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In his *T.V. Reel*, a performance with dance that included a video collaboration with Dennis Diamond, **David Gordon** suggested love as the saving grace for our lives. In certain ways, *T.V. Reel*, presented at 541 Broadway March 10-21, continues Gordon's essential themes and methods, but in other ways—most notably the use of video and a great deal of time spent dancing to music—*T.V. Reel* represents a real departure.

Gordon hedges his sticky subject about with all sorts of distancing devices: switching identities and movements, shifting contexts, making puns (as in his past work), and moving from live action to recorded action. The evening opens with an image on large twin video screens of a kind of game in which we see two checked tablecloths on which four pairs of hands circulate cups, saucers, and bowls, establishing rhythmic patterns of motion and sound as they pile and pass and stack and set them down. The walls and ceiling of Gordon's loft have been painted grey with white patches in a way that makes them at first look deceptively like the unfinished walls of a newly constructed interior. But then you notice that two of the walls have the same pattern with the colors reversed (decor by Power Boothe). This pleasingly intricate play of illusion and pattern is the relentless theme of the evening. The live dancers (Valda Setterfield, Susan Eschelbach, Margaret Hoeffel, Keith Marshall, Nina Martin, Paul Thompson) enter. Eschelbach and Martin sit at the table with checked cloth of the video image, while the others place themselves in the space and talk about how they miss and love "Susan." Setterfield stands in the center, directing the snappy flow of words and motion, and just when it's exact, the whole sequence is replayed, and we no longer see it as ordinary behavior, but as a "text"—capable of infinite reruns. It's a live version of the way video can capture and play back real life. Eschelbach joins the others, introduces herself as

"Susan," and announces "I'm back." This begins a new set of dance moves—like changing channels—that make puns from the rhetoric of soap opera love clichés by literally acting out the language—falling in love, leaning on someone, going around together, throwing someone over. The dancers pass each other back and forth. The hug becomes a leitmotif. The tenderness of certain gazes, certain caresses, certain words—the experience of falling in love—is regularized into a pattern that organizes all these special events into a steady rhythm. Setterfield narrates a story about W.C. Fields and his wife—how he lost her to another comedian but gained the other man's best lines—and later, tells a story (fiction or nonfiction?) about the summer she was twenty and fell in love with four people. Or was it that they fell in love with her? Square dance music comes on ("Miller's Reel," by Gunther Schuller) and the patterned material takes on another layer of meaning: the stylized coupling and uncoupling of this particular mode of American folk dance. Vignettes on the video screen intrude: In a subverted soap opera style, TV nonreality lets Thompson shoot Hoeffel after a lover's quarrel and, as the rest of the cast urges her on, lets Hoeffel literally "get him out of her mind."

Finally Gordon arrives on the scene—one is reminded of Eschelbach's entrance at the beginning and he doesn't even have to say "I'm back." He and Setterfield dance to the music, a circling reel of pacing and turning, all the while facing front and maintaining their handclasp, which is constantly threatened by the stepping pattern that is also written large on the video screens behind them. It looks like a traditional country dance and it evokes a sense of comfort, relief, and, yes, love. The music changes to a song by John Cougar—"This Time (I think I'm really in love)." Sitting in Gordon's home and watching him dance lovingly with his wife one feels healed, even if one has just been shown that love can be a series of banal reruns of conversation and gesture. It is always the same old thing but then again sometimes the same old thing is imbued with pressing, real meaning.

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