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Dance/Tobi Tobias

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David Gordon, WHOSE PICK UP CO. GAVE a wonderful program of "new and used" work at the Brooklyn Academy, always seems to be telling us about how art imitates real life—or is it the other way round?

In the new-last-summer *Transparent Means for Travelling Light* (a title as juicy with puns as his choreography), Gordon physically deconstructs a theater by devices such as bringing in the curtains that mask the wings—and define the performers' private, pedestrian space from the area in which artificial magic is made—only at the end of the piece. He also, as is his custom, deconstructs the most elaborately evolved sorts of dancing to basic elements like the walk, the casual embrace, the fall. What might be a glorious lift in a Petipa-style ballet (and Gordon is evidently a trenchant observer of the ballet) becomes in his rendition a fireman's hold, yet the carrier is nonetheless chivalric, the lady nonetheless enhanced.

The wintry section of *The Seasons* (Chuck Hammer, not Vivaldi, thank God) features a duet for Gordon and Valda Setterfield—a couple whose marriage of a quarter century has been catalogued in Gordon's work—picking their way with caution over what might be metaphoric ice, a painstaking journey, taken one step at a time, that seems to have built into it a world of checkered experience: adoration, anger, exhaustion, sorrow, jealousy, comfort, and support. The passage manages, simultaneously, to be art imitating art with ironic wit; the score at this point incorporates the strains of Meyerbeer to which Ashton composed his utterly care-free skating ballet, *Les Patineurs*.

A revised version of *My Folks* juxtaposes Gordon as a Semitic patriarch (typecasting by looks) with an ensemble of rakish downtown types. The match seems farfetched until you recall the Ukrainians mingled with the punks in the East Village, or the fact that your great-grandpa-the-rabbi has descendants with purple mohawks. This piece, by the way, earns the decade's prize for revision; a work that looked hopeless has become something very like a masterpiece without any of its original premises being quenched or warped. ■