

**David Gordon/
Pick Up Co.**

Riverside

I cannot think when I saw a dancer with as much poise as Valda Setterfield. She looks as though she would be as much at home at a Buckingham Palace lunch or in a shipwreck: polite, friendly, resourceful and entirely assured. Also, she moves always like a dream. She is the star (if you can have one in so casually democratic a group) of the Pick Up Co. directed by her husband David Gordon, and his choreography subjects her to almost as many demands as the contingencies already mentioned.

At one point, for instance, she and Margaret Hoeffel subject each other brusquely to a rather tough work-out while pursuing a relaxed, courteous conversation about their mothers. Words play an important part in Gordon's work, never as explanation, sometimes as distraction, often twisted quite otherwise than as you would expect.

He has even invented one whole number based on punning mime gestures to illustrate a story which all six performers tell at different speeds, like a group of amiable lunatics playing charades. Himself a burly, bearded, somehow very determined performer, Gordon offers his work as if it were all a joke, and because of that he can smuggle quite a lot of original ideas in without scaring his audience, since although it is always experimental it is also always entertaining.

There is little in the way of recognizable conventional dance in his programme at Riverside Studios (which runs until Sunday), but it is all based on using a varied dance training and a mind as flexible as the body. Dressed in casual dance gear, all black or white, without scenery and almost without music, the company give eight items as an overlapping collage with only one interval to make up a show which I found friendly, skilled and thoroughly enjoyable.

John Percival