

Paul Taylor Oral History Project
The Reminiscences of
Dan Wagoner with Assistance from Jennifer Tipton

Columbia Center for Oral History
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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Dan Wagoner, with assistance from Jennifer Tipton, conducted by Alessandra Nicifero on August 12, 2019. This interview is part of the Paul Taylor Oral History Project. The interview was filmed by Elliot Caplan and Donald DuBois.

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 #1

Interviewee: Dan Wagoner with assistance
from Jennifer Tipton

Location: [City, Two-Letter State]

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: August 12, 2019

Elliot Caplan: Okay, Alessandra.

Alessandra Nicifero: Hello, we are here. It's August 12, 2019, and we are with Jennifer Tipton and Dan Wagoner. It's such a pleasure to be here, thanks for welcoming us. I was telling you earlier that I read an interview of you¹, from many years ago, and you were describing the rolling hills of West Virginia so vividly, and so, as we were driving here to meet you, I almost heard your voice describing this landscape. So, you grew up here.

Dan Wagoner: [00:00:44] I did, in Springfield [West Virginia], and it's off set in the mountains, Allegheny, I guess. Allegheny Mountains, they were called, and I went to school, grammar school here, and then went on to a bus ride nearby, where—I was talking about a bus ride.

Jennifer Tipton: To school, to high school.

Wagoner: To high school. Good, could you finish it? [laughter]

Tipton: What did you do after high school?

¹ The interview was conducted by Tobi Tobias in 1978 (see MGZMT 3-971, at New York Public Library for the Performing Arts).

Wagoner: [00:01:34] Went to West Virginia University. I took a degree in pharmacy, which I didn't like, and the moment I got my M.A. [Master of Arts] degree, I left Morgantown [West Virginia], and went to New York as fast as I could go. And what else were we—

Nicifero: You were taking dance classes, already, I think.

Wagoner: [00:02:00] Yes, wherever I could get them, and it was off and in curious corners and walls and side vents, and all sort of things.

Tipton: Do you remember at all how you fell in love with dance?

Wagoner: [00:02:17] It was intuitive, and I'm not sure how. You know how, when something makes sense, you just use it or do it. What was your question?

Tipton: How you fell in love with dance.

Wagoner: [00:02:29] Yes, it was intuitive. My older brother was in high school, which was a bus ride from where we were talking about, and—

Tipton: Did he dance, or was he a sportsman, your brother?

Wagoner: [00:02:48] No, he was a sportsman, but what were we talking about?

Tipton: We were talking about how you fell for dance.

Wagoner: [00:02:53] Oh yes, and my brother Jack was a senior or a junior, I don't know which, but there was a prom, a dance at the high school, and our rural orchestra combo, and I had never seen these instruments, plunk away with it. I guess I had never been in a gymnasium, actually, and the dance was taking place in a gym, a gymnasium. I went into high school with my older brother to do, what? I just had it on the tip of my tongue.

Tipton: Pharmacy?

Wagoner: No.

Nicifero: For these events in school, to do the dancing.

Wagoner: [00:03:58] Yes. I walked in the door, and there were all these decorations that they put up, and a little combo orchestra, so I don't know. I walked into that gymnasium and it was empty, a big space, and I was almost trembling by the time I got through the door, and I don't know why, still don't know why, but I did—

Tipton: And that's where you danced first.

Wagoner: [00:04:32] Yes. Well, it was improvised.

Tipton: Right, of course. [laughs] Of course.

Nicifero: And then, you were already a pharmacist when you came to New York, and you had taken classes with Ethel Butler before, yes, so what happened? What was your experience of New York?

Wagoner: [00:04:57] Oh, it was thrilling. I had been waiting on my life, and earlier, to get here.

Tipton: Did you start studying with Martha Graham when you were at Connecticut College?

Wagoner: [00:05:11] I was at Connecticut; we went there in the summer, and then went to the regular school there that fall.

Tipton: Is that where you first came across Martha Graham, and her kind of dance?

Wagoner: [00:05:24] Well, I knew. I looked at every photograph I could get my hands on.

Tipton: Because you ended up teaching at the studio, didn't you, and that's how you could just stop being a pharmacist, you became.

Wagoner: [00:05:45] Well, I could have stopped anyway. [laughter] It's not very interesting.

Tipton: Right, but you did have to make money.

Wagoner: [00:05:52] Yes. And sort of, I guess, pay back whatever was possible for the scholarship and for having been able to be there.

Nicifero: And so, the two of you met at the American Dance Festival, one of the summers where you were also taking dance classes?

Tipton: [00:06:16] Yes. I was a dancer then, yes. Was 1958, just after I graduated from college.

Wagoner: That's a long time ago.

Tipton: Yes, but we became good friends.

Wagoner: Did we? [laughter]

Tipton: And still are, I hope.

Wagoner: [00:06:33] Yes, Jenny [phonetic], she's responsible for, a touchstone of a lot of ideas and thoughts and so forth. She's always been, I think, fairly honest with me in my work.

Nicifero: So, you had met Linda Hodes and Paul Taylor already during the years while you were—

Wagoner: Linda Hodes?

Nicifero: Yes.

Wagoner: And who was the other one?

Tipton: Paul.

Nicifero: Paul Taylor.

Wagoner: And what about them?

Nicifero: You met them while you were working with Martha Graham, I assume.

Wagoner: [00:07:12] Yes. Well of course it was thrilling to be in Martha Graham's studio, and starting to do some performances, and I continued on in that life.

Nicifero: What was your impression of seeing, well, Martha Graham, of course, and all the dancers in the company?

Wagoner: Yes. Martha, let's see. What were we talking about?

Tipton: What did you think about her dancing?

Wagoner: Martha's?

Tipton: Yes.

Wagoner: [00:08:01] Well, it was swell. It was wonderful, and—

Tipton: What made it special, do you think?

Wagoner: [00:08:12] I don't know, her presence, her chemistry, and she loved dance. You could see that she was looking towards it or away from it or whatever, butterflies, and mosquitoes, and all sorts of things. I was, of course, blown over by being in the same studio, and choreographing, even choreographing some bits and pieces of her, that Linda Hodes, you just mentioned, and yes, do you hear anything from her? Do you? She's still okay?

Nicifero: Yes, she is.

Wagoner: Isn't that wonderful? Yes, she's very special. Ask me something else.

Nicifero: So, you met Paul during the rehearsal with Martha Graham, and you had no trouble after a while to make the decision to dance with Paul. How was working with him?

Wagoner: Well, it was—dancing with Merce [Cunningham]?

Tipton: Paul.

Wagoner: [00:09:45] Oh Paul. Well, it was great. He's a little bit taller than I am, and has long rangy arms, and what else did I—

Nicifero: You said in the same interview that you had the same level of energy and stamina, so you could rehearse and work on a new piece for hours and hours.

Wagoner: Yes. Yes. Did we talk about—now I can't think of it—one of the [crosstalk]—

Tipton: What was Paul's process like in choreographing with you?

Wagoner: He, I think, was, it seemed, with—I had a good thought and where did it go?

Tipton: Did he teach you what to do, or did he tell you to do this, and do that, and—

Wagoner: [00:10:55] Yes. He said, “Do this, and do that,” and it was a dance.

Nicifero: Was he able to share what he had in his mind?

Wagoner: [00:11:09] Yes, but he did it not in a scholastic way, but some in a more scholarly, but wanted—

Tipton: Or even verbally, did he just show you the movement?

Wagoner: [00:11:25] Yes, “shut up and do it.” [laughter] That’s what it always felt like it was like. That was a very interesting turning point in my own life. I’m sorry I’m staggering so with—

Nicifero: Not a problem.

Wagoner: —with speech. Okay, and what were we—

Tipton: We’re talking about Paul and the way he [crosstalk]—

Wagoner: [00:11:58] When you first went to rehearse with him, you knew it was different from everything else you were going to be doing. He had his own studio fairly early, and I danced with, at that time, one of the—

Nicifero: He stole many other dancers from the Martha Graham [Dance] Company.

Wagoner: Yes, he did, yes.

Nicifero: Akiko [Kanda], and Linda [Hodes], for a short period of time. But, was your first performance with the company, with Paul Taylor, in Spoleto [Italy]?

Wagoner: [00:12:52] We were there, yes. We were, the first time going to the Spoleto—wow, I didn't think my mind was this bad.

Nicifero: There was Pina Bausch, I think.

Wagoner: [00:13:11] Yes. They had gone to [The] Juilliard [School] to select dancers, and those were all young people being groomed who were [fit for] the best companies, and so, that was an interesting current underneath. Paul, I'm trying to think what the first piece was. I can't—

Tipton: Was it like *Fibers*, maybe?

Wagoner: It was before that.

Nicifero: It was *Meridian* and then *Tablet*?

Wagoner: [00:13:43] *Tablet*, yes, that we did in Spoleto, and that was with Pina—what's her name—Pina Bausch.

Nicifero: Pina.

Tipton: Pina.

Nicifero: And then later on, was Liz [Elizabeth] Walton, maybe?

Wagoner: [00:13:58] Liz, yes, she was a beautiful dancer, and the two of us spent a lot of time together. We were in Italy, I guess, and—

Tipton: You and Liz did quite a number of duets together over the years, I must say.

Wagoner: [00:14:22] Very successfully so, so that was good. She's dead now. She was a beautiful dancer, and influenced Paul very much, I think.

Nicifero: How do you think she influenced Paul?

Wagoner: How she what?

Nicifero: How did she influence Paul?

Wagoner: [00:14:43] Well, I think there was a directness about Paul, and the people who danced around with him. Will you ask me again?

Tipton: How Liz affected, how influenced Paul—Liz Walton.

Wagoner: [00:15:01] Yes. All of these images get mixed up, and this is like at a service station in the little town I grew up in, Springfield, and I look and they're not there, and so it's peculiar. I apologize for staggering and stumbling around.

Tipton: So Liz Walton, and how did she influence Paul?

Wagoner: [00:15:26] By her beauty. Yes, no doubt about it.

Tipton: And Betty [DeJong] was very beautiful in those days too.

Wagoner: Yes.

Nicifero: And how did you influence Paul?

Wagoner: [00:15:48] Well, that's not for me to say—do you think—in any way. I think that he just liked having me in the studio, and I learned movement quickly and I retained it. He liked that, that I could do long stretches of his pieces, and, what else did you ask me?

Nicifero: Everybody wanted you as a dancer in their company. It was also when, around those years, that you danced with Merce, but you still decided to work with Paul, and—

Wagoner: [00:16:31] Finally. It was a hard decision, and I had contemplated very strongly of joining his company, but I guess I liked dancing to the music that's more conventional. But now,

all of that, your mind changes, and images in your head, it all changes, and I'm trying to think of what's pertinent.

Tipton: Yes. You said you found it hard to decide to dance with Paul and not Merce. Do you know why?

Wagoner: What did I say?

Tipton: You said that you found it hard to make that decision.

Wagoner: Yes, I did.

Tipton: Can you remember why it was so difficult?

Wagoner: [00:17:22] Well, Paul was enigmatic himself.

Tipton: Can't say that Merce was not enigmatic. [laughter]

Wagoner: I found him so.

Tipton: Merce and Paul, both enigmatic, but they had very different ideas about dance.

Wagoner: [00:17:43] Oh yes, but that came on gradually. Paul was in New York dancing in the company, and I was in the Army or Washington, D.C., and what else were we talking—

Tipton: Yes, about how Paul gradually became more different from Merce than in the beginning.

Wagoner: [00:18:06] Yes. Well I don't know, [unclear] ideas, they spring up when you're choreographing and thinking about movement. It's—tell me again.

Tipton: Yes, the ideas that spring up when you're thinking about movement, and Paul and Merce must have had very different ideas about that.

Wagoner: [00:18:31] They did, but I'd wanted to take class with Merce, and Paul was an exceptional—

Tipton: Mover.

Wagoner: —dancer, and so, I guess I decided then I'm not here. [laughs] That had not—what was it you were—

Tipton: You were deciding to go with Paul.

Wagoner: [00:18:59] Yes. I just felt that his things were more to the last minute, for me in my own life, that they were very direct, and there, so—

Tipton: And I know you've always loved the way Paul structured things.

Wagoner: [00:19:18] Yes. Yes. I think structure is the most important thing in dance, the images, what they were and where they were.

Nicifero: There was another description that was very illuminating for me in that interview from a while ago. You were describing Martha Graham's technique, and Merce Cunningham's technique, "all in the distribution of weight on the feet," and that was so, again, instructive, because it made it clear that the weight on the—

Wagoner: Who made it clear?

Tipton: You.

Nicifero: You made it clear.

Wagoner: [00:20:03] Me, I did? Well good.

Nicifero: So, you were describing that in Martha Graham technique, the weight is on the heel, so, movement around her is more dramatic, and with Merce, it's all, the weight is all on the ball of the foot, so one can change directions very quickly. Where did you learn, how did you, for your

choreography, but also what did Paul do? Was it a combination of the two techniques, or a different one—

Wagoner: [00:20:39] No—

Nicifero: —maybe?

Wagoner: —Paul was a thick, heavy accent. Something about him was mysterious, metaphysical. When he danced, and you danced with him on stage, it was just incredible, and I wish I were doing it again.

Nicifero: He was even unpredictable on stage.

Wagoner: [00:21:12] No, he was pretty much set, once he got the dance together, and it inter-coursed a lot, the modern dancers and the ballet dancers, and all the different combinations were there, and it was very exciting to dance with him, and to listen to what he had to say, or if he said anything. Usually, he just did it. He'd go like, "Come on," and you'd join in. There was one— what was that piece he did? It's been popular, but—

Nicifero: *Aureole*?

Wagoner: No.

Tipton: *Esplanade*.

Wagoner: No.

Nicifero: *Scudorama*.

Wagoner: [00:22:10] Yes, that's a good—but there was another. I was going off on a tangent. I don't remember where I was with it or whatever. You talked about being different, the feeling, and, say something.

Tipton: Being different, I mean, certainly, dancing with Paul must have been different from dancing with Merce.

Wagoner: Yes, and, although it went out of my head, it's—say it again.

Tipton: The difference between Paul and Merce. The way you felt doing the movement of Paul's, as opposed to what you felt doing the movement of Merce, for instance.

Wagoner: Well that's a good question but I don't know if I can answer it.

Tipton: You just did it. [laughter]

Wagoner: Well good.

Tipton: And then, your own movement, when you started doing your own choreography, how was that different from Paul?

Wagoner: [00:23:16] Doing the movement with Paul. Well, he liked my dancing, and the fact that I could learn quick and go right ahead with it, and he liked that, Merce, and—

Tipton: And Paul too, I'm sure.

Wagoner: [00:23:42] Yes. There was, I guess, in rehearsing with Paul in his studio, that, I felt different. I felt a mystery, and—

Tipton: And knowing you, Dan, I bet you helped the other dancers in the company with the steps.

Wagoner: [00:24:09] Yes, and I helped Paul some too. But it was fun. It was fun, and it was thrilling and creative, and I'm very lucky that I have had the chance to work mostly with Martha, and Merce, and Paul, the three big modern people. Now, if they're not dead, they're not around.

Tipton: They're gone.

Wagoner: [00:24:44] And that's of course, too, reconciling something, that it's a sense of loss, and yet it's comforting to move around to music and—

Tipton: Yes, well you have a good eye, and you enjoy teaching, so you can look at some way, a person moving, and be able to analyze what they should be doing differently.

Wagoner: Yes. A bit, I think it's mostly—who's that screaming? What was I saying about?

Tipton: About teaching, and a good eye at seeing how people move, and—

Wagoner: [00:25:34] Oh, well it's behavior, isn't it? Jumping right into the middle of a puddle, it's such a strange sensation. What, we were talking about Merce, and Paul?

Tipton: Well, and talking about your teaching.

Wagoner: Oh, the teaching.

Tipton: And your eye.

Wagoner: [00:26:05] Yes. I started teaching. Well I was making it up at the University of West Virginia. There was one of these kind of chairs, and I'm going to get in deeper than I can remember.

Tipton: So what did you do with the chair?

Wagoner: Sat in it. [laughter] What had I said about—

Tipton: Well, we were talking about your teaching, and you said you started early in West Virginia, University of West Virginia.

Wagoner: [00:26:48] Yes, but I was making it up as I went. I had never had a dance class in my life, and—

Tipton: But you have a good eye. You can look at somebody moving, and know—

Wagoner: What's left of it.

Tipton: But still—

Wagoner: [crosstalk]—

Tipton: —I mean, I know that you've told Hannah [Sincell, Dan's sister] things about her movement.

Wagoner: [00:27:15] Yes. Oh, Hannah. Yes, to help her back, and to work on alignment, but anything we talked about is—who's that?

Tipton: That's the driver, your driver.

Wagoner: And what was this?

Tipton: Oh, about teaching, talking about teaching, maybe.

Wagoner: [00:27:42] I guess. I loved working in the classroom, and I loved teaching, but I guess the most exciting part of that is making the pictures come to your mind, and images, and especially of this little town, Springfield, West Virginia. I now can smell the pine trees here, and you know, [of] going somewhere, on a—

Nicifero: The smell of pine trees might bring back memories of earlier times. I was wondering, once you left the company, the Paul Taylor [Dance] Company, were you called back to teach your roles to the new generation of dancers?

Wagoner: It was, to a certain point—what you were asking, about Paul?

Nicifero: If you were teaching to other dancers your role.

Wagoner: Yes, what would I do?

Tipton: And you coached them in their own roles, too.

Wagoner: [00:29:10] I did, yes, and I could see the effect it was having on—they were running a dance, but it looked very hollow, and we worked on it in a way that it was denser and heavy, like Paul's movement. It's—

Tipton: Grounded.

Wagoner: Yes. Who were we talking about? In your purse? [laughter]

Tipton: I don't remember.

Wagoner: Do you remember who?

Nicifero: Do you remember when you were traveling, touring together, in the United States, and going to present the work, when you were a very small family, almost, when the company was five or six dancers?

Wagoner: [00:30:08] Yes, and it just began to accelerate as there were more dancers added and more positions. As a dancer, it has always interested me, I guess, what certain movements will evoke what in me, and other movements, it doesn't evoke anything, and I think part of the time it was just the courage to say, "I don't know."

Tipton: And it seems to me you always used to say that "movement would save the world. If people only moved, danced, that they'd get a sense of themselves that"—

Nicifero: We can all agree.

Wagoner: And—

Tipton: You don't remember that so much.

Wagoner: [00:31:08] I do, yes. And what did you sign off with?

Tipton: That you, well, you can change the world with your movement.

Wagoner: [00:31:16] Yes, and it is, I think, where all the sore places are in our culture, in our language, the language now. That all blends together, and all comes—and I think that what I did was look at the structure, and I did it on my own sense, whatever sense I've got. Paul and Merce both had that special thing that makes the world magic, and worthwhile.

Nicifero: What were the movements that you found more evocative?

Wagoner: [00:32:27] Oh, I liked anything that was noisy, stomping around in the studio, and then moving or standing still as long as you could, and just simple things like that, but fascinating, and I wish I could talk better about it, because it's an experience that I think if— what did I say about the seat over here? Do you remember?

Tipton: No.

Wagoner: [00:33:03] Anyway, it was something I wanted to say. Oh, I think that if people were more enlightened, and that everybody danced, not worried about what it looks like or what it costs, but that if everyone was enlightened with being able to hold a manuscript or nothing in your hands, that you arrive at a wonderful, beautiful place, and I think that I was thinking of the experience of dancing with Paul and with Merce and Martha, that all of that, if it could be incorporated into the choreography would be interesting, and endlessly interesting, but I don't know. I can hardly keep one thought in front of the other.

Nicifero: But you said something very interesting that reminds me of Paul's choreography. You said that you were always interested in the noise, so the stomping, and also the speed of movement.

Wagoner: [00:34:22] Yes. That's where it came from. Did you do that dance?

Tipton: No, I didn't do that dance, but you always managed to dance very quickly, very fast.

Wagoner: [crosstalk]—

Tipton: Which was wonderful to see, this—

Wagoner: I liked to go fast.

Tipton: —big powerful man going very fast.

Wagoner: [00:34:45] And Paul, of course, complemented it. So many people who came to see us dance, and they assumed that Paul would, or that Merce would go ahead with what he was doing, and that I would go ahead with what I was doing. Does that make any sense?

Tipton: Well, people remarked on your ability.

Wagoner: [00:35:11] Yes, and Liz too, Liz Walton.

Tipton: The two of you together were quite—

Wagoner: The two—

Tipton: —exceptional.

Wagoner: —in Italy, and did a concert, and then that was—why did I bring them up?

Tipton: You were instantly famous.

Wagoner: I was?

Tipton: You and Liz.

Wagoner: [00:35:37] Yes. She was, well besides just being beautiful, was a creature. She was smart and could figure things out.

Tipton: And a beautiful dancer.

Nicifero: And do you remember the making of any of some of the works, like *Insects and Heroes*?

Wagoner: Yes.

Nicifero: What was that dance about?

Wagoner: [00:36:04] I don't know. No, it's fairly simple. Do you have a video of it? Can you go back and look at it? You don't happen to know Liz [Elizabeth] Keen, do you?

Tipton: No, I don't think so.

Wagoner: Or Linda Hodes?

Tipton: Linda—

Nicifero: Linda, yes.

Wagoner: [00:36:23] Linda, Merce and Paul and Martha, they all had a sense of the overtones and undertones of a movement or of a person, and often it was not [that] they said anything, but it was the doing, and I think for Merce, kept the movement very pure, that he didn't let any psychological things enter in. It sounds so dry when you talk about it, but he made it really come to life. Do you know his work?

Caplan: Yes.

Wagoner: What else can I say? There are lots of things I'd like to talk about, but I don't think I can with this.

Nicifero: Well—

Tipton: But Paul, too, I think, recognized how each person in his company is so very different, and I think he drew out their particular kind of movement, and I think you saw that, and helped by coaching them—

Wagoner: [00:37:39] My influence—

Tipton: —and by—

Wagoner: —yes.

Tipton: Yes, and by sort of supporting the individual movements of each person.

Wagoner: It—I was about to say something and now I don't remember what I was talking about.

Tipton: But all the dancers in his company, even today, are very appreciative of what you have done for them, and the way you have coached them in the past.

Wagoner: [00:38:13] And that was fun, also, because it—I don't know. Everything can have a meaning or a double meaning, and—words are just slipping out of my head. It's about Merce and Paul and how they choreographed and rehearsed, and it all adds up in little bits, and rose into a huge flower or a tree or bird, [laughter] but everything meets somewhere. We all know the same thing, and it's just that some have found it sooner and some not quite so quick.

Nicifero: I feel that dancing with different dancers and choreographers bring out some part of ourselves, so, what do you think that dancing with Merce would reveal about yourself? What did he bring out?

Wagoner: [00:39:50] Well, I don't know. I guess it was just, at the beginning, it was the thrill of me dancing with Merce, and that went on for a while. Now what were you talking about?

Nicifero: How was that different then with Paul? What did Paul reveal about yourself, just by dancing with the company?

Wagoner: [00:40:17] Yes. I guess it's what I said already. Well, I forget what I was going to say.

Tipton: Well, I have one question about something that you said early on, and that's the little band that was in the gym, when you went to high school, and you went to the dance there, and I just wondered if that little band played music like the music that you—

Wagoner: [00:40:53] Oh, I—

Tipton: —used in your own pieces—

Wagoner: —I loved to move—

Tipton: —over—

Wagoner: —and—

Tipton: —over time.

Wagoner: —and especially to a lot of sort of ethnic movement. Of course I—

Tipton: Founding.

Wagoner: —grew up in—I was going to say Brooklyn [laughter], in Jerry Shannon's [phonetic] gas station [phonetic]. I don't know. I guess it all boils down to, simply do your work, and for a dancer, this feel, being tactile, feeling that wind blowing over my fingers, or hair blowing, and then all of these things come together, finally, at a wonderful stage of—what word do I want to use?

What was I just saying? Things come together, fit together, but what else did I say? Anyway, I'm trying to say that I feel dancing is a special thing to get to do, and that if everyone could experience that—just that one speck or dot, and now look, I've talked myself right out of what I was thinking of. What did I say?

Caplan: You were talking about the wind going through your hair, feeling things through. So you're talking about a cumulative experience of all these things that add up, to make some kind of a gesture that you refer to as dance. Can you speak more about that?

Wagoner: Remind me again in a little bit. Dancing—

Tipton: Wind through your hair, and fingers, and, your feet on the floor.

Wagoner: And then there was something else.

Caplan: You're adding up a lot of different parts, to make a movement or a phrase. It all seems to be important to you. It all carries the same weight. Only a special performer could do that.

Wagoner: [00:43:15] Well I don't know. Of course, I didn't evaluate what it was; I just did it, and it fed back so much. It was fun, dancing with Liz and Paul and all those people. It was tremendously fun. [unclear], mistake.

Caplan: You mentioned that you never took technique class. Is that really true?

Wagoner: [00:43:51] Well, I didn't at first, but the moment I got into New York and Ethel Butler's class, wherever I could get to a class, I would do it.

Caplan: Do you remember her class?

Wagoner: Martha?

Tipton: No.

Caplan: Ethel.

Wagoner: Ethel, do I remember some of her movement?

Caplan: Yes, or what did she base her technique on?

Wagoner: [00:44:19] Well her technique was based very strongly on sort of blood. There was blood in the veins, and that, it all had a metaphysical aspect to it, and it was real for her. She really changed the way people behaved, behavior—did you know her?

Caplan: No. Do you remember other technique classes that you took?

Wagoner: [00:45:08] Oh yes, ballet classes, and what else?

Tipton: You remember Graham, at all?

Wagoner: [00:45:18] Martha? Oh yes. She had made a new dance, and what was the name of it? It was one of the Greek things, and she—I can't keep a bell ringing to sustain a thought. What is that? It's not too interesting, a Greek myth, *Alcestis*. Is that the way you pronounce it?

Tipton: Sure, one way, yes.

Wagoner: [00:45:58] And, the Greek, she had made a slanted bed. Not only was it on a slant, and the audience is there, but it's over on the side, and I first was in the chorus, and then later on, I did—what's his name?

Tipton: Forget his name.

Nicifero: Yes, the—

Wagoner: Oh, you girls [crosstalk]—

Nicifero: —[crosstalk], right.

Tipton: We can look it up online. Anyway—

Nicifero: Was it difficult to dance or interact with a set design by [Isamu] Noguchi?

Tipton: The bed.

Wagoner: [00:46:44] The bed. Yes, and what about it?

Tipton: Was it difficult to interact with it?

Wagoner: [00:46:50] It was difficult to stay on it. [laughter] But yes, he used enough props to create an atmosphere in a place, and—

Nicifero: I don't know. An association, thinking about props. What about *Scudorama* and the blankets? What was the story with the blanket, and—

Wagoner: [00:47:17] Well, don't you think that that whole dance is about trying to—and there I go again with my mind. I can't will it. Oh well. What was—

Nicifero: The blankets.

Wagoner: [00:47:33] Oh yes. That whole dance is about angst and crises, and—

Tipton: Trauma.

Wagoner: —drama.

Tipton: Trauma.

Wagoner: Trauma. I've had both. [laughter]

Tipton: But, now, you've danced with Graham, with scenery, or set pieces, that got in the way, or that you couldn't lie on, and you danced with Paul with lots of props like that. But when you made your own dances, you didn't use scenery or props. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Wagoner: Say again what you—

Tipton: You didn't use scenery or props, when you did your own dances. Do you have any thoughts about that? Do you know why you didn't use—maybe because they were too expensive, I don't know.

Wagoner: [00:48:34] That's part of it, but—where were we?

Tipton: That your dance was much purer than using props and scenery, and—

Wagoner: [00:48:49] Yes, yes. So it was. I was constantly trying to go back to the—

Nicifero: Body in the movement.

Tipton: Core.

Wagoner: Yes. I think I sort of felt that whether it was true or not, that Merce and Paul, a lot of the later dances weren't, but the early dances—what did I say? You've got to make it up, Jenny. [laughter] It was something that I was thinking about.

Nicifero: It seems that you were making a distinction between the earlier dance and the later dance or—

Wagoner: [00:49:42] And you can string all of those out to incorporate everything, and even the stars.

Tipton: Yes, do you have any thoughts about scenery, because when you were in London, the impulse there is to use more scenery, more backdrops, and how did you feel about that?

Wagoner: [00:50:11] Well, I did mostly—

Tipton: Pieces?

Wagoner: —pieces—ask me again.

Tipton: Sadler's Wells [Theatre] pieces, the pieces that you did for Sadler's Wells, and backgrounds, backdrops, scenery, how did you feel about those backdrops?

Wagoner: [00:50:41] Well, I thought they worked out, because you designed the lights, and they were gorgeous. But how had I answered you?

Tipton: I just wondered, because in your American dancing, let's say—

Wagoner: [00:50:59] It was expensive.

Tipton: It was expensive, so, you didn't even think about it.

Wagoner: [00:51:03] And being locked in by rules and—what did I say? It was—

Tipton: Being blocked in by rules?

Wagoner: Yes. And—

Tipton: Whose rules?

Wagoner: [00:51:27] [laughs] Whose rules? Rules are dead. Hemmed in by, and of course, hemmed in by our own shortcomings and—

Tipton: And the way we do it.

Wagoner: Yes. I'm sorry I can't—

Caplan: Dan, would you like to take a drink? There's a very nice woman here who says you should have some water.

Mary: Hi.

Caplan: You have fresh—

Wagoner: Can you come [unclear]?

Tipton: She's got a whole glass for you. Thanks, Mary.

Caplan: This is for you.

Wagoner: Thank you.

Mary: Take a sip of drink, [unclear].

Tipton: Drink a lot of it. It'll help clear your head.

Wagoner: I have to live my life on my own terms. [laughter]

Tipton: Yes sir. [laughter] You have all these people around telling you what to do.

Wagoner: [00:52:37] Yes. "Step over here, Dan." "Fill your glass up, Dan." "I told you to drink."

[laughter] No, this has been for me a sort of an oasis, and a lovely spot. Now what?

Nicifero: Do you remember when was the last time that you saw Paul?

Wagoner: [00:53:06] Yes, he was living in Manhattan, but he had fallen.

Tipton: It must have been *Aureole*? When they did *Aureole*, and you came on stage with red shoes.

Wagoner: [00:53:22] Oh, yes. Well it could have been. Yes, it was only in those three dances.

Excuse me. It was about that time.

Tipton: It was about that time, I think.

Nicifero: So was it a relatively recent restaging of *Aureole*?

Tipton: Right. It was *Aureole*'s fiftieth [anniversary] or something like that.

Wagoner: Who wrote a review, or—

Tipton: [00:53:50] I don't know, but it was the fiftieth anniversary of *Aureole*, so, but company members performed it, and then all the original cast got on stage.

Wagoner: Did they dance in unison, or—

Tipton: No, no. No, no, you didn't dance. The old guys didn't dance. They just came up and bowed.

Wagoner: But [crosstalk]—

Tipton: You don't remember?

Wagoner: —different layers of—

Tipton: Just two layers, just the ones doing it today—

Nicifero: The first and then—

Tipton: —and the first—

Nicifero: —the one—

Tipton: —and then today's.

Nicifero: So it was, 2012, it must have been.

Tipton: Something like that, yes.

Nicifero: So not that long ago.

Wagoner: [00:54:33] But I feel I'm afraid I haven't spoken very eloquently about dance and what it can do, but it is a marvelous, wonderful experience, and then when you have the experience with people like Martha and Paul and of Merce, it knocks it up a notch. There's no way to describe that energy that brings movement to life, and makes you aware of where I need

to go, what pieces I need to do, and just go right to them and do it, but of course, all of those young people were very smart, very bright, handpicked from Juilliard. As I said, I wish I could speak more eloquently. I have Parkinson's disease, and it makes me uncoordinated. I'm all right putting my pants under this way, but when I go across this way—[laughter]

Caplan: In terms of the process of the making of a dance, let's say between Merce and Paul, in your experience, how long did it take Merce to make a dance, and how long did it take Paul to make a dance?

Wagoner: [00:56:22] Well of course it depended. They did everything from solos up through group pieces. What did you want to know specifically?

Caplan: Your experience in working with both choreographers, building a new dance, how long did it take Merce to make a work, and how long did it take Paul to make a work?

Wagoner: I don't know. I guess—

Tipton: Did one work faster than the other?

Wagoner: [00:56:55] Probably Merce worked faster, that he didn't stop for anything. If he didn't have the instruments there to set it up or whatever, he would just plow ahead with, throw the dice and let them land where they land.

Tipton: And what about you, how quickly did you make the dances?

Wagoner: Oh, I'm all right out here. [laughs] How long did it what?

Tipton: Take you to make dances.

Wagoner: [00:57:28] Well, I took as much time as I could, but usually that was very limited, and it was anywhere from two to four weeks. And then I was terribly bad at coordinating designers, musicians, composers, and all of those things are exciting things to think about, to work with, but it's hard to have the money to buy that, or just walk through the wall and say, "Here I am."

[laughs]

Nicifero: So, it sounds to me that Merce would come into the studio and work with a dancer with a clearer idea than Paul had. So Paul maybe created his dances as he was processing with the dancers. Is that a good guess, or—

Wagoner: [00:58:20] Yes, well it varies back and forth, but that's essentially—that way of thinking about sitting down to have your toast. You talk about aesthetics, and of course, as long as we keep moving, or—I talk to myself. You can follow. What'd I say, if you keep moving?

Tipton: Yes.

Wagoner: And go on. [laughter] Where did I—

Caplan: Would the choreographers demo the work for you, demo the part? Would Merce show you what he wanted? Would Paul show you what he wanted, or would Paul ask for something then you would give him something?

Wagoner: [00:59:18] Oh, Paul primarily would go ahead with a movement, and—

Tipton: Show it to you.

Wagoner: Yes. Who else was in there?

Tipton: Merce.

Wagoner: Merce, and did I mention Paul?

Tipton: Did Merce show you what—

Wagoner: [00:59:41] I'm trying—

Tipton: —to do?

Wagoner: —to think. Yes, he did. Yes. He did some things from dance notation, and he would have one of the Juilliard servants [laughs]—

Tipton: This is Merce, or Paul?

Wagoner: Merce, yes. And—

Tipton: And what about you, did you show your dancers what to do, or—

Wagoner: [01:00:12] Yes. I had it choreographed down to the very last, because I knew something would always go wrong, and during most of my life, I've been absolutely terrified, and loving it at the same time, but working with Merce and Paul, Martha, the litany—what did I say?

Tipton: You were talking about being terrified.

Wagoner: [01:00:42] Yes. I guess it was terrifying at not extracting through the dance work—and now I can't remember what subject I was on.

Nicifero: We're talking about this sensation of being terrified, and the same time, excited.

Wagoner: [01:01:09] Oh, elated, yes. Those things are interrelated, aren't they? Fear and yet, can't wait to do it.

Tipton: And ecstasy.

Wagoner: [01:01:20] Yes. That's the reason I think that most dancers have a wry sense of humor, and in sort of the depths of most kind of—what did I say? The—

Tipton: Wry sense of humor.

Wagoner: [01:01:46] Yes. That kind of brought everything together, that everything's either, you can say lowered, or—

Tipton: Raised.

Wagoner: —or raised. That it was my responsibility to make a good dance. Now who from there, who's to decide what's a good dance and what's a bad dance? It's over for me, but you have to keep going if you want to stay in the game. Well, I can't think what I was going to say.

Nicifero: Did you find any of them intimidating when you worked with them?

Wagoner: [01:02:52] No, not really. They were good souls for the most part, and, so, it was a joint affair of everybody. I know Paul was competitive, and—

Tipton: Did you ever feel like that you had to pull back, when you were dancing with Paul, so that he wouldn't get—

Wagoner: [01:03:24] Yes. No, I guess I saw him warming up and getting ready to do one of his pieces, but it all seemed to make sense, and I'm not very jealous acting, so, and Paul is incredibly competitive, and could be right down nasty. [laughter] But usually, with someone like that, you forgive them because they're so talented, and leave their mark here that—words are just fading out and floating away, but, I'm trying to remember. I could remember more, actually, I think, if I sat in a studio—well, maybe not—that one of you could have been there to say, “It's a lot of bullshit, Dan.” [laughter]

Tipton: No. No.

Wagoner: [01:04:37] But it's exciting to be around artists, and likely as people here. It is a good thing to do, and I think it has in one of those—I said this before—one of those—what did we say just now?

Tipton: It's nice to be with artists.

Wagoner: Yes. So it is.

Tipton: And Dan's pieces are going to be in a play at the Public [Theater] this fall.

Wagoner: What's going to be there?

Tipton: Three of your pieces.

Nicifero: That's wonderful.

Wagoner: Well, we'll see what—

Nicifero: Which are the pieces?

Tipton: Well, one is *Raggedy*. What's the name of that? Do you know what their names are? I'm terrible; I don't remember.

Wagoner: [01:05:42] She put her orphans out to freeze.

Tipton: What's *Raggedy*? What's that dance's name?

Wagoner: [01:05:50] [*Broken Hearted*] *Rag Dance*, isn't it?

Tipton: No, it's different. Sorry. Have to let you know.

Wagoner: [01:05:56] Scott Joplin—

Nicifero: Well—

Tipton: Yes, Scott Joplin.

Wagoner: [hums “Maple Leaf Rag”]

Tipton: We’re talking about that tomorrow. I’ll email you the three dances.

Wagoner: [hums “Maple Leaf Rag”]

Tipton: Dan did that dance originally.

Wagoner: [01:06:19] *Broken Hearted Rag Dance*.

Tipton: *Broken Hearted Rag Dance*, yes.

Nicifero: The music brought it back.

Wagoner: What?

Nicifero: The music, just by humming, brought it back—

Wagoner: Maybe.

Nicifero: —the title, yes.

Wagoner: [01:06:32] Who knows about memory, and I feel part of the time that on this side of my body and face, I have—what was I thinking?

Tipton: Good memory, here?

Wagoner: Yes, and—

Tipton: And back here, not so good?

Wagoner: What did I say about—

Nicifero: It seems as if memory had a location--

Wagoner: Yes. Like this—

Tipton: But you didn't quite say where it was.

Wagoner: Well—

Tipton: What do you feel about here?

Wagoner: [01:07:16] Kissing. [laughter]

Tipton: But is this good memory—

Wagoner: Yes.

Tipton: —or bad? That's where you remember, but back here, you don't remember so much.

Wagoner: [01:07:27] Probably. I don't know. This disease is so strange. I swear that it can think. Before I do anything, that probably is lethal, that we'll be sunk down, [laughs] before we get through with it. It's one of my [unclear]. [laughter]

Nicifero: Do memories float more freely when you are not with other people, or not talking?

Wagoner: [01:08:10] Yes, I think to some degree, not always.

Nicifero: Because perhaps it's more images, less structural language, and there is the body, the memory of the body. It probably still remembers some of the action and movement that you did when you created your pieces or when you were in others.

Wagoner: And, ask me again?

Nicifero: I was wondering if sometimes you remember just through the muscle—

Wagoner: [01:08:48] Yes, muscle memory, of course, yes, and I think what happens is, you can sit at home and measure the—what did I have down and out? I can't remember what I did.

Tipton: Sit at home and measure the movement.

Wagoner: Yes, but I don't know what I hooked it on to.

Tipton: Ah, okay. Can't tell you *that*. So you have any final words to say?

Wagoner: Is it over?

Tipton: Well, it can be, probably, but it needn't be, if you have something to say.

Wagoner: [01:09:45] Well I have a lot of things to say but I'm losing the facility to isolate them and plug the holes where they are. I guess there are a lot of anecdotes which would be fun, funny.

Nicifero: What anecdote is coming to your mind? In the—

Wagoner: [01:10:14] Oh, I should have thought of this ahead of time. Isn't that strange, that I can't think of a thing? And I'm just full of funny things. [laughter]

Caplan: Both of you share very similar qualities, because you had a generosity of spirit when you worked with Paul, but you not only did your own part, but you would help others to do their parts, very much like Jennifer, and all of the things that she would just do, no one was asking her. She saw a need and she would just jump to do it, and in this, she developed her talent and her place and her skill. You share this. You're great friends. This is an absolutely amazing moment right now, the both of you.

Wagoner: [01:11:20] Thank you. She beats me all the time. [laughter]

Tipton: Sure, sure. [laughs]

Wagoner: [01:11:33] And just endless treasure to think about as in making a dance, making hot fudge, just endless if we take the time to look and see, and to see like how these things are distributed on this couch, and Jennifer's going to paint a picture of that. Red, isn't it? What do you want to say?

Tipton: [laughs] I just love being with you, Dan.

Wagoner: Oh, Jennifer, thank you.

Tipton: It's very special. Yes, your dancing, your choreography, your spirit has been special to me all my adult life it feels like—

Wagoner: Well thank you.

Tipton: —ever since I've known you.

Wagoner: Thank you.

Nicifero: For creating lights, how did Dan's work inspire you differently than, for example, Paul, or other dancers?

Tipton: [01:12:48] Yes, it's very hard to say, of course, because each piece—my mentor was Tom [Thomas R.] Skelton, and he always said, “They hire me because I light this way.” I am not that way. I try to make the light appropriate to the piece. So, the pieces that Dan has made always spoke to me very, very specially and very deeply, and there's memorable things that we've created together, very memorable to me. Of course, there have been things that I've created with Paul that have been amazingly memorable, and amazing. Each dance is special.

Nicifero: And of course, each dance is related to a specific historical moment, and both personal and more—

Tipton: [01:13:57] Right, it is—

Nicifero: —[crosstalk], so—

Tipton: —of the moment, and of course, there are choreographers that I've worked with that I don't respond to, but Dan and Paul, certainly, I have responded to deeply.

Nicifero: Do you think that that has to do also with the fact that you were friends with them since the beginning of your career—

Tipton: I think it must be—

Nicifero: —that's being peers?

Tipton: [01:14:22] Yes, it must be—

Wagoner: Yes—

Tipton: —because I do feel that sort of everything I know, I learned on the road with Paul, really. You were going to say something.

Wagoner: I probably have forgotten it.

Tipton: Yes. I stopped you.

Wagoner: No. I'm participating somewhat.

Tipton: More than somewhat.

Wagoner: [01:14:53] It's beautiful here, isn't it?

Nicifero: It's wonderful, yes.

Tipton: And the drive. It's interesting to come on the train—that's sort of normal—to get close to Baltimore, but then to take the bus through the hills is quite beautiful, and I got to sit in the front seat. It was a minivan, much like that, only the flat, boxy kind, and so, it's beautiful country.

Wagoner: [01:15:24] A lot of Amish farms, and married couples—

Tipton: With big families, probably.

Wagoner: —yes, and cattle, and sheep, and—

Nicifero: We saw some of them as we were driving.

Tipton: [01:15:44] Yes. And it's funny, I'd ride through a country like this, and I always think of it in the winter, and with snow, and I don't know why. I'm not often in a place like this in the snow.

Nicifero: Nice and green with flowers.

Tipton: There must have been lots of rain, because it's very green.

Nicifero: So do you think you'll be able to travel to New York when the piece will be restaged, this fall?

Wagoner: [01:16:20] Oh, I don't know. You mean see the shadow [phonetic] pieces? What ones are there?

Tipton: We'll talk about that tomorrow. [laughter]

Wagoner: [01:16:29] Scarlett O'Hara.

Tipton: No, well one is the *Raggedy* dance, *Broken Hearted Rag Dance*.

Wagoner: And do they do it exactly as I did it?

Tipton: No one does it exactly as you did it, Dan, but the steps are the same.

Nicifero: How was seeing other dancers doing the pieces that you did before? Like, I don't know, for example, you were in the original cast of *Aureole*. How was seeing other dancers dancing your role?

Wagoner: Say that again.

Nicifero: I said, you were in the original cast of *Aureole*. How was it seeing dancers doing your role, years later?

Wagoner: [01:17:24] Oh. They've smoothed off the edges, and sharp angles have all been made sharper, and, ask me again.

Tipton: In seeing other people, how does it make you feel?

Wagoner: I don't know. I can't seem to get in touch with—

Tipton: [01:17:56] I look at *Aureole*, and I see Dan, and I see Paul. I see Liz, and Renée [Kimball], and Sharon [Kinney], even today, so, that's how I feel.

Wagoner: Good.

Tipton: How do you feel when you see somebody doing your part?

Wagoner: [01:18:19] Usually I'm very sad at the beginning of it, and you just have to shut up and not say anything, or, I guess decide to try to help them find—mostly it was, Paul, it's a matter of weight. His dances bear a—but more so when we did it than they do it now, when the ones who do it now. It's not as [phonetic] angst and pulled and reflected today's society, and—

Tipton: [01:19:07] Yes, it's very difficult to see pieces. I saw *Embattled Garden* once with the new Graham Company, and I only saw, I could see the dancers who did it originally, and at the end, the audience jumped up and cheered, and I sat there weeping. It's very difficult.

Wagoner: You sat there what?

Tipton: Weeping.

Wagoner: Oh. That's not a good thing to do, I guess.

Tipton: [Laughs] It is a reaction. Hard to stop it.

Wagoner: [01:19:57] But talking about Parkinson's disease, it really takes over your body and [you] can't sort of get out from under it. It's just stammering, like th-th-th-this. Not a very interesting existence. But it's certainly nice that you came, and—

Nicifero: It's such a pleasure for us, yes.

Wagoner: [01:20:29] I feel like I haven't talked about the dances as eloquently and clearly as I should have, but it's just that that disease, it almost leads me—I'm walking on a path, and come to a certain place, and I crumple and fall. It's the disease, saying, "Oh no, Dan, you're going

down this road.” So I don’t know. It’s a mysterious disease, and there’s more: it’s growing all the time. Well, I don’t go anywhere much, but anyway—

Tipton: It’s hard to keep moving, I’m sure.

Wagoner: Yes, although sometimes, it’s totally just—

Tipton: Movement oriented.

Wagoner: Yes.

Nicifero: And do you enjoy sometimes watching dance videos and—

Wagoner: [01:21:43] Yes. Not a lot, but some, and—

Tipton: But in his room here, he has TV, and I asked him if he had any possibility of listening to music and he said, “Not really,” it reminds him too much of what was, and so, it’s just as well he’s sort of turned that off, he said.

Nicifero: But there are many dances around here through the window that one can observe.

Wagoner: Yes.

Tipton: It's too bad there are not some performances around that you could go see.

Wagoner: Yes, and I don't think I've been to anything since I've been up [crosstalk]—

Tipton: Right, right.

Wagoner: [01:22:48] The last dances I made were—what were they? I'll think of a dozen things I should have thought of when I get into the car, but I haven't talked this long in one movement, but—

Tipton: Drink some more water.

Wagoner: I don't think it's going to help. Would you like something more to drink?

Nicifero: I'm all set for now, but—

Wagoner: How are you, Jenny?

Tipton: I'm great.

Wagoner: Wonderful. Have you seen her work?

Nicifero: Yes.

Wagoner: [makes questioning sound]?

Nicifero: Yes.

Wagoner: Did you like the new piece?

Nicifero: I did not see the last piece at the theater, at the Public Theater, no.

Tipton: What about Paul? Did you see any of that season at the Manhattan?

Nicifero: Yes, yes. I saw all three programs [2019 Orchesta of St. Lukes's Bach Festival] and actually, I was just at the Jacob's Pillow [Dance Festival] to see their program there. It was the first time I saw *Concertiana*. I had not seen it before. Of the three pieces that they were doing at the Jacob's Pillow, *Promethean Fire*, which is growing more and more, I actually appreciate and admired the lighting enormously. There are many other works, but in that piece, the lighting is—

Tipton: Yes, it's one of my favorites. It's a fantastic piece.

Wagoner: You're talking about which piece?

Tipton: *Promethean Fire*.

Wagoner: Yes. That, the music to that and the movement—

Tipton: And the costumes, costumes are brilliant.

Nicifero: I always find—

Tipton: What was—

Nicifero: I found the music always of that piece a little overwhelming, not—

Tipton: [01:25:42] [crosstalk]—

Nicifero: —necessarily in a positive way, but I even appreciate more the music now, because I understand and appreciate a lot the complexity of all the elements --

Tipton: What was the third piece on the program, if you remember?

Nicifero: *Aureole*.

Wagoner: Was it done last?

Tipton: Probably first, with *Promethean Fire* last.

Nicifero: Correct. That was the order, *Concertiana* was in the middle.

Wagoner: [01:26:25] And who knows how long these dances will last, or they don't last, or they do last?

Tipton: [01:26:35] No, well as long as Betty is around, and I think Andy [phonetic] does quite well too, I think they will. For me, it's sad to see what—well I've mentioned the Graham repertory. It's sad for me to see the [George] Balanchine repertory because it's gone, at New York City Ballet.

Wagoner: Is it?

Tipton: [01:26:54] Yes, there's no one who's coaching it. There were [Jerome] Robbins people. There are still Robbins coaches there, but there are no Balanchine coaches.

Wagoner: Really?

Tipton: Really, and so it's sad to see. That's how it goes. I bet, I think that the Balanchine repertory is probably better in Miami, than it is at New York City Ballet.

Wagoner: [01:27:25] Edward Villella?

Tipton: Who's no longer with the company, but—

Wagoner: Who directs that, do you know?

Tipton: I forget her name.

Wagoner: It's a woman.

Tipton: It is a woman. But she's a Balanchine person, and of course, Balanchine is great in San Francisco, with Helgi [Tomasson].

Wagoner: [01:27:51] So, different pieces will survive and trickle through the—

Tipton: Well, it will depend on the coaching. Certainly for now, it's great, in good shape.

Nicifero: Were you expecting, when you danced *Aureole*, that it would become a classic of American modern dance?

Wagoner: [01:28:15] Yes, and the premiere was at Connecticut College, and what was I going to tell you about that?

Tipton: Did you think it was going to be a classic?

Wagoner: [01:28:32] I don't know, but one, the conductor for us was, he was an Englishman, but was in France at this festival. It's almost as if something's fighting me to keep from thinking my thoughts, but I guess it's just from so many years of habit, that it's not very meaningful. But anyway—

Tipton: Did it feel like a classic when you were dancing it?

Wagoner: *Aureole*.

Tipton: [01:29:12] Yes. *Aureole* was such a scandal, of course. It was a scandal because it was a break for Paul, and Paul had left the downtown dance, and was making uptown dance, shall we say? Can't think of a better way to describe it. So that in itself, it wasn't classic. It was shocking, but it was just what Paul wanted to do.

Nicifero: Mostly just using Bach's music was unusual for that era.

Tipton: Right.

Wagoner: [01:29:51] Did I finish telling you what the three things that—no, I didn't.

Nicifero: What were the three things you thinking of?

Wagoner: [01:30:01] I had them on the tip of my tongue a little while ago and then I lost it. I think it occurred in Porto Alegre, South America. I can't remember the—

Nicifero: Were you on vacation or touring—

Wagoner: No, it was touring.

Nicifero: —with the company?

Tipton: Touring.

Nicifero: You were touring.

Wagoner: [01:30:36] We were in São Paulo. That's South America, isn't it?

Tipton: Yes.

Wagoner: And—

Nicifero: Were you touring with the Paul Taylor Company?

Wagoner: Yes.

Tipton: I think the music quit there, too.

Wagoner: The what?

Tipton: The music quit there, too—

Wagoner: [01:30:58] Yes, the—

Tipton: —I think.

Wagoner: —electricity went off and we were in the middle of a dance. I think the lights went out first.

Tipton: Really?

Wagoner: [crosstalk]—

Tipton: I don't remember that. I certainly remember the music, because I think we destroyed the tape and we didn't have any more tapes.

Wagoner: Oh really?

Tipton: I think.

Wagoner: [01:31:16] Do we have any now? I should be able to remember all of the dozens of anecdotes that—

Nicifero: Well, I read that for *Scudorama*, the premiere, you were injured, and you couldn't perform, and you performed later. What happened to you, do you remember?

Wagoner: [01:31:49] Yes, it happened in Lincoln Center.

Tipton: Connecticut College.

Wagoner: Yes, but I think there was something connected with the—what were we talking about?

Tipton: *Scudorama* and your being injured.

Wagoner: [01:32:09] Yes. It was slow, and we had to change some of the movement, but mostly it was just balance. I had to stand around on one leg, and a woman sitting on my shoulders, and trying to dance.

Tipton: I don't remember that he was injured. The big thing that happened for the opening of *Scudorama* is the music didn't get there.

Nicifero: Right. I also wonder—

Tipton: And we—

Nicifero: —how come the music didn't get there? Was it—

Tipton: [01:32:39] It was on a Greyhound bus, and it didn't arrive. It was just recently, just in recent years, that I've discovered that it was found in an old warehouse in London or something, somewhere, years later. But, anyway, I didn't remember you were injured.

Wagoner: [01:33:02] Yes, my ankle.

Tipton: But you danced anyway?

Wagoner: [01:33:07] Well, I had to alter it. I couldn't [crosstalk]—

Tipton: No, I know, you couldn't do it—

Wagoner: —sections [crosstalk]—

Tipton: —but yes, in those days, Paul wouldn't let anybody be injured. They had to go on. On with the show. The show must go on.

Wagoner: [01:33:19] Crawling across the space. [laughter] But that dance, *Scudorama*, does have a lot of push and pull and kill. Really made it like a—what do you run a? You run a—

Tipton: Marathon?

Wagoner: [01:33:44] Something like that. I was just trying to think of words that described—what's the name of the piece?

Tipton: *Scudorama*.

Wagoner: [01:33:56] *Scudorama*. It was fun to go back and coach the others in it, and do it, also. But it's like having a horrible runny nose and a cold, but it's soon going to get serious, I guess.

Nicifero: Do you remember who were the dancers that you coached?

Wagoner: Who the dancers were?

Nicifero: Yes.

Wagoner: For the original?

Nicifero: No, that you coached—

Wagoner: The revival.

Nicifero: —for the revival, yes.

Wagoner: [01:34:32] Sean Mahoney.

Tipton: Sean's been a good Paul. The company's going to miss Sean [laughs].

Wagoner: What else?

Tipton: I don't remember who did it. I remember who did it originally, but I don't remember who did it recently. What's your favorite piece of Paul's, first of all, that you danced?

Wagoner: [01:35:15] I guess *Aureole*. It had, in a small compact space, not that many steps. It was precise and exact, and weighty heavy, so you could go right up to it and plunge it in and start going, and then that glorious music comes on, and I'd just sit down and cry. [laughter]

Tipton: Yes, well, *Aureole* for me, I've seen it I don't know how many times and I can see it that many more times. It's a wonderful piece.

Wagoner: [01:35:55] And I guess that's what's a classic.

Tipton: I guess.

Wagoner: And he's been here gone, and who else?

Nicifero: Yes, you seem to return always to this idea of weight, a different weight that Paul brought on stage.

Wagoner: [01:36:25] And it's been lost. Not completely, but it's not like seeing—well it's like the Graham Company: when you see the original, nothing else will do. So anyway—

Tipton: But in rehearsing for his company too, it was always weight, weight, feel the floor.

Wagoner: [01:36:58] Well it's like they skim, they begin to skim the movement, and before they've even turned, they take the weight here, they've lost the weight, and then it just looks like an exercise. And, of course, it was fun to help them reinstate the weight.

Nicifero: So did you have a specific way to describe to the dancers how to [crosstalk]—

Wagoner: [01:37:36] No, mostly I tried not to say too much, but I did talk about it with them, the weight, and all of the other aspects, and “take your weight here and back before starting to turn back, fulfill where you are,” and it gives a weight to the dancers and to the movement.

Caplan: Sounds like you were trying to be clear with the movement.

Wagoner: [01:38:11] Yes. Absolutely, and that there'd really be no doubt, and then it wouldn't be transferred by conventional—what did I say?

Tipton: A conventional—

Wagoner: Something, something.

Caplan: Having to do with weight, placement. Make a complete movement.

Tipton: No, I think we get the idea, whether your words say it or not.

Wagoner: [01:38:48] Well of course, that's the idea, is to transfer so eloquently and well that that becomes the dance. But I came from, well near here, and I started dancing late—I have a degree in pharmacy—but, that was leading to a couple of thoughts, but I can't think of not one of them. What were we talking about, *Scudorama*?

Tipton: We were talking about weight, and you were saying that you started late. Who introduced the idea of weight to you, or did you just make it up on your own?

Wagoner: [01:39:39] It's just that I'm observing it, looking. When you watch bodies on the street, often there's a confusion: They bump into each other. Other times they skip along. And so all of that has its attributes. Is that a good word?

Tipton: Yes. Great word.

Wagoner: I feel as if I'm losing all my vocabulary, so, it's all a loss, I guess, isn't it?

Caplan: Not completely.

Wagoner: Pardon?

Caplan: Not completely. [laughter] Did Paul have a nickname for you? He seemed to have so many nicknames for different company members.

Wagoner: [01:40:26] I don't think he did. No. I think he went through several nicknames, but none of them stuck.

Tipton: So how are you doing? You getting tired?

Wagoner: [01:40:51] I guess I am. I'm not alive enough to know if I'm tired or rested [laughs].

But I'm fine.

Tipton: Okay.

Wagoner: What time is it? Six.

Caplan: Six o'clock.

Wagoner: [01:41:09] This has been great. Thank you for coming.

Nicifero: It's really been our pleasure.

Caplan: It's so silent.

Nicifero: There is another memory of listening to an early interview of yours. You were talking about space, that you always had to feel space, and sometimes you had to turn the lights off, and dance in the dark. What did that teach you? What—

Wagoner: [01:41:52] Well, I don't know if I can remember the order at—we should end just a little much earlier; my mind may be better off, [laughter], yes.

Tipton: Well he did a dance in the dark once, at Judson [Memorial] Church. The only light—

Nicifero: That was completely in the dark?

Tipton: Completely in the dark. The only light was a streetlamp through the window. Otherwise, we just turned off the lights.

Wagoner: [01:42:24] And kept going. It was interesting that in one place in the dance, it was a duet, and each soloist had a short little thing to do, and then, then what happened?

Tipton: I forget.

Wagoner: What was [crosstalk]—

Tipton: It was in the dark.

Wagoner: Oh yes, yes, and—

Tipton: You heard them dance. That's what I can say. You heard them.

Wagoner: [01:43:03] Jennifer did the lights when there were no lights, and she was even up gluing the exit signs shut so that there wouldn't be anything anywhere.

Tipton: Yes, I couldn't—

Nicifero: Any source of light?

Tipton: I couldn't turn off the streetlight.

Nicifero: Okay. Well, thank you very, very much for—

Wagoner: [01:43:47] Well thank you and I'm sorry I'm so—

Nicifero: [crosstalk]—

Tipton: Don't be sorry. It's great.

Nicifero: Don't be sorry.

Wagoner: [01:43:52] It could be—

Nicifero: It's been—

Tipton: It was great.

Nicifero: —really great.

Wagoner: —a brilliant subject matter, but I can't get around in it like I used to. [sighs] So now what?

Tipton: So now—

Caplan: Can I cut?

Nicifero: Yes.

Caplan: Okay.

Nicifero: Okay. [applause] Thank you so much, really. Well—

[END OF INTERVIEW]