

PAUL TAYLOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Linda Hodes

Columbia Center for Oral History

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Linda Hodes conducted by Interviewer Alessandra Nicifero on September, 2nd, 2020. This interview is part of the Paul Taylor 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: 2

Interviewee: Linda Hodes

Location: City, New York, N.Y.

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: 09/02/2020

Hodes: What are we starting with?

Nicifero: Before watching *Insects and Heroes*, why don't we start historically, contextualizing the pieces a little bit. They are all from 1961, and both of you were dancing with Martha Graham, still?

Hodes: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the moment—how Paul got you involved in working—

Hodes: [00:00:40] Yes. We were both working with Martha at the time, and she was preparing the season. So, I don't know, after one rehearsal, Paul said to me that he was making a new dance. And he said, "Would you like to be in my dance, Lindy Lou?" He always called me "Lindy Lou." And I said—now I'm embarrassed to say this—but I said, "I don't know, Paul. Is it going to be any good?" And he always teased me about that later.

Q: And that first work was *Insects and Heroes*?

Hodes: It was *Insects and Heroes*, yes.

Q: Should we start watching? Maybe you can stop any time and—

Hodes: Do we need to watch it? Because I've seen it already. I've looked at it.

Q: Well, it's up to you.

Hodes: Later, if you want to put it in, you know.

Q: Would you like to talk about the idea that was behind it? If it was anything shared by—

Hodes: [00:01:45] This is the problem with Paul. There was probably a lot of ideas that he had behind it, but Paul was not a sharer of his ideas. And to be in a work of Paul's at that time was you went to the studio and you just did what he said. [laughs] And I was used to working with Martha and few other modern choreographers who were very verbal about what they were doing. And I kept saying to Paul, "What are we doing in this duet? Are we supposed to be angry? Are we in love? What's the mood of this duet?" He'd just go, "Oh, Linda, for God's sake, just don't bother me." So, it's very hard to answer that question. [laughs]

Q: In one of his interviews, he mentioned that the so-called "poetic flow" wasn't very helpful for him. He would rather have directions, and Balanchine was his model in telling him what to do.

Hodes: [00:02:55] Exactly. "Do the steps I give you and basically shut up." That's—you know, "Don't question me." Because he was trying—I think, this is only my opinion, and I'm not

speaking for Paul now. I think that he was looking for whatever his inner thought was. He was looking for it through the movement and not through the idea itself.

Q: Which is a pretty modernist idea, I believe it was —

Hodes: [00:03:27] And was very popular then among painters and writers and many artists. Yes. So, he experimented with movement, and he edited movement, and he was interested in the movement and the way you did the movement. But he wasn't really interested in what "is this about". Is it about love? Is it about hate? Is it about this? No. He didn't ever talk about that. And as much as I tried to make him, he wouldn't.

Q: I read in a review by Clive Barnes in '71, that he [Paul Taylor] had a little note when the performance first premiered in '61 that said, "An elaboration on the belief that within each mortal dwells an insect and a hero." Having conflictual feelings or conflictual personalities seems to be a theme that is recurrent in his work later on.

Hodes: Yes. I think so.

Q: But maybe if we looked at the video, we can see specific movements. For example, it starts with a walk. And there is always a walk in Paul's choreography. And there are different kind of walks, I noticed. There is the more pedestrian one, which was unusual back then, I think. And a more regal one.

Hodes: [00:05:09] He was interested in natural movement, too. That was something he did bring into his early work. Movements that people did just naturally, walking, running. Any kind of playing of children. He used to watch people. He was a people watcher. So, yes, he was interested in natural movement.

Q: We are at the very beginning, there is no company yet. He's still searching for dancers, and most of the dancers, including you and then Wagoner, are all from Martha Graham?

Hodes: Yes. That and Akiko Kanda, and the—that was the whole company when I was in it. And a woman named Maggie Newman, who was not a Graham dancer, but was a modern dancer.

Q: And were you all trained as modern dancers?

Hodes: Yes.

Q: Do you see any differences in the technique, and also in the movement itself, in the vocabulary that Paul was developing just at the beginning?

Hodes: Any different from what?

Q: From Martha Graham.

Hodes: [00:06:27] Yes. I mean, it was much—it's hard to say in general, but I think it was a little more staccato. He was interested more in special relationships than Martha was. He was interested in different things a body could do. Martha attacked movement from a purely emotional point of view. And Paul was interested in movement from a more—I don't know the word. Maybe a pictorial point of view. Not as a pretty picture, but as a relationship of one body to another body, the amount of space between the bodies, how that space changed as they moved, things like that.

Q: You mentioned in other interviews that Martha Graham became more verbal and more descriptive during the creative process.

Hodes: [00:07:40] About the dance thing, yes. When she sat in the front and looked at it. And I think so did Paul, actually. Because Paul was in all these early dances, so there's a different viewpoint from his point of view when you're in a dance than there is when you're sitting in front of us. So, yes.

Q: Another recurrent theme in other interviews is about the concept of weight that might have been slightly different for Paul. Weight is not just about gravity, but there is also weight in the use of the arms. Can you talk a little bit about—

Hodes: [00:08:26] I don't know if that was so different. Yes. He just had a more—I would say it was a more athletic way of moving. I mean, he had been an athlete. He was a swimmer. He was

on the swim team in school. And he was a man, which is different from the way a woman moves. In that sense, it was different.

Q: But, for example, the extreme extension of the arms on the back, is quite an extreme movement, and both female and male dancers—

Hodes: Martha used that, too. That came from Martha. But, you know, he just developed it in a slightly different way.

Q: Was there something about his sense of humor, for example, that is in the movement?

Hodes: [00:09:25] Yes. Well, that's very obvious in things like *3 Epitaphs*, which he'd already choreographed. I don't know, I can't really speak about that, because he never spoke about it, and I don't know what his intentions were. A lot of times, Alessandra, he just said, "I just want to fit something to the music." He never said what it was about, so it's awfully hard to talk about Paul in these terms. I mean, I always made up my own story because I was very frustrated with him. I was used to working with stories and things like that from Martha. And since Paul never gave you any of that material, I just made up my own.

Q: So, in a way, there was more freedom for the dancer to make up their own stories?

Hodes: [00:10:28] He was very exacting, you know? Actually, with Martha, it was easier. You could get away with things with Martha, because she would watch it, and if she liked something,

she would say, “Oh, yes, I really like that. Let’s put it in.” But Paul was, “No, no, no. I didn’t tell you to do that.” He was always telling me I was adding things, and I was too fancy. I don’t know. I never knew what he was talking about, honestly. And I’d do it over and over and over again [laughs]. And I thought I was doing what he wanted, but apparently, I wasn’t. So, we had some—he criticized me a lot for that, for being too Graham-my.

Q: Well, I guess it was the beginning. But, for example, in his book, he mentioned that your use of the arms—what is now called the famous S—was really inspired by your being such a fluid dancer.

Hodes: I was a very fluid dancer. That was my way of dancing. Paul’s movement is sometimes very staccato, very clipped, very sharp. And that was a different way of moving for me. So, I guess I had to adjust to it. It took a while.

Q: For a dance historian, there is always this focus on transmission. Returning to the idea of weight, which seems to be consistent with what other dancers have been talking about, especially Dan Wagoner, how can the sense of weight, or the intensity of the performance, be explained to other dancers of your generation? You must have faced that issue when you worked for Paul Taylor, too.

Hodes: The way the weight is used, you mean, and the technique?

Q: How the weight is used.

Hodes: [00:12:42] In Paul's work, as opposed to other peoples' work, it's a little bit heavier. You shift down into the weight a little more than you do in other techniques. And I'm only saying this as my opinion, because Paul never explained these things. And sometimes I'd say to him, "Do you want it to be lower or something?" And he'd say, "I don't know what I want. Just do it, you know." He'd get impatient when you asked too many questions.

Q: *Junction* was also created in '61, and they are very different pieces. There are very different ideas, partly because of a different use of music. But in a way, *Junction* is seminal for the later work, in terms of how he used the group in the space. Do you think it will be useful to watch *Junction*? And he added new dancers. I think initially there were six, should we watch? Because it's possible to—maybe Nate can show us the *Junction* from, I think it's 2013, with a younger generation of dancers to—

Hodes: Yes. You want to watch it? Sure. We can watch it.

Q: I think it's possible.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: This is, of course, a dress rehearsal. And we see Sean in the role of Paul.

Hodes: Yes. When that—

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: This is very—it's perceived as very Graham in terms of the curves. Can you talk a little bit about what you see that looks to you more familiar in terms of Graham technique, and if you see any differences from—

Hodes: [00:16:48] Well, he uses the contraction a great deal, I mean, you see that curved back. It's not typical Graham technique in that he uses a lot of simple walks and turns and things like that, which she always kind of was little more decorative with it. She would have added something to the walk or something. But he keeps it very simple and straightforward. I think that's really—I don't know what else—it's hard to say what's different about it. It's just he is unique. And he's working with very classical music so it has to fit into the shape of the music, which is very specific.

Q: And this was also the first time that he used classical music. It then would be more consistent in his choreographies.

Hodes: Is that the first time he used classical music? I don't even know.

Q: I believe so. In '61, both in *Fibers* — in *Fibers* he is using Schoenberg music. And for *Insects and Heroes*, it's by the composer, McDowell who may have been a composer that Martha Graham used as well?

Hodes: I don't know. I don't think so. Not that I know of.

Q: Can we watch *Insects and Heroes* now? Because Paul talks about using the dancers in a bidimensional or a more three-dimensional way. In *Insects and Heroes* there are a lot of lateral jumps. Let's see. Yes, please.

[INTERRUPTION]

Hodes: It was the bug. Paul would call them the bug.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Is that you? The first dancer?

Hodes: Yes. And that's Liz Walton there.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Can we stop here for a moment? Were you given specific instructions when you were behind the screen?

Hodes: [00:21:54] Yes. When to turn on the light, when to open the door. There was some movement inside the box. Yes, those I was given. I don't remember—I don't remember what anybody else did. But that was all. He only gave instructions as far as movement. You didn't get what's happening. [laughs]

Q: So the boxes, it's hard to visualize, was possible to move from a box to another one from behind? Correct? Was there a connection?

Hodes: [00:22:35] I don't remember now. No, I don't think so. I don't think we ever did that. Maybe they did later on. I don't know. No. The only way you could get into somebody else's box was from the front, I think.

Q: From the front.

Hodes: As far as I remember.

Q: It's hard to recognize dancers of course. It's easier for the male dancers in this video. And we have a character in *Insects and Heroes*. We have this giant, scary entity. Can you talk a little bit about his creation of characters?

Hodes: [00:23:25] Again, it's the same thing. He would just say, "Just do what I tell you and don't ask me what it's about." We worked for a long—not a long time, but for a while—without that bug figure that comes across. And then one day, the bug appeared. So we thought, well,

we're the heroes and that's the bug. I don't know. But, honestly [laughs], Alessandra, I know what you're trying to get at, but it's almost impossible with Paul. Especially in those early days when he didn't talk about these things at all. But it just kind of—the fun part of working with Paul, and the good part of working with Paul is you just went along with it, and let your body do what he asked you to do. And that was a good way of training your body to just respond to a choreographer. Because when you're in a rehearsal with the choreographer, the choreographer is the leader, directing everything. And it is a dancer's job to do what the choreographer says. And that's drummed into you as a dancer from the time you're in class. You do what the teacher says, then you do what the choreographer says. You don't ask questions. [laughs] He'd ask questions, but I always got slapped down for it.

Q: So, I notice in fact, that the dancers in videos recording of him working with dancers, dancers ask questions all the time. When he's talking about a duet, he's talking about love or romantic love. They ask, "What kind?" They ask a question that was very basic.

Hodes: [00:25:32] That was later on, yes. I mean, he got more verbal about what he was doing. In those early days, I don't even know if he knew what he was doing. He was looking for different, something different. He was looking for a different way of moving. He was looking for a different way of relating to another body. And so I think it was all experimental for him, too, in a way. I don't think it was—it was a search. That music is so dissident. I forgot how hard that music was to dance to.

Q: Yes. I can imagine.

Hodes: [00:26:16] It's so non-supportive, but anyway—

Q: The idea of character that you mention in later works, for example *White Snow* and *Company B*. How did you see the development of characters later on? And if there are any references to *Insects and Heroes*.

Hodes: [00:26:51] References with *Insects and Heroes* I don't think ever came up. As Paul increased his repertoire and wasn't doing so many abstract things anymore, he got into doing popular songs and doing literary characters. Early on, he did a dance called *Jack and the Beanstalk*, in which he was Jack, and there actually was a beanstalk that he climbed up. That was early on. That was even before all of this stuff. And so, I mean, it was always there, but later on, when he did *Company B*, there are specific characters, say, in *Company B*, or *Funny Papers*. There are specific characters there, the comic book characters. You know, Popeye and all of those. And when he started doing works with popular music, of course, there was specific characters. So, he got into that. It's just as he expanded his repertoire of ideas. So then he was working with characters. And he might have been working with characters in *Insects and Heroes*, but we didn't know what they were. By the way, Paul loved bugs. He was a bug person. He had a collection of beetles and butterflies and various things like that. And he loved reading about them, and he loved talking about them. And he loved putting them in his collage work and things like that.

Q: In his boxes.

Hodes: In his boxes, yes.

Q: When you watch his early works, do you see some elements or do you recognize some elements that later on became a sort of trademark of his movement, of his vocabulary?

Hodes: [00:29:00] You know, early on he used the big kind of looping runs. The runs that are in plié, and with the arms swinging. I mean, he used that in almost every dance in some way or other. And, yes, there were certain—as he progressed, he started using material over again, which is what happens with choreographers. So it was always a little bit changed, a little bit different. But, yes, so he was developing his vocabulary as he went along. So, there were variations of it, of course, but it was basically the same movement.

Q: Maybe we can return again to watch the video of *Insect and Heroes*. There are many angular movements, and these very creative right angles with his limbs, both legs and arms. Were these unusual in 1961?

Hodes: Unusual in what way? You mean that nobody else was doing it?

Q: Yes. In a sense, they were noticed in a way that a later viewer wouldn't—

Hodes: [00:30:39] Well, yes. I mean, I can't speak for what every other choreographer was doing, because I really don't know. But, yes, it was—all the movements that you see in *Insects*

and Heroes, you can see right through his works up to the time he stopped choreographing basically, in some form or other. The way bodies related to each other, there was always this double kind of curve, this kind of thing. So, yes, I would say that it followed through.

Q: Can we watch a few more minutes of *Insects and Heroes*, please.

Hodes: Yes.

[INTERRUPTION]

Hodes: The lights were supposed to go out as each dancer faced the box—the door. But they didn't always work well, the lights. [laughs]

Q: Were the dancers behind the screen actually switching the lights?

Hodes: We were pulling a string, and it was pretty primitive, and didn't always—you'd pull on it and they didn't go.

[INTERRUPTION]

Hodes: [00:32:27] All of these movements were in later works.

[INTERRUPTION]

Hodes: [00:33:03] These are the wrists and the hands movements, specific to Paul. And he used that all the time.

[INTERRUPTION]

Hodes: [00:34:39] And even the dancers mirrored each other. It was very—Paul used that all in his work.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Can we stop for second? And maybe return in a minute. So, you were mentioning the angular, right angle of the wrist.

Hodes: [00:35:04] Yes. Sometimes he uses the hands in a very specific way.

Q: And that becomes a sort of consistent, a recurrent element?

Hodes: Yes.

Q: Also, how about his balance? He has this capacity to stay in a still position on one leg for a very long time in a very—

Hodes: Because he was very strong and a very good dancer. [laughs] Yes.

Q: And in a duet with Dan Wagoner, they are mirroring each other at a certain point.

Hodes: [00:35:42] That's something he always used. He likes to do that with dancers.

Q: I believe it's also in *Fibers*, in the male duet.

Hodes: Yes, probably.

Q: Let's return to *Insects and Heroes* because there is also an interesting way that the group dances which seems also to be a recurrent theme. There is almost a sense of ritual occurring among the dancers. Can we please go back to that, and maybe you can guide us through?

[INTERRUPTION]

Hodes: [00:38:52] His dancing looks like, actually very contemporary to me. It doesn't look like an old dance for one of these—if he'd done it today.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: So here we have a 360 degrees mirroring.

Hodes: Yes. And he likes to use the group against an individual a lot, too. That's something he always has used. There's always one dancer that's out of the group.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: And the dancer out of the group is Maggie Newman?

Hodes: I think so. Personally, it's hard to tell.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: And that is -

Hodes: Maggie. I'm pretty sure that's Maggie. I can't really tell, but I think so.

Q: And we can stop here again. Is it possible to talk a little more about these ideas, how the group and the individual dancer are in communication in a way, but at a distance.

Hodes: [00:40:52] This is just a personal little feeling, but I think Paul always felt like the outsider. I think he felt that that thing of being an outsider away from everybody else, and not part of a group. So, I think that's just something he used. It's an emotional situation, but he didn't emotionalize it too much. He just did it. And it's in all his dances. If you look at them,

you'll always find this one person that's away from the group. And it can be a different person at different times.

Q: And do you think he meant being an outsider in the dance world, and outside in general?

Hodes: Don't know. I don't know the answer to that. It could be either or both. Or none of them.

[laughs]

Q: So returning to the idea of character, we see these giant insects that I'm not sure who was in this performance because I don't think that Betty de Jong was in this film.

Hodes: But the girl that did it when I was in the company was Elizabeth Keen. She was the first one. She was the one that—

Q: And I believe the last up.

Hodes: [00:42:30] That girl is not Betty. That's Elizabeth Keen.

Q: I know that Betty was later on. But I keep thinking of the bad apple in *Snow White* that has the same role, almost magical, of entering and changing the atmosphere of the dance. Do you think it was uncomfortable to wear the costume?

Hodes: [00:43:11] Was the costume uncomfortable? Yes, very. The costume was black, I don't know what. And there were these actual quills that stuck out from it. So we had to be careful we didn't bump into her.

Q: What else can you tell me about the sense of ritual the group had in Pauls' choreography?

Hodes: [00:43:47] By "ritual" what do you mean exactly? Do you mean—

Q: They are performing something that it's not just exercise, or the support, as they create circles. They create some form of—

Hodes: [00:44:08] They create relationships among themselves. And then there's the outsider that doesn't fit in. Or something like that. [laughs] But, yes. I mean, you see various relationships form and break up. Then another relationship establishes and dances around for a while, and then that breaks up and they separate and go into their own little box. So, yes, he worked with all of those. I mean, those are all emotional things. He worked with that, but he was not verbal about that, and he was not—he didn't say, "Okay, this movement is about feeling like an outsider," or something like that. He never said things like that.

Q: The specific working set has sections that he describes as, let's see. They were called—well, the prologue, interlude, the battle. And part seven is called the plague. Did he ever explain?

Hodes: No, never.

Q: Why was the plague?

Hodes: [00:45:29] I've heard that before. No, he didn't explain anything. That's what I objected to. [laughter] He just wanted you to come in and do what he said, and that's what we did. I must say, I found it interesting and challenging. And to do it that way was not the way I was used to working. But, you know—

Q: Perhaps there is more freedom for the dancers to make up and use their own imagination in—

Hodes: [00:46:04] Yes. As long as you didn't use your own imagination in the steps, he was fine. [laughter] But, you know, he caught everything. I mean, he was always yelling at me. Not yelling. He didn't yell. But he was always after me. He said I was adding things or doing things with my arms or my hands. I don't know. And I was like, "What? I'm doing what you're telling me." But I had to constantly work on things to make sure I was not doing these things that he said I did.

Q: With *Junction* we have a change of music. So that must have been a sort of relief for you?

Hodes: [00:46:42] Definitely. That music is not easy to dance this to. McDowell music is not easy to dance to, and not sympathetic to dance to it anyway. There's nothing to lean on. I don't remember if we had counts or not. I really don't think so. I don't know. I think we were doing it on sound. You hear a clang, and that means that you do this or something.

Q: Right. That seems like what Sharon Kinney mentioned. So not having counts for those dances, would it be a lot more difficult for restaging, for example, the piece, or your work?

Hodes: [00:47:40] Yes. Usually what happens over time if it's choreographed without counts, the dancers usually add counts, particularly down the line. You do so many, you think, so many times. And you figure out it's one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, three. You know, you give it a rhythm. So that's the only way you can hang onto something.

Q: So *Junction* has become easier on one hand for a newer generation because previous generations did the counting?

Hodes: [00:48:13] Well, *Junction* had counts because that was set to classical music. So you could figure it out. But this McDowell music doesn't—I mean, it's just so dissonant, you know. I don't know where you start counting.

Q: When you were the director of Paul Taylor 2, did you have to teach any of the works like *Junction*? Did you have to teach to a new generation of dancers?

Hodes: [00:48:45] When I was the director, we didn't do *Junction*. That came later. When I was the director of Taylor 2, unfortunately I didn't really know the repertoire because I hadn't been in Paul's company in many years then. And I had help from other outside people who came in and helped me set things on the—first of all, we had to reduce. Like in *Company B*, we only had

six dancers. So, six dancers did everything, all the solos, all the group work, everything. So we had to make a few little changes. Cathy McCann came in and set that, and she did a great job, I have to say. Some of the other dancers set other works. Patrick Corbin set *Funny Papers*. It was very collaborative. It was very good.

Q: Well, *Funny Papers*, specifically, is a mix of several dancers from the company who were invited to choreograph, correct? So it was not Paul's choreography for *Funny Papers*, if I remember.

Hodes: [00:50:07] I didn't know that. I didn't know. They might have offered ideas, but he never would have accepted it in the early days, but later on did accept. I mean, it was his choreography. It was his idea, and he probably said what kind of movement he wanted, and then probably said, "Make something up that's like something," or something. I don't know how that worked.

Q: But it seems he had a very specific vision of movement that he wanted. Do you know, did he use notes? Did he use drawings? Did he record his ideas somehow before, as a choreographer?

Hodes: [00:50:59] He was very good with counting out the music. Before he came in to a rehearsal, he'd have all the counts to the section he wanted to work on that day. So he'd say, "Okay, there's three eights and two twelves. And then there's a six." And then he'd start choreographing to those groups of counts.

Q: After you left the company, did you return occasionally to perform some of his work?

Hodes: [00:51:37] No. When I left the company, I was on tour with the Graham Company, and that was a long tour. And then I was in several shows. And then I went to Israel for fourteen years—fifteen, almost fifteen years. I was away for a long time.

Q: Right. So you never came back even to teach to other dancers your role in *Insects and Heroes*?

Hodes: [00:52:09] No. I never did. I don't know if I would have been able to teach those dances because they were so—well, I could have taught them, I guess. But I've been in so many dances since those days. Maybe I've been in 300 dances since then. I don't remember them now.

Q: It's so hard to remember all the roles for—

Hodes: [00:52:39] Yes. And I didn't pay that much attention to other peoples' roles because I was involved in what I was doing. I wrote down a lot of my roles. I have notebooks that have my roles in them. But I look at them today, and I don't know what they hell they mean. They don't mean anything to me now.

Q: And there is now a muscular memory that will suggest how—the reading.

Hodes: [00:53:07] When I look at that video of *Insects and Heroes*, I went, oh yes, I remember that. But it's not readily available in my body or my mind at this point. I mean, that was like sixty years, I don't know how many years ago.

Q: And do you remember how many times you performed in *Insects and Heroes*?

Hodes: [00:53:31] Not many. We didn't have a lot of performances in those days. I don't know, maybe three, four. I don't really remember, honestly. I guess more than that, because we went to ADF [American Dance Festival], and we went to The Pillow, I remember. And we must have done multiple performances. I cannot remember, honestly.

Q: Paul described his styles or scribbling as action painting. It's in a very famous essay he wrote. Do you see these scribbling in any of the three works that we just saw?

Hodes: [00:54:23] I'm not sure of the definition of "scribbling," but I could see somebody saying that about his movement, because it's all the quick changes and quick change of shape, maybe. But they're not classical positions, they could look—I guess you could call them scribbles.

Q: He called it scribbling. And it must refer, perhaps, to the very fast movement in *Junction* or in *Insects and Heroes*.

Hodes: [00:54:59] Well, yes, I could see that, yes. I don't remember we ever called it scribbling, but we could have. I don't remember. As I said, it was a long time ago.

Q: Did you ever talk to Paul in more recent years about these early times, about the early works that he did?

Hodes: [00:55:25] Only in so far as any of them related to Taylor 2, maybe. Like, one of the first works we did was *3 Epitaphs*, because of the small cast when we first started. So only in that sense. Not remembering when we did it, or anything like that.

Q: More in terms of—

Hodes: [00:55:52] Paul was not a sentimental person, and he didn't particularly dwell on things that had happened before. He was pretty much living in the moment.

Q: Moving forward to the new dance.

Hodes: [00:56:08] Yes. I think he was much more interested in what he was choreographing then, than what he had choreographed already in the past.

Q: Even though he had a very rich repertoire, and his work continued to be performed also by other companies, not just his?

Hodes: [00:56:29] Yes. He often—he would be invited to go and see such-and-such a ballet company doing a work of his. And he said he didn't really like going to see it. I don't know why. Maybe he just didn't want to go back to that period.

Q: But I can see how it could be more challenging for ballet dancers to do Paul's work.

Hodes: Oh yes, yes. He said he got used to looking at his work, not looking like his work.

[laughs]

Q: And what would be different for him?

Hodes: I don't know. I mean, probably just the way the energy is used, and the shapes of the bodies and things like that.

Q: How do you think the dancers communicate? Are dancers that have worked with Paul for a long time able to communicate and transmit to a new generation the sense of energy and intensity that is in his work?

Hodes: [00:57:44] I think they communicate really well. I think if a dancer is—especially if a dancer has done a part before. They can communicate that quite well. And they do. I've seen the dancers work with a newer dancer coming in and doing their old part. They work very well with them. I'm always impressed with how well they do work.

Q: Because of course, now there are videos of every rehearsal and performance.

Hodes: God, yes.

Q: But, again, how to communicate weight, intensity, energy that can be communicated only for someone that's been in the role, in a way.

Hodes: [00:58:45] Yes. And that gets harder and harder as it goes down the line because some of the dancers haven't necessarily done those early works. And eventually, the lineage dies out and you don't have that person that knows what that part really was. So, yes, I guess the work fades at a certain point.

Q: Have you seen this fading of the lineage with the Martha Graham Company?

Hodes: Excuse me. Seen the what?

Q: This fading of the—

Hodes: [00:59:32] Yes. I have. And you have to understand that, like, nobody in the Graham Company at this point ever danced with Martha on the stage. So, as we all get older and older and we disappear, they don't have recourse to that experience. But that's just the way it's going to be.

Q: That's just the way it's going to be, that's why it's important to—

Hodes: [01:00:04] Even with video, even with all the props and, you know, buttons and bows we have now, it's not going to be the same. But it'll still exist, and it'll be fine. It'll just be, maybe, different, or maybe not. I don't really know.

Q: So if you had a very few suggestions to younger dancers from your experience of dancing with Paul, what would those instructions or advice would be?

Hodes: If they were learning a role, you mean?

Q: Yes.

Hodes: [01:00:44] I think it's most helpful to talk to—work with someone who'd done the role. And even more helpful to work with someone who the role was choreographed on, because then if Paul did say anything or gave them any hints of anything, or said he wanted it a certain way, that's valuable. And that gets lost down the line. I mean, look, dancing has always traditionally been taught—and this goes way back to the early days of ballet—person-to-person. One dancer teaches the next generation and the next and the next and the next, and so on. And that's always been the way dance has been communicated. Now we have more fancy ways. We have video and we have that written form, whatever that is.

Q: Labanotation, and then, yes.

Hodes: [01:01:44] Thank you. And things like that. So that makes it easier. But it is dance, and it is ephemeral. It's not always easy to put in a box. And things do change. I look at things now that the Graham Company does, and the steps are not different, and the movements are not different, and the spacing and the relationships, they're all the same. But there is somehow a difference. Now I don't even know what that is, but there is a difference.

Q: Could it be also the historical context? We do perceive movement in a different way than we did decades ago-

Hodes: [01:02:42] Yes. I think that's—yes. I think that's true. Absolutely. That's a very good point that we look at things differently now, too. We even look at relationships differently. What might have been very shocking in those days is not so shocking now. So, things are just—there's just a different level of understanding and appreciation now.

Q: Yes, it's very interesting how descriptions of early works of Paul Taylor, for example, from critics, sound strange. Obviously, they were watching for the first time a certain kind of movement. Later viewers like me have been used to the movement, so the historical context makes a huge difference in perception and the response of the audience.

Hodes: Yes. Definitely.

Q: Still, most of his early works are extremely powerful to see on stage now, even if I assume differently than in the—

Hodes: [01:04:15] Yes, yes. Yes. As Paul did more and more work and his vocabulary became more known to the public, then they could relate differently to the early works than some people that had never seen it before.

Q: How is re-watching, seeing *Junction* on stage these days?

Hodes: [01:04:51] I'm used to looking at dance on video, so it wasn't as big a shock as [laughs]—first of all, when I looked at *Insects and Heroes*, I thought—the music was a shock to me. I didn't remember the music was so dissonant and so difficult to dance to, but it was. I don't really remember the dance. It was a long time ago, and I didn't do it that often. I kind of go, oh, yes, I remember that, you know? It's somewhere way back in my head somewhere but way back.

Q: Could you imagine seeing *Insects and Heroes* performed?

Hodes: [01:05:35] Yes, I was looking at it. I was thinking, gee, they ought to do this dance. I think they did put it together again. Didn't they? I don't know.

Q: I don't think recently. I think *Insects and Heroes* was performed, if I'm correct, in the '80s, early '80s—

Hodes: Eighties.

Q: —and not since then.

Hodes: [01:05:55] Well, maybe they should do it again. I think I'll suggest it to Michael.

Q: [Laughs]

Hodes: [01:06:02] I think it's an interesting dance.

Q: I think it's a very interesting dance, very modernist.

Hodes: [01:06:10] I still don't know what it's about or what it means, but it's an interesting dance, and the movement's interesting.

Q: Yes, yes. It will mean something else for contemporary viewers—

Hodes: Yes, yes.

Q: Do you have any other insights about working with Paul? And is there anything, when you think of working with him, that you find was unusual in addition to the mystery that he never explained things? What was interesting about working with him?

Hodes: [01:07:01] Well, for me, what was interesting about working with Paul was that he wasn't doing what everybody else was doing. It just wasn't his own version of Graham or Cunningham. It was more of his—he was really trying to do his own things. Even though I might not have liked all of it or liked doing all of it or it felt uncomfortable on my body, I still appreciated that he was searching for things and looking for things. It was fun in that sense to do new things. It's always a challenge to a dancer to work with someone who makes you uncomfortable in a way. It stretches you as a performer, so that was exciting. I liked working with Paul, and I would've liked to have kept working with Paul. But in those days, Paul didn't have any money, and he wasn't paying anything. It was just a question of economics. I had a family to support, you know, so I went on tour with [crosstalk]. What?

Q: I was going to say *Aureole* was created just a year later, and that was a big hit.

Hodes: [01:08:24] Yes. I missed *Aureole*. Yes. Yes, that's a beautiful dance, and that's a very accessible dance. It's like Paul threw away all the weird stuff and just said, "I want to do a pretty dance," and he did.

Q: He was capable of completely clearing the canvas and starting a new work.

Hodes: [01:08:56] Yes. Yes. I think he enjoyed doing different things. He was looking for music once for a new dance, and he said, “Oh, I’m so tired of listening to all this music.” This was up in Mattituck. I was up there for a weekend. I said, “Well, what kind of music do you want?” He said, “I just want something that won’t bore me to death after three weeks.” He was always looking for something new, and he liked doing different things. Maybe after *Insects and Heroes*, he said, “Oh, I really want to do a pretty dance [laughs].” And he did in *Aureole*.

Q: Well, he was one of the first using these pedestrian movements, and so he—

Hodes: Yes.

Q: —turned running and walking—

Hodes: [01:09:56] Walking, running, tumbling. *Junction* has a whole section where he just said, “Start from that upstage—or downstage diagonal,” I think. I don’t remember which it was, upstage or downstage. “Start from that diagonal and go across the stage, just crawling, and crawl all over each other.” That’s that section that starts on the floor. And we did. He looked at it, fixed it up.

Q: It must have been difficult to fix things up while he was in the performance.

Hodes: [01:10:40] Yes, but he was able to step back and look at what we were doing. Not always, but he did. Yes. He always looked at what we were doing. He took himself out and put himself in the front of the room so he could see.

Q: He would have often a solo for himself.

Hodes: Yes.

Q: Would you see the solo while he was working on his solos? Or would he—

Hodes: [01:11:09] [Crosstalk] he worked on the solo before we came or after we left. I don't know. While we were there, he would be working on our sections. Then, yes, when we finally put everything together, we'd see this great solo, and we'd go, "Oh, wow, that's what you were doing in the afternoon when we were not around."

Q: If you had to select a specific part of the work that we talked about today, including *Fibers*, which one would you consider the most exemplary of his work or the one that you think was the

most successful, the most innovative? Can you think of any part in *Junction* or *Insects and Heroes* that, when you re-watch the video, you found more memorable or—

Hodes: [01:12:21] I don't think I found anything more memorable than the other. Well, *Junction*, of course, is still kind of in the repertory, so I'm more used to seeing that. That, I think, holds up beautifully today. I think it's a beautiful dance, and it's a beautiful interpretation of that particular music. It worked then, and it still works now. *Insects and Heroes* is—I haven't thought about that in years, but it's a really interesting dance, and that's why I honestly think they should bring it back. I think it's very interesting. If they haven't done it in a long time, it would be the thing to do again. Honestly, I don't like the music. I think it's very dissonant, but it kind of works for the dance. I do like the movement, and I like the structure of the dance. I like the use of the booths, the lights going on and off. It's theatrical. It has a lot of appeal to me. I think it would have appeal to an audience.

Q: I find the music very filmic. It makes me think of [Alfred] Hitchcock's movies or—

Hodes: [01:13:41] Yes. And I like the relationships in the dance. They're kind of mysterious and changeable, and they're interesting. Then everybody goes back to their little apartment alone.

Q: Can we watch the last part of *Insects and Heroes* together and see the interaction with the giant entity, the furry entity?

Hodes: Yes. Okay. [Pause]

Q: This is what you call the padding session. There is no sound in the video.

Hodes: Yes. Did we do this in silence? I don't remember.

Q: I don't think so, but I'm not—

Hodes: I don't know either. I don't remember.

Q: I believe that the original video was soundless, and then the music was added later.

Hodes: Oh, and there's the hero. He saves the damsel in distress from the bug. [Pause]

Q: This is the mirroring that you were talking about earlier.

Hodes: Yes, yes. [Pause]

Q: Perhaps we can stop here. We see the giant insect becoming less threatening.

Hodes: Yes.

Q: It seems it's dancing with the dancers eventually.

Hodes: Yes [laughs]. The outsider is accepted into the group.

Q: Yes. Would you like to mention anything else in terms of steps that seem recurrent and movement that reminds you of something in later works?

Hodes: [01:26:30] Oh, well I really wouldn't be able to identify at this point what movements went into which works, but I just recognize them from other scenes of works, that I've seen these movements before in some form or other. Every choreographer uses the same movements over again to say different things, and they can be done in many different ways. They can be done fast, slow, staccato, legato, anything. They appear to be different, but they're not really that different.

Q: Are there any other question that I didn't ask that you would like to discuss? [crosstalk]?

Hodes: [01:27:28] I don't think so. I think you covered it really well. No. It was an interesting time. I've forgotten how much fun that time was. Not an easy time.

Q: Yes. What made it complicated or difficult?

Hodes: [01:27:49] We were all very poor for one thing. But we were young, so it didn't really matter that much. Paul had a studio way up on the fifth floor of this walk-up building, and we had to trudge up those stairs, and it was very primitive. It was not a really wonderful space like he has now, so—it was a different time. We put up with all those things because we loved what we were doing. I didn't even think of them as hardships at the time. Now that I'm thinking about them, I think, oh, my god, how did we ever do this?

Q: Ah, youth [laughs].

Hodes: Yes. And inexperience [laughs].

Q: Absolutely. His studio, the place where he lived was also the place where you would do rehearsal.

Hodes: In that studio?

Q: Yes.

Hodes: [01:28:47] Yes. Yes, that's where we rehearsed.

Q: Well, did you rehearse in a theater before the performance? I assume so.

Hodes: [01:29:02] Yes. We probably just had a few hours. It really lacked for lighting and things like that. We did not have luxurious situations in those days at all, but we were used to that. That's how we worked.

Q: Well, thank you for talking, for participating in this conversation. It was very useful. It was also inspiring to return to the specific period of early works.

Hodes: [01:29:46] Yes. As I have said to you many times, it's really hard with Paul because Paul was not a very verbal communicator. Unlike some choreographers, he didn't say, "What I'm trying to get at is so and so and so and so." He just didn't say anything, but he worked through the movement. I think, in the end, that was to his advantage because he produced such wonderful works. Maybe the less said about them, the better. I think they have to be looked at rather than talked about. It's a little hard to talk about them, but that's the best I can do [laughs].

Q: That was very useful. Thank you very much, and we'll be in touch. I will send a transcript so you can read and edit it.

Hodes: Thank you. Yes.

Q: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]