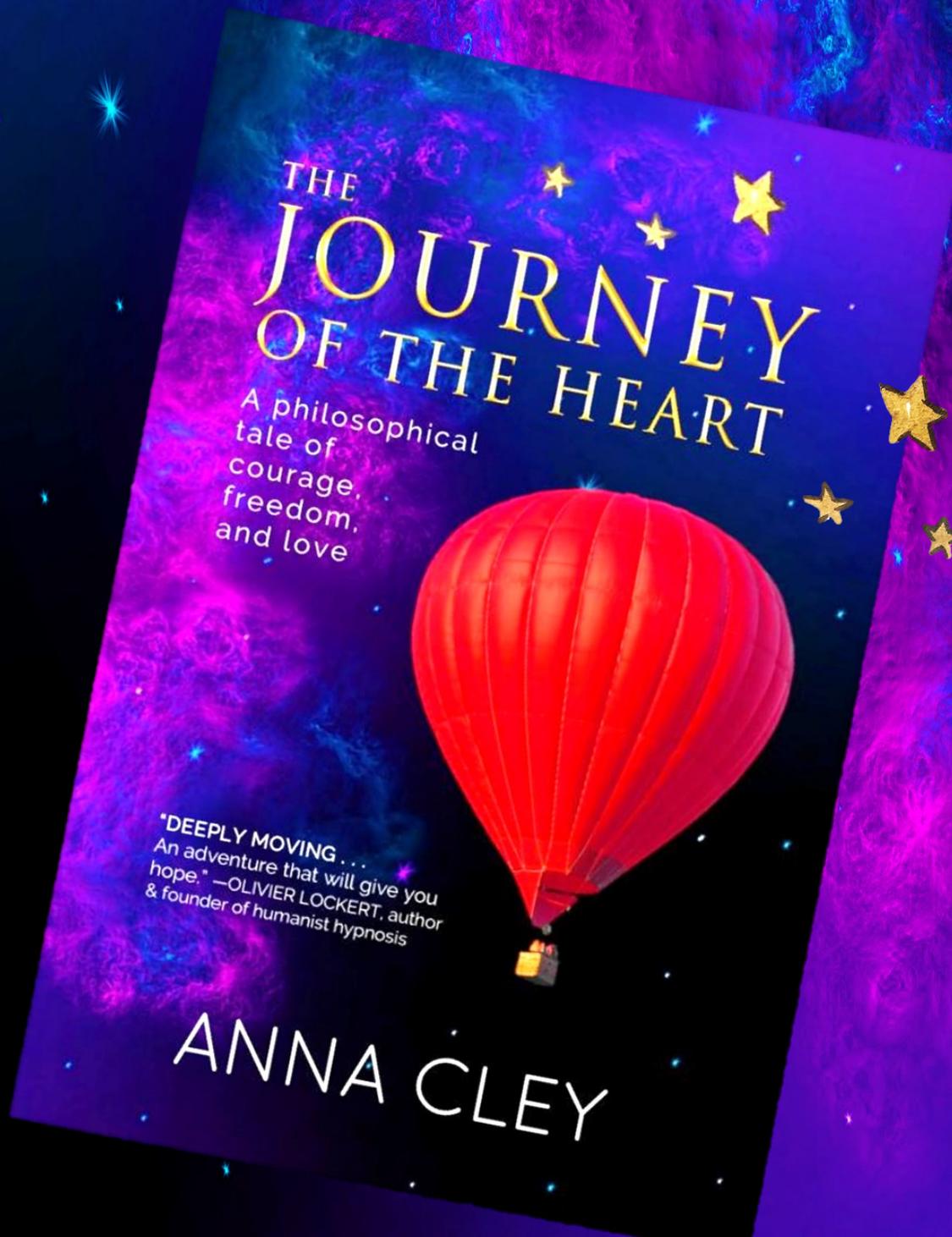


Author Interview



Q&A

Where were you born and what was your childhood background?

I was born in Normandy, France, but moved very often, sometimes staying a few months to a year in the same place. In fact, we did not even always unpack! As you can imagine, I was always the new one at school, and had few childhood friends. My childhood loneliness probably contributed to my personality and creativity. I was an avid reader and loved to draw. I think I started singing to break out from solitude.

How did you end up living in the U.S.?

The French education system operates differently than the US. I studied for two intense years from 18-20 and then entered an engineering school. I also studied Aerospace Engineering in Milan, Italy. I worked as a rocket scientist in Paris and moved and traveled regularly. As it turns out, it was not the career for me, so I left the field.

I spent the next two years studying music again. And then I made the decision to leave everything—and that is when my beautiful journey started. I left for Canada with a backpack and a suitcase! I felt I had nothing to lose. It was pure instinct and survival. I stayed for a month before heading for New York.

Why New York?

New York had been on my mind, but I don't know the reason. After I burned out, I decided to follow the flow of life and found joy again by being in the present moment. I booked a train ticket from Montreal and made my way to the city. I had the intention of exploring the country, but instead I wanted to stay. It was a strange and surprising feeling when I found myself surrounded by New York's skyscrapers and felt home for the first time.

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How did things go?

New York was very expensive, and I had no money. So, I told the sky that all I could afford was \$350/month for housing, and if it was my path to stay, then that's what I could do. The next day, an opportunity presented itself to me for a room in Brooklyn. The rent was \$350 a month. The sign couldn't be clearer.

What inspired you to write this book?

While I was traveling in Canada for three weeks after leaving for New York, I had a vision of a story for a musical show featuring a singer, a dancer, an instrumental ensemble and visual arts. The title *The Journey of the Heart* and the characters, Mylandra and Unique, came to me immediately.

I created a vision board and started to write the scenes, though I didn't know what end to give to the story. That was early 2014. And then, when I founded the nonprofit Vocalise in 2019, I decided that I should adapt *The Journey of the Heart* and create a musical tale to empower children who suffered physical or psychological trauma. I had to write a book first. A book for young and old alike, that could be adapted in different formats for younger children.

My hope is to instill very positive messaging to help others overcome their limiting beliefs, such as:

- ◇ your future is not your past.
- ◇ Everything is possible, regardless of what you've been through, and of your circumstances.
- ◇ Trust yourself. Dare to follow your heart. Take a leap of faith, deep down, you know.
- ◇ You are unique and deserve to fully embrace yourself. Dare to take the journey to learn who you are. Dare to be you.

I've seen too many people unhappy with their lives, waiting to be retired to enjoy their existence. I strongly believe that if we follow our dreams and the calling of our heart, we live a fulfilled and rich existence. The beauty of that is that when someone

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is happy, it makes the world happier, too. Not only because they bring their own positive energy to the world, but because when someone is happy and fulfilled, they are a lot more caring for others and tend to encourage if not really help others to follow that path.

What did you learn when writing this book?

I learned a lot about myself, including how to unleash my own creativity, which was a big discovery. In fact, I re-wrote the script a few times. Before submitting my script to a publisher, I hired an editor to review my script, and she asked me a simple question: “Why do you want to hide the story from the reader? Let the story come to you.” That was a very enlightening teaching and a turning point in my creativity. In writing the book, I finally allowed myself to receive the story as I wrote it. I allowed myself to illustrate my own tale, receiving them in a vision, or drawing them as they came to me. What is very interesting about creativity is this allowance to both receive and be, as if you receive yourself by connecting to something greater, the energy that gives life. It’s a beautiful journey. The journey of the heart really never ends. It’s the quest of a lifetime. In fact, even at that point, I was still restraining my own creativity with self-judgement and the dialogues of my mind. I can’t encourage enough others to DARE, to not just try, but really do, allowing themselves to find true freedom.

What does the title mean?

It is about spiritual goals and the quest, to connect to something greater, something invisible that cannot be named. I have seen it in my life. The book came to me in a vision, I don’t now how. To be, to dare. To be on your path. To become, as well. We are everchanging beings in an everchanging world, and we do have the power to make the world a better place. Here and now. By fully embracing the truth of who we are. An evolving truth, but the truth nonetheless.

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Music is a theme throughout the book, and you have a musical background. What do you hope readers learn from this theme?

My hope is that readers look into themselves to find their own answers. Mylandra finds comfort and connection to her higher self when singing, but she also finds that in nature. Unique finds comfort and guidance when he moves. It helps him dissipate the fog and find his next step. So, a question I wish for the reader to answer is: how does your true self speak to you?

Regarding the musical theme, a lot could be said about this. Music helps with emotions. Music makes you feel less alone. It is good for the soul and helps you connect to the present moment.

Opera singing became a career for me, but it was really the greatest healer of all. I was an introverted, shy and clumsy girl and I learned on my musical journey how to own my presence. It allowed me to express my feelings because the emotions were already on the score. It was in fact in an acceptable frame. I could cry my pain through the songs of opera, but I could not express my pain otherwise. I'm so grateful I had that.

That's why it is also so important for every one of us to have an activity that resonates growing up, especially if we grow up in a restraining environment.

And music has recognized healing properties. The sound and vibration are very important. In fact, music is the only art form we can't run away from. You can look away from a painting or a dance show. But sound—vibration—travels through you whether you want it to or not.

As you know music therapy has become very popular because it works. There are also scientific studies on the significance of the vibration of sound, in particular on water, and our body is made of 60% of water. We are ourselves vibration, and very sensitive to vibration as well.

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What inspired you to have Mylandra and Unique visit various locations, and what were you hoping the reader would learn from their journeys?

When you travel alone, you get to really meet people and learn from other cultures. I think through travels we get to know ourselves better. It's a beautiful thing to be a foreigner. It puts us in the "beginner's mind" and keeps us eternally young. Opening our mind is key to self-growth and expansion.

Love is a powerful theme in your book. What message would you share about the importance of love?

Love is a journey, and it's a journey to learn to listen to our heart—and to our intuition as well. We learn to love our entire lives. It's about self-love, too. Self-love is essential, if you are to love someone. In fact, the more we are in a state of love, the happier we are. It is a positive state of existence.

Were the characters inspired by real people?

They are fictional characters, nurtured by real people.

Why did you decide to write a song to accompany the book?

When the vision of *The Journey of the Heart* first came to me, I hoped to create an immersive experience. My wish was for the audience to forget about their daily life for the duration of the show and have a positive, transformative musical and visual experience that would inspire them to dare more. For some, daring more is about trying something new they always dreamed about, for others, it's about changing career. Sometimes it's something as simple as sharing your true feelings with someone. Daring to be is really about daring to follow the compass of our heart.

Rather than succumbing to circumstances, it's about adapting to them and overcoming challenges.

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I wanted to create a powerful experience so that the positive messages sink in. This goal remained as I adapted and transformed the vision into a book. That's why I wanted to try something new myself through illustration, music creation and meditation. In fact, it was exciting to explore my own creativity while I wanted to convey the same freedom to explore and create to others.

Why did you decide to write a meditation? What inspired it?

I have a passion for and a certification in hypnosis, and have been practicing meditation and self-hypnosis for over 10 years. It is a big part of my life. It's a way for me to find guidance and to identify answers to my problems or concerns. It often helped me decide of what was the next step toward resolution and toward what I wanted to achieve.

Similarly to hypnosis' suggestions, *The Journey of the Heart* includes positive messaging as a way to support the reader's journey in this tale. For example, Mylandra has these moments of connection with nature, particularly when she visits the Land in Between. This demonstrates how Mylandra communes with nature and can find her own healing, guidance and state of well-being.

Where did you study art or how did you learn to draw?

I loved to draw when I was younger. As I began to write the book, I decided to explore incorporating my own illustrations within the book. It turns out that my publisher loved them!

Do you have plans to write another book or books?

Yes. But the next book may nor may not be in the same category. I am thinking about it now. It's a work in progress at the moment.

Author Bio

ANNA CLEY

Anna Cley is a transformative artist, opera singer, and artistic director who is passionate about growth, empowerment and transcendence. She believes that individuals who overcome their limiting beliefs and dare to follow their heart can find true happiness and freedom, allowing them to care more for others and to make the world a better place.

Cley's work revolves around daring to be, and daring to become. She rejoices in a meaningful lifestyle and in co-creating a better world for tomorrow. She creates soothing music, inspiring content and empowering courses for old and young alike.

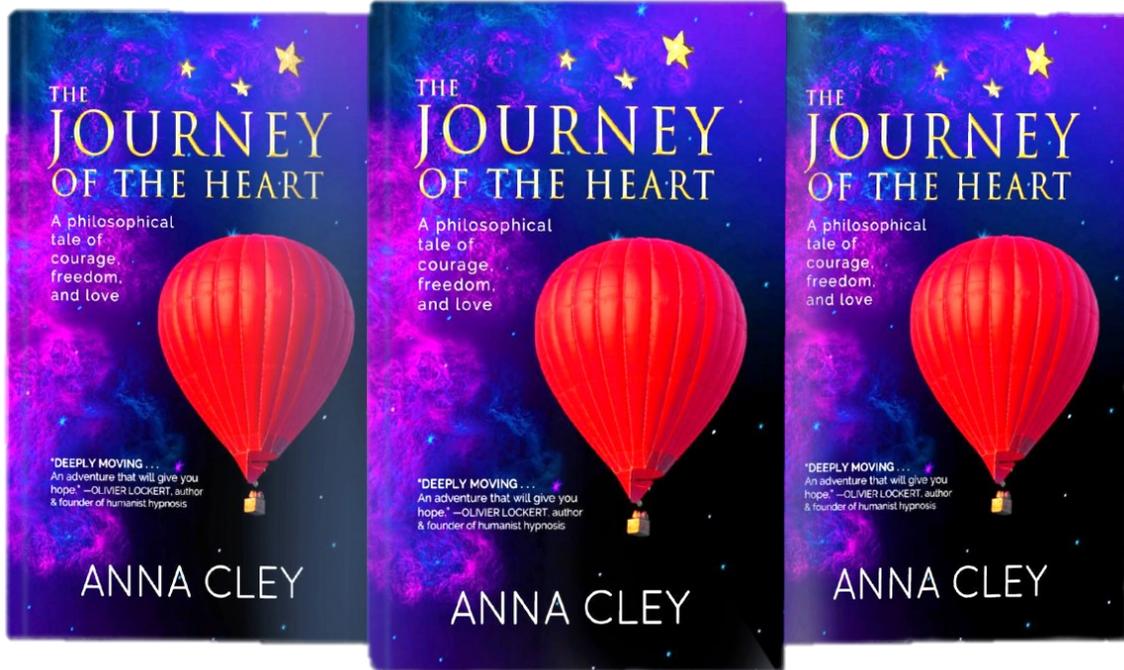
A native of France, Cley has performed on the stage of Carnegie Hall and in the title role of Carmen, after a successful career in rocket science. Driven by her spiritual quest, she fosters a strong relationship with nature and wildlife.



In search for meaning and her place in the world, Cley developed an eagerness for astrophysics as a child. The same sense of service for humanity pushed her in recent years to create the nonprofit Vocalise, seeking to empower those who experienced trauma. She has a certification in hypnosis with a particular interest in humanist hypnosis.

Mylandra, *Unique*, and *The Journey of the Heart* appeared to Cley in a vision while she traveled through Canada alone one snowy winter. It took her almost seven years to shape and finish the story. The song and accompanying meditation can be found at thejourneyoftheheart.com.

Book Bio



From floating boxes to lifesaving riddles to an enlightened mirror, *The Journey of the Heart* is a magical tale of two souls who are courageously determined to find a better fate than the one they were born into. Along the way, they learn that their past does not determine their future, and the heart is the best guide of all.

Celebrating the universal statement that our own truth is the best treasure of all, *The Journey of the Heart* is a beautiful reminder that no matter into what circumstances we're born, our future is ours to write. Authored and illustrated by transformative artist Anna Cley, *The Journey of the Heart* inspires children and adults alike to look beyond their own circumstances and bravely seek what they rightfully deserve—happiness, fulfillment and, of course, love.

Anna Cley



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