

NATURAL MASTERY

profiles of Natural Health



twyla tharp

Work: Choreographer, dancer and artistic director. Creator of more than 120 dances for Joffrey Ballet, New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and other companies. Winner, 2003 Tony Award for best choreography (*Movin' Out*). Author of the newly published *The Creative Habit*.

Home: New York City; one child.

Health: I get to the gym about 6 a.m., stretch for 30 minutes and incorporate some yoga. I use a treadmill for 40 minutes, do a barre, and work with a trainer for a half-hour, mostly using weights. I don't eat carbohydrates or sugar; I do eat protein and lots of vegetables. I drink a lot of water. I drink more coffee than I ought, but that's as far as my physical sinning goes.

Work environment: Warm, so the body can work more thoroughly. It's hard for me to work deeply enough to really get sweaty, but that's the optimal state. The air-conditioned world pushes the body back into itself, but the body is built to be circulating. That requires heat.

Spiritual practice: For me, physical activity—the physical being—is a kind of religion.

Facing fear: Raise the bar. If you're afraid of something, think of something you're more afraid of.

Creativity: If you're generous, you give everything that you understand, and then you come up with something else. That's better than just trying to protect what you already know. In working with dancers, the more I give them, the more they'll give me.

Using ritual: You want to put everything that serves you well into automatic mode so you can count on it. Ritual is something that is supportive.

Sacrifices: My life. There is a period where the work becomes so absorbing and fulfilling and demanding that you have to be in high gear to do it. And high gear is a lonely place; it doesn't leave a lot of room for other people's presence, pleasures or problems.

Role models: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Rembrandt, Balanchine, [Jerome] Robbins. Martha Graham had a lot of discipline and a great deal of pride, which I was very impressed by. She had a sense of honor. ♦

Interview by GIA KOURLAS

Photograph by JOYCE TENNESON