



'The Water Ceremony' ~ 2002

a message re: transforming power of love.
reflections by Tahya
Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

"There is nothing better than a LOVE SONG ... Always remember that the true part of the Culture, never dies. The Arts and the Literature will exist FOREVER! The Love Songs will never cease to exist, no matter what! " Bahereh Khodadoost was inspired to e-mail this message to me after attending the Water Ceremony presented April 9, 2002, here in eastern Pennsylvania.

The Water Ceremony was sponsored by the Muhlenberg College Office of Multicultural Life coordinated by Dr. Ethel Drayton-Craig and was inspired by the book, "The Message from Water." This book documents the extraordinary work of Masaru Emoto whose research illustrates profound evidence that we can positively heal and transform ourselves and our planet. Mr. Emoto's work provides evidence that thoughts, words, ideas and music affect the molecular structure of water. For example, the composition of the water changed dramatically when exposed to the music of Bach vs. 'heavy metal' music. Our bodies are primarily comprised of water and the majority of the planet is made up of water flowing in the great oceans and rivers and it is lifted up through evaporation and descends down again through the rain. Therefore, it stands to reason the quality of our life is directly connected to the quality of water both within and all around us. (For more information/photos et al, visit: <http://www.Tahya.com/water.html>)

Remarkably, despite this event being sponsored by the Muhlenberg College Office of Multicultural Life and the Departments of Religion and Environmental Science there was a mysterious lack of support from the College's publicity department. Yet, nearly 300 people from throughout the Lehigh Valley (and beyond) attended in an enthusiastic response to word-of-mouth. We could only accommodate about 250 with standing room only in the hall; however, despite our closing the doors and not permitting their opening again till the Ceremony concluded, nearly 40 late comers remained in lobby inspired and impressed with what they heard through the walls.

Written and directed by Pana Columbus and motivated by the work of SoLea Leon, this event was dedicated to the transformation of the planet following the September 11th tragedies. The Seven Sisters of the Pleiades constellation descend to Earth and sensing its great sorrow perform 'The Water Ceremony' to offer the beings of the planet an opportunity to open up to hope and a glimmer of the eternal love ever present. The ceremony's ultimate purpose was to "magnify the power of peace, the power of love and the power of joy" and to usher in the Great Renaissance

activated by our collective thoughts and words. The Water Ceremony transported this group's prayers and heart desires.

From the moment people set foot in the lobby they entered a tranquil place with soothing sounds of flowing water. Beautiful wall hangings from poster prints to batik fabric reminded passers-by of the precious commodity worldwide. Three of the "Sisters" (Allison, Sahrin and I) greeted the audience anointing each person with rose water upon their entering the auditorium where the other "Sisters" were arranging flowers and lighting candles ritually transforming the hall into a sacred space for the evening's ceremony.

"The aroma of the rose water took me back to my childhood, to my dear mystic mother, and to the use of the rose water in my daily upbringing. It brought back all the fine memories from my beloved homeland of Persia/ Iran... the aroma that I breathed in my loving family many years ago."

- B. Khodadoost, a clay artist rostered
with Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

The cast of the Seven Sisters of the Pleiades constellation included yours truly, Allison Lam, Sahrin Holderman, Gloriel, Quitaya Lee, Agueda Ramirez and Pana. Sahrin, the youngest "Sister" at age 9, found the experience profound but was challenged to put her feelings into words. Finally, she told me it was "'A' for excellent!"



The production also featured a wonderful ethereal soundscape provided by Ben Iobst playing his collection of Tibetan singing bowls, gongs, metal chimes and tingsha. Sun Lee opened the ceremony with beautiful renderings on her violin, Asa Craig rang the opening bell,

Liz Marsh offered the opening dialogue, Katina Columbus designed the costumes, I contributed choreography and Gloriel provided exquisite beaded accessories for the "Sisters."

I was cast as a high priestess in the Ceremony. At last, it seemed, my years of study dedicated to sacred and secular music and dance traditions of the Middle and Far East culminated in this moment. I remembered everything I'd ever seen, read or heard about the temple priestesses and the temple dancers from centuries-old images that still remain in paint, ceramic and bronze depictions coupled with the knowledge my gurus have handed down to me. I humbly stepped into those memories stored deep within the core of my being and to the best of my ability I re-enacted cultures where women served as priestesses and healers using drumming and dance as integral ceremonial expression.

After Gloriel guided the audience to close their eyes and envision the New Renaissance, with wooden clackers arrayed with jingles in hand, I slowly stepped into the center of the room. Making a rattling noise as I arched the clackers overhead and out, I looked nearly everyone in the eye as I invited the audience to "speak aloud that which they imagined the New Renaissance to be." In rehearsal the director and I imagined a few brave souls would articulate their vision; however, in the tremendous spirit of the moment everyone raised his/her voice to proclaim their vision as I spun in a dervish-like whirling motion to blend their words.

Honored to participate in this event, I found it also permitted broader manifestation of the Tahya 'Healing Dance' program. Motivated by rhythm & music, my movement classes encourage the expression of the music and the spirit of the moment flowing through us. I design my classes with the intention that inspiration will stream into each participant's heart/mind and together we'll find the music that dances within us all, allowing creativity and graceful healing harmony to emerge as part of daily existence.

Designed to make movement and dance accessible tools for healing, joy and vitality, my 'Healing Dance' program has been developed in response to my class participants' needs. Whether seeking psychological, spiritual, emotional, or physical balance, a heightened sense of creativity & self-esteem is re-discovered. Furthermore, connecting movement with rhythmic drumming expands one's imagination, creativity, individual growth and fulfillment complementing one's recovery process. Just as these traditions steeped in antiquity afford healing tools, the Water Ceremony was offered as a means of recovering and remembering our spirit following the devastating blow of the events of September 11th and to "magnify the power of peace, the power of love and the power of joy" ~ all of which have great potential in any recovery process. I believe art-making has profound implications for healing, spiritual growth and the full unfolding of human potential.

During the course of the 1-1/4 hour program the other sisters offered their gifts to the water until the Ceremony concluded with Pana inviting the attendees to again raise their voices, this time in song. She invited everyone to sing an "improvisational language of the heart." The entire audience spontaneously burst into a harmonic that filled everyone's heart with hope and then at an undetermined/unrehearsed/unscripted (yet predestined) moment the song diminished to an "Om."

It was truly extraordinary from where I stood with my "Sisters," in the "heart" of it: The spiral of loving energy activated by the ceremony and the audience's whole-hearted participation was truly wonderful for not only me but those in attendance too ~ like Bahereh, who expressed pure enthusiasm mixed with gratitude. "The program was exquisite," one person commented. "It was a beautiful experience. Thank you," said many more.

Jennifer Macias, a participant in my dance classes at Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, PA, also attended this event and was inspired to write a paper for her class in 'Intercultural Communications.' Following is an excerpt from the paper:

"It was an absolutely moving and wonderful experience for me. It gave me a feeling of calmness and peacefulness within myself. It was a ceremony inspired by the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters star constellation. The ceremony included reference to the September 11 events and the emotions to it, which were symbolized through the river. I had tears in my eyes as they acted out the reactions and emotions that people felt as the planes hit the towers...

"The Pleiades goal in this ceremony was to transform the river's sorrow so that a Golden Age could come to the planet Earth. They offered gifts to the river such as the gifts of song and dance... I am truly grateful that Tahya invited me to experience such a wonderful and moving night in which all dreams of happiness and peace are possible."



The on-going ripple effect of this event in our community has been extraordinary. In addition to the paper penned by J. Macias and the written comments I received from B. Khodadoost and other grateful

attendees, artist Salma Arastu's studio now houses a new painting she was inspired to create after attending the Ceremony. In effect, whenever anyone views this painting they will witness the Ceremony. On a personal note, I was able to introduce a dear friend to someone I met at The Ceremony and with their hearts/minds open to the "power of love," their lives have been forever transformed. Finally, I hope, as you read this article inspiration for similar acts of hope, love and joy will continue to ripple in ever-broadening bands. May the blessings be!

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Teaching and performing since 1977, Tahya's on-going dance and frame drum classes awaken inner creativity while exploring sacred and secular music and dance traditions of the Middle and Far East. The focus of her dance/art/life is to make drumming and dance accessible tools for relaxation, reconnecting with individual eminence and improving one's health and well-being. Visit Tahya online at www.Tahya.com or E-mail: info@tahya.com