Anna Halprin

Words From Lawrence Halprin

Anna and I have been married for 65 years and our work has been interwoven all that time. Early on, Anna abandoned Modern Dance developed by the American pioneers Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman because it was based on the personalities of those dancers. For her instead dance essentially draws on primitive needs that express life forces. Her earliest background emphasized the anatomy and physiology of the human body and its relation to the forces of nature and the environment. She was able to develop her processes in nature on an outdoor dance deck I designed for her which removed the proscenium arch, presented new and different spatial relationships and enveloped the performers with the natural sounds and elements of nature. It has since become an world wide icon of creativity with nature and has drawn a cadre of brilliant dancers from around the world after world war 2 up until the present time including Merce Cunningham, Min Tanaka, Meredith Monk, Simone Forti, Trish Brown, Yvonne Rainer , Eiko and Koma and many new young dancers. With her students she developed new sources of group creativity based on a series of workshop exercises called "experiments in the environment" in which, as in life, outcome itself emerges as a result of interactions with the environment and with group members; flexible, intense and life affirming.

More and more her dance has developed as myths and rituals in which the focus is on issues of everyday life; psychological, or physical, and community as well as personal. In this sense she has reverted to the early meaning of dance in human society, joyful and healing as well as tragic, and based on the most primitive needs of the human condition. These dances are universal.

For this reason Anna's dances have plowed new deep ground which is unlike any other performer today. Dance for her is humanistic and searching and its importance lies in the process of creativity she has developed as much as the performance itself.

Lawrence Halprin