

PAUL TAYLOR ORAL HISTORY

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 4, 2020. This interview is part of the Paul Taylor Oral History Project.

Sharon Kinney discussed Paul Taylor's *Scudorama* [1963], *Party Mix* [1963], and *Post Meridian* (1965) while she looked at videos of the dances. She was part of the original casts of these works.

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

Audio Transcription Center

Session #2

Interviewee: Sharon Kinney

Location: New York City, New York

Interviewer: Gay Morris

Date: March 4, 2020

Q: It's March 4, 2020 and I'm here with Sharon Kinney for a follow-up interview at the Paul Taylor Studios in New York. I think it would be a good idea to start with *Scudorama*, and we'll just watch a little of that so you can comment on it and tell us how it differs from *Aureole*.

Kinney: [00:00:26] I was just wondering; do we want to explain what that title is?

Q: That's a good idea. Why don't you do that? [laughter]

Kinney: [00:00:35] It's taken from the word "scudding," you know clouds that scud evidently across the sky and clouds change. And to me later it was like it could be a storm coming or it could be that. And then when Alex Katz made the set, there were these clouds that hung in the back. And then at that time, let's see we're thinking '64, (*sic.* '63) "orama"—you know there was cinerama, there was all the "oramas." And so that's where he came up with that title. And we didn't know that at the beginning. That wasn't until later or maybe even before the piece was performed.

Q: Very interesting. I had never heard that before. So shall we look at a little bit of it?

[“Scudorama” video: American Dance Festival, 1963] [Kinney suggests you, the reader, watch the video of Scudorama!]

Kinney: [00:01:38] And the clouds aren't there, I don't think, in this version. So when he started to choreograph this piece, we could tell it was very different than *Piece Period* and *Aureole*. And he didn't actually do this part of it until later, [pointing to video] but he started with the movement and it was very angry and tense. And you would see later, there's a beach towel on her. We throw these beach towels around and fall and get up. And then he decided this is how it would begin with us laying on the floor.

Q: He didn't start with this score, did he?

Kinney: [00:02:44] No, no. what we actually choreographed it to was [Igor] Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. I said we, he. And we danced to it. And that was very, very intense and could bring us to that level that he wanted. And then he asked a young composer named Clarence Jackson, who he had met in California, to compose the new score. So, you can see already this is quite different than *Aureole* or *Piece Period*.

Q: The sound was added later to this video, which is maybe why there are these gaps.

Kinney: [00:04:09] It's pretty close. It really is. And when we first performed it, we were at Connecticut College at the American Dance Festival and the score was coming up on the train. We had an orchestra rehearsal scheduled. Everybody's waiting for the score to arrive.

[Pointing to video] Oh let me first talk about the trio. A very hard movement, totally different, different port de bras, grinding, rounded back, down to the floor, menacing, harder, harder. He would say, “More angry.” You know I can hear this music, but I can also hear the Stravinsky at the same time. And sometimes when I’ve taught it, I have used the Stravinsky for this. I’ve taught the trio. I used to teach that. And by the way, that’s Bettie de Jong in the center and Liz Walton and I’m over here.

Q: What about the weight in this?

Kinney: [00:05:53] You are so into your plié. You are down. You never come up to a full—[she demonstrates being hunched over] except for the runs, sometimes the runs. But the whole thing is down and into your body. And so much of the vocabulary that we see today also comes from his solo and from *Scud*, I think. Different port de bras for different pieces. I think I said this Monday, that to prepare for *Aureole* you’re very up. You’re standing in the wings. You’re up, you’re in the air and you’re light. And then the next piece might be *Scudorama*, you change your clothes [costume] and then you have lowered yourself into this shape. That is just Paul Taylor movement right there, [pointing] all of it. So he will use that shape that we used in *Aureole* but to initiate another movement. There’s a beach towel. And that all came about, the beach towels, one day in rehearsal. As I said, he had that bench. And so he goes over to the bench and he pulls out the beach towels. And he said, “Let’s see what we can do with them.” And then they became a part of the piece. Now this is what we call the *Scud* run as opposed to the *Aureole* run.

Q: So can you show what the difference is?

Kinney: [00:08:19] Yes actually I will. So the *Aureole* run is you're very—it's up. And the *Scud* run, this is where we were with the *Scud* run. [She demonstrates] I have to be careful. I don't want to hurt my back. [laughs] Very, very, totally different in both your body and your mentality. So you're thinking about the intention of the piece.

Q: Should we move on now to *Party Mix*? [Video: Hunter College, 1965. Without sound]

Kinney: [00:08:52] I did want to say one thing. So the first performance that we did [of *Scudorama*], we had no music because the score never arrived. So we're all waiting there. So we have this meeting and we're sitting outside at the Palmer Auditorium and Paul goes, "Well what do you want to do?" I mean it just became obvious. "Well, we'll do it in silence." And so then we quickly went through the piece and made sight cues. So there are some people that I know that actually saw us do it in silence. [laughs] It was quite an experience.

Q: So what was the reaction?

Kinney: [00:09:40] You know the people liked it. I think they were confused because the announcement was made beforehand, "Oh this will be performed in silence." So they're feeling kind of a little disappointed because they're not going to—but I mean it's very different. I actually don't know if they liked it or didn't like it. We got a good reaction. Then the score arrived the next day and then the next time we performed it with the music, which we had never heard really [laughter] either. So it was at the orchestra rehearsal that then we found out, "Oh yes

that beep is for the entrance to the trio because in many cases we're relying on sound cues, not so much counts.

Q: Yes I'm sure. Could you say a little bit about Paul as a dancer? You think of that solo in *Aureole* and then what we just saw.

Kinney: [00:10:42] Well, very often we didn't see what he was going to make for a solo. He would do that at the end or he would be working that privately. So for the *Aureole* solo, we didn't really see that, I think, until we got up to Connecticut College. Because at the other times, for me, we were inside the dance with him and all I know is that it was fantastic to dance with him. And he was a very generous performer, and if you were in a duet with him—I remember being very nervous about a duet that I was going to do with him. And I told him right before we went on stage. I said, "I'm really nervous." And he said, "Don't be nervous. Just look into my eyes." And so, I did and I was fine. [laughs] He had that generosity. He could be, "Sharon get your arms up higher." "Paul I can't get my arms up any higher than that. That's it. I've got short arms." "I don't care. Get your arms up higher." [laughs] There would be that. And you wanted to do what he wanted you to do as much as you could.

Q: Okay, so now we'll watch *Party Mix*. Paul said about it in [his memoir] *Private Domain*, "it's an abstraction of a satire." This video doesn't have sound.

Kinney: [00:12:30] So she is the hostess. It's a party. It's a group of people, but you're not supposed to sit here and think that. There is no program note, I don't think. And the arms are

totally different. Now he's gone into a very kind of squarish shape. And also we didn't talk about this, but there's the whole two-dimensional use of the arms and the body. So I'll try to demonstrate, but you're like this dimensionally, two dimensions, very Egyptian here. And so you don't soften it through the body. You've got to press into here, down into your legs. This shape is very important. So that jump comes from there.

Q: Not easy.

Kinney: [00:13:31] Yes very hard. And then she [pointing to another dancer, not the hostess] is the soloist, one of the soloists, and she's very beautiful and very lovely at this party. I don't know who we were [looking at two other dancers]. Now, the first costumes that we had for this, we wore wigs.

Q: Do you know who the dancers are?

Kinney: [00:14:10] Yes. That was Dan Wagoner. This is Paul over here. And over here is Danny Grossman [Williams] and I think that's me and Bettie de Jong. That was me and that is Molly Moore Reinhart. The score is to a two-piano piece by Alexei Haieff and very fun, very sparkly.

Q: That arm movement is—

Kinney: [00:15:07] All came from here [demonstrates the square shape of the arms] again, whereas it's different than *Aureole* or different than *Scudorama* and *Piece Period*, all the funny

shapes [demonstrating a funny arm gesture from his vocabulary] —do we have one with the score?

Q: No. This is an interesting little moment.

Kinney: [00:15:47] Yes because it kind of turns into an adagio. There's a small moment in the score that is softer, more adagio like.

Q: [Looking at the video] But also the hops. The first one's doing one and the second one's doing two and then the first one's doing two.

Kinney: [00:16:14] Then this does come into it [demonstrates the *Aureole* S arms] with the different adagio movements in the score but always going back to the kind of flatness of the square shape. And then she again is pressing down with those arms. And again, after we performed it, then I don't think they did it for a couple years. And when they brought it back, he changed the costumes for it.

Q: So what were the costumes? Were they evening gowns?

Kinney: [00:17:36] Oh no. [laughter] No, no, no they weren't. They were unitards and they had these it was like snakes; rolled material that ran down our bodies. We should have a photo of the original costumes. And then the whole thing was about these plastic-like wigs that we had on that were really horrible to wear. But they were very false and very phony and exaggerated. Still

being able to take, kind of, that movement from *Scudorama*; but it works in this because it's used in other pieces, for example, *Musical Offering*, or *Sacre*, I think is very two dimensional. And it's that shape, really hard.

Q: Oh I can imagine.

Kinney: [00:18:37] To be in a four-hour rehearsal doing this, or even the little jumps, what, this may be fourteen minutes long, this piece. I probably could say more if I could hear the score. I'm not sure. We may be missing a dancer in this version. That was me, by the way, or my part. We were so lucky to have these [videos], even though they're not good. In terms of the video and the cameras that they were using to watch them, it kind of bleeds out, but still, if he hadn't had those there would be no record of the movement in that piece. And I think that he changed the costumes because they were, again, very difficult getting those wigs on and the tape and making sure that they didn't fall off. I should have brought that picture. Now that's Danny, and Danny was a jumper. And I think I wanted to speak about how Paul made dances for the individual and for the dancer and what that dancer brought to his movement.

And Danny, who he [Paul] discovered, there are many stories, but Danny Williams—Danny Grossman later changed his name to Danny Williams and then back to Danny Grossman—he saw at the American Dance Festival at the party afterwards. And Danny was just dancing like crazy, and everything, and jumping. He was from San Francisco, and this was his first time [at the American Dance Festival]. And so Paul went over to him and said, “Where do you train?” And he said, “Well I just started to dance.” And so Paul said, “Well if you're ever in New York

come to my studio. We sometimes offer classes.” And Danny did. And Danny really, truthfully, had never danced much at all other than social dancing. Paul really liked Danny and he wanted to work with that kind of body. He wanted to work with that jump that he had, and he kind of trained and formed Danny. And years later Danny was performing one of Paul’s parts.

Q: That’s amazing.

Kinney: [00:21:24] It is. And after Danny left, he choreographed his own work. It was the same way when Twyla [Tharp] danced with Paul. He was very interested in her body type. For me, I was quick, fast. I loved to jump. I loved to turn. So he would put turns in for me and some days ask me to do things I couldn’t do and try, try, and then, okay, well let’s do it this way then. He very much molded the dancer, and the movement, I think, around the dancer.

Q: So that must be challenging for dancers who come later?

Kinney: Yes, yes.

Q: Where the role is already set.

Kinney: [00:22:20] Yes. So he gave me all those jumps and turns. And see how he’s playing with this kind of fast, quick movement against the two ladies and the dancers in the background that are doing more adagio work, but it will kind of blend into the movement. And this was Bettie, this solo, but it had originally been choreographed on another dancer and she had left the

company. And I think that's Carolyn [Adams]. Now that embrace that the dancers are doing, it's the same gesture that you'll see in *Esplanade*, and that I do at the beginning of *Aureole*, that kind of bringing together making a relationship between the dancers. So all the time that I was in the company, I feel that, yes, he was really with the six or eight dancers that he had, he was developing his vocabulary and in many different ways, stretching it and pulling it into the piece.

Q: Yes, you really can see that.

Kinney: [00:24:49] Now here's the duet between the two men. He often has that [a male duet]. They can either be fighting or they could be buds. So, many dances that I can think of that they do today, there's that wonderful duet between men in *Arden Court*. I think it's *Arden Court* or *Airs*, one or the other. And when we did it [Party Mix], the two piano players—we had live music—usually are together. And Paul convinced them to have one on one side of the stage and one on the other side of the stage. And that worked well for the first performance [in New York].

Q: [laughs] I was going to say.

Kinney: [00:25:52] [laughs] But when we did it in Spoleto [Italy], it starts with a big chord. But from that point on, they weren't together because they were really far apart (the stage was much bigger). And they apologized so much to us afterwards. But we're on stage and dancers on stage talk to each other like, "Do you know the count?" [laughs] And we're on stage and going, "Where are WE? Did you have the cue?" And then somebody would move. But that happens a

lot of times. There are so many stories that dancers have, I don't care which company you're in, that you have to communicate with the other dancers on stage.

Q: So what did they do after it didn't work?

Kinney: [00:26:39] Well they apologized and they figured out some way to fix it. I forget how they did it. That's a good question. But it wasn't a problem after that. And then when we performed it after that, we usually used a tape.

Q: Oh right, that would solve the problem.

Kinney: [00:27:11] Yes that did solve the problem.

Q: So tell me about *The Red Room* [1964] and *Post Meridian* [1965] and how they're related to each other.

Kinney: [00:27:22] So *The Red Room* followed *Party Mix*. It was the next piece that he choreographed after *Party Mix*. He had a commission to go to the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds. And he collaborated with Alex Katz again. And there would be a set, but nobody knew what that was going to be. And so he used the Gunther Schuller score, and it had a much more mysterious feel to it than other pieces he had choreographed. What can I say? Ominous but it wasn't scary. It wasn't at all like *Scudorama*. It was just a whole other new part of Paul that I knew of. And so we went to Spoleto and the set was being constructed when we got there. And

oh, let me show this [she shows a photo of *The Red Room* set]. And again, the costumes were being constructed at the same time, we're all in Spoleto. And so our first rehearsal that we actually had on stage was the first time we did it with costumes, set, and the lighting. And we only had one rehearsal, and with the orchestra. So it was well received.

The Italians really preferred *Aureole* and *Piece Period* over *The Red Room*. It was kind of, "What is this piece?" As I'll show you, can you see this? There were these slats of wood that came down, could go up and come down. There were these circles that the dancers could stand behind. And I think at one point one of them [the disks] could be moved to the other side of the stage. And then these costumes had, we called them petals, and a headpiece. And very Alex Katz in terms of his use of primary colors, green, pink on some of the costumes. A pink, like she might have pink on with green. But when we finished [at Spoleto] and we were ready to leave, we couldn't really travel with the set. We couldn't take the set with us!

Q: Was the set red? I mean why was it called *The Red Room*?

Kinney: [00:30:25] Oh yes, thank you. [laughter] I'm sorry. The floor was red, the flats were red, and the backdrop was red. And it was this kind of dark, wasn't apple red. It was more of a burgundy red. And the floor mat was like AstroTurf if you really want to know the truth. It was very rough. And all our dragging, like I get dragged through, we were bruised and things. It was not fun, that part of it. And he [Paul] talks about that in the book. He was so glad to get rid of that floor. But these flew out [pointing to the slats and disks in the photograph], but the stage, the mat, the wings all remained the same. But when we came back, there was no way we could

travel with that set and so we didn't do it for a year, I think it was. [*sic*. We did it two more times without the set and then did not perform it again until 1965 when it became Post Meridian for season at the Little Theater performances in NYC.]

He called us in and said, "Well we're going to do *The Red Room* without it. I'm going to change the costumes, change the music." And what he did was he hired a woman named Evelyn Lohoefer [De Boeck]. She came into the studio and watched us do it a couple of times, and then she created the score that the dancers use now. And again, I think that Carolyn Adams said this very well: *Post Meridian* is like an abstract painting of Paul with movement of Paul's ideas. So there's no meaning. It's just whatever you take from it. And the Lohoefer score is more somber, more ominous [than the Schuller score].

Q: That's interesting.

Kinney: [00:32:42] So then the costumes, again Alex was the designer, but then the costumes that we got we all loved very much. Again it's a unitard and it has long sleeves and gloves. I might have a pink leotard and a pink glove, or red glove and then my leotard might be green, similar to what he did with the *Junction* costumes.

Q: So what was it like to dance with gloves on?

Kinney: Oh wonderful.

Q: Was it?

Kinney: Oh yes, we loved it. [laughs]

Q: I thought it might be difficult.

Kinney: [00:33:19] No it just kind of fit. We were just so happy to have those gloves. We were also happy to not have the other costumes, too, because those petals were a little problematic. But you know all dancers get used to having to deal with the costumes. But no, we liked it very much. And we liked the feeling it gave. It's the same choreography [as *The Red Room*].

Q: Exactly the same?

Kinney: Exactly the same. Just exactly the same.

Q: That's amazing because [the music is entirely different].

Kinney: [00:33:54] And so it was, "Oh yes we can do that. Oh yes, okay, let's make that a cue."

Q: So shall we watch it? [*Post Meridian* video: Lake Placid, 1974]

Kinney: [00:34:21] So this entrance, again, is the same [two women cross the stage]. You can barely hear it [the score]. It's coming a little louder and a little louder. And we're counting those walks, as was very common. Paul used the walking motif in many of his dances.

Q: And you were one of these two [crosstalk]?

Kinney: Yes, I would be the lead one.

Q: Because this is a later performance, this is 1974.

Kinney: [00:34:53] So the counts for that entrance—oh, I'll let you hear the score. She had originally planned for the music score to be—it's a speech. And Paul wanted to change it and so he just ran the tape backwards so that's the person is speaking backwards. So if it's 1974, that's Carolyn Adams doing my part.

Q: Yes, it is Carolyn.

Kinney: [00:36:26] And that's another interesting—that he develops that line. We see it in other dances, that line that he has. It's in *Esplanade* at the end. So you can see now all that rolling around on that, *Red Room* and our costumes getting kind of stuck. So this was choreographed on me, this solo. And it was interesting trying to think about the different images he would use sometimes. This is 1965, '64, '65. We walked into the rehearsal and he played, I don't know. Would it be *Downtown* by Petula Clark or some popular music? And he said, "What would you

do to this music?” And so we started playing around with it and somebody did this [demonstrates movement] and somebody did that thing and we’re bopping around. And see, then he used some of that. He used that material and that whole gesture.

Q: He likes to do those jumps without any preparation at all.

Kinney: [00:38:05] Yes he does. [laughs] So see that? That was originally us just kind of social dancing and then this [demonstrating movement]. He liked that.

Q: What about his sense of weight in this compared to some of the other dances? Is this a little bit lighter or more down into the ground?

Kinney: [00:38:40] I would say that a lot of that movement we were in between. It’s now being initiated by the back again, and again the plié. I mean, whenever I teach or whenever I would do it, it’s like, “Plié, plié. Come on, get down into the ground.” Now this is Bettie and she has this solo. And in the meantime, she’s got the gloves, but her leotard is white and it’s yellow. Her sleeves are yellow I think that’s how it goes. And she also had a fabulous deep plié, demi deep plié. I think that when I taught it and when I would teach *Aureole*, I would sometimes tell the dancers, “All right I want you to do the first movement, or some of the movement, but I don’t want you to use your arms. Keep your arms out of it.” So they have to figure it out, where it’s really coming from because it’s so easy for dancers to want to have it being initiated from the arm port de bras.

Q: That plié also is very strong but has a kind of softness about it. It's not rigid.

Kinney: [00:40:20] Well, that all comes from Paul's body and his body type and that length of his legs and his arms, being a swimmer. I mean I just remember standing behind him and you couldn't not be that behind him. [Kinney clarified in the transcript: When you stood behind him, the shape of the movement was so clear, you could not be anything but that shape, yourself] . That's just the way, and it was his body. And that's why when you teach dancers later on, you may be [Rudolf] Nureyev or [Mikhail] Baryshnikov but then they have to work really hard to try to get that same kind of shape. Shape, shape, shape is the other thing. Shapes. Paul was a painter and so I think that he was constantly designing shapes.

Q: So would he talk about the shape?

Kinney: [00:41:19] Well yes he'd go, "No, more elbow. I want it square. I want it really square." I'll try to think of some other examples of talking about the shape. Besides the movement in this, the actual body movement, [she is looking at the video] he's also designing kind of a painter's shape of how these adagios are going to look from the audience perspective.

Q: Which in itself was amazing considering he was on the stage at this point.

Kinney: [00:41:57] Yes. And he did this, and in later years he might take this idea of the three people, but only it would be four trios on stage. And then these trios become one big adagio, and we do the same movement, but we do it all together, you'll see. So you're inside that with him.

When he would be choreographing, “No try your arm over here. Could you reach under her? Can you take your leg over him?” So now [looking at video] he’s taking that material that he just used in the trio. She starts the movement there. We see the developpé. We see the girl going down. He will reach over and pick somebody else up. And he had used that kind of motif or development of the movement in *Scudorama*. There are several places where he has molded people together and we have what we called the “pile up” where people all got together and on top of each other, which appears later in some of his work. [Looking at video] Now this was the solo that he made for me. And as I like to explain to people, if it had been another dancer, it’d be totally different, because he really made it for me. Anyway, it’s called “The Bird Dance.”

Q: And what was specific to you?

Kinney: [00:44:43] Well it was my turn to have a solo. Okay, there’s that. And that’s what he made for *The Red Room*. Okay, so it’s exactly as it was in *The Red Room*. And we had been on a tour and this is what Paul would do. We had been on a tour and we went to an embassy party or something and there was a bird in the room. And I don’t like to be in the room with birds flying around. And this bird kind of kept coming over to me and it was driving me crazy. So that’s why it’s called “The Bird Dance” because he’s giving me—that was one of the inspirations. Then he knew that I liked to jump. There was that big jump. As I said, I liked to turn. So, see here I had my turning sequence. And this, feathers, [demonstrating] this movement at the beginning. But then Carolyn did it after me and Carolyn was perfect. I mean Carolyn and I had similar qualities in terms of that.

Q: And whose dance was this?

Kinney: [00:46:56] Paul.

Q: Oh, that was his dance originally?

Kinney: [00:46:57] Yes. Again, see how low. And then people that followed would be Nick [Gunn]. When I saw it done several years ago, I think it was Sean Mahoney who did the part. It's always very beautiful for me to see, when I come back, how intense these dancers today really try to recreate what he did.

Q: The pas de chat step reminds me of *Scudorama* too, but with a totally different feeling.

Kinney: [00:48:06] Yes, right. And his solo in the fifth movement of *Aureole*, that great pas de chat that he does and then goes down to the ground. So I had a nickname. Paul gave people nicknames and mine was Tweety. [laughs] And so any correspondence I got from Paul, it would always start with, "Hi Tweety," or "Dear Tweety," or "This is for you Tweety."

Q: [Looking at video] This reminds me of a [Martha] Graham, the slapping of the thighs.

Kinney: [00:49:01] Yes that could be, yes, which he probably choreographed for her [laughs] because she loved him so much. This is being counted. This is how we counted this: four-e-and-a, five-e-and-a, so that we could stay together. And off stage before we go on, we are counting

out what the rhythm should be because we're getting nothing rhythmically from the sound. Then she picks up the speed just a little bit. And they are almost double time, by that time. And there's that gesture again, then he takes some of the movement from the trios. That's Bettie's part and Paul's part, see if they do it again. So when I reconstructed it, I reconstructed it out at Ohio State University on the students. But I had to, and it happened in several places, bring in a dancer from his company to do Paul's part because I didn't have any men that could do the part. So in *The Red Room*, those slats would have come back in and you could see us between them, the hands touching as we go down, again the line motif. So then he said, "You know, it's just like you're saying goodbye." I mean he would give some literal directions but sometimes he wouldn't.

Q: Wow.

Kinney: That's an ending.

Q: So maybe we should just stop here at least for a few minutes. [A short interruption]

Kinney: [00:52:35] Yes okay. It's been so wonderful for me to have had this relationship with Paul Taylor for over sixty years, back from when I danced with him, and then years later when I taught for him. I taught in the studio. He would call me to reconstruct work. And I just feel so fortunate to have had that opportunity, and there have been many fun ones and surprises. One day I got a call. I'm a freelance choreographer. I'm in my late thirties. I have two sons and I'm teaching, and don't know what my next job is going to be. And I get this phone call, back before cell phones or any of that, and it's Bob Yesselman, [the company manager]. And he said,

“Sharon, hi, it’s Bob. Sit down.” And I go, “Oh, okay.” I had no idea. And he goes, “How would you like to go to Hawaii?” And I’m thinking: Oh, they want me to teach in Hawaii. I don’t know if I can do that. And then he goes, “And dance *Aureole*.” And I went, dance *Aureole*? And he, “With Nureyev.” And I go, “What?” [laughter] I go, “Uh, okay.”

Now my youngest son, who’s like nine at the time is listening to this conversation. I’m going—it was a Friday—“Okay, let me figure this out.” And he [Bob] said, “I think Liz is going. It would be you and Liz, and you would do your duet, your part, with Liz because there will be dancers from the [Royal] Danish Ballet.” Liz was not going to be doing her solo. She would be doing the other girl’s solo part. And I said, “Okay Bob, yes I’ll call you back.” And I hung up the phone. My son goes, “Mom what was that?” And I go, “Oh my God they want me to go to Hawaii and do *Aureole* again.” [laughter] I didn’t think I would be dancing *Aureole* with Nureyev. I go, “But hon, I don’t think I could do that. I mean it would be two weeks away.” And he goes, “Mom you have to do this. You have to do this.” And I said, “Okay.” And so I called Bob back and I said, “Okay I’m going.” And I called my mother to come in from Ohio to take care of the kids.

And Liz Walton and I go off to Hawaii. We get off the plane and there’s leis on us and everything. We’re taken to a very fancy hotel. [laughs] I think that I made more money, which isn’t a lot today, but I made more money on that gig than in the four years with Paul because I also had somebody that negotiated the contract and everything. So yes, we danced it with Nureyev. And Liz and I would be out front watching him doing the solo. He tried very hard, and Paul had taught it. Paul had worked with Nureyev to do the solo. But, of course, Nureyev added a lot—

Q: I can imagine.

Kinney: [00:56:11] You know there's no Paul Taylor around, of course. And he added his own flair to it. And the woman, Vivi, I think—I don't know her last name—quite lovely, was doing the solo and the duet with him. And the young man that was doing Dan's part, I mean that was one of the most difficult—he was learning from the video. Liz and I had to go help him learn it because it was very hard for him, all that quick jump and turning and keeping your arms here. So yes that was quite an experience.

Q: So that was Nureyev & Friends?

Kinney: [00:56:54] Yes, and certainly other dancers. I think Rachel Berman, a couple of other dancers did the Nureyev & Friends here in New York, maybe Eileen [Cropley]. I can't remember when they did it. See, when we were in Spoleto, Nureyev had just defected. And he saw Paul's work and he was backstage every time for every piece. And we could see him trying to get doing these movements. And he approached Paul at one of the parties and said, "You know I would really love to do your work." And Paul said, "Well maybe sometime. Who knows?" And then he did.

Q: What was touring like in those early days?

Kinney: [00:57:49] Touring yes. We did State Department tours as well as touring in a station wagon or a van. So to go to Illinois—we did a tour in the United States—we would all pile into this station wagon with our one bag. We could only have one bag. And some of us carried our costumes in that one bag and then they all had to be put on top of the van or in the back of the station wagon. And we went from town to town. It was winter, one of the first tours we did. And we would get out and it was rough but it was fun. I mean we didn't know anything different. So there was nothing really to compare it to. Dan sometimes drove the van and sometimes Jennifer Tipton did. None of us drove. And you know there was complaining about, [laughs] "Do I have to sit in the backseat all the time?" You know that kind of thing. And one time we stopped at a hamburger joint and the men (Paul, Dan, and Danny) had kind of longish hair. And we walked into this little diner kind of place, and, oh, they looked at these guys and they looked at us, "Who are these people?" [laughs]

Q: But they did serve you?

Kinney: [00:59:43] They did serve us, they did, but you could tell. And when you got out there you went, "Yes you guys have long hair." We didn't think anything. We were New Yorkers, downtown New Yorkers. Let's see, we went to the University of Illinois. This was before they had the Krannert [Center for the Performing Arts] that they have today. And so we performed in a gymnasium, and they had put platforms together for us and these kind of make-believe wings. The story is that the tape recorder was at the side of the stage, and Charlie Reinhart our manager was running the tapes. [laughs] Renee goes twirling off in the "Hand Dance" [in *Piece Period*] and the tape recorder got caught in her skirt, and then Charlie caught the tape recorder. It

somehow continued to keep playing. She twirls back on. He put the tape recorder back down on the stage, or this so-called stage. And the show went on.

Then I think we flew to California, and that was it. We danced at Royce [Hall, UCLA]. But again, when we fly we've only got one bag because back then, I think, you had to pay or you only had so much. And Paul had costumes in his bag, and there wasn't a costume person going with us. We did not have an understudy. It was either Charlie or Jenny Tipton. This was after Thomas Skelton had worked with us [as lighting designer and stage manager]. So then we're in Royce and we're in a theater. But then we left there, flew to Berkeley, and again we're on one of these platform stages. And you just didn't know what to expect, and that just became part of our touring experience. Then we got to go to Spoleto and that was very different. That was more formal.

Q: Were the stages good in Spoleto?

Kinney: [01:02:24] Oh it was gorgeous. It was really gorgeous. Where we did *Red Room* and *Aureole*, and that stage was really beautiful.

Q: But I guess you didn't always have the accommodation that you wanted?

Kinney: [01:02:35] No. And in Spoleto, Charlie said, "Okay we're in a villa. It's going to be wonderful. You're going to love this villa. It just sounds wonderful. It's going to be exactly what you want. And also bring your—" we had all bought bikinis—"because we're going to be on the

French Riviera and we'll probably stop and you'll be able to swim. It's going to be wonderful."

We flew Icelandic, twenty-two hours on the plane, flying Icelandic because that was the cheapest airline that you could fly. And we land in Belgium. Then we get a car and we have to drive down and the car was this van, and it could only go forty miles an hour or something. We were so late. There was no lunching on the beach and things like that. [laughs] We were late for our first rehearsal. We literally jumped out of the bus and went to our first rehearsal, and then we went to the villa.

But the problem with the villa is it was about ten miles away from Spoleto. So it was like we were stuck out in this villa and there was no transportation. Jenny Tipton had a van that she could drive. So we all were, "Oh can you take me to the drugstore. Oh could we stop and get ice cream before we go home?" And then we kind of had a rebellion and we went to Paul and we said, "We don't really like this." So he and Charlie managed to get us into Spoleto, itself, and we each got apartments. Then we were much happier.

Q: I can imagine. And were you on the Mexico tour also?

Kinney: [01:04:32] Yes, that was the first one [1963]. We went to Mexico City and Acapulco. Again, I found a letter. I wrote this letter to my mom, "Oh Mom, I'm going to get two hundred dollars a week and room and board." And so back at the time, if dancers got room and board you saved your board money and you only ate hamburgers or whatever because you wanted to take money back to New York. But we had a good time in Mexico. They really treated us well, and I think actually that's where the bird was flying around at one of the parties. And then later when

we did the South American tour, that was really very elegant for us. That was in 1965 and that was quite wonderful.

And I found this one story. You know, in South America you sometimes did two performances in one night. So you would do the early performance which would be like 6:30 and then you would do the 8:30 or 9:30 performance. And that was for the audience. They could either eat before or they could eat after, so you did two performances. But this one performance, one day we were going to go out into the country, and it was going to be a long ride to get there, be prepared. I have no idea where it was, but we drove and drove and we got out and we were going to dance in this outdoor amphitheater.

Q: Do you know what country?

Kinney: [01:06:21] I want to say it's not Lima [Peru]. Name some other countries in South America for me.

Q: Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Argentina. [On the video Kinney says Chile and she wants the reader to "remember it was 60 years ago but she corrected this later! It was Colombia!"]

Kinney: [01:06:33] It was Colombia, we had danced in Cali. And as we were driving, we saw these people trudging along, looked like families and everything. Well they were coming to our performance, and these people came. It makes me want to cry when I think about it because

these people that were coming to see us were like the peasants and the villagers. And they had never seen dance before, nor heard music like this. And they literally came up and leaned on the stage. They didn't know about clapping. And we're dancing practically on dirt. And we had to cut some things because we didn't have wings. We quickly did a talk through, and how can we do this piece: "You can go upstage to do your solo." But it was such a thrill to have been given this opportunity because they laughed and they just thought it was funny in some places. I think it was that place, to show approval, they stomp their feet instead of clapping. So that's a pretty special memory thinking about them.

Q: Yes I can imagine.

Kinney: [01:07:55] Touring stories, I can tell a lot of touring stories. It was very different. I see these young dancers go off today, and their bags are all lined up and so-and-so's roly poly [foam rollers] or the different mats that they have for working out and keeping themselves in shape. We didn't have that. Paul would look at that stuff and he'd go, "I don't even know why they need that. Why do they do that? They don't need that. They have to carry all that stuff around. Just get up and dance." That was kind of his philosophy. But, he could get up and dance.

Q: Yes, and I don't think he was known for taking excellent care of himself, either.

Kinney: [01:08:43] No. [laughter] No he wasn't. So that's about what I can think of. It was very exciting. I mean I was thrilled and my parents were thrilled. Just very lucky, I feel very fortunate to have had that experience.

Q: And also to be so young and to see so much of the world at a time when, unlike today, people didn't just get on a plane and go somewhere. It was quite special.

Kinney: Right.

Q: And you must've seen a lot of the United States, too.

Kinney: [01:09:24] We did. Later years they saw more, the dancers after me and that particular group. But Dan stayed. After me, Dan stayed for at least eight or ten years, so I'm sure he has a perspective of how the touring changed, and Liz too. Well she didn't stay that much longer but certainly Bettie. And I do have to mention what a thrill it was for me to be dancing with these people. To be dancing with Bettie de Jong and to be dancing with Dan Wagoner. They had danced with the [Martha] Graham Dance Company. You know, I went into that studio that day and these were professionals. This wasn't dancing with other students. These were professionals and they welcomed me and I learned from them, too. And I think the young dancers today do that as they come into the company. And the other thing to mention, we didn't have mirrors. We didn't have mirrors. And there aren't mirrors here because Paul didn't choreograph for the mirror. Or that we could check ourselves out. It was just what we felt inside and what we felt from each other.

Q: And you didn't have classes either, is that correct?

Kinney: [01:10:56] No, we tried. Because there was no real technique, and he hadn't codified any of the movements. But I was going to say during Bettie's solo [in *Post Meridian*], that movement that she does. We came back having done *The Red Room* and we knew we had to do these masterclasses, and Paul said one day, "Well I think we should have some exercises." So there is a famous back exercise that we all know, but we all have different versions of it. And I'm going to check with Bettie to make sure, but that back exercise came from her solo. And it has, like, eight movements in it. It's here [she demonstrates] and then you have the twist and then you go into this, and then you do the great thing out there, and then you do—I cannot do it—but the great thing of going down to the floor into one of Paul's bug-like images, and then something on your knees and back up through the back and then here. [laughs] And we were really glad to have this exercise because we did a lot of the teaching, the dancers, when we went out on tour and we had to do a masterclass. He would be there but we'd be the demonstrators. And then he'd say, "Okay show them the back exercise."

Q: So what else would he do, I mean if he had to do a masterclass?

Kinney: [01:12:32] Oh well, he would give kind of a ballet barre in the center of the floor, with no barre, then center exercises, and then he'd start people across the floor right away. They weren't warmed up. And then he'd give the *Aureole* run and then he'd give the slow *Aureole* run. And then we would do the *Scud* run and then we would teach the trio. And we would teach things mainly from *Aureole* when I was in the company. And some things like the back exercise. There were some places when we would teach material from *Scud*. So it became more of a repertory class. We'd give them a warmup. But in some cases we were in big gymnasiums and

there were thirty-five kids in there. So it would take a long time to get everybody across the floor and back and then to do the material from the dances.

Q: Oh I see. Because if you think of Graham or [Merce] Cunningham, they had codified techniques.

Kinney: [01:13:44] Yes, right. And Paul did not want that. When I would go out and teach and I would say, “Paul what can I teach?” or even when he asked me to teach. And I’d say, “Well what do you want me to teach?” And he goes, “I want it to be you. You can do whatever you want Tweety.” And so I’d been studying with Merce Cunningham, and I have to say, some of my beginning exercises were very Merce. But then I began to develop my class, which was Paul’s class. But it would be very different from the class that, maybe, Carolyn [Adams] would teach. And we all do the back exercise differently. Yes Carolyn Adams, she really began to examine the material and to codify it more.

Q: Because there are classes now, I guess.

Kinney: [01:14:53] Yes. But we all say, there’s not a Paul Taylor technique. There’s a Paul Taylor style. And that is teaching the curved arms and the being low and the being able to do those side falls and being on the ground and crawling, I think.

Q: And the plié.

Kinney: [01:15:15] And the plié. [laughter] Yes he did say that to me, “Just teach what you want.” Well okay. He trusted me as a teacher. And I don’t think he did that with everybody. There were teachers that he very specifically chose that he felt he could trust.

Q: So when people came into the company, like you at this early stage, they came from all different kinds of backgrounds, how would he get everyone together doing the same things? I mean there must have been things that he emphasized or corrected all the time so that people looked the way he wanted them to look.

Kinney: [01:16:16] You know myself, as a young dancer coming to New York, I had trained in ballet and then I went to Ohio State. And at Ohio State there was a Graham teacher and also there was a teacher that was interested in Cunningham’s work. And so then we would go to the American Dance Festival. I took class with Betty Jones, so I had this modern kind of background sensibility, and so I went into that audition and that rehearsal with that. If I hadn’t been able to do what he wanted to do in that first rehearsal, he probably wouldn’t have asked me, but I seemed to be able to pick it up. You know, I came to New York, and I auditioned for Broadway. I auditioned for anybody at that point because you got *Variety*, a newspaper that advertised auditions, and you found out where the auditions were, and you went to an audition. I was studying at Merce’s and there were choreographers coming out of the choreography class there, and people would ask you to dance with them.

So I had a modern framework sensibility, but again like I later said to people, hey if I hadn’t been able to do it, if I hadn’t been able to recreate what he was wanting, I don’t think he

would've asked me or he wouldn't have—you know, "You're not right for this material." And then I was thinking that we were the ones that then taught the next generation with—Carolyn Adams and Eileen Cropley and Ruthie [Ruth] Andrien. And there were still some of us, Janet Aaron, around that had worked with him and danced with him that could teach that dance. What I feel is a real challenge for young dancers is having to learn it from the video because the video just doesn't show things—like you can't see what the plié is doing. You can't see that flatness or this—. Even though we're really happy we have videos. Dancers, certainly dancers before me, they don't have anything of themselves dancing.

There's an example of that back in the '80s before I left New York. I was teaching a workshop at Paul's, and he had just hired Kate Johnson. And at that time, dancers—and this is still the way they learn—very often they say, "Okay learn these three dances. Follow the girl in red in *Post Meridian*. We're going off on tour. Be ready for rehearsal when we come back." And that's what happened for Kate. I really don't know what the sequence is today, but this is back in the '80s. And I was teaching in the other room and afterwards she came up to me and she said, "Sharon, can you please come in and help me? I'm trying to learn this dance and I can't figure out what some of this movement is." I mean she had seen his work and I don't think at that time were they offering the classes that they offer today. So she's trying to read this off a video. So she was ready when they came back. She was ready count wise. But then they would put her right in the rehearsal and then she would begin to know the dance. But just watching the video is in fact sometimes it's—you have to change what they think they saw.

Q: Yes I can imagine. I mean you think the camera doesn't lie but it does. [laughter]

Kinney: Let's see, we covered touring.

Q: I think that's probably all we need—unless you have something else that is important.

Kinney: [01:20:57] The other thing that I would say is that Paul really embraced his alums very much, and it has been that way through the years, through the managers, and certainly with John Tomlinson today, and I don't even know how many years. But the alums have been very important. And he [embraced his alums] from [New York] City Center [days] where there would be an alumni weekend, and we would all go upstairs and have lunch with the company in the cafeteria there and spend the weekend with each other and spend the weekend at the parties for the performances for the season. And that was very, very important to him and they have carried it through to this day. And I've had other dancers say to me, "You are so lucky." And I have to say it because I have a very good friend, Jeff Slayton, who danced with Merce. And he said, "You're so lucky Sharon, because you get to do that and that he has embraced the alums. We don't have that."

Q: That's interesting.

Kinney: [01:22:12] So it takes not only Paul, Paul encouraged it. There would always be a birthday party. He would have a birthday party in July and all alums, if you were in town, you were invited. If you were in California, you were invited and some people came in for that party. And it was really about us all getting together, but also being with him at Mattituck [New York]

or wherever. And I'm so lucky to have been a part of that on so many levels, not only as a dancer, as a teacher. And what I got from him I took to my own choreography and to my kids.

Q: Okay great. Well thank you.

Kinney: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]