Choreographic Methods of the Judson Dance Theater

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The Judson Dance Theater, the legendary amalgamation of avant-garde choreographers in Greenwich Village in the early 1960s, represents a turning point in dance history for many reasons. Its cooperative nature as an alternative-producing institution was a conscious assault on the hierarchical nature not only of academic ballet but also, more directly, of the American modern dance community as it had evolved by the late 1950s. The youthfulness of Judson's original members signified a changing of the guard in terms of generations and, emblematic of the Kennedy era, a cultural shift in authority from the wisdom and experience of age to the energy and creativity—the modernity—of youth. Aesthetic questions about the nature and meaning of dance and of movement were raised in the workshop and in the concerts, among them—fundamentally—the identity of a dance work, the definition of dance, and the nature of technique. The cooperative workshop was a training ground for most of the key choreographers of the next two decades.[1]

But perhaps the most important legacy the Judson Dance Theater bequeathed to the history of dance was its intensive exploration and expansion of possibilities for choreographic method. In their relentless search for the new, coupled with an intelligently analytic approach to the process of dancemaking, in repudiating their elders' cherished compositional formulae, the members of the Judson Dance Theater experimented with so many different kinds of choreographic structures and devices that for the generations that have followed their message was clear: not only any movement or any body, but also any method is permitted.

Robert Dunn's Choreography Class

The open spirit that animated the group had its roots in the sensibilities of the composition class taught by Robert Dunn out of which the Judson Dance Theater blossomed. Dunn's aspirations as a dance composition teacher were informed by several sources (he himself was, of course, trained as a composer, not as a dancer or choreographer). Most crucially he translated ideas from John Cage's experimental music class, especially chance techniques, into the dance milieu; Cage's class, in which Dunn had been a student, already originated in an expanded view of music that encompassed theater and performance in a more general sense. Not only Cage's methods, but also his attitude that "anything goes," was an inspiration that carried over into Dunn's class. Certainly this permissive atmosphere was reinforced by the inclinations of the students, who were all engaged in various ways and to various degrees in the groundbreaking artistic scene in the Village, from the Living Theater to pop art to happenings to Fluxus, and some of whom studied as well with Ann Halprin, the West Coast experimentalist. But beyond this generative urge toward license, Dunn and his students consciously disavowed the compositional approaches taught in the modern dance "academy." Dunn remembers that he had watched Louis Horst and Doris Humphrey teach their choreography classes and was determined to find another pedagogical method; he found them too rigid and the dances by their students too theatrical.

The original class had started out with only five members—Paulus Berenson, Marni Mahaffay, Simone (Forti) Morris, Steve Paxton, and Yvonne Rainer. By the end of the second year, the participants included Judith Dunn (whose status as student sometimes seemed to blend with that of teacher), Trisha Brown, Ruth Emerson, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Fred Herko, Al Kurchin, Dick Levine, Gretchen MacLane, John Herbert McDowell, Joseph Schlichter, Carol Scothorn, and Elaine Summers. Valda Setterfield and David Gordon attended occasionally; Robert Rauschenberg, Jill Johnston, and Gene Friedman were "regular visitors," and Remy Charlip, David Vaughan, Robert Morris, Ray Johnson, and Peter Schumann, among others, came from time to time to observe. The composition of this population alone—it included visual artists, musicians, writers, a theater director, and filmmakers as well as dancers—made for an interdisciplinary brew.

The basis of Dunn's approach at first was to find time structures, taken from musical compositions by contemporary composers (Cage, Stockhausen, Boulez, and others), that dance could share. The principal technique was chance scores, but others included more wide-ranging methods of indeterminacy and various kinds of rules. Students were assigned to use a graphic chance score along the lines of that which Cage had made for his *Fontana Mix*. Another assignment involved using number sequences derived from Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies*. Several students remember dances involving time constraints, for instance, "Make a five-minute dance in half an hour." Trisha Brown recalls distinctly the instruction to make a three-minute dance:

> This assignment was totally nonspecific except for duration, and the ambiguity provoked days of sorting through possibilities trying to figure out what time meant, was sixty seconds the only difference between three minutes and four minutes, how do you stop something, why, what relation does time have to movement, and on and on. Dick Levine taught himself to cry and did so for the full time period while I held a stopwatch instructed by him to shout just before the time elapsed. "Stop it! Stop it! Cut it out!" both of us ending at exactly three minutes. (21)

Other assignments involved collaborations in which autonomous personal control had to be relinquished within a "semi-independent" working situation. Others had to do with subject matter, for instance, "Make a dance about nothing special." Still others required the use of written scores or instructions. This had partly to do with Dunn's convictions about "inscrib[ing] dances on the bodies of the dancers . . . on the body of the theater," and the notion of choreography as a kind of physicalized writing. "By planning the dance in a written or drawn manner, you have a very clear view of the dance and its possibilities," Dunn says. "Laban's idea was very secondarily to make a *Tanzschrift* . . . a way to record. Laban's idea was to make a *Schrifttanz*, to use graphic—written—inscriptions and then to generate activities. Graphic notation is a way of inventing the dance" (7).

An interest in Labanotation and the theoretical issues of recording dance was on the rise in the dance community. Dunn's use of scores was certainly also related to the influence of Cage and other contemporary composers who were inventing new methods of scoring music in order to fit their new methods of composition and performance. But the dancers' use of written scores had a practical basis as well. According to Ruth Emerson: "There was no rehearsal space, and Bob understood that. It was well understood by everybody that most people didn't have a studio of their own. But in another week, you were expected to come in with something. [Scores were] the only practical way of conveying information. . . . [They were] expedient" (25–26).

Dunn recalls that his approach developed generally

into supplying a "clearinghouse for structures derived from various sources of contemporary action: dance, music, painting, sculpture, Happenings, literature" (3). (However, because the previous generation of modern choreographers had so tied the meaning of their dances to literary ideas, the verbal arts were the least plumbed.) Beyond the freedom of method and the inspiration by other art forms, a crucial element in Dunn's pedagogy was the discussion of choice patterns as part of the presentation. Through this "post-mortem" verbal analysis, the importance of the dance-making process was underscored. Choreographic method came to be seen as an arena for creativity prior to, sometimes even instead of, movement invention.

Before moving on to the Judson Dance Theater itself, let us examine some of the methods for student works presented either in Dunn's class or at the first end-of-the-year showing for the class, since the students' input, as well as Dunn's, served as a catalyst in that situation, and not all of the students went on to participate in the Concerts at Judson Church.

As I have noted, chance was a favored technique, not surprisingly in light of Merce Cunningham's influence on the group (several danced in his company and several more studied with him, and the class itself was given in his studio). And John Cage's influence was even greater. For Marni Mahaffay, the marvel of chance was that it seemed to create limitless possibilities: "I used the rotation of the moon to make one structure, but it could have been anything—for instance, the routine of getting up in the morning and cooking an egg. The path of the moon indicated where things could happen in space, in the dance" (8).

Chance was compelling, not only for its generative capabilities, but because it performed an important psychological function in forcing the choreographer to give up certain features of control. Mahaffay recalls, "To give up your own clichés, to give up your own movement that you were so attached to, was very exciting. You might only be given enough time to do the beginning of your favorite movement, or to do it much less than you would have preferred to. You ended up putting movements together in ways that weren't at all obvious or expected" (8). According to Ruth Emerson, chance also seemed an escape route from the domination of hierarchical authority: "For me it was a total change from controlling the process of how you made movement, which was first of all that you were supposed to suffer and . . . struggle with your interior, which I couldn't bear. I hated it. . . . It was such a relief to take a piece of paper and work on it without someone telling me I was making things the wrong way" (25).

Once one accepted all kinds of previously unacceptable formal choices that chance engendered (for example, stillness and repetition), all sorts of other choreographic devices became possible—repetition or stillness or arbitrariness by choice, rather than simply by chance. Despite the calculated formality and fragmentation of these methods, the movements they organized were not always abstract. Rainer wrote, about her movement choices of that period:

> I dance about things that affect me in a very immediate way. These things can be as diverse as the mannerisms of a friend, the facial expression of a woman hallucinating on the subway, the pleasure of an aging ballerina as she demonstrates a classical movement, a pose from an Etruscan mural, a hunchbacked man with cancer, images suggested by fairy tales, children's play, and of course my own body impulses generated in different situations—a classroom, my own studio, being drunk at a party. I am also deliberately involved in a search for the incongruous and in using a wide range of individual human and animal actions—speak, shriek, grunt, slump, bark, look, jump, dance. One or many of these things may appear in a single dance—depending on what I read, see, and hear during the period I am working on that dance. It follows, therefore, that no single dance is about any one idea or story, but rather about a variety of things that in performance fuse together and decide the nature of the whole experience. (14)

Here Rainer is laying a groundwork for what would replace chance as the key choreographic structure for postmodern dance: radical juxtaposition. Collage—with roots in dada and Duchamp, but also reflecting the crazy-quilt of the American urban landscape—was a preferred method for many visual artists of the period; the *Village Voice* dance critic, Jill Johnston, likened a 1962 piece by Fred Herko to a Rauschenberg combine. In Rainer's *The Bells* and *Satie for Two* (also of 1962), Johnston finds a precedent for the repetitive choreographic strategy in Gertrude Stein's circular, repetitive writing.

Another choreographic method used in Dunn's class, the stripping down of movement to "one thing," which later would resurface as a stringent asceticism paralleling that of minimalist sculpture, characterized dances by Simone Forti and Steve Paxton. Forti's "dance constructions" from that period dealt in ongoing activity, a continuum of motion rather than phrases or complex movement designs. Even her response to one of Dunn's Satie assignments is telling: rather than ordering her movements to the counts given by the number structures, she used the numbers to cue certain singular actions: "If it was a five she put her head down. If it was a three, she just put her two feet down. It was an exquisite dance," Remy Charlip remembers. Paxton made a dance in which he carried furniture out of the school office a piece at a time, and another in which he sat on a bench and ate a sandwich.

And at least three other devices that would be used in future Judson dances or works by Judson members arose in the Dunn class: rule games, interlocking instructions for a group, and using or "reading" a space (or some other structure not originally made as a score, such as a child's drawing or the activity of other people) as a score.

A Concert of Dance (1)

The second year of Dunn's class culminated in a public showing of work in the sanctuary of the Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square in Greenwich Village. It was this marathon, hours-long evening, with twenty-three dances by fourteen choreographers, that snowballed into what soon became known as the Judson Dance Theater. As with Dunn's class, the choreographic devices represented on this roster of works were many; since most of the dances had been composed as assignments for the course, the methods reiterate those discussed above, with some additions.

The connection between aleatory techniques and the automatism of surrealism emerged in the first event of the evening, which was not, strictly speaking, a dance, but a chance-edited film by Gene Friedman, John Herbert McDowell, and Elaine Summers. (It was not the last film to be billed as a dance event at a Judson concert.) Ruth Emerson's *Narrative*, the first live event on the program, used a score of interlocking directions involving walking patterns, focus, and tempo, as well as cues for actions based on the other dancers' actions. The "drama" in this "narrative" was physically, rather than psychologically motivated; a change in spatial or temporal relationships between people, no matter how abstractly based, seemed to carry psychological, interpersonal meaning. Emerson's *Timepiece,* based on chance (its very title was a tribute to the stopwatch, the renowned insignia of both John Cage and Robert Dunn), was structured by making a chart that had columns for movement quality (percussive or sustained), timing (on a scale of one to six, ranging from very slow to very fast), time limits (fifteen-second periods, multiplied by factors ranging from one to six), movement material (five possibilities: "red bag, untying; turn, jump, jump; hands, head, plie; walking forward side back side side; heron leg to floor"), space time (10, 20, 30, 40, 50, or stillness), space (five areas of the stage plus offstage), front (direction for the facing of the body, with four square directions, four diagonals, and one wild choice), and levels in space (high, low, or medium). The qualities having to do with movement and timing were put together, along the graph of absolute time, separately from the qualities dealing with space. Thus changes in area, facing, and level in space might occur during a single movement

phrase. Given the fact that there were usually six elements in a gamut of choices for a given feature, the choices were probably selected by the roll of a die.

Emerson was a trained mathematician as well as a dancer; chance choreography appealed to her, and her *Timepiece* serves as a paradigm for chance choreography in its categorical exhaustiveness (for this reason, I have described it in detail). Elaine Summers's semiparodic approach to aleatory techniques in her *Instant Chance* signaled a growing impatience with a method that, for many, was becoming unfortunately fetishized. David Gordon complained that in Dunn's class, "Judy and Bob were really very rigid about this chance procedure stuff they were teaching. And I had already been through a lot of this chance stuff with Jimmy [Waring]. I wasn't very religious about it." Rainer wrote, "The emphasis on aleatory composition reached ridiculous proportions sometimes. The element of chance didn't ensure that a work was good or interesting, yet I felt that the tenor of the discussions [in the Dunn course] often supported this notion."[2] In Summers's *Instant Chance*, the "hidden operations" of the chance procedure were made part of the piece when the dancers threw large numbered styrofoam blocks in the air and performed whatever movement sequences were dictated by shape, color, and number of the block.

The use of "one thing" as structure surfaced in two dances that, despite their formal simplicity, were extremely theatrical: David Gordon's *Mannequin Dance*, in which, wearing a blood-stained biology lab coat, he slowly turned and lay down on the floor while singing and wiggling his fingers; and Fred Herko's *Once or Twice a Week I Put on Sneakers to Go Uptown*, which Jill Johnston described as "a barefoot Suzie-Q in a tassel-veil head-dress, moving around the big performing area . . . only the barefoot Suzie-Q with sometimes a lazy arm snaking up and collapsing down. [And] with no alteration of pace or accent" (43). Implicit in these works was the austere, formalist approach that would become rampant in the period I have elsewhere called "analytic postmodern dance" in the seventies,[3] although it had been introduced by Forti at least a year before, it was not yet a favored method in the "breakaway" years of the early sixties.

Two dances that had been made for a class assignment about "cut-ups" were Carol Scothorn's *Isolations* and Ruth Emerson's *shoulder r.* Scothorn's involved cutting up Labanotation scores and Emerson's included Laban material, among other elements. The cut-up is a subcategory of chance procedures that was favored by the dadaists. Tristan Tzara gives instructions for how to make a dadaist poem based on cutting words out of an article, shaking them up in a bag, and reassembling them. Through Cage, the young New York avant-gardists were familiar with Robert Motherwell's book on *The Dada Painters and Poets*, published in 1951, in which these instructions appear. Perhaps the Tzara manifesto was even the source of this choreography assignment. But, in any case, many of the methods used by the dadaists and surrealists to undercut meaning or to release new meanings—from chance to collage—were consciously explored in the dance arena. That is, through their knowledge of the historical avant-garde, the Judson dancers could find a methodological treasure trove for their own, similar purposes.

The use of instructions is related to chance in that it foregrounds issues of control. Chance undermines the choreographer's control by subverting personal choices. (That, at least, is the theory; ultimately, however, the choreographer's choices are revealed in the original gamuts out of which the chance-decisions are made.) Instruction scores given to the dancer(s) by the choreographer exaggerate control, making palpable and objective the normally implicit, hegemonic position of choreographer over dancer—at least, making it explicit in the choreographic process (since neither chance nor instruction as a generating device is necessarily evident to the spectator). However, depending on how strictly the score codes instructions, such a method can also permit a great deal of freedom of interpretation by the dancer, recasting hegemony into partnership. Steve Paxton's use of a score for *Proxy* grew directly out of thoughts about such issues. He was attempting through the score to make the learning and rehearsal process more objective and impersonal, to get away from the cult of imitation that he felt surrounded modern dance, a cult that began with the direct transmission of movements from teacher to pupil and ended with a hierarchically structured dance company. At the same time, he attempted through the score to go beyond what Cunningham and Cage had done in using chance techniques, for, as he puts it, "My feeling . . . was that one further step was needed, which was to arrive at movement by chance. That final choice, of making movement, always bothered my logic. . . . Why couldn't it be chance all the way?" Paxton's score was made by randomly dropping images and then gluing them in place on a large piece of brown paper: cut-out photographs of people walking and engaged in sports, plus cartoon images (Mutt and Jeff, and one from a travel advertisement). A moveable red dot marked the beginning the dancer had chosen. The score, then, served to mediate between choreographer and dancer, to distance the movements themselves from the choreographer's body and hence his personal style. According to Paxton:

> That was a selection process but one removed from actually deciding what to do with the pictures, because I made the score and then handed it over to the performers, and they could take a linear or circular path through the score. You could start any place you wanted to, but then you went all the way through it. You did as many repeats as were indicated, and you went back and forth as indicated. But how long it took and what you did between postures was not set at all. It was one big area of choice not at all influenced by the choreographer. The only thing I did in rehearsing the work was to go over it with them and talk about the details of the postures. (58)

Summers used a newspaper as a score in *The Daily Wake* for similar reasons. She describes her procedure:

> I took the front page and laid it out on the floor and used the words in it to structure the dance, and used the photographs in it so that they progressed on the surface of the page as if it were a map. If you start analyzing that way, you get deeper and deeper. You get more clues for structure, like how many paragraphs are there? Beginning with *The Daily Wake*, I became very interested in using photos as resource material, and other structures as maps. (53–54)

Another way to distance movement from personal style or personal expression, anathema to this generation precisely because it had become so overblown in the works of "historical" modern dance, was the completion of tasks or the handling of objects. Summers had this in mind in her *Instant Chance*. Robert Morris programmatically developed this method in *Arizona* (to be discussed below).

Yet another term in the debates about choreographic control and the boundaries of chance was the use of indeterminacy, that is, intervention by the performers through limited use of improvisation. This exceeded even Cunningham's relinquishing of control through chance (he was later, in *Story* [1963], perhaps inspired by some of the Judson experiments, to try his hand at indeterminacy, but he was not pleased by the results). Rainer's *Dance for 3 People and 6 Arms*, also performed at Concert 1, was a trio in which the dancers could choose when to perform one of a series of predetermined movement options, most of which, as the title suggests, were concerned with gestures and positions of the arms. Rainer dubbed this method, which combined chance and improvisation, "spontaneous determination." William Davis, one of the dancers, remembers of the first performance (at the Maidman Playhouse in March 1962):

> I think it was the first time dancers were waiting for a curtain to go up without having any idea whatsoever of the shape the dance was going to take.
>
> That kind of thing was being done musically [in the work of Cage and his colleagues]. What it really resembled was jazz musicianship, more than chance

operations, because we were all working for a time when we might, for example, do this, or seeing what someone else is doing, think "Oh yes, I can connect this to that," or "They're doing fine, I'll just let them go at it." It's a sense of shape taking place in three people's minds as the dance is going on. (52)

Without going into detail about the rest of the dances on this historic program, I would like to note several other choreographic devices appearing in this first Judson concert (some of which have already been discussed in the section on Dunn's class or will be discussed further below) that would remain rich lodes for the Judson choreographers to mine: children's and adult's games (Gretchen MacLane's *Quibic*); quoting other artworks, either dance or in other media (Rainer's *Divertissement*, Deborah Hay's *Rain Fur*); the use of popular music and social dancing (Herko's *Once or Twice a Week . . .* , Davis's *Crayon*); collaboration (*Like Most People* by Fred Herko and Cecil Taylor; *Rafladan* by Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, and Charles Rotmil); and the collage, assemblage, or list format (Paxton's *Transit*, Gordon's *Helen's Dance,* Deborah Hay's *Five Things,* Rainer's *Ordinary Dance*, among others).

The Judson Workshop

Shortly after the momentous Concert of Dance in July 1962, Elaine Summers had organized A Concert of Dance 2 in Woodstock, New York, an artists' summer colony (before it became famous for the rock festival held there in 1969). Several dances from the Judson Church concert were shown and some new works by additional choreographers were added.

When in the fall of 1962 Robert Dunn did not continue his choreography class, Rainer and Paxton organized meetings of the group, at first in the studio Rainer shared with James Waring and Aileen Passloff on St. Mark's Place in the East Village, and then, after about a month, at the Judson Church, where they met weekly in the basement gymnasium. The purpose of this workshop was understood to be analytic and critical; new dances were not rehearsed there, but performed for peer scrutiny and feedback. Thus the emphasis in workshop discussions was on compositional method as well as such related issues as performance style.

By January 1963, the Judson weekly workshop had accumulated enough material to organize two concerts. The press release for Concerts 3 and 4 specifically underscored the workshop's emphasis on choreographic method. And, importantly, it pointed out that even though the search was on for new devices, new structures, and new theories, even traditional methods were permitted as but one more possibility in a wide, unrestricted range. "These concerts," it read,

> are in the series initiated at the church . . . with the aim of periodically presenting the work of dancers, composers, and various non-dancers working with ideas related to dance. The methods of composition of the works in this series range from the traditional ones which predetermine all elements of a piece to those which establish a situation, environment, or basic set of instructions governing one or more aspects of a work—thus allowing details and continuity to become manifest in a spontaneous or indeterminate manner.
>
> It is hoped that the contents of this series will not so much reflect a single point of view as convey a spirit of inquiry into the nature of new possibilities. (82)

Some of the dances in these two concerts were partly structured by the physical space of the venue: the church gym (for instance a collaboration by Robert Huot and Robert Morris, *War*, which put La Monte Young playing the musical accompaniment in the cage). The constraints of the physical performance space would affect or directly shape the dances in several future Judson concerts, in fact becoming a hallmark of the innovative spirit of the group. One long thread leading from such works was the spate of "environmental" dances in the late sixties and early seventies. But even where such considerations were not explicit in the dances, the space still governed such elements of performance as the intimacy or distance between spectator and performer and the shape and visibility of the "stage." In Concert 5, held in a roller-skating rink in Washington, D.C., Robert Rauschenberg built his entire dance (*Pelican*) on place; in it, Carolyn Brown danced in pointe shoes partnered by two men on roller skates. As well, the enormity of the space led the group to perform in various parts of the rink, making the audience mobile, and sometimes to fill the space (and challenge audience attention) by performing two dances simultaneously in different places. Concerts 9–12, held in the Gramercy Arts Theater—which had a proscenium stage so small one could barely move without moving off it—gave rise to a number of works in which motion was either minimal, very slow, or spilled into the house. These three radical approaches to movement, emerging here out of necessity, would also become approaches of choice, badges of the Judson heritage. Steve Paxton's *Afternoon*, sponsored by the workshop, took place in a forest in New Jersey; for this dance, Paxton was directly concerned with how the natural ground surface and "scenery" would change the movement, which had been constructed in a studio.

Many of the dances for Concert 13 were united both by spatial considerations and by the use of a physical structure (they all happened in, on, or around a sculpture commissioned from Charles Ross) as well as by performance style (the sculpture, evoking a jungle gym, sparked a common spirit of playfulness). Once again, a Judson emblem—dance and art as play—was strikingly condensed in a single event. Finally, a single concert, 14 (one of the last given jointly by the workshop before it disbanded in 1964), was organized around a single choreographic method: improvisation. Although improvisation was not, statistically speaking, a common device for the Judson choreographers, this concert, too, seemed symbolically to lay claim to a new alternative method for making and performing dances.

Some Exemplary Pieces

Nearly two hundred dances were produced by the Judson Dance Theater between July 1962 and October 1964, the time of the last concert officially sponsored by the workshop. After the workshop disbanded, dance performances continued to be produced at the church on an individual basis—the "bus-stop situation," as Judith Dunn later called it. A "second generation" of Judson dancers, including Meredith Monk, Kenneth King, and Phoebe Neville showed work at the church, as did members of James Waring's company (such as Toby Armour, Carol Marcy, and Deborah Lee), Waring himself, Aileen Passloff, and various original members of the Judson Dance Theater workshop. There was even a revival of Judson "hits," presented at the church, as early as 1966.

As I have noted above, many of the seeds of the methodology for the workshop were already planted in the Robert Dunn class; the first concert and those selected concerts discussed in the preceding section represent a sizeable cross-section of the techniques that would continue to provide food for dancing over the next several years, and by the next several cohorts of choreographers. I am concentrating here on the pioneering choreography by the members of the original workshop, but obviously space does not even permit a discussion of every dance performed over the year and a half of the Judson Dance Theater workshop's lifetime (and, of course, since not every dance was the result of an entirely new method, such a review would be tedious). Therefore I would like to devote the next section of the paper to discussing selected dances that not only exemplify the choreographic concerns of the group and of individuals in the group, but that also point in directions that have proved fruitful for the succeeding generations of choreographers in the post-modern mode.

The first full-length evening dance by a single choreographer sponsored by the Judson Dance Theater was Yvonne Rainer's *Terrain.* This dance, in four sections, in retrospect seems a treasure trove of choreographic devices,

structures, performance attitudes, and other aspects of style; in it one sees the preoccupations that wend their way in one form or another through the rest of Rainer's oeuvre, reaching their fullest expression in her *The Mind Is a Muscle* and *Continuous Project—Altered Daily.* The title is prophetic, for this dance represents the "terrain" of dance Rainer continued to map out in her choreographic career and even in her film work. The dance used methods culled from child's play and rule games (the sections "Diagonal" and "Play"). It had an entire section based on parody through pastiche ("Duet," in which Rainer performed a ballet adagio and Trisha Brown performed a balletic sequence in the upper body with burlesque bumps and grinds in the lower torso, ending with both assuming "cheesecake" poses, all to a collage of music that included African drumming, American jazz, and fragments of Massenet's opera *Thaïs*). The technique of "spontaneous determination" that had provided the armature for *Dance for 3 People and 6 Arms* also surfaced here, as did elements of repetition and chance, the list as organizational tool, and the generating of movement by turning to another art form—in this case, erotic Hindu temple sculpture. Talking while dancing, a technique by which Rainer had electrified spectators in *Ordinary Dance*, surfaced here in the two sequences from the "Solo" section that used texts by Spencer Holst.

Rainer also used several objects for some of the solos in the "Solo" section of *Terrain.* For the Judson choreographers, as for their contemporaries the pop artists, the ordinary object was particularly resonant. Robert Morris wrote in *The Drama Review* that objects and task behavior were two preferred methods for rinsing the dance of excess expressiveness and to find new ways of moving the body:

> From the beginning I wanted to avoid the pulled-up, turned-out, anti-gravitational qualities that not only gave a body definition and role as "dancer" but qualify and delimit the movement available to it. The challenge was to find alternative movement. . . . A fair degree of complexity of . . . rules and cues effectively blocked the dancer's performing "set" and reduced him to frantically attempting to respond to cues—reduced him from performance to action. (143)

For Morris, objects were superior to tasks as a means to solve problems and thus create a structure for the dance. The manipulation of an object generated movement without becoming more important than the performer or the performance. In *Arizona,* Morris threw a javelin, swung a small light while the stage lights dimmed, and adjusted a T-form; all these objects, he wrote, "held no inherent interest for me but were means for dealing with specific problems," such as setting up relationships among movement, space, and duration, or shifting focus between the "egocentric and the exocentric" in the small light contrasting to the dimming stage lights.

Lucinda Childs in *Carnation* (and in several other works) also built a dance around the cool manipulation of everyday things. Yet here the deadpan attitude itself and the *kinds* of objects used (things associated with women's beauty care or domestic activities such as cleaning and cooking) add up to a seething "hot" significance. (Kenneth King's *cup/saucer/two dancers/radio*, a slightly later dance by a member of the "second generation" of Judson choreographers, radically extends the sense of alienation Childs hints at humorously, partly by equating all the elements listed in the title.) Undoubtedly the fascination with the object—the mute, ordinary, everyday object—reflects a growing consumer society, the burgeoning cornucopia of available goods of the United States during this period.

Yvonne Rainer's *Some Thoughts on Improvisation* (part of Concert 14) is another paradigmatic piece for several reasons: its use of improvisation as a structuring device, its baring of the devices, its analytic reflexivity. This dance, too, like so many others by Rainer during this period, includes a spoken text, but in this case the words are taped, serving as the "musical accompaniment" to the dance—or a sound track, to liken the event to Rainer's later terrain, the cinema. As Rainer improvised the dance, dressed in a black dress and high-heeled shoes (a costume that not only stands for a certain image of femininity, but that also severely limits movement possibilities), her voice described the improvisatory process, both in general and in this specific case. Her monologue moves from an almost phenomenological description of thoughts and experiences ("So I keep on sizing up the situation, see. And I keep on walking. And I make decisions. He has left the room, I will run; she is standing stockstill, I will bring my head close to hers; that man is moving his arms around, I will do as he does; the wall looms close, I will walk until I bump into it" [196]) to a dissection of the choice-making patterns in improvisation. She lists three aspects of choice: impulses, anti-impulses, ideas. The action, she notes, can come from any of these, including the decision not to follow an impulse. It is, finally, the instinct of the performer, including the assertion of physical and mental control and the mastery of anxiety, that fuels the performance, she concludes. "When it goes forward it moves with an inexorable thrust and exerts a very particular kind of tension: spare, unadorned, highly dramatic, loaded with expectancy—a field for action. What more could one ask for" (197).

Although improvisation is often remembered as one of the most important legacies of the Judson Dance Theater, this particular concert (14), with its eight dances all conjoined by the shared method of improvisation, was not considered successful. Jill Johnston wrote:

> Ironically, one of the concerts on this last series . . . was a great improvisation, with minimal restrictions on freedom, and the most impressive collection of vanguard dancers and artists . . . couldn't get this tacitly accepted Open Sesame (free play) off the ground. Everybody was very polite except for Yvonne Rainer . . . and the response to her nerve should have been pandemonium if anybody had faced the assertion squarely. (198)

Yet it was this improvisatory side of the Judson Dance Theater, signaling freedom, that would later give rise to, for example, the Grand Union—one of the most brilliant projects of the postmodern dance.

Another key outgrowth of the Judson Dance Theater was the use of multiple media, or intermedia, especially film, in the dance. This seems only fair, since, although many of the dance ideas of the group came from searching for the essence of dance per se, still others came from the inspiration or influence of other media and other art forms, in particular the visual arts, new music, and film. Of course, in the spirit of breaking down the boundaries between the art forms, artists in different fields were making events that so traded in mixing media that it was often difficult to categorize them, except by the author's label. An early mixed-media event at the Judson Dance Theater was Beverly Schmidt's *The Seasons.* It was a vignette from a larger "film-stage" performance, called *Blossoms,* conceived by the choreographer's husband, Roberts Blossom. For *The Seasons,* Schmidt memorized the dance she had improvised for the film shown in the earlier performance, then choreographed a new live solo, which was performed simultaneously with the film projection, sometimes in counterpoint or opposition and sometimes in unison. The dance was in four sections, with live music by Philip Corner and Malcolm Goldstein, and recorded music by Purcell. Each section had a distinctive movement quality, costume, and color—a distinctive mood, which Schmidt made correspond to the four seasons.

The Seasons served as a model for future events in both dance and film. The following year, two evening-length concerts by individual members of the workshop incorporating film into the dancing were sponsored by the Judson Dance Theater—Elaine Summers's *Fantastic Gardens* and Judith Dunn's *Last Point.* Meredith Monk, who arrived on the Judson scene after the end of the workshop, made the fusion of dance and film central to her work from the beginning, in such pieces as *Sixteen Millimeter Earrings* (1966). Reading Johnston's review of Schmidt's dance, one is even reminded of Lucinda Childs's recent collaboration with Sol LeWitt, using film as décor, in *Dance*:

> The interplay of images—the soft, majestic volume of the figure on the screen with the diminutive flesh and blood on stage—made a shifting mirror of the kind of dimension that reached far beyond, in the past and future, the moments of reckoning on that small stage. Near the end I had the uncanny feeling of an ancient presence when her head loomed large in an instant of immobilized totemistic grandeur. (159)

The list goes on and on: dances built on parodies of other dances or of performance styles (such as David Gordon's *Random Breakfast*); dances structured like sports events or based on sports movements (for example, Judith Dunn's *Speedlimit*), dances generated out of pure flashes of energy (Carolee Schneemann's *Newspaper Event*, et al.), repetition, tasks, free association, "ritual," unfinished work. As well, choreographers continued to use all the methods and devices I have mentioned above: time structures taken from music, chance, indeterminacy, "spontaneous determination," rules, limits, collaboration, written scores, interlocking instructions for a group, and using or "reading" a space (or some other structure not originally made as a score, such as a child's drawing or the activity of other people) as a score, children's and adult's games, quoting other artworks (both dance and other media), the use of popular music and social dancing, the collage, assemblage, or list format, "a situation, environment, or basic set of instructions governing one or more aspects of a work," automatism, satire, cut-ups, handling objects, responding to physical space, improvisational verbal content, mixing media—and even traditional methods of composition, such as classical musical structures, image construction, and aspiring to values of unity, complexity, and coherence.

I might say a word here about *my* methods. I have tried to get at choreographic structures or devices in a number of ways, not all of which were available for each dance. The dance historian is like an archaeologist, digging up fragments and—depending on the quantity and quality of the shards, their capacity for transmitting various types of information—she puts them together, with a glue partly consisting of informed speculation, to form a picture of the thing as it was. But this picture will almost always still be incomplete.

Using the scores and the oral and written memoirs of the choreographers, on the one hand (which tells us something about sources, intentions, and process), and the descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations of witnesses—colleagues, critics, and spectators—on the other hand (which tells us something about reception and product), I have pieced together the preceding accounts—accounts that, as you have seen, vary in terms of fullness and even in terms of accuracy.

The structures and methods of some Judson Dance Theater works are simply lost and will never be retrieved. (Deborah Hay, for example, destroyed her written records afterwards and does not remember most of her dances of that period.) For other works, we may know about the methods in a general way without gaining any sense of the way the dance looked and felt—its movement details, its performance style. Yet other works are well documented and well remembered enough to live on—some even in live reconstructions (though it is important to realize that reconstructed dances may not necessarily replicate the original exactly).[4]

A ground was cleared at the Judson that created new challenges for the following generation; in the 1970s, an entire wing of analytic, formalist postmodern dancers extended and consolidated that passion for revealing choreographic process, which sprang from the freedom of method (and the concomitant articulation of method) of the 1960s. But, by the 1980s, choreographic process seemed less important than chorcographic product—for obvious cultural reasons, but also perhaps because methodological innovation was a frontier so thoroughly explored, to many it seemed no new devices could be discovered. But the 1980s are another story.

Notes

1. The sources for the information in this paper not otherwise footnoted will be found in the text and footnotes of my book *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1983). Page numbers from *Democracy's Body* are in parentheses following the quotations.

2. Yvonne Rainer, *Work 1961–73* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1974), 7.

3. Sally Banes, "Dance," in *The Postmodern Moment: A Handbook of Contemporary Innovation in the Arts*, ed. Stanley Trachtenberg (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 81–100.

4. A program of Judson reconstructions, curated by Wendy Perron and Cynthia Hedstrom, was produced at St. Mark's Church Danspace in April 1982, as part of the Bennington College Judson Project. The reconstructions were recorded on videotape by the Lincoln Center Library Dance Research Collection and may be viewed there.