

LECTURE/background

There were things I could always do.

I could draw pictures.

I could tell stories. I could make them up on the spot.

I could improvise before I knew what "improvise" meant.

I could draw people and places and patterns.

I had a hard time with hands.

All my people had their hands in their pockets.

I could sing.

I was a boy soprano in school recitals.

I wrote plays and gave myself the biggest parts
and I made people laugh.

I couldn't bat or catch or climb or swim or bike or hike or skate
but I could make people laugh.

I rewrote Romeo and Juliet in Junior High School.

I was Romeo in a beret and a pencil mustache.

I drew it with a pencil.

I wrote and drew for the school magazine.

I won the Art medal in High School.

I entered college as an English major and an Education minor.

I never took an Education class.

I switched my major to Art without telling my parents.

I followed a young art major woman

with live guppies swimming in her fishbowl earrings

to the modern dance club

where there would be dancer/choreographers

at work on a theater production of Peer Gynt

said, "you there!" They meant me. "Come be a dancing troll."

I did and I met up with the theater majors
and one young theater major woman adopted me
and took me along to an audition
where two would be actors were battling for the lead.
The professor/director shouted,
"you there!" He meant me. "Come read for this part!"
I did, and he sent the other guys away.
I became the Witchboy in a play called Dark of The Moon.
I spoke with a sort of southern hillbilly accent like movie yokels.

The summer I ran away from home to live in Greenwich Village
(which meant taking a subway from Coney Island to Manhattan)
I met an artist named James Waring
on a bench in Washington Square Park
and Jimmy said I was a dancer
and would I audition for his company.
I did and I was in - and in a dance concert
and then I got a summer dance job
in the first religious drama of the south
called Thy Kingdom Come
(in a cemetery in Roanoke Virginia.)

Valda Setterfield emigrated to America
and came to Jimmy Waring's rehearsal
(where he was making a solo for me)
and Jimmy said she and I looked good together
and we ought to have a duet
and we got married
and the Judson Church performances happened
while we were having a baby boy
and I made solos and I got booed and I retired.
I began to dance with Yvonne Rainer.

The Rainer company transformed into the Grand Union
(an improvisational group)
and I began to make group pieces once in a while
while Valda danced with Merce Cunningham for ten years.
Then Valda was in a big car accident
and I made the piece called CHAIR for the two of us
and I began to have a small company
and to have a loft to rehearse in
and I began to be on dance panels
and to win grants and awards
and I got older and older.