

PAUL TAYLOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Sharon Kinney

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

2020

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a video recorded interview with Sharon Kinney conducted by Gay Morris on March 2, 2020. This interview is part of the Paul Taylor Oral History Project.

The interview began with Kinney discussing her background. She then spoke at length about Paul Taylor's *Aureole* (1962) and *Piece Period*, (1962) while looking at videos of the dances. She was part of the original casts of both works, and danced with the company from 1962-1966.

Miss Kinney is being interviewed while being filmed and in some cases is watching a video and reacting and commenting on what she sees on screen.

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

ATC

Session #1

Interviewee: Sharon Kinney

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Gay Morris

Date: March 2, 2020

Morris: It's March 2, 2020, and I'm here with Sharon Kinney at the Paul Taylor [Dance Company] studios in New York. Let's begin by first talking about your background, where you were born, where you were raised.

Kinney: [00:00:19] All right. I was born in Columbus, Ohio, but my parents moved right away to Dayton, so I really grew up in Dayton, Ohio, and it was there that I studied dance. But I actually started to dance when I was like three and a half years old. I love to move, and I danced to the music from the radio. This was way before TV. And so my parents, my mother, put me in dance classes with a teacher in Dayton who taught really, I think it was like eurhythmics classes. So we weren't in dance clothes at all. We were in our dresses. And we used instruments, and we learned rhythms, and we learned about music, and it was for the younger kids, five and six. But then we moved to another area of Dayton, but I stayed with the teacher and went back to that school when I was eight. And the teachers, I really want to mention their names because it was Josephine and Hermene Schwarz in Dayton, Ohio. And they actually formed the first nationally known regional dance company known today as the Dayton Ballet.

Morris: And what kind of a dance was it?

Kinney: [00:01:45] I studied ballet there—when you were twelve or thirteen you were able to take a modern class. We had no idea what that was, but we got to wear black, no shoes, and we could have ponytails, not a bun. And there was this wonderful movement. We loved it. And so that was my introduction to modern dance. And I think it was the Humphrey-Weidman technique. But anyway, I loved it. I knew that that's what I wanted to do.

And then when it came time for me to graduate from high school, I wanted to go to New York right away. I also loved Broadway musicals. I loved, you know, *Singing in the Rain*. I loved all of Gene Kelly's movies—and that was to me what I could and wanted to be as a dancer. But my dad said mm-mm. No. You have to go to college. You must go to college. Very good advice, actually.

Morris: Isn't it?

Kinney: [00:02:46] and so it just so happened that I—and, you know, I'm in Ohio. I'm going to OSU [The Ohio State University], believe me. In 1957 if you lived in Ohio, you were likely to go to one of the state schools and my Dad was a supporter of Ohio State University. But at that time, a woman there named Helen [P.] Alkire had a dance department in Physical Education and was starting to really look into getting a degree for dancers [Bachelor of Fine Arts]. My degree is in education, but after I left she was able to move the program into the School of the Arts.

But in the meantime, Helen Alkire was very instrumental in what happened later for me because she introduced—there were five of us—to what was called Connecticut College at that time and

later became known as The American Dance Festival, where dancers would go for summer training. There was Merce [Cunningham] there. Martha [Graham] was teaching. José [Limón] was teaching. And oh, what an experience.

Morris: I can imagine.

Kinney: [00:03:50] So I went in 1960—'60 and '61—and in the year of 1961, Paul Taylor was coming in to do an evening of work. At that time they [Paul Taylor] didn't have a season. He did one evening or two evenings, and sometimes it was shared with another choreographer. And so he asked my Graham teacher, David Wood, he said, "I need three dancers, some of your advanced students to come and just be in *Insects and Heroes*." And so David chose myself, another dancer named Renee Kimball, and Danny [Daniel] Lewis, who we all know from the Miami New World School of the Arts. He danced with José Limon for many years.

So the three of us go to rehearsal. When David Wood asked me, I said, "Sure,"

"Okay." So we go, and we meet Paul, at the rehearsal, and meet all the dancers. We are very excited, and he says, "Okay, here's what you're going to do. You're going to be inside this box, and you're going to stand still, and when I tell you the cue, you're going to lift your arm up, and you're going to turn on the light. And then you're going to lower your arm, and then you're going to stand for ten more minutes." I think the first version of *Insects and Heroes* is thirty-one minutes, I think maybe. So, the great story I love to tell is that we went back to the other students, and they said, "What are you going to do? This is so exciting." We said, "We're going

to do something you've never seen us do before." That was true. We stood still. We got these great costumes, and we got to watch the dance from inside our box.

So okay, thank you very much. We loved it. Then the next year I moved back to New York. It was the summer of 1962, and I had just practically gotten off the plane. I was taking classes with Merce Cunningham down on Fourteenth Street. And I get this call from Liz [Elizabeth] Walton, who was dancing with Paul, and she said, "Paul is looking for dancers. Would you like to come to an audition?" And I said, "Oh, okay. That's fine." So I went to the studio. The studio was on Sixth Avenue between Thirty-Eighth and Thirty-Ninth I think, right in the Bead [beads for jewelry making] district. And so I climbed the six flights of steps to the studio, and Paul said, "Hello, thank you for coming." And Renee Kimball was there, BUT there wasn't anybody else there. It was just the two of us. We had been friends at Ohio State. We knew each other. So Paul has us come out on the floor. You know, I'm expecting an audition type audition. But he just gave some movement and turned on [George Frederic] Handel music and said, "Okay, you go stand up here."

Evidently, he liked what he saw us do in this ten minutes, and he said, "Okay, you go up here, and Renee, stand down here." And he started to put together the first duet in *Aureole*.

Morris: When you were at Connecticut College, did you know his work? I mean, did you know him as a dancer?

Kinney: [00:07:49] I had never seen him dance, but we of course, once we got there, knew of him as the dancer with Martha Graham. And everybody was swooning, you know, because I think they felt like he was the up and coming choreographer, but he was still dancing with Martha.

Morris: And you didn't know his choreography either—

Kinney: No.

Morris: —when you went?

Kinney: Mm-hmm.

Morris: That's interesting. You joined his company, and you didn't actually know that much about him?

Kinney: [00:08:24] No, because it was—and he and I have a difference of opinion about this, he had not formed the company really. (Paul said he asked me to be in the company that day in rehearsal.)

Morris: Oh right.

Kinney: [00:08:32] So he hired us to be in this piece. You know, it was like, okay, I'm going to do this piece at the American Dance Festival at Connecticut College in three weeks, four weeks, and we'll pay you \$25 for the performance. You'll get your room and board, and, you know, we didn't know that first day that he was going to form his own company. And I said okay. And it was like it was another job. And I had already auditioned for summer stock, and I knew that I had a job in September, so this was going to work out. And then we get to Connecticut College in New London, and we do this (now famous) piece *Aureole*, but that's the first time I saw his work—what would they have done? Maybe *Tablet*, maybe *Fibers*. I should have looked at that program. I forget what they did [*Tablet, Meridian, 3-Epitaphs*]. And then we did *Aureole*. And then it was a hit.

And so on the train back from Connecticut, he came over to me, and he said, "I'm wanting to form my own company. I'm going to leave Martha and get a manager . Would you be interested in being in the company?" And I said "of course."

Morris: So this was after you had already done *Aureole*?

Kinney: [00:09:58] We had finished *Aureole*. It's August 5. We're on the train home, and that's when he asked me. And I said "yes".

Morris: Oh, I see.



Kinney: [00:10:07] Now, I really wanted, because I didn't know Paul Taylor's work really, but I knew Merce's work, and so I thought I was going to audition to be in the Merce Cunningham [Dance] Company. But I have to say that when I got into the studio that day and he showed us some of the movement [for *Aureole*] and he danced the movement, and we started and the music was wonderful. I went, "oh, I love this." So, I was hooked. There was no problem me saying yes. But I didn't know what that meant when I said yes, I do want to be in your company. But oh, by the way, I have a job in September. He said that's okay. And while I was away, he started *Piece Period*.

Morris: Let's talk about *Aureole*. It's such an important work. What was his process as you were making it? How did he work?

Kinney: [00:11:12] Right. His process for *Aureole*, I later learned, was very different than his process for other pieces.

Morris: That's interesting.

Kinney: [00:11:19] In *Aureole*, that first movement is about that vocabulary that I personally think he was developing for later years. But it was like his reaction to Louis Horst's review [in *Dance Observer*], and he said okay, you want theme and variations, I'll give you theme and variations. It was all about the assemblés, sissonnes, little parallel jumps and the *Aureole* S arms all fast footwork. That vocabulary he manipulated in as many ways as he could. And at the same time, he did it very quickly. The movement just flowed out of him. And the

process was so easy. He was very gentle. He was very friendly. And I think of that duet, the very first, and I go down, and I touch Renee on the shoulder...

Morris: We'll look at that in a minute.

Kinney: [00:12:13] Yeah. It's a friendship. It was kind of about, you know, these two girls were friends. That contributed to the choreography. Things, dance movements he gave to his dancers—came from him and what he saw in the person that he was making the dance for, in addition to all of his very creative and choreographic ideas. But he kept the individual in mind. So that first movement just kind of flowed, he had already made Liz's solo in Trieste [Italy] or wherever they were before. And I think he had done a little bit with Dan's solo, but we finished that first movement pretty quickly and then his, Paul's solo, was the next movement in the dance. But we didn't really get to see his solo until later. So then we worked on integrating myself and Renee into Liz's solo, where we come in, and we join her.

And you know, we didn't count. We all listened to the music. That's why later teaching it to people was like, oh god, I've got to count this for them. We would say "Just listen to the music. Hear the violins. They are telling you what to do." It's because he really stayed on that music. And then he would throw in a five or a nine or something. And so, in the solo we come in and join her at the end, and then Dan comes in. And then he integrated Liz, Renee, and I in Dan's solo.

Morris: Maybe we should look at the video and you can talk us through the—

Kinney: Okay yeah, that'd be fun.

Morris: —the whole work.

Kinney: [00:14:10] Mm-hmm. We'll have to talk about that [pointing to a photo of herself in *Scudorama* on the monitor]. Do you have the other one [version of the dance, the original version]? [pointing to the video monitor]

Crew 1: The other?

Kinney: The one from Connecticut College [video of *Aureole*: American Dance Festival, Connecticut College, 1962], the original version!

Crew 1: No, but I can get it.

Morris: Oh, this is the TV [pointing to video of *Aureole*: CBS television show, 1963].

Kinney: Yeah, because it's so different.

Morris: Yeah.

Crew 1: I can upload it in a minute.

Morris: Should we do that? I think it's much better.

Kinney: [00:14:40] Yes because we had to change the choreography for this [the CBS TV Show].

Morris: And it's also not complete. All right, let's watch the 1962 film.

Kinney: [00:15:21] And this is in silence.

Morris: It is, yes, there's no sound.

Kinney: [00:16:04] [Pointing to the video] Okay. I think it's interesting to know that not many dances were recorded like this was, this was very special that Helen Priest Rogers was documenting dances at that time. I just want to say this was at 8:00 in the morning when they called us in to do this. I don't know if the stagehands were there, but it was at 8:00 in the morning, and—

Morris: At least it was recorded.

Kinney: Yes.

Morris: Go ahead.

Kinney: [00:16:58] Okay. [Kinney is looking at the video and commenting on it.]

There are four of us on stage and that is Dan Wagoner, and he is standing in a slight first position and is holding her in his arms. He stays in that position for a very long time, which is a challenge.

Now we see the first dance movement where I come over, and I greet her, and touch her shoulder. She turns to me.

Morris: Who is she?

Kinney: [00:17:20] Renee [Kimball] Wadleigh.

Morris: Okay, and who is he [Dan Wagoner) holding?

Kinney: Liz Walton.

Morris: Oh, okay.

Kinney: [00:17:24] And I should say Elizabeth because—she's Liz to me. Okay, so there you are seeing the vocabulary that I think he was developing, and it appears maybe even in the *Brandenburgs* today. So it's those arms, the V arms, the curved arms, the *Aureole* S arms, and then the *assemblés*, and he's playing with all that movement and does not introduce any new steps—just sees how he can manipulate them in as many—there he's doing an *assemblé* and a

kind of chassé. Then we do the *Aureole* run that became very famous. They always used the *Aureole* run in an audition. There are the V arms, and I'm going to get back to that later. Liz going from V to curve, V to curve. And then, you know, we've got that wonderful da da da, underneath it. And we'll show that when we show the TV film version.

Now Dan was dancing there... very quick. He could do anything Paul wanted him to do but was a very different type dancer than Paul.

Morris: Definitely.

Kinney: Totally different.

Morris: Yes.

Kinney: [00:18:51] Now this is the famous trio. Okay. So trios: Paul uses them in a lot of his choreography, and it's about keeping together and trying to maintain that trio, that formation there. And so we did a lot of rehearsing of that. The *Aureole* trio was always used in an audition.

Morris: This looks—

Kinney: Very hard. [Watching Dan's solo in first movement]

Morris: —so demanding.

Kinney: [00:19:29] Very hard when you have to teach that. They [the male dancers] don't want to go down like that, especially here, down. Okay, and it's 8:00 in the morning. Oh, Dan, I love you [admiring Dan's squat plie jumps]. And here we come in, assemblé, assemblé, lots of call and response. These are the sissonnes, side to side, so he keeps manipulating that same material. And I guess the thing I'm thinking about as I am watching is that costume was—our waistbands are from his jockey shorts. And a woman came in and cut the material and made those skirts for us, and we just have white leotards on, and that's it. Later Paul added a ruffle across the top of the leotard, but the costumes have remained the same over the years!

Morris: Were the costumes by Tacit? [George Tacit, Paul Taylor's alter ego]

Kinney: By Tacit, yes.

Morris: By George Tacit?

Kinney: [00:20:39] George Tacit did that, but there was a woman named Ruth that helped him put those skirts together.

Morris: And did you know who George Tacit was—

Kinney: Yes.

Morris: —at that time?

Kinney: [00:20:50] No, not necessarily. George Tacit somehow appeared later. All right, now we are looking at Paul's solo. I think in this film he does not have a shirt on. He added a shirt after the first performances. I'm not exactly sure why.

Morris: No, it doesn't look like it.

Kinney: [00:21:00] And this is where I wish Liz was still here. Now, he is—ooh, I knew that was going to happen. We did not see his solo until a week before the performance. He was teaching at Adelphi and he told us later that he choreographed it on the train going out to Adelphi. He made stick figure drawings of the positions he wanted to move through. He worked on this solo very privately, and we didn't really see it until the week before we left for Connecticut. We heard the music because he added us at the end of the solo! That section we called "the family"... and then it moves into the next movement which is Liz's solo. I taught this dance many times and before I taught it I would ask him [Paul] about it and he would give me advice on how to teach it and how to direct it. When I would teach it, I would always go in to him and say, "what do you want me to say to the dancer?" He talked about the four corners that he was reaching to, the four corners of the stage. He talked about being a presence, godlike, very peaceful, and he spoke about to not stop in the positions but to keep moving from one position to the next.

Morris: What about the arms?



Kinney: [00:21:53] Those arms came from his back. They just went on. And that was what drew me to the choreography when I first experienced it, using my back and extending out, not making a shape out but, you know, extending from my back, which is what you were talking about when we were talking about sometimes [it being] difficult for ballet dancers because they are in a position. And Paul's movement seemed to flow out of his body rather than being put on his body, and that's kind of what he gave to us.

Also the transfer of weight and being grounded, and I think that's one of the hardest things when you teach say, a ballet company. And coming from that plié, he had a great plié. He really did, and his power came from that. So when you're watching that and you're a dancer, you just cannot NOT do that because we were seeing it just coming from him or being behind him or watching from the wings. I've taught this so many times, and it's really difficult to teach. Each male dancer has such a different style, and you've got to put this style on top of their dancing. I taught it to [The] Juilliard [School students]. I think it was 1981. They were senior students, the advanced students. And the young man that we picked, he had studied ballet, wasn't very trained in modern, and so I wanted Paul to see him to give him a critique and comments. I'll get back to—[pointing to the video monitor] this movement, this section right here was called “the family,” and we came in from the side and were being drawn to him but were still with each other until—she comes out. He comes over to us. And we have that moment. And then my arm is there, and he came from underneath and lifted me up. He was always very powerful. It's funny about how the simplest things could be so powerful, and in your memory, and then he left. It's all okay.

But what I wanted to say about the solo, I have this young man—

Morris: [Requests that the video stops while Kinney explains.] Just about the young man.

Kinney: [00:25:12] He came out to do that first part, and at that time the feet were to be parallel. And he comes out, and he's standing there. And he lifts his arms. And he [Paul] said, "Sharon, he's very bow-legged, and it does not look good on his body. So I'm going to change it so he can stand in first position." So he did that. He would, you know, as the newer dancers would come in he would always—and Dan told me this, he would always make you look your best.

Morris: That's great.

Kinney: [00:25:57] And Dan said don't worry about it because I, at one point when I was first going to dance at Hunter [College, New York City] I was doing like, six new parts, *Insects*, *Tracer*, *Junction*, and I was frightened, is the best word. I said, "Dan, I'm so worried." And Dan said, "Don't worry. He will never ever let you go on stage not looking your best." And I always kept that as a reminder to my own dancers or when I was teaching his dances.

Morris: So should we start again? [The video resumes]

[Liz's Solo]

Kinney: [00:26:40] That's me. Here's Liz, and she comes up, and it's here. Now can we stop it a minute?

Morris: Yes.

Kinney: Can I stand?

Morris: Yes.

Crew 1: Sure.

Kinney: [00:27:03] She comes to here [she shows the position Liz is standing in], and the movement is coming from the floor [she demonstrates]. And her hips are reacting to that. But when you go out and teach it [to students] or to a company, they want to do this because they think the movement's coming from here [she demonstrates the hands moving back and forth]. but it is coming from there, it's from the feet, from the floor, and it's just very subtle. And I've had that challenge when I go to a ballet company, and I really want to say, the ballet companies have done beautifully, have done it beautifully, but you have to, like we were talking, you have to train them to work from the floor and not to work from the lift of the position. Everything is coming from the weight into the floor and the push off of the floor and touching your feet on the floor. That's Liz's solo.

He had already made this [Liz's solo] by the time he taught us the first movement. So they come back from Paris or France and go into the studio. So when we would be rehearsing it, she already knew it, and he [Paul] would be rehearsing her in it. But then to go into the next movement, he added us, [Sharon and Renee]. But if you look at *Aureole* you'll notice that we never go to the

ground, and in so many of his other pieces we're on the ground crawling, and this is all in the air coming from the ground. But except for this little moment, and she goes down, and she rolls her legs over, and he used to say, "Just feel like the sun, like you're out sunbathing, and feel the sun coming down on you." So I would always use that when I taught because this is a tricky solo. This is not easy to do.

Morris: And what makes it particularly difficult?

Kinney: [00:29:27] Because of staying in the parallel position, everybody wants to turn out. And everybody wants to kind of click the heels instead of using the brush to get into the movement. And he would go, "Brush, brush. Don't click the heels." Because several times when you go out to teach, the dancers have watched a video of the piece before you come, and so you have to also pull back from what they see on the video because it's very flat.

And this section was called a "piddly poo" section. This is also complicated and very Paul in his arrangement, his entrances and his exits. When I go back and I look at the pieces, I just marvel at how he brings people on the stage and how they leave the stage. He's a master at entrances and exits. And if he leaves the stage empty, it's on purpose. Back then he didn't usually do that. So again, he's playing with all that vocabulary, which is the assemblé, the sissonne, the little chassé, the little glissade. But we never use those words. And in fact, I never even thought of those words until I went out to teach it to people.

Morris: That's interesting.

Kinney: [00:31:08] “Well, it’s like an assemblé you know, you can do that, only stay parallel and brush.”

Morris: How would he communicate the step? Did he demonstrate?

Kinney: [00:31:19] He demonstrated. He demonstrated it totally. And it’s funny because he would never have been able to do that dance, but he demonstrated it.

Morris: Oh, interesting.

Kinney: [00:31:37] And he kind of gave it to us. So all these little steps, and I guess I could mention that now. Because it [*Aureole*] was such a hit, when we got back, he went, “you know, we’re going to do this again at Hunter. We’ve got to fix this dance. We’ve got to clean this up. This is kind of messy.” Originally, we just kept our arms down. But that’s when he added that we would keep our little fingers attached to the tops of our legs so that our arms didn’t swing when we were doing those kinds of things. So you’ll see. It’s not like we were in fifth, but it’s just that that little finger touching the top of your thigh would keep you from swinging your arms.

Did that make sense, what I was saying?

Morris: Yes, I was just wondering if there’s a way that you can move.

Kinney: It's okay.

Morris: But it would be good if you would be able to... This is so interesting.

Kinney: Really?

Morris: Yeah.

Kinney: Oh good.

Morris: I mean, it'll be interesting for people who see it, and for the people who dance it. It's really valuable. So would Paul just stand up and say do this, and you would do it? Is that the way he would work?

Kinney: [00:34:20] Yes, he was right in there with us.

[microphone falls and is replaced]

Kinney: [00:34:32] He would be right in the dance with us, so he would be demonstrating. "No, do it this way. No." And he would push us around, and he would go, "Well, why can't you," you know, "Can you turn up stage?" Like, "We could try it this way," and "Oh, your arm is too high there." No, he was right in the dance with us all the time. And then he would say, "Okay." And

then he would step back, turn on the tape recorder and watch us, and stop it and go, “No, no, no, no,” and then go back in and fiddle with us.

Morris: That’s good.

Kinney: [00:35:06] Yeah, he was very, very involved.

Morris: And is that the way he always worked?

Kinney: Yes, while I was there.

Has anybody else talked about *Aureole*, do you know?

Morris: No, I don’t think so.

We haven’t done very many interviews yet. Dan might have.

Kinney: [00:36:18] But Dan, did Dan have what I have [being filmed while watching a video of the dance]?

Morris: No, this is the first time. That’s why it is an experiment. [Kinney underlined this for emphasis to underscore novelty of the approach in this interview]. This is the first time we’ve done this, but I just think it is really helpful, and it will be helpful to everybody, whether you’re a historian or a dancer.

Kinney: We're not rolling right?

Crew 2: We are.

Crew 1: So now it's frozen on me, sorry.

Kinney: Where are you? What's the easiest place for you?

Crew 1: Well, the whole program is frozen on me, so [crosstalk]—

Kinney: Well, we can talk about something else, I guess.

Morris: I had one quote, but it would be good to have it on the video. That when he [Paul] talked in *Private Domain* [his memoir] about “passing through the movement to keep the flow going. Don't lock into position.” Seems like that's important. And then another place he said that his movement starts at the center and works outward. “The use of the torso to instigate movement.”

Kinney: Exactly.

Morris: And that really shows there, in the back.

Kinney: In his solo.



Morris: Yes, in his solo. And also, it seems like somehow his upper arms have a kind of support, but I suppose that's from the back.

Kinney: [00:37:56] Yes. And knowing that he was a swimmer.

Morris: Yeah, and that the lower arms and hands can be very relaxed because that strength is coming from the back.

Kinney: [00:38:06] Exactly, oh yeah. Because it's interesting, as I'm watching this, to see the real difference of those two solos [for himself and Dan]. He has made Dan very upright, straight, and, you know, Dan's moving this way. It's all in his feet. Dan liked to solve problems, puzzles, and all that. And Paul kept giving him these little foot puzzles. And Dan and I both had the reputation that we could remember the choreography. And it was like, if you think about it, "Oh, were you trying to trick Dan?" You know. It was summer. It was in July. It was hot. It was very hot in the studio. And I remember Dan working on this solo and just sweating profusely because it was hot, and the solo is really demanding.

Morris: I know.

Kinney: [00:39:14] And when I have taught it they go, the male dancers from wherever I would be, they would go, "What? Is there more?" And I go, "Yes, there's more." Wait, you have at least thirty-two more counts with that kind of activity. So yeah, because it's a long movement in the Handel music/score. And then I'll tell the other story that's interesting about this as soon as

we see the—if we can see the duet. The duet that we're going to watch is with Liz and Paul. And they walk in backwards in this, but now today they walk forward towards each other. You'll see that. But originally they walked in backwards, and then they turned to face each other.

Morris: And he just changed that at some point?

Kinney: Yes, uh-huh.

Morris: Wonder why.

Kinney: [00:40:16] I do, too. When I saw it later I went, "Gee, I wonder why he changed that?" In retrospect, I am sure it came about dancing on different types of stages or venues now, there's something else I want to mention about dancing in the '60s. You have to know that the stages that we danced on were wooden floors. They were not the Marley [of today]. We didn't have Marley. They were wooden floors. They often were on concrete. They also were built for orchestras. And so they were very hard. And one of our big issues as dancers was getting splinters in our feet or our bodies.

Morris: Wow.

Kinney: [00:40:57] And there were several times when we—well, we had to take Liz Walton to the hospital because she had a huge splinter. It was from one of the pieces, and she's dragged.

Morris: Oh my gosh. The dangers you don't think about.

Kinney: [00:41:16] So we were so thrilled with Marley.

Morris: I'll bet.

Kinney: [00:41:20] Really. And some floors would be so slippery, and it would just be, oh god, we've gotten a slippery one. Be careful. Because, especially in *Aureole* and then some of the other pieces. And I think that was in "Tablet" that Liz got the splinter, gosh. Paul's feet were always bandaged up.

[Interruption to find the correct place in the video]

Kinney: [00:41:58] So then, you know, within this solo he introduces the three dancers coming in and doing the chassé around him, with Dan never really interacting with us. We kind of complemented him and his movement.

Okay, let's see if we're coming to the—and he would give—I don't know if this is where it is.

This is kind of the end. Noah, is it awful to rewind it?

Crew 1: Sure, just a little bit.

Kinney: Uh-huh.

Morris: It's interesting to see the video without the music because you realize that the vocabulary is quite simple.

[Interruption to find correct place in video]

Kinney: Because what?

Morris: The vocabulary, I don't mean the steps are simple, but there's not a lot of different steps.

Kinney: No.

Morris: And yet he does so much, and it's seen in so many different ways, these same steps.

Kinney: [00:43:15] I also think that at that time when we did it the Handel music was a surprise because he usually used very, very strong—not Stravinsky, but very challenging composers like Schoenberg and Morton Feldman. So again, now this was—see, we're kind of separated. Later, to keep us together we keep our wrists touching, and that's how we keep together because we're going across the stage and then off stage and not looking where we're going to exit.

So this is called “the tea party,” and we are introduced one by one, to Dan. Now, when Paul was choreographing, he would be inside that with us. “Now, Sharon, you do this.” He wasn't necessarily outside directing us, but he would actually get inside the group and demonstrate what he wanted us to do

Morris: Interesting.

Kinney: [00:45:00] And they [Paul and Dan] worked alone. Paul often worked alone with each of us. You know, we'd come in and he would already be working with Dan. This is the part. He said, "There's an exercise that football players do, and they have tires on the field, and they do that [Jumping side to side.]" And so that was an image we used when we were teaching other dancers. "No, you're jumping through. You're in this very lovely dance, but you're jumping through tires like you would if you were a football player at practice in their warm up." Okay, so we exit So here they come in backwards. That's Paul, and that's Liz. And he also was making that duet. We would come to rehearsal, and Liz and Paul would be working already, and they would be figuring out [the movement]. But again, the impetus was the music, the vocabulary that he was using, the friendliness and relationship between the dancers.

We always said that and felt that, that duet showed how much he loved Elizabeth, Elizabeth Walton. And this section was called the little duet, Renee, Dan, Paul [Kinney is pointing to the dancers in the Little duet], and I think today the circling is different.

But a lot of men don't get the lift. It is a very Paul lift. It is very simple. She is dead weight and he walks very slowly upstage while the little duet goes on.

Morris: In what sense?

[ALL OF THIS IS LOOKING AT THE VIDEO]

Kinney: [00:46:54] It's just the way he picked her up like that and then carried her upstage. Now [Kinney points to the video] this is a very sweet, like, six-eight. These shapes are very Paul, the rounding of the back, the going over, and him gathering her without touching her, which appears in *Esplanade*. When I saw that and when I got to do that—I never did the duet, I only taught it. I did all the other parts. But I just loved that contraction and that pull over. See that back, that wonderful back, so Paul.

Morris: Yes, his arms are so soft.

Kinney: [00:48:05] And that plié, and it's all coming from his plié and then those arms. When that kind of gesturing to each other, and so romantic but not. Now he's all—he's down in a plié.

Morris: I know.

Kinney: [00:48:32] Okay, so we'll stop it here just a minute. {Interruption.} So Paul finished the first four movements and invited Edwin Denby, the writer, critic, to come to rehearsal a week before we were to leave. We were ready to go, and it was only the four movements. And so Edwin came. And there were other people that came to watch the rehearsals, but Edwin came in, and he says, "Well, where's the ending?" And Paul said, "Well, that's the ending." Edwin says "Paul, you can't finish with that duet." And Paul says, "Well, we don't have time. You know, we got to get on the train. No." And Edwin said, "Well, you know, I really think," I can't talk like

Edwin Denby talked... I am sure he told Paul that it looked unfinished, so we came back into rehearsal the next day, and he said, “Okay, we got to do another movement.”

And so we made the fifth movement, and the music really changes. It goes into a march. And he threw out all that other vocabulary [from the first four movements]. He never wanted to use another assemblé, So in the fifth movement it’s all very angular. It’s very different. It’s sharp where we were [demonstrating the movement], and then he introduced those [Kinney demonstrates a tour with her arms]—he did it in one day!!!! [Kinney very animated]

Morris: Wow.

Kinney: [00:50:02] Yeah. I don’t think his solos were quite complete, but he finished that movement with us, so we can watch that. [Video is started again]

Morris: It certainly looks very different.

Kinney: [00:50:13] It’s very different. And the whole feeling of it changed. And again, you’re going to have the trio kind of effect, but this time instead of three girls—[video freezes]. Instead of having the three girls, he uses two girls and Dan. What else can I tell you about that? We were glad, too. We said bring it on. But here we come out, and one, two, three, four, you know, it’s very sharp and very angular.

Morris: And the vocabulary is more complex, isn't it?

Kinney: [00:50:57] [Pauses] Yes. It's just so different. You know, the studio that we're talking about was not much bigger than this one we are in. This is probably a little bigger than the depth we had in the studio that we danced in. And what I've always thought is so fantastic is he made *Aureole* in the smaller space, and then one of the first times we performed was on the [Palacio de] Bellas Artes stage [in Mexico City]. It was just the five of us, and we did more dancing and running behind the stage trying to get to the other side. There were many crossovers. And it's just five dancers like that. When you teach it to another company, they'd go, "What? I can't get across the stage like that." And I'd go, "Well, you're going to have to."

We walk in in silence, which you'll see. Turn thirteen steps, step. Music starts, one, two, three, two, three, four, five, six, one, two, three, four, five. So we are in a very definite march, five, six, one, two, three. We haven't done anything like that. We do that, that little "piddly poo" thing, but we haven't done any grand battement like that. And then turning, slide, slide. Here she comes across the floor with that flying step. This is different. We haven't seen anything like that.

Haven't seen this yet. And we were as surprised as anybody when he [Paul] comes flying out of the wings and into the studio, and then starts doing what we called "the coffee grinder." That's what he called it, and usually it got applause. And all those jumps are very difficult—you can't really see it on films, especially this. And this is so Paul [pointing to video]. This was one of the harder steps to teach to somebody. And it's just a little tour thing, but it was the rhythm and using the back movement to initiate the turn, not trying to do a double tour or trying to do a ballet step. [Pointing to video] We're still in that march, three, four, five, six.



One of the things he loved, or wanted, was for people to think there were more dancers than the five of us ...and they did! He liked the entrances and exits because he wanted them to think there were more people in the dance. [When we came out to take a bow people were surprised there were only five dancers.] And so if a student would say, “well, why were there only five dancers?” It was because that’s all he had at the time. And then when we went out on tour we had six dancers, but he couldn’t expand the company because we had to fit into a station wagon to drive to Illinois or to someplace. And then we got a van. [Looking at video] That’s a good one, those turns. That’s Dan. And then here comes Paul up and lifts us from the floor. And comes around, and then the leap across at the end, and that’s the end.

Morris: Great. That was very, very interesting.

Kinney: Do you want to show the first movement from the CBS version that has the music?

Morris: Sure. I think we have enough time.

Kinney: [00:56:12] And then I can talk about how he—

Morris: How he changed things.

Kinney: [00:56:15] —he wasn’t very happy about making the changes, but he did it. Because of the camera, he had to do it because the camera was stationary back then. So then they felt that

they needed to put stripes down on the floor for the perspective, and they added the set in the back. And then we had to make exits next to the camera instead of going off. [Points off stage]

Morris: And it [the CBS production] doesn't include his solo, does it?

Kinney: [00:56:44] I'm not sure. I can't remember that. So see, that was for the look of the TV version. [Looking at video] So that would have ordinarily been across, but I had to cut down. We had to really change our spacing. So these steps are coming towards the camera instead of going to the side. She usually exits that way. Now this is interesting because Dan is holding her. After we came back from, I think, from Mexico, Paul changed it so he [Paul] is holding her, and one of the reasons was, he said, "Everybody thinks Dan is me."

Morris: Oh, that's interesting.

Kinney: [00:58:06] So the spacing is very different. I did want you to just hear the music—

Morris: I'm sure.

Kinney: [00:58:08] —and for people to hear the music.

Morris: It feels very closed in.

Kinney: [00:58:14] Yeah. You know, I didn't talk about this, but that always got a laugh. People loved that he was doing that [pushing the dancers from side to side]. We thought it was something serious. And then he said, go ahead and look at him. So then we started to look at him, but in the original we didn't. We didn't look at him. He looked at us, but—

Morris: And when it's performed now do you look or not look?

Kinney: [00:58:51] Yeah, they look. See, that's so scrunched. So I think it would have been one camera. Was it? Probably? And then the editing, I'm sure we did takes. So we're already there. You don't see the entrance. Okay, so. Yeah, spacing is all different. We had new costumes. We had the TV people. We called them the TV costumes. It was a very nice waistband.

Morris: Real elastic.

Kinney: [01:00:04] Real elastic. I was talking to Clarion [Overmoyer] and Bettie [de Jong] about the costumes because when I was watching *Aureole* this past season, or the last time I saw it, they just—those skirts just were going on and on. And Bettie said, "Because they finally were able to buy enough material to make a full skirt." I thought our skirts looked pretty good.

Morris: Do you think this is enough of watching this video?

Kinney: Mm-hmm.

Morris: Yeah.

Kinney: [01:00:49] I think it is interesting—

Morris: It's interesting, yes.

Kinney: [01:00:51] —to see because this was the first challenge that he had of redoing his work for the TV camera. And then look what progressed over the years to *Speaking in Tongues* where he really took a piece, and also I think *Rite of Spring*, and had to really restage it for the camera.

Morris: How much time did he have to change things for the camera?

Kinney: [01:01:22] We probably had two or three days with rehearsing it. I don't think we had a lot of time.

Morris: That's interesting. I'm wondering if we have enough time to look at *Piece Period*. We could maybe start and then see where we go. And then we'll meet again on Wednesday.

Kinney: Sure.

Morris: So we will be looking at *Piece Period* from 1962 [video: New York City Center, 2007].

Can you briefly say what kind of work it is?

Kinney: [01:02:56] It's one of his funny dances. And again, we did not know what he was going to choreograph. As I said, I had gone away. I came back, and when I came back into the rehearsals he had already made the hand dance. So I had to learn it because, you know, we didn't have understudies. And even if he hadn't told me to learn it, I would have learned it because as a dancer, certainly at that time, you watched everything that was choreographed. And it was very good because you never knew if you might have to go into that piece a half an hour before the performance because of not having understudies. There are so many wonderful stories in the company, even with people sitting in the audience and having to run backstage, put on a costume, and go into the piece [because of an injury]. But so, you know, I love this dance. This is a wonderful dance. And what can I tell—

Morris: What other parts do you think—

Kinney: [01:04:04] And then the next piece is the four, the four ladies in the skirts.

Morris: Oh, right.

Kinney: [01:04:10] And that was—we were just to be silly. Yeah, just be having fun. And so John Rawlings [costume designer] came to see the dance, and what had happened like the day before, Paul had this big bench, and he would reach in there, and he would pull out wigs, or he would pull our props or something. And so he had these sheets, and he wanted us to be in these long dresses, and we'd put these sheets on and pin them, did what we could in kicking them and having them trip us and everything. But one of the sheets was torn. And so I put on the short

sheet, and John came. And he watched the dance. And he said, “Okay, she stays. She stays in a short costume.” And that’s how he decided, he and Paul decided that the levels of skirts would be different.

Morris: Interesting.

Kinney: [01:05:09] Because originally we were all going to wear long dresses.

Morris: Oh, that’s good.

Kinney: [01:05:14] And that kind of thing I think is very representative of Paul, of those spontaneous things that would happen. And he would pull them into the choreography. He would say, “What did you just do over there? That’s great. Let me see that again.” And be open to spontaneous moments like that.

Morris: And what about the choreography? I mean, how would you characterize that in terms of—

Kinney: [01:05:41] Of the other dances say? Oh, it was just so much fun. I mean, we didn’t have to worry about the arms being straight, and we did this kind of silly thing [demonstrates]. And all these kind of movements appear in other dances later on, whether it’s the movement in *Post Meridian* and the different arm shapes and things. But it was a laugh, you know. And again, we didn’t know it was supposed to be funny, but we were having a good time.

Morris: That's great. Okay, why don't we watch it, and we can talk about it. [Video is started]

Kinney: [01:06:36] You know, Paul chose music that you maybe weren't familiar with, and then you just had a whole new approach to hearing this music.

Morris: Now, was this first dance his originally?

Kinney: [01:06:50] Yes, mm-hmm. And is that Michael [phonetic], I think?

Crew 1: I think that's Richard Chen See, actually.

Kinney: [01:06:56] Oh, it is? Oh. Oh, that's fun. So, the famous story about this is when we did it in Mexico, we hadn't had time to adjust to the altitude change, and so they had oxygen backstage for us. So when we came off in *Aureole*, Paul decides that he's going to lick this whole thing. So he takes a whole bunch of oxygen before he goes on, and he got out there, and he literally did not know where he was. And we're standing in the wings going, "what is he doing? Is he changing the choreography?" He starts to move, and he's having the best time. He's getting some of those steps and everything. I mean, he was recovering from it but the real joke was he didn't know where he was when he first started, but that it added to the fun—this guy's supposed to be kind of—he's the jester, and he's supposed to be kind of silly and off balance and so it worked. And he came off stage, and we said, "What was going on?" He said—then he told us later the story, "Well, I thought I'd get ahead of this oxygen thing."

Morris: But also, it is a parody of an eighteenth century dance, in a sense.

Kinney: [01:08:32] Oh yes, yes, uh-huh. He's playing with it.

Morris: That's right.

Kinney: Yeah.

Morris: This is my favorite part.

Kinney: [01:08:39] Oh, this is, you know, snooty stuff and so elegant. This was Bettie's part.

And there were just the two of us in the original. Ooh, wow, they've got headpieces. We didn't have headpieces like that. Is that Lisa [Viola]?

Morris: Are these supposed to be Spanish ladies?

Kinney: [01:09:23] We're like her care takers. He had pretty much finished her [Bettie's] dance, and it, you know, was one of those things. He came in, and he said, "Sharon, Renee, come over here. Here, pretend like you have fans." And then we went out and bought fans. And we were just supposed to be, you know, guarding her and very sinister. So when we first did it, it was just the two of us, and then we went to Spoleto [Festival], and then he added another girl, and then he would add more. That's the way Paul ... He could see something and then know what to add to it,



because I think when he started out he didn't plan on these two people coming out. He had made this, but I think as he watched Bettie and what they were creating together, he thought well, let's see.

Morris: And were the banners there originally, going up and down?

Kinney: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Morris: And this was Dan?

Kinney: [01:11:24] Mm-hmm. This is another hard, very hard solo. You know, it's so funny because he had already choreographed this, and I can't really tell you that much about that piece except he's so silly.

Morris: But it is like a sailor's dance.

Kinney: [01:12:01] Yeah. And you know, Dan was like a sponge to Paul's work. I mean, he could just—they really had a way to talk to each other and speak to each other through movement.

Morris: Interesting.

Kinney: [01:12:18] And I think Dan got Paul's sense of humor. I mean, we would be laughing off stage at what Dan looked like out there.

Morris: Was this added later, or was that always—

Kinney: No, it was in it.

Morris: in it.

Kinney: [01:12:47] Mm-hmm. There were props in this piece. This was the props piece. I forget. I have to look at the other [video of the dance].

Morris: And it's amusing to have him go off and come right back on again.

Kinney: [01:13:22] I know. He loved to play with, as I said, entrances and exits.

Morris: And what is that?

Kinney: It's a bucket.

Morris: Oh, a bucket, okay.

Kinney: [01:13:36] And that was Liz Walton's part. So everything's so precious and so particular and the fancy lady, but I think Paul always liked to have her do that.

[Kinney points to video, shaking her hands over her head, demonstrating the movement the dancer is doing in the video]. It's like he would break up that movement and break up that idea into something silly, especially in this piece.

Morris: It seems to me that it would be very easy to overdo things.

Kinney: Yes.

Morris: So was—

Kinney: [01:14:34] He would pull us back. If it got too crazy. I mean, you know, he would, "Don't mug there. Don't—"

Morris: Yeah, that always seems to be something very important not to overexpress or over—

Kinney: [01:14:59] Right, mm-hmm. Okay, so one time we did it [Liz's solo}, and the stagehands forgot to put the scissors in the bucket. The bucket had a pair of scissors in it, and at the end of the dance Liz takes out the scissors and cuts the cord holding the bucket. Then she puts the bucket on her arm and walks off. When the stagehands forgot the scissors, Liz walked off the stage, went to the props table, got the scissors, came back on stage and cut the cord.

And so—well, I’ll wait. I came into rehearsal one day, and he said, “Sharon, come over here.” And he said, “Here, I want to—” he started putting these buckets on me. And I had no idea. And he said, “Now bourrée just across the floor. Oh, I know, just put that bucket down there, and you know, that.” And then I pull that bucket out from between my legs. Got a great laugh, great laugh. That was always fun. But it just happened that one day. Yes, we’re covering for Liz to change her costume. [Kinney’s solo, referred to as “the bucket dance,” was added to *Piece Period* to cover the costume change and is without music].

Morris: Oh.

Kinney: [01:15:56] Liz is changing her costume. I love that dance. So because Liz is now an Elizabethan lady.

Morris: So who were these dancers originally?

Kinney: [01:16:11] This was Liz, Bettie, and Renee. And then I did it later with—I thought I did it with Carolyn Adams, but maybe not. I did it with Liz. This is a fun one to teach, and so in some of my classes, to break up the whole thing, I’d give them the hand dance, and they always loved doing it. It’s kind of a nice break. Is that Michelle Fleet? And they have the collars on. And we—you know, we thought that some of these gestures—Paul did sign language. And he did sign language with his friend George Wilson. So evidently some of these are signing gestures that he’s also played with. He didn’t want it too obvious. This one. A port de bras is so important in his work. And the different ways that he used the port de bras, I mean, it was—and I was

talking to Michael Novak yesterday. You know, for each dance you had to get yourself not only physically ready to do that dance but mentally; you'd have to go in your head, remind yourself, no, this is not *Aureole*, and the arms aren't this way. This is a whole—

Morris: Totally different, almost the opposite of *Aureole*..

Kinney: [01:18:17] So as a dancer you're not in the same headspace or physicality, you know, through the whole evening of the concert. You're going into very different spaces, places.

Morris: This movement is totally different.

Kinney: [01:18:45] So down comes the chandelier of ping pong balls. I don't know if it's still ping pong balls, but it was ping pong balls for us, so when it crashes to the floor you will see again we're covering a costume change. Those three ladies are changing into their dresses.

Morris: Oh, but what a brilliant idea, because this is such a ballet cliché.

Kinney: [01:19:14] That's the idea. And he and John Rawlings, just clicked— Here comes another panel [being lowered from above]. I mean, he loved that idea, that the space was changing.

Morris: So you were the one in the short skirt?

Kinney: [01:20:11] Mm-hmm. Here I come. I'm late. I mean, he wanted me to be like she's late. She's got to catch up with the— And so this whole arm movement, [Kinney demonstrates]. I better do it that way, shoulders, but that's so different than anything we had done, you know. It's very different. And that was Liz. And she was to be totally not in charge of this skirt. You know, it was taking over her. What is happening here? And we're being very prissy and silly, and it's silly movement, laughing there.

Morris: So at this time, was he [Paul] still developing vocabularies?

Kinney: [01:21:33] I think so, yeah, because this is right after *Aureole*. And again, each piece I think that he choreographed would either be developing choreography or developing ideas in his head of other things. I have no idea where he came up with this idea, because he never told us. [Pointing to the video] I love that pose. Stumbling and—I'm trying to think of some of the other silly dances that he did later on that would.....— Oh, we're just oh so sweet. I mean, I can still hear him laughing when we would do that.

And again, you know, he's not standing back here choreographing it. He would get up there and do the movement, or come over and say, "Okay, Sharon, you pick up your skirt," and he would do it.

Morris: He had an amazing eye for detail in terms of movement.

Kinney: [01:23:34] And also this was preparing him for what his dream was, to have the company that he has today with sixteen dancers, although he's not necessarily knowing that that's how it's going to work out. But all this material can be developed with ten people, you know. And so, I think when you ask, was he developing his process, was he developing his vocabulary? Yeah, not only the vocabulary but his eye to see later how he could put six [sic. sixteen] dancers on stage.

Morris: That's interesting.

Kinney: [01:24:16] I'm amazed sometimes, like in the *Brandenburgs* or *Musical Offering*, how those sixteen dancers are all moving in unison, not only moving in unison but traveling around the stage at the same time. [Pointing to the dance again] And of course, we went [touring] through a couple places where there wasn't one laugh the whole night.

Morris: Really?

Kinney: [01:24:45] That whole evening, and that's always a little disconcerting.

Morris: Yes. Now these [in the video] are a lot more dancers than you had.

Kinney: [01:25:04] Mm-hmm. We had six. Before the bucket dance was choreographed, when we first did it, I was the one that fell into the [dancer's] arms [at the end of the dance] in my

short skirt costume. But then when he added the bucket dance I was in my bucket dance costume.

Morris: Right. Okay. I think that's good. We should stop here for today. Perfect timing.

Kinney: Good.

Morris: So, on Wednesday 1:30 here.

Kinney: That's fine.

Morris: And we can talk about the other dances.

Crew 1: We have *Scudorama*.

Morris: *Scudorama*, yeah.

Crew 1: And *Post Meridian*.

Morris: And *Party Mix*. I think that Michael wanted to focus on *Party Mix* and *Post Meridian*.

[END OF SESSION]