

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Lewis L. Lloyd

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

2016

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Lewis L. Lloyd conducted by Alessandra Nicifero on July 22, 2016. This interview is part of the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project.

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

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #1

Interviewee: Lewis L. Lloyd

Location:

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: July 22, 2016

Q: Good morning.

Lloyd: Good morning, Alessandra.

Q: My name is Alessandra Nicifero and I'm here with Lewis Lloyd. It's July 22, 2016. Thanks for participating in the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. I'd like to learn a little bit about you, when and where you were born, and where you grew up.

Lloyd: Well I was born in 1938—that makes me 77—November of '38. I had a bifurcated upbringing because although our family lived in Atlantic City, New Jersey—the little bedroom suburbs; first Brigantine to the north and then Ventnor to the south of Atlantic City—my father was a lawyer there. He had met my mother here when he had gone to Harvard Law School. She was from Boston. He brought her back to Atlantic City to what I think was a great disappointment to her because Atlantic City in the twenties especially was a notoriously corrupt place. It was during prohibition, which didn't make a bit of difference. Gambling all the time, prostitution all the time, and so it was a place that she didn't like very much.

She brought up us four children there during the school year and then in 1940 they bought a house somewhat on impulse—as young couples often do—up in New Hampshire, in the White

Mountains, between North Conway and Jackson, and proceeded to take us up there every summer. As she said once to a friend, “I just take them up there the day after school closes and I bring them back the day after school begins.” That’s the other half of my growing up experience, it was in the White Mountains. It had a very profound influence on me. In fact we still own that house, my family does. Although it’s in the hands of my children now, thank god. They pay the bills. And so I had this kind of ping-pong relationship, Atlantic City for the school year, the White Mountains for the summer. Socially it was very difficult because I was not in Atlantic City in the summers when everybody was on the beach. My buddies were lifeguards and various other things.

My mother was a woman who in Boston they would have referred to as a “hopa” with a Boston accent. It means a hoper, someone who is an Irishman who goes to bed hoping he’ll wake up a Yankee. She considered herself an Irishwoman even though her mother was the Irish part. Her father was German. She was also a thwarted theater person. I grew up being encouraged in every way to think about the theater and music; taken to performances and all this. My older brother, very serious, went into the Foreign Service and became a diplomat. My older sister worked for a big non-profit in Washington in Near Eastern affairs. I got shipped off to private school hoping for redemption—as it had worked with my older brother before me, it worked on me. I ended up going to Yale [University, New Haven, Connecticut].

I didn’t know much about Yale even though my school, Lawrenceville [School, New Jersey], had a reputation for feeding lots of its senior class there. My senior class was 105 boys, thirty went off to Yale, thirty went off to Princeton [University, New Jersey]. This was in—don’t

forget—1956, when you could do that sort of thing. My college advisor said, “Gee, what do you think about college?” I said Dartmouth [College, Hanover, New Hampshire] because my brother went there and we had the house in the White Mountains and I had worked up in the White Mountains in the summers. He said, “Okay, put that down.” He said, “Well what about Yale? They have a good theater program,” which I didn’t know about. I said, “Oh, okay.” I got into both of them and chose Yale I think primarily because of my mother’s influence.

I majored in drama at Yale. I was the president of the Yale Dramatic Association, which produces three shows a year in the university theater alongside the [Yale] School of Drama. We share it with the School of Drama. Then when I graduated there was also—there was at that time sort of a path by men who preceded me both to NBC [National Broadcasting Company] and CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System], and I got a job right away at CBS. I was the lowest level on a particular ladder to be a TV director and my job was program assistant.

I was quickly assigned to two shows. One was a daily soap opera, live from New York at four o’clock in beautiful black-and-white. *The Brighter Day* [1954–62], it was called. The commercials were for some kind of kitchen drain cleaner. [Laughs] I don’t remember what it was. So I did that five days a week. I was assigned to a prime time quiz show called *To Tell the Truth* [premiered 1956], which was also live on Tuesday. This was all live TV. On *To Tell the Truth*, the director was a maniac and it was extremely difficult just because of the tension in the control room. My job—I only had one job really, which was to time the show and make sure we hit the commercials when we should.

So I did that for a year. I decided that having a career in which I was obliged to sell a lot of Drano—that was the name of the stuff supporting the soap opera—or being in the control room with this maniac who was screaming obscenities at the stars who were on the floor—who couldn't hear him of course because it was all soundproofed—it was nuts. I had worked with some friends at Yale who had written musicals while I was at Yale, which was a traditional thing to do in those days. We produced an original musical each spring. They had written one based on *Cyrano de Bergerac*. They had written an original musical called *Grand Tour* after that. They were in New York, I was in New York, the director of those Yale productions, he was in New York. So we got together and decided we'll produce a musical by these guys, Richard Maltby [Jr.] and David Shire. I said I'll produce it, I'll raise the money. I didn't know the first fucking thing about raising money for an off-Broadway musical. But anyway, they did and I did and the show opened. I got married to Barbara Dilley that summer too. Are you going to get to her to interview her?

Q: Unfortunately I don't think so.

Lloyd: Well Barbara—a little background on Barbara who is a key person in my life in this regard—she'd gone to Mount Holyoke College [South Hadley, Massachusetts] where she had majored in dance, which had not been something Mount Holyoke allowed prior to Barbara arriving. Instead of a thesis she choreographed and created an original dance work, which was accepted. Very unusual for Mount Holyoke in those days in the fifties.

While she was at Mount Holyoke—she had gone to the American Dance Festival [Connecticut College, New London] where she saw Merce Cunningham’s company—and the one thing she had on her mind was Merce Cunningham, who I’d never heard of. I dated her while I was in high school. I had one date with her in college. Then we ended up in New York and I call her up, we start dating. She began to take me around to modern dance concerts, which I knew nothing about. I was a theater guy and a TV guy if you’d call working for Drano a TV guy. I began to see Alwin Nikolais and Martha Graham and Paul Taylor. I thought wow. Wow. There’s something going on here that I didn’t learn at Yale.

Anyway, we got married in the spring of 1961. That summer my little musical was produced out at Williamstown [Massachusetts] at the Theatre Festival for an out-of-town tryout. It opened in October in New York and didn’t run. It ran six weeks and we didn’t make any money on it. I had been going to meet Barbara over at Merce’s studio and meeting her after class there and at the Met [Metropolitan Opera Ballet School, New York] where she was taking ballet lessons with Mr. [Alfredo] Corvino, I guess his name was. I met David Vaughan at Merce’s. I would wait in the little lobby on Fourteenth Street where he kept the book, checking everybody in. We would chat and there he introduced me to John Cage. I had known him by his notorious reputation only and was surprised to see this quiet man with a very weak handshake, but a notorious reputation. I thought whoa, this is a bit of contradiction.

I had learned from my off-Broadway production that that was no way to make a living. In fact the guys that were making a living were the ones who owned the theaters. I found a business partner who was a real estate developer. He and I set about trying to find a theater. We found an

old fleabag film house on lower Third Avenue—I'll send you some stories about that—which we opened as the Pocket Theater in 1962–63.

While I was in the process of doing that, John came around, sought me out. I was up in the light booth stringing cable and plugs and all this stuff and he came up there and he said, “I’ve looked at the theater downstairs. It’s really a very nice theater. I know you and Arthur [Conescu], your partner, are probably going to get it opened very soon. Merce doesn’t have a patron like Martha. Martha has Bethsabée de Rothschild and we don’t have anybody like that. But I would like Merce to have seasons on Broadway the way that Martha does.” He said, “What we do have is, we have a lot of friends who are artists and they’ve said they’d be willing to donate some works of art to us and we could sell them and then have a fund and use that for a season on Broadway.”

He said, “We’re planning to go ahead with that, but I asked Carmen Capalbo to be the producer.” Carmen Capalbo was extremely well known off-Broadway, having produced Kurt Weill’s *The Threepenny Opera* [1928, Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill], which had been running forever. Very successful. So John said, “We’ve asked Carmen Capalbo, but he said no. So we thought of you.” I thought [laughs] well okay. Then I thought nobody else is asking me to produce on Broadway, fully funded. I said, “Sure.” He said, “The other thing I have on my mind is that this theater might be just fine for a piece of music by Erik Satie that I’ve always wanted to produce, to have it performed in New York as a concert, and I notice you’re doing a concert series in the summer,” meaning ’63, New Music at the Pocket Theater we called it, “—and so maybe you’d like to work with me on this other idea, producing Erik Satie’s *Vexations*,” which I’d never heard

of. I said, “Sure. What the hell? I’ll contribute the theater.” He had the idea about it. We can produce that in September of ’63.

That’s how we began to work together. Now in ’62 when he mentioned this Broadway idea, that quickly—it was like some kind of a landslide. It picked up steam right away. Mixed metaphors. In the fall of ’62 there was a gathering of people, of the artists and some gallery people, to try to form this idea. I may have met Bob [Rauschenberg] at that fall ’62 gathering, but Bob was not a guy who went to meetings with an agenda and all that. Jasper [Johns] was much more of that and I said this about Jasper in the interview I gave to the Foundation [for Contemporary Arts; in *Artists for Artists: Fifty Years of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts*, 2013], which was all you have to do is to look at their art and you can tell which one goes to the meetings and which one doesn’t [laughs]. But I liked Bob and Bob’s studio was around the corner from the theater. Barbara and I had moved into the third floor of the theater with our little son Ben.



Rauschenberg holding flowers backstage, probably during Merce Cunningham Dance Company world tour, circa 1964. Pictured: Barbara (Dilley) Lloyd and Lewis Lloyd. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York. Photo: Unattributed

I got started on this whole project of collecting the art—and you have the price list from the show at Allan Stone Gallery [New York], which happened in I think February of ’63—and pretty

soon I was up to here—with this group of artists. Bob especially because he was nearby and because I loved his personality so much. He and Steve [Paxton] were living in the loft and it was right around the corner over on Broadway. I would walk around over there and they were dealing with various logistical issues about the art and everything. I'm going up to the loft and there were people there, it was a very social milieu, and the paintings were hanging up here. The damned goat was on a platform thing with a tire around his middle [*Monogram*, 1955–59] that got rolled around in the loft. The music was blasting, it was the Supremes and the Beatles; and the bourbon was flowing. It was just great. It was a great scene to be part of.



Robert Rauschenberg

Monogram, 1955–59

Combine: oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, printed reproductions, metal, wood, rubber shoe heel, and tennis ball on canvas with oil and rubber tire on Angora goat on wood platform mounted on four casters

42 x 63 1/4 x 64 1/2 inches (106.7 x 160.7 x 163.8 cm)

Moderna Museet, Stockholm

Purchase 1965 with contribution from Moderna Museets Vänner/The Friends of Moderna Museet

There I was, the guy who was supposed to be producing the show on Broadway in the spring of '63. But there was a big newspaper strike and we were—I had already made a deal with the Shuberts, who owned most of the theaters on Broadway. Alvin Cooperman, who was the man who actually ran the whole operation—the Shubert brothers were all dead so Alvin ran the Shubert Foundation that owned all the theaters. He was such a nice guy. Here I am, this twenty-five-year-old guy shows up at his office with this avant-garde dance company in his pocket and a

bunch of money from these artists saying, “We want to rent one of your beautiful Broadway theaters.” The way it was set up was, we were what was called an interim booking, which meant just what it said; when they had a theater that was available, boom, they’d put us in for two weeks. Very hard to make publicity work for that, but they weren’t going to give us a lock on one of their beautiful theaters. We were going to be an interim booking, but we had three theaters ranked; first choice, the Winter Garden [Theater]; second choice, the Lyceum [Theatre], which was a nice theater. I don’t remember what the third choice was. Doesn’t matter.

We got a cover on *Dance* magazine, we’re kind of pushing this thing getting it ready to go, and then New York had its first newspaper strike ever. And because it had a newspaper strike, it meant that no shows wanted to open in New York, therefore no reviews, so they all stayed out of town, their tryout towns whether it was New Haven, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, wherever they were. At exactly the time we wanted to get an interim booking the strike ended, all the shows came in, and there were no theaters available. The Shuberts said, “Well you can do it in the fall if you want. We’ll lay it over until the fall of ’63.” Well during the summer—in the meantime I was running the Pocket Theater with my partner.

Q: What kind of performances were you producing with the Pocket Theater?

Lloyd: Well I wasn’t. At that point I was renting the theater to other shows. The first producing I was going to do was the New Music at the Pocket Theater with *Vexations* tagged as the last of those in September of ’63. We had rentals in the theater and we had income and it went like that.

But at the end of the '62–63 season, [Judith] Judy Dunn and Marilyn Wood—two of the senior women [in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company] decided to retire. Barbara and Shareen Blair were invited into the company, so the four women dancers then were the two of them and Carolyn Brown and Viola Farber. But Merce, who of course never said a direct word about anything, let it be known that he didn't think the company was ready for primetime. So Jasper and John came over to my office—my apartment actually at Third Avenue and Thirteenth Street above the theater and said, “We don't think we can do this project on Broadway. But we do have this fund and we do have many, many letters from prospective sponsors around the world. We think a European tour could be put together and a tour of India and Japan. David Vaughan has all the letters. He's been keeping the files.” Very meticulous of course, David is. “And so we would like you to work with him on developing a tour.”

Again I had no experience. Boy I have to tell you, we would have—that idea of performing on Broadway in retrospect was the worst thing we could have done. We would have spent every cent and then some, we would have been hugely criticized negatively by the critics and nobody would have come. It would have been a big problem. Years later I told Merce this over and over. I used to say—when I was on Merce's board and when Sage [Cowles] and I were co-chairs of the board—“This was the luckiest break you ever got and we ever got that we never did that.” He'd laugh and laugh, but he knew I was right because off we went to Europe in June of '64.

The first performances were at Strasbourg [France], the second were in Venice at the Biennale at the Fenice Opera House [Teatro La Fenice]. Alan [R.] Solomon was the director of the Biennale American pavilion that summer and it was he who had arranged the performance at the Fenice

Opera House, assuring us that we would net three thousand dollars. So I put three thousand dollars in the income column of the budget and that's what I was depending on for payroll and for this and that as we went on from there to Vienna and Manheim [Germany], other places. Comes to the reckoning and the Fenice management let us know that there was no three thousand dollars.

What Alan had done—in all his innocence he didn't know the first thing about how to produce an event in an opera house—was they were going to give the dance company the net proceeds. And as anybody who knows anything about show business knows, there's never any net proceeds. Never. And so there wasn't that morning either. That was the morning that Alan and Jasper and John Cage and I and Bob stood on the stage of the Fenice, the morning after the performance—while I was trying to digest this information that there wasn't any three thousand dollars; we were completely screwed. John of course had been managing the company on those nine-person VW [Volkswagen] bus tours in which everything was very copasetic and if there was any money left over everybody got fifty bucks and went home happy.



Members of Merce Cunningham Dance Company visiting Rauschenberg's mother in Lafayette, Louisiana. Pictured: David Tudor, Robert Rauschenberg, Carolyn Brown, Viola Farber, Steve Paxton, Merce Cunningham, Dora Rauschenberg, Deborah Hay, William Davis, John Cage, and Rauschenberg's sister Janet Begnaud, 1962. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Unattributed

In the new situation everybody had made arrangements in New York for their rent to be paid based on the idea that I would be making a payroll every week and they would get their check, and back in New York Rubin [L.] Gorewitz the accountant would pay their rent. This was going to go on for months and months. Suddenly within the first ten days of the tour there was a huge hole. I lost my temper on the stage, I very rarely lose my temper in professional situations or personal ones either. Very rarely. I suddenly saw this whole thing collapsing. I wasn't going to go to the dancers and say, "Gee, really sorry." I have to say with pride that I have never missed a payroll in the over fifty years of working whether it was at WGBH in Boston or the Pocket Theater or Merce's company or Eliot Feld's American Ballet Company, which I formed for Harvey Lichtenstein at Brooklyn Academy [of Music] in 1968–69. I practically had to put a gun to Harvey's head to get the money for those payrolls.

So there we were on the stage and I was drinking a Coke out of a bottle of course and I couldn't believe this was happening. I spun around and threw the Coke bottle against the back wall of the

stage and it exploded with glass all over the place. There was dead silence. Bob said, “Well, I could lend you the money. I have the money.” Carolyn points out in her book that it was the money he got for the prize at the Biennale. [Note: Rauschenberg won the International Grand Prize in Painting and two million lire (\$3,200) at the 32nd Venice Biennale in 1964.] I don’t think I knew that at the time or he may have said it. But in any case he gave me the three thousand dollars and frankly saved that tour—for better or for worse and we all know that it didn’t turn out very well in a lot of ways—but that did it. Whether it was me throwing the Coke bottle against the back wall of the stage that triggered, that brought everyone up to say, “Oh, okay, this is very serious. We’ve got to make the payroll. We’re going to have to pay these people,” that’s what happened.

Let’s go back to before we left. Another reason I went over to Bob’s more and more frequently as the tour came up. Two reasons. First, I was making a budget for an enterprise that I had never made a budget for before, an international tour of a dance company. But what I could tell was that even with the funds that we had raised already, we were coming up short. Every time I ran the numbers, we needed more money. This was before the tour. I was already feeling a sense of panic and urgency about this whole—and I was over with Bob at one point and said, “I don’t think this is going to work because we don’t have the money. Even with all the generosity of all these artists, I don’t see—spread out over the number of months that we’re going to be on the road and the paltry fees that we’re going to get from these sponsors—five hundred bucks, a thousand bucks, two thousand bucks, whatever it was—I don’t see how we’re going to do it.” So that was one part of our conversation.

The other part of the conversation was Merce and his lack of experience. If you take a dance company on the road today what you do is—or any day frankly—you have program A, three works; program B, three works including one from program A; total, five works. Merce took eighteen. Merce wanted eighteen works available; the whole repertoire. I would say to Bob, “What about the scenery and costumes for such and such?” “Oh, yeah, yeah. I’ve got to work on that.” And then I would come back the next day and say, “So we’ve got this. We have *Antic Meet* [1958], but there’s that door for *Antic Meet*. How are we going to carry that? Because we can’t take a whole door on a frame on a platform in the freight. How’s that going to work?” “Yeah, yeah, yeah. I’ve got to talk to Alex [Hay] about that. We’re going to have to do something about that.” Then I would say something about the costumes, “Oh yeah, I don’t know where those are though. I’ll have to look for those.” I’m feeling this mounting sense of “Oh my god!”



Merce Cunningham performing *Antic Meet* (1958) in 1964. Still from television production. 16mm, black-and-white film with sound, 27 min., 9 sec. Set and costumes by Rauschenberg. Courtesy the Merce Cunningham Trust © Sveriges Television AB (SVT)

We would find something for say two dances. We would have the costumes, we would have the prop pieces and all this. I would go downstairs, go two blocks down Broadway. There was a place that made luggage and I would buy these containers. Then I would come back and we’d pack those and label them. Then I’d say—the same routine again—“What about this, Bob?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. I’ll have to find that.” So then I’d go back and buy another piece of luggage. We had no inventory, we had no containers to put the stuff in. I had made no arrangement—thank god the women who were running Martha Graham’s company—another instance where I had friendly people helping me—said, “When you leave you’re going to have to have an inventory of everything you’re carrying—scenery, costumes—in order to clear customs on the other end. U.S. doesn’t care if you leave the country with that stuff, but when you land in—where are you going? France? They’re going to put you through the ringer about what all this is.” But I couldn’t make up the inventory unless Bob knew where everything was, which he didn’t. Or he did, but he couldn’t remember, but he and Alex would find it. We’re getting closer and closer to June 3. “We’ve got to be on the goddamned plane, Bob. The plane’s going to be leaving.”

It comes to June 3 and I have not done what I should have done—I now know I should have done it—which is alert Air France that we’re going to have all this stuff, the scenery and costumes, because—this is not an excuse really, but it is the truth—I didn’t know how much stuff we had. And Bob didn’t either. Nobody had ever assembled in one place the repertoire of the Cunningham Dance Company, scenery and costumes and props. So finally on the morning of the day we left, I had rented a truck. We put everything in the truck. I go up to the Air France—at that time there were departure points in Manhattan, the East Side Airlines Terminal it was called. I go up there and the Air France people go, what are you talking about? Where are we going to—? They were completely flabbergasted. We had a mountain of stuff. Not to mention that we had eighteen people and all their personal baggage showing up too.

So we left like that. That was nuts. I was already terrified of the financial situation and now we have all this stuff that we're going to have with us. Thank god the bus that I'd gotten—charter bus on the other end, a big Mercedes bus, far bigger than you needed for eighteen people, but not far bigger if you're carrying—



Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham and others boarding tour bus during Merce Cunningham Dance Company's six-month world tour, 1964. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Attributed to Steve Paxton

[Laughter]

Lloyd: —all this stuff that we had to put in. That's the way we did it and off we go.

I had made an office case for myself. I had a slim beautifully designed Olivetti manual typewriter and I had a beautifully designed mechanical Olivetti adding machine in there and all my office supplies to which I added two bottles of Jack Daniel's and a—I may have mentioned this at Danspace [Project, New York, during "Esprit de tour: A conversation on retracing the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's 1964 world tour," 2016]—a little pouch of fifty silver

dollars. Since I had been the subject of various bribes and shakedowns by the buildings department and the police department in Manhattan building the theater, I thought I better have something to grease some palms when I got to Europe. So I had that and the two bottles of Jack Daniel's, which was my favorite recreational drink. Then we get over there and we're—we could have been already at the Fenice on our second stop and Bob went by. I had my office stuff out. He says, "You've got two bottles of Jack Daniel's? I want one of those."

[Laughter]

Lloyd: I said, oh god, okay. I gave him one.

Q: And did you give away your silver dollars?

Lloyd: You bet I did. They expedited freight transfers and every other kind of thing. And so there we were. Our merry group went on. He won that enormous prize and recognition at Venice and suddenly we were getting much more publicity than we would have otherwise. Merce was not known at all in Europe. John was rather well-known in a very small area of the music world. We went barreling along. We got up to London, with that wonderful picture of Merce, John, and Bob in London. They'd gone up to do press with David Vaughan. David was on the tour, thank god. On the first night at Sadler's Wells [Theatre] in the first piece, which is called *Suite for Five* [1956]—I have said about this over and over again—I felt a palpable change happen in the reception of the company. In the first piece.



John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Rauschenberg at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, during Merce Cunningham Dance Company 1964 world tour, July 1964. Photo: Douglas Jeffery © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Q: How was that? Can you describe—?

Lloyd: I don't know. It was a feeling in the audience and in that theater that night in July of '64 of attention, of, "We're here because we want to see this." In so many cases back in the U.S. before we made that trip there was this kind of "Oh yeah?" attitude about the work and, "I'm already pissed off because I can't hear that soft music [Satie's] of John's," which he played, or "I'm already pissed off about all that racket John Cage calls music." And, "What's going on, on the stage anyway?" Kind of a brush off. Not so at Sadler's Wells that night. Intention. People were very intent on what was happening there. Now there had been some very good publicity from Michael White, our producer—the late Michael White, a man of vast appetites. He had done a very good job at positioning us. But as I said, I felt it that night. Indeed the reviews the next day—Merce was sick with anxiety about that performance because Martha had been very badly roughed up by the critics and [George] Balanchine had been very badly roughed up by the

critics on his company's first visit. With that preceding us Merce was expecting the worst. And in fact it was the best.

Q: Did that build some confidence also within the company for the dancers?

Lloyd: Well, the dancers were completely shocked, especially Carolyn and Viola and Steve, who had been through those tours in the U.S. where one city after another they would get nasty reviews. People say, "Why was this in London that this big change happened?" I'd say well, there were—the broader culture of London in the summer of '64, I would put my finger on two places; one is the Beatles, who'd blown open the pop music scene. Not the [Rolling] Stones yet because they came about a year later in the broad popular spectrum. The Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night* [1964] movie had just opened. A huge hit. And so people's reference points for what was okay was broadened suddenly overnight. And Carnaby Street, the fashion sense of London. They never had a fashion sense before Carnaby Street and suddenly there were all these pretty clothes. You could actually wear pretty clothes. Nobody did that in England before 1964. The whole culture of the community, you could say, had suddenly broadened and people's eyes were opened to say, "Oh, look at this stuff on stage. We can just take that in too."

As a result Michael decided to move us to Broadway, to the West End to the Phoenix Theatre [London]. The two and a half weeks in the West End filled an enormous hole in the budget and in our program because we didn't have any dates after that weekend at Sadler's Wells. We were to go to Sweden, to Stockholm to the Moderna Museet, and we were making up all kinds of crazy schemes. John of course being John was saying, "Well we'll rent a house in the country

and we can all live there together.” I’m thinking and what money is going to pay for that if we’re not performing? Well there we are. All of a sudden we’re at the Phoenix Theatre in the West End of London getting our paychecks basically covered by Michael White’s office, who was sharing the income with us. And it was working. So for two and a half weeks we were there.

One thing Carolyn says about that is, for her the big shock of that was [laughs] realizing that you had to perform seven times a week or whatever it was. It was a complete turnaround for her entire dancing experience, which was one-offs, “Okay, tonight we’re in Manhattan, Kansas and tomorrow we’re in Des Moines,” and it’s one performance. She found that really a transforming way of thinking about being a dancer. She’d been in the ballet company at Radio City [Music Hall, New York] early in her life and I guess they did three shows a day, but it was just a little piece. It was like ten minutes or something. But now she had all of Merce’s repertoire, different dances every night really.

Then there was Bob and Alex who had decided that they would participate in the piece called *Story* [1963]. Alex, who was very meticulous—used to make me crazy for other reasons—always wanted to have his scrambled eggs exactly the right way in the morning [laughs]. I don’t know what he thought—going off on this trip—he did that in India for Christ’s sake. What was he thinking? But he also liked to have his shirts ironed the same way and so he had set up an ironing board on the stage during *Story* and there was Alex ironing his shirts and there was Bob doing a Bob thing or other up there. The critics or writers were like, “Oh, the artists are all on stage too.” That didn’t help John Cage’s growing unhappiness about Bob’s fame.

Q: Can you tell more about that?

Lloyd: Well, at one point David Vaughan said to me, “We’re going to have a real problem because John just said to Bob, there’s one too many stars in this company.” Bob was hugely offended. He actually came to me after that and asked me if he could have his three thousand bucks back. I said, “No. Not because I don’t want to pay you because I do. I do want you to have it. But I haven’t got it. Maybe I can set aside some money from week-to-week, month-to-month as the trip goes on and make some payments and we’ll just carry it as a debt. But I don’t have the money.” He understood that because his whole history had been the hand-to-mouth days in the VW bus. He knew how things went with a modern dance company.

So on we went to Stockholm where he was a big star. I have a poster from that for Five New York Artists, or *kvällar* it’s called. K-V-A-L— [Note: The event was called Five New York Evenings, *Fem New York kvällar* in Swedish.] Niki de Saint Phalle made the poster. He also made a little handout I have at Yale, but Yale also has the—have you seen that one, the Niki—? [Note: Lewis Lloyd Papers are in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.]



Robert Rauschenberg
Untitled (Poster for Rauschenberg Theater Pieces
for Five New York Evenings, Moderna Museet,
Stockholm), 1964
Offset lithograph
17 1/4 x 12 3/8 inches (43.8 x 31.4 cm)

Q: No. I'm trying to remember—I don't have a visual memory now, but possibly—

Lloyd: Well you would because Niki de Saint Phalle is pretty bright colors and all that. Well I've asked Yale to send me a DVD or—they're going to send me an email with a photograph of it and then I can forward that on to you.

Q: That would be great.

Lloyd: So you can see that. I didn't get the Bob little one. So there we were in Moderna Museet in Stockholm and these other artists were with us—this is '65 after this, so I just want to get through '64—and Bob was going to make a performance piece of his own. I don't know what it was called. I don't remember. [Note: *Elgin Tie*, 1964]

Q: Are we still talking about the tour?

Lloyd: Yes, Stockholm pieces at Moderna Museet, and various people made various pieces. These other visiting New York artists made performance pieces coming out of the Happenings tradition—not tradition, but the Happenings experience back in New York.

Q: But [Robert] Morris and [Yvonne] Rainer were also there?

Lloyd: Yes. So the piece that Bob put together, Barbara was in [note: referring to a work by Alex Hay]. And this also made me crazy, he had Barbara and I think [Deborah] Debbie [Hay] dragged across the floor on their backs by a piece of rope around their ankles. I had a real furious fight with Barbara about this offstage. I said, “What if you hurt your ankle? We are out here on a limb and who’s paid for you to get over here after all? I know Bob did indirectly with all his generosity, but you can’t take the risk of hurting your ankle.” Debbie then was in the company because in London Shareen left to get married and thank god Debbie was there traveling with Alex. And she was in the company. And of course Barbara did what Barbara does, which is to get all kind of, “Oh it’s going to be fine. It’s going to be fine, it’s going to be fine.”

And indeed it was fine, but it really upset me a lot. Not because Bob was a star on this other program at the Moderna Museet, but because he and Barbara and Alex and Debbie weren’t paying attention to what I thought was primary, which was to get Merce’s performances on. But that was that tension between how Bob perceived his role as being equal to Merce and John. Therefore as an artist if he chose to involve himself in theatrical activity, that was as valid as

John's music, Merce's dances. That was getting to be hard to digest especially because we had this piece in the company repertoire called *Story*, which had a very loose décor idea, which was that Bob would make up the costumes each night from odds and ends that he found around the theater and he would make up the décor each night from odds and ends he found around the theater. That kind of—John was always irritated about the confusion over indeterminacy and improvisation. He disliked improvisation intensely. Bob was a big improviser.

There's a little film clip actually from our performances in Paris that June in which Bob and I are outside the theater—little black-and-white film—and I come sliding into the frame on a little platform that Bob was using as part of his *Aeon* [1961] construction. Now that collided directly with John's aesthetic of no improvisation and Merce's work was just ruthless. These are the steps. Those are the steps. These are steps I gave you to do. Nobody improvised in Merce's work. John with his scores, it may have sounded improvisational but it wasn't. There's a wonderful exchange between Leonard Bernstein and John, where Lenny—and I say Lenny because one of my CBS jobs was to work on the Young People's Concerts with Bernstein and I got to call him that—like people did in those days who worked with him, you called him Lenny. So John is writing to Lenny about this upcoming concert in '65 I think it was at the French-American—no, that was Lukas Foss. Anyway, there was a concert in which the [New York] Philharmonic was going to do a piece with John's music and Bernstein wanted to allow an improvisational moment in the concert with the Philharmonic, and John was furious about that because that's not what he's about. And yet there's Bob, every time we did *Story*, improvising the costumes and the décor. Never the same. John went for indeterminacy, but loathed

improvisation. So that tension—not to mention the star power of Bob—just continued throughout the tour.

I just—as I said at the beginning of this description, of meeting Bob at the loft and the whole social milieu of being part of his life. I just loved all that with him all throughout the tour. When we were in India and we found out that it was a Hindu holiday celebration with fireworks, Alex and I went out and found fireworks and Bob and Alex and I set them off and had a great old time.

But when we came back Merce Cunningham and—David Vaughan—David was clear on this early on—Merce Cunningham and Dance Company, came back from that tour that made Merce's name internationally and it dissolved. Bob left, Steve left. Merce said to the company, “You can all make your own decisions and after the first of the year, Lew and David will work on the schedule for 1965, then we'll talk again about what you'd like to do and what we can do.” And so that's the way it was left.

But I said again, I was so—I found Bob—even though he was maddening and disorganized in so many ways in the context of what I needed to do—not for his art but in the context of what I needed to do to get the show on. When he came up with this idea of this [First New York] Theater Rally [1965] and asked me if I would work with him on it, I said sure. So this is the—take a look at this list.

Q: I have two questions about the 1964 tour. Do you have any memory about Japan and Tokyo?

Because—

Lloyd: Grey, dark.

Q: —Bob, Alex Hay, Deborah, and Steve Paxton, the four of them performed their own work in a different setting. [Note: Modern Dance Workshop, Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, November 20, 1964] It wasn't part of the Merce Cunningham. How was that perceived by the rest of the company?

Lloyd: Well it just contributed to the tension.

Q: And nobody else from the company went to see them performing.

Lloyd: I didn't. Yes because by that time there was this kind of loyalties issue. "Well, are you going to be with Bob or with John and Merce?" And we were all so exhausted.

Q: I can imagine.

Lloyd: It was November in Tokyo, not a pretty time of year. There was some fall—early on up by the university, up by the big tower, there were some nice fall days. But then we went off to Kyoto and to—I don't even remember—Osaka and then back. It was just so tiring. We were so tired.

Q: You and Barbara also had a child with you, Benjamin?

Lloyd: No, we didn't at that point.

Q: Oh, you didn't.

Lloyd: No. We took Ben with us as we left and we had engaged an English nanny who was an elderly woman, a grandma—Mrs. Gray—who hit it off with Merce right away. This elderly English woman, she had twin sons who were pilots for BEA, British European Airways. I don't know how we made the connection—oh through Michael White. So she showed up, met us in France, and we did the whole tour back up to London—which she thought basically thank god they've slowed down—and Barbara and I had a nice suite actually in the old Imperial Hotel on Russell Square. Everybody split. My whole deal with the company was, as we left I would guarantee them that they would spend no more than five dollars a day for double occupancy room and meals, but I would pick the hotel. And then we got to London, they went to look at the hotel and I just thought, oops—it was over in the Earl's Court area—we don't like this. Then they all split and went off to their own places. And that was great; we got out of each other's hair for that time we were in London. It was great. Mrs. Gray was back home at her house. She would come and do any babysitting we needed for Ben.

Then we went on to Sweden, where Ben had his second birthday with Bob and the company, and a little birthday party at a little place in the old town, which was our office while we were

there—it belonged to Fylkingen, the modern music organization there. Anyway, Mrs. Gray came to us and said, “This is no way to bring up a little boy. Aren’t his grandparents at home? Couldn’t they—? I’ll take him back.” So we agreed and she took Ben back to Princeton where Barbara’s parents were. My mother had died a few years before and my father was not about to take in a two-year-old. But his granny in Princeton, Jean Dilley, she was ready. This is good news. So Mrs. Gray flew back to New York with Ben and deposited him with his grandparents. And she was right.

Q: So 1965. How did you get involved?

Lloyd: Well, Bob asked me to get involved with this idea [First New York Theater Rally]—another crazy idea as far as I was concerned—but these other guys, Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, [Robert] Bob Whitman—were all—and again this first one, Jim Dine’s, it’s called *A Happening*. They were all out of this whole—all the spontaneity of the Happening life. Not life. There was no life involved, but performances, events. They were events. Alan Solomon and Steve were the listed, designated producers, but actually if you look down you’ll see that it says there’s three sponsors—I don’t know who the others are—but the Pocket Theater, my theater, was. I think we used—my theater office did a lot of the administrative work on this because we were in different locations. Many of the performances were in the [former] CBS TV studio at Broadway and Eighty-first Street, which later became home base for *Sesame Street* and the Children’s Television Workshop. But that’s where several of the events happened, except Claes Oldenburg wanted to have his in the swimming pool at Al Roon’s Health Club on Seventy-third [Street] and Broadway. So that’s there and there’s more information at Yale about that. And then the back,

that last page—if you go one more page—that was a handout that the—have you seen that before?

Q: I've seen these in the box at the [Robert Rauschenberg] Foundation. Do you remember some of Bob Rauschenberg's performances? Like *Pelican* [1963] and *Spring Training* [1965] was part of the 1965—

Lloyd: Were some of Bob's performances also done not in the TV studio, but in that place called Stage 73 on the Upper East Side? [Note: Surplus Dance Theater mounted a series of performances at Stage 73 in 1964 for which Rauschenberg did the lighting; one evening included Rauschenberg's *Shot Put* (1964).]

Q: Yes.

Lloyd: Yes. I remember those very well. Very well. They were haunting. I was captured by them. There was the one with the turtles and the flashlights.

Q: That was *Spring Training*.

Lloyd: Yes. And Carolyn and the parachutes. That was Bob's—*Pelican*, yes.



Christopher Rauschenberg, Robert Rauschenberg, and turtles in *Spring Training* (1965), First New York Theater Rally, former CBS Studio, Broadway and Eighty-first Street, May 1965. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Elisabeth Loewenstein Novick



Alex Hay, Rauschenberg and Carolyn Brown in *Pelican* (1963). First New York Theater Rally, former CBS studio, Broadway and Eighty-first Street, May 1965. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Elisabeth Loewenstein Novick

Q: Yes, it was *Pelican*.

Lloyd: I just thought he had the most fantastic, original—not colorful in the color sense, but in the way he used materials, as he did in his paintings, on stage. It was just dramatic. His works were dramatic works I thought. But we went through all these at different venues. I didn't put Stage 73 down here. I should have.

Q: How was your relationship with Bob as a friend?

Lloyd: It was good, yes.

Q: So you would spend a lot of time working on these projects, but also socially?

Lloyd: Yes. Well not socially in the sense of you go out to parties and stuff like that. Barbara and I were dealing with our own issues with Ben at home. He was going to be three in '65. Our own marriage was not in great shape after that tour and we were trying to hold that together. So we were not going out at night with Bob and the rest of the artists or whatever they did at night. I say we; Barbara was totally involved in staying with Merce and the dance company. So she was going to rehearsal and class.

The company did go off for some performances in '65. But as was typical the sponsors pretty much had already lined up their 1965 attractions so although we got some dates immediately with the Hunter College people for performances in New York, we couldn't really pick up en route engagements with out-of-town sponsors until later. But by '66 we were back in Europe again. Twice: in the summer and then in the fall. Two separate tours. So I wasn't on—I was only on the payroll when there was a tour to be managed abroad. But I certainly was working with David Vaughan on setting up all this stuff for '66 and trying to figure out with John how to get out of the hole from the world tour.

Q: So Barbara stayed with Merce Cunningham and Dance Company for a few more years?

Lloyd: Yes she did, yes, until she left to be very active in the Grand Union with Valda [Setterfield] and David Gordon and Yvonne and Steve, I think.

Q: Yes, Steve was also there at the beginning. How was the transition? Because she was also performing with some of the Judson Dance Theater years before the Grand Union.

Lloyd: Yes, absolutely. I have a lot of those programs. Yes, she worked with [William] Bill Davis at Judson and Yvonne. I think Merce was very—he was a little bit puzzled by how he and John could have spawned this group of younger people who were out doing all their stuff over there at Judson. He came to the performances.

God, Twyla [Tharp] was involved with some of those performances, so although Barbara was never part of Twyla's—as the former Twyla dancers refer to it—the Tharpettes. Barbara was part of that whole thing too. I used to go to all those concerts. So it was Judson, then it was the Grand Union, which in a way came out of Judson. But the terminology, Judson Dance Theater, which people think is an institution, wasn't an institution. These were, you'd have to say, pick-up performances. And postmodern dance, nobody used the words “postmodern dance” in those days.

Q: Until Sally Banes did it.

Lloyd: Yes, so she—I don't want to put words in her mouth, but she was my wife and we did travel together even after we were divorced with Ben to Europe in '66 and South America. She was becoming unhappy with the regimen I would say—

Q: Of the Merce company?

Lloyd: Of the touring dance company. The more successful and demanding that regimen became, the less happy she was. And so when she made that move to Grand Union—Barbara herself refers to the Grand Union years as part of her wild years in New York. But she'll have to talk to you about that. By that time I had remarried, to one of the Tharpettes actually—Theresa Dickinson—and so I wasn't part of Barbara's performing life after Merce at all. I saw some of the Grand Union performances. I always liked David Gordon's work, right on up over the years. I just thought he had the most interesting theatrical and dramatic sensibility about putting work on the stage. Just a very funny, droll man to be with too.

Q: They made a wonderful couple on stage and in life, with Valda Setterfield.

Lloyd: Yes. Valda was with us on the '66 tour. We had three little boys travel with the company then. Rick Nelson was the stage manager then and his son came along; and Ain Gordon and Ben. Ain and Ben had been childhood playmates so that actually—there was a young nanny who pretty much had her hands full. The '66 tour was post-Bob so he wasn't in on that at all.

Q: Did you stay in touch with Bob after he left the Merce Cunningham company?

Lloyd: Not regularly. By that time I had my hands full with my other jobs because the Cunningham company couldn't pay me enough to support my wife and son and me. And so after the spring of '65, I got a call from Brooklyn Academy of Music and they wanted me to come over and be the publicity director, which I was ill-suited for except for the fact that there was

nothing to make publicity about. This was the old regime, before Harvey Lichtenstein was hired. I had done a project in '65, spring, for the New York State Council on the Arts and the Harkness Foundation [for Dance], on dance demonstrations in the public schools. I had gotten to know a guy—also out of Brooklyn Academy because we did some programs out there—this is all confused in my mind, but in any case, one thing led to another and I was offered this job.

I took it and I had a yearlong job, concert season anyway, at Brooklyn Academy before Harvey. It was in the dumps. They had glass cases in the lobby with pots and pans in them, cookware premiums that if you bought a season ticket to this or that, you could get an extra set of cookware. It was pathetic in every way.

Q: Unimaginable now.

Lloyd: It was so depressing. So I did that. I stuck it out. The man who was the assistant director there got a job running a big theater festival out in Michigan. He left at the end of the year. He told me he was leaving and I said, "I'm out of here too. I can't stand this." Meantime I had been contacted by a man who was the chairman of the board of a chamber orchestra in New York called the [New York] Festival Orchestra. I went to see those folks—and I'll send you a story about that too—and he asked me if I was interested in managing the orchestra. I'm telling you this only by way of saying I was having full-time jobs in addition to piecing together work for the Cunningham people, in order to put food on the table. So the first full-time was Brooklyn Academy, terrible experience; the next one was the Festival Orchestra, a better experience but also an ensemble in equally terrible financial condition. No better than, really, the Cunningham

company, even though we did a *Messiah* [1741, George Frideric Handel] at Carnegie Hall in the fall and a subscription series at Lincoln Center [for the Performing Arts]—what was then called Philharmonic Hall [now Avery Fisher Hall]—in the spring. Hell, I thought I was on the top of the world as a concert manager because I was dealing with the biggest venues in the country, but the orchestra itself was teetering on the edge of collapse.

At the end of that season, which was spring of '67, I left the orchestra—and you'll see that in the story—and worked with the Cunningham company to get the benefit at Philip Johnson's Glass House on in the spring of '67. Maybe it was June of '67, which was bailing us out from the deficits we'd run up the previous year from the tours of Europe in '66. It did pay the bill, we got out of hock. Then Cunningham Foundation got a grant to hire me for a full year, '67–68. I said I wouldn't take the full year's salary unless Merce had a full year's salary. John was in and out all the time doing his own lectures and concerts and things like that, but Merce had to be right there in the studio every day. I said, this is—I can't do a job on a full year salary for the Cunningham Foundation unless Merce has a salary—more than mine incidentally. I told the board of the Cunningham Foundation. If we can agree that Merce has a salary higher than mine for a full year then we should accept the grant and I'll work for a full year to set up the things that needed to be set up. And we go on the tour of South America and this other crazy stuff. That's how that all unfolded.

At the end of the '68 tour, I was asked by Harvey Lichtenstein to come back to Brooklyn Academy to be the assistant director in charge of dance for a residency program that would include Merce, Alvin Ailey, and a new ballet company that he wanted to have—Harvey came

out of the ballet world—directed by Eliot Feld. And I would be in charge of setting up the ballet company and taking it to Spoleto [Festival of Two Worlds (*Festival dei Due Mondi*), Italy] in the summer of '69 for its first performances and then to Germany for TV. So I was really doing—by then I was very experienced and I did all that stuff. I settled in at Brooklyn Academy and we did all the stuff with the Living Theatre and [Robert J.] Bob Wilson.

It was I who brought Bob Wilson to Harvey's attention because back here in the earlier sixties I had been contacted by the New York State Council on the Arts. Well first of all, the hit show that ran at my theater was called *America Hurrah* [1966, Jean-Claude van Itallie]. Bob had done the puppets for *America Hurrah* at the Pocket Theater. *America Hurrah* really helped me financially get the theater stabilized. Then I got a call from the New York State Council on the Arts and they said, "We have a guy who wants—what's called technical assistance—technical assistance on a project he's doing down at the Anderson Theatre down on Second Avenue. His name's Bob Wilson." "Oh, I know Bob Wilson. He was—" "And he's got a project called *The King of Spain* [1969]. We wonder if you'd like to go down and work on that and we'll pay you—" whatever the per diem was, seventy-five dollars or something. I said sure. So I went down, met Bob, I got the production manager from Merce to work on *The King of Spain* with Bob to try to solve some of the enormous technical décor and scenic problems. Bob's imagination was far bigger than he had the resources to pay for or even the mechanical knowledge to execute these things. So we kind of patched that performance together.

Then I was out at Brooklyn Academy in '69 and starting my work there. Bob called me and said he'd like to come over and look at the Opera House because he'd really like to do a production

there. I went to Harvey and I said, “We have to get this guy on stage because he is really, really interesting.” Harvey had never heard of him. Robert Wilson? Who’s that? And so we did. The first one was called *Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* [1969]. I have some beautiful posters that he made. He made beautiful posters based on the works of [William] Blake. He made those. I’ve actually—I’m going to get copies of those from Yale. I just requested them yesterday. Anyway so that’s just a little link.

So those things were happening in my life, but what I had to do was to get [laughs]—it sounds like me talking on behalf of the dancers’ payroll. I had to be on somebody’s payroll so I could support my family. I was still living over the theater on the third floor and that went on until ’69 or ’70. Then we leased out the theater.

Q: The Pocket Theater?

Lloyd: Yes. We leased it to a group of three producers including the vile Arthur Cantor, a press agent from Broadway; Mrs. Ninon Tallon Karlweis, a Viennese woman with a long history in European theater; and a dentist from Long Island named Martin Rubin; and they were going to put on their own shows. I’ll send you the story about them too.

Q: So you’ve written these stories—

Lloyd: I wrote a whole series of stories for my grandchildren, yes, about this stuff. I’ll send you five of them. They’re not long, little essays.

Q: That'd be wonderful.

Lloyd: Yes.

Q: Going briefly back to Bob Rauschenberg, you continued your work and got more and more involved with the theater business—we have to thank you for Bob Wilson [laughs].

Lloyd: Yes, for getting him over to Brooklyn Academy, yes. He always gives me a big hug when we see each other. “Oh god, thank you for getting me over here.” Boy he put—speaking of technical advances, *Life and Times of Sigmund Freud*. Brooklyn Academy stagehands were really good guys. They knew how to get a show on, but he stretched their capacity right to the limit. As you know from seeing his work, lighting is very important. We didn't have electronic lighting controls at Brooklyn in those days. We had banks and banks of resistance dimmers with three electricians manning four or five big dimmer boards; one here and one stacked on top, a pair on the right, a pair on the left. It was crazy. Not crazy in a bad way, but just in terms of the technical demands that were being made on the Brooklyn Academy Opera House crew. Those stagehand union bills were big as you can imagine. A union stage crew. Anyway, sorry. I got off the topic.

Q: No, absolutely. So you lost touch with Bob Rauschenberg?

Lloyd: Yes. By the end of the sixties I really wasn't seeing much of him at all. I don't know—I would have to ask you or somebody much more knowledgeable, when the rapprochement came between Merce and John and Bob.

Q: Well, I'm not sure about how it really came and what happened there. And then of course at the beginning of the seventies, Bob moved to Captiva Island [Florida] and he worked there.

Lloyd: Yes.

Q: He would come back to the city regularly. Did you go to see some of his exhibits?

Lloyd: At the place on Lafayette Street?

Q: That's where the Foundation is now and that's where he—he was there for a while.

Lloyd: Yes. Oh you mean at galleries?

Q: Yes, galleries later on.

Lloyd: Oh sure. Of course. Yes, absolutely, always. I just love his work. I love Jasper's work too. I was just in New York about a month ago and went down to Chelsea to see an exhibit of Jasper's work. Beautiful.

After Bob left the company I worked very closely with Jasper for the next several years and that was really a wonderful experience also. Getting the [Marcel] Duchamp/Johns piece on spring of '68 in Buffalo [New York], another technical challenge about trying to get those clear boxes that we could knock down and carry as scenery, that made up Duchamp's *Large Glass* [1915–23] images. [Note: *Walkaround Time*, 1968]

And then the Andy Warhol pillows, which had a whole series of issues. [Note: *Rainforest*, 1968]

Q: What were the issues there?

Lloyd: The Mylar pillows? Well, they were filled with helium and tethered by black fishing line and little fishing sinkers. Very beautiful. That was in Buffalo for the opening. And not too long after that, a month or so, we went out to Boulder [Colorado] for a residency. [James] Jimmy Baird, our production manager, filled up the Mylar pillows with helium and they sat on the stage, they would not fly. The volume of helium to the weight of the Mylar was such that the helium didn't have the capacity to lift the pillow due to the altitude. They sat there. Somebody at the University [of Colorado Boulder] said to us—because we were in residence at the university—said, “Oh, you ought to go up to this place up on the hill there by the Flatirons, where the National Oceanographic and Aeronautic—” blah blah blah “—they have a big lab up there. They'll know how to figure this out.” Indeed we did. We found some scientist up there who said, “Oh this is very interesting.”

They found what was important was we needed the pillows to float in Boulder, at that altitude, but more importantly at the following performance in Mexico City, 2000 feet higher. They calculated how big the Mylar pillow would have to be with helium at 8000 feet, or seven, whatever it is Mexico City. It would have to be this big. They were bigger. So then I called the shop where they were fabricated—Andy had them fabricated at a little shop on the Lower East Side, a little guy who made balloons—and had a whole new set made. I had to go back for a Cunningham board meeting and I went around and picked them up in a big box—not a big box, but big enough to fit on a seat, end up—bought two tickets back to Boulder. The pillows and I flew side-by-side back to Boulder where they worked very well. And they worked very well in Mexico City.

Then we got to Rio [de Janeiro] on that tour. Jimmy and I were backstage talking to the chief of the stage crew about this idea of the pillows and all this helium. The man said, “Oh we don’t have any helium in Brazil.” I said, “That’s hard to believe.” He said, “No. It’s manufactured, helium. It just doesn’t come up out of the ground. And we don’t have—” in Brazil in 1968, “—we do not have facilities for making helium.” I said, “Well, what can we use?” He said, “Hydrogen.” —What? Immediately thinking of the Hindenburg explosion at Lakehurst in New Jersey. He said, “Yeah.” I said, “We’ll have to talk to the dancers about that.” So we had a company meeting and told them the story. They said, “Well, what we’d like to see is fill one of the Mylar pillows with hydrogen and we’d like to see it explode.”

So Jimmy did that. It was tethered outside the theater building, which was all wood, in the alley where all the wardrobe ladies—who the dancers called the samba ladies—had their washtubs and

all this stuff. We floated it up just like this and Jimmy was a smoker so he took his cigarette and jammed it in the side. The thing just went [makes sound], just a flash, and collapsed. And so the dancers said, “We can do that. We’ll do that.” So we filled them with hydrogen.

I was thinking, god, the whole point is that they’re—they look like these big raindrops floating around. If one of them hits one of the stage lights there could be a problem here. But they didn’t. So they had their own unique issues that they brought along into my life as the manager of Merce Cunningham and Dance Company. Crazy stuff.

Q: Yes. Bob Rauschenberg has this reputation of solving technical problems for set design.

Lloyd: He did. He did all the time. The other thing that I brought besides Jack Daniel’s and silver dollars, I had heard from somebody in my theater community—either off-Broadway or on Broadway—that there was—you could go to the drama bookstore and you could buy a four-language dictionary of stage terms. I went and bought one of those. That was another thing Bob spotted in my office case. “Where’d you get that?” I told him. He said, “Geez I could use that.” He reached in and took it and that was the last I ever saw of that [laughs]. It was English, German, Italian, and French. Maybe Spanish. Could have been five languages. So he used that. It actually was very helpful because I do have an image, now that I’m telling you this story, of more than once seeing Bob thumbing through that little thing with a stagehand looking over his shoulder saying, “Oh, yes.”

Yes, Bob—you know that spontaneity, which led to improvisation, which collided with John, was always there and it was so wonderful to watch. It went back before this tour, when he made that—what we called the *Aeon* machine—for each performance, that thing that went across often with a blinking light on it that looked very threatening. And because he was a lighting designer also, he would darken the stage as this creepy thing went along the upstage area. It was just—I wish I could draw. I would draw a picture of a man whose capacity for making things with art—stuff was just coming out of all ten fingers all the time.



Rauschenberg assembling the *Aeon* “machine,” part of Rauschenberg’s set for Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s *Aeon* (1961), Japan, 1964. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Unattributed

Q: That’s a very strong image. When the 9 Evenings[: Theatre & Engineering] happened in ’66, you were traveling with a company so you were not—

Lloyd: Yes. Well actually I went to see those at the [69th Regiment] Armory [New York], yes. It was the spring or late spring of ’66, is that right?



Robert Rauschenberg
Poster for 9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering, 1966
Offset lithograph
36 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches (92.7 x 61.6 cm)
From an edition of 90

Q: It was October. It was the fall.

Lloyd: Oh, October? I've got it all twisted around. So it was October of '66. I was working with the orchestra and not going on the fall tour with the Cunningham company. David Vaughan was with the company for that fall tour. So I was there, yes, in the fall of '66, and I did go to the thing, which I thought was a fiasco because—

Q: What were you expecting as a spectator?

Lloyd: Well, what I was expecting, I was feeling—I knew [Johan Wilhelm] Billy Klüver pretty well. I thought these guys—meaning the scientists and engineers—applied engineering I don't think is what they're really used to. Actually getting something to work. The scale on which they were using that space, I just had a feeling of, I don't see how this is going to work. And indeed a

lot of it didn't work. I think. Now, as you said at the outset, it has this reputation that it's developed over decades that it was this amazing thing. It was amazing that all these people worked on this together. But boy.

Q: It was also highly advertised and many people went to attend the performances.

Lloyd: Yes. They had that—I put this in here—the *E.A.T.* [Experiments in Art and Technology] *News*? Do you have all those things?

Q: Yes.

Lloyd: Yes.

Q: Do you remember Bob Rauschenberg's performance? *Open Score* [1966]?

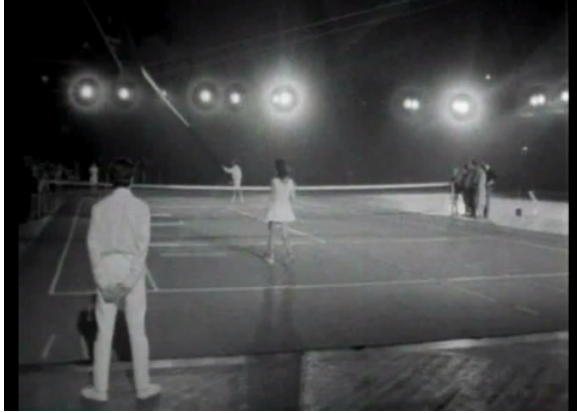
Lloyd: No, I don't. What was his—did he have a piece? What was its name?

Q: It was called *Open Score* and he—

Lloyd: *Open Score*.

Q: There were two tennis players—

Lloyd: It was the tennis players. Yes, I remember that.



Mimi Kanarek and Frank Stella on the tennis court in Rauschenberg's *Open Score* (1966), 9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering, 69th Regiment Armory, New York, October 1966. Still from *9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering* (1967). Produced by Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.). Audiovisual Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Q: Very loud.

Lloyd: Supposedly amplified tennis rackets, right?

Q: Right.

Lloyd: Yes.

Q: The noise of the ball. And do you remember the space?

Lloyd: Yes. My god, the stage was huge. There was this whole area that was filled with people like Gordon Mumma and David Tudor madly plugging things in and unplugging things and wiring things, and doing this and doing that. Speakers all over the place. Yes. Yes. Like the tennis game, that was, I thought, a very clever idea. But the truth is, if you were to go back and

listen to this conversation this morning, there wasn't anything Bob ever did that I didn't think was really interesting and clever [laughs] so I'm not a good critic. I just think he just made wonderful stuff no matter what he decided to do. Even if it was incomplete or not so well executed. But still, just amazing.

Q: It was productive. He would continuously make things.

Lloyd: Yes, yes. I was glad that Rosemary [S. Lloyd] [note: the narrator's current wife] and I got to see him at the end of his life down in Captiva. The Cunningham company was performing down at Naples and we were down visiting Rosemary's parents in Naples [Florida]. I noticed the ad in the paper and I called the office in New York and they got in touch with David Vaughan, who was with the company. David said, "Come around tomorrow to the so-and-so hotel because we have a bus and we're all going up to see Bob." That was so great, to see Bob and Merce together. Talking, talking, talking, talking. It was a very, very, very nice moment. They were both in wheelchairs at that point. I don't know, maybe you can tell me, at the end of Bob's life, what was that? Was it arthritis or something?



Rauschenberg and Merce Cunningham with Rauschenberg's *The Ancient Incident (Kabal American Zephyr)* (1981), Captiva Drive studio, Captiva, Florida, 2007. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Attributed to Laurence Getford

Q: Bob had had a stroke.

Lloyd: Oh he did?

Q: Yes.

Lloyd: Oh, I didn't realize that. Did he have one arm that didn't work too well? Yes, I remember that now. Yes.

Q: Did you ever go to visit him in Captiva?

Lloyd: Individually, not with the company? No, I didn't. No. That is now a facility that is open for artist fellowships, which the Foundation operates?

Q: Artists in residence. Yes.

Lloyd: And how is Christopher [Rauschenberg]? Christopher was in some of this stuff. How is he and where is he?

Q: Christopher is a successful photographer and—

Lloyd: Yes, I knew he always was.

Q: Yes and he also is involved with the Foundation.

Lloyd: Oh is he? Good. And where does he live?

Q: I'm not sure actually if he lives in Captiva.

Lloyd: Oh really, down there?

Q: Was that the last time that you saw Bob Rauschenberg and Merce Cunningham? In Captiva?

Lloyd: Yes.

Q: That was your last good-bye?

Lloyd: The last time I saw them, yes. Yes. David and I were the first to arrive because Rosemary and I picked up David from the hotel and drove up ahead of the bus. Bob was there. Merce hadn't arrived yet. David and I looked at Bob and said, "Well, here we are. The company managers, we're always here first."

Q: What year was that?

Lloyd: Well, when did Bob die?

Q: 2008.

Lloyd: So I was going to say ten years ago, so it would have been 2006. This is probably right. Yes. That fits the picture, doesn't it? Yes.

Q: Is there any question I didn't ask you that you would like to answer?

Lloyd: [Laughs] What possessed you for doing—? I want to go back to the beginning and say, on behalf of Barbara, that if it weren't for Barbara this wouldn't have happened in my life because she was the one who had her eye on Merce Cunningham. She was the one who wanted to get into that company and it was because of her that I hung around the studio, that John found out about my theater, and that he decided he could ask me to do this thing that didn't turn out to be a Broadway season. We did do *Vexations* as part of that and I'm going to send you that story.

Q: Yes, please.

Lloyd: It went on from there. As I always say about myself, I was a theater guy coming out of Yale, as many others were. That's what I thought it was going to be. My dream was to see "Lewis L. Lloyd Presents" on a marquee on Broadway, but that never happened. I got to see a lot of other great theaters in the world as a result of my work with Merce.

I said to Valda recently that what I regret is that given my relationship to the funding of the company and therefore my reliance on John for guidance and direction and where should we look for the money, that I wasn't able to have another kind of relationship with John. I blame myself for that, for not being more open to the John who was everything else and was amazing. I'll tell you—are these stories boring?

Q: No, absolutely not.

Lloyd: Okay. In '64 because of London we got invitations from the arts ministry in Prague and Warsaw to bring the company to Prague and to Warsaw, and in Warsaw to coincide with the Warsaw Autumn Festival, big contemporary music and art festival. So we worked it out. There are other pieces of stories to tell, but we got to Warsaw and the performance was great. I have a nice memory of Bob and Sandra Neels and I riding in a carriage, a horse-drawn carriage—two horses—through the night after the performance, through the rebuilt old city of Warsaw. It was just a lovely moment, the three of us.

From Warsaw we took the train west to Poznań [Poland] where we had another performance. Remember that we'd had no State Department money. John made a big point of this at every press conference, "We are not supported by the U.S. government." Which is why we were invited to Warsaw, Prague, and that kind of thing. So I get out of the train in Poznań and a car drives up, young man jumps out of it and says, "Who are you?" I said, "Well, I'm Lewis Lloyd with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from New York." "How did you get here?" "Well we came from Warsaw and this is Mrs. So-and-so from the cultural agency. She's our traveling companion." He says, "We had no notice that you were coming. I'm from the U.S. Consulate here. We didn't know you were coming." I said, "There's no reason you should know we were coming. From my perspective, we don't have anything to do with you." He says, "Well where are you going?" I said, "Night after tomorrow we're taking the train to Cologne." He says, "The train to Cologne? That goes through East Germany and East Berlin." I said, "Probably. I was told it's the train that goes from Moscow to Paris. We get on in Poznań and we got off in Cologne." He says, "You can't do that." [Laughs] I said, "We've got all the visas, we've got all the paperwork. Why can't we do it?" He said, "Because we don't have diplomatic relations with East Germany. If anything happens to you we won't be able to help you." I said, "We're going to sit on the train." Well that was a little naïve. Anything could have happened really. He was right to be worried.

Then we got on the train. It was an overnight train so we all had compartments and berths and this stuff. We get to East Berlin in the middle of the night. It was pretty scary looking; spotlights everywhere, guys with sub-machine guns on the platform. That's weird. So all of a sudden the train lurched, starts ahead, and as it goes this way out of the station, piled on the platform are all

the scenery and costumes. They had taken all our stuff out of the baggage car and left it on the platform in East Berlin. I thought, “I’m fucked. What am I going to do now?”

We get off in Cologne and the bus was waiting there to take us to the next town, the town where Bayer aspirin was manufactured. I can’t remember the name—Krefeld. The ballet world called the local ballet company “the aspirin ballet.” “Take the company to Krefeld,” I told John, “I’m going to wait behind. You and David and the company go on and I’ll go see the station master, baggage people.” I go to see them. Very nice man. Another one of these kind people that helped me and spoke perfect English. He heard the whole story and he said, “Well here’s what I can tell you, Mr. Lloyd. The only other person less likely than myself to get your scenery and costumes to Cologne is you.” [Laughs] I said, “Really?” He said, “Yes. We don’t have any relations with the East Germans either. We can’t do anything about it.” He said, “What I think will happen, because I have some idea of how they behave, is that they’ll go through all that stuff, then they’ll put it all back on the next train or a later train to Cologne. You tell me where you’re staying in Krefeld and I’ll just stay in touch with you.” I go over, take a cab to Krefeld and go to the hotel. By now it’s later in the day and we all have dinner together and Merce is thinking, “Well we’ll call Todd Bolender, he’s running the ballet company at the Cologne Opera. Maybe he can lend us tights and shoes so we’ll at least have that and we can do a performance here in Krefeld.”

We’re sitting there talking about this and John said, “Well in a situation like this it’s useful to consult the *I Ching*.” I had been very “oh really?” about the *I Ching*, the Chinese book. He pulls it out and he had all his little sticks, his yarrow sticks—have you heard this story?

Q: No, no.

Lloyd: We're sitting at the table in a place just like this with a coffee table. He has the book out and he casts the sticks down and he looks at them. He determines which of the pieces within the *I Ching* it would be. He thumbs it open, looks at it and says, "Ah, it says, 'Eat well, be happy.' Well haven't we agreed that this is one of the best meals we've had on the trip yet?" I said, "Yes." He casts the sticks again and he looks through them and he thumbs through the book to the right place and he says, "Ah, this one says, 'The rains will come in their good time and the harvest will be plentiful.' I take that to mean that the scenery and costumes will come to Krefeld." Within minutes the phone rang and it was the station manager—

[Laughter]

Lloyd: —saying that the scenery and costumes had arrived. I thought, my god, we're going to have to run the company on the basis of what the *I Ching* tells us to do.

[Laughter]

Lloyd: My god. John was, "See? See?"

[Laughter]

Lloyd: Oh boy. Anyway.

Q: That's a great story.

Lloyd: That's a little bit what it was like traveling with Merce and John and Bob.

Q: Welcoming the unpredictable.

Lloyd: Yes. Welcoming the unpredictable, using indeterminacy to expand your range of possibilities. Yes.

Q: Okay. We can end our session here. If anything else comes up, we can always add it.

Lloyd: I'll send you my non-Merce stories about the Pocket Theater.

Q: That would be wonderful.

Lloyd: *Vexations*, the Festival Orchestra, and other travails of being a young arts manager in New York in the sixties.

Q: That would be wonderful.

[END OF INTERVIEW]