

The Times, London  
30 Jan. 1980

## DAVID GORDON/ PICK UP<sup>UP</sup> Co.

### Pick Up Company Riverside

#### John Percival

If all experimental dancers were as talented, pleasant and entertaining as David Gordon and Valda Setterfield, how much more popular experimental dance would be. Some of us remember her as a gifted member of Merce Cunningham's company; but now she is appearing with her husband. He calls his company the Pick Up Company, describes it as "permanently temporary" and enlarges or diminishes it at will. For their British appearances in the Dance Umbrella series it has diminished to just the pair of them; but with two such dancers, who needs more?

Actually they do also have projected still photographs of David Vaughan as a most unlikely pope, and his voice narrating a dead-pan spoof account of the origin of papal audiences, while David Gordon dances a solo. The sound-track, with its explanation of "pope dances" (whence pop-dances, popcorn and even poppycock) is so hilarious that you are in danger of missing the skill,

originality and casual elegance of the dance.

Setterfield's solo at Riverside Studios last night was a sequence of poses based on a collection of photographs; you do not see the pictures, but hear Gordon's recorded voice commenting on her attempts at them in rehearsal, with some interjections from her. Is that actually a dance? Perhaps not, but it is an interesting and theatrical use of a dancer's disciplined body.

Their opening duet, *Close up*, is highly affectionate (you could not perform it with a stranger), full of embraces and falls into or out of the other's arms. The pace is slow, interrupted every now and again by poses during which enlarged photographs of what they are doing are projected on the screen behind them. But the conscious shaping of bodies and of the spaces between them, with the sustained control of timing, ensure that this piece is always unmistakably a real dance.

So is *Chair*, in which they perform marvellous contortions on, over, through or under two folding metal chairs, sometimes la-la-ing the tune of Sousa's "Stars and Stripes forever" while doing so. Described, it seems very little, but they make something entirely joyous of it.