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In its third Next Wave appearance, the David Gordon/Pick Up Co. presented the New York premiere of *United States*, a still-evolving piece that, when completed, will require two evenings to perform. Gordon prefers to be known as a constructor rather than a choreographer. To that categorization one could add coordinator, in view of the vast number of artists, writers, researchers (and his own dancers) involved in contributing material to his concept of a performance piece reflecting his perceptions of American regional flavors and urban particularities. Like its material, financial support for *United States* came from sources nationwide; in a bold move, Gordon and his producer Alyce Disette corralled not a few sponsors but a whole team of them: 27 arts presenters, from titan-sized John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to tiny Meany Hall at the University of Washington.

The segments brought together at BAM—"Minnesota," "New York," "New England," "San Francisco"—form what might be described as an intimate epic: Gordon invents the big picture from the small-in-scale, the nostalgic, the familiar, even the banal. "New England" is Robert Frost's dried-leaf voice discussing the making of poetry: "Minnesota" is a romantic evocation of dancers dressed in denim—the women

in long skirts and ruffled blouses—moving easily through soft, smoothly swinging passages to Mozart and the taped voice of a woman recalling her first dance, brought back to earth by the crisp analysis of a piano teacher as to why her pupils fail to master the composer.

Gordon finds the robust, contemporary spirit of San Francisco in the songs written about it, performed diversely but enthusiastically by Judy Garland and Jeanette MacDonald ("San Francisco"), Carmen McRae ("I'm Always Drunk in San Francisco"), and Tony Bennett ("I Left My Heart in San Francisco"). As for New York, Gordon handles its characteristic violence in terms of comedy and melodrama, with flying squads of twinkle-toed Keystone Kops, raffish street people, and a waltzing elderly couple (Gordon and his wife, Valda Setterfield), separated by gang savagery into victim and widow to the strains of "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." As in most of Gordon's work, there are stretches when the choreography fumbles rather than forges ahead (he's not his own best editor), but *United States* has a homely and persistent charm rather like that of another specifically American product of many hands that it resembles: the patchwork quilt.