

9/10/85

726

Spiral Dance '85--Working Outline (After meeting 726)

SETTING:

People are asked to come wearing ritual garb, in red, white or black if possible, and wearing or bringing cloth they can tear.

The Women's Building, S.F. People arrive in entrance hall, with ticket booths, etc. Childcare will be separate. The door to the hall will be draped, perhaps a giant wishbone will mark it as the entrance to the Otherworld, the Land of the Dead. The altar will be built out beyond the doorway into the hall, so that people pass through it in order to enter sacred space.

Incense or burning sage creates a veil of light smoke at the entrance.

A balcony runs around three sides of the hall. Walls can be draped with banners, cobwebs, cloths, etc.

The hall will be marked off into a quartered circle, by ship's rope taped in place, with a central circle and avenues left open for movement and dancers. (Chorus and musicians will eventually be positioned in one corner, Charlie, Jamie etc. possibly in another.) Microphones are set up but unobtrusive in other corners.

In the center is a large bowl of sand, holding a covered cauldron. On top is a lit candle. The atmosphere makes clear that when we enter the hall we are entering sacred space.

OPENING:

People are encouraged to enter the hall in sacred silence, and to sit in the quarters of the circle, leaving avenues open. Graces help with this. A special grace helps facilitate movement and positioning for people with disabilities throughout the ritual.

People face the flame in quiet meditation. As people are coming in, Ruth Barret sings "Earth Receive Thy Soul". Perhaps a violinist improvises off the melody. Figures circle the hall with drums, incense and bells.

When all are gathered and settled, there is silence. Susan North steps to the center. She puts the candle down, opens the cauldron and lights it. Lit by its flames, she sings 'Spirits'.

When she finishes, we hear the opening notes of Jani's cello. As Susan closes the cauldron and replaces the candle, Charlie and Jami begin The Burning Times. As energy builds, the Isis Astarte chant becomes a wild dance--perhaps going into the Blood of the Ancients chant, perhaps letting the dancing go on into frenzy.

The music stops. Energy is grounded (people will either follow motions of experienced people, or someone can say "Give this

energy back to the earth, by touching the ground"). People sit. Silence. Candles on altar are snuffed out, and only the central flame is left.

We hear the sound of a stick, tapping across the floor. A cloaked figure makes its way into the center of the circle, and snuffs out the central light. Darkness.

Drums begin.

From behind the side door, costumed figures of the chorus emerge, holding lighted tapers, led by a figure carrying a sword or lighted torch. They come down the stairs of the stage, go to the center of the circle and then to the North Quarter, ~~encircling~~ ^{marking the quarters with bells. When the hall is encircled, they again} the entire hall ~~depart~~ (clockwise), ~~while chanting:~~ ^{move detail, chanting:} The earth, the water, the fire, the air Returns, returns, returns, returns.

The chorus encircles

The procession returns to the center, and plants their candles in the cauldron of sand. They take their stations at microphones.

Grounding: A short Tree of Life?, led by a single voice, helps all participants ground and center. Perhaps some short visualizations of each direction, with suggestions for movement, are given.

Invoking the Four Directions: Chorus sings Guardians song, Dancers come down the open pathways and dance in the open circle. Multiple dancers for each direction encourage all participants to join in movements, gestures and dance. Instrumental interludes call on musicians' talents--perhaps with appropriate instruments for each direction?

Invoking the Goddess: Chorus sings 'There Is No End to the Circle'. We discussed having multiple voices on each chorus, not solos. They might also come from different directions. Dancers again lead participants in moving, looking into each others' eyes, touching hearts, etc.

Invoking the God: The "Wild One" chant interweaves with the end of the Goddess chant. Some changes may be made in words, and additional words added, to invoke more aspects of the God--"Old One", "Green One" etc. Again, dancers facilitate all participants in movement.

THE SHORE:

Drums and spoken guiding create the illusion that we are sitting in a circle on the shore of the sunless sea of the otherworld, preparing for a journey to the Land of the Dead.

We begin by mourning for the dead. The Litany of the Oppressed is read by many voices, with a call and response after each section:

Call: What is remembered, lives.

Answer(all): What is remembered lives. (repeat 3X)

People tear their cloth and rend their garments as they hear the litany.

People are then asked to call out the names of their own beloved dead, especially those who have died this year or who died in ways that were out of the natural course of life and death. Children and graces carry around bowls of ashes for people to mark their faces. We keen and mourn collectively. Power rises and is grounded.

SAILING TO THE ISLE OF THE DEAD

Graces emerge, take candles. An ~~drope~~ rope from the center, and move the crowd back as they form the outline of a great ship, prow facing the altar. The candles mark the gates to the ship--either the rope can be separated for the gates or it can be lifted or lowered to admit passengers. Graces guide people on board, as those who stand at the gates keep up a running whisper "What are you saying goodbye to? What are you leaving behind? What are you giving up in order to make the passage?" A drum/voice meditation sets the scene, letting people know that they are embarking to the land of the dead, and the Chorus chants "Set Sail".

The ship is loaded, people sail and rock as they are led into trance by voice, drum, and chanting. When "Set Sail" finishes, we begin the chant "Sail the hidden ocean, where life comes unbound."

We hear voices from the other world. Twelve chorus members bearing lighted candles form a small circle that approaches the prow of the ship, expanding as it draws nearer. They are chanting "Oh the shining jewels the moon brings to ground."

Drum/voice tells people that they are approaching the shining isle of the dead and the not-yet-born, where all things end and all possibility begins. They are told that they will feel their hand taken by another hand as they reach out, and they will be greeted by an ancestor--of body or of spirit, by one of the beloved dead who has help or teachings for them.

THE ISLE OF THE DEAD

As the small circle reaches the ship, it becomes a gate--a double line of people holding candles. Chorus sings "These are the gates" Graces begin leading people off the ship, through the gates in two lines that circle the hall in opposite directions. Chorus repeats "Here is all that ever was..." section as a chant. When the two lines meet at the opposite end of the hall, one passes in front of the other to form a clockwise spiral, and continues moving until the ship is empty and rope and candles are

brought to outer periphery of the circle. Participants should end up in a spiral. They Stop!

Drum/voice guides a silent meditation, to use help of the beloved dead to build an image of the world we want to bring into being, here where all possibility begins.

The chorus begins the "We are of each other" chant and goes on into the "We Are Alive" Litany. The spiral dance begins slowly, then builds power. We can turn the Spiral more than once, or let it dissolve into free dancing, but eventually we build the cone of power, to give power to our vision.

The cone is grounded. In the quiet, we hear Holly (and others?) sing 'For All the World Below'.

In the silence that follows, the trance guide asks us each to take a moment to find what the commitment is that each of us will bring back to the world of sun and sky--what we will each do to help our vision come into being.

SAILING BACK

Again, Graces take rope and candles, form the outline of the ship around the participants, and we sail back, sitting this time and rocking as we hear Holly chant "Gone, Gonna Rise Again." We chant "Bless the shining jewels the moon brings to ground." We are asked to whisper or speak aloud our commitments. Drum/voice guides us to say a clear farewell to the isle, to the ship, and to any souls whom we do not want to bring back with us.

RETURN TO THE SHORE

As we step off the boat, candles are brought away from the ship again and perhaps placed on the altar. We celebrate life by singing the names of babies born this year (Jamie Green?) We also call for the souls we want to be born: "I call for a dancer" "I call for a woman of power" "I call for a man who is a healer" etc., led by Teiah, who makes clear that we are calling for qualities which may be born in ourselves, not just in future children. With appropriate cautions about unwanted pregnancies following?

CELEBRATION

The circle is opened with the "There Is No End to the Circle" Chant part 2. People are invited to stay for music, dance and celebration to the limits of what Charlie, Holly, other musicians, pipers, etc. are willing to provide.