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Memorial tribute to dance pioneer Ina Hahn planned for June 11 at Windhover

Artists live in a self-defined space. Their work remains theirs forever — merely witnessed or shared by the rest of us. Sometimes, when artists leave us — especially performing artists — what made them unique leaves us as well. Ina Hahn has died. The dancer and choreographer, impetus for much of th...

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By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Jun. 3, 2016 at 9:06 PM

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Artists live in a self-defined space. Their work remains theirs forever — merely witnessed or shared by the rest of us. Sometimes, when artists leave us — especially performing artists — what made them unique leaves us as well.

Ina Hahn has died. The dancer and choreographer, impetus for much of the dance scene on Cape Ann for decades, and an influence in modern dance internationally, died in January from cancer. She was 86.

is a marvelous story. Ina Hahn ... She studied all forms as a child. ... way through Wellesley as an ... taking advantage of Boston ... like studies with Jose Limon. She ... York, with innovators of modern ... tha Graham and Doris Humphrey. ... ay as well, during the 1950s, in ... ows like "Can-Can" and "King and



Zoom
Ina Hahn

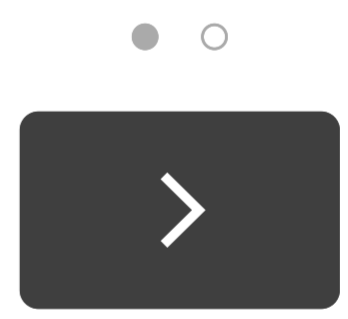


Hahn taught dance, as a pioneer at Radcliffe, and

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later in many Massachusetts colleges, like Boston Conservatory, Bradford and Endicott. With her teaching she looking forward — training a next generation of performers — but also back to the past. She was a champion of the work of modern dance pioneers, and preserved their work — especially that of Doris Humphrey — through re-creation and notation.

As her performing career was winding down in the 1960s, she and her husband bought a farm in Rockport’s Pigeon Cove, which they transformed into Windhover. In its early years Windhover was a thriving arts camp each summer, populated with teenagers and pre-professionals studying music, literature and, of course, dance.

In the mid-80s Windhover became a foundation, turning its focus to the performing arts, and still persists as a site for live performances. Many of the presentations on its outdoor stage followed Hahn’s creative direction: “Dogtown Common,” “Peer Gynt,” “Las Meninas Variations,” “The Battle for Pigeon Cove Harbor,” and a series of dance remembrances for the Doris Humphrey centennial in 1995.

The memories of Ina Hahn’s career, and her influence, are shared by many artists, thinkers and admirers on Cape Ann and throughout the dance world. The quality of those relationships serves as a sign of how deeply the arts were part of her life. Her intellectual scope was restlessly varied, and her explorations of what it meant to be an artist and a thinker never ended.

She maintained a devotion to art of the past. Her love of Bach was prodigious. She set dances to the music of Vivaldi, of Kurt Weill, and of many others. But her most profound relationship was to the generation of choreographers who immediately preceded her — the founders of modern dance. Humphrey, Graham, Tamiris, Limon, Weidman — for many years Windhover Dance Company was the only troupe in New England dedicated to these choreographers.

Modern dance stands apart from all the art forms: it may hearken to the past, but its own history is recent. As a vigorous, regimented discipline, it goes back only to the early decades of the 20th century.

Ina Hahn stands with others in being its first proponents. Her key role, initially through her performing career, and later through her own choreography and in documenting the creations of others, can be witnessed in the robust growth of modern dance troupes throughout the world.

Doris Humphrey’s choreographic credo — “Fall and Recovery” — could be the single defining philosophy behind modern dance. Like tension and release, or conflict and resolution, fall and recovery sums up a central premise in great art. Immerse an audience in a problem, and offer a solution.

Windhover has had its fall. And already it has designs on its recovery. With the decline and loss of its founder, Windhover has been faced with finding a solution. It has, and its future has promise. Ina Hahn’s daughter Lisa will run the foundation as executive director, and has for years been quietly steering the organization toward a regeneration.

Much of the magic of Windhover has come from its outdoor performances, which have been limited to cooperating weather. In order to move forward as a reliable performance space, an indoor theater has long been planned. In just the past calendar year, a substantial Mass. Cultural Council grant, contingent on matching funds, has been secured toward the completion of an enclosed performance space. Plans are being designed, and the creation of a dance theater, dedicated to and named for Ina Hahn, has become a galvanizing and cathartic mission for those many people who want to continue her work.

This is where the legacy of Windhover, and a remembrance of Ina Hahn the artist, converge. Nothing could be more fleeting than a dance performance. It exists in the moment — witness it, and you may find the magic. Retelling the mystery of those moments always fails.

But continuing the practice, retaining its tradition and disciplines, and believing in its power — that’s where a legacy renews itself. Revitalizing Windhover in Ina Hahn’s memory will foster the tradition that she devoted her artistic life to, the tradition that she understood, practiced, studied, and mastered. Her ultimate fall, and lasting recovery.

Memorial gathering

Next week at Windhover, dancers, friends and admirers will come together to celebrate an ending.

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It is a tribute to the end of Ina Hahn's admirable life, but not to the end of her legacy. Not only was her life a rarity, her legacy is a rarity among artists. Windhover lives. Become a part of it, beginning with this afternoon of celebration.

A memorial service is scheduled for Saturday, June 11, from 2 to 5 p.m. at Windhover. Several of her own choreographed works, along with performances of the music of J.S. Bach, and readings of some of her poetry, will accompany remarks from her family. The public is welcome to remember Ina Hahn, and to continue her legacy at Windhover. In case of rain, the memorial will be held the following afternoon, Sunday, June 12.

For further information, or to contribute to the ongoing artistic future of Windhover, visit www.windhover.org or call 978-546-3611.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for Gatehouse Media and WBUR's ARTery. Follow @PowersKeith; email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com

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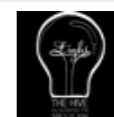


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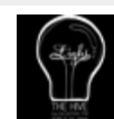
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