

INCITE PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Bettie de Jong

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

2019

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Bettie de Jong conducted by Gay Morris on July 29, 2019. This interview is part of the INCITE Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

3PM

Session #1 (video)

Interviewee: Bettie de Jong

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Gay Morris

Date: July 29, 2019

Q: This is an interview with Bettie de Jong on July 29, 2019, at the Paul Taylor studios. So, I'd like to begin with you saying something about your very early youth because compared to most Americans, it was quite exotic. Could you say something about where you were born and the first few years of your life?

De Jong: [00:00:29] Where I was born. For us, it wasn't exotic because there were a lot of Dutch people in [Republic of] Indonesia because, at that time, Indonesia was still Dutch, so for us, it wasn't exotic. It was just a charmed childhood because the weather always was good, and when it rained, it rained only for an hour, and then you knew that it would stop. You could step through the water and get nice and dirty, and get your mother just upset [laughter] at all the mud. So, my childhood was very charmed. We went to school at six o'clock in the morning, and we would be in the pool by eleven, so if you can't call that charmed. [laughs] That is really wonderful. You had to stay in from around one till four because the sun is just too strong, but we never stayed in our bedrooms. We snuck out to the kitchen where the food was much better than what we ate because our cook insisted we eat Dutch food—and we, my sister and I loved Indonesian food—and they made Indonesian food for themselves, so we shared. [laughs]

Q: Yes. And what were your parents doing there?

De Jong: [00:02:05] They met actually in Indonesia, which is sort of not usual because usually pairs go to Indonesia. My mother was a nurse and a visiting nurse, and she had it with Holland, and so she took a job as the head of a small hospital on one of the pro [phonetic] stations in Sumatra. That's where my father worked, and they met when my father had an operation for the—what is that?

Q: Appendix?

De Jong: [00:02:48] Yes, and that's how they met in Indonesia and then my sister and I, my sister being older, were born there at that little hospital. Yes.

Q: What happened during the war? Were you there during the war?

De Jong: [00:03:06] Oh, absolutely. Well, I have to go back a little bit to the First World War. Holland stayed neutral, but they did draft the second son in the family, and that happened to be my father. My father was then put into the division of—what do you call it? —intelligence. And here came the war with the Japanese, and so [he was] recruited at forty-eight, forget about age, and he was immediately put back into the intelligence section.

So, the military were separated from the women and children, and the boys were separated from the mothers after twelve because they considered them mature. Those camps were like the *Lord of the Flies*—they were very terrible. Those boys fought for their lives. But we were in a woman's camp, and we were able to stay with my mother. My father was in a military camp, and

they were paid by the Japanese government. My father insisted to stay a soldier. He didn't want any—nothing on this, [phonetic] but he got a dime a week, and the officers got twenty-five cents a week, so the Geneva convention. So, they could have a smoke, and we were fed too whatever they had.

It was never said, but they were very afraid of the women because the women fought like tigers for their kids. They invented all kinds of things to kill the Japanese, so the Japanese were very, very on their guard when the women came. So they tried to give us as little food as possible so that they weakened us. That's the story of the weakened camps, and—

Q: So how old—

De Jong: —women camps.

Q: —were you then when the war ended?

De Jong: [00:05:47] The war ended when I was thirteen, and we left Indonesia on my fourteenth birthday.

Q: And do you think that that malnourishment over those years, did that have any long-term effects on your health?

De Jong: [00:06:03] It had no effect on me. That's why I'm so tall. I grew in spite of food. My sister had a lot of dysentery. My mother was of strong constitution. She died when she was seventy-nine, and for that age group, that was pretty good. And so, some people perished very much so, but our immediate family didn't. All of the men though—that was an interesting story—they weren't—the military men. I don't know anything about the bourgeoisie, but the military men were fed just as badly as we were fed, but those men all died around sixty-five because they were fed too much after coming back. You know they said, "Oh, eat, eat, eat, eat," and it was just too much on their hearts, and it was only the men. The women flourished. That's a very, very strange – my father lost all his friends with the same age, around sixty-five, well, they just had retired.

Q: Yes. That's unusual.

De Jong: [00:07:36] Yes, it's very strange.

Q: So, did you start your dance training when you got back to Holland?

De Jong: [00:07:44] [Sighs] You can't even call it training. [laughs] Honestly, it's a dance group and just has a lot of fun with a local dance teacher, and he choreographed some, and we would give a little shindig somewhere for schools on the—but you can't really call it training.

Q: So, you began when you were thirteen or fourteen?

De Jong: [00:08:16] Well, [laughs] the story goes in my family—of course, I don't remember at all—that my mother—my father would travel to all these rubber plantations. There was one rubber plantation that the wife of the rubber planter was a ballerina, and she had a school. She said, “Mrs. De Jong, you have to send your little girls to my school.” Her name was Nana Nash [phonetic]. So there we go, my sister Nini [phonetic] and me, and my sister hated it, hated it with a passion [laughs] because she was a sports person, but she was good at dancing though, but she hated it.

They started teaching me a three-rhythm, a waltz. You teach a four-year-old a waltz, no communication, there is no way that a four-year-old understands a three-rhythm. I was stepping outside, I was stepping here, I was stepping there. And Nana Nash finally said, “Well, the older one is really very talented, but the younger one is not so,” so there I went. I didn't [laughs] get into the school, and that stayed that way.

But in the camps, we all—to waste time, we had little performances. We borrowed blankets and sheets, and we hung up the things, and everybody gave their little performance, and—you know? I went straight back in high school to a dance school, and that's what I did over the weekend.

Q: Once you got back, this was in the Netherlands that you—?

De Jong: Yes.

Q: And then when did you start a sort of formal training?

De Jong: [00:10:23] My formal training only when I got into a university. Formal training for anybody dancing for a job, you have to have three years of training, otherwise, you're an amateur. I started that when I got into Amsterdam University. There was a very, very good dance club. The head of the dance club was a former dancer of the Nederlands Dans Theater. So that's when I started, very late. I was eighteen, nineteen, but I danced, so-called dance and loved every moment of it.

Q: So how long were you there for—

De Jong: [00:11:22] Five years.

Q: —at the university? Oh, and then?

De Jong: [00:11:25] And it was mostly ballet and mime because the teacher was very taken by [Étienne] Decroux. And so there was a good mime teacher in Holland, so we all sort of mimed. We performed a little mime but mostly ballet. But I was this tall when I was fourteen, and there were no boys that were that tall, so forget about pointe shoes, I stuck up like—you know?
[laughter]

Then Martha Graham came through, and I saw some tall boys, and I said, “Murs [phonetic], I'm going to America.” She said, “I'll get you there.” My mother was an adventurer. The American embassy gave a—how do you call it? —that thanksgiving dinner for all the exchange Americans

in Holland on the day of the—the turkey day. She found this neighbor of ours, a young couple, and she said, “If you find anybody that lives close to New York, maybe they will sponsor somebody.” At that time, the student visas were popular. They were easier to get than green cards or anything like that, and they found somebody immediately. They said, “We’re sorry, but we live in Iowa.” [laughter]

Q: Oh no.

De Jong: [00:13:30] “But we will look for somebody that lives close to –.” And this couple lived in Hastings-on-Hudson—we passed it yesterday—I said, “I will spend a year there” [unclear], and they took me right away for a year. I went to the [Martha] Graham School [of Contemporary Dance] and just school. That was a very hard year. It was not because of the family; the family is wonderful. But I had to take the morning class, so I had to leave with all of the businessmen in the morning. But I couldn’t take the four thirty class with the advanced because I wasn’t good enough yet in great technique, so I had to take a later class, so I would be home at eleven o’clock at night. So it was a little tough. I was very tough to entertain myself from twelve o’clock in the afternoon till six o’clock at night in Horn & Hardart. I needed a lot—lots of nickels

Q: The automat, yes.

De Jong: [00:14:46] Oh, anyway.

Q: So you did that for a year?

De Jong: [00:14:53] No, I was in the Graham School for five years, thirteen classes a week. I got a scholarship. I was trained as a *Graham* dancer, yes.

Q: And then were you in the company?

De Jong: [00:15:11] Well, I was an understudy, and I remember very closely that Linda [M.] Hodes who is a friend of Paul's [B. Taylor Jr.] came over to me. I was her understudy in one of the pieces. She said, "I'll give you a thousand dollars if you do my part [laughter] because, see, I had just gotten our second daughter." She said, "I have no time for this Greek drama." [laughs] Of course, nothing happened because Martha would never let Linda go. But that was a very funny sort of story.

Q: So how did you meet Paul then?

De Jong: [00:15:59] I bumped into him.

Q: Was he dancing with Graham at that point?

De Jong: [00:16:03] Oh yes, yes. Oh yes. There was a little kitchen that Martha [Graham] used, and she allowed her dancers to use the kitchen to warm up some soup and coffee. He only came there because there was a shower, Paul, and only took class at the Met [Metropolitan Opera House], the old Met, on Seventh Avenue [and 39th Street, NY], because there was a shower

because his loft had no shower or bath. So he took class, take a shower; he went to Graham, take a shower, you know?

I bumped into him, and I heard that he had an audition. He said, “Yes, but it’s by invitation.” In those days, I took any audition that I heard of: Broadway, Alvin Ailey [American Dance Theater], whatever. I didn’t care because I just wanted the experience. And then he said, “But you can come,” and that was very hard for—because I was only at Graham the thirteen hours a week. So it was hard because he was not Graham. He loved Graham, but he wasn’t Graham, none. So I walked out, I did my best, and I walked out with Dan Wagoner. I had danced twice with Dan Wagoner in *Carmina Burana* because in those days, you danced with whoever was asking for dancers because it was money.

Q: Of course.

De Jong: [00:18:01] And the New York [City] Opera was especially very good because this was—I think the opera was still under equity at that time, not AGMA [American Guild of Musical Artists], so you really got nicely paid. I asked Dan, “What do you think? How did I do?” and Dan said to me, “Well, Paul said he would never—didn’t ever think of a tall dancer” like me. I wasn’t sad because I didn’t know Paul. I had seen him dance, and I admired him, but I had not seen his dances, so I didn’t know one way or another. I had danced with Pearl Lang and—you know. The next day, I went to my ten o’clock class, and I came home, and at one o’clock, the telephone goes off and, “Where are you? We are rehearsing.” That was my initiation in this company, and I’m still here. He didn’t say that he took me. No, we are here, we are rehearsing.

Q: Oh, that's funny.

De Jong: [00:19:20] Yes.

Q: So, when you started with him, what happened? What did you do? I mean you must—

De Jong: [00:19:29] He immediately started choreographing a piece for three, the three new girls and himself.

Q: But this was *Tracer*? *Tracer*.

De Jong: [00:19:39] Yes, with the wheel.

Q: Yes, the [Milton Ernest "Robert"] Rauschenberg.

De Jong: [00:19:43] He taught me himself. He taught me *Three Epitaphs*, and he himself taught me *Junction*. And then I was the little creature in *Insects and Heroes*. We premiered it in Paris [at Théâtre de Lutèce during Théâtre des Nations festival 1962] [unclear]. The theater was so tiny, [laughs] that people with their arms to the sides, four people in a row could not stand. They had to stay exactly, you know. So me, as my creature with the—they called it hair, but it was these spokes, they knew where I was. Every wing [where] I was, my spokes would stick out, and [laughter] I never was hidden. But it was so glorious because I had never been on a

professional—with Carmina, of course because I was at [New York] City Center with a big chorus—I still remember where I sat warming up—but that was it. And, of course, Pearl Lang was very, very professional.

Q: Well-known too, yes?

De Jong: [00:21:19] Yes. One time, there was a TV show, and Paul started to say, “Easy, easy, drink some coffee. Later on, you have to do sixty-four jumps.” [laughter] Because Pearl was a jumper, and everybody, you know, “Sixty-four jumps.” That’s fun and anyway—

Q: He did *Tracer* for you and then you learned these other dances and then did you go on tour immediately?

De Jong: [00:21:56] We premiered it in Paris. That program was for Paris.

Q: Were those the first performances you did with him?

De Jong: [00:22:05] Yes. Yes, with the Théâtre [des] Nations. It was a big festival at that time, yes, in Paris, and we were in a tiny, little—it was in the Sorbonne area. Paul got actually a citation [critical dance review] for *Three Epitaphs* then. Yes.

Q: Do you remember how long the tour lasted with—?

De Jong: [00:22:35] A week and then a friend of Paul's found a little theater on the other side of the Seine [River] in which, apparently, *Gigi* was premiered. We played there for three weeks and sometimes only with sixteen people in the audience, but we performed. And then we went to Reno in Italy, and *Insects and Heroes* was filmed, *Three Epitaphs* was filmed and—what did—how did you call that?

Q: *Tracer*.

De Jong: [00:23:22] *Tracer* was filmed. But, at that time, whatever wasn't used after a year, the Rome television erased everything. So these don't – yes.

Q: That's too bad.

De Jong: [00:23:38] When Taylor 2 brought *Tracer* back, we had to guess at it because it was years ago since I had done it. When I heard the music, I remembered a little bit, but we hadn't done it for so long because Charlie [Charles L. Reinhart] did not like it. Charlie went haywire on *Aureole*, *Aureole* only. *Tracer*...

Q: Oh, that's too bad because it had—

De Jong: [00:24:14] And it has this beautiful little dance, yes. Yes.

Q: Yes. So, after this tour, then you came back to New York, and so what was your life like, I mean at that time, because the [Paul] Taylor [Dance] Company was not performing all the time, was it?

De Jong: [00:24:36] No. We were rehearsing pretty much all the time.

Q: Yes. Were you then dancing with other companies at the same time?

De Jong: [00:24:46] No. Paul didn't like that idea because I was asked again to do the *Carmina Burana* [opera], and he encouraged me not to do it.

Q: So you were only performing with the Taylor Company, but they weren't performing all the time—

De Jong: [00:25:04] No. We were working on new dances, yes.

Q: And you could make a living this way?

De Jong: [00:25:11] No. [laughs] No, I babysat. No, Paul didn't have money to give us.

Q: No, I wouldn't think so.

De Jong: [00:25:21] And then we got Charlie as our manager, and he got us on unemployment, and that was our rehearsal pay.

Q: Ah, right. So he came in '62, and you came also in '62, I think.

De John: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay. So then, what were the next dances that you did? Well, why don't you tell me about *Junction*? That was interesting because you did the film too, the [Rudy] Burckhardt. You were in the Burckhardt film.

De Jong: [00:25:56] Yes. That role was already made for Maggie Newman, and she left, and Maggie Newman is about this high, and I got to do that role. It was magnificent. Just I loved that dance. Well, I loved every dance at that stage with Paul, really. She was known for not being very gracious about people that did her parts, but she came up to me when I had done *Junction*, and she said, "I liked your *Junction*." Which was, you know like, "*Wow*, somebody liked my *Junction*!" so that was nice.

Q: So what—?

De Jong: [00:26:47] Because of Paul's work, *Junction* is *pure* Graham, *pure* Graham, so it's up my alley. It was choreographed with Linda Hodes in it. Yes.

Q: What was the movement that you remember about it particularly?

De Jong: [00:27:10] Contraction, contraction, and releases, releases, contraction, contraction, releases, releases! But in a very different—in a happy way, never in a Martha Graham—you know?

Q: Exactly, yes.

De Jong: [00:27:32] No all of that sad, break [phonetic] stuff.

Q: Yes, it has a very different feeling about it completely. I mean I would never think it was a Graham piece even if the movement was Graham-esque. And you performed the duet with him in that?

De Jong: [00:27:57] Yes, yes.

Q: What was that like to be performing with him?

De Jong: [00:28:05] It was the easiest thing that I ever had a partner. He was not consistent. He was a true performer. He changed from time to time, but he let me know unspoken what he was going to do. The timing of just giving contact by hand, by back, you knew what state he was. Every night was an adventure because every night, it was a little different, and it was just

wonderful, just—and the music is just so gorgeous. We did it again here at the Bach Festival [in New York City].

Q: I saw it.

De Jong: [00:28:53] Yes. Yes. It changed a little bit from what it used to be.

Q: In what way was—?

De Jong: [00:28:59] More people. There are only three girls and two guys in there.

Q: That's amazing.

De Jong: Yes.

Q: Yes. So, what do you think it was that he found interesting about you?

De Jong: [00:29:28] Not the slightest idea.

Q: [laughs] But he did because he put you in so many works.

De Jong: [00:29:35] I know. I really don't know. First of all, I think—but that's not dancing. First of all, I had no time limit. I didn't ever say that I couldn't come, which was of course, a relief for anybody who couldn't pay me, you know?

Q: Right.

De Jong: [00:30:02] I just made myself available and then I started doing—washing costumes, and I was even more available. [laughter] And then started dyeing costumes, and I was even more available. “Oh, but I have such beautiful material, can you come with your sewing machine, and do some curtains for the dressing room?” so I was even more available, and on, and on, and on.

Q: But I think looking at that film, the Burckhardt film, there's something very special I think about your movement and his movement that's quite—it just syncs in a way—

De Jong: [00:30:47] Oh yes, because, [sighs] see, he took very rarely classes at Graham but that body could do anything he wanted. He was just very natural like David Parsons. Like, if you told him to do such and so, he would do such and so and understand it, what he did, not a fake form of it. He really understood. Like the first dance in *Junction* when he carries me on his back crawling out of the—it was so solid and so safe. I never even had to try it. I just went, and he knew exactly where to carry me and to crawl, and it was a totally natural thing that he did.

And then the stillness, like I watched a lot of rehearsals of Graham because I was an understudy, and we could come into the theater for the rehearsals. He did *Embattled Garden*, and he stood there on that stage in a tree, and I haven't seen him until he jumped out and gave me a heart attack because he could be so still, it's just frightening. All of a sudden, he jumped out, and I hadn't seen a person there. [laughter] No, to him everything came really natural.

Q: But he seems also always very dedicated to the movement, completely dedicated.

De Jong: [00:32:47] Oh yes. That probably comes from studying so late with dance. He started late with swimming, and swimming is very close to dancing. He knew about twists because the crawl twists. It's water. Water gives you a lot of clues, and he had all of the clues he could use, and he used them all. And he always was there. He was never play-acting onstage like a lot of others, they are somewhere thinking about food or something, not him, not him. It was very easy to dance with him.

Q: Did he do *Piece Period* for you? Was that—?

De Jong: [00:33:50] Oh, for the three of us, yes. Yes, it was the three of us and then it became a foursome.

Q: Yes. It's just so funny.

De Jong: [00:34:03] It is funny.

Q: [laughs] So maybe you could say something about his sense of humor?

De Jong: [00:34:13] He had no sense of humor at all.

Q: [Laughs] Really?

De Jong: [00:34:16] No, no. He told the stupidest jokes in the world—none, but visually, he had a sense of humor. And I always ended up on my head. That was the thing with him because I had a long neck, my neck could support me, so they dropped me on my neck and [laughs] “Okay, get up.” But to be a funny person, he was not a funny person at *all*.

Q: So his sense of humor was reserved for dancing—

De Jong: [00:35:00] I don’t—

Q: —or choreography?

De Jong: [00:35:00]—ever thought that they were [unclear] to words. I don't think he could express them in words like John Thomlinson can retell your joke not Paul, none—

Q: But his—

De Jong: [00:35:19] —but visually, definitely.

Q: What part did you play in the *Piece Period*? What other dances did you—?

De Jong: [00:35:32] I did “Spanish Ladies.” I was in a corset and then we changed quickly to the second section that we did. It was the “Hand Dance” ladies in the Empire. No, not in the Empire, in these basic costumes and then we changed into the Empire and then end was back into the corset.

Q: Right, right. What kind of choreography was he doing when you entered the company? I mean was there a certain type of choreography he was doing?

De Jong: No.

Q: What was the movement?

De Jong: [00:36:11] He was getting ready for this tour to Paris, so they were all existing dancers. *Junction* was made and was performed. Linda and Maggie Newman had performed these dances. *Three Epitaphs* was performed, *Insect and Heroes* was performed with Maggie and Linda. What was on that program? Oh, what was that dance called? *Tablet* you know [Philippine] Pina Bausch did that. Yes. She came in, and she held her own head. She looked like she was carrying her head around. And no, he was just getting ready for that. The only new dance that he made was *Tracer*.

Q: Was there a certain kind of movement that he was doing at that time? Was it all Graham-esque, or was it different?

De Jong: [00:37:15] No, it was all Paul Taylor. I watched him a couple of classes, and he could do it all, but I'm sure that he did not understand it at that time. Later on when he choreographed, yes, but at the time that he did it—but it was always correct. Water I think does that to you. That man spent four years, six hours a day in the water. Well, you learn something there.

Q: So, when he did *Aureole*, I think that's when he decided he really wanted to have a company and to—that's why he took Charlie.

De Jong: [00:38:09] I don't know. I don't know. I wasn't there. My father was very sick, so I went to Holland, and my father died that summer, so I wasn't there. He got the music from a friend of his, one of the brothers of the Pepperidge Farm family, and it was so smart because it was [George Frideric] Handel. And one of the conductors in Britain thought it was one piece of Handel music, and it wasn't. He just got all of the sections lined up so that they seemed to belong to each other. Paul started making that dance because he had no interest in sightseeing in Paris and stuff like that. He started making it in Paris, and I had friends that I was not aware that he was rehearsing with the other, just getting ideas and then it was such a success in New London, [Connecticut].

He wanted to separate himself from Graham, but it was on the basis of that he—every—after every even little tour, he would come to each one of us and say, “Do you still want to dance with me for the next piece?” I don't know if that meant that he either want—no, he was very aware of the responsibility, financial to have a company, even six people. You have to feed six people. I don't know. He kept it pretty loose, sort of. We all came in because we wanted to and then *Aureole* definitely started Charlie Reinhart and then little by little, the other dancers. And then Charlie finally—I think I was there three years—he got us unemployment, and unemployment was rehearsal play, so we got something.

Q: Also, you were touring,—

De Jong: Oh yes.

Q: —I think, at that point.

De Jong: [00:40:54] We did extensive touring too in the college.

Q: Yes. In the United States?

De Jong: In the United States.

Q: And then also, you were doing some tours in Europe. Oh, didn't you do a South American tour also?

De Jong: [00:41:10] State department.

Q: Oh, that was later.

De Jong: [00:41:12] We did a lot of state department tours in those days.

Q: But earlier, you were already touring in Europe and in—

De Jong: [00:41:21] No. Europe was because they were so impressed with *Three Epitaphs*, they wanted us everywhere, but that was not state department. South Africa, we did one eleven-tour with the state department. It started in Cairo [Egypt] then Karachi [Pakistan] then [British] Ceylon then New Delhi [India], Caracas [Venezuela], well Bhadrās [phonetic], Bombay [India], Kuala Lumpur [Malaysia]. We were supposed to go to Jakarta [Indonesia] but didn't go. Philippines! Okinawa, Japan, Tokyo, Seoul [South Korea]. Eleven weeks. It didn't matter because they paid us royally, royally—

Q: It was—

De Jong: —for us really. We had this money in our pocket. We had never seen money like that.

Q: So, in the early '60s up till about 1965 when you had just started to dance with the Taylor Company, what was the New York dance scene? I mean, what else was going on? Were you aware of—?

De Jong: [00:42:46] Judson Church.

Q: Yes, and were you aware of that?

De Jong: [00:42:51] Oh, very aware, and we were very out. We were not loved, no. We were outcasts. We danced. They didn't dance, they laid down on the floor where—one of our dancing friends—they looked at their navel. No, no, we were out. He was always an outcast.

Q: Well, that's interesting.

De Jong: He always was an outcast.

Q: But I think the critics liked—

De Jong: [00:43:30] Oh yes, yes.

Q: —the dance.

De Jong: [00:40:31] And the audience liked it, but in the dance world, he was definitely an outcast. We never were the group. We will go see them, but it was so boring. They didn't do anything. They did not move. Well, I don't call that dance. I call that going to sleep or more, no.

Q: What?

De Jong: Thinking about the world but that's not dance.

Q: No.

De Jong: [00:44:13] Well, immediately when he had choreographed *Aureole*, Robert Rauschenberg split, yes, and Merce Cunningham. Nobody wanted to know him, nobody even Martha who adored Paul. He was the enfant terrible [unruly child], you know? No, he was totally alone in that field. What is her name, that beautiful dancer that I danced with? She was a Graham dancer. Pearl Lang, she was different, but she belonged to Martha's company, and she belonged to that idea. But Paul didn't have that [phonetic] from one dance to the next dance, from the next dance to the next dance had nothing to do. There was no going from one thing. There was no follow-up. They were all separate things, and I think that, sort of, stunned the entire audience: what is he doing now?

Of course, graphic artists were very interested like Alex Katz and—what is that lovely man? — Ellsworth Kelly. Yes. They had lots of ideas for Paul.

Q: He had intended to be a painter early on.

De Jong: Yes, he did. Yes, he did.

Q: So maybe there was some of that that spoke to those people.

De Jong: [00:46:16] Yes, and color-wise. Like Alex Katz is the worst—you can quote him easily for me, he doesn't know anything about fabrics. He does not know anything about how to make costumes, but he knows his colors. His colors were absolutely the most exquisite and the combination of colors and the contrast of colors and the ideas too. Like *Sunset* was Alex Katz, *Diggity* was Alex Katz, you know? One, two, three—everything was Alex Katz. [unclear] we're just, "Oh, what is he going to do now?" that type of thing.

Q: After *Aureole*, I guess the next major work was *Scudorama*. So, can you talk about that a bit, that work?

De Jong: [00:47:31] I have the feeling Paul never talked about what he had in mind. Much later on, yes, but in those days, none, and I had that feeling because he used the [Igor Fyodorovich] Stravinsky music—

Q: "Rite of Spring."

De Jong: [00:47:51]—for that, the “Rite of Spring.” So I think he was set to do a “Rite of Spring” and then he felt too many people had done it, and he said to me, “I need some bathroom music,” and that became *Scudorama*. But the very first from the beginnings through—there’s a woman’s trio in the beginning, you still can dance on this, on the Stravinsky music count by count. But the music is much too pompous for the kind of music, movement really, so he made his death wish. And, as you see, he liked heaps of people, that’s the first heap, and he makes a heap in us, look, and he has a heap and fire, “Promethean Fire,” people—dead people on top of dead people.

Q: Yes. Well, that’s still such a powerful work, *Scudorama*.

De Jong: [00:49:18] Yes, it is, and I’m glad it’s back, and I’m glad that the dancers at the moment are loving it. They don’t go pooh-pooh because they said, “Oh, dance,” they all want to be in it. Now, they love it.

Q: The way it starts with the major character dressed and then—

De Jong: [00:49:49] The [unclear]—

Q: —the way it develops, I mean it’s—and to see that film, one of the early films, he’s so powerful in it and so, sort of, terrifying.

De Jong: [00:50:05] Oh yes, he is.

Q: And then what about your role in it?

De Jong: [00:50:11] I was the maiden, I was going to be sacrificed, yes.

Q: It's—

De Jong: [00:50:20] But wonderful to do [phonetic] really. I mean I don't know why all of a sudden, we lost that dance. Other dances were made and then we didn't do it for years. It was very strange because it's a very important dance.

Q: Oh, absolutely, yes, yes. Did you know from the beginning where he was going with it?

Did—?

De Jong: [00:50:53] No, no. No. No.

Q: Because your part it seems at the beginning, it's almost as if you're calming.

De Jong: [00:51:07] Yes, I am, I am. Louis Horst, obviously I find—I went to ADF [American Dance Festival] in New London, and of course, I took the Louis Horst classes, and all these things that you had to do when you were there. He had me come back at night when the musicians were there because I had done something. I didn't remember what I had done at night, but he said, "You did not do this this afternoon." [laughs] He was very angry with me. But when

he saw *Scud* [*Scudorama*], he said, “You’re finally got to be a prima donna—a prima ballerina, didn’t you?” very sort of—cigar in his mouth, you know. No, he loved that piece.

Q: So how do you see that role in terms of you come in, and there is this sort of calming thing, but then what happens? What happens to that person?

De Jong: [00:52:24] Well, she sort of breaks down, and he takes advantage of it. He breaks her down even more. Oh, I never thought about it, took to heart because it’s physically very logical what happens. It’s rise, survive, breakdown, and to me that was a very logical way of dancing. You have to when you break down and you have to survive back up, you know?

Q: Yes, yes. Was it difficult physically the role?

De Jong: [00:53:07] For him, not for me. Oh, he’s doing the lugging. No, no, not for me at all because I knew where he was going, but he had to pick me up. [laughs]

Q: Yes, that’s right. That’s right, yes.

De Jong: [00:53:26] The story about that though, it—he made that duet especially just when the two of us were in the studio because every time he had made one move, his pants split. He said, “Okay, tomorrow the next,” so he had about twelve pair of pants with the crotches being split. And that’s not done anymore as dangerous as it used to be. Paul really made it bordering on dangerous.

Q: Bordering on what?

De Jong: Dangerous.

Q: Yes, yes. That’s the feeling you have when you see him, and it’s terrifying.

De Jong: [00:54:14] And that’s not anymore. Not that he didn’t tell Sean [Mahoney], but I don’t think Sean has that side in his character. Sean is a sweet guy, and Paul is not a sweet guy. He can be sweet, but basically, he loves to pulverize people. Yes. He did it very gently, but he knew what he had to do.

Q: Well, there are a lot of dark works, and that comes from somewhere in a personality.

De Jong: [00:55:01] Look at *Last Look*. Yes. He turned to me, and he said, “Oh, I was on that side”, he said, “Do you recognize it?” I said, “Yes,” [laughs]. The ideas, he wasn’t finished with *Scud*, so he went beyond *Scud* and to *Last Look*.

Q: Oh, interesting.

De Jong: [00:55:26] Yes. He always had a *more* answer on that kind of thing. And then he could make the most wonderful—or just think of—what is that dance? I love that little—did you see that little Matthew Diamond, what they showed before the performance? It’s all Bach music of

the Brandenburg music, and he has little vignettes of all the dances but in rhythm. And the last thing, I just love it because it's from that dance with the beautiful backdrop, the pairs, what is it called? Oh, damn. The girls have these dresses on, very simple dresses, and almost pioneer-like, and the guys are in beige pants, and it's Tom and—what do you call him? What is the name? Oh dear, now I'm—[sighs]

Well, anyway, one of the girls, and that's a duet, a happy duet, young duet. And then at the end, she—he—he's standing there, and she rolls her head along his arms, and they separate, and then on the last beat, they run together, and they hug. But the wonderful part of the hug is that Diamond made the last note of the music when her hair flicks for the hug. It's so gorgeous and it's just—it's one of the most beautiful, quiet dances of Paul. He could do that too. He had that duality.

Q: Exactly. That's very central, I think, to his character with those two sides of *Aureole* and *Scudorama*.

De Jong: [00:58:01] And every time that *Esplanade* is made, and they drag those girls in in the duet section, he turns to me, he says, "It's so satisfying." [laughter] By now, he hates *Esplanade*, but just that dragging, he said, "It's so satisfying." At least some things he likes of his own pieces, you know?

Q: Yes.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: I'm just wondering if you can talk a little bit about what touring was like in those early days both in the United States and then when you were abroad. But maybe start with the United States, what it was like to tour in the US in the '60s.

De Jong: [00:59:03] In the beginning, well, I never thought it was hard because you can put me in a car, and I love to look at the land, so for me, it wasn't hard. For other people, it was hard, especially for Americans, they just wanted to get there. We didn't earn very much, and we hit the most deprived areas. It was under the National Endowment [for the Arts], so they could have two days or a week. And in the two days or the week, you had to give one performance, and for the rest of the week, you could have lessons or lecture demonstrations, whatever you wanted. There were very few communities that had the money for a whole week, so it usually was two and a half days. I remembered giving a lecture demonstration [unclear] for schools, for mostly—I don't know the names of the school system in America but the kids all sound like below sixteen. Well, some of them were, but it was very sexy for them and they were, "Oh," you know the whole—yes. In one place, they became so vocal that Paul had to stop the lecture, and he said, "We're going home," he said to the teacher because it became riotous.

Q: Oh no. [laughs]

De Jong: [01:00:53] This was somewhere South. And then in Decatur, Illinois, every morning, we put our makeup on in our motel, of course, no light, forty-watt lightbulbs, and you don't

know what ended up on your face and then you would go to the—girls would go to the girls' john and then the guys would do the guys' john, and we would put on our lecture demonstration costumes. We had lecture demonstrations costumes. They don't have them anymore, and they don't want them anymore. The girls had blonde tights and the black tops, and the guys were reversed, black tights and blonde top. We started at nine o'clock and do six lecture demonstrations. The very first one in Decatur, Illinois, was for teachers, and they were sitting there knitting.

Q: All the time? [laughs]

De Jong: [01:02:10] Well, by the time the performance go at the end of the week—it was in Eisenhower High [School]. Those kids were bused from I don't know where. And by the time the end came, they loved it. They weren't knitting anymore. They weren't knitting anymore.

In the meantime, we always had a Halloween party at that same time. Paul always came like missus—his mother. He would find dresses in The Salvation Army that fitted him. Oh, and then the lady that sponsored us brought those cakes and—what is it? —the lemon pies too. She got so fond, and she had the school band saying goodbye to us at the airport.

Q: Oh no. [laughs]

De Jong: [01:03:22] And they were all drunk, and Paul said, “Oh, please, let them go.” [laughter]
So they were trying to get part of the National Endowment interested in Decatur. It’s in, what,
Indiana, no?

Q: Illinois. Decatur.

De Jong: [01:03:41] Illinois, yes. We went there four times, all with this woman. She was a
little—but she was good that way because she got it done. She got it done.

Q: So, in most places, you were just there a few days and then you would move on?

De Jong: [01:04:04] All week. In Decatur—

Q: But you would—

De Jong: [01:04:06]—we were a whole week or two and a half days. You danced at whatever
facility they had. One time, we arrived in a school, and we had a cafetorium and then you were in
a gym. I remember the gym was very early on, and they had set it up, rigged for us. And in
Aureole, you have these pushes of the guy, they laughed, and the person that laughed came
afterwards to Paul. It was a he, and he was mortified that he had laughed, and he apologized to
Paul. Paul said, “You can laugh any time you want.” They were so afraid of making noise
because they said it was a holy thing. And Paul loved it when they laughed about takes. He really
loved it.

And then *Dance Magazine* did a whole spreadsheet for small children, how did the music sound when they did such and so, and so, and so. “Oh, we thought that music was just like the dogs are playing in the garden,” the answers were so sweet. Some cool cucumber said, “Oh, we didn’t notice any different.” [laughter] It was a very popular program this whole NEA thing. It was hard for us to produce it, but for the audiences, it was very—it really spread dance through all the schools. And we did a lot of universities because, at that time, I know and particularly Berkeley, it was the student body that hired the groups that were going to perform there not the school things. Where in in Ann Arbor, the dean didn’t want any dance. They only want drama. So we always performed in these platforms, these lecture platforms and then you have the poles of lighting. So every time we come into a motel, I say, “We swing around to Paul.” [laughs] I don’t even think [unclear] mind that that’s what we used to do. We swing around to Paul, you know?

But, in a way for me personally, it was much easier because you could write our eight checks for your rent, eight checks for the electricity, eight checks for your telephone and didn’t have to do it every four weeks because it was just as much work. The girls, they cannot imagine to be away now eight weeks. I have leftover letters from Victor [Laredo] in Spain, and they’re so precious because they were written.

Q: Of course, of course.

De Jong: [01:07:38] They were not telephone calls.

Q: Yes, yes and you wrote on aerograms.

De Jong: [01:07:46] That's right. That's right. No, I find it much easy to do eight weeks rather than four weeks or one week. One week to me is like everything that I wore last week is dirty, so I have to bring it to the laundromat and then pack the damned thing over again. I don't know what we did with our—we washed it and hung it on the line over the tub.

Q: Probably.

De Jong: [01:08:16] And it was simple. It was just about a whole different way of traveling.

Q: Yes, and did you go by car or bus or—?

De Jong: [01:08:29] The state department tour, we were always picked up by—

[INTERRUPTION]

De Jong: [01:08:43] In state department tours, we got very often driven, but usually, it was just station wagons. It was very late that we traveled by plane in this country. Everything was done by station wagon.

Q: There were just six of you in the beginning, right, so, and Paul was there with you all the time?

De Jong: [01:09:17] Yes. And Jennifer Tipton drove.

Q: Oh, Jennifer Tipton.

De Jong: And she checked us in, and she did the lighting. [laughter] She did everything.

Q: It's incredible, isn't it?

De Jong: [01:09:28] Yes, she did everything. And then in Iowa City, we finally had gotten a little—one of those little things that were attached to a station wagon that—?

Q: A trailer?

De Jong: [01:09:44] Yes, but those tiny ones. She parked it backwards all the way up, but she came down South, the guy wanted to hire her immediately [laughter] because she was so good at backing up that trailer with the—yes, oh she was good. We left at nine o'clock with Jennifer Tipton and finished at one. Having had breakfast and after going to the john, she wouldn't stop for nothing. Those were her best driving hours.

Q: What about the stages or performing areas?

De Jong: [01:10:26] We didn't bother to worry about it, nothing. It was all wood.

Q: Yes, no Mylar in those days.

De Jong: [01:10:35] No, nothing, nothing. Somewhere in Oregon—no. What is the—?

Q: Washington?

De Jong: [01:10:49] D.C., D.C.

Q: Washington?

De Jong: [01:10:51] Washington, Elie Chaib got this big a splinter locked in his shinbone. He had to go to the hospital. They had to operate it out and then—but, in a way, it was a good thing because the next day, he watched the performance, and he was the only one that clapped. He said, “It was so beautiful!” [laughs] He was just out of himself. He didn’t know that he was part of something so gorgeous because he’d just deny it [phonetic], and there he was. He had never seen anything of that sight. It was wonderful. Those tours were very sort of—about really living, where is food, where is the bed, but also a lot about laughing because the situations could be so ridiculous. Other people cried, but, ah, babies, you know?

Q: Right. But everybody was young too and—

De Jong: [01:12:12] No, they were all in their thirties.

Q: Oh.

De Jong: [01:12:15] Yes, yes, no.

Q: Not so young.

De Jong: [01:12:17] The Taylor Company never has been young except for David Parsons. He was nineteen when he was in Moscow [Russia]. That was the only one. Now, they are young, but in those days then—Maggie was thirty-six.

Q: Really?

De Jong: [01:12:34] Oh yes, and Paul was in his thirties. Oh no, we weren't young, but it was an adventure because nobody else did it. Because even Merce, he was already contracted by a university for six weeks, and they stayed on campus, and they were steady. We were just all over the place. We just drove. Maybe that university had answered, we weren't quite sure, but we went anyway. And they say, "Oh, sure, we have not—no, tonight, you can do it fine."

I remember one performance somewhere in Kentucky, and they had made a stage of coffee tables in a gorgeous, gorgeous dance hall. The parquet was absolutely perfect with a crystal chandelier. But since we had done that dance—it was *Churchyard*. We had done *Churchyard* so much, we marked the rehearsal. We had to go through rehearsal because there was a platform

with little steps down, so you had to rehearse the steps down, how many steps there were. Nothing was easy, but you learned. At night, we started really doing the dance, and those coffee tables had an echo. Like nobody that could hear the music, nobody could hear the beat because they had all that echo from the hollow coffee tables. That's the most ridiculous performance we ever gave. [laughs]

Q: How did they attach these things together, the coffee tables?

De Jong: Oh, tape, tape.

Q: Oh, that doesn't sound like a very stable—

De Jong: [01:14:47] No, it wasn't. [laughter] It wasn't. Nothing was very stable. One time in Chicago [Illinois], well, the guy that the did the curtain got the sandbag that the curtain was going up and down with on his head, and he just fainted. [laughter] And he was a stagehand; he wasn't even a dancer. No, no, a lot of—unfortunately, they were funny things, [laughter] and fortunately because we always laughed about it.

Q: So what about when you were touring in Europe, was that very different from touring in the United States?

De Jong: [01:15:36] Yes. Because touring in Europe was always, you had an impresario, and they always had very—especially our impresario in France, he was fantastic. He always made

sure that there were good hotels, good food in the area, and then we were paid very well. We were practically every other year in France. We did all of France, but Paris—we had to do *Esplanade* three times in Paris, three different times before they got it.

Q: Really?

De Jong: [01:16:21] Yes. I remember Nicholas Gunn, I think it was, said, “Bravo, bravo!” [laughter] They didn’t get it. They were still in the smoke of the trains. They were still in their twenties. Outside of Paris, they loved us, they loved us.

Q: Were you performing in England [United Kingdom], in London?

De Jong: [01:16:47] Yes, very little. England has a different structure with the unions. Oh, first of all, the Musicians’ Union are immediately involved when you have a performance, so you have to pay them off, if—even not [using] them. So even the British film stars? are coming over here. No, it’s a very hard union, yes. Like I read about one of the famous Brits that was in Canada at the [Stratford] Shakespeare Festival, and Canada was dry in those days, but you could drink if you went to the bureau and told them that you were an alcoholic. [laughter] And you go there, [phonetic] yes, and said, “Sure, the whole—” So the whole company became immediately alcoholics so that they could drink. So there were all these little bylaws that were very funny.

Q: Were you on the Paris tour in 1968 in France when they were having some—?

De Jong: [01:18:24] Yes. We saw them, so that they get the stones out of the street and threw them down.

Q: Were you not allowed to dance?

De Jong: [01:18:38] We did one performance, and that was it and then we got out. Sean Marie Somebody bought—[unclear] got us out. Yes.

Q: Was that—

De Jong: [01:18:57] Well, there's whole tour of riots. There were riots in Sweden, there were riots in Yugoslavia. Everywhere, everywhere, there were riots, student riots. Yes. We never came anywhere—and we didn't know that ahead of time, you know. We always stayed in the Hôtel Odéon and Hôtel Odéon had rooms that looked at the—you know?

Q: Square?

De Jong: [01:19:33] At the square but also at the park in the back. And that's where all the Blue Marais [phonetic] were on. Every night, the Blue Marias were standing there, these policemen locked up in the Blue Marias until something happened and they—by the time they got out of the Blue Marias, they were vicious, vicious. That's why they were locked up. So they were sitting there for fights the whole day.

Q: Was it frightening?

De Jong: [01:20:12] Yes, it was. Yes, it was.

Q: I was wondering about the relationship—to go back to the works—between *The Red Room* and *Post Meridian* because it started with *The Red Room*, and I could never understand that relationship between those two works.

De Jong: [01:20:41] The relationship is really the dance only. Alex Katz made this absolutely magnificent red room. It was—how do you call that stone, that orangey stone that's prevalent in Italy? Anyway, the walls were red, the floor was red, the back was red, and there were only two doors in which you could enter. There were these things that came down in three layers, and it worked. But it only was one piece because how are you going to take a room apart for a next piece because it was solid walls, solid backdrop, solid floor. So when we came home, first of all, of course, the costumes were horrendous because he does not know how to dress women. So I was the first one to get on a chair, stand on a chair, and Paul with big scissors cut off the—

Q: So what were the costumes for *The Red Room*?

De Jong: [01:22:12] For *The Red Room*, the girls had these dresses with little flower things, ridiculous. The guys were much better off. They were in just brown tights, like pants-looking thing. But it was a beautiful-looking thing, just gorgeous. If this had been a painting, a moving painting, it would have been beautiful.

So Paul asked a musician friend of his to write a score, and he sort of liked the score but not entirely, so he flipped the score, so the score is played backwards, and that's *Post Meridian*, same steps, same everything, no red room. There are two circles that some very slow motion things happened. They still come down. Sometimes, they were hung, but sometimes, they were brought in by the guys, two guys in the top and two guys in, but it's the exact same dance, just different music.

Q: And obviously different décor?

De Jong: [01:23:42] Yes, but *The Red Room* was absolutely useless but gorgeous, just Alex Katz gorgeous.

Q: Was it ever filmed or—? I mean is there any record of what it looked like?

De Jong: [01:23:57] I don't know. That I don't know because it was absolutely beautiful.

Q: Yes, it's too bad if—

De Jong: [01:24:05] And if you have only two entrances—we had it somewhere else in France that we had one entrance, downstage on the very right stage. We went through the whole program to see how we could reroute everybody out and in from that one entrance, and we did

very well the first night. But the second night you forget, and they got stuck there on the wrong side of the stage. You can do it once, but twice, you know?

Q: But with *Post Meridian*, what, did he still use just those two entrances? Oh.

De Jong: [01:24:51] No, no. No, no, in *Post Meridian*, all of the wings are open.

Q: Let's see if we have time for—talk about *From Sea to Shining Sea*, such a major work.

De Jong: [01:25:08] Well, *Sea to Shining Sea*, you should really talk to Paul about that because I was very brand new in this country, and in Europe, you're not taught American history, so I didn't know who these characters were. I was doing my thing, what I was told, so I was [Elizabeth Griscom] Betsy Ross. [laughter]

Q: And the Statue of Liberty.

De Jong: [01:25:39] Well, of course, the Statue of Liberty, she's in—you can see her so, but Betsy Ross, I didn't know. They're off. I never heard about—and I had to sew her flag you know? George Washington, I had heard about, but the whole political—it was really a political piece, very much so. And then we went to perform it into one of the military academies, and Paul took a look at one of the generals, and he said, “No costumes and rehearsal.” [laughs] We did it, and they didn't squirm. They didn't squirm.

Q: Well, it came at a relatively political time, and I think that—

De Jong: [01:26:45] There was a comment, right, a comment. Yes?

Q: Yes. And I think Paul didn't like to think of himself as a political—

De Jong: [01:26:56] Oh, he was.

Q: He was? Oh, he was. Oh, that's interesting.

De Jong: [01:27:04] He just didn't talk about it. Yes. He is loyally Democratic. [laughs] Yes, no, no, he hated the whole thing. That's why he made the piece. He was very smart because the piece was always done at the pinnacle of right time, and then he put it away, and then he picked it up again when it was the right time. Like the piece that he did for Mr. Bush with Michael Trusnovec—what was it called? —Vultures, *Banquet of Vultures*. I was sitting on there, a really political piece. No. He took it off the program again, and he always sort of forecasted what was going to happen. But it was a delicious piece to do, wonderful because the music—well, the music is also a story because it was choreographed on—what is that? —American composer—

Q: Charles [E.] Yves?

De Jong: What?

Q: Charles Yves?

De Jong: [01:28:26] Yes. and Paul was at just at the verge of being able to pay for an orchestra, but that piece had seventy-two instruments in the pick, and there was no way that Paul could pay for seventy-two instruments. So his good friend John Herbert McDowell wrote a piece instead and dedicated to Yves. It's a collage. You can hear [Ludwig van] Beethoven in it, you can hear [Joseph] Haydn in it, you—[laughs] the whole gamut, but it still sounds like Yves. He was a brilliant composer.

Q: I didn't realize that.

De Jong: [01:29:16] Crazy guy, but he understood how to compose for Paul, yes, in three days.

Q: Whoa, amazing.

De Jong: [01:29:27] Yes.

Q: So did you eventually learn what all these characters were?

De Jong: [01:29:34] The last one was the three men, the—what are they called, the men? The one with the [unclear]?

Q: Oh, the fife and drum, the—

De Jong: No.

Q: No?

De Jong: [01:29:52] What are they called? See,—

Q: Honestly, I don't know.

De Jong: [01:29:57] I still don't know, and I just saw them recently in a movie.

Q: He has Washington crossing the Potomac [River].

De Jong: [01:30:08] Yes, he did Washington crossing Delaware. The only non-American thing was the *Pieta*.

Q: Oh, that's right, yes. Of course. Yes, and the Indian, that just—

De Jong: [01:30:24] Well, but that's American.

Q: —walked, yes.

De Jong: [01:30:26] Well, he was just deaf and mute like Paul's friend.

Q: That's right.

De Jong: [01:30:32] Oh, big women, big fish, you know? [laughs]

Q: That's right, yes. The last pose when the Statue of Liberty with her—

De Jong: [01:30:47] Crown.

Q: —crowns—

De Jong: I know.

Q: —like it's—

De Jong: [01:30:50] That was just me. sinking, sinking, but he always had the Ku Klux Klan there.

Q: Oh?

De Jong: Oh yes, I stabbed one.

Q: Oh, that's what that—oh.

De Jong: [01:31:04] At the end.

Q: Oh, that's interesting.

De Jong: [01:31:06] Oh, it was all there. Yes.

Q: And what about *Orbs*? That was a whole evening, which was—

De Jong: [01:31:20] No, it was not the whole evening, two half hours.

Q: Oh, it's still—

De Jong: [01:31:25] It was two—what is it they are called? They're really Bach pieces that are solidly one piece and then another piece. The beginning piece, that's the "*The Grosse Fugue*." There was summer. Actually, there were four. It is a Bach series of, and I don't know why he was interested in that.

Q: Well, it was longer than he usually did.

De Jong: [01:32:16] Oh yes. It was his first sort of—it was not—it was an hour. There's an intermission, yes, and really separate. There was summer—no spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Q: And what was your role in that?

De Jong: [01:32:40] I was one of the comets and then I became the mother of the bride and then I became winter. Yes.

Q: And was the movement very different in each of those roles?

De Jong: [01:32:59] Yes, yes.

Q: So, what would—?

De Jong: [01:33:02] In the spring, the moons had most of the delicious dancing to do. The comets sort of are quietly—you know constellations. In the summer, Paul had most of the dancing to do because he was the hot sun. Then the wedding in the fall, Paul was the priest, and Molly [M.] Reinhart was the bride, and I was the mother of the bride because I couldn't [makes sound]. [laughter] I could click my little purse. And then the last piece was, that was my only objection because that's a piece that's called "*The Cavatina*," and it's the most gorgeous piece that Beethoven ever wrote. It was just so quiet, and it was just the four planets all not moving in space, and the moon's going around it and we [are] just very quietly moving from one position to the next and then sort of huddling together. And then it was just the coda after that. That had nothing to do with the whole piece. So, I could do away with the coda now. But it was—it was hailed quite good in Europe. In this country, Beethoven is just not known as well. It has nothing to do with accepted or anything, but it's not as known.

Q: Yes, yes, and is that still in the repertoire?

De Jong: [01:34:59] Oh yes, oh yes. We did it a couple of years ago.

Q: For some reason, I've never seen it, so. Do you think that Paul gave you certain kinds of roles or do you think—or did you just do everything?

De Jong: [01:35:20] No, no, I didn't, especially not me. He gave me very specific roles.

Q: What did they tend to be?

De Jong: [01:35:28] Angular, angular from brain to body. I was a praying mantis. Yes, oh no, definitely, definitely, and I didn't mind. I got to dance.

Q: Yes, yes, but it seems like he also gave you quiet things to do too sometimes. I mean I think at the beginning, in *Scudorama* where—

De Jong: [01:35:56] Yes, when I walk in.

Q: Yes, yes.

De Jong: [01:35:59] Well, that he made because I could walk, and he loved the way I walked. I am the biggest critic when there's an audition and these guys just walk across, and they got, "Oh, miserable [miserable,]" because walking can be just so gorgeous, and they have never been taught how to walk. You could tell. They're not even window-shopping.

Q: Are they too self-conscious or what is it that—?

De Jong: [01:36:37] No, they have no idea that there is a way of walking that is beautiful. They just sort of flounder along. It's very embarrassing. It's very embarrassing to your ego that you can't walk.

Q: So, is that something that can be taught?

De Jong: [01:36:58] Oh yes. Oh yes. Graham is walking, and where I come from is walking, and it's delicious when you can walk well with the music. And you can just think about the heavens moving, and, oh, it's just wonderful. You can be outside of yourself when you walk. It's wonderful, and it's just simple. You don't have to do anything but just quietly push air. It's just some things some people never get it because they're too busy with other things. You have to quiet this down [does she point to her head here?] but—

Q: So maybe that's it. That's what I see in your dancing. It's not dreamlike, but there's something that is like a quiet center.

De Jong: [01:38:12] Yes, it could be, it could be.

Q: Even when you're moving very rapidly.

De Jong: [01:38:17] I do have images when I dance. It's not just all movement for me.

Q: So, can you elaborate on that?

De Jong: [01:38:27] Not really because images don't mean anything, they just come. Sometimes, they're just very quiet, but sometimes they're not, or sometimes they're very broken.

Q: That's the other thing I noticed. I mean, I'm just talking about videos because I never really saw you dance, but it's very focused but also there is a sort of calm about—you're not acting.

De Jong: [01:39:02] The focus thing is for certain dancers, yes. Now, getting [into the] second section of *Esplanade*, it's very focused because I'm going at a particular distance and I was—I didn't choose the distance. Paul chose the distance, but I could make something out of it. In *Junction*, I did a bunch of walking when there were not as many people yet, and that was wonderful because *Junction* started—it's all about carpets, so you could walk the carpets, you know?

No, walking is very inspirational too, and you can also embarrass yourself very quickly. Like you can fall over your own feet very easily, very quickly. You have to be warmed up completely to just walk, and some people just never get it, and some people are the most gorgeous walkers.

Q: Well, the other thing I always feel when I was watching you dancing is that you're never acting. A lot of dancers are acting when they are dancing.

De Jong: [01:40:27] I don't know that I can act. Do you know what I mean? It's all up here, and I don't know what my face does. I've never stood in front of a mirror [to] inspect my face. I was too afraid to discover what I would see.

Q: [laughs] What about *Churchyard*, do you remember that?

De Jong: [01:40:59] Yes, yes. I liked it, and Paul tried to bring it back with more people, but we don't have enough film to bring it back.

Q: I wondered about that because Tom sent us some videos, and the video of *Churchyard* is so bad.

De Jong: I know.

Q: I couldn't really figure out what it was about.

De Jong: [01:41:27] Yes, no. Well, it's about the profane, the whole end of profane. That's when we put those pieces of faux rubber in our costumes so it goes profane. It's something that will be accepted better in Europe than here because they make a very different separation between holy and profane.

Q: Oh, oh. So it's another of the dark pieces?

De Jong: [01:42:03] Yes, definitely, definitely.

Q: Okay. I think we can end now for today, and we'll continue at another time because we've got two hours, so we'll stop.

[INTERRUPTION]

Male 1: Today is Paul's birthday.

Q: Oh.

De Jong: [01:42:32] No, it's the twenty-eighth. He's the twenty-ninth.

Male 1: Yes, it's not the twenty-ninth?

De Jong: [01:42:38] Oh, is it today the twenty-ninth?

Male 1: Yes.

De Jong: [01:42:40] Then it's his birthday. Yes, July, yes, it's July twenty-ninth. It is his birthday.

Male 1: It's very fitting to speak to you on Paul's birthday.

De Jong: [01:42:56] Yes, I know. Well, he did care about his birthday. Not so much, but if you gave him usable gifts like I gave him once a whole box of socks, and he just loved it. He liked things that he could use. All of the trivia, he hated it. Boy, it's already a year? That's why I'm confused about July and August. He's a Leo, that's for sure. We have so many Leos at the moment, new Leos, just arrived, yes. We used to be engulfed in the verbose and their opinion the next. [laughter] So strict, please can I divert a little bit? No. [Makes sound] That's very strong. You can pick them out in our company. It's weird. It's really weird. It's stronger in our company than everything in any other group of people. They sent that with the hat [phonetic] No, that was the day I get to know [phonetic]—not, that's not the diagonal. Diagonal is [unclear], who cares? As long as it looks like a diagonal, please. [laughter]

[INTERRUPTION]

[END OF INTERVIEW]