

INCITE PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Linda Hodes

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Linda Hodes conducted by Alessandra Nicifero on May 28, 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.

ATC

Session #1

Interviewee: Linda Hodes

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: May 28, 2019

Nicifero: Okay, so we are here with Linda Hodes, and today is May 28, 2019 in New York, in your apartment. So, thank you very much for being here, for talking to us.

Hodes: Thank you for coming all the way over here.

Nicifero: So, why don't we start by telling when you were born and when, where you grew up?

Hodes: [00:01:04] I was born in New York City, and I grew up in New York City. And, I've lived here most of my life. I spent fifteen years, almost fifteen years, in Israel with the Batsheva Company when it was first formed in 1964, I believe that was.

Nicifero: Can you speak a little bit about your experience of walking to Martha Graham's studio as a child?

Hodes: [00:01:34] When I was a young child, I had an uncle who was kind of a winter sportsman. He skied, and he ice skated. And he used to take me every Sunday up to Bear Mountain where we would ice skate and do a little skiing. And, I decided at that time—I had seen the Sonja Henie movie. She was a Swedish—I think she was Swedish [Norwegian]—ice skater. And she made a movie, and it was very popular. It was a musical. And I wanted to be an

ice skater. So, someone must have told me that if you want to be an ice skater, you should study dance. So, I bothered my parents relentlessly that I wanted to study dance. And, at that time we lived in Greenwich Village. And around the corner from us was a dancer called Martha Graham. My parents probably had no idea who she was. And I certainly didn't know. But they decided they would—my mother decided she would take me there for classes.

So, I remember one day going up there with my mother. It was in a building that was then the 5th Avenue Cinema. I don't know if it still exists. I don't think it does. I think NYU [New York University] has bought up all that property. And, we walked into this building—and I remember the studio was on the third floor—took the elevator up, went to the door, rang the bell—silence. There was no answer for a long time. Rang the bell again. Finally, the door was flung open, and this woman appeared. She had on a black dress with a white stripe down the front, very red lipstick. Her hair was long and loose. And I was like, oh my God. She was amazing-looking. And immediately I was enthralled. It was like going into a Disney movie.

So, we went into the studio and she said, “Oh, I'm Martha Graham. Can I help you?” And my mother said, “Well, Linda's interested in taking dance classes.” She invited us in. Nobody was there. We sat down. I had never been in a dance studio before, and I remember thinking where's all the stuff, because it was a totally empty room. And it had not occurred to me that it would be in a room like that. There were mirrors on one wall. And, I don't remember what we talked about. She asked me why I wanted to take dance classes. I said I wanted to be an ice skater. And, she said, well, we'll see about that, or something like that.

And then my mother started asking about what to wear and when the classes were and things like that. And I had noticed that there were two little dachshunds under a piano. And I asked if I could go over and pet the dogs, and Martha said of course. So I did. But as I was going over, I heard my mother say to Martha, “Linda can be a very naughty little girl. I hope you won’t have any trouble with her.” And Martha said, “I don’t think I’ll have any trouble with her at all.” And at that moment, I was hooked. I just wanted to be in that room with this woman.

And, so I started taking classes there. I only took class on Saturday because that was the only time there was a children’s class. And, Martha herself taught those children’s classes in those days. I’m sure she didn’t particularly love teaching the ten or twelve little girls that were running around, but she did it because she needed the money. I’m sure that was the reason.

Nicifero: And they were mostly girls?

Hodes: [00:06:08] They were all girls.

Nicifero: All girls?

Hodes: [00:06:09] Yes. I don’t remember any boys in that class at all.

Nicifero: Was she the only one teaching classes?

Hodes: [00:06:15] She was the only one teaching. Now, there might have been other people teaching other classes. I'm not sure. But, she taught that children's class.

Nicifero: And you continue all through high school?

Hodes: [00:06:30] Yes, I continued.

Nicifero: Was there a moment when you realized that you wanted to be a dancer and no longer an ice skater?

Hodes: [00:06:40] I don't remember a particular moment, but just the ice-skating kind of faded away. And yes, I wanted to be a dancer. I was taken by my parents to see Graham perform, didn't understand anything, but I liked it. So, I was just, that was it. And then, as time went on—I guess I was in high school maybe—I started taking two classes a week and then more and more. She said, "Well, you should come every afternoon that you can."

Nicifero: And so, the transition to become a member of the company went pretty smoothly?

Hodes: [00:07:34] Actually, I didn't become a member of the company right away because I got a job. The problem was my parents wanted me to go to college. And I wanted to be a dancer. And in those days there was no dance in college, not like there is today. So, there was a battle. And, my father said, "If you can get a job and support yourself as a dancer, fine. I'll give you one year. If you can't, then you have to go to college." So I said, yes.

So I started going to auditions, and I got a job in a show. I got a job in a show called *Make Mine Manhattan*, which I think we were at the Paramount Theater, one of those Broadway big theaters in those days where there were stage shows. And, we did four shows a day, five on Saturday and Sunday, which meant I was in makeup and costume from, like, 11:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night. And, we did a show that was, like, an hour long between showings of the movie, which was a Bette Davis movie, and I don't remember which one. And I only saw it backwards because I saw it from backstage. So, that was my first job.

Nicifero: And your first performance as a dancer for Martha?

Hodes: [00:09:10] After I'd been in that show, I don't know what happened after that one. Let me think. My father was in the movie business, and he spent some time in Europe. And I remember going to Europe with him for a couple of months. And then, when I came back, I went back to the Graham School to take class. And at that point, Martha was looking for new dancers. She had just broken up with Eric, and a lot of company members had left. And there was a kind of new era starting. And that's when I was invited to join the company. So, that was about six months later.

Nicifero: And do you remember meeting Paul, Paul Taylor, for the first time?

Hodes: [00:10:03] That came much later, not much later but later. That was when we were still downtown on 13th Street and 5th Avenue. When we moved up to 63rd Street, Martha, I believe

she started teaching at Juilliard. She also taught at The Neighborhood Playhouse, and I was one of her demonstrators. I used to demonstrate the class for her. So, one day I went to Juilliard with her. She was teaching a class. And, there was this boy in class. I noticed him, and I'm sure Martha noticed him right away because he was very tall and good looking and didn't dance like anybody else and didn't really know the technique. But he was in the back of the room, and he was following along.

And, at that time we were just gearing up to start rehearsals to go on an Asian tour, a state department tour. We would be sent all over Asia. It was a great tour. And we were looking for—Martha was looking for another man. And I remember going home in the taxi with Martha, and we were talking about the audition. And I said, Martha, what about that boy that was in class today—you know, the blonde boy in the whatever-colored tights he had on, I don't remember—beige or something. And I remember Martha was in the taxi, and she went like this. She said, "He's on his own path." And I thought, well, I guess that means she doesn't want him, so I didn't say anything else.

But, in the meantime, after the class, I had spoken a few words with Paul, and he said, "I would like to come to the studio and take class." And I said, well, come. I'm sure you would be welcome there. And, I never thought about it again. And then, a few days later he showed up and he took class there for a couple of weeks. And then Martha decided she would take him to Asia.

Nicifero: What was unique about his movement?

Hodes: [00:12:42] It's really hard to describe. Paul was a dancer. He was a very facile dancer. He could do anything. But he definitely had his own way of moving. It's not that he didn't do the movement. I don't mean to imply that he did things wrong. But he had his own stamp on things. When he was dancing with other people, it was very hard to make him look like everybody else. And that's just a thing that some dancers have. But, it worked for Martha's ballets because a lot of the parts were separate parts, so he didn't have to dance with everybody else. When he did have to dance with everybody else, it was always a little bit of a problem. But we yelled at him, and we pushed him, and he managed to look like everybody else, I think. I don't know.

Nicifero: Were you able to see Paul Taylor dancing with Merce Cunningham?

Hodes: [00:13:45] No, I never saw him dance with Merce Cunningham, never. I wish I had. I think that was before this whole thing happened with Martha. So, then he was in the company finally, and he was in the company for I don't know how—maybe six, seven years. I don't remember. I don't know, quite a while. And then he started doing his own things, which it was kind of inevitable that he would because of the way he moved and the way he liked to move. And so, in those days you didn't work all year in a company. You only worked when you worked, which could be maybe for a tour or a New York season, and in between you were off and not making a living. So, Paul started doing his own things.

And he asked a few of us that were in the Graham Company if we wanted to be in his—he said to me, “Oh, Lindy Lou, you want to?”—he always called me Lindy Lou. He said, “Lindy Lou, you want to be in my dance?” And I think I said something like, “I don't know. Is it going to be

any good?” or something like that. I was very whatever, I don’t know. But, since I didn’t have anything else to do, I decided to be in it.

When I was in the company, which was really a long time ago, in the fifties sometime, Akiko Kanda was dancing with him and Dan Wagner, Liz Walton, me and a girl named Maggie Newman. And, we were all Graham dancers except Maggie wasn’t. And, that was it. We were the company.

Nicifero: Was he a different person as a choreographer? How was making dance with him?

Hodes: [00:15:42] It was good dancing with him. He had a studio on 6th Avenue. It was on the top floor of a very dilapidated walkup building. You had to walk up, like, five flights of stairs to get there. It was small, and the floor was kind of like this. It was sloped. And there was a skylight, I remember. And he lived there, too. He’d put up a partition, and there was a tiny little army cot and this little sink, and it was very primitive. And, he didn’t have any money, but he managed. He cooked his food on a hot plate, probably all illegal. I don’t know.

But working with Paul as a choreographer was—he was different. I’d worked with a couple of choreographers by then. I wasn’t really that experienced with other choreographers. I was used to Martha, and I thought, well, since I worked with Martha, this would be easy. Well, it wasn’t easy at all because he never liked anything I did or any of us. He always was looking for something else. And it was sometimes difficult for me to figure out what the hell he wanted, because I thought I was doing everything he asked. But, apparently I wasn’t all the time. We had a couple

of arguments, but I liked working with him. It was challenging. It was fun because I would say I'm trying to figure out what the hell you want. But, it was an interesting time.

Nicifero: So, he would explain movement through movement?

Hodes: [00:17:35] He wasn't good at explaining movement. That was probably part of the problem as far as I was concerned. He'd show you what he wanted, and then you just had to kind of do it. And, because maybe you didn't absorb it all at once, you probably—I probably did it my own way, and it wasn't what he wanted. But I loved working with him, and we got on fine. I did *Insects and Heroes* when he choreographed it. I did *Junction* when he choreographed it. I did *Three Epitaphs*, but I think he'd already choreographed that. What else did we do? I don't know. There were a number of other things. That one with the telephone wires that Rouben Ter-Arutunian designed, it was beautiful—Fibers. Fibers? Yes, I think so. There were one or two others I can't even remember.

Nicifero: And what were the venues where you performed in New York?

Hodes: [00:18:46] We went to Jacob's Pillow once. We went to the American Dance Festival when it was still in Connecticut—not Connecticut.

Nicifero: Yes, I think so.

Hodes: [00:18:56] Was it Connecticut? New London, yes. And we went to—we did something at Needle Trades, which was a theater in the twenties somewhere. I can't remember which street it was on. I don't think it exists anymore. And something probably at the Y I think we did, at the 92nd Street Y. So, those were the kinds of venues there were in those days.

Nicifero: Were you also friends? Would you spend time together socially?

Hodes: [00:19:30] We were friends because, first of all, we were both in the Graham Company. So, after we finished rehearsing with Paul we would all get on the subway and go up to—Akiko and Dan and Paul and me, we'd all get on the subway and we'd go up to the Graham School to rehearse. And then, we'd stop and have coffee and a hamburger or whatever. So, yes, we were all friends.

Nicifero: And it seems that everybody around those years was taking classes, ballet classes, with Margaret Craske. Some of the Cunningham dancers were taking classes. Were you as well?

Hodes: [00:20:19] I wasn't taking class with **Craske**. I took class with—what was his name?—**Ben Harkavy** and with another man called **Karel Shook** in those days. I never took class with Craske. Craske, it was hard to get into her class because she was—Paul took that class because she'd been a teacher of his at Juilliard. And I wasn't a Juilliard student, so I didn't have an in to that class.

Nicifero: Do you remember seeing performances around those years, going to see ballet or other companies?

Hodes: [00:21:01] Yes. New York City Ballet was doing interesting things then. That was their early days, still. There were other companies around, but very classical companies.

Nicifero: And, you also performed in *Episodes*, or you were around?

Hodes: [00:21:26] Yes.

Nicifero: Do you have any memory of that collaboration, working with Balanchine?

Hodes: [00:21:33] The collaboration, it wasn't really a collaboration because everybody worked separately. Yes, I was in Martha's section of *Episodes*, which had nothing to do with Balanchine's section of *Episodes*, which had nothing to do with Paul's section of *Episodes*. And that was totally by itself, Paul's section. I remember what happened with the rehearsal's with Martha's group. But I didn't ever see what Paul was doing until the day of the performance, until we had a tech rehearsal on the day of the performance, and I saw what he was doing then.

Nicifero: And was it surprising for you to see what he was doing? What was your—

Hodes: [00:22:22] No. I looked at it, and immediately I knew that Mr. Balanchine had not really choreographed that, that that was really Paul's choreography, and Balanchine had probably

added a few little connections here and there. But, it was something. We were all in separate rooms doing separate things at that point.

Nicifero: And, did you tour with Paul Taylor Company during *Insects and Heroes*?

Hodes: [00:22:55] Not really toured. I went to ADF with him, and I went to the Pillow and a few places like that. But I didn't stay that long in Paul's company because at that point Martha—at that point they had started this whole program. The state department had started this whole program of exchange programs with other countries. And Martha was touring a lot. And, so we were really much more busy and I had to make a choice at a certain point. Do I want to stay with Paul, or do I want to continue with Martha?

And, the main reason I stayed with Martha was financial because she paid well in those days. Not well considering what we get today, but in those days she was paying well and Paul wasn't. I would have liked to have stayed with Paul in some ways because I found it interesting and challenging in a way. It was less predictable than what Martha was doing. And I didn't know where it was going to go. And I didn't know if it was going to succeed. And I didn't know if I'd be out of a job in a month. So, I stayed with Martha, which was maybe a wrong decision, but I don't know. I don't think it was a wrong decision for me at that time.

Nicifero: And, what happened afterwards? Were you still in touch with Paul? Were you able to—

Hodes: [00:24:33] I always stayed in touch with Paul. We had become friends. We weren't close, close, close, close friends, but we always were friendly. And when we were in the same place, we always had dinner, and we used to go to movies and things like that. And then he would come back and dance with Martha once in a while, too. So, we were together there, when she was doing a New York season. He wouldn't maybe go on tour with her, but he would do a New York season with her. So, that kept us together. I always saw Paul socially in those days, too. And, the only time I stopped seeing Paul was when I was living in Israel, and I didn't see any of my American friends then.

Nicifero: Can you speak about that?

Hodes: [00:25:29] He did come to Israel, as a matter of fact, but that was several years into it. And I did see his company perform in Israel, and we did have dinner and we did have visits and things like that.

Nicifero: Can you speak a bit about your being in Israel and being the director of the Batsheva Company? How did that happen?

Hodes: [00:26:00] That happened because Bethsabée de Rothschild was a good friend of Martha Graham's and one of her financial supporters. And, actually, Bethsabée called me up, and she talked to me about this project, that she wanted to start a dance company in Israel. And I was totally not interested because, first of all, I was in a—this was a period where the Graham

Company was having a lot of problems. This was in the sixties, early sixties. Martha was drinking a lot. Martha was not working. The company was semi-laid off.

I got a job at a show. I was in *The King and I*. I was in another show before that. Then I moved to *The King and I* because I needed to make some money. I couldn't just sit around and do nothing, or teach class, because it didn't pay enough. So, at first I said to her, no, I'm not interested. I'm in *The King and I*. And, I was making a really good salary every week. So, I said no, I'm not interested.

Well, about two weeks later they posted the closing notice on the board for *The King and I*. and I thought, I wonder if that job in Israel is still open. I could go for a few weeks. And she had asked me to come for a few weeks. I think she wanted six weeks or four. I don't remember, something like that. And, so I called her, and I told her what had happened. And she said, "Oh, well, I'd love you to come. Can you come for six weeks?" And I said, well, it's kind of a long time, but I'll do it.

She wanted me to set *Diversion of Angels*, *Embattled Garden*, and I think there was one other piece. It was a lot of work for six weeks, and teach class every day. So I said, okay, I'll do it. So I went, and that's how I got to Israel. And, that was the very beginning of the company. They hadn't ever performed. And they were gearing up to have their first performance at the Habima Theater. And, that was the beginning of the Batsheva Company. And, I loved Israel. I loved the company. My marriage had just broken up. A whole lot of things had happened in my life. I

didn't have a job in the States. It was just convenient to stay there. I also met someone else that I later married. I sort of started a different life for myself.

Nicifero: Did you learn Hebrew?

Hodes: [00:29:24] Very badly.

Nicifero: All classes were, of course, in English?

Hodes: [00:29:29] Everybody speaks English, and I did—yes, I learned enough to get along, to shop and to get what I needed. But I never learned it really well because the trouble was I could never go to an Ulpan, which was one of the schools where they teach you, because we always worked at night, and the Ulpans only met at night because everybody else worked in the daytime and went to those schools at night. Those were the schools for the immigrants. So, that was my problem.

Nicifero: Then you became the director of the company?

Hodes: [00:30:07] I became the director. I didn't want to become the director. I just became the director by default because they were looking for another director. And everybody said, "Well, you just have to do this until we find a director." So, I did it. I didn't really ever want to be a director. I did it for longer than I wanted to do it. I don't remember how long. But I didn't mind being a rehearsal director. I just didn't want to be an artistic director.

Nicifero: And, were you able to choreograph?

Hodes: [00:30:45] I did choreograph a few things. I wasn't really interested in being a choreographer. It's just that you kind of are in the situation where it's easy to do it, so you do it. And, I enjoyed it, but it wasn't something I really wanted to pursue.

Nicifero: So, Paul Taylor was just one of the many choreographers that came from the United States to perform in Israel?

Hodes: [00:31:12] Yes. He came to the Israeli Festival. And he never actually—when I was there, he never did a work for Batsheva. I kept suggesting him, but I don't know. Whoever was making the arrangements, I guess they couldn't arrange it with him or something. His company was really busy in those days. I think he came—in all the years I was there, which was almost fifteen years, he came only once to Israel with his company. And they performed in the Israeli Festival. I think they performed in Jerusalem and in Herzliya and in—I don't know if they performed in Tel Aviv. I don't honestly remember anymore.

Nicifero: Do you remember what they were performing, which piece?

Hodes: [00:32:02] I don't honestly remember. I'm sure you can find that information.

Nicifero: What did bring you back to the United States? When did you decide to come back?

Hodes: [00:32:26] I came back to the United States in 1977. My husband was killed in Israel in an accident which we're not going to get into, in the army. And I had a little child then, a small baby. So I decided to come back to the United States where my family was and for a whole lot of reasons that we don't have to get into now. But, Martha had offered me a job of running her school, and I took that job. That's one of the reasons I came back. So I came back to run her school, which I did for a year. Then they asked me to start being a rehearsal director, which I did, and ran the school.

And I said I can't run the school and be a rehearsal director and go on tour and do all those things. And I had stopped dancing by this time. So, I gave up the school. I became a rehearsal director. And I became Martha's assistant, basically. And all the works that she choreographed in that period, I was her assistant. So, that was it.

Nicifero: Do you have any memories of specific work that you were doing those years?

Hodes: [00:34:09] In those years with Martha?

Nicifero: Yes.

Hodes: [00:34:11] Oh, yes. We did lots of things. We did, oh my God, *Rite of Spring* and *Judith* and *Legend of Judith*, I think it was called. It was a remake of the old *Judith* dance she did. And we also did repertory, all her repertory—*Appalachian Spring*, *Embattled Garden*, *Angels*,

Clytemnestra, everything we did. *Acts of Light* we did. There were many dances. I can give you a list.

Nicifero: And how was being the rehearsal director? Did it feel as though—

Hodes: [00:34:57] Working with Martha was fine. Martha and I were very close at that point. We became really good friends in a different way. It's different when you're not dancing. It's different when you're helping in a different way. And, we became close, and it was a very interesting, good relationship. I think it was very important for me. I liked it. She was someone that was very—I felt very supported by her and loved by her. There were problems in the company. There were problems of the people that were running the company as far as the money was concerned and things like that. But those things didn't really touch me that much, so it was all right. Now, the problems started after Martha died. I lasted a year after Martha died, and then I had to leave. Actually, I was fired. I didn't leave. But I would have left if I hadn't been fired.

Nicifero: What was the official reason for firing you?

Hodes: [00:36:04] It was this man, Ron Protas, that was running the company. I'd managed to get along with Ron and deal with Ron for years. And I knew how to deal with him, I thought. But, he just had some artistic ideas that were so ridiculous that I just finally couldn't take it anymore. I said that's not going to work. I can't do that. And so he fired me. It was fine. I was ready to go.

Nicifero: I'm curious. What were the artistic ideas he had that were—

Hodes: [00:36:40] Oh, he wanted to send—because money was short—I can't even remember them. They were all so bizarre. He had this idea that he was going to send out half the company without costumes and sets. And I kept saying you can't do Martha's work without costumes and sets because where are they going to dance? They dance half the time on the sets. And, he was convinced that he could do it, and I just threw up my hands and said, well, go ahead. I can't do that. So, it was time to leave.

And I had been in touch with Paul all this time. Paul and I were, again, seeing each other occasionally for dinner and a movie or just dinner and talking. He had his place in Mattituck then, and I used to go out for a weekend. And we just had a very nice relationship, a very easygoing, companionable relationship. And, when I left Graham—I think it was in May or June—and I suddenly thought, oh my God, what am I going to do all summer? I don't even have a salary coming in. Charlie Reinhart called me and said, "Do you want to come to ADF and teach this summer?" And I'm sure he didn't need another teacher, but he just suddenly thought, oh, this poor girl is adrift. I'd better do something.

But I did go, and I had a really good time because it was just so nice to get away from all the drama. And, I went to ADF. And Paul's company came down to ADF to perform. And Paul and I had dinner one night when he was down there. And, he said, "So, what are you going to do now?" And I said I haven't the vaguest idea. I have no job. I have nothing when I get back to

New York. And he said, “Well, do you know anything about second companies?” And I went, not really. But I said I could find out, I guess.

And he said, “Well, everybody’s bothering me to start a second company. And, I do have a grant.” I don’t know if he said a grant or something. He had some kind of offer of money to start a second company. And he said, “Of course, I’m trying to figure out a way I can keep the money and not start the company,” which was very typical of Paul. And I said I don’t think you can do that. And he said, “Would you be interested in running a company like that?” And I said Paul, I honestly don’t even know what it entails. But, let me figure it out, and let’s talk about it next week.

So, I think I called Sylvia Waters (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater), and we talked a little bit about second companies. And she sort of filled me in on what second companies do. I kind of knew what they did, but I didn’t really know the details. And, I called Paul, and I said, well, let’s try it. If it doesn’t work, we just won’t do it. He said okay. And, that’s how it started. That’s how Taylor 2 got born.

So, I went to work for Paul then, and that was a great period. I loved Taylor 2. I loved forming that company. I loved the dancers I had. They were really young and really inexperienced, but they were great. And, all of those dancers ended up as major soloists in his company. So, I had Ann Maria in the company and Orion and Michael-Trusnovec and so many of the good dancers—Amy Young.

Nicifero: Were you making decisions about the repertoire with Paul?

Hodes: [00:40:54] Yes. We started small. We started with *Three Epitaphs*. And we did a smaller version of *Company B*. And we did *Aureole*. I think that was the first program. And then we added *Arden Song* and *Airs*. We kept adding things as we went along—*Funny Papers*, a few other things. We only had six dancers. We had three girls and three boys. So, for them it was really a great experience. They got to do all the parts. They just didn't have one part. They had three parts in one dance.

Nicifero: And how frequent was the interaction of Paul with the dancers?

Hodes: [00:41:46] He would come into rehearsal after we'd kind of gotten it together, and he would give direction and things like that, say this is supposed to be this way or that way and this could be better or this could be—or maybe he'd have an idea to change something to make it bridge better or something. He was very active in the beginning.

Nicifero: And you would select together the dancers?

Hodes: [00:42:16] Yes. We had an audition, which he was there. He was there.

Nicifero: And so, was 1994 or '93 the trip to Africa? I believe it was soon after.

Hodes: [00:42:37] Yes. I think it got started late in the fall of '92, so yes, it would be '93. Yes, that was kind of crazy. That was a state department tour. They weren't doing many of them then. The director, the executive director then, was a man named **Ross Kramberg**. And, he said to me one day, "You have to come to Washington with me." And I said Washington? Why? And he said, "Well, we're going to see"—and I can't remember the man's name now. I'm sorry. But we're going to see Mr. So-and-so who's the head of such-and-such. I don't know. And I went, all right, thinking nothing will ever come of this.

And, so we went down there, and this man, whoever he was, was sitting at his desk. And, behind his head, on the wall, was this map of Africa. And, it was one of those maps where they have pictures of the little animals and little African people doing things, one of those maps, pictorial maps. And the man just—we sat down, and he said, "Well, where would you like to go?" And I was so taken aback because I didn't expect that. I thought he was going to ask us about the company and what we did and things like that.

He said, "Where do you want to go?" And I'm looking at this map, and I said I'd love to go to Africa. And he said, "Okay, we could arrange that." And that was it. It was so strange, but we went to Africa.

Nicifero: But they decided the locations for the—

Hodes: [00:44:29] Yes, they decided. I guess that has a lot to do with their government. And we were taken care of very nicely and very well by American **USIAS** people, whatever they're

called. I don't know. They were all very helpful and very nice. It was a wonderful tour. It was hard because we weren't really in real theaters. We were sometimes in a movie house, not with a movie playing, but just sometimes there was a screen up. Sometimes we were outdoors on a platform. Sometimes we were in schools. So, it was a hard tour.

Nicifero: And you were also teaching classes, or the dancers were?

Hodes: [00:45:18] The dancers taught classes. There were only the six dancers and me, and I had a stage manager. So, I became the costume lady, and the stage manager had to set up the whole show. Sometimes there was nothing to set up. You just turn the wall switch on, and that was the lighting. There was none. But sometimes we had a real theater, occasionally.

Nicifero: And, how was Paul Taylor's work received by—

Hodes: [00:45:52] It was fantastic. They loved it. Mostly we played universities and high schools, so mostly our audiences were young. But I'm sure there were other people in the audience, too. But they loved it. They had never been exposed to American modern dance, as far as I could tell. I used to give a little talk sometimes if they asked for it. Sometimes they didn't want it, but if they asked for it before the show, I would ask, how many of you have ever seen American modern dance? Nothing. They'd seen television sometimes, not often, but sometimes. But what they'd seen on television was mostly disco and things like that.

Nicifero: And so, of course, Paul wasn't there, never—he didn't obviously travel with the Paul Taylor 2?

Hodes: [00:46:56] No. When we went to India, it was a joint venture. The Taylor 2 went and kind of prepared the ground, and then the main company came and performed in a real theater. But that was a couple of years later.

Nicifero: And there was an overlap of the companies, so you were both there?

Hodes: [00:47:19] Yes. In India that happened, only in India, I think. In Africa we were on our own.

Nicifero: Was the first time for you or for the dancers, to be in Africa?

Hodes: [00:47:34] I had never been to Africa. I'd been to a lot of places, but yes, it was the first time, first time for all of us to be in Africa.

Nicifero: What kind of reaction on your side?

Hodes: [00:47:47] I loved it. The conditions were hard. And that's tiring, and it wears on you after a while. But aside from that, it was wonderful. I loved the audience reactions. I loved the interchange we had with people. Often, I would do, depending on the situation, but I would do

questions and answers afterwards with the audience and the dancers. So, yes, it was very stimulating for everybody.

Nicifero: What was interesting to them? What were the kinds of questions that they were asking?

Hodes: [00:48:37] Oh, they asked everything. They asked, how much do you get paid? Can you make a living at being a dancer? How much do you train? What do you eat? Who makes the costumes? They asked everything and anything. They asked if the company was married to each other.

Nicifero: And was there an exchange? Did you or the dancers take classes?

Hodes: [00:49:10] Yes, there was. In a few places we went actually to a dance studio, and then if one of the Taylor 2 dancers would teach a class to those dancers, then those dancers would teach Taylor 2 something in a studio. So, there was that kind of exchange.

Nicifero: And when did you stop being the director?

Hodes: [00:49:39] I stayed for five years, and then I said to Paul one day, I said, you know, Paul, I can't do this anymore because I just can't travel like this anymore. It was really hard. Our conditions were not deluxe in any way. And Paul said, "Oh my God." He said, "I'm surprised you lasted as long as you did." So, I left. I left regretfully, but I just, it was time for me. I needed

a rest. So then, **Mary Cochrane** took over for me, and she was there a while. And then, other people have taken over since.

Nicifero: Tell me more about Paul as a person. In his writing, I can see an extreme sense of humor, a warmth and wild imagination. I wonder as a friend—

Hodes: [00:50:50] I used to spend a lot, not a lot, but I used to spend some of my weekends up in Mattituck. And that's where we used to really talk. Paul was a very private person, and it was rare for him to just open up easily. But, sometimes we'd get into these—because we'd known each other so long, I think. We knew each other through different stages of our lives. We would talk about books we were reading. We would talk about—I would always ask him what he was working on. And he'd say, "Oh, I'm looking for music." And I'd say what kind of music do you look for when you look for music? And I remember he said to me, "I'm looking for music I can stand to listen to for the six weeks I have to choreograph it," or something like that.

He was always very kind of funny about it. He didn't put himself on a pedestal at all. He would say things like, "I'm looking for music that won't bore me to death after a week." And we'd talk about—funnily enough, I don't think we talked that much about dance. We talked about movies we'd seen, books we were reading. Sometimes we'd get off on some subject that was something that was happening in the world. And Paul always had opinions, and sometimes his opinions would be very—I don't know how to say it—contrary to what would be a popular opinion just because he wanted to get a reaction out of you.

Nicifero: And, did he go to see dance performances? Did he like some?

Hodes: [00:53:04] Not very much. He didn't even like to see his own dance performances sometimes.

Nicifero: Did he have preferences about his work?

Hodes: [00:53:20] Not that I know of. I don't think so.

Nicifero: I'm very curious about technique and how different Martha Graham's technique would be from Paul Taylor, and if you experienced the difference right away while you were a dancer and later on when you were teaching classes.

Hodes: [00:53:59] Yes. There was a difference, and that was very evident to me when I was dancing with him. As I told you before, he didn't like what I was doing because I was doing it in a Graham way, I think. It's hard to explain, but he had this very particular way of moving. And so he would take Martha's technique, but he would make it a little bit his own by just giving it his own twist. That developed later on into his technique.

And, there are a great many similarities. The core is really the same. And I didn't even realize that until I started working there and watching the classes. And the core of the movement is absolutely the same. It's just that on top of it he's added his sort of turned-inside-out kind of movements.

Nicifero: Was being in Martha Graham's class intimidating or mesmerizing?

Hodes: For me?

Nicifero: For you as a child and then a teenager.

Hodes: [00:55:17] No, because I think was so young that I was unaware that she was different or anything like that. I was very fascinated by her. I thought she was beautiful. To me she was like a Disney princess with the long black hair and the red lipstick. She was very glamorous. I felt very comfortable in her technique.

Nicifero: Would she teach just exercise, physical exercise, or would bring in books?

Hodes: [00:55:55] In class she would just teach physical exercise. But, when I was in the company and she was working on a piece, Martha was a real scholar. Martha really researched her subjects. And she used very classical subjects sometimes, you know, all her Greek subjects. She would often suggest that we read such-and-such. When we did *Seraphic Dialogue*, I remember she gave me two books. I don't remember the authors, but they were both about Joan of Arc. I always said Martha was my college education because I didn't have a college education. But I had Martha Graham.

Nicifero: And, of course, with Paul it was a different process, or he shared—how much did he share his intention about his work?

Hodes: [00:56:58] No, never. And, because i was used to Martha, I would say, what am I supposed to be feeling here? Or what's going on here, or something? And he'd just look at me like just do the movement. No, I don't know if he had a thought about it or what it was supposed to be, or an emotional content. But he never told when I was in the company. Maybe it was different later on, although a few times later on, when we were rehearsing with Taylor 2, sometimes I would help him out with rehearsals.

I remember there was a period when Betty was away having her knee operated on. I helped him out with rehearsals. And, he would say to the dancers, “You know, it's like remember when you had a girlfriend and you were going to the movies,” or something. He would make some reference to real life. But he was much more abstract than Martha in that sense. He wasn't concrete about things.

Nicifero: And in what way [was] Martha was more concrete?

Hodes: [00:58:17] Martha usually had a script, not a written-down script but a script in her head, about what was happening and what the relationship between two dancers or three dancers or four would be. And so, you could use that in your movement to somebody. But Paul didn't give you that when I was in the company. Later on, I think he started doing more of that, and that probably happened at the time when he was dancing less, because I noticed also when Martha

stopped dancing, she was doing more of that, too. She was explaining more verbally what she wanted.

Nicifero: So, you were away when Paul stopped dancing?

Hodes: [00:59:10] Yes, I was away.

Nicifero: And you were also away during the most critical years for Martha Graham, when she was drinking more?

Hodes: [00:59:24] Yes. I was away when Martha stopped dancing. And actually I was away when Paul stopped dancing. Yes, I never thought of that, but that's true.

Nicifero: Have they ever talked to you about what was their experience of stopping dancing?

Hodes: [00:59:39] Paul has never spoken about that. Wait a minute. I think we did speak about it. But Paul was very matter of fact about it. Paul just said, "Oh God, I'm so glad I don't have to do that anymore." Martha always talked often about how much she missed dancing. Martha always said that she didn't ever care about being a choreographer. She just choreographed so she'd have something to dance. And I think Paul felt that way, too, in a way. But, the transition of Paul stopping to dance and just becoming a choreographer was something I wasn't around for. I didn't see that.

So, with Paul it was—this is only an observation, and I'm not sure it's right. It's just what I saw. Both of them, I felt, when they stopped dancing, became much more aware of other things that were going on in front of them. Like, they could actually look at the picture of everybody onstage, and they became more aware spatially of things. For instance, if there's maybe a line of dancers here, then maybe there should be a line or shouldn't be a line of dancers there. I know Martha became much more aware of all of that, of where people were onstage.

I don't want to say that Paul was not aware of that before because he certainly was always aware of that, more so than Martha. But, I think he became even more aware of designing things when he stopped dancing. And he also became interested in other things like writing. Paul was a real artist. Out in Mattituck, we would go to the beach, and we would collect driftwood and shells and stones and all kinds of junk we found on the beach. And Paul would make these fabulous things out of them. He would make furniture, and he would decorate boxes, and he would make tables. He was really an artist in so many ways.

Nicifero: Can you speak about **George Tacit**? And were your dancers always aware that Tacit didn't exist, because of course you didn't meet this mysterious set designer? But, did he always share with you this idea? Was it—

Hodes: [01:02:48] I'm trying to remember what happened there. I don't know. I don't know if I know anything about that. I know with **Noguchi** and Martha, there was kind of a—is it all right if I talk about that?

Nicifero: Sure.

Hodes: [01:03:10] There was a kind of routine, that Martha would be choreographing a dance, and at a certain point Noguchi would come. And he'd sit down, and he'd look at the dance, and then he'd get up. And Martha would ask everybody to leave the studio. And they would talk for maybe fifteen minutes. And then Noguchi would leave. And then about a week later he'd come back with a little, one of those little shoe boxes with the set in it. And, that's how that worked. I don't know what they ever said to each other, because we were never allowed in the room.

Nicifero: I'm thinking that Paul Taylor often signed for the set design and the costume.

Hodes: [01:04:08] Yes. I don't know. That was probably stuff that he designed or asked somebody specifically to make, like I want this. And he would explain it to them. But I don't know that process, really. I just assumed, and I never really talked about it with him, I don't think. I don't remember ever talking about it, is that that was just his way of doing what he wanted. Everybody kind of knew it was his design.

Nicifero: So, obviously there was not a real person being George Tacit coming in.

Hodes: [01:04:57] No, there was no George Tacit. Paul was George Tacit.

Nicifero: Yes. But, I guess the secret was kept by also all the dancers. I remember listening to an interview of Nicholas Gunn, one of his dancers in the seventies. And he's mentioning George Tacit as a real person. So, he's keeping the secret, or he's keeping the magic.

Hodes: [01:05:27] I don't even know. Actually, when I was in Paul's company in the early days, I don't remember that there was a George Tacit then. I think that came a little later, because the designers that Paul had when I was in the company have all become famous artists, like Alex Katz and Rouben Ter-Arutunian and all those people. So, I guess they got full credit. I don't remember when I was in the company that there was a George Tacit. But as soon as I saw that name on the program, I knew it wasn't a real person, that that was just Paul's way of saying this is what I wanted. I did this, in other words. That was typical Paul.

Nicifero: What else was typical Paul in that genre of—

Hodes: [01:06:35] I remember there was a whole incident in *Clytemnestra*. Paul played Aegisthus, which was a young lover of Clytemnestra. And, there is a scene where Clytemnestra is doing a big, long solo, deciding to commit murder and all kinds of things going on. And, Aegisthus, who was Paul, is lying on a pile of rocks over on the side of the stage. And, he has taken Martha's—Martha had a kind of a purple veil over her. And he had taken it off at one point in the dance. And he's lying on the rocks, and he's kind of pulling this purple veil between his legs very slowly, as he's supposed to be sleeping.

Well, Martha's in the center of the stage dancing her little butt off, and you could not look away from Paul. You could not. He was upstaging Martha. And at a certain point she began to realize it, and she did scream at him a few times. Stop moving around. Stop playing with that veil. Stop doing that. And I said to Paul one night, because I was watching from the wings, I said you have got to stop doing that. You're really ruining what Martha's doing. It's too hard not to look at you.

And he said, "Well, I'm only trying to find the safety pin." He had to put it on at the end of the scene. He had to put it on her again. And he had to put it on her with the center of it right on top of her head. So, Martha had put a little gold safety pin in the edge there so that he would know where the safety pin was. It had to go right here. So, he had to have it in his hand a certain way, so the safety pin was right in the middle. So, he says, "I'm only looking for the safety pin." I said come on, Paul. I said you have to get that safety pin out of the eyes of the audience because everybody's looking for the safety pin, and nobody's watching Martha. So, I don't know if he ever toned it down completely, but he did tone it down a little bit.

Nicifero: Was Martha very upset when Paul decided to leave?

Hodes: [01:09:31] I think she thought he'd really stopped, but he really hadn't. But, she never got really upset. She used to get upset with everybody at some point or other. Yes, she probably got upset, but she got over it. She loved Paul. She really did love him because he was so unique, I think, and she recognized that. And, she knew he was going to do what he was going to do, that he was, as she said in the taxicab going home from Juilliard that first day, she said, "He's on his

own path, and he's going to do what he wants." That's what she meant. And that was all part of the Tacit thing and everything.

Nicifero: And she went to see him in theaters when he was performing?

Hodes: [01:10:15] She did go to see him, and I went to see it, too. I remember the famous concert, the *Seven Dances* or *Seven New Dances* or something, where he did the silence, the however many minutes of silence. And, I think she said afterwards to him, "You are a naughty boy." But that's like an indulgent mother saying to her child that's just thrown food on the floor, "You're such a naughty boy." She was very indulgent to Paul. She wouldn't have put up with that with anybody else, I have a feeling. I never saw her react so benignly to anybody as she reacted to Paul.

The one time he made her really mad was when we were in Japan on that very first Asian tour. And there was a press conference, and Martha was a master of press conferences. She was really good at it. And the whole press conference went very well. And then the press said they'd like to ask the dancers some questions, and they asked us various silly questions. I don't know. And one reporter asked Paul if he could explain the difference between ballet and modern dance. Have you heard this story? Oh, you have?

Nicifero: No, please tell the story.

Hodes: [01:11:57] And Paul said, “Oh, there isn’t much difference. It’s just modern dance is uglier.” Well, Martha blew up at him after that, and she banned him from all press conferences. And we were furious because we always had to go to the press conference, and he was free to do whatever he wanted. We would have liked not to have gone to the press conferences and had that time off, too. So, he didn’t go to any other press conferences on that tour. But I never saw her really get mad at him after that.

And she allowed him a lot of freedom that she didn’t allow other dancers because he had this way of moving that was distinctly his own, and she let it be. And if you watch the dances that Paul is in, the Graham dances that Paul is in, you can see how he has pulled the movement into his own realm. And it’s not wrong. It works.

Nicifero: Do you think that Paul somehow influenced Martha’s work and technique?

Hodes: [01:13:16] I don’t know if I’d use the word “influenced the work.” But he definitely colored the work. And she liked that. I have to say, in all fairness, Martha was really, really good about allowing dancers to do what they were good at. She encouraged that, and she used that. She used qualities, different qualities in dancers, whereas most choreographers just want you to be a certain way. And she definitely used Paul for all the characters that were a little bit strange or a little bit off-center, a little bit different than the other dancers. And she liked that about him, and she used it. And I think it fed her work very well.

Nicifero: So, how about Paul’s last years?

Hodes: [01:14:26] The last years were difficult for him, for all of us a little bit, but for him especially. He had many interests. He was a great reader. And for a long time he enjoyed being in Mattituck where he could garden. He was a wonderful gardener, and he grew vegetables and flowers. He had a beautiful flower garden. But I think as he got older and physically—it gets hard when you're—I know now because I'm old—what was the last thing?

Nicifero: We were talking about Paul's last years.

Hodes: [01:15:59] I think as he found it harder to do the things—because like all old dancers that have beaten up their body the way he did and the way I did and a lot of my—our generation, we didn't have all these Pilates and Gyrotonics and things that the dancers do now. They're in much better shape than we were. And we didn't warm up as thoroughly as they did, and we were very ignorant about things like that. So, our bodies took a beating. And his body had taken a real beating. I think he probably had terrific arthritis, and I think he was in pain a great deal of the time.

He still tried. Up until the last few years, he tried very hard to do his gardening and his beach combing and all of that stuff. But I think it got very hard for him, and I think he got less interested in doing it when it became so effortful. He was a great reader. He loved to write. And he kept doing those things. He would send me occasionally things he'd written, and I like to write, and I would send him things. We had an exchange of things we were writing. But, I think his last years were lonely and difficult. And I don't know how much he—he liked the process of

choreographing, but I don't know how much he liked it at the end when he really couldn't show what he really wanted.

So, I don't know. We didn't really ever sit down and talk about that, and I don't want to speak for him because I don't really know what he was feeling. He never complained, never. And I'd say are you feeling okay, and he'd say, "Yes, I'm fine." So, it's hard for me to say, although I'm telling you what I think, and I think he was not feeling great. And I think it was an effort for him to have to produce a work every year or two works or whatever it was. So, that's all I can say.

Nicifero: Who was helping him in the last few years in the creative process?

Hodes: [01:18:32] Andy LeBeau was doing his—sitting beside him. When Paul comes into a studio ready to choreograph, he's very organized. He knows exactly. He's got everything divided up, like this is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Today I want to do this much. I want to go to the point in the dance. I want to go to this point. And, he comes in like a workman, and he accomplishes that. And if it takes half an hour, he'll get up and leave. Or if it takes three hours, he might bleed into another rehearsal just to get it done. But he's got to get to that point. Andy was kind of in charge of all his counts and all of that stuff.

Nicifero: He was very disciplined?

Hodes: [01:19:28] He was very disciplined, yes. And it was his pattern of working. I guess you develop these patterns over the years, and they're very hard to change. But it wasn't easy

because when you can't just get up and say this is what I want it to look like, it becomes difficult. With Martha, she could express herself very well verbally. Paul was not that kind of verbal person, so it was harder for him, I think, in many ways.

Nicifero: But the communication with the dancers still worked? He was able, I'm talking in general, not being very verbal, in explaining movement?

Hodes: [01:20:19] The dancers were amazing. Sometimes I used to sit there, and I used to think how the hell do they know what he's talking about? But they did. They gave him something. And then, once they give him something, then he can play off that. I found it amazing. And that's very similar to what I found with Martha's dancers, too, that I used to wonder, how the hell do they know what she wants? Because, I would listen to her say something and I'd think, what? And then they would say, oh, you mean you want it like this? And they'd do something. She'd say, yes, that's what I want. And I'd say how the hell did they know that?

And it was the same with Paul's dancers. Dancers are amazingly intuitive, especially when they've worked with that person before for a couple of years. So, that was good. I think he loved working with the dancers. And I think he—I hope he enjoyed those last years of choreography. I don't know that he always did. I don't know. It's never easy getting old.

Nicifero: And he was also this collector of insects.

Hodes: Yes.

Nicifero: What is behind the insect story?

Hodes: [01:21:40] I don't know, but the first time I ever really sat down and had a conversation with Paul was way back in Israel when we were on tour. I took a walk on the beach one day.

This was in the fifties, maybe, maybe '58 or something. And, Paul was in the Graham Company then. We were on tour and Israel was one of our stops. And, it's no longer like that, but the beach in Israel was empty in those days.

So I took a walk down the beach one day, and I see this guy is digging a big hole in the sand.

And I come a little closer, and I see it's Paul. And I go hey Paul, what are you doing? And he

said, "Digging." And I said what are you digging? And he had dug up a skeleton, not all of it, just some of it. There was a head and an arm and part of a body. And I said Paul, what are you

doing? And he said, "I'm digging up this skeleton." And I said Paul, you can't dig up skeletons. I

said that must be against the law or something. Well, there wasn't anybody around. He said,

"Well, I won't let anybody see it." He said, "I'll wrap it in a towel or something."

I said what are you going to do with it? He said, "I want to take it home." I said, take it home?

What are you going to do, put it in your suitcase? And he said, "Yes, I'm going to wrap it in a

towel and put it in my suitcase." And I went, oh my God. I'm thinking, oh my God, this guy is

going to get arrested in the airport or something. Of course, in those days there was no security,

although Israel always had security because of their situation. I said I just hope they don't open

your suitcase. And I guess they didn't because that skeleton was hanging in the 6th Avenue studio. I don't know whatever happened to it, but it was there.

But that day, after the skeleton episode, and I had decided I just wasn't going to say anything about it to anybody and never talk about it again—in fact, this is the first time I've ever said anything about it. I had forgotten about it. We were sitting on the beach, and there were all these little sand crabs running around and digging their little holes and going down. And I said, why are they doing that? And Paul went into this whole explanation about sand crabs and why they did this, which I don't remember now. And, it was fascinating. And I said, God, you know so much about these things.

Now I'm thinking, I wonder if he really knew what he was talking about, or he was just making it all up or what. But he was very interested, and he used to read books about it. He loved beetles, and he had a vast collection of different kinds of beetles. And, he put them in pieces. He would collage them with other pictures and other shells and stones and things and make little scenes. That's why I said he was a real artist.

And, he had a fascinating knowledge. He was fascinated by butterflies. He knew a lot about butterflies and all the different kinds of butterflies. He loved animals. He always had a dog, different dogs, of course, but he loved them. I don't know. I think he was a lonely little boy as a child. I know he was a lonely little boy because he told me he was. And these things were like friends to him. They were the things he communicated with. So, I think that's where the whole bug thing started.

Nicifero: His siblings were much older?

Hodes: [01:25:58] Yes. He was a strange guy but a really interesting guy. I liked him. He was a basically good person, too. His instincts were all the right instincts.

Nicifero: Can you talk a little bit about the legacy and what he's leaving with his dance?

Hodes: [01:26:28] Aside from the fact that he's leaving some of the great dances, great, great pieces of dance, that will be done, I hope, for a long time to come by many companies, and he's written his—I think it's an amazing book, *Private Domain*, which explains really—I think that explains his life better than—certainly than I could explain it or that anybody else, or even that he could explain it, because I think he could write it better than he could speak about it.

I hope that he's leaving a company that will continue to exist. Of course, the danger is after the creator goes, then where do you get the new dances to bring in the audience? And then everybody starts using other choreographers, and then all the companies start to look alike because they're all using the same choreographers. This is how I feel about it now, that everybody does dances by Pam Tanowitz, and everybody does, I don't know, whoever they do. So, I don't know what's going to happen to the company, but I feel for the next at least ten or fifteen years it will continue to perform and to dance these beautiful dances very well. And there is a school where new dancers are being taught how to dance these dances. So, I'm hopeful.

Nicifero: When you mention of him being a good guy, being generous, I was thinking more of the kind of atmosphere and environment that he created for his company.

Hodes: [01:28:38] Oh, okay, yes. I think everybody that's ever been in one of Paul's companies, whatever year it was, has really, really cherished their time there. I think, first of all, when he was really working up to top level, he was a very exciting artist to work with for a dancer because he was very challenging, and he was very interesting. I remember I know whenever I worked with a choreographer, I would always try to—and this is not only Paul. This is everybody. I would always say I wonder what they're going to do next. And I would sort of have in my mind maybe an idea of what they were going to do next. Nine times out of ten I was wrong, that they had something entirely different.

And, I think with Paul you never knew quite where he was going. But when you got there you realized, of course, that's the thing that had to happen. So, I think the dancers have always been—I don't like to use the word “happy” because that's such a funny word for dance because dance is so hard. But the dancers have always been stimulated, have been interested, have been excited by what he did and what he created in the studio. And he was generous. He loved his dancers, I think. He respected them. And I think he treated them with a great deal of respect, maybe not always. I don't mean he never got angry. He did get angry. But that's normal.

So, I don't know what else I can say about that. It's a sort of an abstraction. It's not concrete. I can't think of concrete examples. But the atmosphere was good. I think the dancers respect each other. That's another thing I like about his company. There's a great sense of—I don't want to

make it sound too cozy, but there is a sense of family and togetherness in his company that wasn't always in other companies that I've experienced. There's a helpfulness. The dancers help each other. I like that quality.

Nicifero: Is there any question that I haven't asked that you would like to answer?

Hodes: No. I think you've asked more than enough questions. I can't think of anything else.

Nicifero: Should we stop here?

Hodes: [01:31:37] It's all right. I'm trying to think if there's anything about Paul that I haven't said. I feel very privileged to have been a friend of Paul's, and I miss him a lot. In the last year of his life, I did not see him very much. I almost didn't want to see him because he wasn't the same person. He kind of lost interest. He was always so interested in people and in what they were doing and in what they were thinking about and in what they were reading and what they were—everything about them, what their family situation was. But he lost that interest, and I don't know why, and I don't know. Whatever happened to him physically, I think, affected that, and it was hard to be with him in the last year. I missed him. Even before he died, I missed him. But I'm sure glad I knew him.

Nicifero: So, should we stop here?

Hodes: Yes, I think so. I don't think I have anything else to say.

Nicifero: Thank you very much. We can always—

Hodes: If I think of anything, I'll give you a call.

[Interruption]

Hodes: [01:34:20] We'd see each other, but maybe we didn't see each other that often because I was on tour with Graham, and he was on—

Nicifero: Also, *Junction* was extremely fast in terms of movement.

Hodes: Yes, parts of it.

Nicifero: I always wonder about the arms and in general the upper body. It was extremely fast. And so, the costumes by Alex Katz, what did he like that you didn't, or vice versa?

Hodes: [01:34:59] I had a fight with Alex. Alex Katz was not the famous Alex Katz then. He was just a kid that was an artist in those days. And, he came to the studio with these costumes and these tights that we all had to put on. And I didn't like the way the tights were—the way the color cut your leg off here. And I'm looking in the mirror, and I'm complaining. And I'm saying Alex, this makes my legs look so short. And he was getting very annoyed with me. I said, couldn't it be cut up a little higher?

It was the way he'd put the color on. He'd change color right in the middle of your thigh. All the costumes were different blocks of color. They were color block before color block became fashionable. And, so I didn't like the way they looked. That's all. And I complained loudly, I guess. And, Alex just shot me down. And Paul didn't say anything. Paul stayed out of it, but he would have defended Alex in a minute, not me. I knew that. And they still wear those costumes today, and the dancers don't like them.

Nicifero: Oh, the dancers continue not to like them?

Hodes: [01:36:16] They don't like them, the girls, because they cut off your thigh in a strange way. And they make your leg look kind of short and stubby. So, that's all I can tell you about that.

Nicifero: Was that the only encounter with Alex Katz while you were a dancer?

Hodes: [01:36:35] That was my encounter with him. I've never met—I haven't even ever—he would never know who I was now. It's such a blip in his rise to stardom. But, listen, he's done some things I really loved. I loved *Sunset*. I loved—I don't know. I can't remember what else. And I like his paintings very much. But I did not like that costume. And I made it very clear to everybody that I did not like those costumes. And the dancers, the girls didn't like the costumes.

Nicifero: There's also—I would have some questions about his private life. There is always this mentioning of Babe, which I remember when I first read his book—

Hodes: [01:37:38] Oh, of George, yes.

Nicifero: Of George, yes. I wasn't sure if he was real or also an invention.

Hodes: [01:37:45] Oh, yes, George was real.

Nicifero: But George was real?

Hodes: [01:37:48] Yes. George was great. I loved George. George was wonderful. He was very quiet. He was always in Mattituck when I was there. And George and I used to communicate by writing. He would write me a question, and I would answer it. Or I would write him a question and he would answer it, yes. And, yes, George was great. And I think there was a change in Paul after George died. I think that was not a perceptible change, but I think that was an adjustment for Paul that was hard for him to make, being alone, because George used to take care of the house. George did the cooking. George did the laundry. And all of a sudden Paul had to do all those things, and he didn't like those things.

Nicifero: But, there's also a presence disappearing from your life.

Hodes: [01:38:49] Yes, just somebody to talk to. And George was deaf. He was deaf, and Paul knew sign language. And that's how they communicated.

Nicifero: So, Paul had actually learned sign language?

Hodes: [01:39:04] He did. He knew it, yes. He learned it.

Nicifero: In his book he writes that it was so easy to communicate with George—but in the book he calls him Babe—because dancers speak and communicate with their feet. And he used his hands. But he's a very sensitive and intuitive person as well.

Hodes: Yes.

Nicifero: And they lived together for many years?

Hodes: [01:39:42] Gosh, I don't even know how many. Very often, when I would go over to Paul's house, you would not be even aware that George was there because he would kind of fade into the background. But he was there for Paul. He was always there. So, I think it was difficult when he wasn't there. Definitely an important part of Paul's life.

Nicifero: He writes in his book about it's obviously not part of his work or his world, his creative world.

Hodes: Yes.

Nicifero: Did his mother ever come to visit at the very beginning of the career?

Hodes: [01:40:58] I met his mother once at a performance, but I was never aware of her as a personality in Paul's life. In the early days that I knew him, he used to speak about his mother. But, later on, he didn't really speak about her that much. And he had a sister that he used to speak about sometimes. But he used to speak also about the **Butz [phonetic]** family. There was a family that he lived with, I think, at a certain point, when he was a young boy. Or maybe he was an older boy. I'm not sure when that was. I know that's in the book, but I'm not sure. And that's because his mother ran a hotel, and she worked really hard. And she probably didn't have a lot of time for him.

Nicifero: Well, in his book it seems that his mother was very ill when he stopped dancing, so around '74, around the performance in Vienna.

Hodes: [01:42:08] Yes, and that was when I wasn't here. Yes, his mother, I don't know that we ever—he spoke about his mother randomly, but I don't remember that there was a big sense of loss or anything like that. But I may be wrong about that. I don't really know.

Nicifero: There was certainly a correspondence. They would write each other letters. They were in contact.

Hodes: [01:42:52] Yes. I had a feeling that he always wanted her. I think he probably wished when he was younger that she was more involved in his life than she was. But that's because she was so busy, I think. Yes, it's difficult when you have to run a business and have children and everything. It's really difficult. I think Paul's sense of family was his company. They were the ones he spent Christmas with, and they were the ones he spent birthdays with, and that was his family. Martha's, too, actually.

Nicifero: Martha also would spend her holiday with dancers?

Hodes: [01:43:55] Yes. Once her parents were dead and her sister Mary died and only her sister **Geordie** lived where she lived, yes, I think also it's that same thing, that the company becomes your family. And she always had a Christmas party for the company members, as Paul did. And she always had—not always but sometimes had a birthday party. If we were on tour and it was your birthday, she would manage to give you a present or something, do something to commemorate your birthday. And Paul did that, too. I don't know if he learned that from her or he just wanted to do it or what. So, what else could I say about Paul? I think that's it.

Nicifero: Okay. Thanks again, and we can always continue.

[END OF INTERVIEW]