

descriptions of overall program:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EVENT FULL OF HALF REMEMBERED HALF TRUTHS ABOUT DANCES MADE ANOTHER TIME IN ANOTHER LIFE ACCOMMODATING THE TALENTS OF PERFORMERS I WAS IN LOVE WITH AND REMADE FOR THE TALENTS OF PERFORMERS I HOPE TO BE IN LOVE WITH NOW, SHORT REFERENCES TO WORKS I THINK NOW ARE TOO LONG AND A LONG NEW DANCE BECAUSE I NEVER LEARN. ALSO INCLUDING ONE SIDED MEMORIES AND FABLED ENCOUNTERS WITH PERFORMERS PRETENDING TO BE JAMES WARING, YVONNE RAINER, MERCE CUNNINGHAM, NORMA FIRE, LUCINDA CHILDS, AIN GORDON, ROBERT DUNN, BRUCE HOOVER, REGINA HOOVER, SUZANNE WEIL, ALYCE DISSETTE, STEVE PAXTON, TRISHA BROWN, ROSE GORDON, BONNIE BROOKS, ARLENE CROCE, RHODA GRAUER, NADINE BERTIN, DAVID WHITE, MISHA BARYSHNIKOV AND VALDA SETTERFIELD.

titles of work included in program:

DEBRIS FLOW 1989 complete

text: John McPhee/music: Harry Partch/voice: Norma Fire (I mention to Alyce it might be interesting to make work about places we tour. She calls every presenter in America and invents the United States project.)

CHAIR 1975 one section

(How to do CHAIR in N.Y.? I ask Trisha. She says ask Paula Cooper. I walk into Paula Cooper Gallery. I say Trisha sent me.)

MANNEQUIN 1962/3 fragment

(I wanna do it surrounded by mannequins. I sing Second Hand Rose (a Fanny Brice song) and Get Married Shirley (a Nancy Walker song.) I settle for no mannequins.)

SLEEPWALKING 1971 remembered excerpts

(At the Walker in Minneapolis the performers wear trench coats which the Salvation Army has a lot of. In Oberlin, Ohio the performers wear army uniforms which the costume department has a lot of.)

ONE PART OF THE MATTER 1979 excerpts

(The performers who agreed to be nude are shy. Valda arrives and I ask her to take her clothes off. She walks around naked introducing herself and does the solo for the first time in front of total strangers. They applaud. I say - well, we'll have to work on it.)

SPILLED MILK 1974 fragments

(This piece would not have happened without Trisha's ACCUMULATIONS. That thumb.)

TIMES FOUR 1976 remembered excerpts plus new stuff

(A Japanese friend advises us to blink only when facing away from the audience. We do TIMES FOUR in France, England and Japan and at the Whitney Museum in N.Y. Forty minutes long, I drop it as soon as possible.)

WHAT HAPPENED 1978 complete

(A lot of good women audition along with some not very good men. I take myself out of the piece and hire the women. So I meet Susan and Margaret and Christina. They don't go away when it ends and with Valda they become the core of the Pick up Co.)

TRYING TIMES 1982 excerpt plus new stuff

music: Igor Stravinsky

(It ends with a trial. I am tried for aesthetic inconsistency. The prosecutor says "how can we recognize his signature piece if we can't read his handwriting.")

TWENTY ONE MINUTES SOME ODD 1999 complete

music: Richard Einhorn

(Four years ago I'm looking for a composer for THE FIRST PICTURE SHOW. Ellen sends this music over. Four years later Laurie says how about Danspace? I salivate at the idea of making a new dance. During the last six weeks I learn I can't make a new dance. I continue to make the dance I make.)

BEETHOVEN 1998 complete

music: Ludwig Von Beethoven

(Dancers who behave like people and people who can dance. It isn't necessarily pedestrian movement that interests me - it's pedestrians.)

brief quote about work/process:

I QUOTE FROM MYSELF ON THE COVER OF A PROGRAM OF A PERFORMANCE AT D.T.W. IN 1978.

"SOMETIMES, AS IN CHAIR, EXISTING SEGMENTS OF MY WORK APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR AND NEW SECTIONS ARE ADDED. VERY OFTEN SECTIONS OF MY WORK GENERATE NEW WORK OR MAKE THEIR WAY WHOLE INTO OTHER WORK. I SUPPORT CHANGES IN CONTEXT, THE FREEDOM TO RE-EXAMINE, TO ALTER, TO ABANDON MATERIALS, OR TO RE-USE THEM FOR A GOOD LAUGH AT MYSELF AND MY WORLD. KEEPING THE OPTIONS OPEN EXTENDS THE LIFE SPAN OF A WORK AND MY INTEREST IN IT.

these performances are dedicated to:

Chuck Finlon, Dean Moss, Scott Cunningham,  
Heidi Michel, Cynthia Oliver, Nina Martin,  
Paul Thompson, Margaret Hoeffel, Susan Eschelbach, and  
Keith Marshall and all the other dancers  
who moved on and left their images for me on video,  
to Bruce Allardyce and Sachiko Willis, gods of logistics  
and to Ed Fitzgerald who makes me feel safe  
and to Valda Setterfield my partner  
and to Karen Graham without whom, folks,  
this concert couldn't have happened.

CLAP OF THUNDER (house lights out, stage lights up)

DEBRIS FLOW 1989

PERFORMED BY TWO MEN AND TWO WOMEN

TEXT: JOHN McFEE (ABOUT CALIFORNIA MUDSLIDES)

VOICEOVER: NORMA FIRE

MUSIC: HARRY PARTCH

CLAP OF THUNDER (blackout, lights up)

NUMBER 3: (ENTER) I am an actor named Valda Setterfield who has often, over the years, been called upon to play the part of a character called Valda Setterfield in the theater and dance work of the artist David Gordon. He persuaded me, when I began to work with him, to bleach my hair white, which became a trademark, and to affect a British accent, which was difficult at first but, which I'm now quite good at. I was, at the time, amused by these shenanigans but I now have mixed feelings about being "shanghaied" into giving up my natural long red hair at such an early age and about having allowed him to use my real name. Strangers hail me on the street. "Hey Valda," they call out, "I saw you the other night. You were so funny." Well, I'm not funny. That's not how I describe myself. I am serious and sincere but he gives me funny things to say and I say them as if they're my own thoughts and because I'm a good actor the audience believes me. But believe me, any similarity between the Valda you may have been looking at, some of you, all these years, or the Valda that you see here tonight and the real Valda, me, is purely coincidental. Line?

NUMBER 4: "Of course he wrote..."

NUMBER 3: Of course he wrote everything I'm saying right now. "Audiences believe me but believe me." I don't talk like this. Does anybody really talk like this? Oh, here he comes. Don't let on we've spoken. (EXIT)

NUMBER 1: (ENTER) This evening's performance is AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A LIAR and I'm the choreographer David Gordon. I'm going to talk to you as if you know what I know. I can never imagine that anyone doesn't know what I know. Or is unhappy to be not knowing. I love not knowing. Twenty five years ago I made a piece called CHAIR.

(FIRST "CHAIR" PERSON ENTERS AND SITS)

CHAIR was inspired by Valda Setterfield. Not by her beauty or her dancing which is plenty inspiring. No. By her being in a car and getting hit by a train

(SECOND "CHAIR" PERSON ENTERS AND SITS)

and having stitches and scars and amnesia and deciding she wasn't learning dance steps as easily and leaving the Cunningham company after ten years and by her thinking now she'll never dance again and sobbing in that desperate way she does which racks her whole body which she hardly ever does which makes it all the more terrible.

(THIRD "CHAIR" PERSON ENTERS AND SITS)

She's been dancing all her life she says. "Who will I be if I'm not dancing?" I hold her in my arms. My shirt is wet with her tears. (PHONE RINGS) Hello?

NUMBER 5: David?

NUMBER 1: Mama? Is something wrong?

NUMBER 5: That's what I was going to ask you.

NUMBER 1: I'm sorry. I'm fine. I know I didn't call. I was busy.

NUMBER 5: As long as everything's all right. Valda's alright?

NUMBER 1: Fine.

NUMBER 5: Ain?

NUMBER 1: Everybody's wonderful. How are you?

NUMBER 5: I have a headache. Did you eat something?

NUMBER 1: I ate, I slept and I'm dressed warm enough.

NUMBER 5: Your father says come visit, we'll feed you. He says I should make your favorite. (TO NO. 2) What's his favorite? (TO NO. 1) Barley soup. He says I should make you barley soup. (TO NO. 2) Who eats barley soup in the summer? (TO NO. 1) He don't hear me. He's watching Jeopardy. I won't keep you. Call if you have time.

NUMBER 1: Okay. I love you. Goodbye. What is a muse?

(FOURTH "CHAIR" PERSON ENTERS, SITS, FIRST PERSON BEGINS TO PERFORM ORIGINAL "CHAIR")

"The inspiring goddess" says the dictionary.  
No mention of "the inspiring interruption."

NUMBER 4: David?

NUMBER 1: Not now. Or the inspiring way your mother puts a sentence together or "the inspiring circumstance." Valda is scared and unhappy. I have to do something so I sit her down and teach her to fall side-ways off a chair. Stand on the chair. Fall back pushing the chair out from under herself. Put the metal folding chair on. It's a dress. It's a percussive instrument. It's a partner. Uh oh. Huge black and blue marks. I pile coats on the floor to soften the falls and remove one at a time as she gets better at it. Sounds like I thought about this and knew how to do it. No. I'm inspired by Valda's mid-life crisis (she's forty) to make something she never did before. It isn't ballet or Cunningham so she can't think she isn't doing it as well as she used to. The first rehearsal of CHAIR actually uses a wooden bench in the borrowed Cunningham studio.

NUMBER 2: I'm Merce. I have no idea he's using my studio.

NUMBER 1: We also borrow Lucinda Child's studio where we find royal blue metal folding chairs.

NUMBER 2: I'm Lucinda. I buy the chairs from Buffalo Roadhouse, a restaurant in the village, at the end of the eating outside season. He asks to use them. I think why not?

NUMBER 1: I buy the next seasons castoffs from the same place. Also blue.

("CHAIR" CONTINUES IN SILENCE, ENDS)

NUMBER 1: Valda gets well and gets a job teaching in England for a month. She takes a chair along and learns the whole piece to the other side so we can do symmetrical CHAIR.

NUMBER 4: (COLLECTS CHAIRS) He has denim drawstring bags made for touring.

NUMBER 1: Two chairs to a bag. Can a chair be a muse? It's an inspiring object, isn't it?

NUMBER 4: Sculptural, utilitarian and transformational. A chair interacts and doesn't ask why.

NUMBER 1: Hire the chair I say.

NUMBER 4: Who am I when I say this?

NUMBER 1: Yourself.

NUMBER 6: (ENTER) I'm Jimmy Waring. I'm a choreographer. You're a dancer.

NUMBER 4: Flashback. The end of the fifties.

NUMBER 6: Dance in my company. Take my classes. Meet my friends.

NUMBER 1: Okay.

NUMBER 6: Listen to this music by Feldman and Cage and Mahler.  
See Schwitters and Morandi and Guston and Duchamp.

NUMBER 1: Okay.

NUMBER 6: Meet Cy Twombly, Ray Johnson, Rauschenberg and Johns.  
Put that menu down. You don't want chow mein or egg  
roll. Come to the Thalia. See Jean Cocteau films and  
Laurel and Hardy and ballets by Tudor and Balanchine  
and you must see Merce Cunningham.

NUMBER 1: Candide.

NUMBER 6: What?

NUMBER 1: I was listening to Candide.

NUMBER 6: By Bernstein? Fake Offenbach.

NUMBER 1: Okay. I shut up for a couple of years. I have a mentor.

NUMBER 4: Who ever heard of a mentor in the fifties?

NUMBER 1: I thought we'd be friends forever.

NUMBER 4: Time passes.

NUMBER 6: By the way, an English woman who came to America  
yesterday is coming to rehearsal. Here she is now.

NUMBER 3: Hello. I'm Valda Setterfield.

NUMBER 6: You two look good together. Let's make a duet.

NUMBER 1: She's too heavy. I can't lift her.

NUMBER 3: He doesn't know anything about partnering.

NUMBER 1: You're right. Would you consider marrying me if nobody  
better asks you?

NUMBER 3: Yes, thank you.

NUMBER 1: Would you mind becoming Jewish?

NUMBER 3: Not at all. Is it important to you?

NUMBER 1: No. It's important to my grandmother.

NUMBER 4: Valda marries David. (THEY ARE FRAMED)

NUMBER 3: I start to dance with Merce.

NUMBER 4: Time passes.

NUMBER 3: I get pregnant.

NUMBER 1: I go to the Judy and Bob Dunn composition class.

NUMBER 3: I watch sometimes.

NUMBER 1: She uses cocoa butter on her growing belly every night.

NUMBER 3: Mae West says it's good for stretch marks.

NUMBER 5: I'm Bob Dunn. You can work on the music or against it.

NUMBER 1: Everybody's using Satie in the class.

NUMBER 3: It's the assignment.

NUMBER 1: Can I work off the music?

NUMBER 3: You always do that.

NUMBER 1: What? What do I always do? Tell me so I can stop.

NUMBER 3: He says choose one from column A or two from column B. You say "is there a column C?" I find that attractive but I also find it irritating. But I also find it seductive. But I also find it infuriating.

NUMBER 1: I don't know how to work with music. I don't say that. I say "off the music."

NUMBER 5: I say "Why not?" It's the kind of thing one says in the sixties. "What if I want to do this backwards?" Why not? "How about half of it ten times?" Why not?

NUMBER 1: I use a series of actions and string them together. I silently physically imitate Billy Daniels singing THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC. I balance on one leg which I'm good at. I make it all last as long as the GYMNOPIEDIE.

NUMBER 4: He travels from one end of the space to the other.

NUMBER 3: Because he made it in our railroad apartment.

(PERFORMER OF MANNEQUIN ENTERS)

NUMBER 1: Like a good Jewish boy I name my new baby dance after a dead person. My first girlfriend/friend. Dead of cancer at twenty two. I thought we'd be friends forever.

NUMBER 3: HELENS DANCE. Do it.

NUMBER 1: I don't remember it. Video doesn't happen yet.

NUMBER 4: The Judson happens.

NUMBER 3: And MANNEQUIN. Do you remember MANNEQUIN?

NUMBER 1: I remember it. I can't do it all anymore.

NUMBER 3: Do what you can.

(MANNEQUIN IS SUNG AND DANCED DURING THE NEXT LINES)

PERFORMER: FATHER HAD A BUSINESS. STRICTLY SECOND HAND

NUMBER 1: How do I decide to sing? I don't know.

PERFORMER: EVERYTHING FROM GOLDFISH TO A BABY GRAND

NUMBER 1: I know the words to this song. Jimmy loves Fanny Brice.

PERFORMER: STUFF IN OUR APARTMENT CAME FROM FATHER'S STORE  
EVEN THINGS I'M WEARING SOMEONE WORE BEFORE

NUMBER 1: I wear hand-me-downs all through my teens. My father's coat with too short sleeves over my uncle's six button double breasted pin stripe suit with faded shoulders. I pull the sleeves of the jacket up so they won't hang out of my father's coat. To keep it all in place I pin my arms to my sides. I can't shake hands.

PERFORMER: IT'S NO WONDER THAT I FEEL ABUSED  
I NEVER GET A THING THAT AIN'T BEEN USED

NUMBER 1: I make this piece in the bathtub waiting for body lice liquid to do it's job. I stop sitting on toilet seats in the dressing rooms of dance classes.

PERFORMER: I'M WEARING SECOND HAND HATS, SECOND HAND CLOTHES  
THAT'S WHY THEY CALL ME SECOND HAND ROSE  
EVEN THE PIANO IN THE PARLOR  
FATHER BOUGHT FOR TEN CENTS ON THE DOLLAR

NUMBER 1: I ask a friend to design a costume and she gives me her used lab coat covered in animal blood. I wear it.

PERFORMER: SECOND HAND RINGS. I'M SICK OF SECOND HAND THINGS.  
I NEVER GET A SINGLE THING THAT'S NEW

NUMBER 1: Solo dancers, in those days, revere the traditions of Isadora or Ruth St Dennis and Ted Shawn. I think my models are Sophie Tucker and Milton Berle.

PERFORMER: EVEN JAKIE COHEN - HE'S THE MAN I ADORE  
HAD THE NERVE TO TELL ME HE'S BEEN MARRIED BEFORE

NUMBER 1: My peers aspire to art. I am doing vaudeville.

PERFORMER: THAT'S WHY EVERYONE KNOWS  
THAT I'M JUST SECOND HAND ROSE  
FROM SECOND AVENUE.

NUMBER 3: 1962. I have a baby. We name him Ain. I dance with David again.

NUMBER 4: RANDOM BREAKFAST 1963.

NUMBER 2: David asks Valda to strip to burlesque music. She starts out in a Victorian gown and a feathered hat and long gloves and a fur stole and winds up in sequined pasties and a mirrored gee string.

NUMBER 3: I rehearse at home. Ain crawls around the living room picking up the clothes I drop and handing them to me.

NUMBER 2: I'm Ain. I don't remember this.

NUMBER 3: David does a fake spanish dance in a strapless lace dress and a red wig muttering in made up language and lectures on how to make your own post modern dance and I make a huge mess dressed as a nun and say shit and fuck before I shove a cream pie in my own face.

NUMBER 2: These are my parents.

NUMBER 1: These are my three first pieces at the Judson Church. The audience is responsive. I am fearless.

NUMBER 4: Valda starts to dance with Merce again.

NUMBER 1: Jimmy Waring says if you think of a movement - keep it.

NUMBER 6: If you don't like it maybe you'll get to like it and if you can't get to like it -

NUMBER 1: Who says you have to like it? That's how piece number four gets made.

- NUMBER 3: WALKS AND DIGRESSIONS. 1966. David thinks to whistle, to drool. He takes his pants off while standing on his head for the Judson crowd.
- NUMBER 1: They boo. They stamp their feet and boo. They walk out. They walk right up to me booing and leave. I am not prepared for the audience to not love me.
- NUMBER 4: Then what happens?
- NUMBER 1: I retire. I don't make another piece for five years.
- NUMBER 6: I'm Yvonne Rainer. He begins to dance in my company.
- NUMBER 1: If the audience boos or walks out I don't mind because they're booing her not me. Well I mind but I don't mind as much. Well, I mind as much but not in the same way.
- NUMBER 6: This is how it is to work with him.
- NUMBER 1: Yvonne the goddess, the muse of seriousness. Every day here she is making up some thing which has consequences and here's Steve Paxton testing the material.
- NUMBER 2: I'm Steve Paxton. (PAUSE)
- NUMBER 1: Steve is thoughtful. And every next day there Yvonne is responding to the truth and consequences of what happened yesterday. We all laugh. A pleasure to be serious. I thought we'd be friends forever.
- NUMBER 4: Time passes. It's 1971. Yvonne goes to India.
- NUMBER 6: A group of students meet every week in my loft. (PERFORMERS ENTER) I don't want to lose them. David, why don't you teach them something? Keep them busy till I get back.
- NUMBER 1: Why do I say OK? I never taught before. I'm flattered. She could have asked Steve. Maybe she did.
- NUMBER 5: (PHONE RINGS) Hello?
- NUMBER 1: Hello mama, it's David.
- NUMBER 5: Is something wrong?
- NUMBER 1: I'm just calling to say hello.
- NUMBER 5: Oh how nice. Let me turn off the stove for a minute and get a cigarette and sit down. Hold on.

NUMBER 1: Anyway, I run out of what to teach after two times

(PERFORMERS BEGIN TO DO "SLEEPWALKING")

so I start to show movement based on junkies nodding out at night in the streets of N.Y. How far off balance a semi-conscious human can be and not fall. Add walking and running. Add Wagner. Call it SLEEPWALKING. Have I come out of retirement?

NUMBER 6: I'm back. I had a wonderful time in India.

NUMBER 4: Yvonne's company begins the process, engineered by her, of transformation into a democracy.

NUMBER 6: I don't want to be boss anymore.

NUMBER 4: They become the improvisational Grand Union.

NUMBER 1: I invent the name. On a park bench in Philadelphia. Don't let's sound like a dance company, I say. Let's sound like a rock group. I am wearing green checkered high heeled shoes and velvet pants and necklaces.

NUMBER 2: I'm Ain. I'm nine. I'm wearing red checkered high heel shoes and velvet pants and necklaces.

NUMBER 1: The Grand Union gets a job.

NUMBER 2: Call me Sue. What do you need?

NUMBER 1: A new inspiring goddess, Suzanne Weil, the muse from Minnesota (TOSS SNOW) who makes things happen.

NUMBER 2: I arrive in N.Y. with a yellow legal pad. I meet Yvonne and David. I write down what the Grand Union needs -

NUMBER 6: (INTERRUPTS) One hundred red rubber balls.

NUMBER 2: - in it's first residency ever at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Handball size or basketball size?

NUMBER 6: Handball size.

NUMBER 2: One hundred handball size red rubber balls. Okay. Next?

NUMBER 1: Glinda the beautiful witch of the midwest. "There's no place like my home," she says and asks us all to stay.

NUMBER 3: Sue uses rock concert profit to get David or David and me out to the Walker again and again.

- NUMBER 1: I begin to have a career.
- NUMBER 3: A job is inspiring. An employer is empowering.
- NUMBER 2: And I can cook too.
- NUMBER 1: Is there a muse of faithfulness?
- NUMBER 4: Beverly D/Anne.
- NUMBER 1: The muse of constancy.
- NUMBER 2: SLEEPWALKING get's performed at the Walker. Benedicte Pesle flies in from Paris.
- NUMBER 1: And falls asleep. The muse of coma. (PERFORMERS EXIT)
- NUMBER 3: David is haunted by the number of times Benedicte falls asleep at his work. It's a long trip from Paris.
- NUMBER 1: 1972. A shared concert with Douglas Dunn called SIX INCIDENTS includes the first version of THE MATTER. I pass a sign up sheet through the audience at a Grand Union performance. (PERFORMER HANDS PAPERS TO AUDIENCE) Forty people sign up to be in it. I use a child's drawings of naked dancers as a mailer.
- NUMBER 2: They're my drawings. I'm Ain again. The mailer also tells when he does the display work that pays the rent.
- NUMBER 1: Come watch me work in five windows on Eighth street. (FRAMED IN FOUR DIRECTIONS)
- NUMBER 2: An audience gathers. (PERFORMERS ENTER) Valda and me too. Peter Moore takes pictures. (PERFORMER W/FLASH CAMERA) Who is that in the window? David the performer? The choreographer? The window dresser? My father?
- NUMBER 3: One part of THE MATTER was a solo for me called ONE PART OF THE MATTER - (BEGINS TO PERFORM) - based on a series of photographs by Edward Muybridge showing the body in motion. David cut the photos out of a picture book and scotch taped them to pages of yellow typing paper - out of sequence - in random order - numbered - with bits of instruction - and mailed them to me. I was in Detroit with the Cunningham company and I learned the poses in my hotel room.
- NUMBER 4: When she got home they rehearsed in the living room. They still had no studio. David made changes and made Valda angry and they made an audio cassette recording their rehearsal behavior.

NUMBER 2: While they were taping, their eight year old son cut his finger playing and interrupted rehearsal looking for a bandaid. It's all on the tape.

(NUMBER 3 CONTINUES TO PERFORM DURING TAPE)

NUMBER 2: (TAPE ENDS) It was all in the performance.

NUMBER 3: I've done this piece nude, in my own 1920's bathing suit, and in a see through dress designed by Santo Loquasto.  
I've done it in silence, to the sound of David and I bickering and with the Philip Glass ensemble performing live.  
I've done it in our loft, in a pool of water on an opera house stage and for a video camera in a black box space for a public television fundraiser. The original score that David mailed, scotch tape and all, was bought by The Museum of Modern Art.

NUMBER 1: THE MATTER was called THE MATTER because of the Paul Newman movie called HUD. Subway posters said "What's HUD?" and I wanted people to ask "What's THE MATTER?"

NUMBER 4: THE MATTER resurfaces seven years later, in 1979, at the Dance Umbrella in N.Y. (PERFORMERS ENTER, POSE)

NUMBER 1: Less performers, more music, new sections. Benedicte Pesle flies in and falls asleep.

NUMBER 4: Then Dance in America on television.

NUMBER 2: Ain again. Now I'm in it doing a dance I made in his composition class in Boulder, Colorado. With a broom. (ILLUSTRATES)

NUMBER 4: Four years later THE MATTER is the basis for the dance section of THE PHOTOGRAPHER at BAM.

NUMBER 1: They really wanted Paul Taylor. (PERFORMERS EXIT)

NUMBER 4: This material interests you for a long time.

NUMBER 1: Some old shirts I throw away and some I keep to see if they'll come back in style.

NUMBER 4: Back to 1974.

NUMBER 1: SPILLED MILK.

(PERFORMERS ENTER W/HAND ARM GESTURES OF SPILLED MILK.)

NUMBER 3: Improvised movement and personal storytelling played against a series of specific repetitive finger, hand and arm gestures by eleven performers. (ILLUSTRATES)

NUMBER 1: There were supposed to be eleven performers. There are only ten, Valda. You're not there. It's June.

NUMBER 4: You sure it's June?

NUMBER 1: It's June. Valda goes off in a car with a woman to look at the woman's house somewhere in Long Island for a possible summer rental and I go off with Trisha Brown.

NUMBER 2: (PHONE RINGS) David? It's Trisha. How do you feel about lugging my dancers around the Kennedy Center while we do non stop ACCUMULATIONS? You know, stand us up. Lay us down. Put us in piles. Whatever you think of. Okay?

NUMBER 1: (PHONE RINGS) Hello Ma? I'm going to Washington for one night so don't worry if you can't get me.

NUMBER 5: Go healthy, come healthy and stay healthy.

NUMBER 1: A mantra. She says it all in Yiddish. I can't go anywhere without it.

NUMBER 2: Ain again. She says it to me too.

NUMBER 1: I have to stay the night in the home of a stranger.

NUMBER 2: Not his favorite thing.

NUMBER 4: That's where he gets the phone call from Norma.

NUMBER 2: (PHONE RINGS) Hello David? It's Norma.

NUMBER 1: How did you find me? Joke. How's New York? Joke. Joke. Why are you calling? Serious. Norma? What's the matter?

NUMBER 3: This is when I get hit by the train.

NUMBER 4: Who's Norma?

NUMBER 3: Norma Fire. She's our friend. She's taking care of Ain for the day. He gets car sick so I don't take him with me. I'm always glad about that.

NUMBER 1: Norma? Where is she?

NUMBER 2: In a hospital in Riverhead, Long Island.

- NUMBER 1: The next train out of Washington is five A.M. Sometime that morning I get to Riverhead and to Valda and I cry like a fool and she takes care of me and tries to make me feel better.
- NUMBER 3: I tell him, he tells me later, that there are fresh strawberries in the closet. I don't remember.
- NUMBER 1: I open the closet and everything is smashed and covered in blood. Yes. SPILLED MILK happened in June. I visit Valda every day and perform every night. Then she comes home. It takes a while for her to get good again.
- NUMBER 3: This is where we came in. (SPILLED MILK PERFORMERS EXIT)
- NUMBER 2: Are we to make anything of the fact that as long as Valda is dancing with Merce your career seems sporadic and unfocused but starting 1975 when Valda quits Merce you start making stuff every year? A lot of it.
- NUMBER 1: Part Valda, part Bruce Hoover.
- NUMBER 5: I'm Bruce. Are you tired of being the best kept secret in New York, David? You have to show work twice a year. Spring and Fall. Perform in your loft. You need someone to do publicity. Get all the free listings, the New Yorker, Voice choices. You need someone to take reservations. You should also talk to my wife.
- NUMBER 2: "Hi, I'm Regina Hoover. You have to get your head out of your asshole."
- NUMBER 1: Succinct and to the point.
- (NUMBER 3 PLUS PARTNER ENTER/BEGIN TIMES FOUR)
- Another kind of inspiration. The god and goddess of tell it like it is. Acknowledge ambition they say. Stop waiting at the ball for someone to ask you to dance. Send out invites to a ball of your own they say. Okay I say. They change my life. I thought we'd be friends forever.
- NUMBER 4: TIMES FOUR. 1976. (SHORT EXCERPT)
- NUMBER 3: (TO PARTNER) It's okay. I'm following you. I follow you when I can see you. You follow me when you can see me.
- NUMBER 1: My last ditch effort at abstraction or post modernism or some legitimate art aesthetic I admire and envy.
- NUMBER 3: (TO AUDIENCE) I love doing TIMES FOUR. He hates it.

NUMBER 1: You can't be funny doing anything four times. Three times maybe.

NUMBER 4: He begins to edge toward character and non linear narrative hoping no one will notice.

(TIMES FOUR ENDS/PERFORMERS FOR WHAT HAPPENED ENTER NUMBER 3 AND PARTNER EXIT)

NUMBER 4: WHAT HAPPENED. 1978.

(CAR CRASH TAPE, WHAT HAPPENED BEGINS, FOUR SEPARATE STORIES W/GESTURES PERFORMED SIMULTANEOUSLY)

SAMPLE: On the corner of the street where I live a car backed up into the car of the son of an old friend of mine which in turn hit a street car lurched up on to the side walk running in to a stop sign and knocking it upside down and back to the beginning of time when man was a monkey at the top of the street car ran in to the window of a five and ten minutes to three men rounded the corner out of breath to see if the driver of the car was hurt him self stumbling over the stop sign off over and out of my house running in to the son of an old friend of mine climbing out of his small car he lurched up on to the side walk stumbled and fell to the ground dead as a door you with all my heart to heart talk to me I cried bending over his grandfather came running down the street from no where was I walked back to the house in time to stop the old man which was to no avail for he pushed me aside crying where was I opened the door of my house and stepped inside the street car the women and men were waiting  
 "To be or not to be: that is the question:  
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
 And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;  
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
 That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consumation  
 Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
 To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;"  
 The police arrived and also an ambulance. The ambulance had ambulance spelled out back to front on the front which was confusing. The police questioned witnesses while the ambulance attendants searched for victims. Know what happened - wanting to help - but having no time - I left right away.  
 (PERFORMERS EXIT)

NUMBER 4: 1980.

NUMBER 3: He starts using our real names in performance.

NUMBER 1: What's wrong with tha...

NUMBER 3: (INTERRUPTS) He uses things we say in rehearsal and adds things he wants us to say. He writes a script. He turns us into characters.

NUMBER 1: I don't turn you into cha...

NUMBER 4: In 1982 Arlene Croce begins to write a profile.

NUMBER 3: For the New Yorker.

NUMBER 1: About Valda and me.

NUMBER 7: I'm Arlene. Are you sure it's 1982 dear?

NUMBER 1: I'm not sure of any of this stuff. It all seems to have happened to someone else. But you're at the loft. We're rehearsing the piece called T.V. Reel.

NUMBER 3: It's winter. The boiler busts.

NUMBER 1: The tape machine freezes.

NUMBER 3: We rehearse in coats and hats and gloves.

NUMBER 1: The profile takes a year to write, doesn't it?

NUMBER 7: A year? Was it as long as that? We are having a lovely time aren't we?

NUMBER 1: We see lots of dancing together and we drink a lot.

NUMBER 7: Not too much, I hope.

NUMBER 1: We talk about dancing.

NUMBER 7: And about movies.

NUMBER 1: We talk a lot about old movies.

NUMBER 7: You say you want to see the New York City Ballet as often as possible and we do, don't we?

NUMBER 1: I love all of that. Lots of George Balanchine's APOLLO.

NUMBER 7: More than other ballets?

NUMBER 1: I don't know. But in 1982 I use the Stravinsky APOLLO music for a piece called TRYING TIMES.

NUMBER 7: And Valda is your muse, isn't she dear?

NUMBER 1: Actually, you are. In those several years with you I think more, and say more of what I think, and fight battles of words and meanings with you who seem to enjoy, as much as me, wrestling ideas to the ground and then picking them up, brushing them off and starting all over again. You are the goddess of "what if?" I miss you. I thought we'd be friends forever.

(APOLLO MUSIC, SOLO ONE W/FRAME, SOLO TWO W/BOARD, SOLO THREE W/CUT OUT CHAIR, QUARTET W/ROLLING DOORFRAME, DUET, THEN SIX PERFORMERS ENTER W/MASONITE BOARD)

NUMBER 2: He walks up. He walks in. I wake up. He sits down. I sit up. He goes "Move over."

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 4: 1982. STORYBOARD. Another part of TRYING TIMES.

NUMBER 2: I go "Hold it." He goes "What?" He moves over. I go "Hold it." He goes "Hold what?" I go "Very funny." He goes "C'mon." I go "Ha ha ha." He goes "Aw c'mon." He smiles. I smile. I can't help smiling.

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 2: He goes "You're so mean." I go "Me mean?" I go "I don't know what you mean." He goes "I mean mean." He goes "You are." I go "Oh yeah." He goes for my leg. I go "Oh no." I move away. I mean I know he really goes for me, ya know?

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 2: So then I go "Keep your hands to yourself." He gets mad. He gets up. I slide down. I roll over. He stands still. I lay still. He goes "I'm going." I go "Go."

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 2: I shut my eyes. I make like I'm sleeping. I hear him breathing. I hear him moving around. I hear the door open. I hear it shut. I open my eyes. I sit up. He's still there. He's stark naked. I go "Jesus Christ."

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 2: He goes "Don't play hard to get." I go "Get out." He looks at me. I go "Get dressed and get out." He looks at me. (If looks could kill.) He goes "If I go, I won't come back." I go "Is that a threat or a promise?" I look at him. I never saw him naked before.

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 2: To tell the truth, he looks good. He looks at me. I look at him. On the one hand he looks good. (He did look good, ya know.) On the other hand, what am I? I go "What do you think I am?" He goes "What?" I surprised him with that. He goes "What?" I go "Yeah, what?! "I go "I'm only human." I go "I'm only a human being." I start to cry. I can't help it, I start to cry."

ALL: Then what happened?

NUMBER 2: He comes over. He sits down. I turn away. He takes my arm. He turns me around. I go "Don't." He goes "I'm sorry." I go "Oh sure." He goes "I am." I go "That's what you say." He goes "I really am." He goes "I'll go if you really want me to." (SHIFT GROUP/BOARD POSITION) I go "Go." I go "I really mean it." I go "I have to think this over." I go "It's not that I don't like you, it's I don't like what you did." He gets up. He gets dressed. And he goes. Before he goes, he goes "Can I call you?" I go "I don't know." I go "You can try." I go "I'll think about it." And I am. I really am, ya know?

(FINAL SECTION OF APOLLO MUSIC (NO. 17) BEGINS)

NUMBER 1: The thing about dance companies - they're like families. "Who is it likes the dark meat?" I ask cheerily. "Breast," everyone says. "Breast, breast." "Okay," Margaret sighs, "I'll eat the dark meat," She's doing me a favor. Like a family. Someone cooks best and someone shops best and someone doesn't mind doing the washing up - me, in fact. In fact I do it best. I wash the underneath of the dishes. Nina and Dean are the best all around turners. Without any preparation they can spin into the next phrase. I never was good at turning. Paul turns best to the left. He can lift Nina but don't try to get him to partner Susan. Paul drives Susan crazy. Just like a family. Don't sit Aunt Edie near Aunt Sally since what happened after the funeral with grandma's diamond dinner ring. And don't tell Aunt Sally that Aunt Edie got the gold Jules Jorgenson wristwatch or there'll be a revolution.

NUMBER 3: (ENTER) I didn't know she got that watch.

NUMBER 1: I'm reasonably good at my job so I keep the peace and I help make them all look their best. At this time we're all about the same age so when we go on tour we have something to talk about when the plane's late at O'Hare or the food's late at Denny's. Then things change.

NUMBER 3: He's going to tell you about the acting classes.

NUMBER 1: Time passes and one by one the dancers you've been working with, and have come to love and rely on, grow restless and nervous. They wanna have children "before it's too late." They turn into gardeners and caterers and therapists and traitors and one by one they get replaced by dancers younger than them and, more to the point, than you which actually means than me. More and more they come and go and get younger and younger and then the one you've been counting on -

NUMBER 3: Here it comes.

NUMBER 1: Not by any means your muse or anything like that. Just a peer. Just someone who remembers what you remember. All of a sudden she - or he - or whoever - no names - I'm not naming any names - just all of a sudden somebody's gotta go to acting class fa chrissake!

NUMBER 3: (TO AUDIENCE) I told you so. (TO NUMBER 1) I love you.

NUMBER 1: Easy for you to say it when I write it.

(DURING THE NEXT PAGES THERE IS CONSTANT MOVEMENT. THE METAL CHAIRS ARE SAT ON, STOOD ON, WALKED OVER, TOSSED AND CAUGHT, THE MASONITE BOARD IS USED AS PERCUSSIVE SOUND WHEN THE WORD "BOARD" IS MENTIONED, ENTRANCES AND EXITS FRAMED BY THE ROLLING DOOR, ALL AT GREAT SPEED)

NUMBER 4: Moving on. Suzanne Weil leaves the Walker and becomes the dance program director at the NEA.

NUMBER 1: And tricks me onto the dance panel where I meet Bonnie Brooks who works there.

NUMBER 2: I'm Bonnie Brooks. The first full time Pick Up mom.

NUMBER 1: Bonnie leaves Washington to work for the Pick Up Company which is not a step up.

NUMBER 2: How to be a manager.

NUMBER 1: How to have a manager.

NUMBER 2: We're like newlyweds. Three years later we get divorced in Paris. I take a job in Minnesota (TOSS SNOW) where Sue comes from. I want to say here - I'm responsible for us staying friends. I keep in touch and wait for him to grow up.

NUMBER 1: Bonnie builds a working board of directors (BOARD BANG) against my will. Arlene Shuler, ex-ballet dancer/emerging lawyer...

NUMBER 4: (INTERRUPTS) Not Arlene Croce.

NUMBER 2: I'm Arlene Shuler. I raised a lot of money didn't I?

NUMBER 1: Did I ever thank you? And Regina Hoover of the "get your head out of your asshole Hoovers."

NUMBER 2: I'm Regina. If I knew how often I'd be quoted I might have watched my language. (CHAIR BANG)

NUMBER 1: And Nadine Bertin who I worked for in my other life. The window dresser life. The "make a living" life. Bonnie wants professionals on the board (BOARD BANG) so I ask Nadine who is color editor at House and Garden.

NUMBER 2: I'm Nadine. He shows up for an interview in bell bottom ribbon trimmed jeans and a flannel bathrobe. I hire him and he lures me onto his board. (BOARD BANG)

NUMBER 1: At the first meeting in my kitchen they try to put into the by-laws that the board (BOARD BANG) can't take the company away from me. I say "if you want it, take it."

ALL: We don't want it.

NUMBER 1: So Bonnie gives me respectability in the dance world. The muse of my credibility. Before that Sue leaves the NEA for PBS...

NUMBER 2: (INTERRUPTS) I'm Sue. Goodbye.

NUMBER 1: So Rhoda Grauer takes over Sue's job which is how I meet her and how we are friends.

NUMBER 2: I'm Rhoda. I'm in Bali now.

NUMBER 3: That sounds like you're in the ballet now. Say Bahli.

NUMBER 2: I'm Rhoda. I'm in Bahli now but I was where he says I was and I am his friend and I'm on his board too.

- NUMBER 1: She is the muse of pragmatic political reasoning. She teaches me how to listen when other people talk. She leaves the panel...
- NUMBER 2: I go to ABT.
- NUMBER 1: Meanwhile I meet Arlene Croce.
- NUMBER 7: This is before 1982 when I write the profile.
- NUMBER 1: Who scares the shit out of me because she's so ruthless.
- NUMBER 7: A combination of ruthless and truthful.
- NUMBER 1: I'm sure she will figure out that I am no master of inventing dance steps.
- NUMBER 4: Do you want me to keep track of the time?
- NUMBER 1: No. The other Sunday, I went to hear Marge Champion say that "choreographers" were people like Balanchine and Robbins and that Broadway choreographers were called "dance directors" in the old days. They knew, she said, about 26 steps and figured how to reconfigure them for period or style or subject matter. Well I never counted but 26 sounds like a reasonable number.
- NUMBER 4: Alyce Dissette?
- NUMBER 1: First FRAMEWORK 1983. Bruce Hoover's advice kicks in.
- NUMBER 5: (FRAMED) I'm Bruce. He's not invisible.
- NUMBER 2: (FRAMED) I'm Sue. He's on the dance panel.
- NUMBER 7: (FRAMED) I'm Arlene. He's in the New Yorker.
- NUMBER 1: David White becomes the god of "I believe in you, let me keep producing your work year after year at Dance Theater Workshop, and why don't you now have a three week run?"
- NUMBER 2: (FRAMED) I'm David White. I've been meaning to call you.
- NUMBER 1: A whole lot of unlikely people come downtown to see who the hell I am and what the hell I'm doing. One of them is Baryshnikov who commissions me to make a ballet for American Ballet Theater which gets called FIELD, CHAIR AND MOUNTAIN.
- NUMBER 4: Music by John Field, metal folding chairs and a mountain designed by Santo Loquasto.

NUMBER 3: Who we meet in THE PHOTOGRAPHER. A lovely man.

NUMBER 1: He's so busy I can't get to work with him anymore. I thought we'd be friends forever.

NUMBER 4: Alyce Dissette?

NUMBER 1: First Baryshnikov.  
 (#2 ENTERS, SITS, TWO PERFORMERS SIT, #2 DOZES)  
 I never made a ballet. The 26 steps I know aren't ballet steps but Misha gives me a corps of twelve dancers, plus six solists and Clark Tippet and Martine van Hamel as principles. He also gives me Charles France and David Richardson, who save my ass, and he gives me his faith.

NUMBER 4: The ballet opens at the Kennedy Center. Then at the Met.  
 (TWO PERFORMERS APPLAUD, #2 STIRS, RESUMES DOZING)

NUMBER 1: I share reviews in Time and Newsweek with Jerome Robbins and Peter Martins and I'm still here.

NUMBER 4: Then Clive Barnes, in the Post. He calls me the "Casper Milquetoast of the ballet."

NUMBER 2: (WAKES) He's no Paul Taylor. (EXIT)

NUMBER 1: He says Misha is nuts for hiring me. I race up to the Met. I babble apologies to Misha.

NUMBER 2: (ENTER) I'm Misha. I say "who-gives-a-shit-and-what-do-you-want-to-do-next-and-can-I-please-be-in-it?"

NUMBER 1: Misha the muse of no boundries. He chooses the art that interests him and dances the true hell out of it. He has re-invented virtuosity, past leaping past spinning, to be the act of performing every step, every phrase and every whole dance with genuine and intense gravity which doesn't mean he isn't theatrical and funny. He is also, sometimes, a royal pain in the ass.

NUMBER 4: Alyce Dissette?

NUMBER 1: Okay. Time for Alyce. (TO #4) Be Alyce. Blond when we meet, you dye your hair red, dye it black, bleach it blond again. You're my manager after Bonnie. We fight for three years. You drive me crazy. I wanna kill you.

NUMBER 4: You always kill the thing you love.

NUMBER 1: Okay. You change my life.

NUMBER 4: I get you a raise.

NUMBER 1: First you get me a salary. Then you get me a raise.

NUMBER 3: She gets David and me separate bathrooms on the road.

NUMBER 1: Important things. You look at my work and say:

NUMBER 4: You ought to be in the theater.

NUMBER 1: You laugh that laugh of yours and call every regional theater in America.

NUMBER 4: Hello. David Gordon is great. Hire him and his company to work with your actors.

NUMBER 1: You actually get the Guthrie Theater to bring me and the dancers to Minnesota (TOSS SNOW) for a four week workshop with nine actors on what is called the mystery project since none of us including you know what the hell it is but you're not scared. But then you quit.

NUMBER 4: We both quit but I'm responsible for us staying friends. I keep in touch and wait for us both to grow up.

NUMBER 1: At the Guthrie I meet Madeline Puzo, "muse mom" to me and the actors. I meet Garland Wright the choreographer of directors. He makes actors dance and lets me watch him do it. He sends scripts to read and hires me to direct a play. Garland the muse of privacy. I meet Cynthia Mayeda the best conversation since Arlene. She looks into my eyes. Hard to not tell the truth.

NUMBER 4: Performers take places for TWENTY ONE MINUTES SOME ODD

NUMBER 1: I don't forget Jed Wheeler and Nigel Redden who between them save my ass on THE MYSTERIES and WHAT'S SO FUNNY when it goes from Guthrie workshop to no man's land. I don't forget Marjorie Samoff and Zalmon Mlotek who between them save my ass on SHLEMIEL THE FIRST when the Klezmer music drives me up the wall. And Arnold Weinstein. The funniest man with words. The man with the funniest words. A muse of poetry. A muse of professionalism. A god of procrastination. He is my true reward for surviving Shlemiel.

NUMBER 4: David?

NUMBER 1: Cary Perloff and Corey Madden. They listen and say what they think and what they think is smart.

NUMBER 4: David. They're ready.

NUMBER 1: Gordon Davidson. He has faith, like Misha, in artists. He gives me faith in myself and he knows ways to stay positive under fire. I need to know how to do that.

NUMBER 4: I'm giving them the go ahead.

NUMBER 1: Occasions and conditions and powerful humans are my muses and to learn something is my job. Go ahead.

NUMBER 4: TWENTY MINUTES SOME ODD - 1999

TWENTY MINUTES SOME ODD -

1ST SECTION: UNISON QUARTET

W/CONTINUOUS REPLACEMENTS OF 4TH PERFORMER

2ND SECTION: CENTER STAGE SOLO TIMES FOUR

PLUS SIMULTANEOUS UNISON QUINTET

(ONE BY ONE PERFORMERS STOP IN PLACE UNTIL ONE IS LEFT DANCING)

3RD SECTION: CENTER STAGE MUYBRIDGE SOLO

PLUS 9 PERFORMER VARIATIONS

4TH SECTION: HIGH SPEED MUYBRIDGE

PLUS SLOW MOTION RUNS

NUMBER 4: (TWENTY MINUTES SOME ODD ENDS) Performers take places for the BEETHOVEN, please.

NUMBER 1: The family as muse. Fanny and Rose, and Sam, and Pauline also known as Auntie Annie. What a quartet. And Ain Gordon. My blood. My friend. He hears the words and what they mean and what they might mean. And Valda Setterfield who knows ways of dancing between the steps. I spend my working life making sure that Valda still thinks I'm worth her effort. I am lucky. A family of muses and an extended family of muses. All the gods and goddesses of detective work, of loving to make connections, of eating and drinking and joking and laughing big laughs while talking fine talk. I think we'll be friends forever.

NUMBER 4: BEETHOVEN - 1998

BEETHOVEN

QUARTET - THREE WOMEN AND ONE MAN

THE END