

Following the Lincoln Center *Performance Demonstration*, teaching during performance was not attempted again until the Pratt Institute *Demonstration* (March, '69) and *Performance Fractions for the West Coast* (April, '69). The cue sheet for Pratt reads:

1. Tape on (muciz)
2. Two minutes later – Stairs slides
3. Lights up. Tiomkin tape on (performers stand upstage)
4. Two Trios (Barbara, Yvonne, Becky and Steve, David, Douglas)
5. Five minutes later tape on (Trio A lecture)
6. Trio Film (shot by Phill Niblock, with Becky and Steve)
7. Rehearsal of “Continuous Project” starts simultaneously with rehearsal tape
8. Trio A – taught to Barbara while others do it
9. Trio A – with the Chambers Brothers

At this performance I worked on *Continuous Project*, a small part of which had already been completed in rehearsal. This is my first large dance not documented by some form of notation. What remains are some elaborate program notes (*page 129*), a list of designated components (*page 132*), a description of the component *Group Hoist* (*page 134*), three letters to the group (*page 146*), and a film of a rehearsal at Connecticut College made by Michael Fajans in 1969.

I kept adding to the list during the summer of 1969 when Becky, Barbara, Douglas, David, and I were in residence – teaching and performing – at Connecticut College\* and again that fall for performances at the University of Missouri and Amherst College (November 8, 1969 and December 12, 1969).

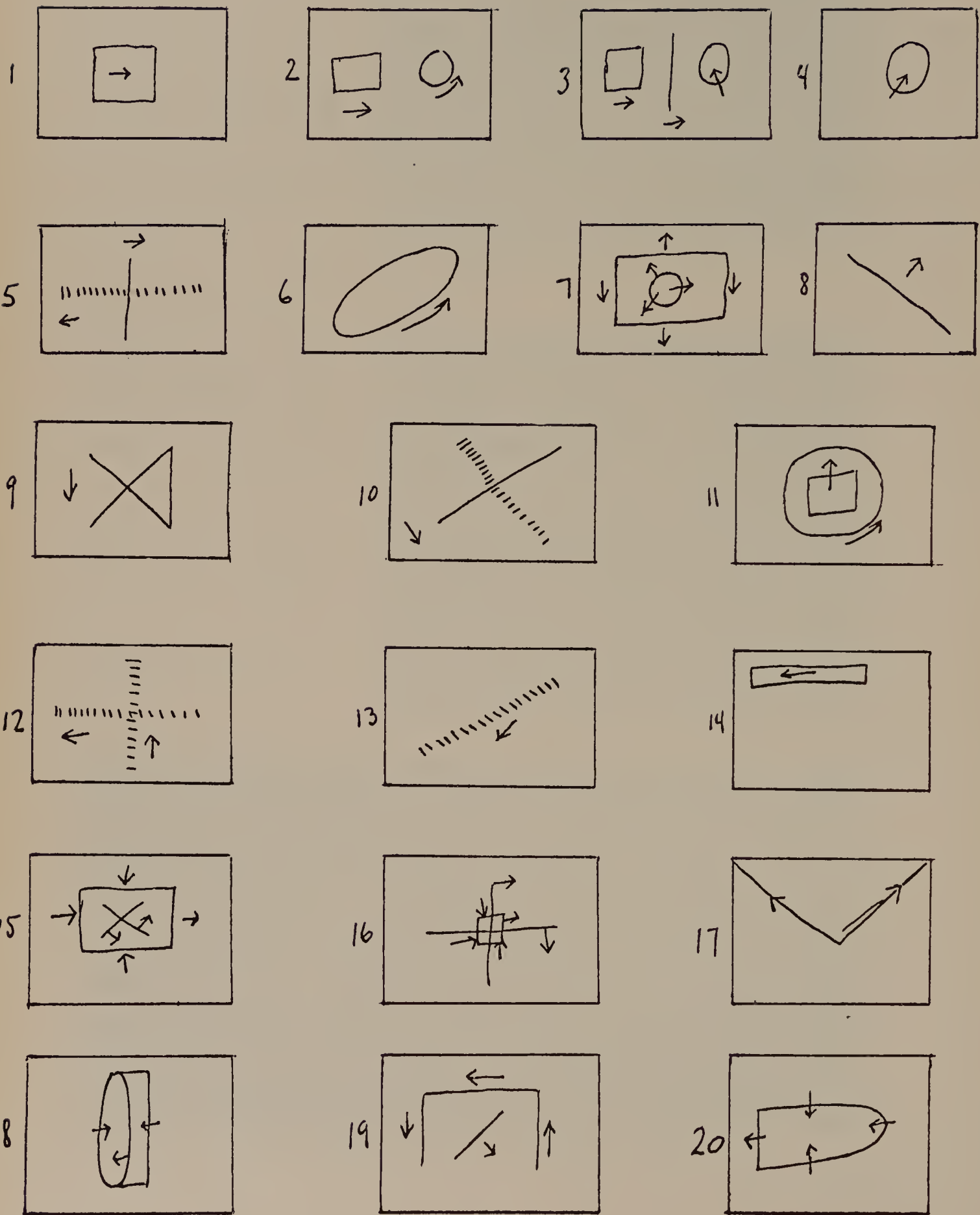
By the time of the Whitney performance of March 31, 1970, the accumulated material lasted from ninety minutes to two hours and constituted the definitive version of *Continuous Project – Altered Daily*.\*\*

Basically it was constructed of interchangeable units of material, some very elaborate and requiring the whole group, other units being solos that could be done at any time, or duets and trios. Some units could be done with an indeterminate number of people. The sequence of events – unlike the construction of *The Mind is a Muscle* or *Rose Fractions* – was determined by the participants during the performance itself. It was an expanded version of *Play* from *Terrain*, without the repetition.

\*Here I presented *Connecticut Composite*, an evening involving 80 students, taking place in five separate performing areas in one building. The audience could move from one to the other at their own discretion or according to a published ‘schedule’ (*see next page*)

\*\*After that I no longer formally contributed anything new to the performances, but supported and participated in a process of ‘erosion’ and reconstruction as the group slowly abandoned the definitive “Continuous Project” and substituted their own materials. These continued to evolve and change from performance to performance. Within a short time, with the addition of new members, the group became wholly autonomous and the work almost totally improvisational. It became known as “The Grand Union”, under which name it continues to operate.

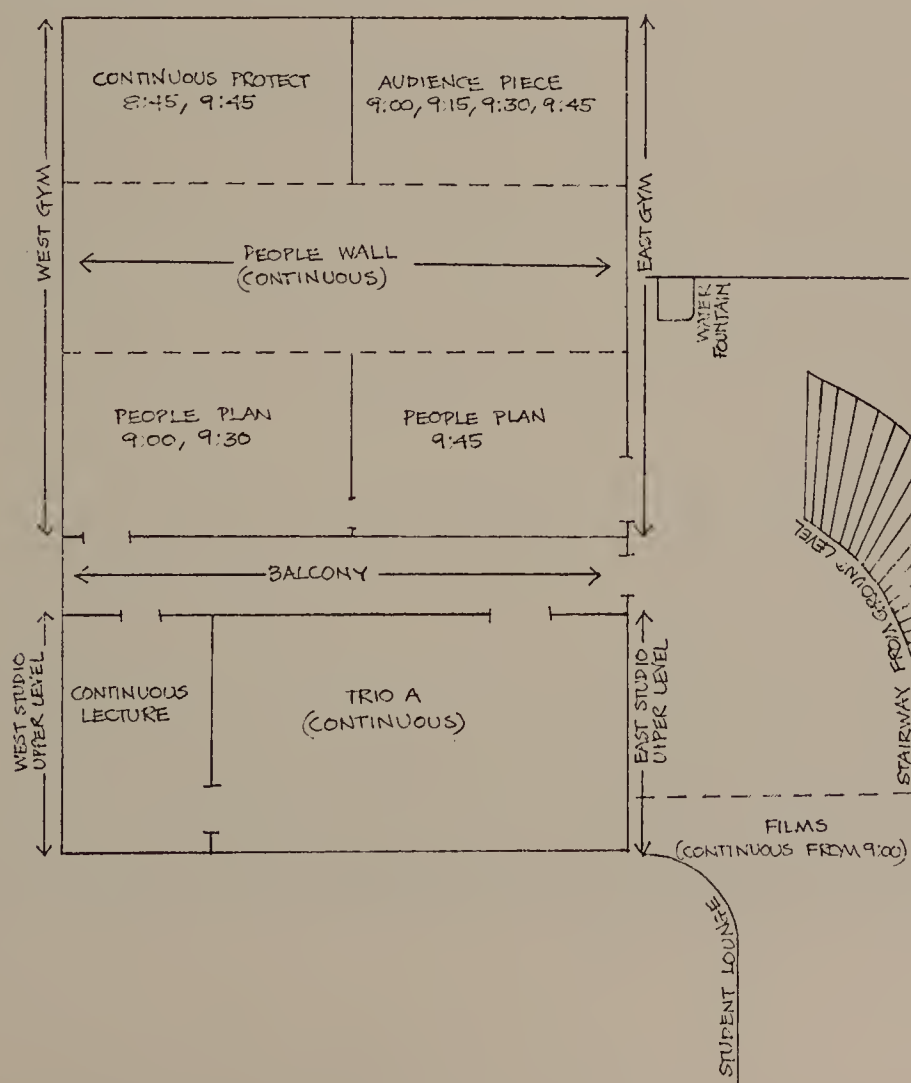
# Connecticut Composite



*People Plan.* Designs represent consecutive static configurations by a group of 20 people. The arrows indicate the direction in which they are to face. An unbroken line means shoulder-to-shoulder alignment. A series of parallel short lines indicates column formation. The performers regroup 20 times.



51 *Audience Piece* (so-called to invite the audience to sit in the vacant chairs) later referred to as *Chair Pillow* (see page 132)





In retrospect it is hard to account for the euphoria that ensued following those early concerts of *Continuous Project*, especially the one in Kansas City. It was here that the phenomenon of ‘spontaneous behavior’ really impressed me as a viable mode of performance. And also around this time I returned to my soul-searching and agonizing about controls and authority, as the letters to the group will attest (*page 146*). Now it all seems somewhat overblown. Now there seems to be more clarity in groups as to the role of authority and collaboration, or I would hope so. But at the time it seemed that once one allowed people’s spontaneous expression and responses and opinions to affect one’s own creative process (in this respect the rehearsals were even more crucial than the performances), then the die was cast; there was no ‘turning back’ to the old conventions of directorship. It then seemed a moral imperative to form a democratic social structure. What happened was both fascinating and painful, and not only for me, as I vacillated between opening up options and closing them down.

Since that time I have reconnected with my own ‘moral imperative’ to realize my on-going obsessions, some of which have been decidedly influenced by those earlier brushes with ‘real’ behavior, i.e., ‘rehearsal’ behavior’ transposed to performance. And the role of director has again become appropriate for me.

<i>Continuous Project—Altered Daily</i> utilized the following props:			
59	a 6 x 8 foot white screen	a stuffed round object with a leg and foot attached to it	52
	2 large cardboard boxes about 2½ feet square	a papier mache hemisphere with the eastern hemisphere painted on it	
	5 pillows	(Only Becky, who was pregnant, wore this over her abdomen.)	
54, 55	a large pair of wings	2 pieces of 8½ x 11 inch paper	
	an object that when strapped on the back transformed one into a hunchback	1 5-foot pole	53
	a lion’s tail	1 6-foot pole	56
	a multi-colored striped sombrero 5 feet in diameter	1 strip of foam rubber 6 x 2 feet	57
		6 folding chairs	

The performers were Barbara Lloyd, Becky Arnold, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, Douglas Dunn, and myself. Then there were others at the Whitney performances with instructions to step occasionally to a standing microphone and read particular texts. These texts were culled mainly from reminiscences of famous film stars and directors (in “The Parade’s Gone By”, ed. Kevin Brownlow) and were read by Annette Michelson, Carrie Oyama, George Sugarman, Hollis Frampton, Lucinda Childs, Norma Fire, and Richard Foreman. In two galleries adjacent to the main performing area films were shown: *Connecticut Rehearsal*, *Line*, and a film starring Barbara Stanwick, which was a last-minute substitute for *The Incredible Shrinking Man* directed by Jack Arnold.

# Continuous Project-Altered Daily \*

It is not necessary to read this program prior to performance.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART  
March 31, April 1, April 2, 1970

## CONTINUOUS PROJECT-ALTERED DAILY

BY YVONNE RAINER

Performed by

Becky Arnold, Douglas Dunn, David Gordon, Barbara Lloyd, Steve Paxton,  
Yvonne Rainer and others.

Objects and "body adjuncts" by Deborah Hollingworth  
Films by Jack Arnold (The Incredible Shrinking Man)  
Michael Fajans (Connecticut Rehearsal)  
Phill Niblock (Line)

Sound supervision by Gordon Mumma

THE AUDIENCE IS INVITED TO GO TO ANY OF THE THREE PERFORMANCE AREAS AT ANY TIME. HOWEVER, PLEASE DO NOT WALK ACROSS THE MAIN PERFORMING AREA, BUT PROCEED AROUND THE PERIPHERY OR ALONG THE WALLS TO GET FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER.

Continuous Project-Altered Daily takes its name from a sculptural work by Robert Morris. It has altered and accumulated very gradually since its original presentation as a 30-minute collection of material at Pratt Institute in March 1969. It was there that I first attempted to invent and teach new material during the performance itself. What ensued was an ongoing effort to examine what goes on in the rehearsal - or working-out and refining - process that normally precedes performance, and a growing skepticism about the necessity to make a clear-cut separation between these two phenomena. A curious by-product of this change has been the enrichment of the working interactions in the group and the beginning of a realization on my part that various controls that I have clung to are becoming obsolete: such as determining sequence of events and the precise manner in which to do everything. Most significant is the fact that my decisions have become increasingly influenced by the responses of the individual members. Although it cannot be said that Continuous Project is the result of group decision-making as a whole, it is important to point out that there are details throughout the work too numerous to list that should be credited to individual responses and assertiveness other than my own, or to the manner in which we have come to work together, i.e., freely exchanging opinions and associations about the work as it develops.

John Simon

*I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the ~~Solomon R.~~ Guggenheim Foundation in the form of a fellowship, which during the past year has permitted me to work unharrassed by the fact that I normally do not make a living at what I do.*

\*see also p. 125

Rudimentary Notes Toward A Changing View of Performance

Levels of Performance Reality:

- A. Primary: Performing original material in a personal style.
- B. Secondary: Performing someone else's material in a style approximating the original, or working in a known style or "genre".
- C. Tertiary: Performing someone else's material in a style completely different from, and/or inappropriate to, the original.

Elements used in Continuous Project (not all of the following occur during any one performance):

- 1. Rehearsal: Performance of previously learned material that is not in polished condition (i.e., has been insufficiently rehearsed), thereby necessitating verbalizations, repeats, arguments, etc. The material itself may be re-learned (having been performed at an earlier date) or may be having a first performance, in which case all the "kinks" may not have been worked out (cf. "working out").
- 2. Run-thru: Polished performance of material. May involve verbalizing because of pre-arranged "signals" or actual response during performance. (See "Behavior").
- 3. Working out: Creation of new material in performance. It may result in intense response-behavior kind of activity. It can resemble "rehearsal" and may involve "teaching".
- 4. Surprises: Material (objects, activity) introduced without previous knowledge of all the performers.
- 5. Marking: Performance of previously learned material in the absence of some of the conditions necessary for polished performance, such as adequate space, proper number of performers, proper expenditure of energy, etc.
- 6. Teaching: A performer teaches previously learned material to one or more performers who do not know it, or choreographer invents new material.
- 7. Behavior:
  - a. Actual: individual gestural and verbal activity spontaneously occurring in performance of a predetermined situation. Can occur during any of the above or in "b".
  - b. Choreographed: behavior that has been observed, then learned, edited, or stylized prior to performance.

- \*c. Professional: the range of gesture and deportment visible in experienced performers.
- \*d. Amateur: the range of gesture and deportment visible in inexperienced performers.

\*The distinction between these two categories is becoming rapidly more blurred as seasoned performers begin to relinquish their traditional controls and so-called amateurs become more expert in the new dance modes.

A selection of roles and metamuscular conditions affecting (though not always visible during) the execution of physical feats.

adolescent	peer
angel	redhead
athlete	Richard Forman
autistic child	sick person
angry child	swimmer
Annette Michelson	short woman
bird	schizophrenic
Barbra Streisand	senile old lady
Buster Keaton	tired person
brother	tall girl
Betty Blythe	12-year old ballerina
black militant	weight lifter
confidante	W. C. Fields
Carrie Oyama	young woman
competitor	young man
energized dancer	anger
Edward Sloman	convalescence
enemy	celibacy
follower	constipation
Fidel Castro	catatonia
friend	drug-induced state
feminist	discipline
George Sugarman	diarrhea
girl with hare lip	exhilaration
head	equanimity
husband	fatigue
hard drinker	fear
Hollis Frampton	gas
hunch back	good muscle tone
leader	in the pink
Louise Brooks	impotency
lover	large bone structure
Lucinda Childs	malnutrition
middle aged fat man	menstruation
male nude	not in the pink
mother	overweight
Martha Graham	puberty
macrobiotic foodist	pleasure
Michael Keith	pregnancy
Norma Fire	pain
old person	power
out-of-shape dancer	relaxation
old teacher	responsibility
playing child	senescence
pregnant woman	sciatica
pompous nobody	terminal cancer



HOISTING DOUG; DAVID SOLO; 3-MAN POLE; BA-Y-DAV; S-Doug

2nd Becky SOLO; 1st HEAD-PUSHING; PERIMETER RUN

2nd HEAD-PUSHING; JERKY GROUP; SCREEN DUET-DY2; 4  
DAV-BA rush with screen; STATIC SCREEN; HERE CO

5-MAN Box ENDING IN ESTHER WILLIAMS LIFT.

\* IKE + TINA - CHAIR-PILLOW ROUTINE: 3 people minimum (at the

GROUP HOIST

COUPLES (6 people) interrupted by "CONSTANT-GROUP" (4 peo

\* HERE COMES THE SUN: 3 people minimum (except when it occurs

\* 1-2-3-4 (<sup>3 to 6</sup> ~~4~~ people)

\* MARKING ILL.-CONN. CP: ~~2-3-4-5~~ - Ba-Y-Dav, S-Doug

DAV-Y PILLOW DUET

STEVE-BABA PILLOW SOLOS (1 solo, 1 duet each perform

Becky-Yvonne POLE-PILLOW SOLO (ONCE EACH PERFORM

\* STEVE-DAV. MAT-POLE <sup>duet</sup> (DOUG Learning)

BECKY 3-PILLOW BANG (YVONNE LEARNING) - unrehears

INDIVIDUAL THING - ONE CHANCE PER PERSON PER PERFORM

Black - Group

Green - solos + duets

Pink - original CP - new in 4 chunks

\* 3 people minimum



ABLES

EN; 5-MAN ROLL; FALLING, RISING; 1st Beck, T. L.

OWS

CHINE WITH ECK, 2 AV-BA DUET WITH ECK; 3-MAN 2ND;  
SUN: DAV-BA; solo circles with LEX; HCT. WITH 2-ND. DAV-BA

)

mum)

original CP)

- Trios can operate separately

Steve does not rehearse until performance)- WINGS

one of us)



52 *Group Hoist*



53 Becky does *Pole-Pillow-Solo* (finally a pregnant performer!)

*Group Hoist* — for five people — started out as a problem in how to get people 52 into the air and down to the ground in very quick succession. Using pillows, or utilizing pillows. The pillows functioned literally to cushion landings, but also worked to mock such a function and to indicate such a function where the function was not actually warranted. Shortly after the Whitney performance of *Continuous Project*, I wrote:

“I love the duality of props, or objects: their usefulness and obstructiveness in relation to the human body. Also the duality of the body: the body as a moving, thinking, decision- and action-making entity and the body as an inert entity, object-like. Active-passive, despairing-motivated, autonomous-dependent. Analogously, the object can only symbolize these polarities; it cannot be motivated, only activated. Yet oddly, the body can become object-like; the human being can be treated as an object, dealt with as an entity without feeling or desire. The body itself can be handled and manipulated as though lacking in the capacity for self-propulsion.

“The group stands in a tight circle facing inward, five people and four pillows. One pillow is covered with plain muslin and has a leg and foot sticking out of it. Steve falls straight forward holding a pillow and is caught by Becky and Doug and lowered to the ground. Barbara jumps straight up assisted by Doug and David. Becky does handstand, returns to upright position. Doug jumps up and dives forward — arms straight out — into the arms of Steve, David, and Barbara. They lower him to floor. Barbara does handstand over his body, is lifted over and high above the heads of group and placed on her feet on other side of circle. Steve keels over sideways to his right and is caught by Doug. As he rolls onto his back Doug and Becky grab his outstretched hands and armpits and haul him up onto his feet, then into the air assisted by David at his feet so that he is momentarily in a horizontal swan dive. They lower him to floor chest-first onto a pillow that Barbara has meanwhile placed there. Doug, Barbara and David lift Becky straight up so that her knees hug her chest, then lower her to her feet. David keels over sideways right and is caught by Doug and Steve. David hurls pillow he has landed on outside of circle and Barbara runs and places her head on it, then throws it to Steve who throws it to David (still on floor) who throws it up so that it lands in center in time for Barbara to run in and place her head on it. She does headstand, is assisted over onto her feet by Doug and Steve. Becky places head on pillow Barbara has vacated. Steve lowers her hips to ground, then pulls her torso up to a sitting position, then dives across her legs into a headstand on the same pillow, is pulled up to a handstand by Doug, who then lowers Steve’s legs sideways to floor. The moment Steve is on his feet (Becky meanwhile has been helped to her feet by David), he initiates a unison movement backwards done by himself, David, and Becky: skip, skip, step, then forwards: step-together-step-clap. On the clap Barbara falls straight backward to be caught by Steve and David, Doug placing a pillow under her head at the last possible moment. Barbara rolls full circle to her left, then does backward somersault ending on her feet. Steve lies down backwards where Barbara was originally and does backwards somersault to other side of circle. Everyone is now standing throwing three pillows around circle. Doug throws pillow onto floor at his left, which is cue for everyone to do unison movement as above, with exception of Becky who does not return forward. At clap Becky runs forward and is hoisted into scissor kick by Doug and Steve, then lowered onto her butt onto pillow that Doug last dropped. Barbara falls forward and clutches David at waist. Steve is assisted to roll down Barbara’s back by David and is ‘cushioned’ at last minute by Doug. Everyone sits — Becky still facing out from circle. Holding hands, everyone stands except Becky. Barbara is lowered to stiff-legged sit on floor, then raised. David is lowered, then Steve. David is raised and in the effort both David and Steve touch soles of feet in center. Steve is raised, Doug is lowered, then raised. Becky falls onto her back with both legs perpendicular. Doug and David hoist her so that her feet rise straight up, followed by hips and arching torso. After making huge upside down arc, she lands forward on her feet.”

At the Whitney, because of Becky’s pregnancy, I took her part.





54, 55 *Pillow Solo* – Steve and Barbara (Steve is wearing wings)



56, 57 *Pole, Mat* – David and Steve



57





55



58 *Couples* – Becky and Y.R.



59



60 Betty Blythe monologue being delivered by Annette Michelson

### Monologues:

excerpted from *The Parade's Gone By* by Kevin Brownlow. The Streisand quote is from an unknown source. The Fields quote is from *The Films of W.C. Fields* by Donald Deschner.

"The audience is the best judge of anything. They cannot be lied to. I mean, this is something I discovered . . . not discovered . . . but after almost two years on the stage one learns that. The slightest tinge of falseness, they go back from you, they retreat. The truth brings them closer. A moment that lags, I mean, they're gonna cough. A moment that is held, they're not gonna cough. They don't know why, they can't intellectualize it, but they know it's right or wrong. Individually they may be a bunch of asses but together as a whole they are the . . . wisest thing."

Barbara Streisand

"There has been no advance in technique since the silent days — except for one thing. They're doing away with fades and dissolves. I like this much better than the old technique of lap dissolves, which slowed down the pace. There was a time when we made eight- to ten-foot dissolves. We taught the audience for many years to recognize a time lapse through a lap dissolve. Now they're educating them to direct cuts — a new technique brought about by a new generation of directors who can't afford dissolves or fades. And I think it's very good."

Unidentified director.

"Our farewell scene was tragic drama done in the stillest form of suffering. We were standing way, way down one of the great rooms of the court. As the cameras started to grind, Mr. Edwards called "Action," and we just looked into each other's eyes. Then I walked slowly with

60



the little boy right to the very edge of the great doors and then hesitated. I turned around and with my back full upon the audience I just raised an arm and stood there. And he did the same. No blubbing, no weeping, none of that stuff. We just knew the timing because we were emotional people. And finally, I brought the hand down and turned, just looking into the years ahead without him. I put my arm around the child. I didn't look at him. I just looked into the ages I would have to spend without this great love. Mr. Edwards had his handkerchief out. Miss Whistler heard him say as he wiped his eyes, "That can never again be made like that. Cut. Everybody go home."

Betty Blythe

"I was stuck over a scene in which Faust is changed from a ragged old man into a handsome youth, and is transported from a hovel to a glittering palace. Then I had an idea. I got the carpenter to make a platform, with four bicycle wheels. We mounted the camera and the cameraman on this traveling platform and started to photograph old man Faust, in a full-length shot. We moved towards him, refocusing all the time, until we came to a full head close-up. Then we started the dissolve. We marked the head close-up in the camera finder, and sent Mr. Faust to change his make-up to the handsome youth. Meanwhile, the hovel set was changed to the palace. The rejuvenated Faust returned to his former position, the other half of the dissolve was started, and the camera pulled back to the full-length shot — disclosing Faust, impeccably dressed, standing before a huge fireplace. Presto!"

Edward Sloman

"I was a veteran before I went into pictures. I was twenty-one years old by then. I made my first picture when I was twenty-five. Pacing — for fast action, you cut things closer than normal. For a dramatic scene, you lengthen them out a little bit more. Once we've seen the scene on the screen, we know what to do. We get in the cutting room and run down to where the action is. There — as he goes out that door, rip it. That's it. Give him the next shot. Get it down to where he's just coming through the door. Get the two spliced together. We didn't have regular Moviolas. We had machines with little cranks, but they were a nuisance."

Buster Keaton

"I learned to act while watching Martha Graham dance, and I learned to move in film from watching Chaplin . . . I discovered that everything is built on movement. No matter how well Ronald Colman played a scene, if you saw him lumbering across a room in that hideously heavy way of his, it took all the meaning out of it. Speaking of Chaplin, he said in his book that we must get rid of walks . . . in and out of scenes. What the hell? He built his whole character on a walk. Garbo is all movement. First she gets the emotion, and out of the emotion comes the movement and out of the movement comes the dialogue. She's so

perfect that people say she can't act. People would much rather see someone like Peter Sellers performing than see real acting, which is intangible. People are pretty good judges of dancing, because they've all tried to dance a little. They can recognize a technique. They're judges of singing, because they've tried to sing, and they recognize a technique. So they must have some visible technique in order to judge acting, and there isn't any. Acting is a completely personal reaction. That is why I get so inflamed when people tell me Garbo can't act. She is *so* great. Sarah Bernhardt was always a thousand times more popular than Duse because she gave a "performance." Proust made a brilliant remark: 'The degree of mediocrity produced by contact with mystery is incredible'."

Louise Brooks

"Another key element that is very important to me: clothes. A woman's clothes are not only the key to her personality and her pretensions and aims, they give you an instant image of a period, its morals and manners. History at a glance. I had to go to Berlin and Paris to find directors who understood that costumes and sets were as important as actors and cameras. Maybe that's why people like von Sternberg's old films. They are wonderfully exciting to the eye after looking at westerns, and spies in offices, spies in beer joints, spies rolling broads over beds. Or those goddamned ugly war pictures. This is surely the age of ugliness. Dietrich's clothes in *I Kiss Your Hand, Madame* were fantastic. What she couldn't wear she carried. She was big, strong, and she naturally had the energy of a bull. Sternberg tried turning her into a Garbo. He stopped her dead and posed her. Every time I see her pictures, I ask myself, 'What in hell is she thinking about?' And I remember von Sternberg's story about one scene. He said to her: 'Count to six, then look at that lamp as if you could no longer live without it.' And you can see that she would do these things. In true acting you never think of what you're really doing — it's just like life. Right now, I'm thinking of seven different things and so are you."

Louise Brooks

"I think the auteur theory of *Cahiers du Cinema* is crap; I read the first English issue. It took me two hours and three dictionaries to get through the Bazin auteur article to find out what everybody has known since the beginning of films: that some writers and some directors are jealous of the stars' glory and the auteur theory is just another attempt to wipe the stars off the screen with words. And the silliest yet devised. After a film is finished, words can't help the poor director; and a great director doesn't need them. I was standing with one of the exponents of this sort of stuff in the lobby of the Dryden Theatre at Eastman House, watching a film in the theater through the glass doors. I said, 'Who directed it?' He said 'I don't know.' To me, that was incredible. He himself had selected the film to be shown to a group of people up from New York. The first thing I want to know about a film is who directed it."

Louise Brooks



“Somebody would come up with an idea. ‘Here’s a good start,’ we’d say. We skip the middle. We never paid any attention to the middle. We immediately went to the finish. We worked on the finish and if we get a finish that we’re all satisfied with, then we’ll go back and work on the middle. For some reason, the middle always took care of itself.”

Buster Keaton

“The gag was that I should launch this boat I’ve built, and it should slide down the launching ramp into the water — and straight to the bottom. It took us three days. We kept running into problems. We put something like sixteen hundred pounds of pig iron and T-rails in it, to give it weight. We cut it loose and watch it slide down the ramp. But then it slows up — so slow we can’t use the shot. You don’t like to undercrank when you’re around water, because you can spot it immediately. The water’s jumpy. Well, first thing we do is to build a break-away stern to the boat, so that when it hits the water it’ll just collapse and act as a scoop — to scoop water. That works fine except the nose stays in the air. We’ve got an air pocket in the nose. We get the boat back up and bore holes all through the nose and everywhere else that might form an air pocket. Try her again. Well, there’s a certain buoyancy to wood, no matter how you weigh it down, and this time the boat hesitates before slowly sinking. Our gag’s not worth a tinker’s dam if she doesn’t go smoothly straight to the bottom. So we go out in the Bay of Balboa and drop a sea anchor with a cable to a pulley on the stern, and out to a tug. We get all the air holes out of the boat, we make sure that the rear end would scoop water, and with the tug right out of shot we *pulled* that boat under the water.”

Buster Keaton

“I have spent years working out gags to make people laugh. With the patience of an old mariner making a ship in a bottle, I have been able to build situations that have turned out to be funny. But — to show you what a crazy way this is to make a living — the biggest laugh on the stage I ever got was an almost exact reproduction of an occurrence one evening when I was visiting a friend, and it took no thinning-up whatsoever.

At my friend’s home it didn’t even get a snicker, but in the theater it caused the audience to yell for a full minute.

On the stage I was a pompous nobody. The telephone rang. I told my wife I would answer it, in a manner that showed I doubted she was capable of handling an affair of such importance.

I said, ‘Hello, Elmer . . . Yes, Elmer . . . Is that so, Elmer? . . . of course Elmer . . . Good-bye, Elmer.’

I hung up the receiver and said to my wife, as though I were disclosing a state secret, ‘That was Elmer.’

It was a roar. It took ten or twelve performances to find that ‘Elmer’ is the funniest name for a man. I tried them all — Charley, Clarence, Oscar, Archibald, Luke, and dozens of others — but Elmer was tops. That was several years ago. Elmer is still funny — unless, your name

happens to be Elmer. In that case you probably will vote for Clarence. I don't know why the scene turned out to be so terribly funny. The funniest thing about comedy is that you never know why people laugh. I know *what* makes them laugh, but trying to get your hands on the *why* of it is like trying to pick an eel out of a tub of water.

'Charley Bogle,' spoken slowly and solemnly with a very long 'o' is a laugh. 'George Beebe' is not funny, but 'Doctor Beebe' is. The expression 'You big Swede' is not good for a laugh, but 'You big Polak' goes big. But if you say 'You big Polak' in a show you'll be visited by indignant delegations of protesting Poles. The Swedes don't seem to mind. You usually can't get a laugh out of anything valuable. When you kick a silk hat, it must be dilapidated; when you wreck a car, bang it up a little before you bring it on the scene.

It is funnier to bend things than to break them — bend the fenders on a car in a comedy wreck, don't tear them off. In my golf game, which I have been doing for years, at first I swung at the ball and broke the club. Now I bend it at a right angle. If one comedian hits another over the head with a crowbar, the crowbar should bend, not break. In legitimate drama, the hero breaks his sword, and it is dramatic. In comedy, the sword bends, and stays bent.

I know we laugh at the troubles of others, provided those troubles are not too serious. Out of that observation I have reached a conclusion which may be of some comfort to those accused of 'having no sense of humor.' These folks are charming, lovable, philanthropic people, and invariably I like them — as long as they keep out of theaters where I am playing, which they usually do. If they get in by mistake, they leave early.

The reason they don't laugh at most gags is that their first emotional reaction is to feel sorry for people instead of to laugh at them.

I like, in an audience, the fellow who roars continuously at the troubles of the character I am portraying on the stage, but he probably has a mean streak in him and, if I needed ten dollars, he'd be the last person I'd call upon. I'd go first to the old lady and old gentleman back in Row S who keep wondering what there is to laugh at."

W.C. Fields

"Every cameraman in the business went to see that picture more than once, trying to figure out how the hell we did some of that. Oh, there were some great shots in that baby! We built a stage with a big, black cut-out screen. Then we built the front-row seats and orchestra pit and everything else. It was our lighting that did it. We lit the stage so it looked like a motion picture being projected on to a screen. For the location shots, all we needed was the exact distance from the camera to where I was standing. Then the cameraman could judge the height. As we did one shot, we'd throw it in the darkroom and develop it right there and then — and bring it back to the cameraman. He cut out a few frames and put them in the camera gate. When I come to change scenes, he could put me right square where I was. As long as that distance was

correct. On *Seven Chances* I had to use surveyor's instruments. I had an automobile, a Stutz Bearcat roadster. I'm in front of a country club. Now it's a full-figure shot of that automobile and me. I come down into the car, release the emergency brake, and sit back to drive — and I don't move. The scene dissolves and I'm in front of a little cottage. I reach forward, pull on the emergency brake, shut the motor off, and go on into the cottage. Later, I come out of the cottage, get into the automobile, and the scene changes back to the club. I and the automobile never moved. Now the automobile has got to be the same distance, the same height and everything to make the scene work. For that baby, we used surveying instruments so that the front part of the car would be the same distance from the camera — the whole shooting match."

Buster Keaton

... "I went back and shot a couple of dramatic scenes again. One of them was when they'd dragged the girl onto the cannibal island and all those black feet were around her and we went to her close-up, surrounded by feet. He shot it in such a way that it looked like all she was doing was smelling feet. Which would be perfectly natural if we were looking for laughs — but we weren't. Not at this point. So I shot that again so she wasn't half-unconscious and their feet weren't bringing her to, or something. I just had her looking more scared."

Buster Keaton

"I'm in the cage out at Universal, where they had all the animals at that time. It's a big round cage, about sixty to eighty feet in diameter, full of tropical foliage. With a whip and a chair and a gun, the trainer gets the two lions in position, and I go to mine. My cameraman is outside the cage, shooting through one hole. The trainer says, 'Don't run, don't make a fast move, and don't go in a corner!' Well, there *is* no corner in a round cage! I start to walk away from one lion — and lookit, there's another one, there! I got about this far and glanced back and both of them were *that* far behind me, walking with me!" (laughter) "And I don't know these lions personally, see. They're both strangers to me! Then the cameraman says, 'We've got to do the shot again for the foreign negative.' I said, 'Europe ain't gonna see this scene!' Years later, Will Rogers used that gag — 'Europe ain't gonna see this scene' ... we made a dupe negative out of *that* baby! I've worked with lions since, and some nice ones."

Buster Keaton

"I went to the original location, from Atlanta, Georgia, up to Chattanooga, and the scenery didn't look very good. In fact, it looked terrible. The railroad tracks I couldn't use at all, because the Civil War trains were narrow-gauge. And the railroad beds of that time were pretty crude; they didn't have so much gravel to put between the ties, and you always saw grass growing there. I had to have narrow-gauge railroads, so I went to Oregon. And in Oregon, the whole state is honey-



combed with narrow-gauge railroads for all the lumber mills. So I found trains going through valleys, mountains, by little lakes and mountain streams — anything I wanted. So we got the rolling equipment, wheels and trucks, and three locomotives. Luckily, the engines working on these lumber camps were all so doggone old that it was an easy job. They even had burners. At that period they didn't pay much attention to numbers of engines — they named them all. That's why the main engine was called 'The General' and the one I chased it with was 'Texas.' It was the 'Texas' I threw through the burning bridge. We built that bridge and dammed up water underneath so the stream would look better. I planned the scene with Gabourie and a couple of his right-hand men, one of them a blacksmith. We had a forge and a blacksmith's shop right on the lot. Extras came from miles around to be in the picture. None of them were experienced — we had to train them. And when we did the battle scenes, I got the State Guard of Oregon. That location was around twelve hundred miles from Hollywood. Railroads are a great prop. You can do some awful wild things with railroads." Buster Keaton

"First of all, we thought we'd use that big tank down at Riverside. If we built it up, we could get five or six feet more water in the deep end. So they went down and built it up, put the water in — and the added weight of water forced the bottom of the swimming pool out. Crumbled it like it was a cracker. So we had to rebuild their swimming pool. Next thing, we tested over at Catalina, and we found there was a milk in the water — the mating season of the fish around the island causes that. The moment you touch the bottom it rises up with the mud, rises up and blacks out your scene on you. Lake Tahoe is the clearest water in the world, and it's always cold because it's up a mile high, and that's an awful big lake. So we went up to Tahoe. I'm actually working in around twenty feet of water in that scene. You imagine: we built this camera box for two cameras, a little bigger than this table square, with a big iron passage up to the top with a ladder on the inside. It holds two cameras and two cameramen. It was built of planks and sealed good so there was no leakage. But it's wood, and there has to be added weight. Well, I added about a thousand pounds to it. Now we find that the inside's got to be kept at the same temperature as the water outside. So we hang a thermometer out there so the cameraman looking through the glass can read it. And one on the inside. First thing in the morning, and the night before, we have to put ice in there, and then add more to make sure to keep the temperature of the camera box the same as the water on the outside, so it won't fog up the glass. Either one side or the other will fog on you, see. The difference was that when two bodies are in there, the body heat means we have to add more ice immediately. So as you put the cameramen in, you roll more ice in. So there's the whole outfit, and me with that deep-sea diving suit down there — and the cameraman says, 'I'm too close. I want to be back further.' I moved that camera box. I moved it. That's how much you can lift when you're



down around fifteen to twenty feet deep. The box must have weighed fourteen hundred pounds, something like that, with two cameras, two cameramen, about three hundred pounds of ice, another thousand pounds of weight — and I picked it up and moved it. I was one month shooting that scene. I could only stay down there about thirty minutes at a time, because the cold water goes through to your kidneys. After about a half hour you begin to go numb. You want to get up and get out of there.”

Buster Keaton

## Letters to performers

Instructions for Steve and Barbara [mailed to them at the University of Illinois]:

Review all material from *Continuous Project-Altered Daily* that is familiar to Steve: sequence, details, etc., as per the ILLINOIS VERSION; that is, Steve will do his original thing, most of which I did in Connecticut. Example: in the beginning Doug is lifted onto STEVE'S back; Barbara is manipulated by STEVE; STEVE balances on Becky. BARBARA will also do her original thing (as per Connecticut version): paper and sweater routine with Doug, etc. The first tricky place is where Steve/Barbara used to roll along under screen. STEVE will do that in new version; BARBARA do what David does – including my duet with David. (BABA will learn it in performance.)

BARBARA – teach Connecticut stuff to Steve, making sure he understands it. In the group lift STEVE will replace *me* wherever possible; this will probably have to be worked out in performance. Teach BABA'S solo with pillow to Steve only if you have time; however, BABA should be prepared to perform it flawlessly herself.

Performance is beginning to shape up like so:

1. New Material by Dunn, Arnold, Gordon ) Simultaneously  
Performance of rehearsal by Lloyd, Paxton ) performed
2. Performance-rehearsal by whole group, gabbing, arguing, rehashing where necessary.
3. Films: sometimes simultaneous, sometimes interrupting.
4. YR randomly monologuing, directing, watching, disappearing, participating.

I anticipate an incredible amount of unaccounted-for possibilities. Let me know. Saw Gordon at Debbie's event. I am sorely tempted to fly out this weekend to see your thing, Baba. Your decision to go there now really seems like a good thing. NYC seems very closed down to me now. Everything I see seems like 'Fin de Siecle'. It is beginning to seem not only imperative but possible to think about conducting one's life elsewhere.

Steve don't let them overwork you. I try to imagine what it is like: I teach 6 hours every Tuesday at VA and it takes 3 days to unwind and the next 3 days emotionally preparing for it. After 5 weeks it has dawned on me that the main trouble is that a lot of the kids are simply scared shitless of being looked at; they aren't even at a point where they can think about 'aesthetic problems'. In the light of this that list I sent you is total nonsense. I feel unreal. My God! Can theater finally come down to the irreducible fact that one group of people is looking at another group?!

Miss you both terribly. Look forward to the KCMo Reunion.

Prescript for Steve and Barbara

Originally this letter was meant for Barbara alone. I anticipated communicating with the New York contingent orally, and writing a separate letter to Steve. My concern about writing to Barbara immediately came from wanting to clarify the unresolved friction that put a kind of edge on our communication in KCMo. Her responses affected me with an urgency to deal with them, while Steve, I felt – in the absence of the possibility for extended discussion – was engaged in his own private sorting out of a complex set of feelings about the whole thing. Then as the letter progressed it became apparent that I was elaborating on my own responses to the situation in a way that concerns all of us. So in re-copying the letter I am retaining the mode of addressing myself to Barbara with the expectation that she will show the letter to Steve. I in turn will show it to everyone else.

Monday, November 10, 1969

Dearest Baba: I am lying in Bob's house feeling very chilled. Maybe I am coming down with the cold I have been staving off for the last week. Lots of vitamin C and ginseng going down the hatch.

I have so much to say to you. Talked to your friend and mine D.G. for three solid hours on plane (as I guess you did with S.P. after we left). He with his characteristic sensitivity clued me in to what happened between you and me – which neither of us got to adequately before saying goodbye.

There is something I must tell you about myself that I am sure you will recognize. I do not directly and immediately and spontaneously acknowledge accomplishment. This trait has gotten me into repeated difficulties and evidently I am not yet sufficiently hip to it – or haven't investigated the reason for it. The way it operated in KCMo was like so:

I have this huge trust in you and Steve. In writing out those instructions for the two of you I had absolute faith that however you figured them out I would be pleased and tickled. In other words I am at a point – a dangerous one – where I take certain things for granted. When I saw you rehearsing in the afternoon the 'thing' I am lamenting took place: I saw; then I thought "O yes of course, that looks just like I thought it would; *they couldn't have done it any other way (!)* There is nothing to say (criticize) about that." Blast me! There I stood with my steely gaze brazenly taking credit for what *you* had done. Wow!

Forgive me dear friends. As my affection and esteem for all of you grow I am forced to examine these vestiges of parsimony and control. We cannot take anything for granted anymore – I in relation to your achievement and you with res-

pect to your own. What the two of you did in Illinois was nothing short of phenomenal, and considering that you had to disregard my instructions in order to do it, well — my mouth hangeth open, my mind does boggle, I almost don't believe, but I have seen the glory. That I behaved as though I didn't even have to look at what you did may on the one hand seem thoughtless and disinterested; but it was also an expression of my good faith. I felt free to attend to other matters. However, this is a description and not a justification. You cannot be expected to read my mind *all* the time. In the future I hope that you will be more faithful to your needs and 'call me on it' if you pick up on similar behavior coming from me. I just now realized in remembering something I did in the performance that you could have behaved in similar fashion: I really wanted you both to see what I had wrought in your absence (which is why I was so delighted when Baba came over to me with the chairs to "show Steve"). At one point in the beginning when I saw you both standing there watching 'Becky's solo' but in reality the new stuff, I just about dissolved in my own greasy pleasure and flashed my hugest Rainer grin. Again at the end — Steve lying on the floor — I plunked myself in front of him and 'showed him' myself doing the new stuff. A child strutting her latest achievement. "Hey man dig this." That is probably what you felt in doing your Urbana thing. And the bitch didn't even remark on it. OK so next time make me look — right then and there in performance. I would like to share your pleasure. I would like to acknowledge your feat. I don't want to take anything for granted and I want whatever contact and interaction the situation brings up.

The phenomenal quality of your accomplishment also characterized the whole experience for me. The words I keep thinking of to describe it come perilously close to current psychotherapeutic clichés: reality of encounter, responsible interaction, truthful response. To put it in a more personal way: I got a glimpse of human behavior that my dreams for a better life are based on — real, complex, constantly in flux, rich, concrete, funny, focused, immediate, specific, intense, serious at times to the point of religiosity, light, diaphanous, silly, and many leveled at any particular moment. As David said — the complexity of and differences in the quality of the experience of each one of us in that situation at any given moment balance out and prevent the domination of any one person's involvement. Yet at the same time there is a consistent seriousness of response in the best sense — whether it be giggling, scowling, or reflective — that unifies the whole thing. We are totally and undeniably *there*. We take each other seriously and feel responsible to ourselves and to the whole thing. I think the days of your good-girl-bad-girl syndrome may be coming to an end, Barbara. I suspect that your reason for vetoing your impulse to unbutton Steve's shirt was not that "Yvonne wouldn't like it" but rather that Steve might not like it or *you yourself* might not like it if you had done it. Am I right or wrong or even close?

One of my real problems is being unable to make a 'hierarchy of moments' in remembering those two hours. I mean — when the total and continuous presence



of each person is pleasing how can I like one thing they do better than another? But I see a necessity for some form of extrapolation because the strain of performing on such an intense level leaves one at the end with a feeling that nothing happened. Your not remembering those two incidents — with the hump and the chairs — clued me in to this oddity, Barbara. Steve's concentration and presence during the lifting lesson; his lying on the floor at the end; his observation of me doing the pillow-head routine. Doug sitting across the room looking at our shenanigans with a baleful eye. Becky's two solos; her steadiness and fullness of concentration thruout offering recurrent relief from the general busyness. David seriously working on the new stuff by himself; his interrupting me at the microphone to ask for help. As you see, I am talking mostly about behavior rather than execution of movement. It is not because I value one over the other, but because the behavior aspects of this enterprise are so new and startling and miraculous to me. Only on TV does one see live 'behavior'. Never in the theater. I am sure it will all eventually take its proper place for me in relation to the learned material but right now I am luxuriating and marveling and 'wallowing' in these images.

The practical problems that arose (and also the 'social' ones) — like the feeling of being 'shot out of a cannon' and the briefness of contact, the inequality of my role and yours\*, the need for new definitions of freedom and limits\*\* — all this must be thought about.

\*One of my main functions in KCMo was 'crowd watcher'. I was very conscious of lapses of time and appropriate moments to turn music on or off, talk, etc. in relation to a sensed (or imagined) attention span of the audience.

\*\*Addenda to original letter re 'freedom and limits': I am ready to accept total freedom of 'response'. At this moment I have trepidations about allowing people to 'alter' my material or introduce their own, BUT (concurrent with my trepidations) I give permission to you all to do either of these *at your own risk*: that is, you will risk incurring the veto power of me or other members of the group, *in performance* (I do not want to know about such intentions prior to performance). In short, I reserve the right — and I confer upon all of you the same right — to be true to my/your responses in performance — be they enthusiastic or negative — bearing in mind the *natural precedence and priority of my material*. This last condition is based on the assumption that by the time of performance you are all willing to cooperate in showing the/my material, your initial responses to it having worked themselves out and exerted their influence on *me* during rehearsals. In the case of those who have been absent from preliminary rehearsals (Steve, Barbara, and in the future, Doug), I understand and accept the condition of risk attached to exposing my new material to them in performance. I still wish to establish a sequence of events before each performance. This sequence may be altered or interrupted during the performance at the discretion of anyone.

(‘Altering’ of sequence is not to be confused with the above-mentioned ‘altering’ of material.) The primary necessity at this point for me is to get the Connecticut version of *Continuous Project* shown.

The above are general considerations that will be revised and/or brought up to date after each performance. If the style is legalistic and impersonal, it is to provide a theoretical base for more personal interchange and discussion. A more specific set of instructions will be distributed before each performance.

Love love love

yr

November 19, 1969

**California Dreaming:  
news, reflections and reveries from  
Vacation Village, Laguna Beach**

The typewriter in use is perched on a desk just inside a plate glass door giving out on a 3rd floor ‘penthouse’ balcony opposite three 4-story eucalyptus trees beyond which is unadulterated (to the eye) Pacific Ocean. Last night we heard hooting in one of the trees and discovered an owl sitting up there, a strange fat feathered raccoon-looking creature hooting plaintively; perhaps he was lost.

In rereading the ‘addenda’ to the newsletter written after the KCMo performance I find that I basically have little to add other than defining certain ‘strictures’ that might make that projection more possible and/or operable. My main reservation about the Amherst gig was that we were operating on the assumption that anyone could depart from the basic structure on an individual basis at any time. When you get 6 people exercising this option — well, I kept being reminded of early Judson ‘random’ activity. Actually all it takes is for one or two out of the six to detach themselves from a group activity and then suddenly the whole thing becomes diffused when the remaining people set about keeping themselves ‘busy’. Actually, Amherst was so different from anything I could or would have thought of making that I am still sort of astonished and blown by it. It put into very clear relief the particular nature of my concise and orderly way of arranging things. What I would like to try next time is a system which would produce both the unevenness and diffusion of the Amherst performance *and* the concentration and tight focus of a lot of my imagery. (My memory may not serve me well, but one of the few ‘highly focused’ moments in the whole performance was the duet of

Steve and Barbara doing their Duncan bit.) A dispersed 'look' over a prolonged period becomes a drag, and I am no less dragged at the thought of the tight-ass look of the beginning of *Continuous Project* (where Doug gets hoisted) dominating the evening. I hate to say it, or I almost hate to say it, but I really do seem to be about variety, changes, and multiplicity. Not necessarily contrast, but rather a spectrum of possibilities in terms of spatial density, types of performance (rehearsal, marking, run-thru, teaching, etc.), and perhaps most important of all: durations and sequence. I'm nothing if not a two-bit entertainer.

OK enuf theory. On to a revision of the statute of limitations: I have changed my mind about how much of my stuff can be performed solo; I mean there are either clear-cut solos or unison and group situations. This greatly cuts down on individual options during a break: for instance, the Here Comes the Sun one-legged balance routine must be done with 3 to 6 people (except where Baba and David do it together with the box); also the chair-pillow bit must have a minimum of 4. (Since it was originally conceived for 30 I still consider it a group routine.) What I am trying to get at is a situation where we will exercise more responsibility toward each other. A mechanical way of doing this is to cut down the number of solitary activity possibilities; this will result in one's having to enlist the cooperation of others when initiating a break (more often than previously). At one point I remember making a rule that you could only take a break when you were expendable (when an activity could be handled by less than 6). I guess the Illinois contingent never heard about this, and since I neglected to repeat it, etc. etc. This rule is going to put greater limitations on our freedom of choice as Becky finds it more difficult to participate in everything. All the more reason that the breaks should involve a consideration of other people's situations and desires: If you wish to break for a solitary activity (like talking or doing your own thing) you must ask permission of the group and then set up their time — either by telling them to continue what they're doing or to do something else. In other words, whoever initiates a break must also exercise responsibility for it by choreographing it totally. It seems to me these problems are not at all new to my work. I was dealing with them back in 1963 in *Terrain* when spoken signals initiated changes. The difference lies in the types of material: then it was repetitions and permutations of short dance phrases; today the material is chunkier, consisting of paragraphs rather than sentences, hence more unwieldy in terms of 'mixing and matching'. The New "Quartet" more closely resembles parts of *Terrain* (*Diagonal*) with its frequency of called signals signifying changes in direction or regrouping. I don't know yet whether I want that kind of flexibility on a larger scale.

VETO POWER: No one exercised it. As Doug said, he looked around and saw everyone having such a good time doing their thing that he didn't have the heart to interfere even when he wanted to make a change. I think I should repeat, or re-emphasize: In the event of a conflict of will concerning duration of elements in



the sequence prescribed prior to performance, the wish to continue or repeat (if the material has not been performed to someone's satisfaction) has priority over the wish to break. Similarly, the wish to return to the PRESCRIBED SEQUENCE has priority over prolonging a break. This is beginning to sound a bit doctrinaire, but the Amherst performance introduced a whole new 'wrinkle' that at this point, as far as I am concerned, only muddles the situation. It is hard enuf to perform material that has been, either out of necessity or intention, under-rehearsed and so results in a 'less-than-polished' performance. This I am definitely interested in. It is quite another matter to think you are on top of material and then find that for reasons inherent in the performing situation that you are not. Like the breaks having a disorienting effect and making concentration on familiar material difficult. I think we must begin to make certain distinctions in executing stuff: If something doesn't work that hasn't been rehearsed, then ok, we do it as well as we can do it (like the group up-and-down). But if it doesn't work when it had been ok at a previous run-thru, I think it should be done over (as with the Becky-lift), or someone should call a halt and suggest we concentrate (suggested script!: "OK let's knock it off you guys; pay attention, stop goofing off, enuf fucking around you knuckleheads!). It might appear that these delicate sentiments could be provoked only in the breast of the boss-lady, but I have reason to believe that others of us have similar moments, whether or not you act on them. Given the current scheme of performance "variables" it is important to have certain things done "perfectly", and I don't care how long or repeatedly we have to do the thing (in performance) before arriving at the 'perfect' end of the spectrum. As I remember, the solo and duo involvements at Amherst were all very beautiful. It seemed easier for people to get their teeth into material when they were alone or in couples. It's obvious that we do forfeit something by not being able to rehearse together: The work gains in 'kinky behavior' while losing in unity. It will begin to even out very soon I hope. Right now I love that each time it is so different. At the discussion the next morning a student who had seen both rehearsal and performance asked me "what responsibility (I) felt toward the audience" since the performance looked just like the rehearsal. I was delighted that he had made this observation. Susan Horwitz had also remarked on and been surprised by this fact. We've come a long way since Pratt. I just had this flash that the last performance of *Two Trios* (done with five people, Steve out) has in some respects more resemblance to the current *Continuous Project* than the Pratt CP had to the current CP. All that goofing and gabbing. The basic difference between the two CP's is in the time that I spent in teaching new material in the earlier performance, thinking that 'teaching' was the primary ingredient of a rehearsal. (One result was that the people who were not being taught had 'nothing to do'.) Since then my idea of the rehearsal has become much more elaborate. 'Teaching' is really a very small part of it.

I came out here intending to write about where CP-AD is right now, which would involve tracking the various stages from the beginning. Somehow my feelings about it require a more fluid and discursive form — like correspondence and interchange with you guys — and not the kind of nailing down or crystalization that I usually tend to do. I think that ultimately — perhaps May or June — I would like to organize a gab session with all of us present for taping. (By the way, how many of you are available for my May 20 NYU date?)

Some more revisions: re ‘doing your own thing’ — one chance per person per performance. I’m still fooling around with spoken material. I don’t think that a reading of *anything* works. Now I have narrowed it down to commenting directly on the action (instructions, comparison with previous performance) or reciting learned material. I’m going to be sending each of you long quotes by performers and directors — Buster Keaton, Barbara Streisand, Louise Brooks, early movie directors, etc. There are some great bits in Kevin Brownlow’s *The Parade’s Gone By*. I’d like you to start memorizing these things, and if you get any ideas for other things you’d like to say let me know. The Lenny Bruce idea still lurks in my head. Real performance bits: stand-up comic, reminiscing actress or actor; quotes *about* performance. But it can’t be improvisational or ‘in the style of’; it must be a performance of someone else’s material at a remove from the original or implied performance. There are primary, secondary, and tertiary performances. Primary performance is what we are already doing — original material. Most performance is secondary, i.e., performing someone else’s material in a style approximating the original or working in a known style or ‘genre’ (Dying Swan, Aida, Magician, etc., altho the latter instance can be both primary and secondary, as with Harry de Dio, the juggler). I want our spoken stuff to be tertiary — someone else’s material, or material that has actually previously been brought into existence (via media, or live), *as though* it is one’s own, but in a style completely different from or inappropriate to the known original. The degree to which it can be established that the material is being quoted rather than imitated will save it from ‘bad’ performance (cf my hitherto unsuccessful monologues; I (we) have neither the skills nor the familiarity to do ‘good’ secondary performances, like sportscaster or comic, and at this point I haven’t the foggiest notion how to establish that I *want* to do ‘bad secondary performance’). This will happen through clues in the material itself — references to actual dates, events, people, etc., obviously not connected to us, the current performers (or ‘tertiary performers!’). At one point I really wanted to do a secondary Lenny Bruce — imitate him or find someone who could. I think my ultimate decision was much more interesting. How about a transcript of a Johnny Carson-Ed McMahon bit? Two of us might learn that. Another thought: A lot of things work on tape that won’t work live — like Cindy and Bill reading from the transcript of the conversation by Bob and me. But I’ve gone that route and tape doesn’t interest me right now — except to throw

out muciz. The ambiguities and cross-purposes of live presence vs. apparent behavior vs. implied intention conveyed by specific source material vs. unconvincing performance: It all adds up to a kind of irony that has always fascinated me. When I say “How am I like Martha Graham” I imagine that my *presence* is immediately thrust into a new performance ‘warp’ (in the minds of the spectators). From that moment on people are forced to deal with me as a certain kind of *performer*, someone who is simultaneously real and fictitious, rather than taking me for granted as a conveyor of information (simply because I’m talking half-way rationally). Or do I overestimate the evocative power of that name? Similarly I feel that the tension that is produced from not knowing whether someone is *reciting* or *saying* something — pushes a performance back and forth, ‘in and out of warp’. The days of thwarted expectations are over. Warping is the ticket!

Note from notebook: I would like to know what people said at the mikes and how they felt about what they said. That’s all for now folks.

Y.R.

1-28-70