

The Music That Moves Us On

By Christine Loughlin, OP

Summer ~ the season of dance and delight, movement and music, travel and transition. In cultures long past, peoples lighted ceremonial fires upon the hillsides in grateful mirroring of the abundant energy pouring forth from Earth's sun star. Custom required people leap over the dancing flames to turn away their weaknesses and worries. While we no longer light the fires or leap the flames, or sense a dependent relationship with the sun, the burning examination of our personal and collective cultural weaknesses and woes is more necessary now than ever before. As the blossoms of summer's beauty contain the seeds for future planting, the arts born in summer's leisure guide the human spirit.

In early summer, more than half a century ago, two months before the dropping of the bombs that would define forever our place in history, representatives from international organizations gathered in San Francisco. After two horrific world wars marked our human way in the first half of the 20th century, wise councilors from around the globe sought to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights. On June 26, 1945, the United Nations Charter was established to create conditions for international law that would promote social progress to better the standards of human life.

While the latter part of the 20th century did give birth to an emerging human consciousness that dreamed a world beyond war, and social activism recognized and responded to global systemic injustices, the technologies unleashed in a war economy were converted to commercial means of production and commerce. Though the UN Charter committed the nations to a transformation of the "world" on behalf of the world's peoples, it did not ground the Charter in a fundamental reckoning. World must embrace the Earth we live on, the environment that surrounds us, the context out of which we emerged and upon which we are utterly dependent. Economic gains and social progress generated by technology imperiled the living systems of our self-emerging Home Planet, the source and substance of a living community.

In the last decades of the century a new articulation emerged expressed in programs and innovative projects undertaken by the peoples of Earth. International Agreements and Acts were ratified until, at last, in 1982 the General Assembly of the UN recognized that world peace and security was dependent upon the larger community of life. The World Charter for Nature was signed.

Ten years later at the Earth Summit conference in Brazil an early draft of a United Nation's Earth Charter was presented. Throughout the final years of the 20th century, global grassroots and non-governmental international agencies modified the document until it expressed an authoritative synthesis of values, principles, and aspirations shared by growing numbers of peoples from diverse landscapes and cultures. Ecological well-being is the bedrock upon which sustainable development must lie. On June 29, 2000, in a symbolic event held at the Peace Palace in the Netherlands, the Earth Charter was sent forth to all nations that peoples everywhere might engage in "the great work" that moves the principles from theory to practice.

Today thousands of organizations, mayors, governors, cities and towns far and wide throughout the world have endorsed the Earth Charter. Artisans, teachers, builders, healthcare workers, farmers, youth, city planners, are inspired to implement its principles. After a century of unparalleled death and destruction of every form of life, a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the human family within the context of the larger living world has awakened in the human soul.

The values that birthed the Earth Charter emerged from the same sources that have guided the human community on our sometimes glorious, often perilous journey: local customs and international law, science, wisdom of indigenous peoples, the philosophy of the great world religions, and ever evolving global ethics.

In a time long past, people intuited the passing of energy between summer's sun and the budding forth of the natural world. Today the youngest child sits and observes on her computer screen Earth's journey around the sun ~ the axial tilt, the elliptical swing, the great distance and the interface that brings summer's warmth. We modern humans have extended the power of our senses through the tools of science. While we increased our capacity for outer knowing, we diminished our inner understanding. The Earth Charter represents a turning point in the ethical development of human consciousness. Mikhail Gorbachev, one of the primary architects of the Charter said, "My hope is that this Charter will be a kind of Ten Commandments, a Sermon on the Mount, that provides a guide for human behavior toward the environment in the 21st century."

Art is the form in which the primordial energy that rises in the obscure regions of the unconscious manifests itself. In the first week of June, eighty women from the provinces of Canada and the United States will gather in Boston to sing into being the soul of the Earth Charter. Our responsibility to Earth is not simply to preserve it, but to be present to Earth in its next transformation. While the principles lay out the grounding for our choices, it is music that will stir the psychic energy necessary to sustain our human will toward a profound reorientation of a renewed human-Earth relationship.

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"Humanity is at a crossroads that requires us to acknowledge the effects on our planet caused by how we live. We believe it is imperative that we reclaim our right and responsibility to take action to restore the health of the ecosystem." -Spirit in Nature