

(Continued from Page 11)

The "Chance history plus further expansion" includes a taped discussion by Gordon of the chance processes he went through to put the dance together. Then they show us the movement further. No particular movement is given any extra emphasis or importance over any other movement, but some things stick in my mind. Like leaning back in the chair until it falls over; lying down and drawing the chair over the body; spraddling backwards in the chair and circling the leg over its back.

In the "Fully expanded version plus repeats" the two dancers repeat parts of their movement a certain number of times the way a needle gets stuck every now and then on a record. They are extremely precise about repeating the movement exactly and it's satisfying to watch them carry this process through movements that by now have grown familiar.

Finally they sing "Stars and Stripes" while going through the fully expanded version. Here the clowning aspect becomes important. Gordon, who is a sort of natural comedian, makes the funny boom-booms of the music come at amusing times in his movement. Setterfield makes no attempt to do that. There's something about clowning around with this piece that belies it, though admittedly one could be ludicrously serious with "Stars and Stripes." But the comic aspect makes the work seem coy; it seems to apologize for something when it needs no apology.

Gordon/ Setterfield

Kathy Duncan

David Gordon

New Work with Valda Setterfield

Paula Cooper Gallery

David Gordon's "One Act Play—work in progress," is a verbal dance. It's paradoxical in that the words in two of the three parts tell a story while the movements do something else.

Gordon has manipulated the story-telling in a way that separates what we generally call content in a play from its form. In a traditional play, if it's any good, form is something you think about maybe on the way home. In "One Act Play," Gordon asks you to separate what is normally together and concentrate on both distinct features simultaneously.

In the second part of the play, "The Meeting," the movement and timing of the lines is steady and repetitive. The dancers make a slow progression from one side of the performing area to the other, both dancers facing alternately front and back with each step and each line, as both of them play both roles. But during this steady progression, a plot develops, reaches a mild point of personal confrontation and ebbs away, as the dancers speak their lines expressively.

In the third section, "The Confession," Setterfield and Gordon face each other, and

Setterfield speaks with a precise equal pause between each word at the same time that she maintains a normal expressive inflection of voice. It goes sort of like this (to paraphrase) "And...so...I...went...to...cash...a...check...at...the..." etc. The story has a focus—it's called a confession and I want to hear it, expecting something juicy. There's something about some man. But she rambles and rambles. Each sentence in the progression of her story leads to a meandering side story. It goes on and on playing around with you, teasing to the limit that it can do so without losing the basic story entirely. As she finally gets to the end, the last word she says is a small pin prick, and the air seeps out of my expectations as I realize I've heard the ultimate shaggy dog story.

The opening section, "The Lecture" is a conceptual dance of words that change spellings. A taped voice intones, (to paraphrase an example) "To make DANCE out of DANGER keep the DAN, change the G to C, keep the E, and get rid of the R. To make ROMANCE out of DANCE, get rid of the D hang on to the ANCE, and add ROM at the beginning." etc. It goes on through a seemingly random set of words. Sometimes a new word requires very few changes from the old word. Sometimes it shares nothing more than one letter with the old word, or a

couple of letters that aren't connected, and a complicated process is presented. It challenges the concentration. If there are other levels of organization in it I missed them because it took all my concentration to hold onto a word and make these changes. It's like watching a dance in your mind, and the use of words enables one to see it clearly.

The program opened with "Chair, alternatives 1 through 5", a work that contains a great deal of attention to and love of form. The basic dance idea is given a number of different treatments. There's a prologue and epilogue consisting of a rousing recording of "Stars and Stripes Forever." For the "Initial one minute version" Gordon and Setterfield stand in two taped squares on the floor. They spiral to the floor, move back to the chairs, step up on them and jump off, and return to their positions. Then we see the "Colorful History plus First Expansion." They stand and listen to Gordon's voice on tape relate from a diary how he created the dance, inserting a color in each reverberating sentence. There's an odd mixture of truth and fantasy in it. When he speaks of seeing the blue chairs at Trisha Brown's place, he says, "I blacked out." The two dancers then perform their movement sequence, which is considerably expanded over the first one and contains all kinds of manipulations of the chairs. They perform the same movement without attempting to synchronize with each other.

(Continued on Page 19)