

the art of making dances doris humphrey barbara pollack

The art of making dances Doris Humphrey Barbara Pollack has long been a subject of interest for dancers, choreographers, and dance enthusiasts alike. As pivotal figures in the realm of modern dance, Doris Humphrey and Barbara Pollack have each made significant contributions to the development of dance as a form of artistic expression. This article delves into their unique approaches to choreography, their philosophies, and the lasting impact they have had on the world of dance.

Understanding Doris Humphrey's Choreographic Philosophy

Doris Humphrey (1895-1958) was not only a prominent dancer but also a trailblazing choreographer whose work exemplified the emotional depth of modern dance. Her philosophy centered around the concept of "fall and recovery," which she believed mirrored the human experience. This approach is characterized by:

- **Physicality:** Emphasizing the body's natural movements and rhythms.
- **Emotion:** Infusing choreography with deep emotional content.
- **Storytelling:** Creating narratives through movement.

Humphrey's technique was grounded in the belief that dance should reflect life's struggles and joys. She often drew inspiration from literary and theatrical sources, allowing her choreography to resonate with audiences on a profound level.

Key Works of Doris Humphrey

Some of her most notable works include:

1. "The Shakers" - A piece reflecting the religious sect's beliefs through dynamic group movements and formations.
2. "Air for the G String" - A subtle exploration of emotional states, characterized by fluid movements and a lyrical quality.
3. "New Dance" - A revolutionary work that exemplified her fall-and-recovery technique while exploring themes of freedom and confinement.

Barbara Pollack's Contribution to Dance

Barbara Pollack (b. 1931) is another influential figure in the dance community, known for her innovative approaches and commitment to modern dance. Pollack's work is often characterized by an exploration of the relationship between movement and music, and she has been a significant force in both choreographing and teaching.

Pollack's Creative Process

Pollack's creative process is reflective of her belief that dance should be an extension of the human experience. Her approach includes:

- **Collaboration:** Working closely with musicians, visual artists, and other choreographers to create a multi-sensory experience.
- **Improvisation:** Allowing dancers to explore their interpretations of movement, which leads to a more organic and authentic performance.
- **Experimentation:** Utilizing various styles and techniques to push the boundaries of traditional dance.

Through her choreography, Pollack aims to create a dialogue between the dancer and the audience, emphasizing movement as a form of communication.

The Intersection of Humphrey's and Pollack's Techniques

While Doris Humphrey and Barbara Pollack have different styles, their work shares common themes that highlight the evolution of modern dance. Both choreographers emphasize the importance of emotion, physicality, and storytelling. However, their techniques diverge in execution and philosophical underpinning.

Similarities

- **Emotional Expression:** Both choreographers utilize movement to convey complex emotional states.
- **Narrative Quality:** Their works often tell a story, whether through abstract concepts or literal interpretations.
- **Innovation in Movement:** Each has contributed to redefining what dance can

be, expanding the language of movement.

Differences

- **Technique Focus:** Humphrey's work is centered around her fall-and-recovery technique, while Pollack often incorporates elements of improvisation and collaboration.
- **Musical Relationship:** Pollack places a significant emphasis on the relationship between dance and music, often collaborating with composers to create a cohesive artistic vision.

Impact on Modern Dance

The art of making dances by Doris Humphrey and Barbara Pollack has left an indelible mark on the world of modern dance. Their approaches to choreography have influenced countless dancers and choreographers, fostering a rich environment for innovation and creativity.

Legacy of Doris Humphrey

Humphrey's legacy includes:

- **Choreographic Techniques:** The fall-and-recovery technique continues to be taught in dance schools worldwide.
- **Influence on Future Generations:** Many contemporary choreographers cite Humphrey as a significant influence in their work.
- **Establishment of Modern Dance Schools:** She co-founded the Humphrey-Weidman School of Dance, which became a vital institution for modern dance education.

Legacy of Barbara Pollack

Pollack's contributions to dance education and choreography are equally notable:

- **Teaching Philosophy:** Pollack's focus on improvisation and collaboration has shaped the way dance is taught today.
- **Choreographic Innovations:** Her works continue to inspire new generations of dancers to explore the boundaries of movement.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaborations:** Pollack's emphasis on collaboration has encouraged a more integrated approach to the arts, fostering relationships between dancers and other artists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the art of making dances by Doris Humphrey and Barbara Pollack embodies a rich tapestry of emotional depth, innovative techniques, and enduring legacy. While they each approached choreography with different perspectives, their shared commitment to artistic expression has significantly shaped modern dance. Their works and philosophies continue to inspire dancers and choreographers today, ensuring that their influence will be felt for generations to come. Whether one is drawn to Humphrey's profound emotional narratives or Pollack's collaborative spirit, both offer invaluable insights into the transformative power of dance as an art form.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the significance of Doris Humphrey's contributions to modern dance as discussed in Barbara Pollack's writings?

Doris Humphrey is recognized for her innovative approaches to choreography and her development of the 'fall and recovery' technique, which emphasizes the body's natural movements and emotional expression. Barbara Pollack highlights how Humphrey's work laid foundational principles for modern dance, influencing countless choreographers.

How does Barbara Pollack interpret the relationship between choreography and emotional expression in Humphrey's dances?

Barbara Pollack interprets the relationship as a central theme in Humphrey's work, where choreography serves not just as a sequence of movements but as a medium for conveying deep emotional narratives. This approach allows audiences to connect with the dancers on a personal level, making the art form more relatable.

What techniques did Doris Humphrey innovate that are still relevant in contemporary dance today?

Doris Humphrey innovated several techniques, including the use of weight and gravity in movement, as well as her 'fall and recovery' concept. These techniques are still relevant today, as they inform the physicality and expressiveness of contemporary dance, promoting a deeper understanding of movement dynamics.

In what ways does Barbara Pollack suggest that Doris Humphrey's work reflects societal changes during her time?

Barbara Pollack suggests that Doris Humphrey's work reflects societal changes through its emphasis on individual expression and collaboration, mirroring the evolving roles of women and shifts in social dynamics during the early to mid-20th century. Her dances often encapsulated themes of struggle, resilience, and community.

What role did collaboration play in Doris Humphrey's creative process according to Barbara Pollack?

According to Barbara Pollack, collaboration was essential to Doris Humphrey's creative process. She often worked closely with composers, visual artists, and other choreographers, integrating their insights into her choreography. This interdisciplinary approach enriched her work and expanded the boundaries of dance as an art form.

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