

Webways of the Elements: How We Plant a Seed Created and performed by Amy Oestreicher 2020

Theatre/Performance/Visual Art/Music/Dance

(Can be performed as a live-stream virtual piece, outside with social distancing, or pre-recorded)

Genre: Healing, Resilience, Women, Sustainability, Environmentalism, Spiritual Ecology, Ecofeminism, Climate Change Activism, PTSD, Hope

See performance (in development) clip 1: [https://youtu.be/0-Z-7m MB0](https://youtu.be/0-Z-7mMB0)

See performance clip 2 (in development) : [https://youtu.be/SGi2qwK7 vg](https://youtu.be/SGi2qwK7vg)

Storyboard: <https://tinyurl.com/gaia-story>

Production Photos, In development sketches, etc.: <https://bit.ly/2KBqHfX>

How can we foster a compassionate connection with ourselves or each other if we don't with the earth?

In a multimedia performance combining original songs, spoken word, mixed media artwork, puppetry and an inspirational true story of resilience, audiences are taken on a journey through the webways of healing, based on the performer's own story of trauma, in a quest to heal along with Earth and they both push against the destruction done to them and use the arts to reclaim their voice. On this journey, Amy meets the five elements of fire, air, spirit, water and earth, who show her that in order to heal ourselves along with our planet, we must have a heart warm enough for listening, and hands tough enough to get dirty in the soil.

In this solo performance, Gaia tell this story of creation and of resistance to a child born from a flower, through various forms of puppetry The young girl gives Amy - a resilient yet resistant survivor of complex trauma - hope that together we can make a positive change for our planet and future.

I, as Gaia, am telling the story of creation and of resistance to a young girl, how I have been split apart. The young girl gives me hope that together we can make a change for our planet, our future, and heal. I started developing this based on the question, How can we connect/have compassion for ourselves or each other if we don't for the earth? We must start with healing our planet. How? We have to have a heart warm enough for compassion and listening.

This nature-inspired multimedia cycle takes audiences on a fantastical journey of discovery in an extraordinary coming of age story, answering the question “can you sing about the beauty of life after near-death trauma?” with an emphatic “YES.”

CHARACTER BREAK DOWN

SETTING:

Over the course of several days
Prologue: Berkshire Hills
Scenes: Woods

CHARACTERS:

Tannin - 33, F, stubborn and resilient because of what she feels has been done to her. Looking for a way to repair her holes, longing for the "wholeness" of nature she once remembered at a more innocent and whole time in her life and body.

Gaia - a motherly figure, a presence who is sensed but not fully seen. Warm, wanting her elements to work together, for Tannin to work with them, and for all creatures to have a home.

Pillodeh: A Child, (Piloderma fungi, part of the microzyzetal network) but an old soul in a small body, discovering the earth as a newborn, but born from the ground, already has the lessons within her. Has childlike wonder with elements that Tannin is afraid of, which naturally come with the child's inherent wisdom that these elements are part of her and part of her world

Elements:

Fire - strong, vibrant, determined and strong-willed

Earth - sturdy, grounded, yet flexible and malleable. Teaches tannin how to adapt to change

Water - vulnerable, emotional

Wind - humble and longs to connect everything, but doesn't know her own strength and endangers the child

TANNIN: portrayed by puppeteer (myself)

CHILD: portayed by flower or mushroom scarf marionette

FOUR ELEMENTS: Portrayed by different scarf marionettes

STORYLINE

SEE STORYBOARD HERE: <https://tinyurl.com/gaia-story>

- **EXPOSITION**
- We meet Tannin loving nature and receiving a vision
- **INCITING ACTION**
- Tannin is struck by lightning, receiving holes in her body
- As Tannin cries out in pain, we also meet Gaia (with the elements represented) plants a seed that becomes a child and its home (demonstrate how all the elements create the child/home)
- Home/Child blooms
- Tannin still in pain, unknowingly steps on child's home, destroying it
- Child cries out for Tannin to rebuild their home; Tannin refuses because she has her own problems and is seeking that vision; Child expresses they don't know how
- **RISING ACTION**
- Child calls on Gaia and Gaia awakens and sends the elements (who are already working with Gaia, being represented visually)

- The elements introduce themselves COVEN SCENE reveal to the Child (excited) and Tannin (repelled) and offer to help
- Tannin wants to leave
- Elements tell her she is essential
- Tannin still refuses to believe them and help the child so Fire accepts the challenge
- Fire then shares her story showing how her devastation leads to life and the strength (strength)
- Child is intrigued and Tannin is repelled, but gets excited about strength
- But it's not enough for Tannin
- Earth then shares her story showing how important it is to change and be flexible (take and give)
- Child is intrigued and Tannin is hesitant but curious
- But it's not enough for Tannin
- Water then shares her story showing how the power of yielding and flowing (vulnerability)
- Child is intrigued and Tannin is hesitant but curious
- But it's not enough
- Wind then shares her story showing how she is sensed by not seen (connection and humility)
- CLIMAX (or rising action???)
- Wind picks up and endangers the child
- Tannin decides to save the child (*set this up with earlier moments of dismissal*)
- Tannin argues with the elements how they are simultaneously light and dark
- FALLING ACTION (or climax)
- The elements together reveal how they need each other, just like the Child needs Tannin
- Tannin and the child learn to love the element together despite the light and dark. Love the dark and the light
- Tannin helps the Child rebuild its home with the help of the elements / nature
- RESOLUTION
- Tannin is alone; what's next? (*tie this back to the beginning of her journey*)
- Gaia meets Tannin and embraces her.
- The end!

(Child could possibly be Piloderma fungi, microzyzetal network)

Examples of monologue/folktales that each element tells:

"Torrie the Pine Tree and the Water Droplet"

<https://youtu.be/1iT5Ah9bo7I>

A Story of Sunlight, Hummingbirds, and "Happiness"

<https://youtu.be/P9kH0nxLI-k>

The Story of Air: How Wind Learned to Balance

https://youtu.be/C_mGjG7Auqw

SONGS:

1. OPENING CHANT: Pushing Against
2. I WANT OUT: Blue, "numbness mask" (with song, I WANT OUT, used in show)

3. <https://youtu.be/69WStHEKNQs>
4. THIS IS OUR NAME Song used in show sung between Tannin and Gaia: with painting, snake, scarf puppet - https://youtu.be/0-Z-7m_MB0
5. GIVE IT TO WATER: original song, scarf puppet and mask work: <https://youtu.be/Ic-ruwqrHOQ>
6. Stay out of corners: original songs and shadow puppetry: <https://youtu.be/kKkAKSLov3Q>
7. FISTULA: <https://youtu.be/iG46yKj-G8I>
8. SPIRIT IS A WEB: <https://youtu.be/0hZVxyltxnA>
9. MADWOMAN: <https://amyoes.bandcamp.com/track/madwoman>
10. SCARY MORNING: <https://youtu.be/DiflthwdnV4>
11. BODY SONG: <https://youtu.be/ejtkdGzAzdk>

**Each Element has their own musical motif*

VIDEOS

Scarf Puppet Exploration Videos:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqqhtI1i5Qxc1G4EwKSizlYbHqpErWeoS>

Mask work videos:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqqhtI1i5QxeUqAX9cGQJvBNK8W1mDh7L>

Wooden Marionette Videos: (Possibly TANNIN's harder side)

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqqhtI1i5QxfNV9fr4kKncjRe7jAJu8nF>

Cardboard marionette hand and blank white mask is used as the “puzzle pieces” of Gaia that TANNIN finally puts together by the end.

Bringing to life the cardboard hand: <https://youtu.be/M-sdyEGnM0s>

Gaia's presence is just felt throughout the piece through sound, chant, and these “pieces.” At the end, TANNIN embraces the spirit of Gaia and acknowledges herself as part of Gaia. This prompts her to finally wear the “Four Elements Mask” and put on the mask, becoming all of the elements at once. (See [production photos](#) for more information)

Interaction of earth and fire puppet: <https://youtu.be/5QMXgH0Vjyo>

Two scarf puppets take a journey: <https://youtu.be/PLW2HsEwqGk>

Mask and puppet interaction:

<https://youtu.be/7-aid71VIg>

Some examples of translucent puppetry:

https://youtu.be/_cjat-u5qz0

<https://youtu.be/GCW7tNRPXHk>

Live painting: <https://youtu.be/qdg02PM4zGc>