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Merce Cunningham: Five More Years

David Vaughan

1995

The year 1995 began inauspiciously for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company with a performance at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, on a weekend in February when there was a blizzard in the northeastern United States. However, the performance did take place and the company managed to get back to New York safely. In March the Boston Ballet gave its first performances of *Breakers* in its home town, having first presented it at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC the year before; the piece continued to be in the repertory of the Cunningham company.

1995 was the last year in which the company gave what had become its annual New York season at the City Center Theater. The repertory included one new work, *Ground Level Overlay* and yet another revival of *Rune*, again with new costumes and this time a backcloth by Mark Lancaster.

Ground Level Overlay

Ground Level Overlay is an outstanding example of the synergistic interaction of the independent elements of a Cunningham dance: choreography, music, design.

Music

Stuart Dempster, the trombone player and composer, had played *Events* for Cunningham in Avignon in 1976. His score for *Ground Level Overlay*, which has its own title, *Underground Overlays*, was inspired by the earlier experience of working with Cunningham when, Dempster has written, "I played and recorded *In the Great Abbey of Clement VI*." Dempster continues: "The material for this piece was recorded in a two million gallon former water tank at Fort Worden in Port Townsend about 70 miles northwest of Seattle (in Washington State), which has now achieved some notoriety ever since the CD *Deep Listening* was recorded there in 1988. John Cage was deeply moved by that recording. The old water tank is known locally as 'the cistern' or, more fondly, 'The Cistern Chapel.' It has an incredible reverberation time of 45 seconds; any sound made is reverberated warmly with nearly perfect evenness in tone quality and dynamic range over a 45 second decay time."

In the making of this work, ten trombone players descended 14 feet into the 186 foot diameter cistern and spread out around the circumference. Dempster, as composer, soloist, and director, performed in the center, spinning slowly and delivering various instructions to each of the performers in turn. The result is a warm, shimmering series of overlays from this underground water tank; hence the title of the work. The resulting tapes are then arranged to be played with a performance attitude separately or simultaneously while at the same time live musicians are blending with the tape(s), creating more layers.

Design

Merce Cunningham had seen the work of Leonardo Drew in a friend's apartment. He was so impressed that he asked the artist to design the decor for a new dance. Drew had never worked in a theater before, but he agreed to do it, and created a hanging sculpture made of found objects. Suzanne Gallo, the Cunningham company's costume coordinator, designed clothes that looked like contemporary street wear, in various fabrics all in black. The somber lighting was by Aaron Copp.

Choreography

Cunningham's only statement regarding *Ground Level Overlay* is as follows: "This dance was begun by processing phrases of movement into LifeForms, the dance computer (software) I utilize. It continues my interest in dancers dealing with movement complexities."

On the day of the first performance at the City Center, 8 March 1995, there was a rehearsal in front of the decor, with the dancers wearing their costumes, while Copp set the lighting. Dempster, in the orchestra pit, asked Cunningham if he would mind if the musicians played the music. (The dancers customarily rehearse in silence and often do not hear the music of a given piece until the time of the first performance). Cunningham agreed and immediately saw that, as he put it later, "we had something." The urban milieu suggested by the decor and costumes and the haunting sound of the trombones and other brass instruments, both live and recorded, combined with the choreography, especially in the duets, to create a potent atmosphere that can only be described as dramatic, though with no explicit narrative content.

Lancaster's new designs for *Rune* departed from the autumnal feel of previous versions. The women wore dresses of a clinging jersey fabric in muted colors, the men leotards and tights. There was a leafy pattern on the backcloth. There were two casts, and since the dance again received only three performances, the second cast got to perform only once. (However, *Rune* was performed again in Paris three years later).

During the City Center season, Cunningham began to include in the regular repertory programs a short *Event*, which he called *MinEvent*, of about forty minutes' duration (as opposed to the ninety minutes of a full-evening *Event*). Among other things, these *MinEvents* included a new sequence known as *The Slouch*.

Cunningham had long hoped to go to Russia with his company. Immediately after the City Center season David Eden, an independent producer, did arrange for Cunningham to go, not with the company but with Robert Swinston, his assistant, to give master classes in Moscow. While Swinston remained there to give more classes, Cunningham went to St. Petersburg to talk about his work and show videos.

In April the company left again for the Far East, this time for its second visit to Taipei, where it gave four repertory performances at the National Chiang Kai Shek Cultural Center. At the beginning of June it was in Los Angeles for one show at the Interactive Media Festival, performing Cunningham's first two works made with the use of LifeForms, *Beach Birds* and *Trackers*. In the meantime Cunningham had been working on another new dance to be performed at the festival Montpellier Danse 95:

Windows

Like all of Cunningham's dances since 1991, *Windows* was made in part with the use of LifeForms. The titles of many of these works (*Enter*, *Trackers*, *CRWDSPCR*) derive from computer language, in this case the "windows" that divide up the space of the computer screen and can be moved around on that space. *Windows*, first given at the Opéra Berlioz/Le Corum on 23 June, was a company work for fourteen dancers.

Music

Windows was the third Cunningham work with a score by Emanuel Dimas de Melo Pimenta. *Microcosmos*, according to the composer, was one of the first pieces of music based on nanotechnology: "*Microcosmos* was created after microphotographic research on ferrous metals. The microphotographic information was then translated into three-dimensional CAD (Computer Aided Design) data. Later, using data graphics technology, a two-dimensional framework was created defining twenty-three voices. Sound events were determined by the conflicts between chemical events present in the ferrous metal composition and the two-dimensional framework. The framework was generated as a reference to time and frequency. Each sound event is defined, in the last instance, by the morphogenetical design on that ferrous metal-events that were drawn essentially from the presence of carbon particles in the atomic structure of that mineral sample. Timbres were produced from metal sound analysis, creating impossible sounds of nature in the laboratory. The entire structure of *Microcosmos* is a trap for our senses, a logical trap for our traditional order of reasoning. Every part of the piece was created inside Virtual Reality in real time. The main tools that were used to create *Microcosmos* are AutoCAD, 3os, Cyberspace Developer Kit, Avalon, and Cubase."

Design

The backcloth for *Windows* was taken from an aquatint by John Cage, an etching on gray paper prepared with smoke, *Global Village 1-36 (Dptych)*, originally printed in an edition of fifteen. According to Laura Kuhn, executive director of the John Cage Trust: "It was part of a 'found' series completed by Cage in 1989, 'found' in the sense of being a 'by-product' of his earlier *Where There is, Where There - Urban Landscape* (1987-89), suggesting various modern urban locales through its haphazardly placed skyscrapers (black, vertical bars) set against and within a pervasive haze (smoked paper)."

As with *Ground Level Overlay*, the costumes, tights and leotards with a tie-dyed pattern, were by Suzanne Gallo.

During its Montpellier residency, the company also performed two outdoor *Events*, the first a *MinEvent* on the Montpellier Esplanade and the second in the Cour de l'Espace Vigneron, Place du Jeu de Ballon in Aldébaron/Baillargues. Stuart Dempster joined the company musicians for this residency, and in Baillargues made use of the resonant space of a gallery adjacent to the courtyard where the dancers performed.

Touring continued early in the following month with two repertory performances at the Théâtre Municipal in Luxembourg, and at the end of July the company gave three performances of *Ocean* at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, where Merce Cunningham was presented with the Golden Lion of the Biennale in recognition of his lifetime achievement. (Some rows of seats on the orchestra level were removed to extend the stage to provide the circular space needed for this dance). The Cunningham Company was the last to perform in the historic theater before it burned down several months later.

After Venice the company traveled to Paris to give a series of four *Events* in the courtyard of the Palais Royal as part of the Festival Paris-Quartier d'Été. Here the company musicians, still including Dempster, were joined by the jazz clarinetist Steve Lacy. After this engagement Cunningham went to Vienna with Elliot Caplan, the company filmmaker, to screen their films and talk about them at the Im Pul Tanz Festival in Vienna.

European touring resumed in October, first with a series of performances in various towns in France: Sceaux, Cherbourg, Orléans, Noisiel, and finally Albi, in a jewel-like *théâtre à l'italienne*. The end of the month found the company in London, giving first a series of three *Events* at Riverside Studios, followed by three performances of a repertory program at Sadler's Wells, all in the space of a week.

During the fall, Takehisa Kosugi was appointed musical director of the company, replacing the ailing David Tudor, who now assumed the title of musical advisor.

There was one more European date in December, when the company flew to Ljubljana in Slovenia for a single *Event* performance. The day after they returned they gave a *MinEvent* in the Merce Cunningham Studio at Westbeth in New York City, at a party for members of the Board of Directors and friends.

1996

The year began with a tour for three cities in Texas: San Antonio, Houston, and Austin. Returning to New York early in February, the company gave a week of *Events* at the Joyce Theater, again in front of the large painting by Robert Rauschenberg first used as decor for the *Events* there two years before. Two important stagings of Cunningham works were presented in the late winter months: in February, just before the Joyce season, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company in Ohio performed *Channels/Inserts*, staged for them by Chris Komar, and in March, Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project added Cunningham's *Septet* to its repertory, often with Baryshnikov himself dancing Cunningham's original role, staged by Chris Komar and Robert Swinston, with Cunningham himself and Carolyn Brown supervising late rehearsals. On 12 April, both Cunningham and Baryshnikov were in Seattle, where Baryshnikov presented Cunningham with a Lifetime Achievement Award from his alma mater at the first Comish (College) Arts Achievement Award Dinner.

Cunningham had never expected *Ocean* to be performed after its creation in 1994 at the KunstenFESTIVALdesArts in Brussels and the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, but the piece seemed to have taken on a life of its own. The first American performances took place in April at the University of California at Berkeley, in the vast Harmon Arena, with a round space marked out on the floor and the audience on four sides.

From Berkeley the company traveled north to Seattle where, in three performances in Meany Hall at the University of Washington at the beginning of May, another new work was presented:

Installations

In 1994 Elliot Caplan created a video installation based on his film *Beach Birds For Camera*, first shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris and in 1996 at the Fondation Cartier in Paris in the exhibition *Comme un oiseau*. This installation gave Cunningham the idea for the new dance, whose decor was another video installation by Caplan on which were projected film images of the dancers in groupings devised by Cunningham before the choreography of the dance was made. These images "prompted," in Cunningham's phrase, some of those in the dance itself. There were a number of static groupings, and a striking sequence in which a pair of dancers took up a position at the front of the stage and then in succession first one then another was replaced by another dancer after he or she had performed a short solo, until all fourteen who were in the piece had taken part. (This sequence, and other passages from the dance, later found their way into *Events*).

Elliot Caplan also arranged the curtains that formed the background to the video monitors disposed about the stage, either standing or hanging, collaborated with Kelly Atallah on the lighting, and with Suzanne Gallo on the costumes. Caplan wrote as follows: "As a designer as well as filmmaker, my work with dance is direct; I work to be clear. My intention is to maintain a situation for the audience where the viewer's eye can roam the stage alternating between the performance and recorded image. This kind of experience can be lively for the dancer and engaging for the viewer, it should be like looking at a painting, rather than watching television. There should be a lot to see. Overall, I seek to intensify the dance experience, not get in its way".

The music was by Trimpin, a German composer residing in Seattle, who wrote as follows concerning

his composition: "*Thirteenstitches* is based on acoustical transitions, using the physical space surrounding the audience as an instrument. The tuning system for this piece is based on the natural overtone series, not frequently used in our Western-influenced approach to composition. All the sounds heard are 'real,' nothing is amplified or synthesized. The somewhat traditional melodie and rhythmical patterns that emerge in *Thirteenstitches* are contradictory to the ever-experimental direction of the Cunningham choreography. The simultaneous lateral movement of the dance (visual) and the acoustical movements (aural) result in a mental synchronization that resolves the two dissimilar structures into one entity. Creating friction by having two distinctly different approaches working opposite each other is a risk I wanted to explore in *Thirteenstitches*."

In June there was a week's tour of five cities in Germany, most of them close enough to permit one-night stands. In the first, Ludwigsburg, as part of the Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele, the company gave the first performance of a new work, *Rondo* (an earlier, incomplete version had been performed in Austin under the title *Tune In, Spin Out*, and excerpts had been included in *Event* at Riverside Studios in London in 1995 and at the Joyce Theater in February 1996):

Rondo

Rondo is in two parts: Cunningham tosses coins to determine the order of the dances and the casting in the first part (all the dancers know all the parts), so that each performance is different.

This first part consists of eight dances: two solos (one for a woman, one for a man), a duet, a trio, a quartet, a quintet, a sextet, and a septet. Each dance is based on a different movement quality: the woman's solo is danced standing, with the knees bent; the man's solo is on the floor or on one or both knees; the duet is about walking, the basic step being *plié-straight-relevé*; the trio is about "hop, skip, and jump;" the quartet is also about walking, with straight and bent knees, which becomes running when the rhythm doubles; the quintet is about "other parts of the body" (e.g. head, hands); the sextet is also based on *plié-straight-relevé* but with the possibility of other movements on the "and" counts; the septet is similarly constructed, except that there is running as well as walking, and the interpolated movements are even more syncopated and based on everyday gestures rather than the arm movements typical of Cunningham's LifeForms choreography.

In each of these dances other members of the company are present, whether as observers or "doing something else," as Cunningham says "like people in a park." For example, in the trio several dancers enter at the side of the stage and imitate (or "mark" like dancers understudying) the movements of the three, moving in and out of the wings; at the end of the quintet the other dancers cross the stage playing leap-frog, in which the five join as a means of exiting; in the sextet four other dancers form a group at the back of the stage and then break it down.

The second part of *Rondo* is always the same and is, Cunningham has said, "like a change in the weather." This is reflected in Kelly Atallah's lighting, sombre in the first part, with a scrim at the front of the stage and a black backcloth. Cunningham wanted lighting changes that would suggest "another part of the forest," so in the second part the scrim and the black backcloth are raised to reveal a white backcloth, and the lighting becomes brighter. The second part is performed mostly in unison, though who starts it depends on who is available to enter having made the necessary costume change. The choreography here consists mainly of separate phrases in shifting rhythms. One couple performs a duet of their own alone on stage.

In the first part the dancers are dressed in the kind of things they wear in class or rehearsal; for the second Cunningham asked Suzanne Gallo for something more formal, so she dressed them in black and white.

The music is one of the last compositions by John Cage, FOUR6 that is to say, the sixth in a series of pieces for four players. (The third was used as the music for *Beach Birds* in 1991). The piece is

described as being "for any way of producing sounds (vocalization, singing, playing of an instrument or instruments, electronics, etc.)."

The German tour continued with performances in Dusseldorf, Cologne, Essen, and finally Leverkusen. Ten days after their return to the United States the company was in Raleigh, North Carolina, for performances at the American Dance Festival at Duke University. First, though, they gave another outdoor *Event* on the grounds of the Museum of Art in Raleigh. At Duke University *Rondo* was given its first American performance. Five days later, at the end of June, the company was back in Europe again for a series of *Events* in the Teatro ai Parchi di Nervi, during the 28th Festival Internazionale del Balletto - thought it is safe to say that the Cunningham performances were unlike any other seen during the festival.

Summer festival appearances continued with two performances in the Val de l'Arc in Aix-en-Provence in mid-July. On the second of these, the company learned that Cunningham's assistant, Chris Komar, had died after a long illness. The performance, concluding with *Sounddance*, which he had revived two years before with Meg Harper, was dedicated to his memory. This engagement ended with another outdoor *Event*, in the Théâtre de Verdure au Jas de Bouffan (a park famous from paintings by Cézanne). The weather was extremely hot, and Fast Forward, the resourceful percussionist, "played" a garden hose with which he sprayed the dancers.

1996 was the first year of the new Lincoln Center Festival in New York, and the company again performed *Ocean*, out of doors for the first time, on a specially constructed stage in Damrosch Park, from 30 July through 4 August. During the festival there were also two concerts of music composed for or used by Merce Cunningham: one of electronic music by David Tudor, Takehisa Kosugi, and David Behrman, and one of music for small orchestral ensembles played by the Eos Ensemble, conducted by Jonathan Sheffer. Alexei Haieff's music for *Princess Zondilda and Her Entourage* was played for the first time since the dance was performed some fifty years ago, together with John Cage's *Credo in Us* (his first collaboration with Cunningham) and *The Seasons*, Morton Feldman's *Ixion* (the music for *Summerspace*), Lou Harrison's *The Open Road*, and Erik Satie's play *Le Piège de Méduse* with its incidental dances for the mechanical monkey. (All the music except the Satie was later recorded on CD).

As soon as the performances of *Ocean* were finished, the company returned to Europe, this time to Copenhagen for three repertory performances on the new stage of the Royal Theatre, in the festival Dancin' City '96.

On 13 August 1996 David Tudor died, four years almost to the day after the death of John Cage. He had been unable to perform in *Ocean* as he would have wished. On 17 September there was a celebration of his life at Judson Memorial Church in Washington Square, at which Molly Davies's video installation of *Ocean* and David's participation in it was shown.

Meanwhile, one more European festival remained, La Batié/Festival de Genève in mid September - though the *Event* performances actually took place in France, in Annemasse, across the border from Geneva. Fall touring began in the United States, with three performances in late October at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, followed by two *Events* at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, and another at the University at Stony Brook, New York. But the company soon returned to Europe, for a week in late November at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris under the auspices of the Festival d'Automne à Paris. From Paris the company went once again to Grenoble for one performance, then back north again for two performances at Le Blanc Mesnil at the end of the month, in the series Opus 96/97. Throughout this period Cunningham films and videos were being screened at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in the festival Vidéodance 96.

1997

The year began with tours of the west and midwest: in January and February the company performed in Costa Mesa and Glendale, California (the latter in the charming art deco Alex Theater); then in Nashville, Tennessee; Lawrence, Kansas; St. Louis, Missouri; and finally in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On 19 May 1997 there was a gala benefit performance in honor of Cunningham's sixty years as a performer: Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown, Mark Morris, Meredith Monk, Mikhail Baryshnikov (who performed Cunningham's *Nude Descending a Staircase* solo from *Walkaround Time*, and Bill Irwin all paid homage to him, with Garrison Keillor as master of ceremonies. At the end the Cunningham company performed *Sounddance*.

Elliot Caplan's film *CRWDSPCR*, documenting the creation of the dance of that name, was completed and released about this time.

Summer touring began in June with three performances at Das Tat (Theater am Turm) in Bockenheimer Depot (a converted railroad depot) in Frankfurt. Later in the month the company returned to Prague for the first time since the 1964 world tour, as part of the festival Tanec Praha '97. (There was also one performance in Brno). In these *Event* performances Cunningham performed his solo spot for what proved to be the last time, though no announcement was made of the fact. Back in the United States, the company went to the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Lee, Massachusetts, for one week at the beginning of July.

At the same time, a Cunningham Repertory Group began to perform for the new Lincoln Center Institute, giving a program consisting of *Septet*, a reduced version of *Scramble* (later dropped), and *Signals*. During the following school year, the group was to perform in public schools in the metropolitan area. In the great Robert Rauschenberg retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum (both uptown and downtown branches) from 19 September to 4 January 1998, films and videos of his collaborations with Cunningham were screened regularly, and the original set for *Minutiae* (1954) was exhibited.

There had been no repertory season by the Cunningham Company in New York since the last City Center engagement in March 1995. In October 1997 the company appeared in the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, giving the first New York performances of *Rondo*, *Installations*, and *Windows*, together with a retrospective *BAMevent* and a new work:

Scenario

This was Cunningham's first collaboration with a figure from the world of *haute couture*, Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons, known for her innovative, indeed iconoclastic designs. Kawakubo based those for *Scenario* on her previous collection in which the clothes had protuberances that distorted various parts of the body. Although the dancers wore the costumes in some rehearsals, Cunningham did not make the choreography with them in mind - he simply regarded them as another element in the mixture. The setting realized a "space and lighting concept" also by Kawakubo, who wanted as white a space as possible, with fluorescent lighting. Her program note was as follows: "The defiance and fusion of the dancers within the confines of a limited white space! What would happen? The emptiness of and restrictions to the movements due to the shapes and volumes of the costumes! Would something totally unexpected be produced?"

The results are unpredictable.

We can only await chance and fortuity."

The music, *Wave Code A-Z*, is an electronic score by Takehisa Kosugi, who wrote as follows concerning his composition: "The inaudible very low frequency electronic waves make sounds undulate. Various sounds and phonetic realizations instructed by the meanings of 26 single words (A to Z) are performed with the electronic waves. The undulated sounds may be heard for gradual change of sonic spectrum."

Once again there was another opportunity to present *Ocean*, this time at the Belfast Festival in Queen's in November, in the beautiful Waterfront Hall, an ideal space for the piece. In the bar and lounge areas of the hall there was also a sound installation of John Cage's *Roaratorio* by John Fullemann, Cage's original collaborator in the realization of the piece.

There was one final performance in 1997, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 5 December. In November Aperture published *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, chronicle and commentary by David Vaughan; the French edition, *Merce Cunningham: un demi-siècle de danse*, in a translation by Denise Luccioni, was published by Editions Plume the following month.

1998

In November 1992 the Cunningham Company had given the first performances of *Enter* at the Opéra National de Paris/Palais Garnier. In January 1998 the company returned to the theater to give two programs, the first including the first European performances of *Scenario* and the new production of *Rune*, together with one of the short *Events*, and the second including *Installations*, another short *Event*, and a new work:

Pond Way

"Ponds are a way of life: bogs, water lilies, a haven for birds, myriad layers of different activities." Merce Cunningham.

In other words, *Pond Way* is another of Cunningham's "nature studies," like *Beach Birds* or the earlier *RainForest*. It is a lyrical, contemplative, and even sensuous piece.

Normally, Cunningham does not, as he puts it, "tell a designer what to do," but he had seen Roy Lichtenstein's recent exhibition of *Landscapes in the Chinese Style* (also inspired by Edgar Degas's landscape monotypes), and he asked the artist to design a backcloth in the same style. Lichtenstein died before he could carry out this commission, but his widow, Dorothy Lichtenstein, allowed Cunningham to choose one of the paintings (*Landscape with Boat*) from the show to be blown up as a decor for the dance.

Once again the costumes are by Suzanne Gallo, whose clothes, in off-white silk jersey, both conceal and reveal the shape of the dancers' bodies.

The music is by Brian Eno, *New Ikebukuro (For 3 CD Players)* (the three CDs are played at random). Before returning to the States, the company went to Dieppe for one performance, on 20 January. By the end of the month they were in Burlington, Vermont, for a single *Event* performance. But a month later they were in Europe again, for a tour that began in Basel, Switzerland, and continued into France for performances in Roanne and Toulouse.

The beginning of April found the company in Berkeley, California, giving the first American performance of *Pond Way*, on the way back to New York they stopped off in Tempe, Arizona, for a single show. At the end of May they gave two *Events* at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Ocean had not yet been seen in France, but in June there were two performances of it at the festival Montpellier Danse '98. Appearances at summer festivals continued with return visits to the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina, and the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Finally, the company gave a free *Event* in the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival in Damrosch Park, New York City (followed by two private *Events* in the Merce Cunningham Studio in Westbeth).

An important exhibition, *Art Performs Life: Merce Cunningham/Meredith Monk/Bill T Jones*, curated by Philippe Vergne, had opened at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on 29 June. Toward the end of the exhibition, which closed on 20 September 1998, the Cunningham company gave another free outdoor *Event* in the Sculpture Garden adjacent to the Center.

Two more important overseas tours remained in 1998: first, at the beginning of October the company went to London to perform at the Barbican Centre. After only a week in New York, they left for Japan for three weeks during which they would visit Tokyo, Nigata (where *Ocean* was performed), Kyoto, and Shimane.

In between these engagements, Cunningham continued to work on an hour-long dance, part of which was shown at Jacobs Pillow as part of a short *Event*. Cunningham's well-known interest in contemporary technology had led him to a new collaboration, with Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eshkar, on a multimedia film, installation, and computer project called *Hand-drawn Spaces*. In the early stages of this project, in April 1997, Cunningham, working with two dancers (Jeannie Steele and Jared Phillips), had choreographed some seventy phrases which were transferred to the computer screen via a program called Biped, by means of reflective spheres attached to the dancers' bodies. (In other words, the movement goes from the dancers to the computer, as opposed to what happens with LifeForms, where the movement goes from the computer to the dancers). Cunningham, Kaiser, and Eshkar worked with Aaron Copp, the Cunningham company's lighting designer, to devise a means of using the installation as the decor for the new dance, for which the score had been commissioned from the British composer Gavin Bryars. Its first performance was scheduled for April 1999 in Berkeley, California, the week of Cunningham's eightieth birthday.

New York, November 1998