

# PAUL TRACEY

## *Our Little Blue Planet*

**Art Form: Music, Storytelling**  
**Style: Contemporary**  
**Culture: International**

### MEET THE ARTIST:

**Paul Tracey** was born in South Africa to British parents. He grew up on his grandmother's farm in England where he soon became accustomed to every aspect of mixed farming. Educated at boarding schools, Paul sang in the church choir, learned to play the flute and taught himself the guitar. On his return to South Africa he attended the University of the Witwatersrand but completed his education at "The University of the Bush" -- which simply means being a farmer. This time he specialized in chickens. He co-authored the hit musical revue, "Wait a Minim!" which ran in theatres around the world for seven years, appearing on Broadway for 13 months. He played in other Broadway productions but on the birth of his daughter began writing his own songs, some of which were featured on Jim Henson's "The Muppet Show." His television credits include appearances on PBS, comedy specials on ABC and The Tonight Show. He has received a 'lifetime achievement award' from the California Alliance for Arts Education, and co-founded the Professional Artists in Schools Award (PASA).

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Paul Tracey brings our attention from the 'Big Dipper' down toward Earth -- *Our Little Blue Planet* -- on to the United States, and to where we are today at your school in California. Accompanying himself on guitar and with prerecorded tracks, he sings seven original songs for this environmental show. An 8-foot diameter inflated globe suspended from a pole is used to point out places of interest internationally. From California we move to the other side of the world to the island of Mauritius. This is where the dodo bird lived until its extinction. Dead as a Dodo warns us about endangered species. *The Train to Timbuktu* tells of places with fascinating names, like Zanzibar and the Limpopo. *Save the Forests* explains the vital role of trees in producing oxygen. Our world's people have many differences (*People, People*), but with cooperation *We Can Do It* -- we can save this planet. After questions, the song continues as the audience exits.



### PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

As Mr. Tracey shows us, our 'little blue planet' is small when compared to our closest star - the sun - which is 400 times as wide. As Earth circles around the sun, once every year, it also rotates on its own axis, once a day. As it spins, it tips, bringing the northern hemisphere closer to the sun during summer and further away during winter. The Earth spins from west to east and, generally speaking, weather patterns and wind also travel in the same direction. Gravity is the force that keeps the earth from spinning away from the sun. It keeps the moon from leaving its orbit around the earth. It makes the tides react to the phases of the moon. It also keeps most of us firmly planted on earth.

Air seems very light, but it has weight which keeps it close to earth, within 5,000 miles. Beyond that is space where there is no air. Air is made of various gasses, with oxygen being the vital one for humans. The leaves on trees, through a process known as photosynthesis, produce oxygen while absorbing carbon dioxide -- just the opposite of what happens when humans breathe. This is why trees are crucial to human existence. Water is the other element necessary for human life. Whether in its solid form like ice, in its liquid form like rain, or as a gas called water vapor, all living things need water to survive. Ocean water evaporates when heated by the sun; water vapor forms and when it condenses and turns into droplets it can be seen as a cloud which gives us precipitation -- rain, sleet, snow or hail.

Scientists believe that human life began in Africa. People migrated from there across land to other continents and, later, by boat to islands. Even today, with the population of the earth at six billion, there are still uninhabited areas where life could be sustained provided we -- the human race -- take care of our planet and all its species by not polluting the air, the soil and the water.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What are the differences between the globe you saw today and the real world?
- Do you feel that the human race can control earth's environment? How?
- What could you do, personally, to improve the environment in your neighborhood or your school?
- Which part of the world fascinates you the most? Why?

## FRAMEWORK FOCUS - SCIENCE:

What can we do to help our little blue planet? Many things! Plant a tree, for one. Contact Tree People, 12601 Mulholland Dr., Beverly Hills, CA 90210. (818) 753-4600. They also do school presentations.

Start a recycling center at your school. Recycling saves energy, thus reducing acid rain, global warming and air pollution. It usually takes less energy to make recycled products; recycled aluminum, for example, takes 95% less energy than new aluminum from bauxite ore. Recycling paper uses 60% less energy than manufacturing paper from virgin timber. Recycling a glass jar saves enough energy to light a bulb for four hours. Recycling conserves valuable natural resources. For example, recycling metals minimizes the need for mining new minerals and decreases damage to wilderness. In most cases, making products from recycled materials creates less air pollution and water pollution than making products from virgin materials.

Recycling also cuts down on landfill. When the materials that you recycle go into new products, they don't go into landfills or incinerators, so landfill space is conserved. A very handy guide can be found at this webpage: <http://www.obviously.com/recycle/guides/shortest.html>

What is good to recycle, and what not so good? Good: mixed paper, junk mail, magazines, cereal or shoe boxes, photocopies, cardboard, phone books.

Bad: napkins, tissues, milk cartons, fast food wrappers, any wet or food stained paper.

Note: Paper fiber can be recycled up to seven times.

- Legend:
- 🌀 Artistic perception
  - ❖ Creative expression
  - ▶ Historical & cultural context
  - 👉 Aesthetic valuing
  - \* Connections, Relations, Applications

## ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- ❖ Draw a map of your classroom. Imagine that you are a fly on the ceiling, looking down. Draw the outline of the room. Include the places where there are doors and windows, tables and chairs.
- \* Using a smaller scale, draw a map that includes your school, where you live, and five or six other places of importance in your community. (The supermarket, post office, church, etc.)
- ❖ Make your own globe. Use a beach ball or inflate a balloon and using marking pens, draw in the lines of longitude and latitude to form a grid which will assist you in placing the continents in their right places. Mark in major cities such as New York, Paris, Singapore, Bombay and Johannesburg as well as your hometown.
- ▶ Most Americans have ancestors who came from other countries. Find out where your forebears came from. Find that area on a map of the world and measure how many miles they had to travel to get to where you are now.

- \* In a dark corner, using a flashlight as your "sun," turn the globe to see where it's daytime when it's night for you, or "dawn" at your house when it's "dusk" elsewhere.



## SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Gore, Al. *Earth in the Balance. Ecology and the Human Spirit.* A Plume Book, Penguin, New York, N.Y., 1993.

Cherry, Lynne. *The Great Kapok Tree, a Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest.* Harcourt Brace Javonovich, San Diego, CA. 1990.

<http://www.paultracey.org/>