

# David Gordon's Pope

By SUSAN REITER

DAVID GORDON PICK/UP CO.  
AT 541 BROADWAY. APRIL  
12-29.

David Gordon and Valda Setterfield know how to elevate the matter-of-fact, unadorned presentation of movement into an art form. They demonstrated this recently once again during performances by Gordon's Pick/Up Co., which opened with a work Gordon originated in 1972, *One Part of the Matter*. In this piece, Setterfield languidly but ever-so-precisely slips from pose to pose, while a tape of her and Gordon discussing in minute detail a photo series of body positions plays. The tape begins before Setterfield enters, so that the audience can decipher what was under discussion and try to picture the positions before she appears to inhabit them.

Setterfield passed through positions before or after they were mentioned on the tape, so that sudden recognition could occur (so *that's* the one she was explaining was almost impossible to hold!). The piece is

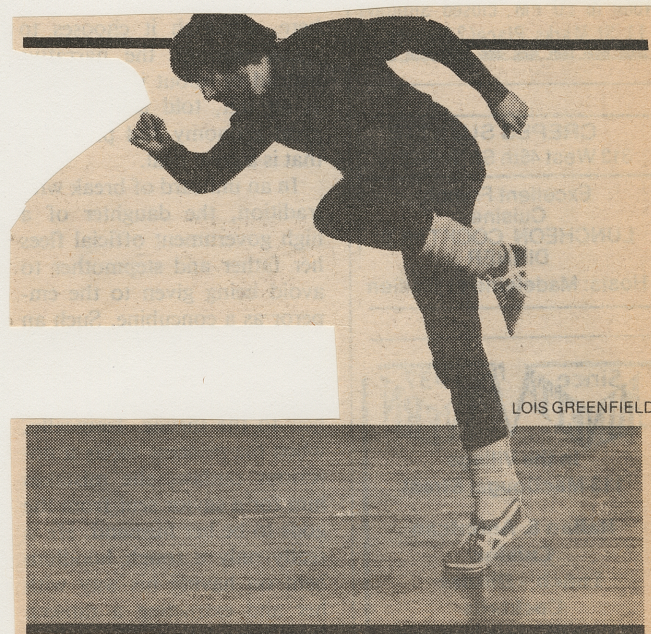
completely straightforward, but somehow not static despite the presentation of movement as a series of separate images. Setterfield's quiet intensity and the detailed precision with which she assumes the poses (including some wonderfully odd facial expressions) are what give the work its validity.

In *An Audience With the Pope*, or *This is Where I Came In*, a new work, David Vaughan's taped voice as he narrates a quasi-lecture of skewed papal history reflects the calm, deliberate approach Gordon and Setterfield assume in performance. *Pope* uses the entire Pick/Up Co. in five sections. Gordon presents the basic material in an opening solo, performed in shadowy light while large projections of Vaughan-as-Pope (looking devout and fatherly) form a backdrop. The solo has a lazy look to it; Gordon falls and rolls on the floor a lot, shifts directions in clear, large phrases. The material is limited and repeats itself. One interesting movement has Gordon looking as if he's about to

launch into a slow, easy jog, only he changes his mind before the first step is completed and never gets started.

*What Happened*, which was first presented last autumn, followed *Pope* without a break, performed by the entire company. It is a bizarre, teasing retelling, complete with enlarged, overly-literal gestures, of a traffic accident. It is wonderfully chaotic, and the deadpan seriousness with which it is performed does not disguise that it is, at heart, a game, a nimble manipulation of language and gesture. Like

much of Gordon's work, it is irreverent, clever, and consistently challenging.



LOIS GREENFIELD