

DAVID GORDON/PICK UP CO.

104 Franklin Street/New York City/10013/212.966.5485

Minnesota

Suzanne Weil pronounced wile
And Bucky Weil.

My first Minnesotans.

She, Sue, showed my work at the Walker.

The museum. In Minneseta. In Minneapolis.

First work out of N.Y. First foreign audience. First residency.
First teaching. First and last lecture demonstration.

When I first went there we were all listening to Carol King singing
"But will you love me tomorrow?" and Sue and Bucky had Randy Newman
records in their house...or did I buy them them?

I did a piece called Sleepwalking to Wagner at the Walker.
And Benedicte Pesle pronounced Pell
came and fell asleep.

It was the beginning of a series of comings and comas
that Benedicte performed to my work until she stopped.

I stayed at Sue's house with all the Grand Union and roomed with
Douglas Dunn who unpacked by emptying his suitcase at the side of
his bed.

Yvonne Rainer was there in the secret room having nightmares.
Bucky smiled at the invasion and at Sue.
He had already lived through Mabou Mines.

I didn't much meet Martin and Mickey who are the Walker,
but I knew them from their taste and wit and risk
which are everywhere around--around there.

Melinda Ward was there then, then at KTCA.

Mike Steele wrote about us. And Roy Close. And Alan Robertson later.

Back again in awhile piggy-backed on the profits of rock concerts,
Sue said. Sue's a pal.

Doug and Sarah Rudner and Valda Setterfield and me in the Firehouse
and at the Walker. Blonde Pat O'Brien (can that be right?) brought
chicken soup to the dressing rooms. We met again later in St.Paul.
I haven't run into her for a longtime.

Back again and back again.

Sue went to Washington and put me on the dance panel and Nigel Redden
went to the Walker.

Arlene Croce pronounced Crowchay

wrote a New Yorker profile about Valda and me that began in Dayton.

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I did Limited Partnership for Linda and Leigh pronounced Lee
and my company and their company with Wendy (whose married name
I don't know) and Will Swanson
to Stravinsky and Gershwin
at the Childrens Theater
and the T.V. show
and the other T.V. show
and Sandy Hale and Sage Cowles pronounced Coals
giving parties back to back
and back again---to Duluth.

Pavlova

it is said

danced in Duluth.

Valda and Margaret Hoeffel pronounced Heffel did too in By Two,
a piece with a cord of white birch on stage.

→ Valda had a hernia and an operation and was teaching in Minneapolis
two weeks later

and I went to a meeting in Minnesota

where I met Peter Zeisler

who had been at the Guthrie while it was becoming the Guthrie

and he knew Sue and Bucky

so we all visited them and had an unplanned dinner.

Our first Cuisinart meal.

A zucchini souffle.

We talked and laughed a lot that night.

That was the last time we saw Bucky.

→ The Photographer played in St. Paul and Valda danced the Maybridge
pronounced Moybridge solo in a pool of water.

She had done it ten years before

on the lecture stage of the Walker

without any water and without any clothes.

→ We took wild rice from Lunds home to N.Y.

And good used woolen Minnesota jackets from Ragstock.

Valda bought big gloves to wear over her other gloves

and stuffed down super sweet mince tarts

at Becky's Cafeteria

to ward off the cold

and we took home Becky buttons.

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✓ → Bob Stearns pronounced Sterns is at the Walker now.

Bucky Weil died and I think of him.

Sue sold the house.

Melinda Ward's in Washington

and Alan Robertson is in London.

✓ → But Bonnie Brooks moved to Minneapolis

and Norma Fire's in St. Paul

acting for half a year again.

Lise Houlton went back

and I hear Wendy (whose married name I don't know) had a baby.

I'd like to meet the kid.

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I especially loved the dances. They were so colorful and varied, and some were so sensual and beautiful. They freed me from severe puritan sexual rigidity, from relating pleasure to guilt and sin.

short pause

I remember my first dance. I don't know ^{how} ~~how~~ my mother and my grandmother let me go, but it was not without warnings, threats, and a terrible armor against sin and excess.

*longer pause
board
mom
2x*


My first party dress was white, although I would have preferred red or even yellow. But only the whores wore these colors, my grandmother said. So I wore a white dress, and shoes that had a thin stripe of red around them and little heels. I had rolled my hair on newspaper to have curls, which seemed to me the height of voluptuousness.

*short pause
return of first melody*

Jon came to pick me up in a surrey with a fringe on top, though it was harnessed to a plow horse. The harvest was just over, and his huge forearms were browned from the sun and gleaming. He smelled of chaff, even though he was scrubbed to within an inch of his life and his wild straw hair was slicked down with bear grease. He seemed strange and huge as he helped me onto the high step. We drove slowly through the aspens, which were gold around us. I smelled of talcum powder and so did he. I had rubbed wet red crepe paper on my cheeks and blackened my eyes with kitchen matches, passing my grandmother quickly so she couldn't see my whorish color.

*smooth
spoon
melody
return*

In the big empty hall everyone stood around kidding and waiting. The men seemed very tall and hung their heads. The girls seemed unbearably bright, each in her best bib and tucker, all laughing too loud and embracing each other to show how good it was to embrace.

melody  *orchestra*

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The fiddlers started warming up. An accordian joined them and we were off. I began to be tossed from one tall man to another. My feet hardly touched the ground, and the caller could have been speaking another language. I didn't need to know the dance, I just followed. I went from one great harvester to the other. They were laughing, some yelling and "feeling you up," as the girls said. Through the hours we were flying, sweating, pressed, tossed, stamping out the rhythms, whirling from embrace to embrace. I never was so happy since the day I was born.

more quiet - men piano - - - orchestra -

As the night got deeper and the fiddlers hotter, we were flung into the men's arms, back and forth, a weave of human bodies. I couldn't tell one from the other. A girl took me outside with her. The girls lifted their skirts on one side of the field, and the boys stood with their backs to us on the other. I never heard such laughter or sensed such dangerous meaning in the night, in what took place in the woods, when the dancers returned with curious smiles and leaves in their hair. We seemed on the edge of some abysmal fire. But they seemed unafraid, plunging into the heat and the danger as if into a bonfire of roses. I never was the same again.

21 *gmla enters - contacts dean - stark*
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NO PAGES

Weldy again

For several years in a row after we arrived in Minneapolis Mama managed a neighborhood marching and baton twirling group. I was expected to choreograph the routines and to teach the other kids the intricate maneuvers. Our annual objective was to win awards in the Minneapolis Aquatennial Parade. I was the group leader and I usually marched along several paces ahead of our motley crew, strutting like hell and blowing on my whistle to signal the routines. In the old days the parade ended at Parade Stadium, and because we knew the judges were there we used to save our last bit of strength to put on a particularly entertaining act for them. That strategy worked, at least sometimes, because we did win awards.

Ours was a mixed race group, and on that basis alone we were quite a novelty to the large numbers of people who lined the street and hung out of upper-floor windows to watch the spectacle. Sometimes when we would pass by a particularly enthusiastic group of spectators, some of the whites would throw nickels and dimes at our feet to watch us scramble for them. But a high-stepping baton princess with a whistle could not break stride to scoop up the man's filthy lucre. I would prance right over the money, and Mama, who always accompanied us along the sidelines, would scold me afterward for being so stupid.

Even during my stage performances Mama was always in the wings coaching, doing the same number on the sidelines out of the audience's view and calling out improvised routines as they occurred to her. She would shout out, "Smile, goddammit!" and "Get down on your knees now, get down on your knees...now throw them a big kiss!" and all that old-time bullshit. Though the applause was sometimes deafening, all this would be drowned out by Mama's usual complaints in the wings that I had made so many mistakes, or that my taps weren't loud enough and people couldn't hear them, or that I should have taken off my white satin top hat and tossed it in the air as she directed.

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I truly believe that Mama's aspiration was for me to become the black Shirley Temple from the ghetto or a female reincarnation of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. She seemed desperate in her zeal for my career, never realizing that she was preparing me for a show business specialty that was soon to become obsolete.

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True nostalgia is not merely or essentially a backward movement, a heart rending longing for a bygone, a once before, a something lost. It is a remembering forward, a carrying into any experience in space and time-- not dead remembrance, but a green and growing recollecting that is strong enough to dye that new space indelibly green and make that new time as memorable as the vibrant past. Those who go away from a time and space when and where they were happy, take the aura of that happiness with them. Separating from that time and that place is not a cutting or tearing up of roots. It is a moving out into a wider world, a vaster existence, but the center remains the same. The earth turns methodically in space, the wheel of life moves erratically over the earth, but the quiet recollection of the root-life where one grew up is the hub. Thus five of our eight children have indeed left Minnesota, but Minnesota has never left them, for growing up in Minnesota has helped to give all ten of us the organic capacity to be everywhere and anywhere and always at home.