

## Field Dance

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### A r a w a n a   H a y a s h i

My work as an improvising dancer involves dropping habitual ways of perceiving in order to contact a fresh and subtle perceiving “under the surface” of what is going on. Perhaps that can be called perceiving the field—both the personal field and the social field. That deeper sense of perceiving allows the emergence of what I call the “true move,” or the genuine expression of myself and the collective.

If we want to develop a deeper, more subtle, way of perceiving situations and social fields, we need to be relaxed, open, confident, not expecting or demanding anything in particular. And we need to make friends with our own body—not just casual, in-passing friends, but intimate friends.

Often we get caught up in the speed and pressures of daily life, and our mind and body become disconnected. The mind is off thinking about something and the body moves towards one goal after another on auto-pilot. When we start to slow down, we might notice that mind habitually ignores the body. It jumps around, wanders disembodied and ungrounded. Or mind gives body a hard time— expecting, demanding, judging, and manipulating.

In my workshops, we begin by letting mind’s attention simply rest, focus, on how the body feels. We pay attention to sensation. We relax, slow down, become familiar with ourselves. We drop the habit of judging. We feel genuine appreciation, even wonder, for simply being present in the body this very moment. A deep sense of well-being comes from feeling at home.

“Presence of being *is* our home.”

We bring mind and body back together by paying attention to sensation in a full, non-judgmental way. We begin to feel a sense of presence, of being right on the spot without an agenda. Presence of being *is* our home.

### **Discovering Natural Creativity**

Presence has a natural expression, a natural creativity. We aren’t interested in struggling and straining to squeeze out a product that is more clever or more attractive than the next person’s. All we need to do is allow our innate creativity to come forth. It is a dance of discipline (being on the dot of being present) and openness (having enough room to relax). It is a balance of form and freedom. We create boundaries and forms that allow for the most space and freedom of expression.

For example, workshop participants are invited to participate in a “20-Minute Dance.” This dance has the dimensions of time, space, and vocabulary (what we do). This is true of all situations—projects, family life, meetings. In the “20-Minute Dance” time and space are set. Vocabulary is free. Each person can do whatever he or she feels like doing, providing the vocabulary contains some movement and some non-movement. The task is to pay attention to what each moment of movement or stillness *feels* like.

At first, people often feel awkward. There is a twinge of “now what?” But that bewilderment, that not-knowing, is the key to genuine spontaneous expression. Not-knowing is the most welcome of guests. It is the spacious possibility that anything could happen. As our discipline of paying attention to the body in the present moment strengthens, we find that we relish more and more this sense of not-knowing. Working in this way decreases self-consciousness and increases trust in ourselves and in any situation that arises.

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### Seeing the Social Field

I find that as people develop a greater sense of confidence and well-being in working on their own, they inevitably begin to turn their attention outward. They become inquisitive and interested in working in groups.

When our attention turns outward, we often become completely seduced. Then what often happens is that we completely seduce into the group—its vast array of people, expressions, intentions, projections. We lose our most important ally, awareness. We let the “out there” pull us completely away from the body sense. About 30 years ago, I began using a form I called “The Village” to clarify the elements of ensemble improvisation and investigate the relationships between self and group. The Village allows anyone, not just dancers, to perceive what Otto Scharmer refers to as the “invisible quality of the field beneath the surface.”

If you watched The Village you may not think it is about creativity at all, because, in fact, each person in this group dance is limited to just six ordinary movements—sitting, standing, lying down, walking, turning, and greeting. No waving arms, poetic gesturing, or leaping about. No creative dancing. Because the vocabulary is so pared down, our awareness fills the space. We notice light, rhythm, weight, spatial configurations, energy, atmosphere.

The Village dance is not “me” and what I do; nor is it “them” and what they do. Our attention is on the space in which everything takes place. The space is the field. We stop trying to figure out, in some linear way, how we are going to participate in the group. We simply experience what is already happening and what wants to emerge— what is unfolding, arising by itself in the space.

Of course, we notice and are moved by what people do—they follow, they lead, they group together, they spread far apart, they hover in the middle, they skirt the edges, they cut through

the middle and attract others who do the same. We enjoy this display; however, this is not where our attention lies. Our attention remains in the space, as a panoramic awareness that includes what is happening as well as the background space out of which the activity emerges. We make choices based on what we perceive, but with attention on the space, these choices become natural, non-conceptual non-choices arising from awareness of the field.

I have seen hundreds of Village dances and each is unique and profound. Some are funny, some are games, some are rituals, some are mysteries. Each has its own integrity, beauty, and power. Each is a journey in which individual people drop their separateness while shining in their uniqueness. They journey from stiffness to ease, from skepticism to delight, from seriousness to play. This is a step-by-step approach that creates a base of trust. People learn to trust themselves and the situation. They cease to be locked into a solid sense of me and them.

With soft eyes we see the field or the space. Then we see that the space itself is dancing. We experience each other beyond credentials, opinions, and concepts. We experience the basic healthiness and integrity of our community. We are ready for genuine communication and insight.

**Arawana Hayashi** is a dancer, choreographer, and teacher, with roots in Asian and Western arts. She began her dance training in classical ballet, culminating in studies with Nina Fonaroff in New York, and later trained in modern dance at the Merce Cunningham Studio. Throughout her career she has been involved in interdisciplinary, ensemble improvisation. However, her strong interest in traditional, contemplative arts also led her to study bugaku (Japanese Imperial Court dance) with Suenobu Togi, the holder of a 1000-year-old lineage. Her workshop in creative process, *The Art of Making a True Move*, has been presented in educational institutions, meditation centers, and organizational settings in the U.S. and Canada. Arawana is a member of the Shambhala Institute's creative process faculty and she will be collaborating with Otto Scharmer and David Rome in the 2004 module on "The Practice of Innovation: Learning from the Future as it Emerges."