

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW
with LILI MANN LAUB
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LK: I was president of the union once. I know that.

KW: You were? Under what, the CPC (City Projects Council)?

LK: Of the local dance--

KW: The Dancers Association, was that it?

LM: No. There was a big union of all the projects.

KW: The Workers' Alliance?

LK: NO.

KW: Or the CPC?

LK: What does CPC mean?

KW: City Projects Council.

LK: Well, maybe our--we had a separate branch. I know we had meetings all the time.

And I know everybody had a chance to be president, I'm sure, because I do remember that I was president during one of the things and that we had one sit-in and I had to get up and make a speech. You know, I got up on the desk and--(laugh). It's very funny to me. Are you recording this already? Oh, gosh!

KW: I just turned it on.

LK: I'd better not tell all that.

KW: (Laugh) It's up to you.

LK: No, it's not important. I mean, we all had an opportunity to be chief executive there. But they were interesting meetings and there was always partisanship. There was a lot of dispute and there was always one little group that was against the regular group and I thought they were--

KW: Was this all to keep the Project going?

LM: It was mostly for grievances to open the Project to more people and certain demands that we felt. I can't remember what they were now at all. I think we had a tendency to ask for things that weren't as important as other things.

But in the main we were interested in getting more choreographers, getting more production and really working and not being hampered by the red tape that was involved in getting anything. We wanted to dance. There was no question about it. I mean, that was the most interesting and the best part of it, that we did dance all day long. We rehearsed and we were glad to rehearse and we wanted to perform. A lot of it was probably to "Let's get the show on the road," I'm sure.

KW: Because you felt you didn't have enough chance to perform.

LM: To perform. Actually though we ended up performing a lot, as you know. I mean, you have the programs. But to get back to me, if that's what you want to hear, how I worked into the Project.

KW: Yes. Start at the beginning and where you--

LM: You don't want to hear that story all over again about my childhood. But when I. was about six, I tried to be a dancer and then in our family, academics was most important, scholarship was most important, school work was most important.

KW: The other side was. extra?

LM: So the--that was all extra and especially dancing was in very low esteem. So I concentrated--I was the youngest of four and they were all bright children. I mean, my sister was a valedictorian in high school and in elementary school. And my brother was a student and I had to compete with them. So all my energies went that way and, you know, the idea was that you go to college and get a degree. That was important. So I did that but I stopped thinking about dance when I was about seven, I guess. I can't remember wanting to dance after that at all. Can't remember-maybe from time to time if I saw something. And when they wanted to give us lessons in things to be cultured, it was

always music. And every time they did that I said, "Well, how about dancing?" But they never gave me dance. Then in college they had a modern dance class and that--well, even before that I remember going out with two young men. My friend and I were taken to a dance concert.

KW: Modern dance?

LM: Modern dance. I had never seen modern dance before and these boys were older than we were. I mean, I must have been about 16 and they were about 18, you know, and they were very wise and very--they were Bohemian and they knew what was going on everywhere. And they took us to a concert of Mary Wigman and I was overwhelmed with it! I had never seen anything like that and as soon as I saw it, I said, "That's what I'm going to do." I knew immediately. It was a strange experience because it was very vivid. I had never seen anything like it and I said, "That's what I'm going to do." And in my last year of school, I didn't know how or where or what. I just knew that that was it.

I got out of college quite young and my last year of college they had introduced a dance class. I remember it was Eleanor Lilbach's. Did you ever hear that name?

KW: No, I never did.

LM: Eleanor Lilbach Kline was her name, and she was a charming young woman. And she gave the modern dance class and immediately told me that I should be doing that, that I was very good. I got an A, (Laugh) one of the few A's that I got. But oddly enough, I was a math and physics major, and I graduated with a degree in physics. I switched from math to physics. First I was a math major and then I switched to physics. But I took these courses in dance, everything that they had to offer. There was one choreography class and of course it was all at a very infant stage. And then when I got

out of school, I proceeded to look for a job and I looked under "Dancers."

KW: Dance magazines?

IM: No. New York Times. I did try to become an engineer and I did go up to an engineering school, as a matter of fact. And they laughed at me. They said, "What? A woman engineer? You're crazy. Forget it." This is exactly what they told me, totally discouraged me. You know, I would have gone to an engineering school after that, but it was such a flat rejection that I just had no alternative. I didn't even think about it. And I was very naive and very, very--about the ways of the world. I really didn't understand anything. I was a child, very young and if they said No, it was No. I mean, I didn't resist.

KW: You hadn't had any hints in school by your teachers that this might happen though?

IM: No.. Well, I had heard, but I thought I would find out anyway. In all my classes I was the only girl. Most of the girls did not study math or physics. You know, that was not a female subject. Don't forget, this was many years ago.

KW: I think it's not that different now,

IM: You think it's still so? I'm sure there are many more women in engineering and science than there were.

KW: There are a few more coming in, but I'll bet they are still pretty top-heavy with men.

LK: Yes. As a matter of fact, they're trying to encourage women to become doctors and things. But in those days, I was the only girl as a matter of fact in most of my science classes. It was physics and math; not chemistry, but physics and math, which was especially male. And they really laughed me out of that school. I even think it was a famous school of engineering. So the next thing was to look up and get a job when you get out of college.

And I looked under dancers and there was an ad in the paper: "DANCERS WANTED."
It was Sara Mildred Strauss. You've heard that name, I'm sure.

KW: Yes.

IM: I went down and she took everybody. I don't think she was very discriminating. Anything that wanted to be a dancer and they were really big and little. They were all sizes and all shapes. But they did have in common that they wanted to be dancers.

KW: W011, what was the job, though?

IM: The job turned out to be--we were going to work on numbers, production numbers, and then audition. There was not a job. It was really a bait. It was a come-on. She wanted people to work for nothing and then get a job with them. And I don't know how she selected. It seemed to me that she took everybody.

First of all, I could hardly do anything. I had a year of dance in college and that was practically nothing, but she had determined to train us. And she trained us--like it was a zoo, I mean like we were wild animals. We were made to eat carrots and raisins and we worked for very long hours. Of course, we were healthy and young, and we were able to do this. But--

KW: You were going in training.

IM: We went into--like a prize tighter, you know. And she was a very domineering woman, a big, tall woman. You've seen pictures of her in that--we did get jobs eventually. And six months after this training period, we landed a job. We were in the Ziegfield Follies. Now when I think about it, we were such an odd assortment of people, I don't know how they, why they took us. But modern-dance--again, that was a period when it was just taking hold and they wanted little new things in the theatre. And they were looking for novelty.

KW: In Musical theatres?

IM: In musical comedy. They were tired of the hoofers. I think people were just getting tired of seeing hours and hours of tapping and kicking of legs. So they wanted something different and she offered this romantic stuff, very romantic stuff that me did.

KW: But modern also?

IM: Modern in style, totally modern. And she had experimented with modern dance.

She did dances without music and she had experimented with modern. But this she specifically was determined to make some money finally. Of course she had been around modern dance for a while. So we got the job. We t this job with the Follies and that's when I met Susy--that's where I met them. They had come, too, for this audition. Eva had had some work already since She was a child. She had been dancing for a while. Sue had started maybe a year ahead of me, so she wasn't--she was a little bit ahead of me. She had some ballet. I had nothing. I had just had that year. I was a fake and well, she trained us to do those things, and we could do those things. And we worked in the Follies and their idea was to give us--you know, to enhance the show and then they'd fire us, get the people to come because it was so full of novelty.

KW: But why fire you then?

IM: Well, because they didn't want to pay the money any more. And you know, the Follies: had a reputation by itself. Nobody would know the difference. just, you know, they'd have us and they didn't announce that they were firing us or that the show had left the show. This is the way they were.. I'm sure they did that with other shows, too. They would get a novelty act because it was a big, big show. Oh, they had many, many acts.

KW; Was this the early thirties?

IM: This was the middle thirties: I would say. Yes, 1934, 1935. I'm not sure

exactly when. In the middle thirties and well, they kept us for about two and a half months. So it was exciting. We enjoyed it very much. I used to watch the show every night. You know, to be right out of college into the Ziegfield Follies was quite a jump. And that's the way my career started, right at the Ziegfield Follies, you know, which is funny. Six months after I'm dancing, here I am in the Follies. What happened, there was a lot of bickering going on. Everybody--there was always griping and in dance companies that's very common. I mean, you're griping against the director. You find something wrong with her, and we were griping a lot about Sara Mildred Strauss. And when they fired us, we said, "We're going to fire her." We felt very strong. You know, here we had gotten a job in the Follies and we were strong. And Eva and Sue and I decided to have a trio, make our own trio and do our own auditions.

KW: The purpose being getting auditions?

IM: Being getting jobs, getting into vaudeville. There was still vaudeville and still, you know, in connection with movies they still had some vaudeville shows. And that we would audition and get jobs or in a show, in another show. WO would, you know, try to. In the meantime there were other little companies around so that we worked together for a short while. It didn't work out too well because we didn't hit it off, the three of us. I mean, two of us hit it off; three of us didn't. Anyway, it didn't last too long, the trio.

KW: Did you get jobs at all?

LK: WO did audition for something, I remember, and we almost got something. And I can't remember whether they got something. Did Eva say anything about whether she and Sue got anything at that period without me or whether? I don't know.

KW: I can't remember. I don't remember anything long-lived.

IM: No, it didn't last too long. Another reason was that there were other things happening around and we would attempt to go there. Well, as a matter of fact, the three of us went to Eddie Strawbridge at that time. So we all three got that job, I don't know how. I was terrible.

KW: In his group?

IM: In his group, yes.

KW: Was he more ballet? That's always been my impression.

IM: Yes, definitely. That's why I was hopeless there. I remember that. They had had ballet training, and why he took me I'll never know. But he did take me into his--

KW: Maybe he liked the three of you together somehow.

IM: I don't know. We were friends. You know, that's very vague in my mind. But he used to scream at me because I couldn't do pirouettes. I never learned pirouettes, you know-. You have to practice that. I never had any lessons at all. So anyway, I stayed with him and oddly enough, I stayed there the longest. And I became one of his leading dancers. They left. I don't know where they went, but they all went their own way eventually. I stayed with him a little longer. I know I was longer than Sue because she had other things and I don't know what happened to Eva. But I was with him and he was giving me the leading roles so it was worthwhile persisting. But at first I almost left because he was so cruel to me. He'd scream at me, you know. And that's how I got my training, by being screamed at by all these people. First Sara Mildred Strauss would scream, "Get that deadpan off your face!" You know, I didn't smile.

KW: Maybe that's the best way.

IM: It was the best way, but I didn't know that and, you know, I was young and barely out of school. So then after that we did do a lot of touring with

Eddie but we'd always get stranded on the road. We went out on tours and we-- and then the Project came along, and I was the first one to get on the Project. I don't know, Sue never did. Oh, yes, she did later on, much later, but she was doing other things.

KW: How did you hear about it? Do you remember?

IM: You know how I heard about it? I had gone to a concert, I think, a program of the New Dance Group, something like that. I wish I knew how I met Fanya Geltman because I think Fanya was the one that was instrumental and she said, "Listen, this is what you have to do to get on the Project." And she said, "You do a, b, c, d, e." And I did that.

KW: TO get on relief and--

IM: TO get on relief first because I needed that job, you know. I had no job. It was very legitimate really. So I got on relief and she said, "Now you apply for the Project," and that's how I got on the Project. As I said, I was one of the first. Eva didn't get on at all really as a part of the Project, She went on as an assistant to Charles, I think.

KW: Yes, and Doris. Yes.

IM: And Doris, yes. But that was much later because before that I worked with Doris and Charles and they invited me into their company. As a matter of fact, I danced with them at the Stadium. This was the result of my association with them and I danced with them at the Lewisohn Stadium. But I was more interested in modern. I was famous for that because they would be very upset with me. She never came on the Project:, It was beneath her to do it. Oh, what happened with Martha, I went to a concert at Martha's and I didn't know what the hell they were doing. It was absolute Greek to me. I was fascinated by it, but I had to go baCk twice. I went three times before I understood what

she was driving at. And then when I did, when I finally dug it, that was it for me. And so from there I went straight to Martha. I mean, I had done all this stuff with Eddie Strawbridge and with Charles and with--and I'd done the Project. We did Candide, for which I got a lot of marvelous comment, and as you know, I was asked to do a screen test and I blew it. I said I wasn't interested in acting. They asked me whether I was interested in acting. I said, "No, I'm a dancer." I don't know, somehow it didn't come off. I never did the screen test, but I had, you know, all kinds of wonderful letters and good reviews and everything. But I was going to be a concert dancer. That was my plan and I was going to work with Martha.

KW: Was that her plan? I mean, did you approach her with this plan?

LK: No, that didn't happen that way quite. You go into her studio and you suffer for about five years. I mean, you go under the whip, and I did. Well, I went off the Project with Charles. We did a show. Is that one we did? I'd Rather Be Right, yes. And that was the end of the Project for me because he took me with him, so that's why I left the Project and I told you that story. I worked all the show. I thought, this is going to be my big opportunity because this: was after Candide and I. was going to be a star after that, and this was going to be my leading role.

KW: Were you like his partner in this thing?

LM: Well, he gave me all the good spots in the show so, you know, I was going to be "found" in I'd Rather Be Right. And it turned out that they didn't like what he did, so that turned out to be a disaster. And as I said, they fired him and the modern dancers.

KW: at, him too?

LM: Him too. They got a new--you know, the old choreographer, the old hoofer,

Robert Altman, brought him in, and redid all the dancing with the hoofers. And they kept maybe a little spot of what he had done, so just--I don't know why I was kept. I was kept because there was some kid, one of the chorus boys, who was a great favorite on Broadway and was a great favorite of Altman and who liked me and put in a word for me and they kept me on. Now that was probably the worst thing that ever happened to me because for one year I was buried, I did nothing but just draw a salary. And I almost had a breakdown then because it was such a disappointment.

KC And a bore, I would think.

IM: And a terrible--well, it wasn't a bore. It was just I was very unhappy because I wanted to be getting on, you know.

KW: What was this, like a musical comedy review or something?

IM: Sig musical I'd Rather Be Right was a big, big musical with George M. Cohan and --

KW: couldn't tell if it was a story unfolding or if it was just--

IM: just a musical comedy. It was about the presidency. No, "I'd rather be right," some president said that. I can't remember who--who was it? Roosevelt!

"I'd rather be right than be President." It was about Roosevelt. It was a whole musical about Roosevelt and it was pretty successful. I was not crazy about George M. Cohan. I remember I didn't like him too much. He was very exclusive and he had his own valet. He never talked to anybody in the company. But it was a nice company and it was fun except that I was very depressed by it because I wasn't dancing. So that went on for about a year and then after that I went to Martha to study, and I worked very, very hard with her. And I was getting recognized and I did some demonstrating for her up at the Y, and I really developed as a dancer there. I mean, let's face it, she was a great

teacher, is a great, great teacher. And I became a dancer in her studio.

KW: How long were you a student of hers?

IM: I was with her for about four or five years and I was invited into her company as a matter of fact, to tour with her. At the same time, I was also asked by Agnes De Mille to go on tour with her company. And also I was asked to be in several shows. I was to replace in one thing and Anita Alvarez in another thing. None of those things happened. I went—it was like a contest. At the same time that Martha asked me, Agnes asked me. And I ended up going away with Agnes because Martha couldn't make up her mind about what to do. So I went on tour with Agnes and that's where I met Katie Litz. It was just Katie Litz and I and Joe Anthony, who was a director. This was the company, and Agnes. We had a wonderful time. We toured with her for six months and then I went, did things with Bill. That was Winter's Tale we did, a Shakespearean thing. And what else? And I danced all these years with the New Dance Group.

KW: Oh, really? In addition?

IM: All through this, in addition to everything else. I constantly danced with them.

Was that a core group of people that you could just fill in?

LK: That was the company. No, that **was** a very specific small company. There were five of us. There was Nina and Muriel and myself and Dora and who was the Other one? Now, we were consistently the New Dance Group. We did wonderful things. We did all Sophie's ballets and James and we went to New London with them and danced there many, many summers. I kept dancing all the time, and I taught for many years. I taught up at Connecticut. I taught at the Randall School in New London. Not New London; New London was the festival.

We'd go there every summer. And I taught at the New Dance Group and I was on the Board of Directors of the New Dance Group. This happened all through all of this. This is all in addition to the other thing.

KW: This is all when? In the late thirties and early forties?

IM: All through the forties, yes, thirties and forties, and until I got married.

KW: It sounds like a killing schedule.

IM: No, it was the life of a dancer. It was from morning till night. Come home at night, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, take a hot bath, go to sleep, get up the next morning, go to class. Go to class, rehearsal in the afternoon, performance at night. And this went on for all those years and it was not killing at all. It was wonderful because it was creative. Years in the studio, it was working with one Choreographer or another, also doing your own work, doing your own concerts.

KW: It sounds like that's the period when concert dance really opened up, that there was a lot more chance to be in and do these kind of things than there were like in the early thirties.

IM: Well, I don't know what's happening now. I think there's an enormous amount of dance now. Unfortunately, I. haven't been associated with the dance so I don't know exactly what's happening, but there's a real abundance of dance. It is mostly in the ballet, true, which is sad, but there are modern dances still, a lot of modern dance, too. Paul Taylor, Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey I suppose is modern. They're all balletic though. They're all not as modern as the modern dance was then and not as exclusively modern. Well, this is the Graham Company.

KW: "Were modern and ballet so far apart then?"

IM: Not as different. They kind of used each other. There has been a meeting of

the two forms. Balanchine has attempted to use modern. Jerome Robbins has used the modern dance more than most of the ballet dancers. Well, Paul Taylor leans more to the modern than to the ballet but is steeped in ballet. Who else are the modern dancers?

KW: Joyce Trisler?

IM: I am not familiar with her.

KW: I'm not that much either.

IM: I don't know. You know, I've never seen Joyce Trisler. Isn't she a modern dancer?

KW: I think so, and she seems to concentrate on these Denishawn or that's part of her--

IM: Oh, really? Trisler has done that one.

KW: That's what Klarna Pinska said. She revised some of the dances or--

IM: Oh, I didn't know that about her. I really have to see Joyce Trisler.

I've heard about her. Then there's--

KW: Pilobilus?

IM: Pilobilus. I suppose those are--I'm not excited about Pilobilus or about that Murray Louis and what's his name? You know, the guy that Murray Louis works with. Oh, Alwin Nikolais. It's a very, very theatrical form.

KW: Was Nikolais involved with the Dance Project then? Do you know?

IM: No. As a matter of fact, he was in New London. When I taught at New London at the Randall School--not New London. What's the other town, not New London? Isn't that awful?

KW: Not Mystic or something?

IM: No, I taught up in--

KW: I don't know where the Randall School is.

IM: I used to go up every weekend and teach. I'll think of it. Not New Haven, but the next stop after New Haven. Anyway, I spent two years teaching up there

and he taught there at that time, too. In the Opera House or something he taught his dance. He comes from there, Connecticut. Isn't that terrible? That Randall School in--(laugh)--I'll think of it. It's not New London.

It's New something--isn't that awful? I wish Merrill were here. He remembers everything. Anyway, that's where he comes from originally, Alwin Nikolais, and he came to New York and he had this thing about very theatrical forms, about moving people around as if they were props. Dancers were not too thrilled with that. People love it though because it's very colorful and, you know, it's more like mobiles but it's not human beings,

And Murray Louis is, I find, very narcissistic. I don't know if you've ever seen him.

KW: I haven't.

LM: But to me the great, great one, of course, was Martha, who got drama, theatre, and essential dance in the way that no one else has. Because dancing her work was the most gratifying. You somehow felt that you were using your body as completely as you possibly could use it. There was no one else who had that. Humphrey-Weidman were lovely. It was a great, spatial, airy kind of movement, you know, where you swept across the stage and used space in a marvelous way. And it was fulfilling but not in the way that Martha was--well, for some people, I guess. For me it was the expressive form, the most deeply expressive. And the people whom she has produced, most of the modern young people have had work with her and some of the ballet people, too. The really fine ones you'll see the depth of the work as a result of her. Oh, the thing that I forgot to mention, I said it as if I stopped. I didn't really stop when I got married and had my children. I worked here. We've lived in Teaneck since 1950, since 1953 to be exact, and I had a school here. I had an enormous school, a full school with. .

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IM: . . . after I moved here. What happened was that a lot of people who knew me-- you know; people who live here are ex-New Yorkers, all of them, because there was no place to live in New York. We were pushed out of New York. I remember searching while I was pregnant for an apartment for that whole time to find a place to live, because we were living in, you know, these weird apartments where it was hard to have a child. Of course, we lived up near the park in these big, old, brownstone houses and there were no really good bathrooms. There were no kitchens. I lived--I had a whole beautiful floor through. I wish. I had it now; but it had no plumbing and, you know, you can't have a baby that way. So we had to move out here. About two or three years after we lived here, they were clamoring for dance. They were people who knew about these things and I had a marvelous school with some of the greatest kids. I've produced a lot of dancers who are in the field today. One of the girls is with the American Ballet, one of the girls--she was a ballet dancer. It's interesting though. You get kids in the studio and you know this one's a ballet dancer, this one's a modern dancer. They're different personalities, they're constructed differently, they work differently. I could tell immediately. There was one child that was very gifted as a modern dancer, but she wanted to be a ballet dancer. It's a state, a mental state, you know. Somewhere they became--and you can't stop it. But T. urged her not to do it because I said, "You're not constructed like a ballet dancer. You don't move like a ballet. . ." Well, she spent about six or seven years working like a demon and nothing came of it. I mean, she became very capable, you know; competent, but she never became a real dancer and she could not get into any company. On the other hand, I had a kid, a little kid, who was marvelous, had had very little dance of any kind. Whatever she did was great but she looked like a ballet dancer. Well, she worked with me for oh, all

the time till she got out of high school and then went into ballet. No, she started ballet while she was still with me and I suggested that she do it. She became a ballet dancer and she's doing magnificently. She's going to be a very fine dancer. She's going into a big company, I know, but she's just a natural ballet dancer and you can see it. I wouldn't have believed it when I was becoming a dancer because I wouldn't hear of ballet.

KW: Well, people probably saw it in you. You know, you said--

IM: Yes, but I rejected the idea. I still don't know which would have been best for me. I know that what I get gratification from was--the thing that I enjoyed most was doing Martha's work. It's very exciting to do, and I never liked the ballet. I could have done it probably but I never really enjoyed it. So I did that, you know, after--from 1953 on about.

KW: Do you still have it now?

LK: Oh, no. No. What happened, I just got sick and tired of teaching. I never really was a teacher.

KW: It's hard work, too.

IM: Well, it wasn't for me. I did it under protest all those years because I had no other outlet. I mean, I had one child and then I had another child, and it was too hard to get to rehearsals. I did go back to the New Dance Group as a matter of fact, after Phoebe was born, and I taught there for a couple of years. But it was very difficult. I was guilt-ridden about it, leaving them with babysitters, and I did it badly. I really handled it very badly. So then I got as much dance as I could this way, but I never really was happy because I wanted to be performing. That was essentially what I was, a performer, not a teacher. I taught at the New Dance group but there it was always a part of performance. I taught for 15 years there, but that was always part of performing

because the teaching was at night, the rehearsal was during the day. And it wasn't as if you were teaching because you were teaching dancers. In a situation like this you were teaching a handful of dancers. The majority of the kids were not dancers. In a sense it was better than most because they came to study dance.

If you teach in a school, it's terrible because none of them are dancers so I avoided that. I didn't want to teach in a school, college or anything. So I did have wonderful kids, but only a handful, you know. And I'd work with them and we'd always have a company and they'd always leave when they were 16. At 17 they'd go off to college and that was very frustrating. I'd have a marvelous company, do a whole program, and half of them were gone. So that would happen year after year and I got very tired of that and I got very tired of teaching. So I decided to be a writer. So that was end of career there.

KW: End of that career anyway.

LM: But it was that particular career. I should never have stopped dancing.

KW; But it's hard to keep up.

LM: I couldn't do it, all those things at once, because I had all the other things to do. So that's **my** whole life story in a minute.

KW: In a nutshell.

LM: in a nutshell. I don't think I mentioned everything, but I did a lot of touring. During the campaigns, I remember I danced during some of the political campaigns.: I remember being on tour with Norman Mailer once.

KC Was this: before speeches they'd just have--I mean, what was--

LM: Yes. Well, they'd have entertainment and then somebody would get up and make a speech. It was for a rally. I remember doing that for Wallace. We campaigned and he was on the program, Norman Mailer, and I was and a couple of other people. And we danced for benefits, a lot of benefits. And then I toured all through

as a soloist with a small sort of revue company with--did you ever hear of Irwin Corey, that nut?

KW: Yes.

IM: He was our comic. He nearly killed me, I remember. He used to do the curtain for me and he'd say, "I'm going to give you 12 curtain calls" and he'd go like this. (Laugh) It was crazy but it was dance, dance, always--I always was performing, always. And that's why when I couldn't perform any more I began to get unhappy, just to teach.

KW: That's something--I don't think that can happen anymore. I mean, you don't hear of those many opportunities for dancers. You're with a company or--

IM: Yes, I don't know. That's right. I found opportunities. I was always performing. Weekends I used to go up to these little summer--you know, during the summer. I worked in camps during the summer. Sure. I worked every year. I worked up at Camp Tamiment two summers with Danny Kaye, Imogene Coca. I worked up at Green Mansions for two summers.

KW: Yes, and even my impression of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) Dance Project is that people were kind of in and out of each other's productions. You know, it wasn't like "this is a company and this is a company."

IM: That's true. Yes, there were many companies but I only danced with Charles and Doris.

KW: Why don't we talk a little about them. What were they like to work with? Compare them to Martha or whoever you want to, if you can.

IM: Okay. Oh, sure, I can. I knew them all very well.

KW: What were the differences?

IM: On the Project there was Charles and Jose. Now, he did Candide, which. was our big,

It was a great pleasure. I know that I enjoyed going to rehearsals every day.
We'd rehearse all day.

KW: Was he there a lot?

IM: He was always there, sure.

KW: He was always handy. It wasn't like he was a taskmaster.

IM: Not at all, no, no. He came in and he did the thing. He did the whole
production. He taught it to us, worked it out on us. He had done it before
apparently. There was a production of Candide before he came on the Project.

KW: With this company?

IM: Yes, but I don't know how much--they didn't do it very much and he just redid
it for us, I think. But he really redid it, he worked on it. We worked very
hard on it and he got the whole thing done. And Jose came with him sometimes
to help, Jose Limon, but we didn't work with him. He just came there and he
helped with the production because I guess he remembered a lot of it, too.

But we used Project people. And then Doris came on and she did with my Red Fires.
We did that with her and she taught us. We did To the Dance, which I did with
her company. That's the one thing I was invited to do and I was the only one,
as a matter of fact, that danced with them at the stadium and did this dance,
To the Dance. I remember I loved it.

KW: Was that after the Project, this stadium thing?

IM: No, that **was** still while we were on the Project. It was before we left it.

KW: They were in and out?

IM: That's right. Oh, sure, they did their productions, regular things. You know,
the Project just used them for this production. I could have gone with them
but I didn't. I went with Charles and when he went off, you know, and he did a
show--

KW: What did they have, a joint company?

IM: They had a joint company. They did concerts together all the time.

KW: But then also separate groups that you didn't--

IM: No,

KW; Well, how could you--

IM: They worked separately They worked with their company separately. I did not go with her. I did this while I was on the Project and I enjoyed very much doing it, but I didn't stay with them because I wanted to go to Martha. In fact, I used to come in from classes with Martha. I took classes with Martha while I was on the Project as a matter of fact. I just remembered that because I used to come on and do the stuff, you know, and they'd get very upset about it, Doris especially. They used to call me, "Oh, here comes little Martha" because I, you know, Martha was--

KW: You were using her techniques?

IM: Using her techniques because I loved it (laugh) and I would try everything out, you know, there. I didn't study with Doris and Charles. I wanted to study with Martha and it was a problem because I was working with them. I know Doris--I remember when I once came to take a class with her and she said something about "You're still shopping around." I mean, she knew that I was interested in working with--it was nonsense really, but there was a very strong feeling. The strongest feeling, however, was against ballet, the modern dancer against the ballet. But beyond that there was always a great competitive thing between Doris and Martha.

KW: And yet Martha didn't mind you, going to--

IM: Martha didn't even know. She was totally disinterested in the Project, She didn't even know. I mean, she wasn't interested in me at all at that time.

I was just beginning and I was in the beginners' class there. I didn't develop in her work until after the Project was way over and then I did a couple of concerts with her. I did Primitive Mysteries and I did American Document and the whole concert series that she did and that was very exciting.

Then I was asked to join her company on the road and I would have been in the company then. But as I said, there was a slipup there and instead of going with her, I went off with Agnes./ No, that's when I went with Bill; as a matter of fact. That's when I went touring with Bill. I remember getting a letter from Martha, a note with her picture at Christmas time She sent me because I was very upset with her. That's another story, but anyway, that's what went on there. There was this competition. It wasn't important, but there were great debates going on, which was the better technique, which was more important. And there were people who were strictly for Doris and people who were strictly for Martha.

KW: Were they really that different in style?

IM: They were a different kind of dance. Sure, there was a different quality to the dance. There was a whole different feeling about the kind of dance that it was. For instance like Eva never went to Graham. Sue never went to either one of them, but she did both of them. I mean, she enjoyed doing them Some people never went to Martha at all although I think Eva when She went up to New London one summer took some of her classes. I think she did. But, you know; it was just a personal choice. It was a choice of temperament, I guess, the kind of temperament.

KW: From all descriptions, it seems like they would be well, Eva's word is

"cerebral!" for Doris. So it just seems like they were both kind of cool and--

IM: No, it wasn't cerebral.

KW: --with a vision.

LM: It was spatial more than anything else.

KW: Well, she's contrasting to Weidman's being emotional.

LM: Oh, you mean between Doris and Charles you're talking about? Or Martha?

KW: Well, Eva said that Doris was cerebral compared to Charles.

LM: To Charles, yes.

Dr: Well, the way you're describing Martha it sounds like she would be more cerebral.

LM: She wasn't cerebral. No, I wouldn't call it cerebral at all. What Martha is is very central, very introspective. That's what the difference is. Martha's work was very introspective. Doris's was very spatial and very--just the opposite. It was very outgoing. Of course, there are other aspects of it. Doris's work was very musical, very based on the music, and she used music as a frame. She used the music--her dancing had a musical idiom. Martha's work was independent of music. It was just contrapuntal to it, totally, you know, it was used as a--the way scenery would be used, as an addition to it, not as an integral part of it. With Doris the music was very integrated. Can you see the difference?

KW: Yes. That's an interesting distinction.

LM: Martha's work was from the inside out always and Doris's was in design. It was never emotional.

KW: Yes, plus from what I know of a number of hers, she's interested in a kind of, not social themes always per se, but kind of, you know, motifs from American history.

LM: Right. Martha had that, too, but she did it in another way. Very personal, that was the difference. Extremely personal. Very introspective is the word.

Very deeply introspective and very personal, everything. And Charles was dramatic. His stuff was all drama, you know, a story, and it was great. And he used movement in a very telling, dramatic way. Martha was able to integrate drama but the essence of the style was very personal. And you felt that you were getting the feeling of her story, not just the story.

Not just the drama of it but the intensity of the personal feeling involved in the story. For instance, she'd take a thing and she'd say—she's doing a story of Clytemnestra and she's doing it at the point where she--the inner landscape of where she--I don't remember the story now. But she'll take one aspect of the moment of discovery of something, of the unfaithful husband or whatever, and you get the story but you get the intensity of the feeling of the moment, of the personal feeling involved. And that's what you get from Martha and it's very unique. Almost nobody else does it.

How about Tamiris? How would you classify her?

IM: Tamiris was a vigorous, very lusty, earthy, pantheistic personality and her work was like that. It was full of verve and a kind of a personal joy of movement. It wasn't probing the way Martha's work is and it wasn't lyrical the way Doris' is. But it was very, very lusty and very earthy.

KW: And she really didn't concentrate more on these social themes than the others?

IM: She very explicitly, she was the most explicit in her themes of all of them, and she wasn't afraid to take up a cause. And she did it well. You know, she did it with a great deal of zest. She would take spirituals and do them with zest. She would take American history and do it with zest, you know, and take a position. And so you knew you were clear about what she had to say. With Doris it was philosophical. 'Nth Martha it was a test of psychiatrics, you know, psychological, That's the distinction, You see, one was psychological, one was

philosophical, and the other one was explicit and lucid. I never danced with Tamiris. She wasn't my style at all. I enjoyed Doris. I enjoyed doing her very lovely spatial lyrical things. I'd love doing them, but as I said, it didn't give me the psychic kick that you get when you dance with Martha.

KW: Did you work with Tamiris much as far as the union and the whole Workers' Alliance?

IM: Oh, yes, I was very socially conscious from the beginning and very aware of what was happening in society and why we were having difficulty and why we didn't have jobs because I was a victim. I got out of school and couldn't get a job. I needed to live. I couldn't go on, you know, forever living off my parents. You get out of college, you're supposed to work. There weren't any jobs to be had. I remember applying for, trying to become a clerk. I remember that. Couldn't get a job. You'd line up--you'd come to the office and there was a lineup of 25 people ahead of you. And you'd get an interview and you didn't have a chance. I mean, here was this meek little character coming in. I was like a child.

KW: They'd probably think you were overqualified, too.

IM: Well, I was really underqualified because I was a math and physics major. I couldn't be a clerk.

KW: Yes, but they could say you had a college education.

IM: Yes. Well, they didn't say that actually. They took a look at me and said, "She looks pathetic." (Laugh) I looked like about 12. I always looked very young and frightened, you know. What could I **do**? I knew how to get the square root of a--(laugh). I knew how to get the volume of a torus. There wasn't much demand for the volume of a torus. But I did apply for jobs.

I tried to get work and there was no work to be had. And as I told you, I looked up, I finally had to get this DANCERS WANTED. That was the first job I got was in the Follies. And then you couldn't pursue a career if you didn't have any money. I don't know, we knew that. There were dancers living in attics. There were, I guess, and there were artists. But they too had to live. They were starving, too, and this is what happened. This is why we had to have the Project. We had to. We would all have been dead in the streets if we didn't.

KW: I believe it.

IA: So became socially conscious totally and tried to understand why the world was like it was.

KW: Did you feel like you had to fight the Washington bureaucracy or, you know--

IM: We really did think we'd get the revolution and have a better society, because we didn't know--What else the answer was. WO didn't know how else to proceed. Of course, we were very young and took broad views of everything, didn't understand the subtleties and how you could do something one step at a time.

I think I'm much more conservative with the years, but I absolutely understand why--I was what was then because there was a very logical reason for it. I mean we had to do something About the situation. We couldn't keep these whole groups of people getting out of school and having no place to go. So something had to change in the society. And one thing we did fight for a lot was for the arts. I mean, our big, big, you know, social upheaval and protest was to get the arts, to get more theatre, to get more dance, to open up these fields for people who were artists.

KW: it seems like that was a good time for it because there were--

IM: It was.

KW: --so many people out of work.

LM: Yes.

KW: And there were people who, once the WPA Project started, then the audiences came. Right?

LM: Absolutely. We had marvelous houses. We had--people were exposed to theatre more than they ever would have been and more than they are now. I imagine what they call the Inner City doesn't get theatre, just the way they didn't then. And we provided theatre for them and I think something is needed now. In fact, I understand that he's--Carter said something about a couple of million dollars for CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) and that maybe another kind of WPA. I don't know how much will be going--I think there will be money going for the arts. What they're doing now though is--you see, then they set up a whole thing where new young people could come. Now they're not doing that. They're giving the money to the established companies. I don't know' what happens to people who want to get into the field, whether there's a way. I don't know.

KW: I don't know either. Sometimes, I think, the CETA money will cover somebody if they have a specific project in mind. You know, it's like submitting a proposal and you have to say, "I want to paint this mural on this wall and it's going to look like this," and then maybe they do it that way. But it's not that national.

LM: No, the setting up of the whole institution. You see what they did--I never took classes there. I may have. They had a school first. The first money went into a--

KW: Oh! The state school?

LM: The state schools and that was the first thing. And the next thing we got was the Project, which was wonderful. But, you know, you didn't know then how wonderful it was until you see what happened. It produced many fine artists,

dancers, actors. Otherwise, maybe we would have come along anyway, but it would have been harder, I suppose.

KW: Slower certainly.

LM: Slower.

KW: Why do you suppose there was such--I don't know. It seems like Don Oscar Becque, for one, it seems--

LM: I don't even know. Now that was a political thing. He wasn't supposed to be involved. I mean, I don't know who he was. He was certainly not known. I mean, he wasn't the logical person to head this thing, and it was same connection. It was a political appointment of same kind. I really didn't know him. I don't know. He seemed inept. I had no dealings.

KW: Did you have to confront him often about these things? That's the impression I have.

LM: I'm very vague about that. Yes. I'm vague about him Fanya may know more about him, but I was very busy dancing. I don't remember getting too involved with him, I do remember that he was in the way. He certainly didn't help make the thing progress. He seemed to be an obstruction rather than a constructive force in this whole thing. So I guess that was a big beef that we had which was a legitimate beef. And I don't remember all those. As I said, I can't remember all the things that we griped about but you know there were a lot that we should have and a lot that we shouldn't have probably. But we were young, don't forget. We were not experienced. We didn't know how to do this, so we made mistakes I'm sure. We should have held on to that project.

KW: Well, I don't know how much you could have done really.

LM: It was a question of money, money, money. They just didn't have any more money.

KW: And even that--more than that even, the time. I mean, it became clear that anti-Roosevelt forces just wanted a scapegoat.

IM: Yes, that was it.

KW: And this was perfect.

IM: And you know, what a shame because it's a great idea and it could still be good for young artists, people who are just coming into the field who struggle, I know. They try to get into a company and the companies aren't that good and dissipated. And they don't get an opportunity to perform. We had costumes and we had theatres and, you know, we had a whole theatrical setting in which to do this work. And the people that came out of it and were to go on, went on and didn't have to stay with the Project. They went as far as they should go there and then went on to professional work. That would be a great thing to have now and they do not have it. I mean, a company like Paul Taylor had to go out of business for a while. He finally got money again because they disbanded last year. Of course, now they're getting a lot of play and they've got money somehow. But not for them. No, I think that there is something needed for young people who come out of, say, the High School of Performing Arts and who need a place to work. You know, it would be great. So I don't know. Every other country, I understand, has some kind of national theatre, don't they, that operates this way?

KW: Certainly a lot of them do.

IM: We don't have a national theatre.

KW: We don't consider it--I don't know.

IM: We have a National Theatre in Washington or something.

KW: It's just called that; it's private.

IM: It has nothing to do--and they only hire companies that are very top.

KW: They either get pre- or post-Broadway runs. That's what they have.

IM: So apparently that's needed. Now, we did it in a very primitive way, but that

should be the outline for a national theatre. And that, by the way, was one of the things we always included in whatever we asked for for a national theatre. We never got it.

KW: Do you remember the response other than, "We can't do that." I mean, I don't know who you asked.

IM: I think it was just ignored. It was just keeping enough money to keep this little

thing going a little longer, a little longer, until finally they said, "No more. No more money." They're cutting funds out of other things now, I understand, that had been started that--

KW: What, like in the Endowments or--

IM: NO. Wasn't there some CETA money for--well, the state councils on the arts, all these people who have grants. They're cutting those grants down. I remember reading very recently of somebody in Congress saying, "There's enough of that already. We don't need any more of that." Now, I don't know whether that was in connection with New York City where they're cutting everything.

KW: It could be.

IM: Or whether it was a national. Are there any national endowments at all, national council of arts?

KW: Well, there axe these two agencies that run the state councils, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities.

IM: They run the state councils?

KW: Yes. And they give a portion of their money to all the state councils and then the states get to decide.

Lai; Well, that's what I think they're cutting.

KW: It probably is.

IM: It was a whole discussion, I think, in Congress and they're cutting way down.

Now, like your project is being cut, you say.

KW: Well, it was meant to be, I mean, it's no surprise.

IM: It was supposed to be a limited period?

KW: That's what they all are, you see. It's nothing as an ongoing--

IM: I see.

KW: You have a specific proposal and you do that. And then you can apply again or--

IM: What do you call that?

KW: A grant.

IM: It's a specific grant?

KW: Yes*

IM: Are they going to reapply to continue this or is it almost finished or what's the--

KW: It will have to be different if it is continued because the grant was to organize and sort and make a register of all the material and that will be done.

IM: Oh, you couldn't continue further and--

KW: Something else will have to--you know, you have to get some other kind of grant to encourage people to--

IM: Now what you will have finished is just a kind of catalogue of everything that--

KW: Yes, that we found that was there. In other words, we developed the collection.

KW: Gluck-Sandor. Did you have any contact with him?

IM: Yes, I remember Gluck-Sandor. I think I worked with him for a while. I'm trying to remember in what connection. I remember him on the Project. He did The Prodigal Son, I remember that. He was a flamboyant.

KW: Was he a modern guy, though?

IM: Sort of.

KW: My impression was that he was kind of over--

LM: Theatrical, yes, theatrical modern. Not as strictly classically modern, though not as strictly modern in the sense that we were. And he had ballet background, too.

KW: I'd heard that somewhere. That didn't surprise me somehow. Because of your union activities, did you run into Philip Barber or Stephen Karnot or Walter Hart or any of these people?

LM: I remember them, Steve Karnot and Philip Barber. I remember Philip Barber as a handsome guy. I remember him, and we did deal with him in some of our negotiations. But it's not a vivid memory.

KW: Was it the kind of thing where you just had to go into someone's office and give them the demands?

LM: Yes. I just remember one occasion when we all went in there and sat in. And I remember getting up and making a speech. That's the only time I remember and saying, "We'll stand here without leaving until we get"--I don't know what. I don't remember what.

KW: If it was in the beginning, it was probably more openings for dancers and later it was no cuts or something.

LM: That's right, no pink slips. They were firing everybody and, you know, we would tremble each week to see if ours was the pink slip. And how they decided, I'll never know that either.

KW: I think it had to be arbitrary in a lot of cases.

LM: Yes,

KW: How about that sit-in at the Nora Bayes Theatre? Were you there?

LM: Oh, yes, I didn't you have a picture of Susy and me sleeping?

KW: Oh, yes, didn't know that was there. It looked like it was a desk top.

LM: No, that wasn't in the Nora Bayes. It was in an office.

It was on a desk. The Nora Bayes? Yes, I was there. What was the production? That was our production.

KW: It was Candide, yes.

IM: Right, sure. We sat in the theatre all night. I remember Charles talking at great length, He vw wonderful. I mean, we weren't sure that he was going to participate, but he absolutely came right through and did. I don't remember what that was about. Do you have records of it? Oh, well, that was against closing the Project, I think. We wanted to go on.

KW: 1937, I think, was about the time. It had been going for about a year and a half and there were a lot of cuts all over WPA. From then until the end it was pretty rough. Did you follow the whole business at the end, even though you weren't--

IM: Well, I was off. I went off the Project before the end even.

KW: Although they did put on Fantasy 1939 for a brief period and I think you were in that.

IM: I don't think I appeared in it, though. I think I left before it was--

KW: Oh, really? Because your name is in the playbill of that.

IM: It is?

KW: I think so.

IM: Yes, I think it is, but I don't remember performing in it. Maybe. Where was it done? Maybe I did.

KW: I don't know, but it's at the very end.

IM: Isn't that strange that I have a very, very bad memory of that?

KW: Do you remember any of these names?

IM: Oh, I don't remember.

KW: Do you remember anything About Berta Ochsner?

IM: Yes, I remember her. I do remember her. We weren't too happy with it.* I was so happy to get off I remember I didn't go in to the show.

KW: You may have come back to do that, maybe from something else, because I'm sure it was brief. It was the last month of the Project.

IM: No, I don't remember this.

KW: Is that the one Saida Gerrard talked about with the black velvet-covered ladders and having to climb down?

IM: Yes, up against the back wall and I remember that. I remember climbing up the ladder. Yes, I remember doing, learning this, but where was it performed? It doesn't say.

KW: Oh, I haven't got that with me. I don't know which theatre, but I can look it up,

IM: Lee Sherman, oh, my heavens. Welland Lathrop, oh, my God. David Campbell. Kathleen O'Brien. Where is she? She was my roommate. We lived together in the Village for at least a year. That's before the five of us lived together, or after, No, I left them to go to live with Katie. I remember that. I don't remember this thing well except that I wasn't thrilled with it. That's all I remember.

KW: The only pictures we have are of David Campbell and Berta Ochsner.

IM: No, those pictures that you have of the three of us, that's from that, all those pictures.

KW: at, that's from that. I hadn't seen that until today.

IM: Do you need this? Yes.

KW: I think you might have one, too.

IM: I probably do. What's this? Is that Candide?

KW: Yes. This is one picture. It's a group one. It's harder to tell people's faces.

LM: I don't have this one of Paula. This one I think is me. I'm not sure, though.
Isn't that weird?

KW: Well, there are so many people in it it's hard to tell.

LM: Lily Verne. I don't know where she is. But that's the pictures you have
of me. That's where I was Paquette, those individual pictures. I think I'm
in the back there because what we did we were in the group, too. I mean, we did
everything.

KW: I know I asked you this before. Did you know much about the other dance projects
in other cities under the WPA?

LM: NO, nothing at all. They had other dance projects?

KW: In Philadelphia and Chicago.

LM: Really? Did you interview those people?

KW: I haven't found anybody.

LM; Do you have names?

KW: Malvena Fried. She was in Philadelphia.

LM: Malvena Fried, I knew her. You've never found her?

KW: I haven't really looked.

LM; My brother knew her very well. There were two Frieds: Malvena and Elsa Fried.
Elsa Fried was in New York, Malvena was in Philadelphia.

KW: In Chicago, not all the time, but they did use Ruth page and Katherine Dunham.
It might have been in a deal like Humphrey and Weidman.

LM: Yes. No, I had no knowledge of them or connection.

KW: They were small ones and they weren't notorious for their union activities.

But often that's the case in New York. People didn't know about the rest of
the projects in the smaller--

LM: What was going on. Well, there was a real marvelous upheaval. The thirties
were great. They were exciting, they were--

KW: Especially in New York, ' would think.

LM: They were a sense of--you see, it's what the young people in the fifties didn't have at all and there was some of it in the sixties, I guess. I don't know, I was not involved. But the thirties were not only a political upheaval, they were a cultural upheaval, too, and they were a great, great rediscovery. They were--psychology was a new thing. The arts, there was a great blossoming of the arts, and there was also a social upheaval. Everything at once, and it was a very exciting period.

KW: Then you could sense that then, that things were happening?

LM: Oh, knew it, that it was--yes. And I realize now--we didn't know as much of what was happening.

KW: You can't when you're living it.

LM: But I realize now how much was happening. We were involved in all the new magazines that came in. I remember dancing for The Masses. What they had was a New Masses Ball every year, and I always performed for it, I remember being on stage with Zero Mostel and who else? A couple of other comedians. And I danced for them and Elmer Bernstein did the music for me. Do you know Elmer Bernstein? He's a very important musician in Hollywood now, but he composed a lot of music for me, Those were benefits and I would always do them, I remember. It was big events and there were balls and there were all kinds of social activities. There was always some place to go and something to do. Parties; there were rent parties and there were painting parties and there were benefits. It was a very lively time. I remember touring for--what's this organization? And we got paid nicely, too, I remember. I went out with small groups, you know, There would be a comedian, an actor and a dancer. What's his name, the guy that writes the "All In the Family" thing?

KW: Oh, Lear.

IM: Not Norman Lear but the guy who writes the stuff. He was a comedian then.
He's a millionaire now.

KW: Carl Reiner?

IM: Not Carl Reiner, no, no. But these guys--now Mel Brooks used to write the comedy sketches that we did in camp. He wrote that stuff. I can't think of his name but he's on "All In the Family" scripts, and he toured with us once on one of these tours, I remember. Laura Duncan, Al Moss, they weren't on the Project. Do you have those names anywhere?

KW: Al Moss?

IM: Maybe.

KV: Someone mentioned his name.

IM: He was a musician.

KW: Yes.

IM: They sang for me, and you know, it was a company, It was a little company of six, Somewhere I should have the material, but I don't know where it is. It was a marvelous time, when I think of it. I wouldn't have exchanged it for anything. I remember coming home one summer and they were a musician, Charlie Polacheck, an actor, and a composer and me. We called ourselves "Four Dots and a Dash," and we'd put on a little show and we'd perform it, you know. There was still a question of making a living and that's what we'd do.

KW: I think it's great that there would be people available to see these kind of things. Now--

IM: Yes. I'm trying to think who were the audiences. Who were the people. Well, organizations would--

KW: I'm sure a lot of unions and--

IM: Yes, unions. There was something called the IWO. I remember we toured for the International--it was an insurance, really, organization where people got insurance. But they had a little IWO in every town all over New York State, and we went all through there and danced and acted and sang. That's when Corey went and that's when this guy--I can't think of his name--Bernie something, very funny guy. And as I said, he writes the stuff for "All in the Family" now. It was a wonderful time. Artists, that's another thing. There was a great camaraderie between the writer, the artist, the musician. We all knew one another. I don't think there is as much of that now, I don't know.

KW: No, it seems more exclusive.

IM: Everybody does his own thing. Here we always worked. We knew all the writers, we knew the actors-, we knew the dancers.

KW: Having those separate but closely aligned WPA projects--

IM: Yes, somehow brought us together. I guess that's what it was. And we all knew one another. It was a fascinating time, and then when we'd work up in the camps, we'd all be there. You know, there was always a writer and there was always a musician. There was always a dancer.

KW: Were these camps run by unions or private or what?

IM: By unions usually. Well, no, some of them were private. Green Mansions was a private camp, but they all came out of this movement so that they were socially oriented that way. I'm trying to think. Unity House was the union. International, ILGWU, that was a camp.

KW: And it would be like a resort for--

IM: A resort for workers, right. And we'd perform there, and we'd perform all through these places, you know. We'd make the rounds.

KW: What happened to them?

IM: They have some of the camps, I think. Like Camp Tamiment still exists. That's where I met Imogene and Danny Kaye. They worked there. And then I went up to Green Mansions two summers. Imogene was there, too. I got to know her very well, Imogene Coca. Also me were in a show-with her. Oh, I never even mentioned that. Sue and I and Eva went into--oh, yes, I did, this Strawbridge show. I'd Rather Be Right, which was one of the New Faces.

KW: Oh, yes, you did mention that.

IM: I have pictures of that. The three of us were in that. Well, because we were working with Strawbridge at the time and he got the job and that was why. And that's another time we knew Imogene, yes. So I had a lot of connection with her. She was a funny little thing, terrified. She used to sleep with the light on. She was this big and she had a dog this big. And those camp days were--that was real fun. I mean that was just hilarious. They were some hilarious summers. I did that for about seven years, and then I stopped going to them.

KW: It sounds great.

IM: But I used to go back every year. It was tremendous fun and they had marvelous staffs. I remember one summer we had Jerry Robbins, Anita Alvarez, myself, Dorothy Bird--you may have heard that name.

KW: Bill Bales told me about her. He showed me a picture of her.

IM: Dorothy Bird, a gorgeous girl. And Miriam Golden. That was the one ballet dancer. The rest of us were modern. There are pictures there, I think, of that wonderful summer and they were all fine dancers. You know, they auditioned us. You didn't just get a job. You just had to go and try out. I remember

that summer Susy got the job at ILK, and I got the job at Tamiment. They were near each other so we used to come over. I'd go to her camp, She'd come over to my camp. And all these people, very creative people, worked there.

KW: It sounds a little bit like the borscht belt but not--

LM: This wasn't quite the borscht, no, it wasn't.

KW: It sounds like the same kind of--you'd get similar experiences.

LM: Well, yes, what comics got up in the Catskills. But this was a little different in that they were--they had full staffs. You know, there was an enormous staff in each one of these places.

KW: Plus the audiences.

LM: And they had a producer and they had a major comic, and it was the--you see, the borscht they would have different people every week.

KW: Yes, they would just bring in someone--

LM: Yes, bring them in. But this was a resident company so it was like a stock company more than it was anything else. And you produced new-work. It was almost like being in New London. And after I stopped going to the camps, I'd go up to New London for the summer. So there was always a summer of performance some place. But there were great stock companies and like Alex North was there. They all became, you know, people in Hollywood, and they were artists. Tamiris was up at ILK and Esther Junger. And what's her name, another one who worked at Green Mansions with me, Pauline Koner. She worked up there. She was a soloist and I was a soloist but, you know, we did different things. That was at Green Mansions. So they were like little stock companies. We'd do other things, too. We'd do sketches-. I can't sing for the life of me, but they'd make me sing. I'd get up there and belt out a song. It was fun, tremendous fun. But most important to me, of course, was the concert field and that's

what I was most interested in. The major things I did were the things I did with Martha and the things I did with the New Dance Kroup for many, many years. We did marvelous things. Of course, we never got paid very much for them. We used to rehearse like crazy and then do one concert. And they're still doing it. Sophie Maslow.

KW: And you'd also get paid by performance anyway.

IM: That's all we'd get, just the performance. So that's what was nice about WPA, I mean. We were on salary at least. It wasn't a lot, but it kept us alive. But we managed to maintain ourselves teaching and still do, I mean there's Bill. He is up there teaching I got very, very tired of teaching and I longed not to have to deal with children any more, you know. So that when I went into journalism, I adored it and still do. I mean I love the quiet and privacy and the complete control over your material. One of the frustrations of working with a company, and especially a young company, is that you don't get what you want, you know. You get only a part.

KW: You might, but you wouldn't know it until the last minute.

IM: Well, you don't get what you want in terms of performance and of ability if you're working as a teacher, I mean, with either a school, though, like he does. I'm sure it's very frustrating. I've heard dancers say they'll work with a company. You know, they'll have one or two dancers and the rest of them are not really dancers. And they're trying to put on something, a production that they have in mind, and it never comes out that way. So doing this year after year was frustrating.

KW: It's like being an orchestra conductor.

IM: Having control of your material. If you sit down to write something, it's you, it's what you do. You either do it or you don't do it, but you can make it as

close to what you want as you're capable of. You don't have to rely on other people.

KW: Are you still doing that?

LM: Yes, I still do that. I wrote dance reviews up until very recently. There was a new--I didn't tell you about that. There was a new-magazine in New Jersey, an arts magazine, that came out about a year ago. And the idea of it was to use as critics people in the arts; instead of just critics, to get someone who was a performing artist. So they had a playwright do criticism for theatre, they had a dancer do criticism. And I was the dance critic and I have some great reviews that I wrote. Then the magazine folded. No more money. (Laugh) So I'm not doing that now, but I am writing so that's my present thing. But I'm mostly interested in fiction now.

You know, I dropped out of dance almost totally when I stopped teaching. One of the reasons is, by the way, my throat gave out from years and years of teaching. I never used my voice correctly. But I got to the point where I didn't want to look at another dance concert and I stopped going totally for about three years, I just didn't go to concerts, And then recently in the last year I've sort of had a revived interest in dance. I'm now able to go back and I don't feel so jaded about it.

KW: Maybe that's good to break.

LK: And I'm having a resurgence of interest in dance and I'm willing to write about it again. I just didn't even want to--you know, everyone would say, "Well, you're a writer. Write about something you know, write about dance." I said, "That's the one thing I'm not going to write about." But now I do and I did the dance reviews for a while and I enjoyed it very much. So I do some of that but I'm considering trying to get connected with same kind of a,

with a newspaper or something in connection with dance criticism because they really need it. Because there's very poor dance criticism.

KW: And even then not enough.

IM: You see, I didn't think I would be able to talk so much and so long and at such great length (laugh) and so fast.

KW: Once you got started, though. . .

IM: All right. Got any more questions?

KW: Just if there's anything else you want to put on tape, if there's any concluding remarks that you want to make. It's up to you.

IM: I don't know. I think it's--I wonder how my voice sounds. I'm worried about it because my throat is so raw. You'll have to play back some of it.

KW: Okay.

IM: Just to see the quality of the voice. I'm a little nervous about it.

(End of interview)