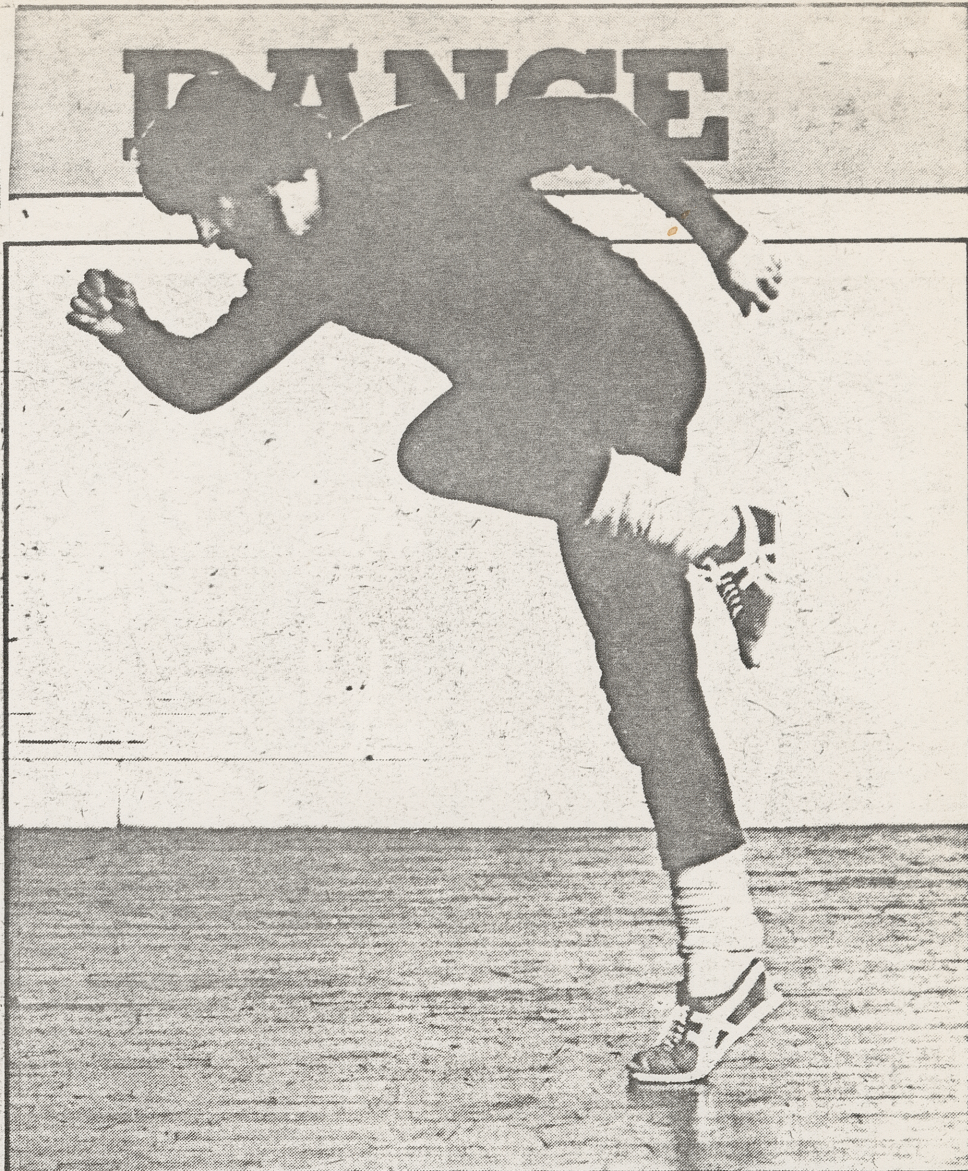


April 23-29, 1979



DAVID GORDON POSES

"Every little movement has a meaning all its own/Every thought I'm feeling by some posture can be shown." So sang David Vaughan in accompaniment to the poses Valda Setterfield assumed in performing *One Part of the Matter*, a solo choreographed by her husband David Gordon. I quote the song because it perfectly sums up the entire concert by Gordon and his Pickup Company, a concert of words, movement and images which bounced against each other like bells, striking unanticipated, often comic resonances that are still ringing in my mind.

The solo was a series of discrete action poses, placed side by side for no apparent purpose. Setterfield's unbalanced weight, more on one foot or hip than the other, informed them with action; her delicately mobile face colored them with a point of view, coy, reluctant and anticipatory in turn. While she posed, she and Gordon discussed the poses on tape, gradually revealing that each was an attempt to duplicate a photograph. The poses themselves weren't funny but the dance was, perhaps because of its unsynchronized juxtaposition with the straightforward, businesslike commentary.

An Audience with the Pope (or This is Where I Came In) began with slides of Vaughan dressed in ecclesiastical robes. When his eyes fell on the door, Gordon entered through it to perform a long solo of walking, sliding, leaning steps while Vaughan's voice offered a potted history of the derivation of the dance's title, thickly planted with puns on the work "Pope."

Next, Gordon and Setterfield both performed the solo, starting at different points in the movement sequence. As she danced, Setterfield spoke calmly about a contemporary audience with the Pope. I distinctly heard, "I assume the Pope must have some kind of understudy... one of the Archbishops," which made me laugh. Other laughs bubbled for lines I didn't quite catch; everyone was having fun individually.

Then a trio of girls did the same step in unison; then two boys and two girls shared the material as Gordon and Setterfield had, occasionally regrouping as couples. Finally, the full company of seven split it seven ways, each performing all the movements without reference to anyone else. When they stopped, to stand like statues, the roar of the devout crowd surged over St. Peter's Square, followed by traffic noises and sirens.

Without a break, the company moved into *What Happened*, a spoken and gestured account of a street accident (Anyconnection to the sirens?) that each recounted at his own speed. As in charades, each gesture matched the sound, though not always the sense, of each spoken word: Two flattened hands passed from brow to chin represented "avail"; a cackle and sideways swoop, arms flapping, stood for "which." If you listened and watched very closely, sliding your attention from dancer to dancer, you could accumulate almost all the details of the story.

I can't figure out how it happened (what happened?), but suddenly everyone was reciting Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be," with gestures and in a backwards canon, that is, they all started at different times but finished in unison. They returned to the story of the accident briefly, standing still, facing front and speaking together.

Maybe Lewis Carroll, the supreme comic logician, could make good sense of it all. Lacking his logical skills, I can only say that I loved it, loved seeing pictures become movement, loved seeing sound, loved seeing movement splinter into reflecting shards, each of which threw new light on all the others. The Pope piece seemed much too long; I kept thinking, "This is where I came in." Perhaps that was the point. David Gordon/Pickup Company. 451 Broadway, 4/26-29, at 8:30 p.m., \$4.00 or TDF + \$1.00, 279-4200.

BY BARBARA NEWMAN

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