummer Moon*

Production Notes for 8 Scenes

*Midsummer Moon –  
The Poem*

Contextual Comments –  
Why Produce *Midsummer Moon*

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# Midsummer Moon – *Dancing through Time and Space*

## A Timely Production

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century helped clarify some of the special characteristics and challenges facing Planet Earth:

- **Global Interconnectedness Calls For Inclusive Stories**
  - People who are globally interconnected through the email and social media *require* stories that give significance to everyone's ancestral heritage and contemporary struggles,
- **Earthrise Witnesses Need an Integrated Framework**
  - Individuals that have seen the Earthrise over the surface of the moon and viewed deep-space photos from the Hubble telescope *require* conceptual frameworks that integrate all their perceptions,
- **Individual's Actions Must Nurture Planet Earth**
  - Members of a species whose actions impact the Planet's very well-being *require* operational contexts which foster nurturing actions for all the other species with which they share the Planet,
- **Diverse Cultures Require Unique Affirmations**
  - Societies whose members have widely diverse cultural backgrounds and capacities *require* images that affirm everyone's unique contribution to shaping the course of the as-yet-unknown future and
- **Comprehensive Visions Turn Challenges to Opportunities**
  - Inhabitants of Planet Earth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century who face unprecedented challenges and unforeseen opportunities *require* a comprehensive vision that inspires everyone to actively engage in nurturing the Planet.

These five challenges can be met by combining the cultural understandings of Nelson Stover, President of Emerging Ecology, and the talents of skilled performers utilizing the forms of contemporary dance.



Having studied the writings of Greensboro native and cultural historian, Thomas Berry, Nelson Stover composed the poem *Midsummer Moon* in 2007.

Thus, Emerging Ecology's production of *Midsummer Moon* in the form of a contemporary dance or staged production in Greensboro to meet global challenges with local manifestations has become a timely venture. For further information about *Midsummer Moon*, contact F. Nelson Stover ([NStover@EmergingEcology.org](mailto:NStover@EmergingEcology.org)).

# Midsummer Moon – *Dancing through Time and Space*

## Production Notes

**Version:** This version of the Production Notes has been prepared by Nelson Stover to suggest a direction for embodying the poem “Midsummer Moon” through the medium of contemporary dance. This version is intended as a starting point for conversations between the production team, the dancers, the choreographer and the composer, arranger and musicians.

**Sources:** *Midsummer Moon – Dancing through Time and Space* is based on a poem by F. Nelson Stover. The poem draws heavily on the writings, insights and inspiration of cultural historian and Greensboro native, Thomas Berry. The recommended songs were composed and recorded by Joyce Johnson Rouse, (a.k.a. Earth Mama).

**Invitation:** Each dancer is invited to formulate one “special movement” – their personal unique contribution to the overall enactment of Midsummer Moon’s story. These will be woven into the first scene in ways that enhance the initial narrative.

**Reminder:** The dancers, artisans and directors should remember that whatever particle or person they are representing was in the midst of making decisions which not only affected themselves but the course of history. This “what should I do next?” / “I will act with resolve.” attitude pervades the performance.

**Setting:** This dance takes place on The Grand Stage of History – all of time and space are present, persistently. All of the powers of the Universe – the dark ones and the illuminating ones – join in the celebration; they enliven the dancers and the audience. All of the manifested and unmanifested realities and the numinous ones, too, have been invited to contribute to the story being enacted; they have showed up, or sent their blessings.

## **Scene 1: From a Fireball**

*Music: I Come From a Fireball*

*Setting:* Flat and barren – 3 ropes hang around the periphery of the center

*Opening:* The stage goes dark. Dancers enter the darkness making noises with shoe implants and horns or bells on their costumes – a microphone amplifies the breathing of one dancer. They gather at center stage and all becomes quiet.

*Lighting:* A bright red spotlight pinpoints the group of dancers and slowly expands to light the stage in glowing red and orange. As the dance progresses the lighting hue changes from vibrant red (hot) to brilliant blue (cold).

*Movement:* Wild movement and seeming chaos ensue. Some dancers climb ropes and seem to fly. The individual beauty and prowess of each dancer becomes apparent. Some collisions occur as one dancer gets in the way of the others.

*Journey:* As the dance progresses pairs of dancers form – some may have the same color costume, some pair with dancers of similar size.

*Dilemma* – Two dancers obviously have trouble pairing up because no one else is like either of them. One has a two-color sash which when reversed matches the sash of the other lone dancer – the dancer reverses the sash and the two finally get together.

*Conclusion* – The five unique pairs embody their own special qualities.

**1<sup>st</sup> Interlude:** Midsummer Moon shines over a background with a photo from the Cosmic Background explorer showing the early form of the Universe.

## **Scene 2: Walking Upright**

*Music:* To be determined

*Setting:* Like Scene 1 – the 3 ropes hanging around the periphery of center stage now look like trees with leafy branches covering their tops.

*Opening:* Two dancers portray cats, two portray dogs, and 6 are monkeys/apes deciding whether to walk upright on the ground or swing in the trees – to become human or to stay as monkeys.

*Lighting:* Greens, browns and yellows embody the forests and the savannahs of Africa.

*Journey:* The monkeys experiment with bipedal locomotion. The cats and dogs try to figure out whether to be friends with or foes of the monkeys/humans.

*Dilemma* – The bipedal monkeys struggle to protect their young one from the wild cat.

*Conclusion* – One family of monkeys decides to walk upright and adopts a dog, the other animals are happy in the forest (on and around the ropes).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Interlude:** Midsummer Moon shines over the background photo from Africa exhibit at a zoo.

### **Scene 3: Experiencing Enlightenment**

*Music:* To be determined

*Setting:* The stage is divided into thirds by two barriers – the sections represent the great river valleys of the Tigris/Euphrates, the Ganges and the Yellow. Different style houses represent the different places.

*Opening:* Three dancers are in each section. Each valley has a peasant, a warrior and a sage who is on the journey to enlightenment. The tenth dancer portrays a wanderer who goes across the barriers sharing patterns and insights.

*Lighting:* The three sections appear different.

*Journey:* The warriors fight each other but are called back by the peasants and sages. Enlightenment happens at different times in each of the various sections.

*Dilemma* – The sages, in different ways, see the depths of life (one sees poverty, one is crucified and one focuses on social justice) and then try to share their enlightenment with others.

*Conclusion* – The wanderer tries to bring the three groups into harmony but strife continues.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Interlude:** Midsummer Moon rises amidst a sky filled with stars in the shape of diverse religious symbols.

### **Scene 4: Social Pioneers**

*Music:* *Standing on the Shoulders*

*Setting:* Stairs to a balcony.

*Opening:* The peasants from the previous scene continue plowing their fields and working. The other dancers return to the stage.

*Lighting:* The stage brightens and darkens as struggles and harmony ebb and flow.

*Journey:* Three great leaders appear at various times to bring social order, then they disappear and confusion and strife return. The actions on the balcony inspire or frustrate the others.

*Dilemma* – The dancers try various ways of getting organized into one program.

*Conclusion* – To the words of the song, the dancers enact a common routine.

**Intermission:** Midsummer Moon shines on a backdrop of faces – some recognizable, some ordinary, some non-human; all quite diverse.

**Scene 5: Going Away?**

*Music: There's No Such Place as Away*

*Setting: Same as Scene 1.*

*Opening: Many dancers look about the same at the beginning of Scene 1, the dogs and cats return.*

*Lighting: Muted colors like smog.*

*Journey: Some try to get up the ropes and reach the stars. One lands on the moon and sees the oneness of Planet Earth. Others are enjoying the good life and some are trashing the environment.*

*Dilemma – Who will nurture the Planet?*

*Conclusion – The dancers end up in several groups – not doing the same patterns.*

**5<sup>th</sup> Interlude:** Midsummer Moon rises over the Earth covered in smog.

**Scene 6: Everybody Participates**

*Music: Grassroots*

*Setting: One space with plants and ropes as trees*

*Opening: Dancers look about the same as at the beginning of Scene 3 but more modern.*

*Lighting: Like Scene 3 but brighter.*

*Journey: Teams work together to enliven Planet Earth.*

*Dilemma – How can we work together?*

*Conclusion – The dancers dance together.*

**6<sup>th</sup> Interlude:** Midsummer Moon rises over the Earth enriched in blue and green.

**Scene 7: Paying Attention**

*Music: Pay Attention*

*Setting: Same as Scene 3*

*Opening: Dancers look about the same as Scene 6; more wander from section to section than did in Scene 3.*

*Lighting: Like Scene 2 but brighter.*

*Journey: Dancers find beauty, awe and wonder in themselves and in their surroundings.*

*Dilemma – How can one share the experience of Awe?*

*Conclusion – Dancers embody – each moment/movement is sacred. Their actions feed off of each other and enrich the performance.*

**7<sup>th</sup> Interlude:** Midsummer Moon rises on a black background, slowly passing across the stage, bigger and brighter than before.

**Scene 8: Mutual Enhancement**

*Music: I am a Friend of the Earth*

*Setting: Same as Scene 4, with ropes as trees*

*Opening: Some dancers look about the same as Scene 7, some have cell phones. The dogs and cats return also some of the elements from Scene 1.*

*Lighting: Like Scene 3, but brighter.*

*Journey: Dancers explore how to nurture each other to enhance the vitality of the entire Planet.*

*Dilemma – What does the next millennium look like for Planet Earth?*

*Conclusion – The people, materials and animals – tame and wild – dance together calling forth each other's greatness.*

**Finale:** The cast takes bows. Midsummer Moon rises as in Interlude 6, smiling.

**Guide to Earth Mama's Songs**

Earth Mama has recorded the songs referenced in these notes on her publicly available CDs. The song titles and the CDs on which they appear are listed below.

*I Come from a Fireball*, Track 1 on "Under the Rainbow"

*I Come from a Fireball (Dance Mix)*, Track 10 on "Under the Rainbow"

*Standing on the Shoulders*, Track 9 on "Love Large"

*There's No Such Place as Away*, Track 4 on "Grassroots"

*Grassroots*, Track 1 on "Grassroots"

*Pay Attention*, Track 1 on "Pay Attention"

*I Pledge Allegiance to the Earth*, Track 11 on "Grassroots"

*I Am a Friend of the Earth*, Track 13 on "Around the World with Earth Mama"

*Every Day is Earth Day*, Track 1 on "Around the World with Earth Mama"

# Midsummer Moon

The moment arrived that energy could no longer contain matter, nor time subsume space  
And Is-ness burst free from the bonds of Nothingness as the Universe became manifest.  
Echoes of the searing heat remained for epochs in the vastness of cosmic background noise.  
After 14 billion years, countless stars, planets and species carry on the cosmic dance.  
Great clouds of elemental gasses congealed then ignited to light the skies with stellar flares.  
When the flaming giants collapsed, all the life-essential elements were formed.  
The wispy arms of the Milky Way galaxy had witnessed countless of these supernovae and  
From the element rich debris burst forth a Sun with planets, comets and moons.  
A silvery moon soon sailed around the Blue Marble, observing as it circled  
That green plants and multicolored flowers emerged, slowly, from the rolling seas  
And the Universe embodied Autopoiesis, Communion and Differentiation.

In the verdant boundary between the African savannah and the jungle, a bold experiment began.  
Walking upright on their hind legs, forest creatures ventured out under the daylight sun.  
This new posture allowed vocal chords to produce primal speech and freed arms to carry food.  
Women could birth babies with larger heads through their expanded pelvic bones.  
As the exploratory urge mounted, the walkers ventured out of Africa to cover Planet Earth.  
They harnessed fire for cooking, domesticated animals and physically adapted to locales.  
Along lake shores, rivers and seacoasts groups of families settled into the rhythms of particular places.  
They created languages, epic myths and social forms appropriate to their environments.  
Trade flourished among the settlements as groups perfected ways to enhance existing crops.  
Mining minerals allowed concentrated buildings and useful tools for growing societies.  
While the silvery moon watched the flourishing of a species.

While most people concentrated on their daily tasks essential for growth and survival,  
Some heard the Voice of the Unsynonymous and taught truths from the Depths.  
Born of a wealthy noble, Siddhartha first saw death and suffering with an immensely opened heart.  
Enlightened under a boa tree, the Buddha returned to guide others on an 8-fold path.  
As strife and suffering mounted in kingdoms along the Yellow River, wise Confucius looked around  
To see profound harmony, the Yin and Yang, whose balance led to peace within and without.  
Jesus, the carpenter's son, studied his God's scriptures and heard the call in his heart,  
He beckoned each person to serve God, and in his dying transformed death.  
Midsummer Moon watched holy men and women transforming interior vision into social form  
As increasingly complex societies were held together by rituals and holy days,  
And the Universe's drive for communion became self-conscious.

Generally, societies grew and cared for their inhabitants and the environment that surrounded them;  
When social pain abounded, some heard the Voice in the Thunder, and led transformation.  
American democracy entered its 2<sup>nd</sup> century with only ½ of its citizens eligible to vote;  
Susan B. Anthony led boycotts and lobbying efforts until the Constitution was amended.  
Three centuries of British colonial rule left a nation without control of its own destiny,  
Mahatma Gandhi turned interior resolve into political action until a new flag flew in the land.  
Nelson Mandela's objections to South African apartheid laws landed him in prison;  
But his vision for a better way persisted until he became President under new rules.  
Midsummer moon shone over times of calm and times of disruption  
Affirming both dynamics of organization and collapse in the on-going dance of creativity,  
For the Universe knows radical differentiation.

*... and for eons Midsummer Moon slid across a starlit sky.*

Midsummer Moon felt an extra warm blast, and knew a gentle touch when the Eagle landed.  
The Universe crossed a threshold when one species crossed from planet to moon.  
Having tapped millenniums worth of fossilized sunlight to fuel its species-specific economy  
Some social visionaries warned of global warming and sought simpler lifestyles.  
Though oceans surrounded every land, human population centers taxed potable water supplies.  
Peace makers sought creative solutions to festering disputes over the precious liquid.  
Mother Earth loved all her children but never had a single species so taxed her finite resources,  
Voices from every land began to call for new policies and protections.  
When consumption and rampant extraction diminished opportunities for the non-human species,  
Cries for patterns of sustainable environmental practices fell on receptive ears  
And Hope for every species spread across the land.

Social forms forged by isolated tribes and growing nations  
Proved inadequate for highly literate societies in a global village.  
Educational patterns that focused only on rote memorization and frequent repetition  
Gave way to integrated thinking and exploration as internet connectivity opened new vistas.  
Global economic calculations had long discounted all environmental effects  
But carbon exchanges and renewable energy sources led to new valuations.  
Religious leaders reexamined their ancient sources and heeded modern wisdom  
In order to reinstate the natural world as a source of Beauty, Awe and Wonder.  
Finally, political leadership reflected the diversity of their constituency  
And adopted participatory decision-making patterns at all social levels.  
And Planet Earth became self-conscious.

In the foot-print on its dusty surface, Midsummer Moon  
Felt both the extreme pride and the internal emptiness of the human species.  
Centuries of frantic actions to produce more stuff led only to homes full of clutter  
Though compassionate ones were advocating simplified living and meaningful activities.  
Scientific rationalism split from religious wisdom left both adrift and shallow  
Though conscious ones saw the oneness of the Universe, saw that Matter and Spirit are one.  
Ancient religious traditions, adrift from originating lifestyles remained in society as hollow practices  
Though contemplative ones gave global forms to historic rituals.  
Instead of precipitating ongoing strife over whose religious rites were legitimate,  
Contemporary saints and sages were inventing inclusive profound practices  
In the light of the Midsummer Moon.

Sixty-five million journeys around the sun earlier, Midsummer Moon saw  
Ferns and dinosaurs being replaced by flowers and mammals as the Cenozoic Era began.  
Although some backward-looking leaders advocated using exclusively technological fixes,  
Ever larger numbers of people decided to live in the Ecozoic Era.  
The all-pervasive processes of the Universe flourished on the consciousness-rich Planet  
As each species found its unique role on the global stage.  
New social forms and cultural patterns enabled inclusion of diverse perspectives  
As communication channels bridged chasms of distance in the global village.  
The Universe took complexity to a new level on Planet Earth and  
Midsummer Moon joined in the Cosmic Dance;  
And All knew "It was Good".

## Why *Midsummer Moon*

The narrative poem *Midsummer Moon* was written as an outline for a stage performance telling the history of the Universe in the context of the transformations underway in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. During the holiday season of 2006, an original musical by Preston Lane was presented in Greensboro by Triad Stage. The play, *Beautiful Star*, told the biblical narrative of the creation of the world in seven days and the history of the Hebrew people as a prelude to the recounting of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. While *Beautiful Star* drew sell-out crowds to a masterful production of a well-written play, some people thought that the story, itself, was not completely adequate for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Midsummer Moon* is written in the same format as the original play and tells a parallel story yet emphasizes quite different themes. The two poems together are in a downloadable format entitled *Epic Narratives* at <https://emergingecology.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Epic-TalesV5.pdf>.

The basic purpose of the biblical revelation seems to have been to alter the primordial sense of continuity throughout the Universe. "Within the biblical context, the continuity of divine presence with the natural world was altered by establishing the divine as a transcendent personality creating a world entirely distinct from itself. In addition, the continuity of the divine with the human was altered by the establishment of a covenant relationship based on a juridic model. The continuity between the human community and the natural world was altered by identifying the human as a spiritual being in contrast to all other beings. Only the human really belonged to the sacred community of the redeemed. The previous sense of a multi-species community was diminished."

Thomas Berry – *Evening Thoughts*

For several decades, Greensboro native Thomas Berry wrote and spoke of the need for a profoundly new way of conceptualizing the human relationship with the Universe in which they live. *Midsummer Moon* draws on Thomas' writings to tell the story of a Universe constantly in the process of creating itself anew. The Universe is understood as a place in which every particle and creature participates in the on-going process of mutual evolution. While *Midsummer Moon* focuses on the human element in the Universe's drama, the action takes place within this larger framework.

Such a new story, a fresh way of understanding how the human species got to where it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and thus how it can move forward into the coming centuries, provides an important foundation for addressing the complex and intricate social, environmental and spiritual problems facing each individual and society as a whole in the coming decades. The previous ways of understanding life and the human role in the on-going drama of existence resonate deeply with people who have heard them told over and over since they were children. However, these same understandings are fostering irresponsible actions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and, in fact, are leading to degradation of the life systems of the Planet. Since, as Thomas Berry has observed, these stories suggest a separation of the human from the natural world and describe a static world into which current inhabitants must learn how to behave correctly, people operating from these perspectives are unable to join in the rampant creativity of the present moment and fail to see the deep-seated interrelations among all aspects of the Universe. New self-understandings are required if human society is to be able to continue to inhabit Planet Earth. These stories will tell of the primordial interrelationship of all species and of the perpetual vitality of the life systems at all levels. *Midsummer Moon* contributes to this expanded perspective.

F. Nelson Stover