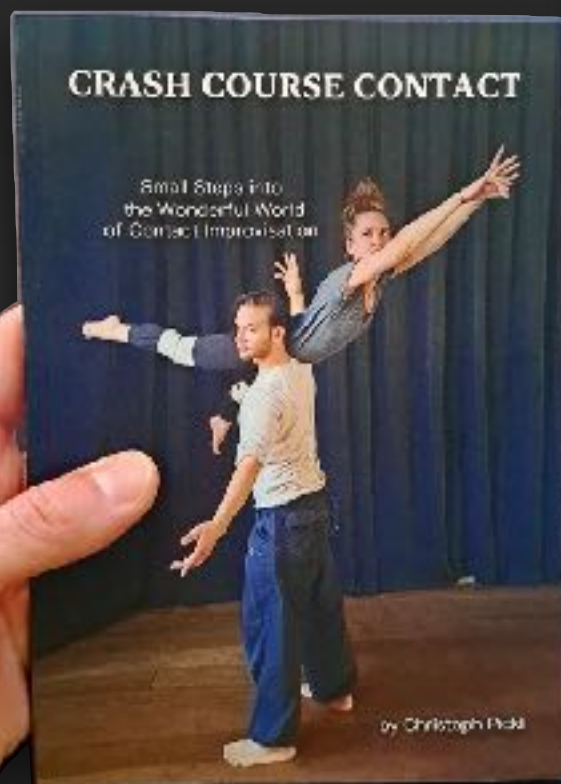
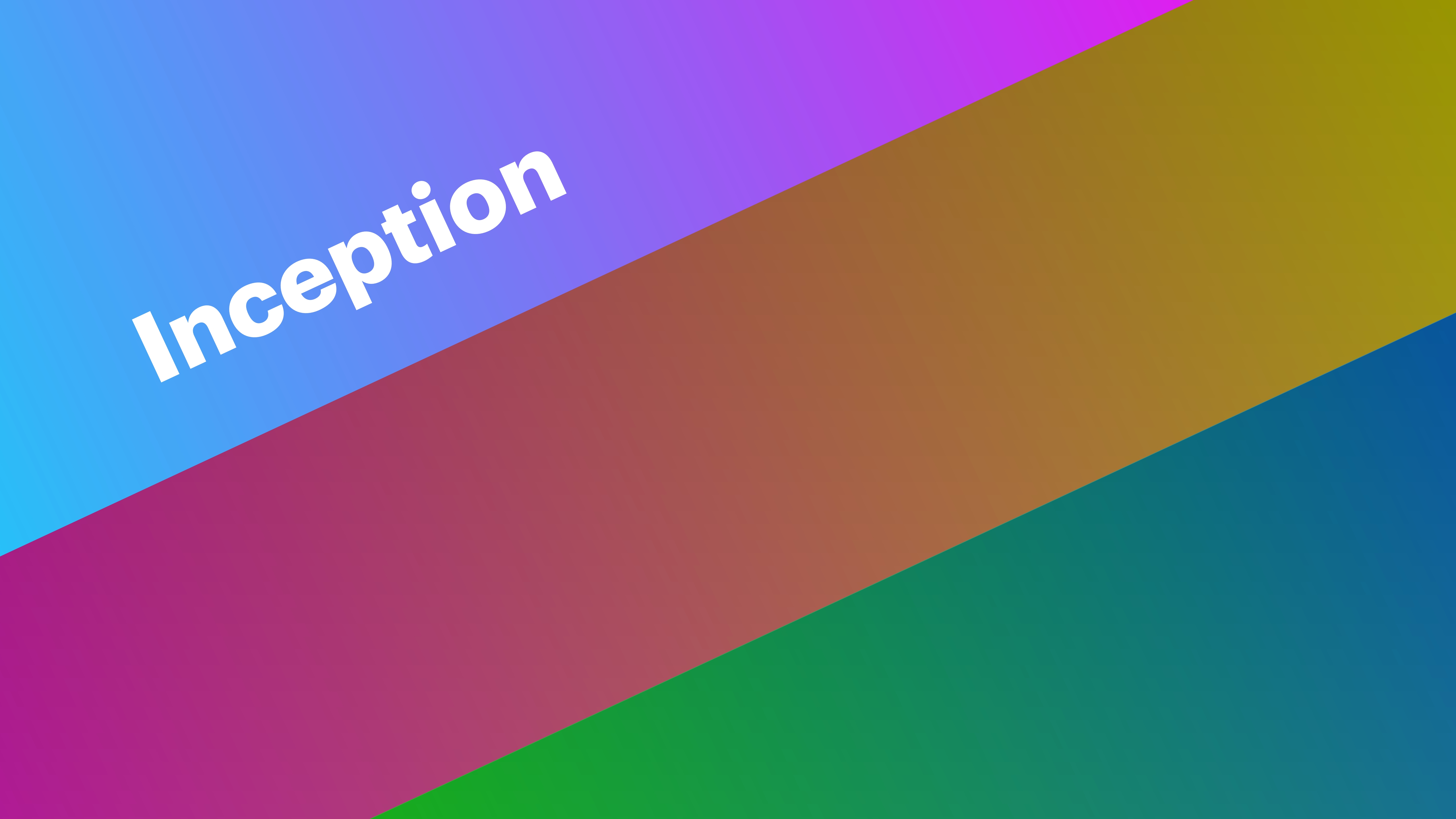


Contact Improvisation

The Quick History From '72 Until Now





Inception

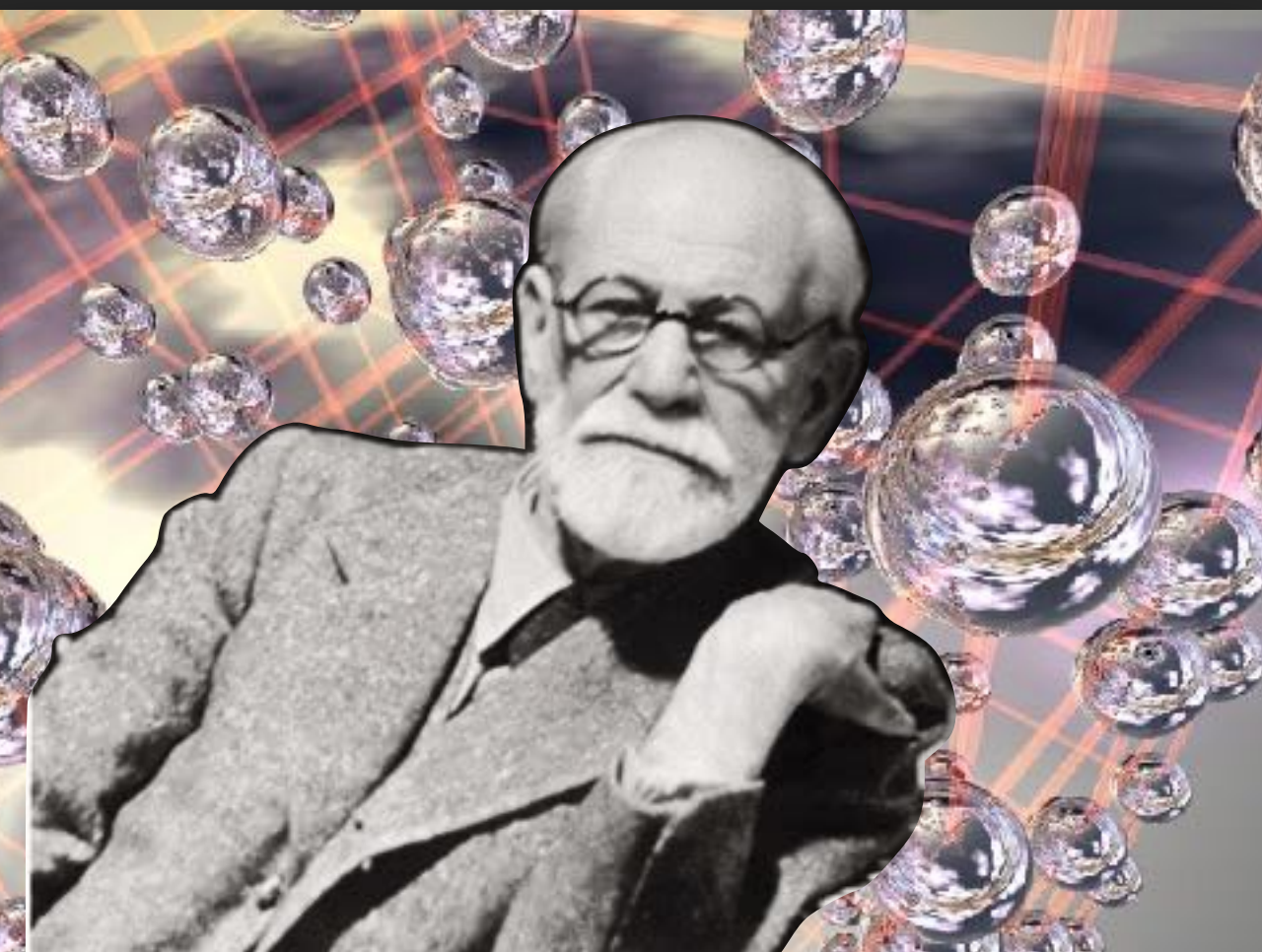


Disclaimer - No claim is made that the information presented here is all **correct**. It is **simply given** what could be found online, in books, and other resources.



Why?

What motivates us to study history?



"The values of that period were somehow built into the practice. It's like geology and the formation of rocks - when something forms, it takes into its structure the forces that are in the environment at the time."

Nancy Stark Smith



... next?!



The First Generation

a.k.a. Weber Group

Steve Paxton

Founding Father

1939-2024 (Arizona, Vermont)

Simple **parents**, two siblings

Partner Lisa Nelson

Danced since high school

Excelled at **gymnastics**

Dropped out **university**

Received dance **scholarship**

"I regarded myself as a barbarian entering the hallowed halls of culture when I came to New York."

He wasn't a warm and fuzzy teacher, he was thrillingly articulate.

He never faked enthusiasm.

He was discrete and radical, even provocative.

He was brilliant and very intelligent.

He was mild, with a seemingly humble appearance.

Career



1960's studied dance in NYC: Merce **Cunningham** and José Limón

Teacher at **Oberlin College** and Bennington College

Central figure in the development of **post-modern dance**

Founding member of **Judson Dance Theater** and **Grand Union**

A Buddha of American Dance.
(New York Times)



"I'm an angry person."
"I cultivate my pessimism."



Merce Cunningham

"Remove Yourself!"

Revolutionary choreographer

Free from **symbolic** meaning

Movement **emerging** by itself

Inward focus

CI is "**being**", not "performing"

"Dancers should not think that movement means something... Movement based on emotional or psychological meanings just seem ridiculous to me." - Merce



1986, "Roratorio",
stand and sit attentively

Cunningham

The Dance Academy

Steve studied there (1961-64)

Experimentation w/o judgment

Dunn's **composition** classes

Stopped to "**find himself**"

Performed at **Judson Church**

"The premise of the Bob Dunn's class, was to provoke untried forms, or forms that were new to us." - Steve Paxton



Robert Dunn

Good Old Uncle Bob

At **Cunningham** with Cage

Dance **composition** classes

Colleague of **Graham**

Paxton's **inspiration**

"Birthplace" of **Judson Group**



John Cage

4'33"



john cage

Apple Music

Home

Radio

Library

Recently Added

Artists

Albums

Songs

Store

iTunes Store

Playlists

All Playlists

Apple Music

Listen to John Cage and 100 million more songs.

START YOUR TRIAL

Music > Classical > John Cage

four minutes

seconds

4'33"

thirty-three

€ 0,99 Buy

Released 9 Jul 2002

© 2010 The Sound Corporation

4'33"

John Cage >

Songs

Ratings and Reviews

Related

	NAME	COMPOSER	TIME	POPULARITY	PRICE
1.	4'33"	John Cage	4:33		€ 0,99

TOTAL: 1 ITEM

Zen

Form, Nature, Acceptance

Growing **interest** in 50s/60s

CI = Modern **Dance** + Zen (?)

Natural = **Functional**

Art = **nature**

Cage-Duchamp movement

“The attitudes of calm peacefulness and wild disorientation are joined in CI. Allowing the dance to happen, and recognizing that anybody can dance.”

- Yvonne Rainer



Oberlin

Liberal Arts College #1

Private **liberal arts** college

Progressive student activism

Steve lived/**taught** there

Invention/"Home" of CI



Bennington

Liberal Arts College #2

Private **liberal arts** college

Home for **Judson** group

Steve & Lisa **taught** there

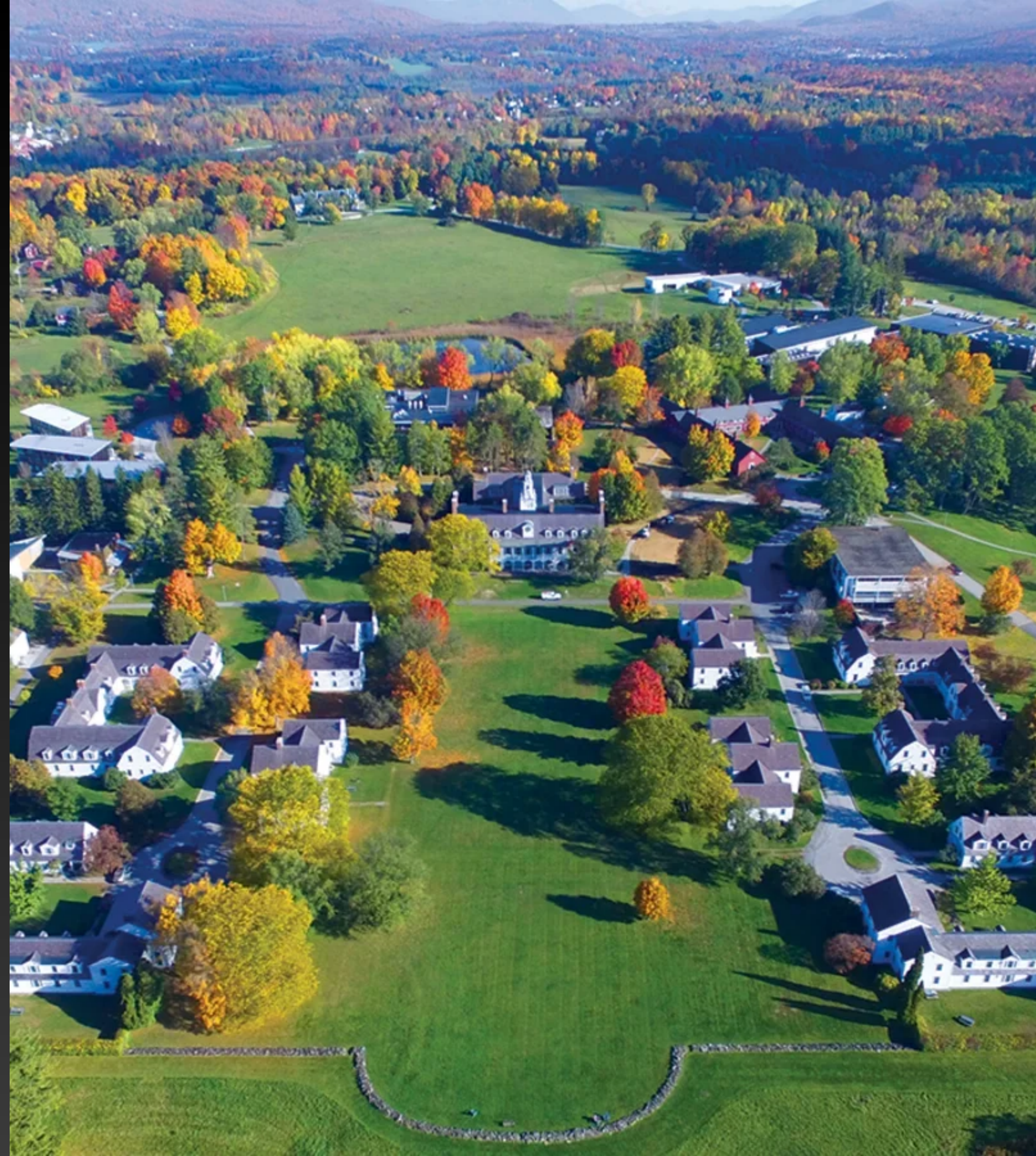
Maturation of CI



197x, Steve Paxton and
Trisha Brown



1978, Steve Paxton (top)
and Danny Lepkoff





Earthdance

Retreat Center



Judson Dance Theater

“The Judson Era” 1962-64

Dancers used the **gymnasium**

Evolution of **Dunn’s** class

Birth of **post-modern** dance

Evolved into **Grand Union** 🙄



Yvonne Rainer

Rebel Maid

Early **Egalitarianism**

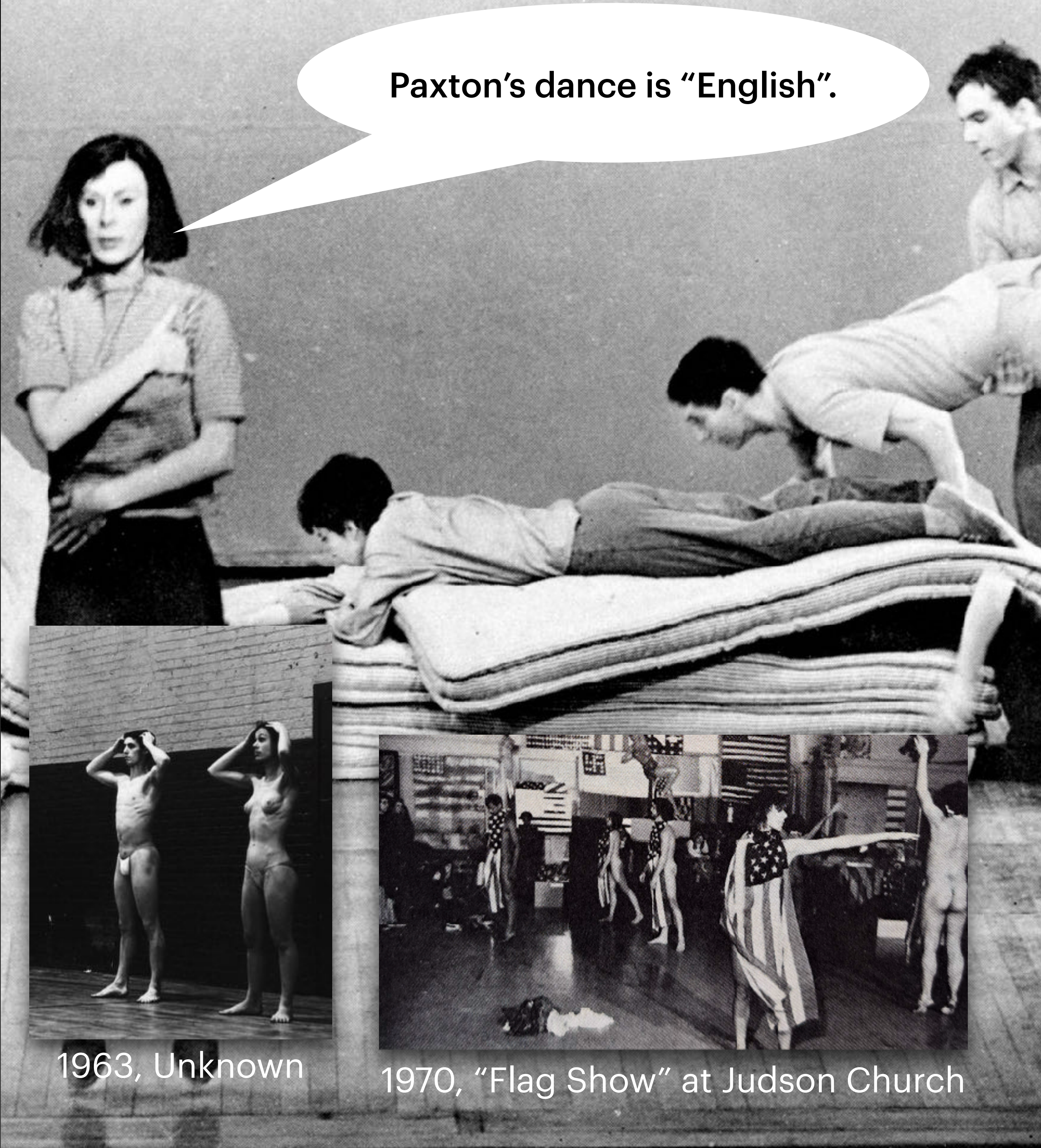
Non-entertaining, but political

"Continuous Project Altered Daily" as
beginning of **Grand Union**

most active **Judson** member

**"He was very aware of the
importance of social content
and attempted to integrate that
into his dancing."** - Yvonne

Paxton's dance is "English".



1963, Unknown

1970, "Flag Show" at Judson Church

“Steve’s was the most severe and rigorous of all the work that appeared in and around Judson during the 1960s. Eschewing music, spectacle, and his own innate kinetic gifts and acquired virtuosity, he embraced extended duration and so-called pedestrian movement while maintaining a seemingly obdurate disregard for audience expectation.”



Yvonne Rainer

Grand Union

NYC, 1970-76

By **Yvonne Rainer's** piece

Improvisational, anarchic

Leaderless group

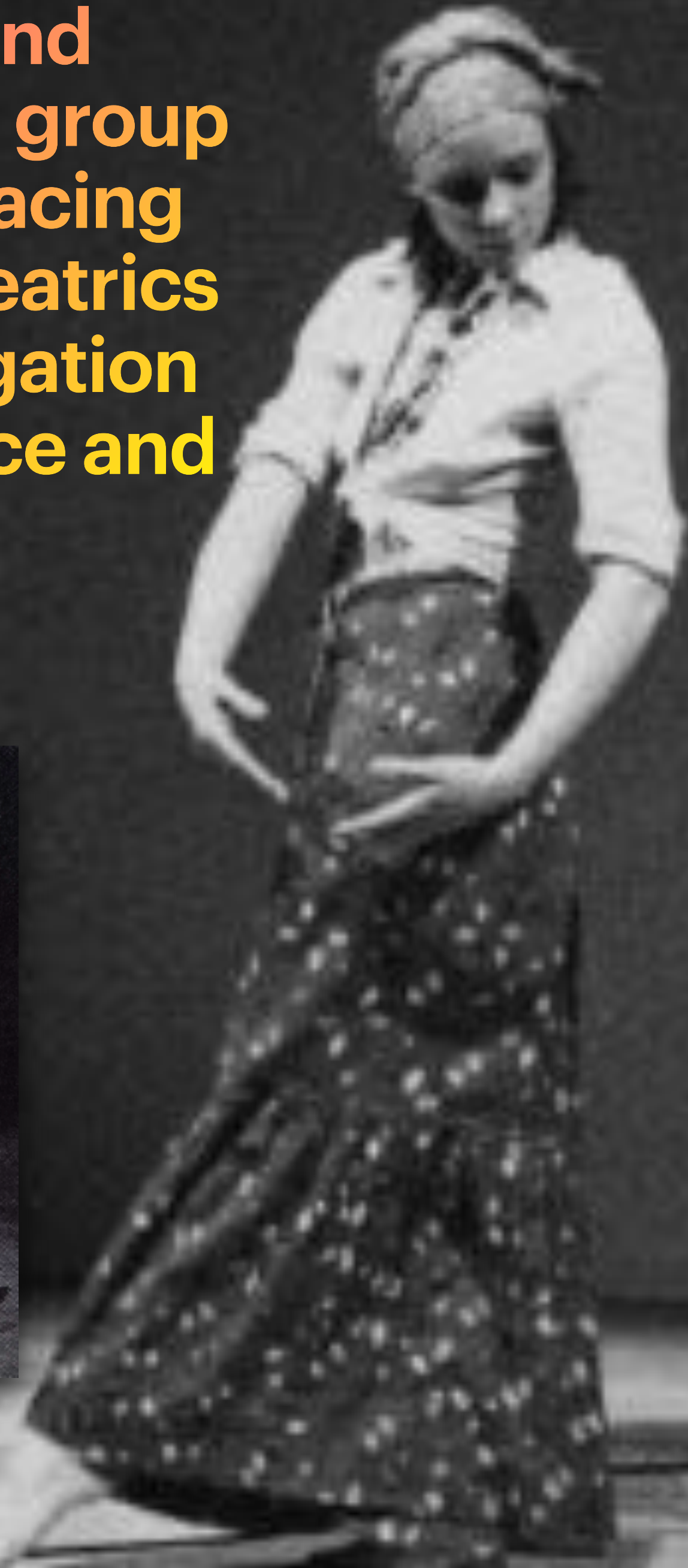
"Yvonne Rainer and Dancers"

Not many viewers, but **great!**

"Collective of choreographers, and performers who made group improvisations embracing dance, theater and theatrics in an ongoing investigation into the nature of dance and performance."



1974, at Judson Church
Trisha and Steve on the left



ReUnion

First-CI.com, 1975-78

Mainly West US/CA

Tour, teach, perform

(Steve, Nancy, Lisa, Curt, Nita, Danny, ...)

Grow **popularity** of CI

Initiated contact **newsletter**



"Most of them modern dance choreographers were quite dramatically emotional, or (had) a romantic style... except for Merce Cunningham, who really developed the most important abstract style, and that was what I was drawn to. He wasn't dealing with the emotions. He was looking more at a kind of physics of dance, and to get to that point in the most pristine way possible, the work couldn't be dramatized."



Steve Paxton, 1990



A Grand Old Man of Post-Modern Dance.

Goldberg Variations

1992 in Amsterdam, J.S. Bach by Glenn Gould



(Rehearsal, 1987:

)

The inventor of walking.

Satisfyin' Lover

1967 in Paris, Pedestrian Movement



1960's Yvonne Rainer's
"The Mind Is a Muscle"



“There is a curious mixture of tension and relaxation in Paxton’s body when he dances. At times one sees analogues to Cunningham’s shapes, but more fluid, loosened: nimble, intricate footwork executed with floppy ankles and feet; circular shapes made with lax rather than held arms.”

Banes



Awards

1980 - National Endowment for Arts

1987 - Bessie Award

1994 - Contemporary Arts

1995 - John Simon Guggenheim

1995 - Bessie Award

2014 - Golden Lion for Lifetime

2015 - Bessie Award for Lifetime



Works

1961 - Proxy 🚶

1964 - Jag Vill Gärna Telefonera 🐔

1966 - Physical Things

1967 - Satisfyin' Lover 📺

1970 - Intravenous Lecture

1978 - PA RT 👫

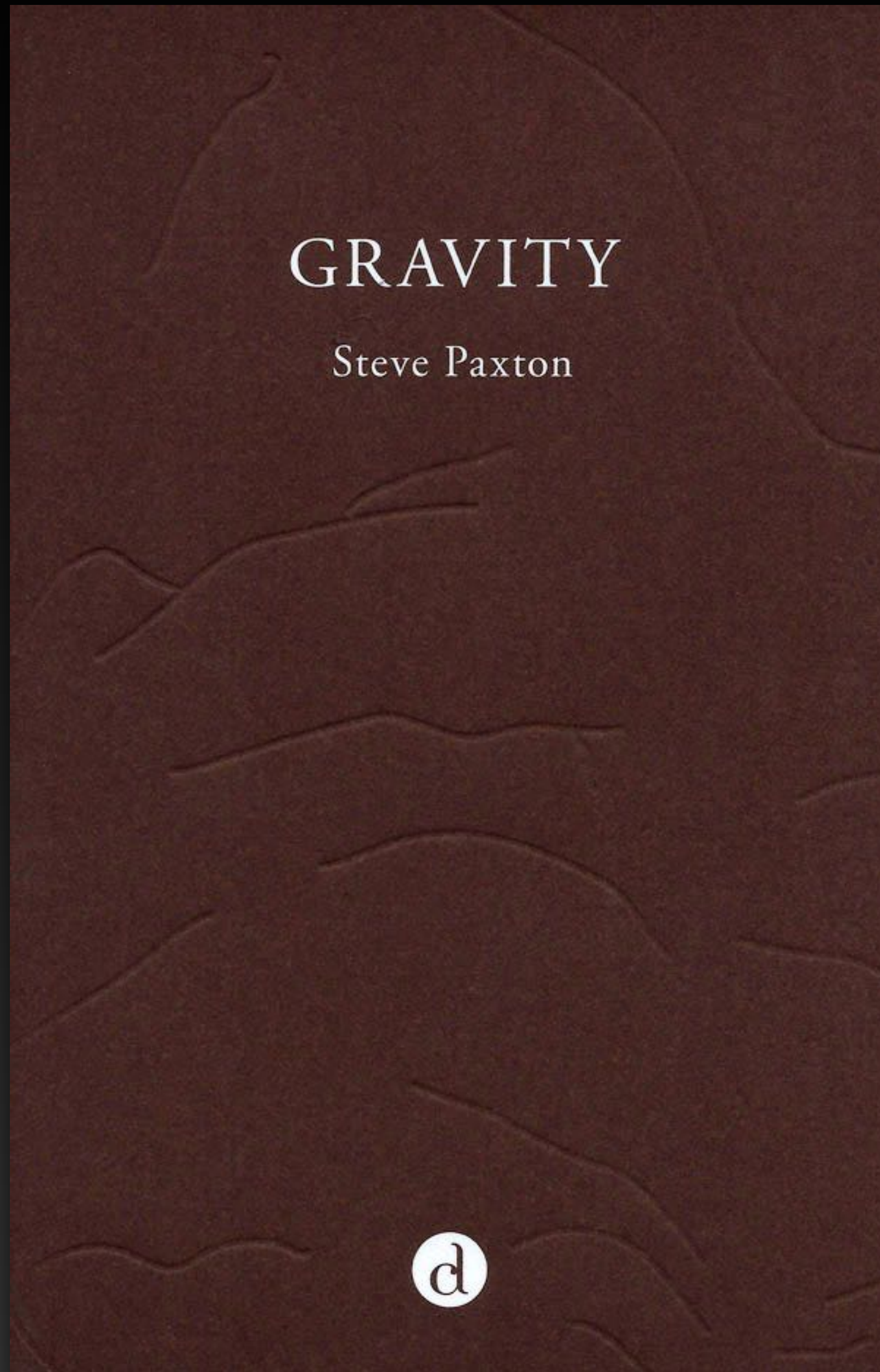
1986 - Goldberg Variations 📺

2004 - Night Stand 👫

2008 - Material for the Spine 🦴

2016 - Quicksand

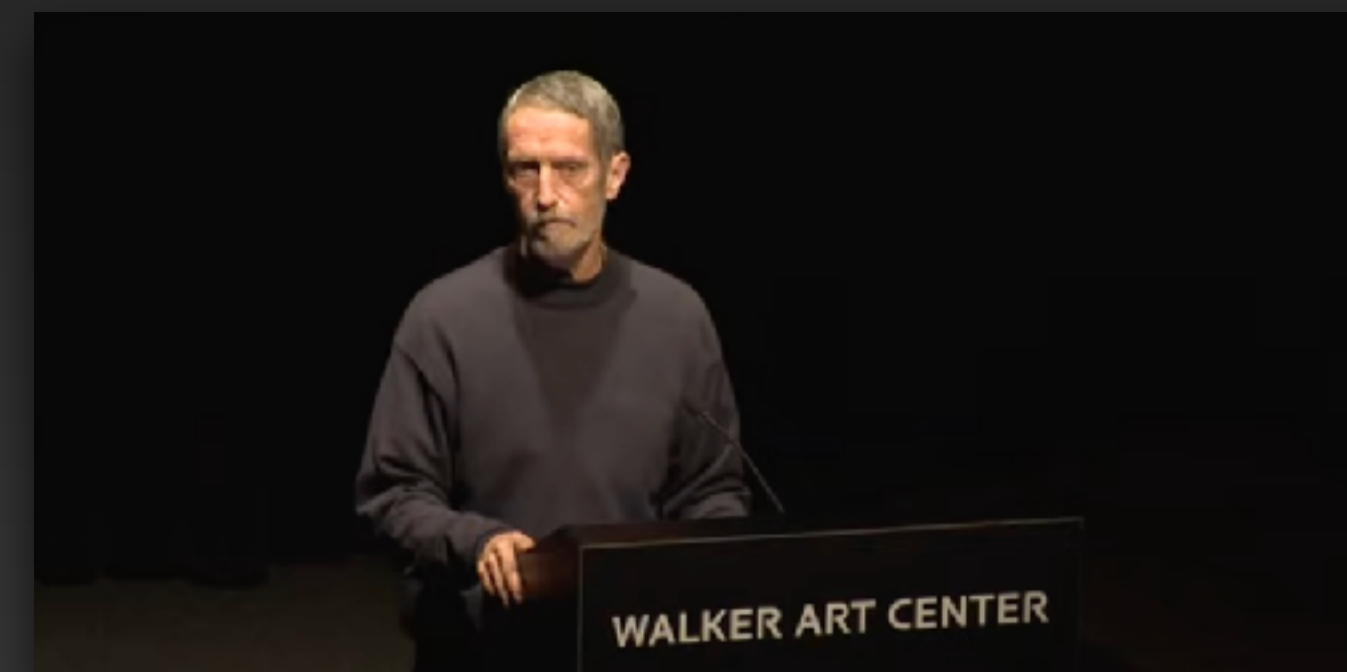




2018 - “postmodern poetry”

**fragmented/lyrical rumination theme:
gravity and the human relationship to it**

“Birth is not so much a beginning as it is an abrupt change in which suddenly there are different factors than those in the womb, and there is gravity. With gravity, a new negotiation begins, and these terms condition us for the rest of our lives.”



Material for the Spine



2008, Steve plus “Contredanse”

Spine awareness/perception

Interactive **DVD / Video** collection

With many **exercises** too

“To bring the light of consciousness to the dark side of the body.” - Steve

“What the spine is doing in that tumbling sphere with another person —a kind of yogic form, a technique that focuses on the pelvis, the spine, the shoulder blades, the rotation of the head.” - Steve

Leadership

Social movements **rely** on a leader

CI as **anti-authoritarian**/-traditional

Being late, not showing up

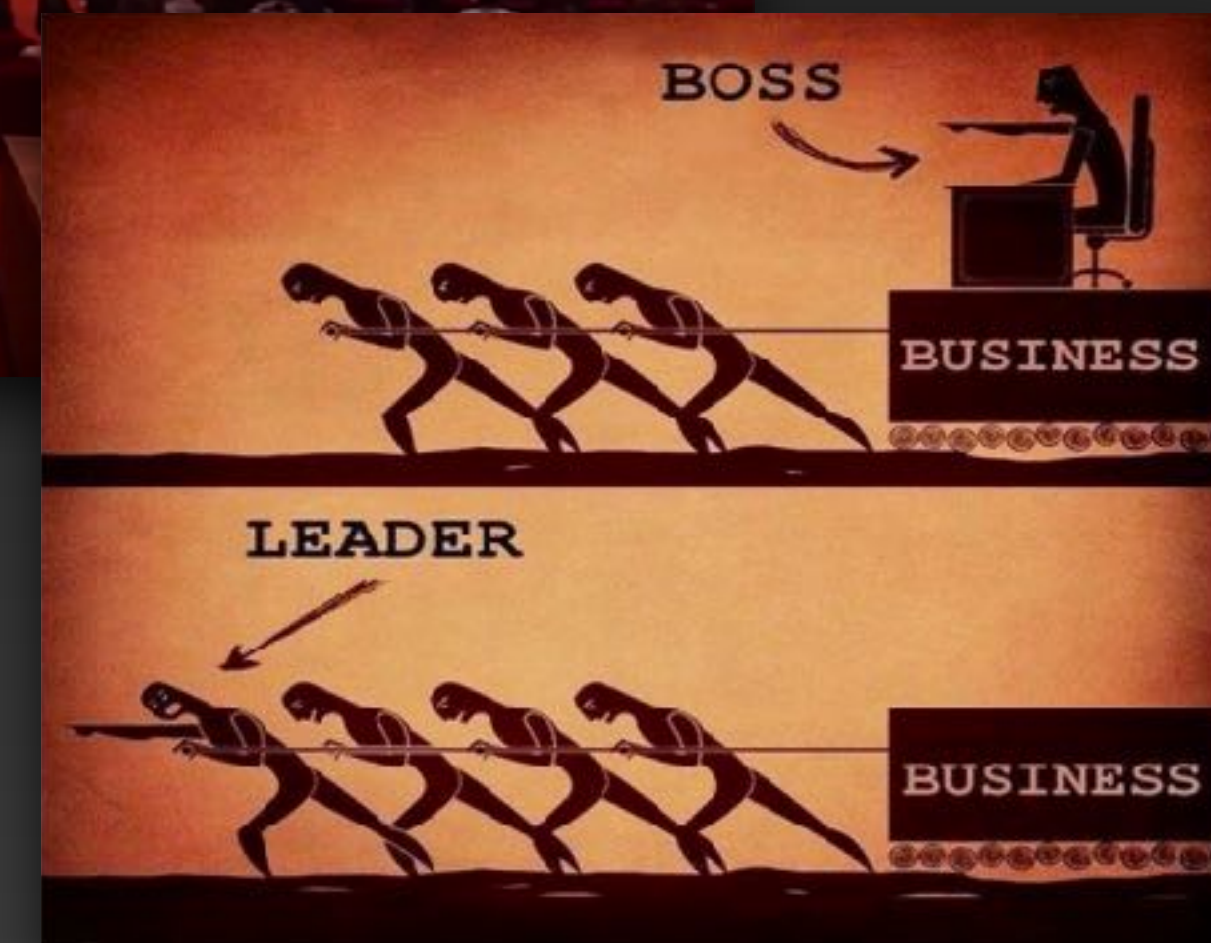
Gives instructions, **walks away**

Even more a leader thus

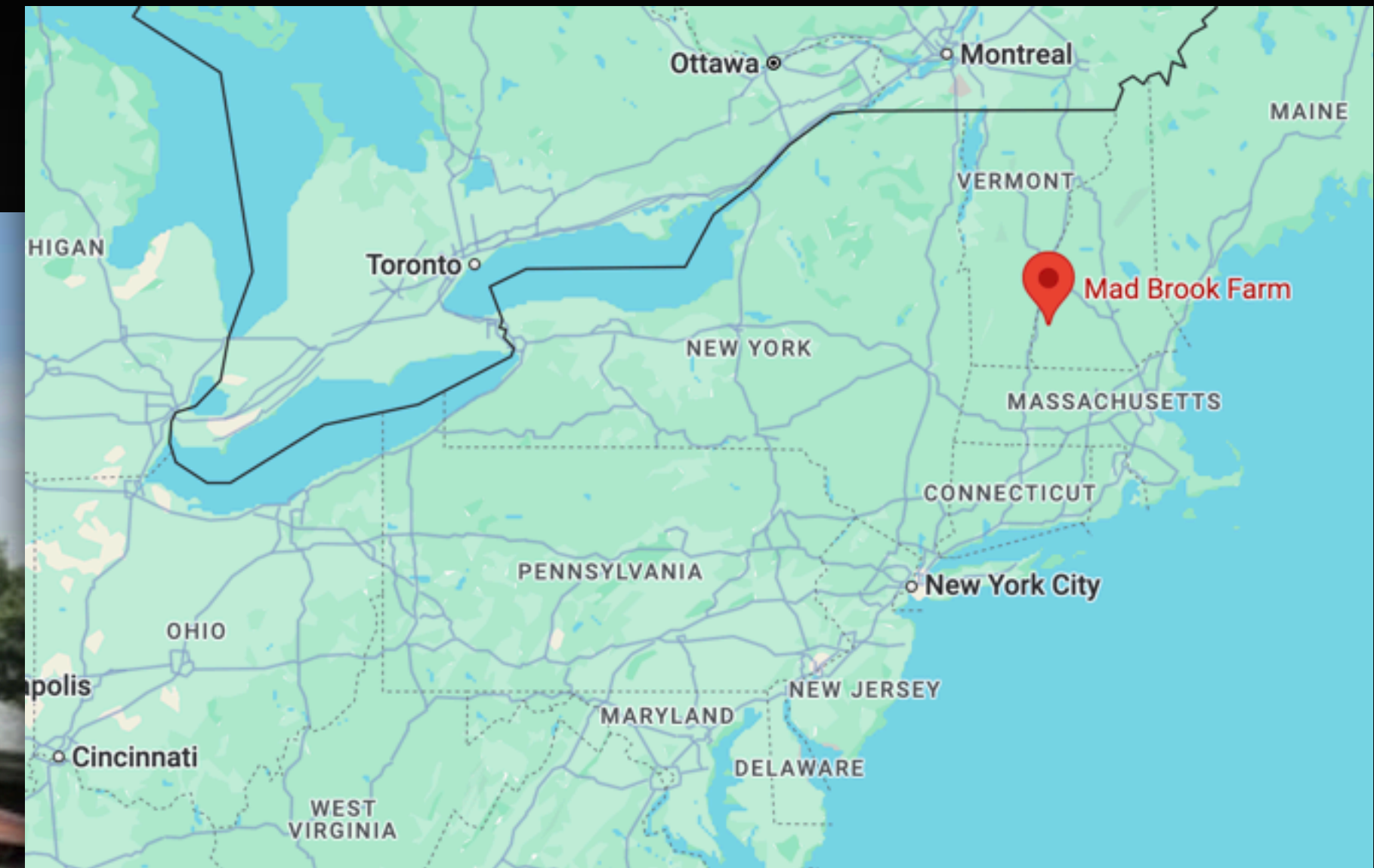
“He holds leadership position in a vacuum.”

- Nancy Stark Smith

An unwilling leader.



Mad Brook Farm



... in a non-wimpy way / Steve Paxton



Nancy Stark Smith

Founding Mother

1952-2020, NYC

Athlete/Gymnast

Sports too competitive

Dance too narcissistic

Main **contributor** to CI





“I'd see the dancers standing in front of a wall of mirrors, looking at themselves and making little movements. I didn't understand what was exciting about that.”

Nancy Stark Smith

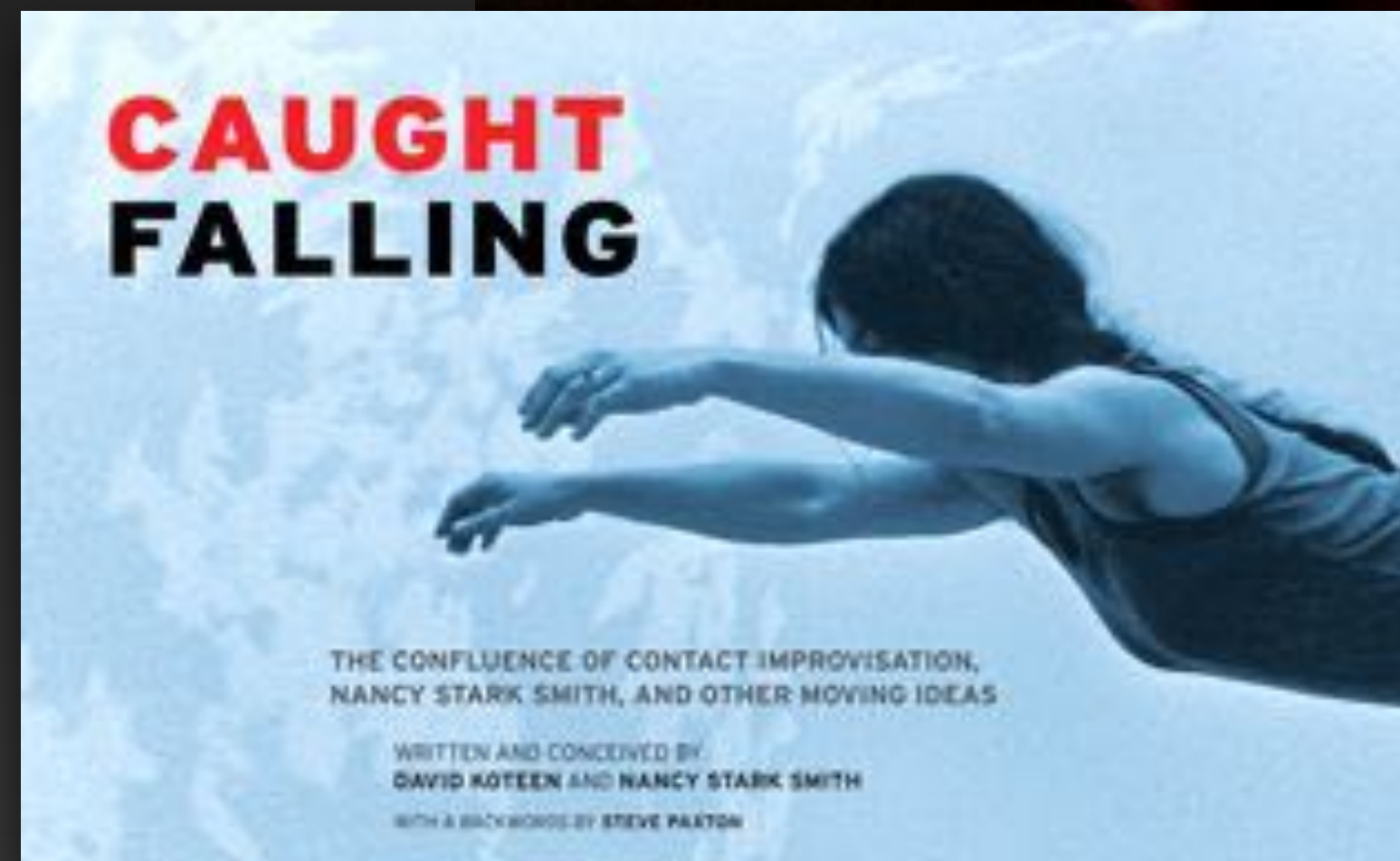
Profession

Studied at **Oberlin** College

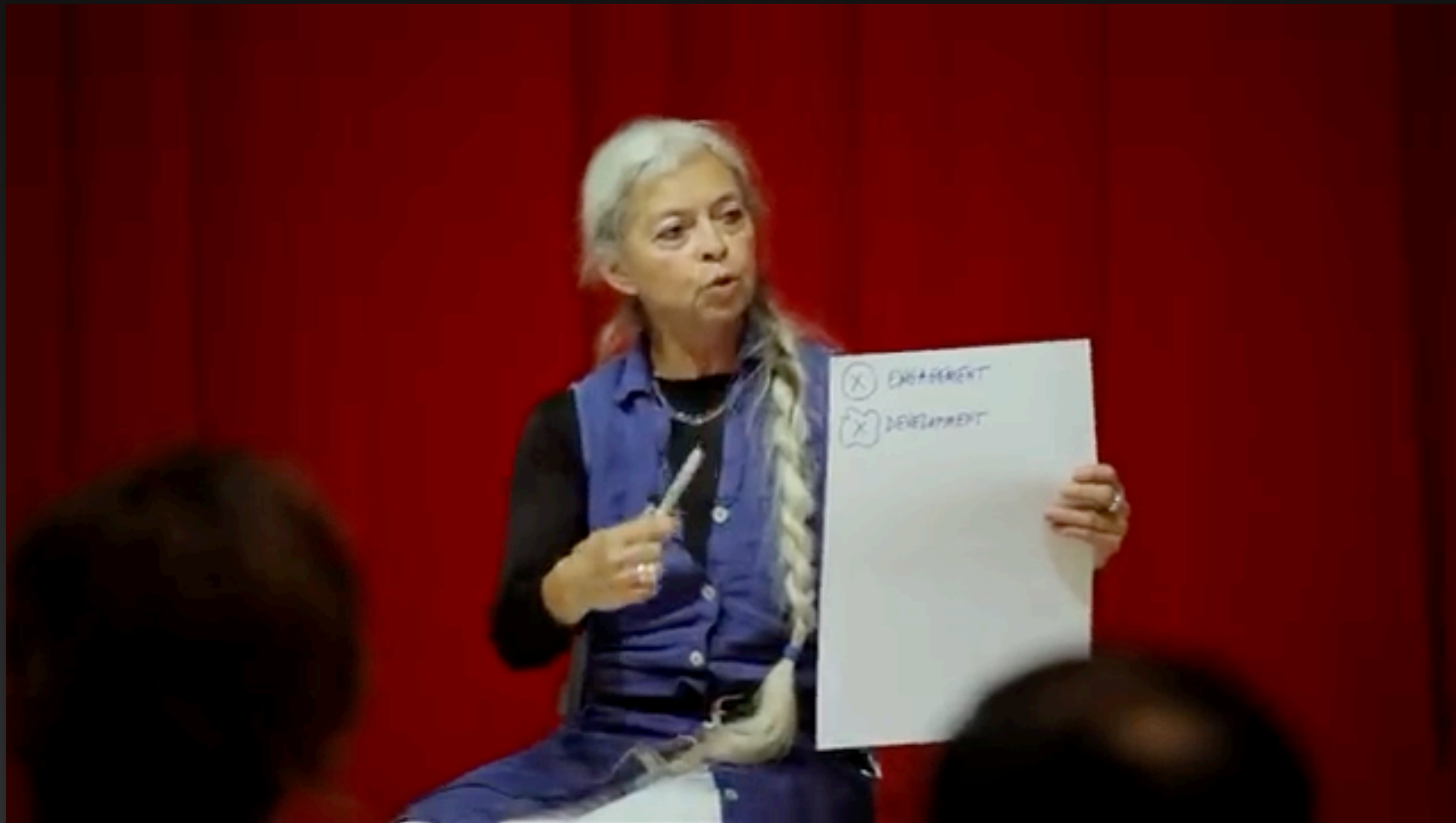
Forbidden at Steve's classes

Took over from Steve mid-80s

She was athletic,
she was responsive, she would take
initiative... she was very daring.



Underscore



1990, from **Nancy** Stark Smith

Improvisational, compositional

Structure: 20 phases, 3-4 hours

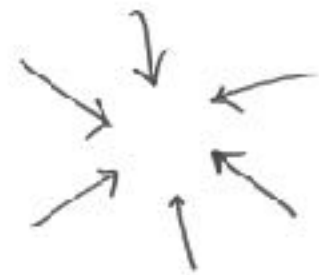
Reflective **Jam?**

5-Rhythms like?

UNDERSCORE

() ARRIVING ENERGETICALLY

(•) ARRIVING PHYSICALLY



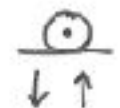
ASSEMBLY



PREAMBULATION



SKINESPHERE



BONDING WITH THE EARTH



MOBILIZING/AGITATING

X CONNECTIONS

• X TOUCH

→ CONFLUENCE

↗ DIVERGENCE

⇒ COINCIDENCE

→ ← ATTRACTION

← → REPULSION

↗ TANGENT

↗ ↘ INFLUENCE

↑ CONTRAST

↗ ↘ INTERSECTION

~ ~ ~ EM. PATHY / RESONANCE

↗ ↘ COLLISION



GRAZING

(X) ENGAGEMENT

(X) DEVELOPMENT

X END/RESOLUTION/DISENGAGEMENT



RECIRCULATION THROUGH THE SYSTEM

[] OPENSORE w/ observ. res.

[*] FINAL RESOLUTION OF TENSION

[/] DISENGAGEMENT FROM WITHIN



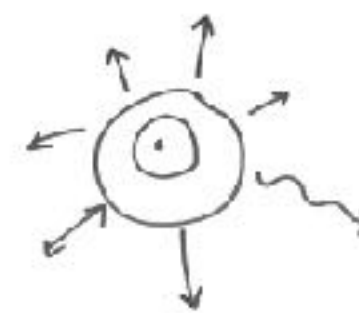
KINESPHERE



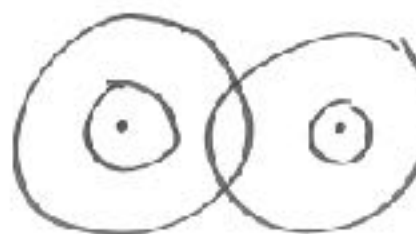
LOW KINESPHERE



HIGH KINESPHERE



EXPANDING/TRAVELLING KINESPHERE



OVERLAPPING KINESPHERE



REFLECTION/HARVEST



SHARING

ANYTIME ALLTHE TIME ASPECTS



STREAMING



NOTICING



GAP



COMPOSITION



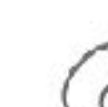
TELESOPING-AWARENESS



OBSERVING



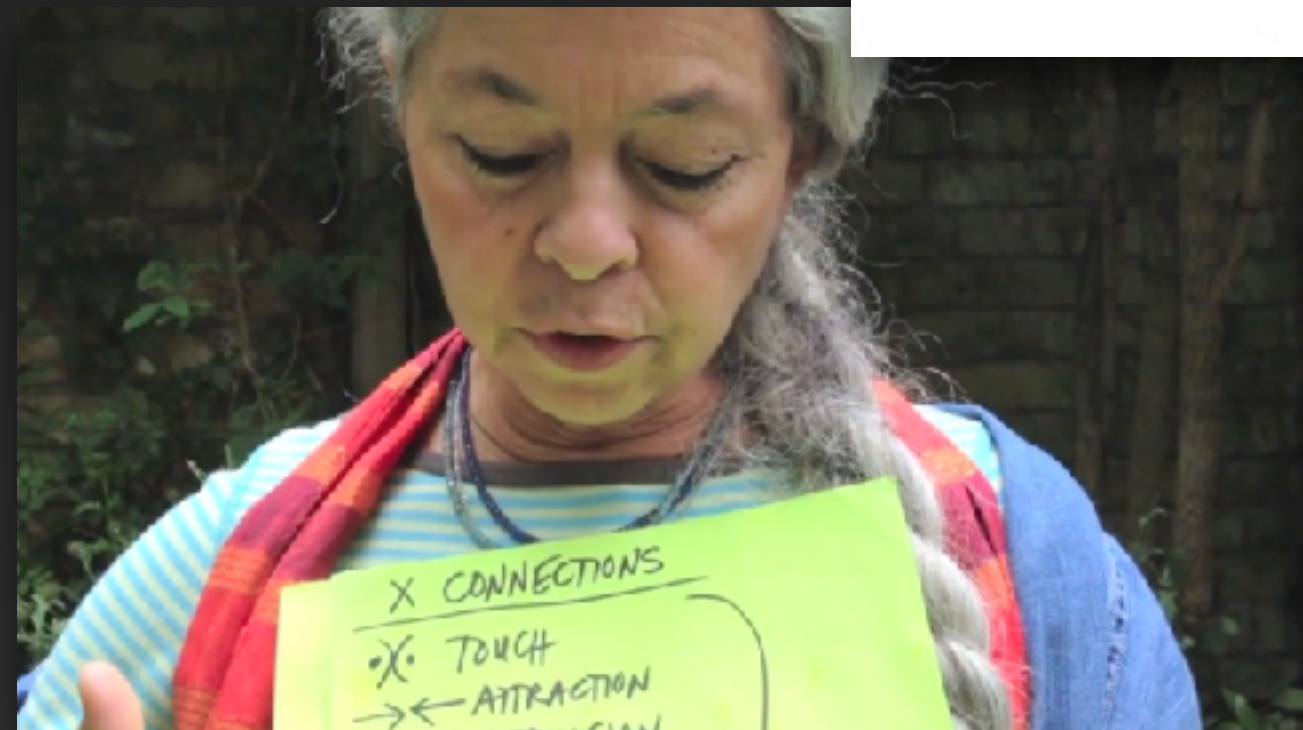
LISTENING



SIMPLIFY



BUTTON



The Poetics of Touch

A Pathway Into Contact Improvisation (2007)



Lisa Nelson

Partner-Companion

1949 NYC/Vermont

Modern **dance** and ballet

Steve's partner & collaborator

'72 **Bennington** College 💕

'73 Developed "**Tuning Scores**"

'74 joined **CI** (CQ + videos)





Masters of Improvisation



Então, a seriedade de propósitos que tinha vindo com os trabalhos da Judson era apenas uma pequena parte deste bolo.



**“Improvisation
allows the dancer
to be his own
choreographer.”**

Nita Little

First Lady

Studied at **Bennington**

"Crawling Under/Over score"

Researching **Embodied Mind**



1976, Nita and Nancy

1975, Nita and Steve

Daniel Lepkoff

Loyal Companion

Studied **Rochester** University

Dancer, improviser, writer

Into **Functional** Movement

CI = **Mindfulness** Information

90s member of "Channel Z"



1975, Danny and Scott Jones



University of Rochester

Liberal Arts College #3



Body Performance



Μια τεχνική να διδάξεις τους ανθρώπους να βλέπουν
πράγματα που δεν βλέπουν, το πώς να κάνεις το
αόρατο ορατό

**“Precedence of
body experience
first, and mindful
cognition second, is
an essential
distinction between
CI and other
approaches to
dance.”**

Curt Siddall

Humble Initiator



Studied **Oberlin** College

Part of Magnesium, Chute 🎥

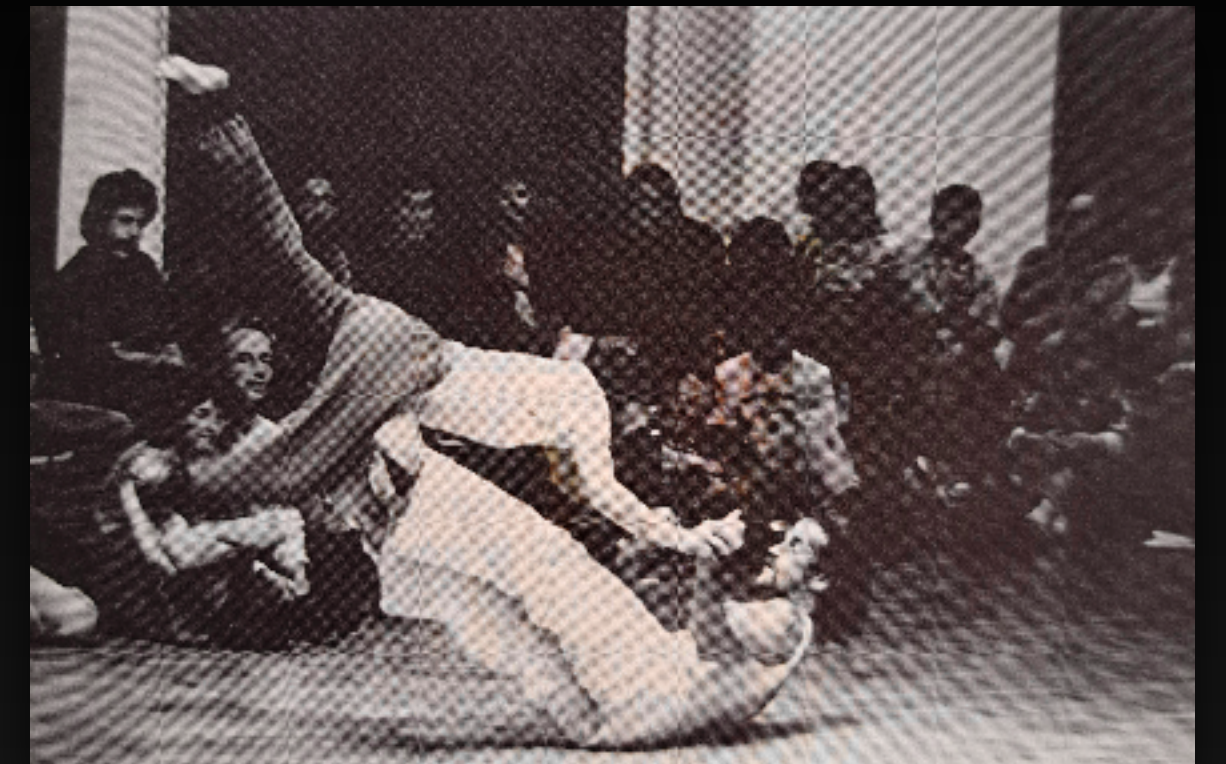
Member **ReUnion**

Founder **Mangrove**

“CI is the beauty of natural movement combined with full communication.” - Curt



1976, Curt and Steve



1976, Curt and Nancy



1976, Steve flies over Curt

David Woodberry

Man in the Background

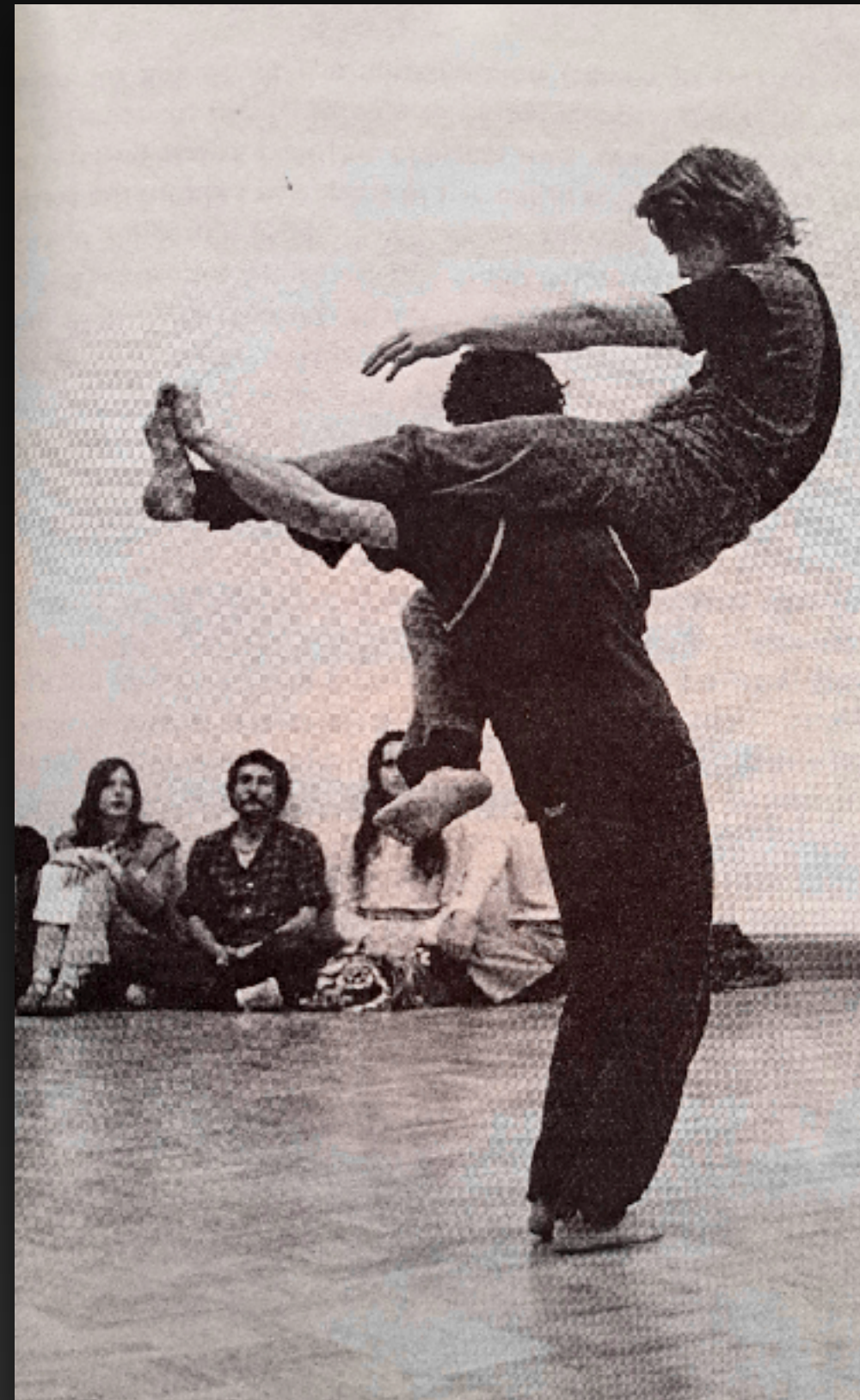
University of **Rochester**

Part of Chute, Soft Pallet 🎥

Member of **ReUnion**

**“The instincts take over.
The body knows how to
protect itself.”**

- David



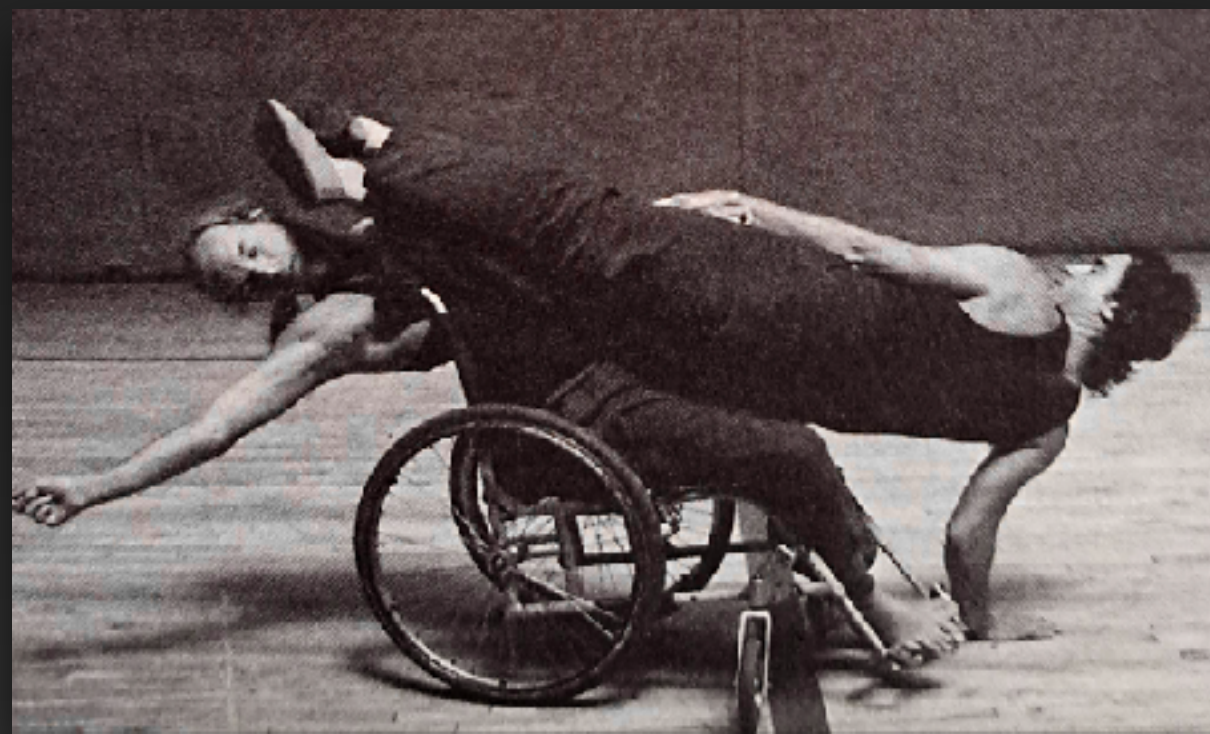
1976, David and Steve



1977, David and Steve



1979, Nancy and Alan Ptashek,
curved trajectories, 360
degree/spherical space



1988, Bruce Curtis and
Alan Ptashek

And Many More ...

Karen Nelson

Trisha Brown

Steve Christiansen 🎥

Laura Chapman

Alan Ptashek

Emily Siege

Twyla Tharp

...



Invention

Pre-Invention

Early Influence(r)s

Before Beginning

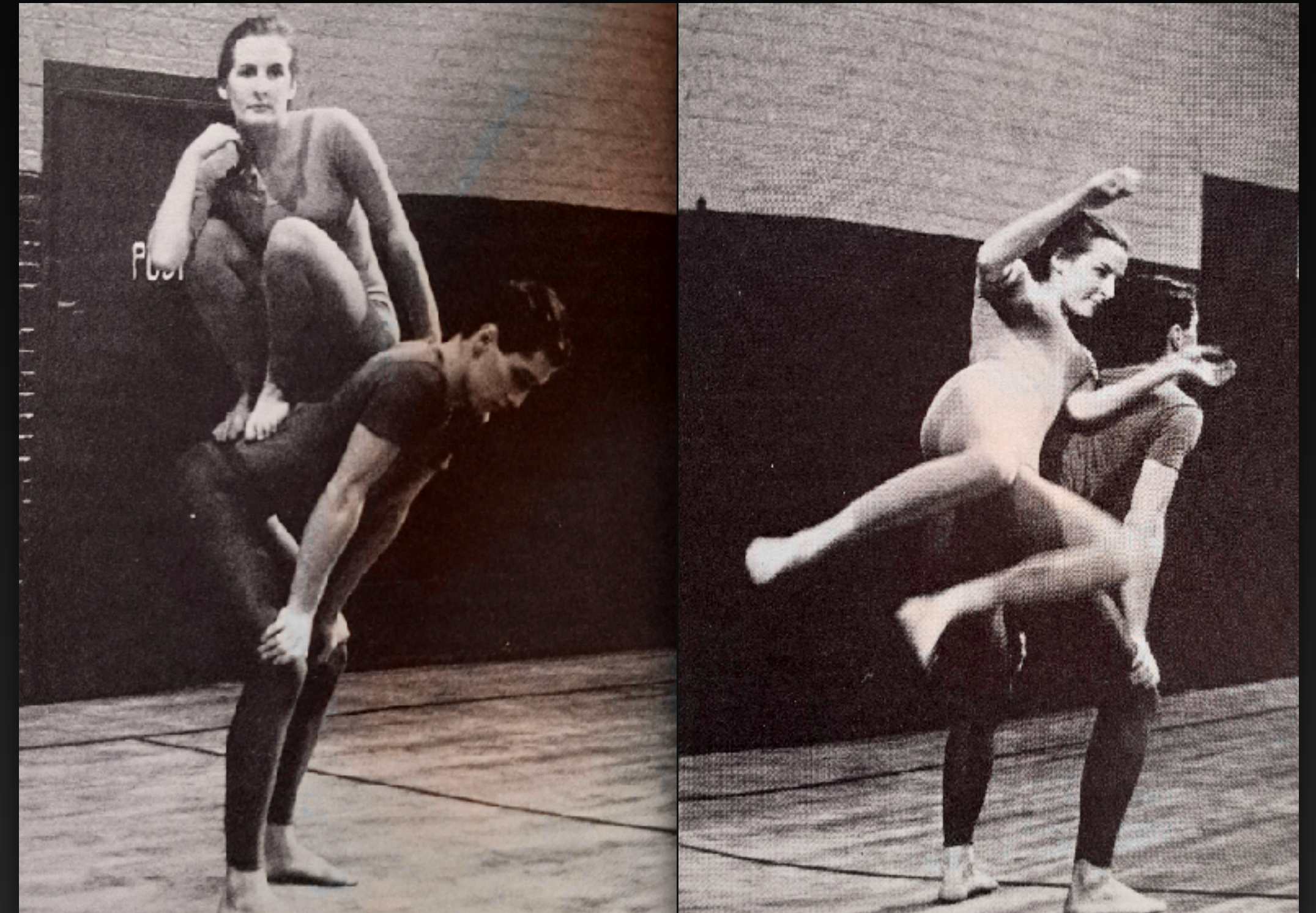
Fantastic **Three**:

Cunningham, Halprin, Hawkins

Relation to: sports, martial arts, dance, movement/therapy

Socio-cultural **shifts**

“A cross between jitterbugging, wrestling, and making love.” - Steve Paxton



1963, Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton in “Lightfall”

“This is an early version of CI without the martial art's softness” - Yvonne Rainer

Anna Halprin

Natural Therapy

SF-based modern dance

Theater as dance

Everyday movements

Therapy and awareness

Natural impulses



1960, Anna (left), doing
an "opening up" exercise



1971, Anna's "Trance Dance",
students collapsing

Erick Hawkins

Science, Sensuality, Spirituality

Dance, Philosophy, Kinesiology

“**Think-feeling**” dancer

Scientific movement principle

Efficient, without strain

Allow it to happen (Zen)



I want to become a dancer!

Yvonne Rainer

1957, Erick performing his
“Here and Now with Watchers”

Mary Fulkerson

Visual Ideokinesis

Professor at **Rochester**

Anatomical Release Technique

Anatomical imagery

Softness, flow

Part of “**Chute**”

“**Release Technique** had strong
effect on the development of CI.”

- David Woodberry



CI = Dance ?

Depends on Definition!

CI from **modern dance**

Graham, Ballet

Formal, asthetical, social?

Constructed!

Physics guiding movements!

Still meaningful to watch



Dance

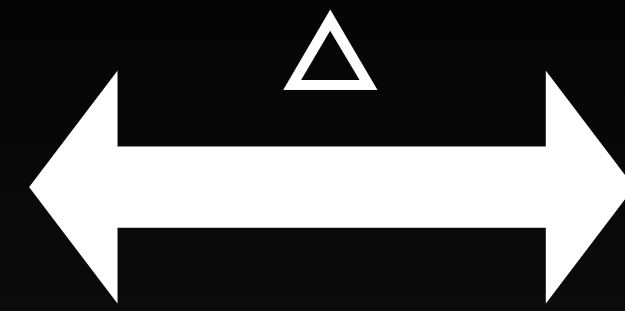


Choreographed

Musically synced

Performance driven

Theatrical, psychological



CI



Improvised

In silence

Internal experience

Physical approach

“The body’s communication with gravity and the other physical forces has its own timing. Our habit as dancers is to take our timing from the music, so it took some practice to get our timing organized with each other and these forces, before we could add the partner of music. What Steve says on the videotape 'Fall After Newton' is, that we started to use music to break up the movement habits, we had established dancing without music.”

Nancy Stark Smith

Postmodern Dance

Let's do something new

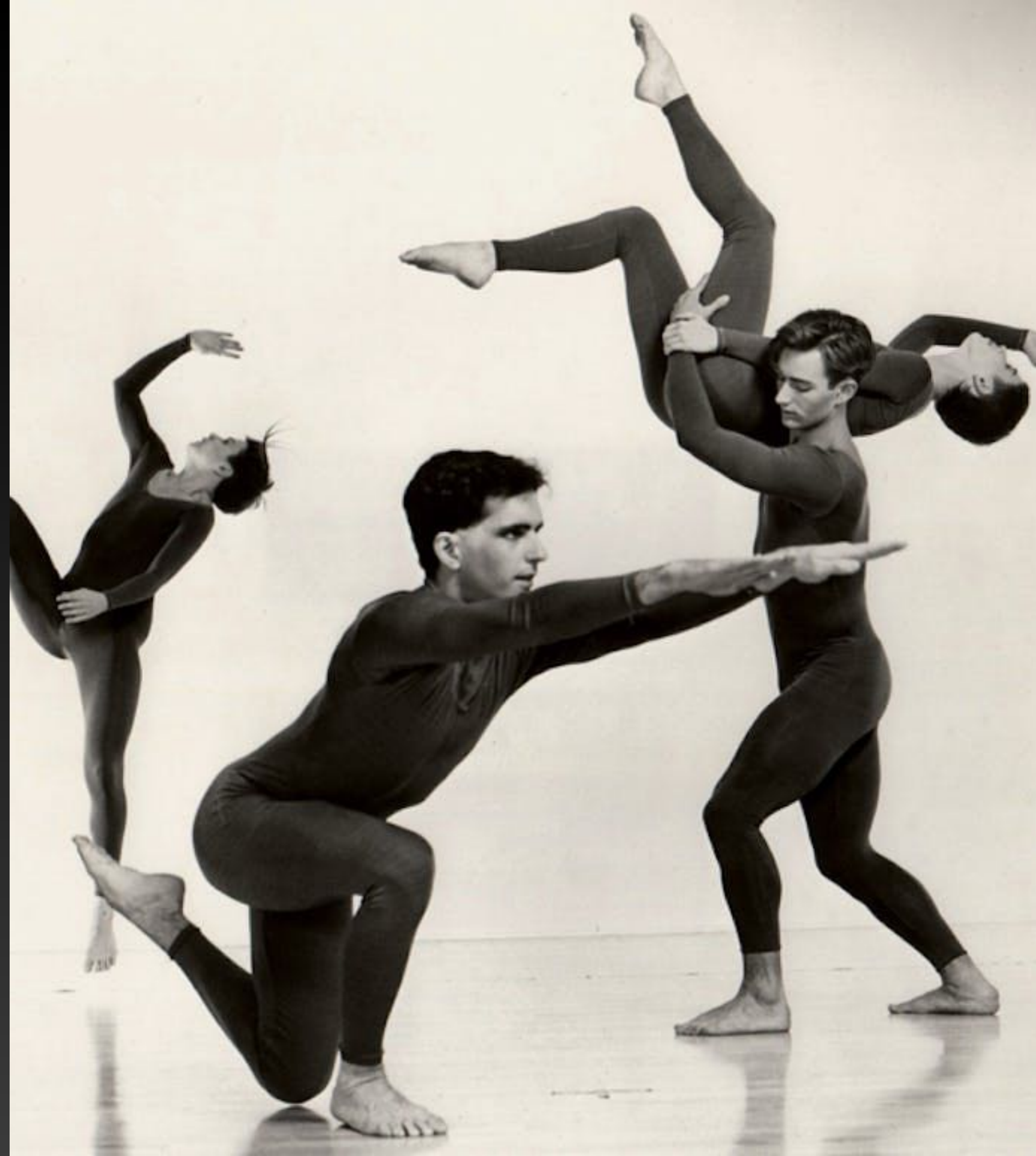
20th century **concert** dance

Anti-modern dance

Everyday movement as dance

Influences: JDT, Cunningham,
Graham, Cage, Halprin, Forti,...

*Metamodernism, Post-
postmodernism, Remodernism?*



Dance Improvisation

Nomen Est Omen

Spontaneous creation

Free habitual patterns (JDT)

Explore authentically

Laban, Graham, Cunningham



**“I have an interest in performing
a dance to *Billie Jean* only if I can
do it a new way each time.”**

- Michael Jackson



Theater Dance

Inspiration for CI

More **pedestrian**, minimal

“**Physical theater**”

Social vs Theater dance

over/under-sexed

Steve **allied** with performers



Ballet ↔ Contact

Outward focus

Gendered **costumes**

Isolated

Controlled, shaped

Inherently **sexist**



Inward focus

Casual camouflage

"Like a family"

Ongoing, **flowed**

Egalitarian



"Even 'natives' can identify male and female movement, and detect different degrees of accentuation/diminution of such movement depending upon the situation." - Raymond Birdwhistell

“Ballet is hierarchical, and so is modern dance (Martha Graham), but it has magicians instead of monarchs.”

Steve Paxton

Social Dance

No Skill Required

Dance in a **social** context -duh!

“**No-fault**” dancing

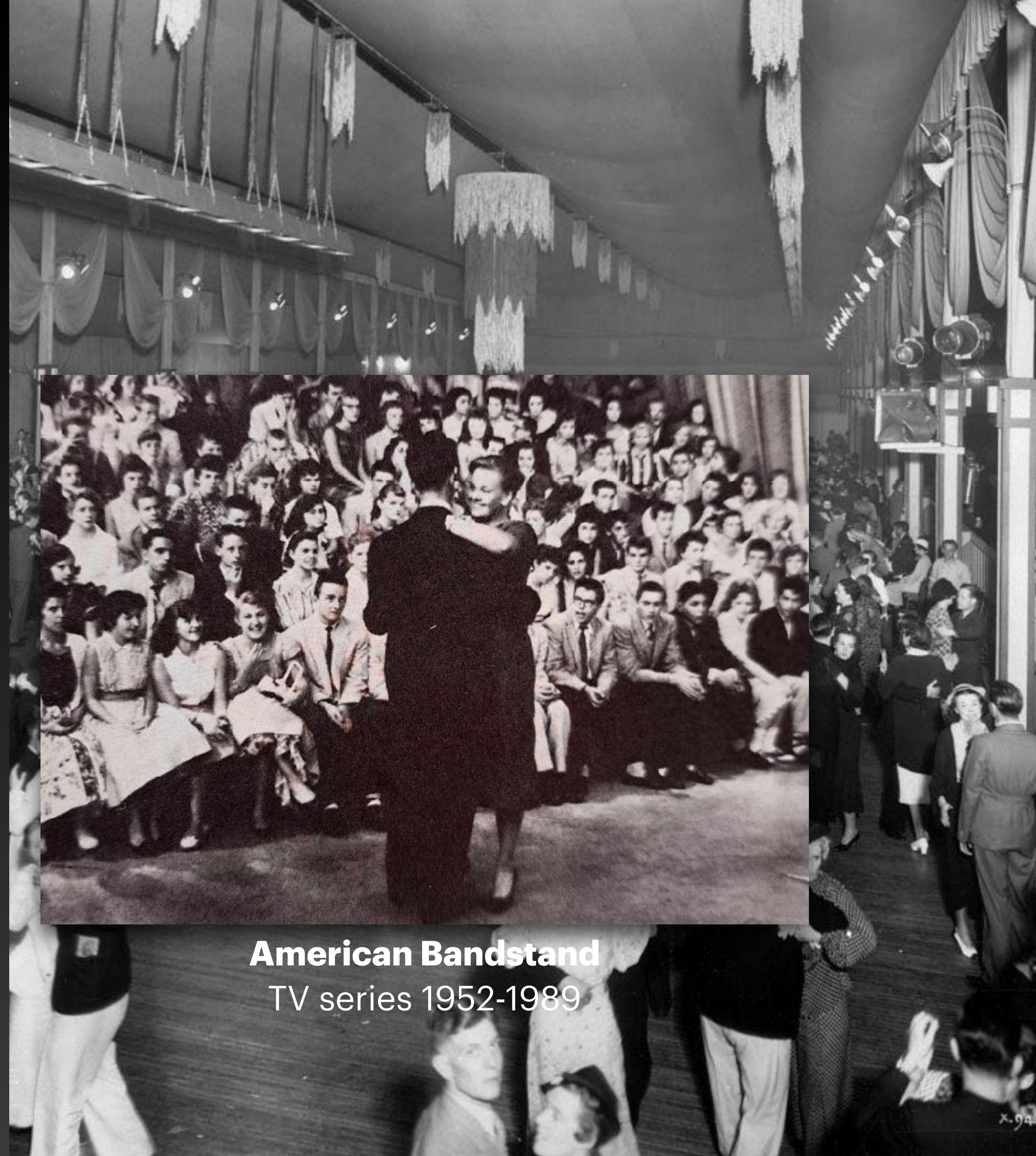
Relevance of **improvisation**

Personal experience

Wild **rock** era

“Young **nudes** danced in a **haze** of **marijuana** smoke; but there were **no reported incidents** beyond **monumental traffic jams**.”

- Unknown



American Bandstand
TV series 1952-1989

Folk Dance

Tradition Connecting People

Reflecting people's **life**

Tradition, customs, choreo

CI = "**Folk Art**"? (in early days)

"CI is/was a folk dance, the whole concept of jams, getting together. A complete folk form - social form at first; I would always drop in on jams, wherever I was, meeting new people."

- Lisa Nelson

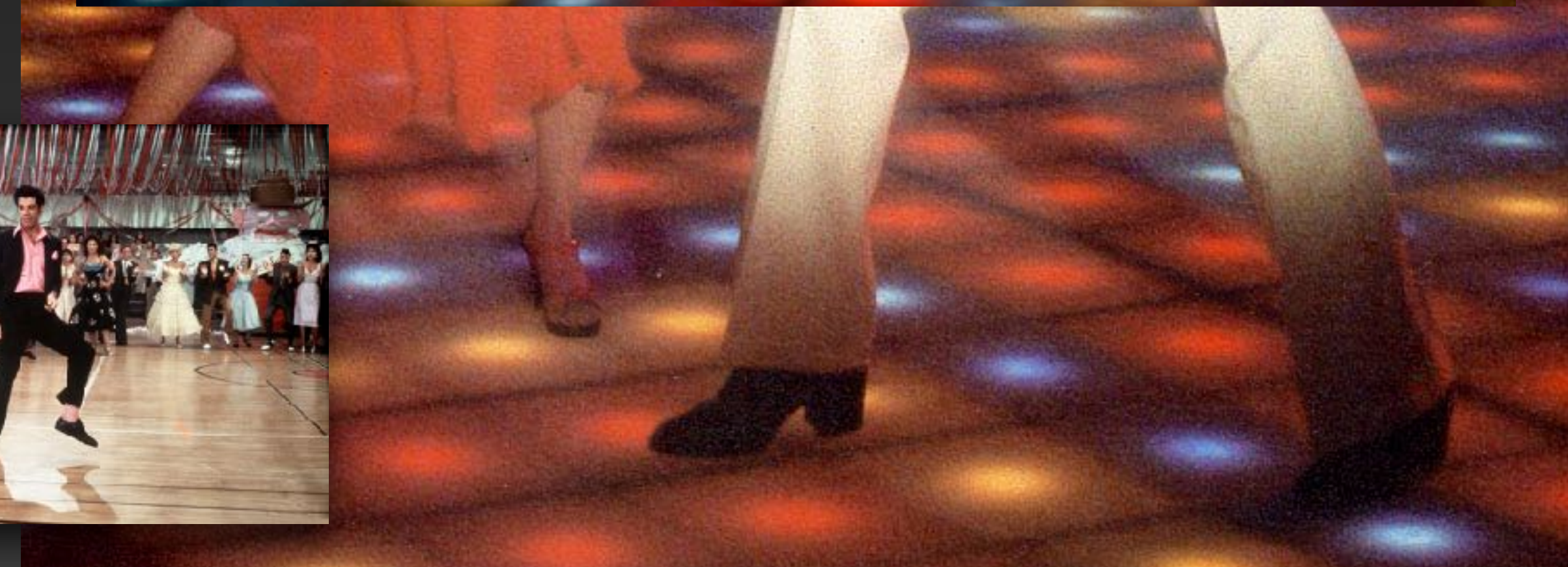


Disco

70s Macho Behavior

Male leading, controlling
Outward, presentation, **posed**
Aggressive dancing
Childish, best left behind...

**"The aggressive macho image
must be tamed to become a
liberated man."** - Unknown



Breakdance

Ready to Rumble

Competitive social dance

70s in **NYC** neighborhoods

Athelticism, 360° gymnastics

Music, **presentation**



Martial Arts

Be Like Water

Growing **popularity**

Competition vs Collaboration

Destabilize vs Support

Individual in group

Friendly vs Jealous

Equality and egalitarianism

True yet **idealized**



合気道

Zen in Movement

Rolls inspired **Steve**

“Profound **shift**” for him

“I wanted to launch myself off the planet and see what happened without having to worry about the re-entry a few seconds later.”

- Steve Paxton

Ai·ki·do

Harmony Universe Way



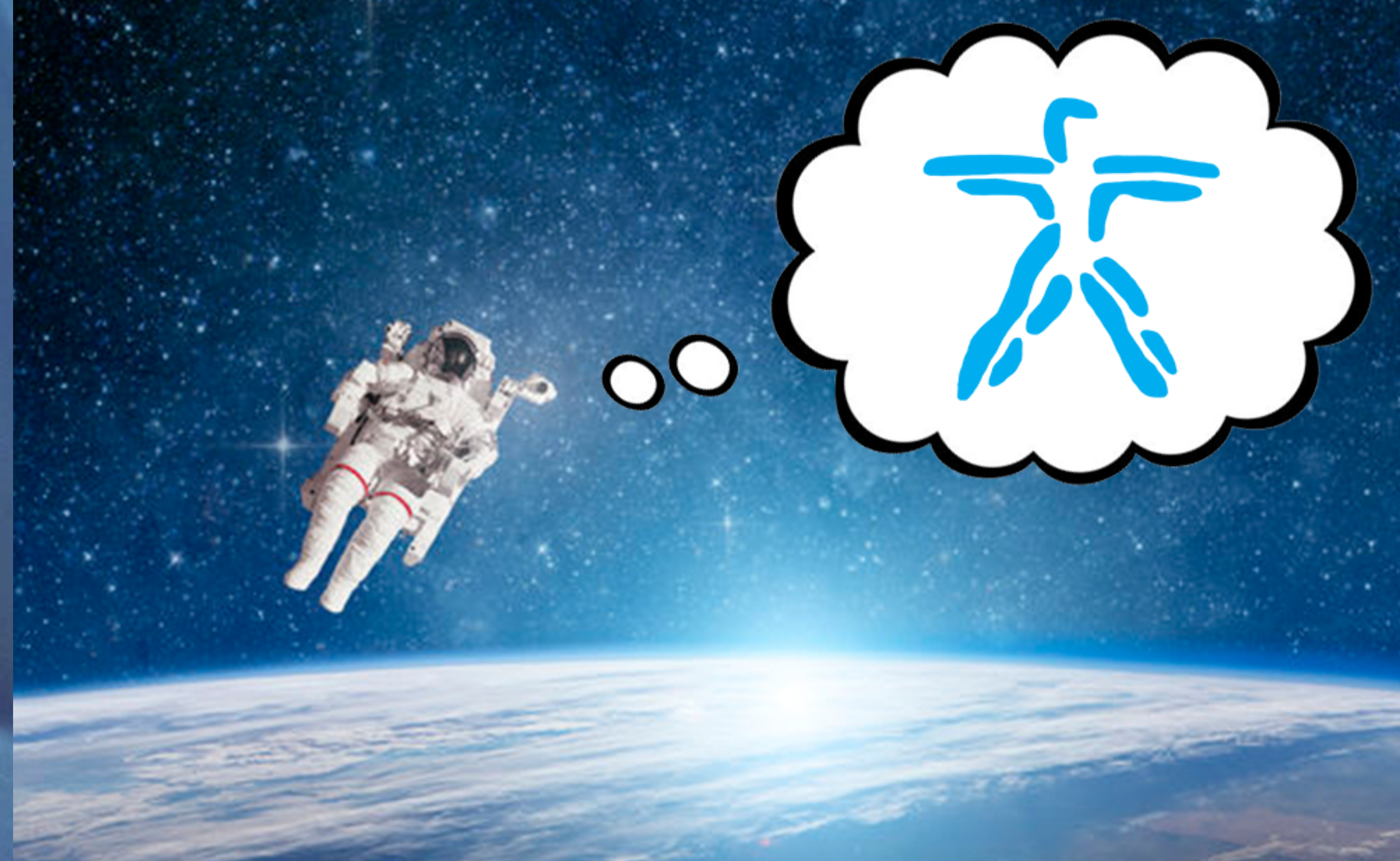
An Aikido Dream

Gravity free space

Any crazy position

Land without damage

Keeping the roll



“They were not trying to overturn an era, but were simply doing the work they felt was appropriate at the time.” - Steve

“It's governed by the participants rather than by a leader, similar to the structure of Grand Union.” - Steve



Wrestling

Good vs. Evil

80s sport-performance

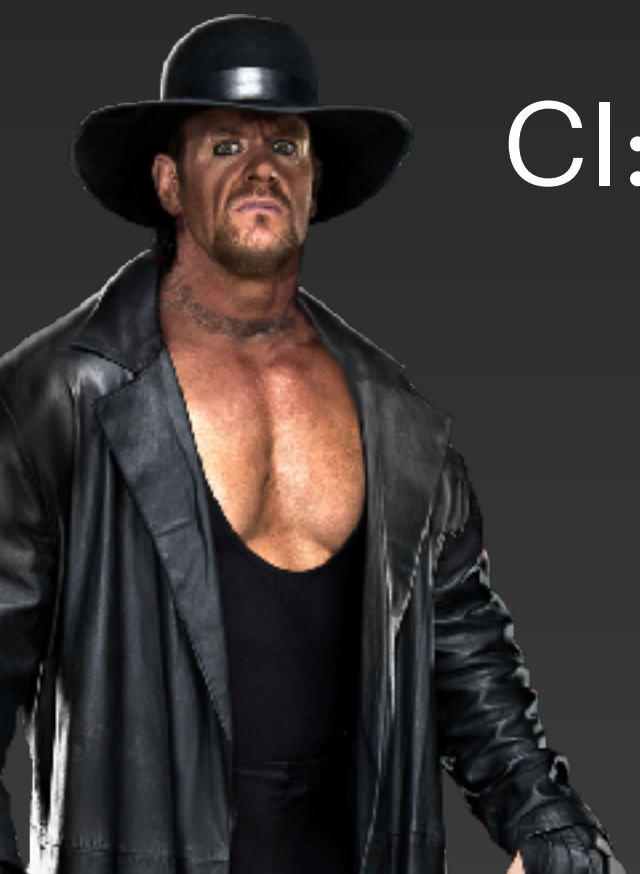
Use **touch** and **physics**

Violence & spectacle

Cl: Play & love

Fake choreography

Cl: Sincere & intimate



Sport

Mingling with Dance

Everyone (must) know(s)

Visual **referent** for skill

Boys sports, **girls** dance

Distinct features

“Hmm, it’s kind of like an art-sport.”

- Simone Forti



Aerobics

“No Pain No Gain”

Popular “**dance form**” 80s

Competitive **sports** training

By women for **appearance**



Other Influences

Eclectic Fusion

Science and **sensuality**

Social dance: flow and internal

Therapy and meditation

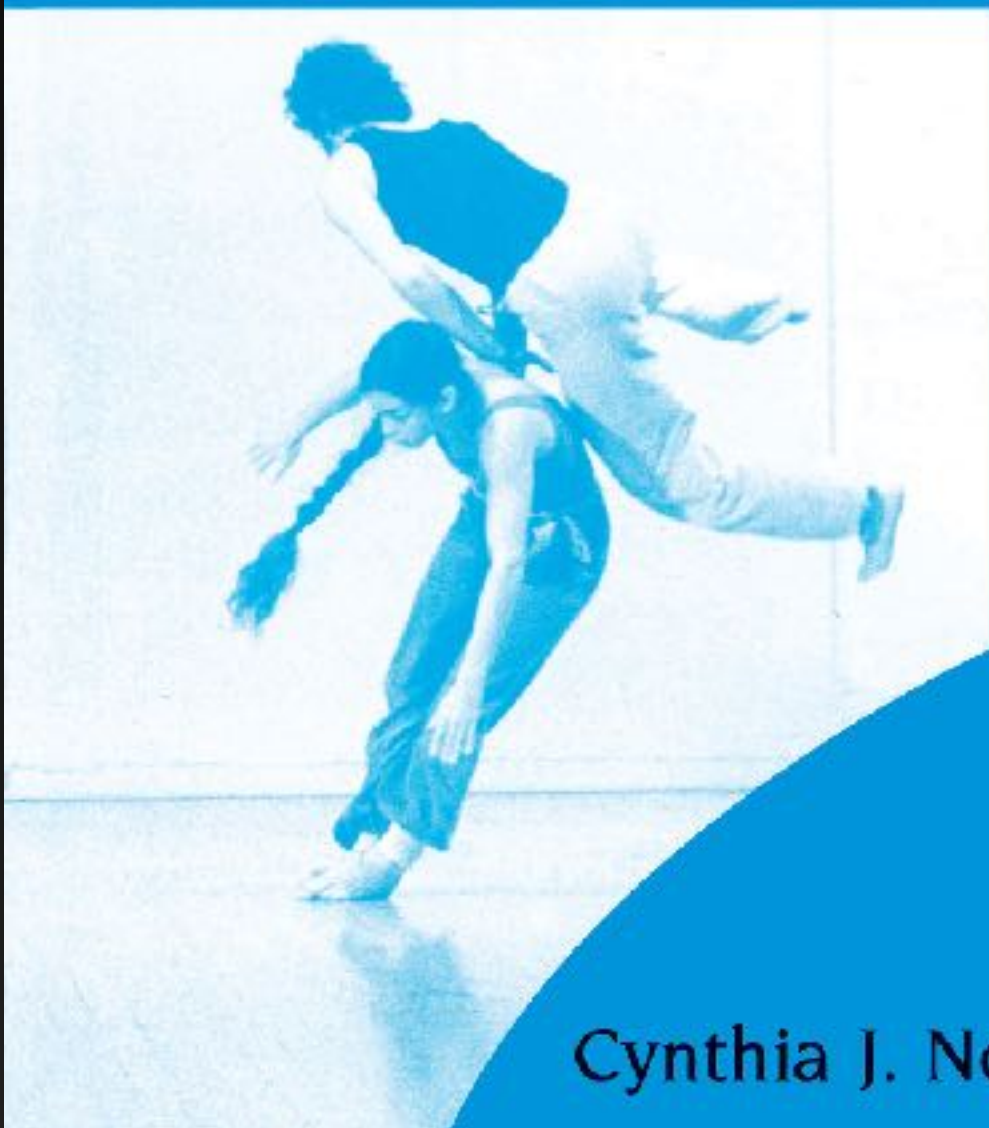
Martial Arts and bodywork

CI **connecting** all of them



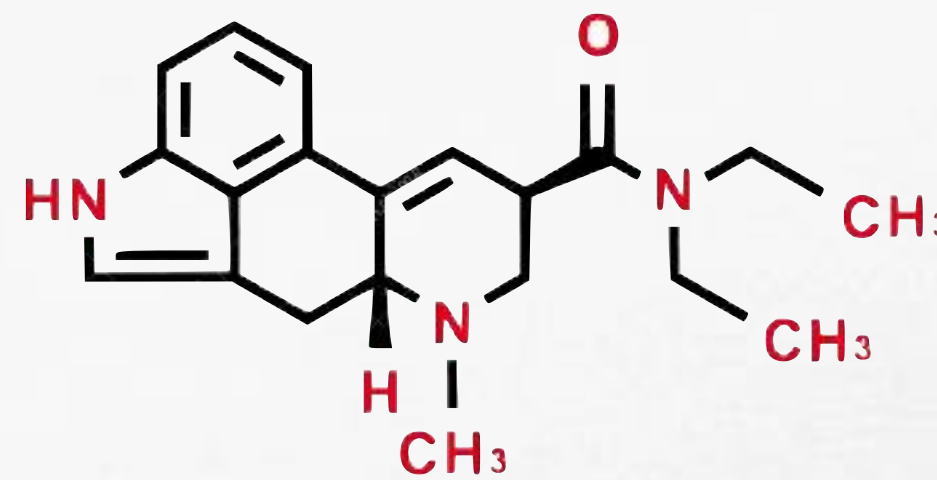
Sharing the Dance

Contact Improvisation
and American Culture



Cynthia J. Novack

“In ‘Sharing the Dance’, Cynthia Novack considers the development of Contact Improvisation within its web of historical, social, and cultural contexts. This book examines the ways Contact Improvisers (and their surrounding communities) encode sexuality, spontaneity, and gender roles, as well as concepts of the self and society in their dancing.”



"Lots of drug taking and rule breaking."



“There were often love affairs on the side because we were opening to each other in deep ways. Partly because of the 1960s and the free-love sexual revolution flower/hippie thing, Steve wanted to make a clear distinction that this was not that. He needed to make a stronger edge.”

Nancy Stark Smith

Challenged Expectations...

Blurred boundaries



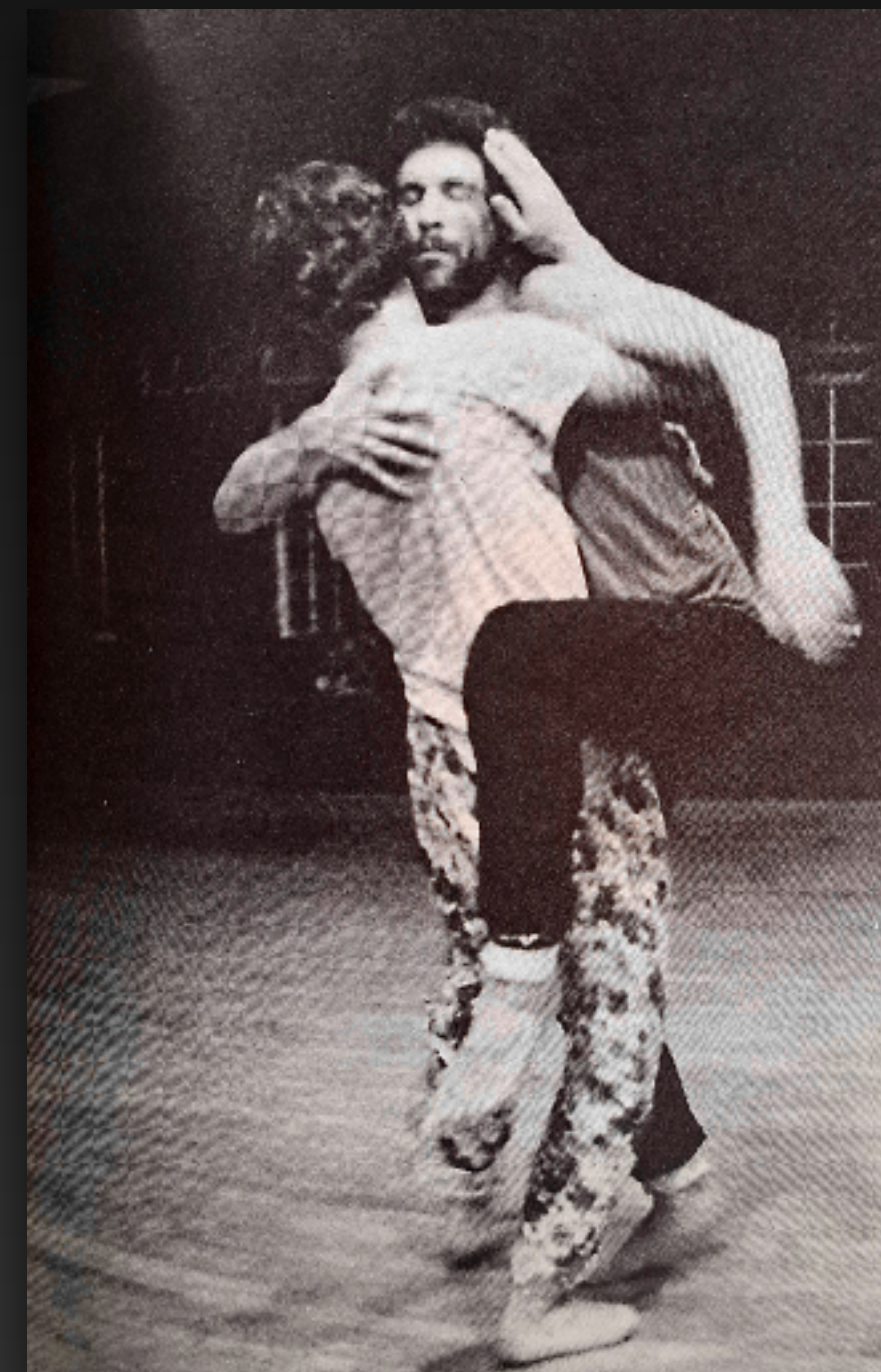
1972, Screenshot from
"Chute"

Women lifting



1984, Nancy lifting Steve,
focusing inwards

Sensitive men



1985, Danny Lepkoff
and Julyen Hamilton



1985, individual identity



1984, gender-neutral,
focus on each other

The Initial Years

1972-1976(+)

“The birth of CI is as vague as the nature of CI itself.” - Unknown



Disclaimer - Most of the videos show outdated, initial brainstorming material; CI from its inception. Older doesn't necessarily mean better, or being more authentic/traditional. Today's CI is way more developed and refined.



“In January 1972 Paxton taught the structure for an improvisational solo he had made for himself to a class of male students at Oberlin College.”

Cynthia Novack

Preliminary

Two Classes

Grand Union at **Oberlin** 3 weeks

Soft Class: 7am, cold, stand 🪑🍌

Afternoon: Disorientation 🌀

Final performance: **Magnesium**



“During a Grand Union residency at Oberlin College in January 1972, Steve Paxton made a work for 11 men in which they threw, caught, flung, collided and fell among one another continuously for 10 minutes. The dance was called ‘Magnesium’.”

Nancy Stark Smith / Lisa Nelson

Magnesium

Nancy is watching



Dozen athletic **men**

Some **rough** play

Jumping, bumping, crashing

Falling through space; drunk

15min **wild**, 5min **small dance**



Recording "accident"

“Essentially a lot of crashing around on a mat – followed by lifts of randomly chosen sacrifice... And then there was a five-minute stand. Out of all that chaos came – it would not be called order – but quiet.”

Steve Paxton

That's it?!

To fill the **gap** in dance training

Language of **physics**

Presence of **partnering**

Just another of his **performance**?

Not so fast...

I know what you did **next summer**!

Steve discussing Magnesium, 2008



Chute

"1st Contact Improvisation Performances"



June '72, John Weber Gallery

Bennington College grant

After 1 week:

Further **refined** movements

5hrs 5days **performance**

Art **event** > dance concert

First mention of **CI**

"The Chinatown loft was a massage hospital after every performance."

- Danny Lepkoff



The "Original John Weber Dancers"



The Old Parachute Jump
Coney Island, Brooklyn

“We worked at the Weber and showed our progress - and lack of it - to the public because I had a strong feeling this was something that should be seen from the beginning, that it was going to progress.”



Steve Paxton

John Weber Gallery

Manhattan, 420 West Broadway, Third Floor



Chute video recorded

Also location of **Soho Art Gallery**



Peripheral Vision 🎥

"You Come, We'll Show You What We Do"

Jan. **1973**, Firehouse in S.F.

First **West** Coast tour

Commented concert

No mats, more audience

Reflexes > rational thought

Center-alignment of carrier



Soft Pallet 🎥



1973, Rome

Dance on (soft) **straw** mats

Paxton et al - "*But **not** me!*"

More like a private **jam**

Cuddly **wrestling**

Extrapolating a **solo**

6..5..4..

by Lois Welk

1977 piece in NY

Partially **choreographed**

Incrementally replaced by **CI**

"Is this still CI?!"

"I heard Nancy felt like I did something impure with the pure style; felt like the veterans didn't like what I was doing."

- Lois Welk



Current Exchange 🙄

'79, 1 month **retreat** by Paxton

No structure, just dancing

Only for “**serious** students”

Only with strong **involvement**



2000-something Vancouver,
Convergence Festival

Country Jam 😊

Retreat by **Peter Ryan**

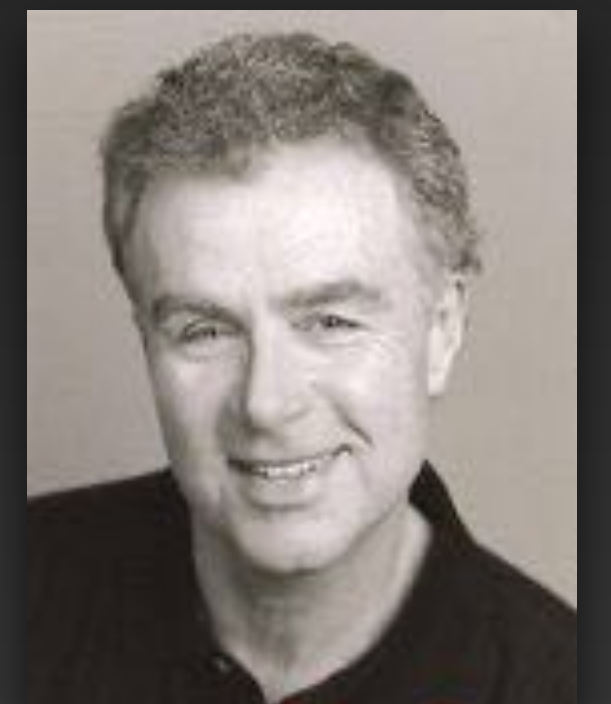
co-organizer of C.E.

Dance for the **proletariat**

Organic food, daily **jamming**

“It was exactly the opposite
of Current Exchange.”

- Peter Ryan



Improvisation: Dance as Art-Sport



June 1980, a 5-days **conference**

by *American Dance Guild*

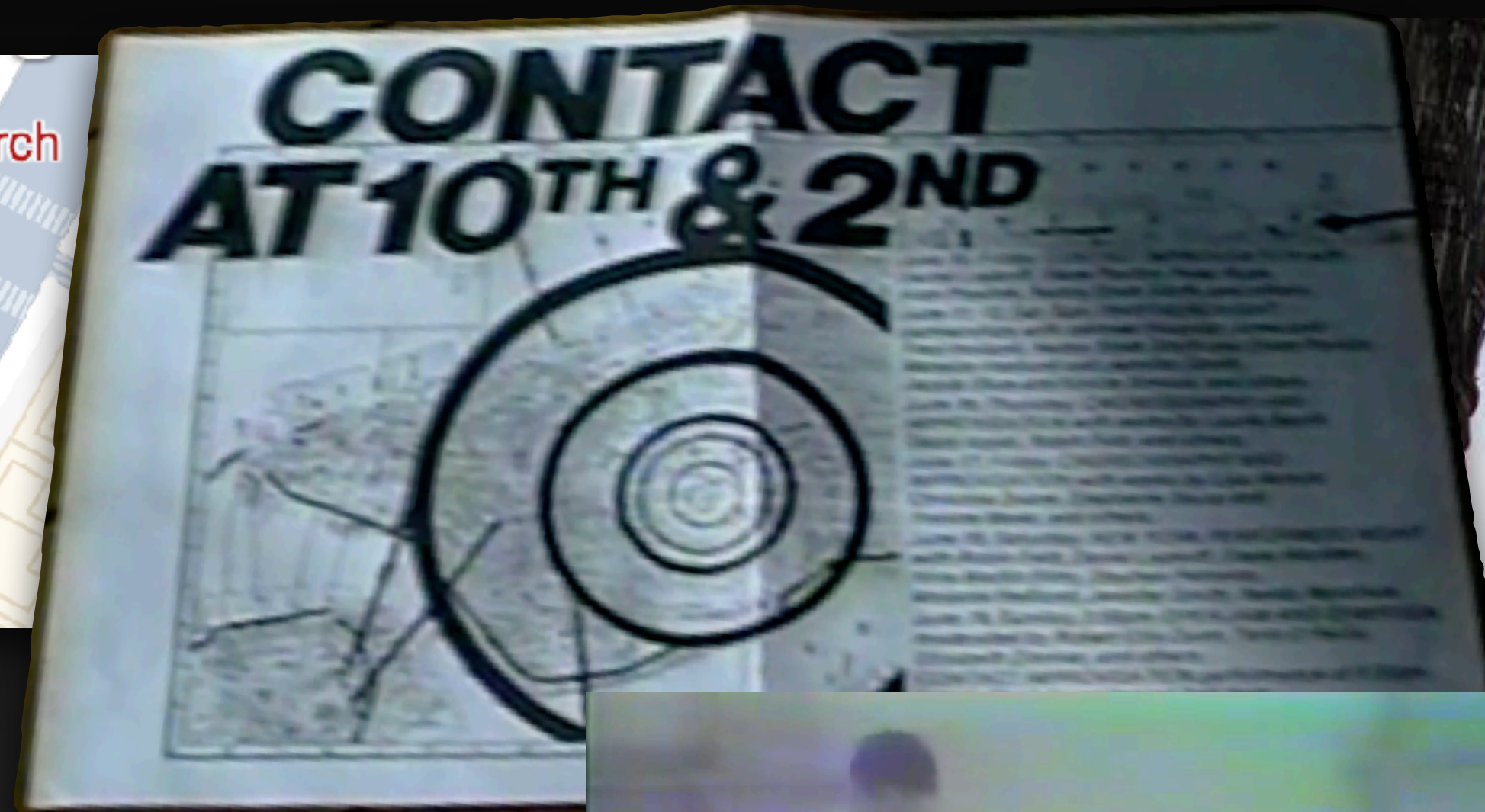
CI and “all those **other** people”

CI “**dominating** everything”

Some internal **criticism**

Politics and **competition**

Contact at 10th and 2nd



1983, St. Mark's **Church** NYC
11th anniversary **concerts**
Fluid, soft, controlled
(**Chaotic**) Panel discussion



Fall After Newton

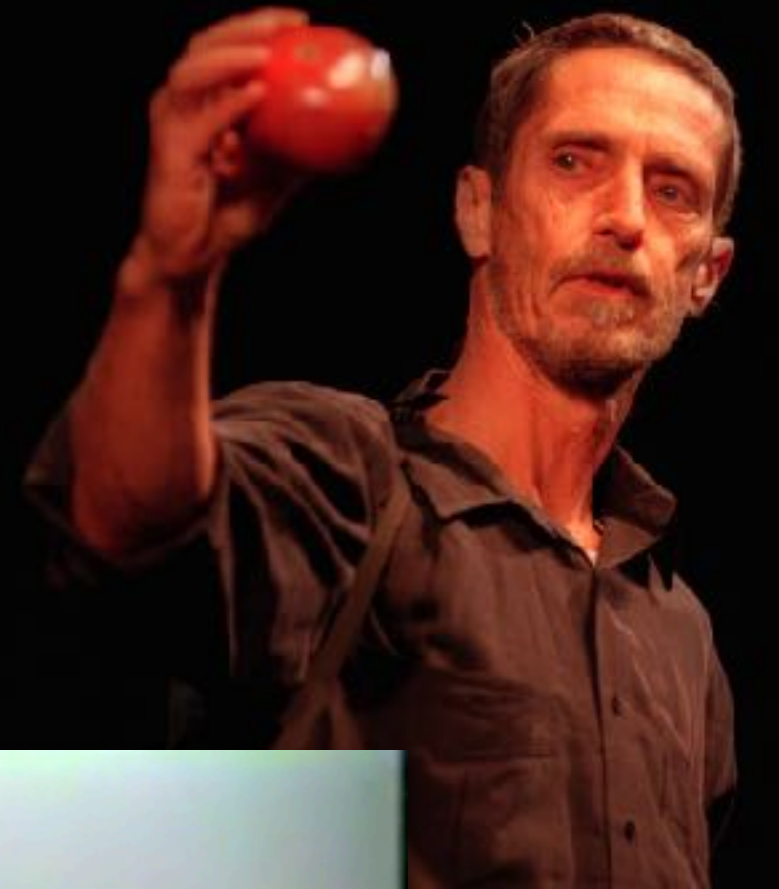
CI, Physics, and Mass in Motion

1972-83 (published '87)

Narrated **documentary**

Took 7 years, **50hrs** of video

Progress over 11 years



“A Cappella Motion”

Nancy Stark Smith and Karen Nelson (1990)





Maturation

Wide Spread

Further than COVID19

"The nature of this form is that you need a partner to do it, and I think this is one of the most important reasons it has spread. If you could do it alone, I don't know how far it would have gone..."

Nancy Stark Smith



“When you are a poker player and come to a new town, and no one knows how to play, before you can play it, you need to teach others how to do it. CI is similar, it’s not solitaire.”

Christina Svane

Mangrove

Go Gay Go

Most **active** CI group, 1975-80

(**Dramatic**) West Coast style

Curt Siddall among founders

Allowing body *and* mind/**emotions**

Struggles with community

“Contacters thinking they can separate the body from the mind, and do a ‘purely physical’ dance are deluding themselves.”

- John LeFan



Contactworks

Lekker (?) Bezig

CI-like dance **collective**, 76-82

Related to Nancy/Mangrove

Perceived as **elitist**

The **end**: poor and burned out

“They didn't realize that after teaching, rehearsing, performing, and doing arts administration work all week, we didn't often feel like getting out for two hours on a Sunday afternoon to dance.”



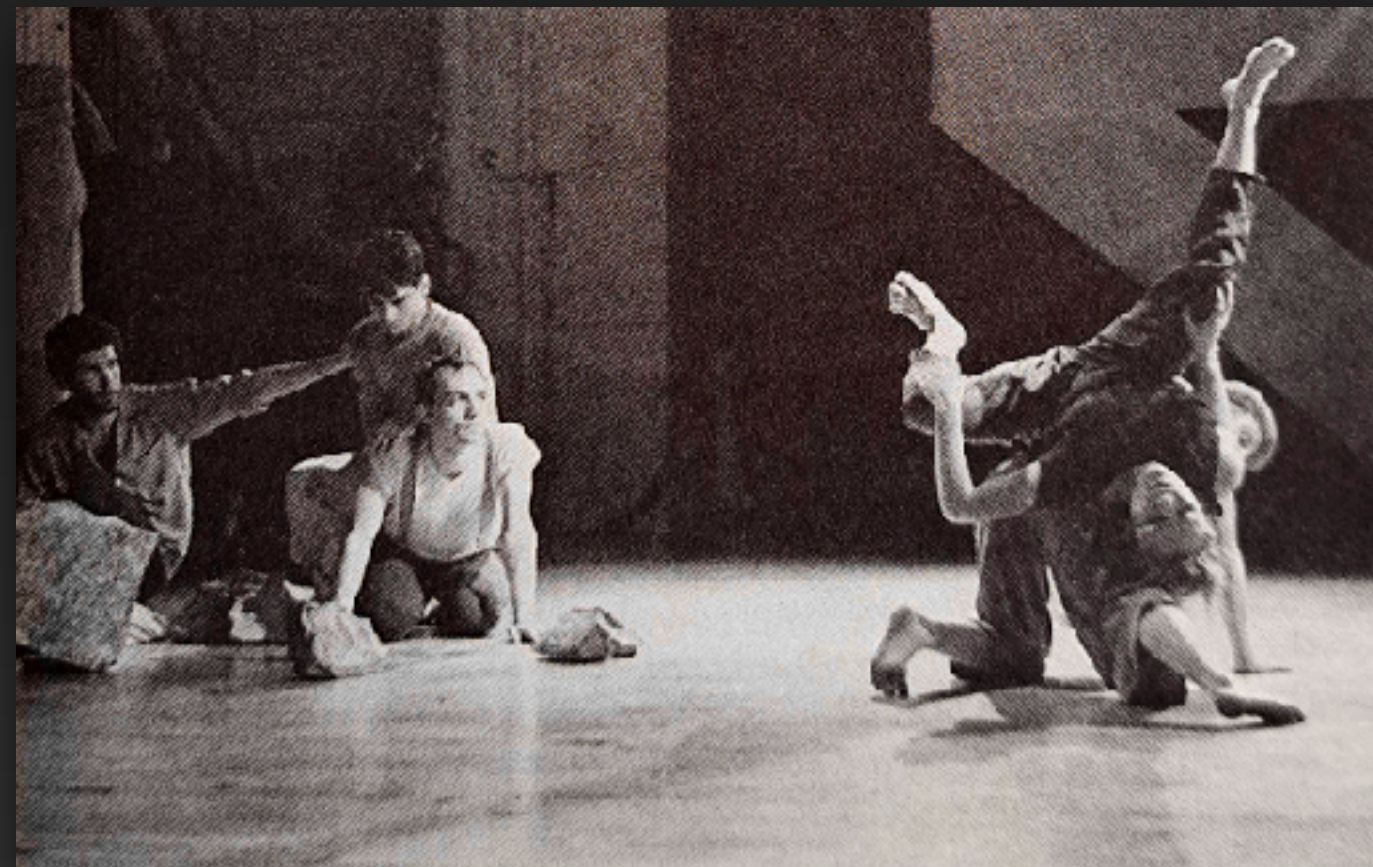
More Companies ...

Freelance Dance

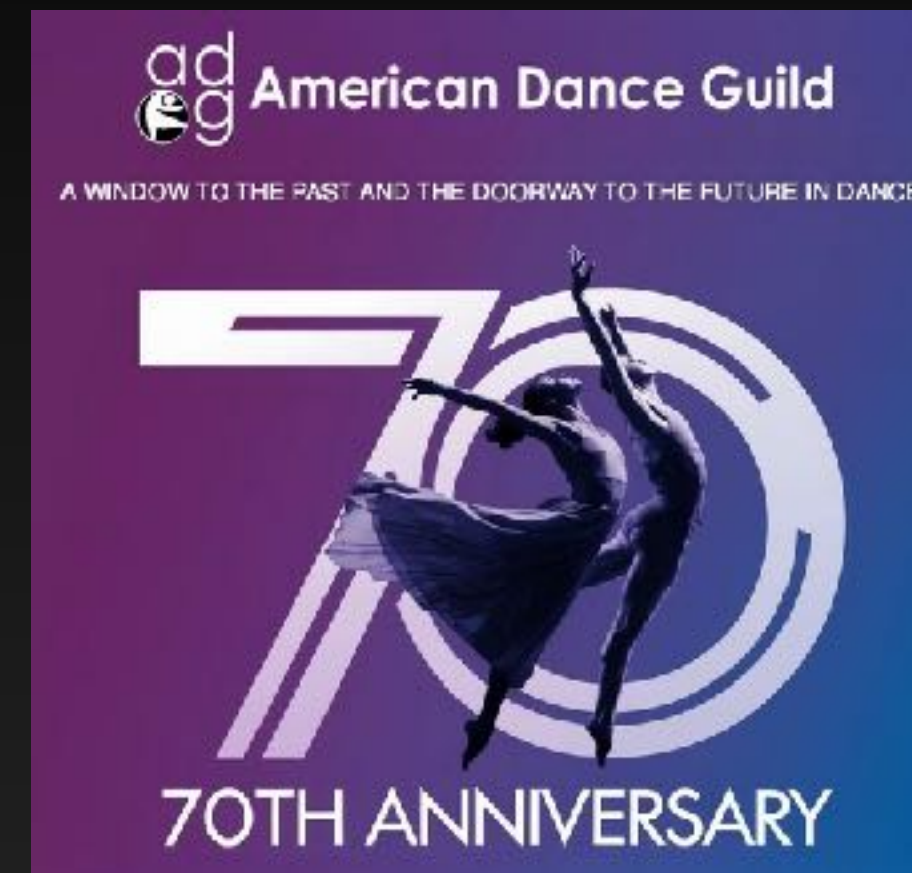


1980, Christina Svane , Paxton,
Smith, Nelson, Lepkoff

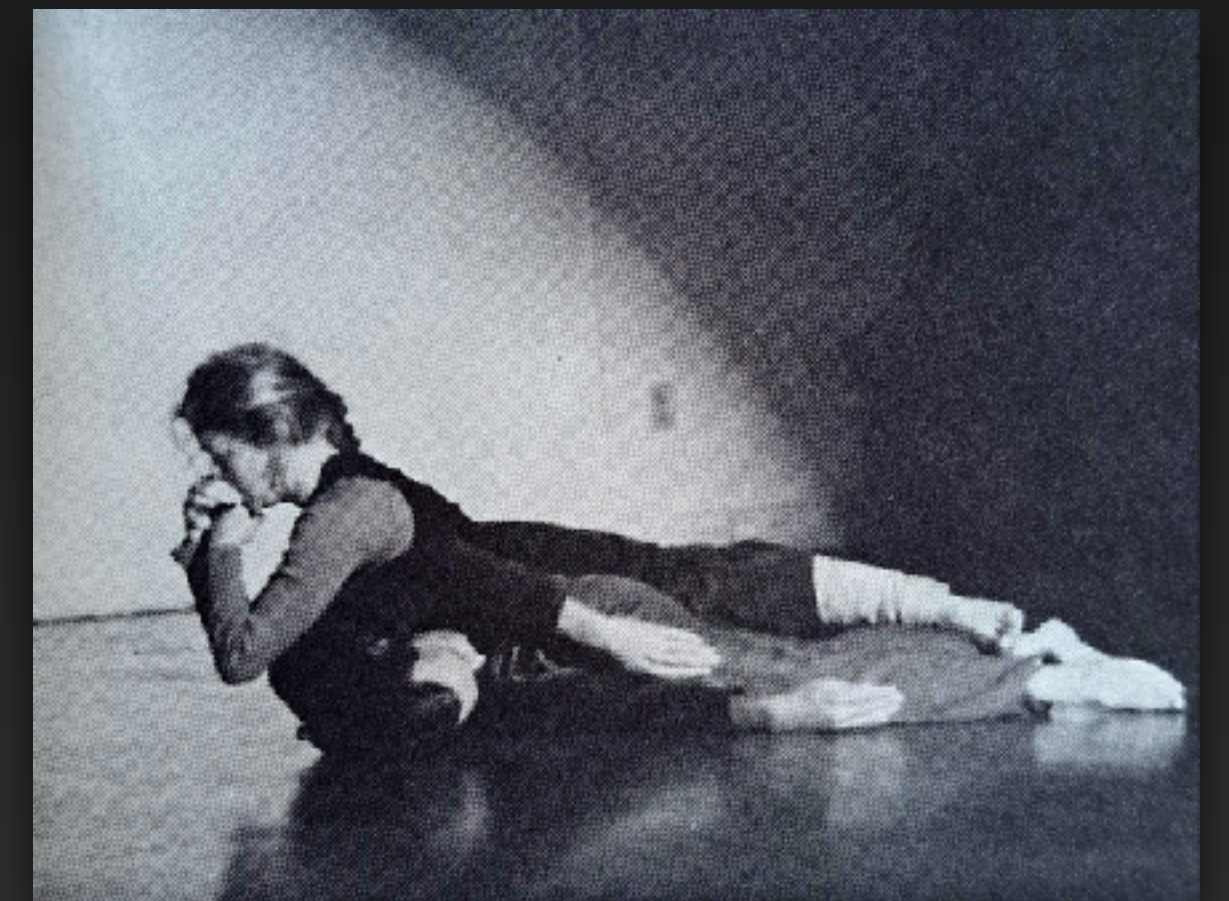
Channel Z



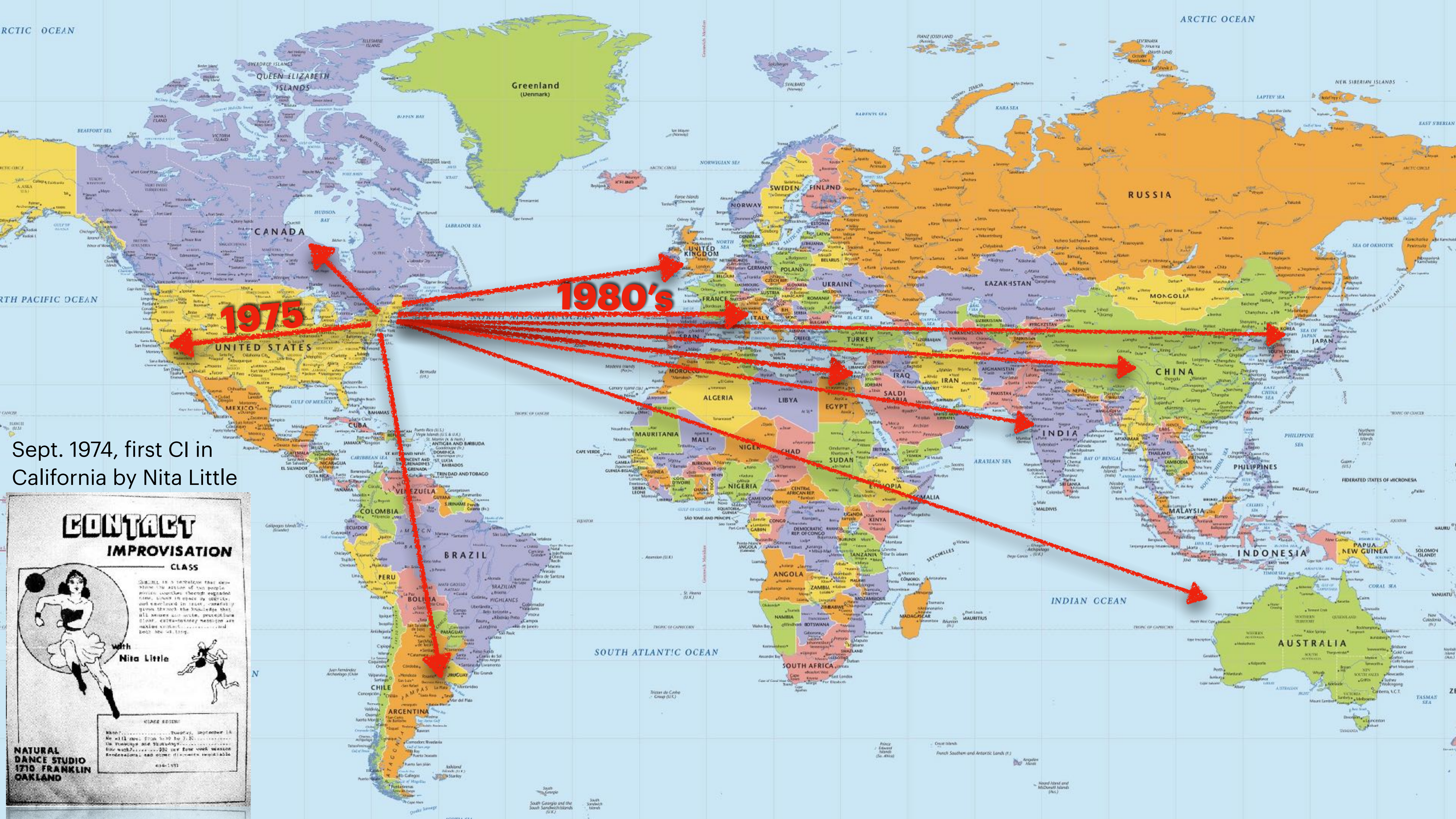
1986, Lepkoff (left) et al



Fulcrum



1978, Helen Clarke,
Peter Bingham



Sept. 1974, first CI in California by Nita Little

CONTACT

IMPROVISATION

CLASS

CONTACT is a technique that demonstrates the action of two people moving together through expanded time, space in space by utilizing and enclosed in time, carefully given through the knowledge that all senses are active, perceptions clear, extra-sensory messages are subtle contact.....and both are at first.

With
Nita Little



CLASS SCHEDULE

When..... Tuesday, September 16
We will meet from 8:30 to 9:30.....
the Runways and Runways.....
Our work..... 200 per five week session
Professional and other discounts available

616-4197

**NATURAL
DANCE STUDIO
1710 FRANKLIN
OAKLAND**

Styles

East Coast

ReUnion

Pure CI

Focus on body

Serious, unanimated

Focus on sensation...



West Coast

Mangrove

Theatrical, dramatic

Slapstick, light, laugh

Grown men = crazy kids



ECITE

European **C**ontact **I**mprovisation **T**eacher **E**xchange



Gatherings

Practice

Exchange

Momentum

Changes in Structure

Original group **dispersed**
From group to **movement**
Challenged local **variations**
Creating **social ties**
Communal living

“Like a family.”



Growth Pain

Consequences of Equality

Unorganized, casual

No hierarchie, **equality**/folk

Lots of **injuries**

Discrepancy emerged

Professionals vs. Amateurs

“People who just saw a performance would try the bigger, flashier moves without the other training.” - Nancy Stark Smith



Amateur or Professional?

**“A lot of people got tired of dancing
with beginners, even got tired of
beatific looks on other people's faces.”**

- Ellen Elias

Work or Fun

Perform or Recreate?

1984 **division** into 2 parts

From raw to **polished**

Against CI's **nature**?!

Socially **loosely** connected...

**"I never really liked jams.
There were too many people."**
- Danny Lepkoff



PR Decision

How to present CI?

Impression management

Anti-hierarchy vs. decisions

Fear freedom, need structure

Ideological **prohibitions**

“People talk about community more. When there was a community, nobody talked about it at all... But as the family starts breaking up, you get nostalgic and you say: 'Oh, we were such a great family, everyone was so close', which, of course, is usually not quite true either.”

- Nancy Stark Smith



Maturity

Non-Improvisational

Repeat, recognize, **define**

Video **camera** the teacher

Formalization wanted

Feeling **proprietary**

“If it worked consistently, it might become vocabulary. Certain throws, for example. These things were never taught as set ‘moves’, but they appeared regularly.”

- Nancy Stark Smith



Exchange & Inspire Command & Control



Copyright Or Public Domain?

Koriel the **manager** (ReUnion)

*“A really **small job**”* – Paxton

Proposal money, validity, name

Ideological **contradictions**

“This work is very unorganizable. It is based on the premise of individuals, even though a lot has to do with harmony and unity. It has to do with freedom, not institutions. To codify, to organize, to regulate it, is unsuccessful.”

- Nancy Stark Smith



Contact Core

(c) Steve Paxton et al.

Policing Or Inspiring?

✗ No to **certifications**

✗ No to Paxton **Institute**

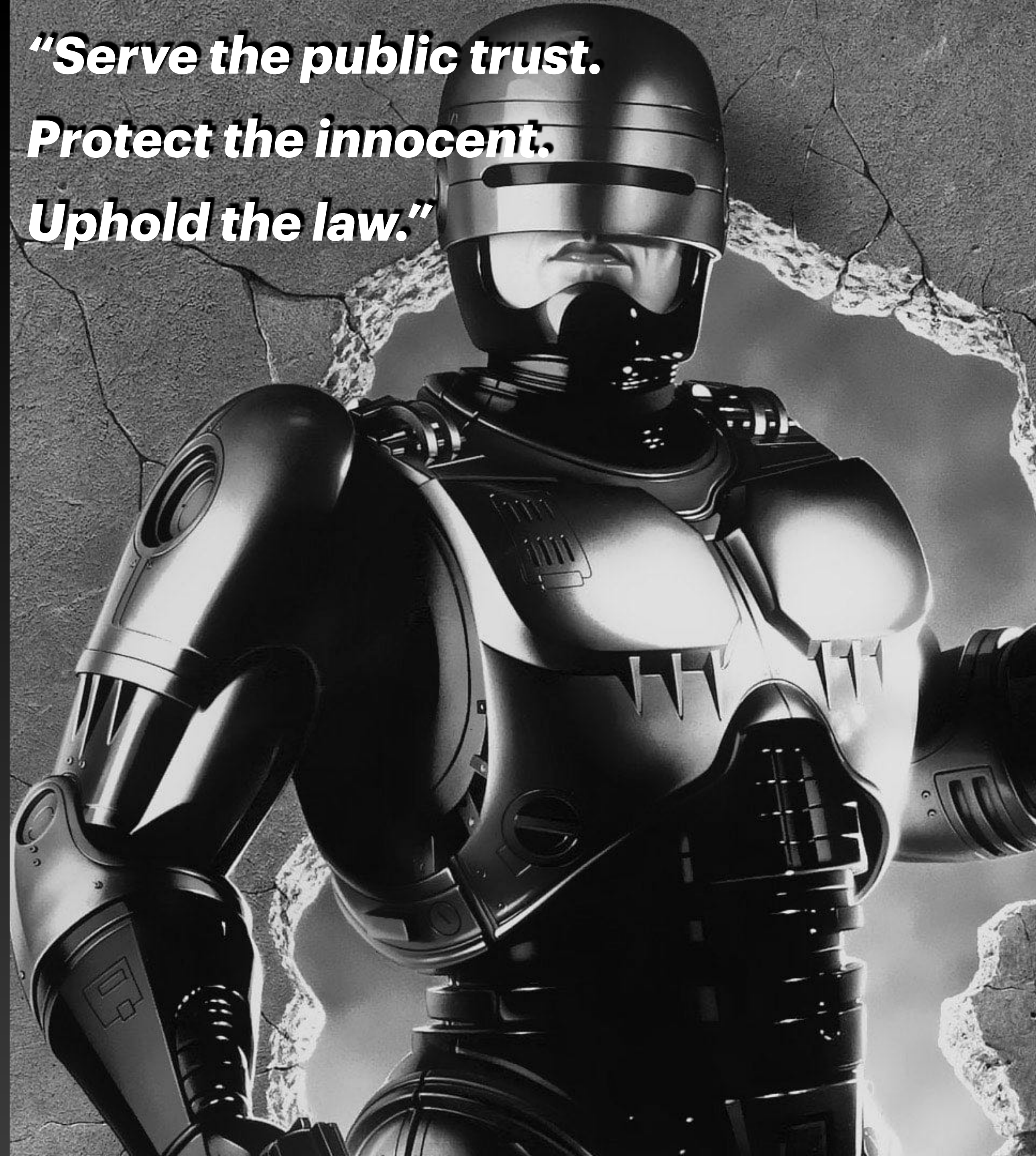
✗ No to being “**contact cops**”

Forum for **communication** ✓

“Instead of being policemen, we have decided to put our energies behind fostering communication between all those doing contact. Encourage those less experienced to continue working out but hold off teaching for a while. It feels a lot better this way.”

- Contact Newsletter #1, 11/1975

*“Serve the public trust.
Protect the innocent.
Uphold the law.”*



Contact Collaborations Inc.

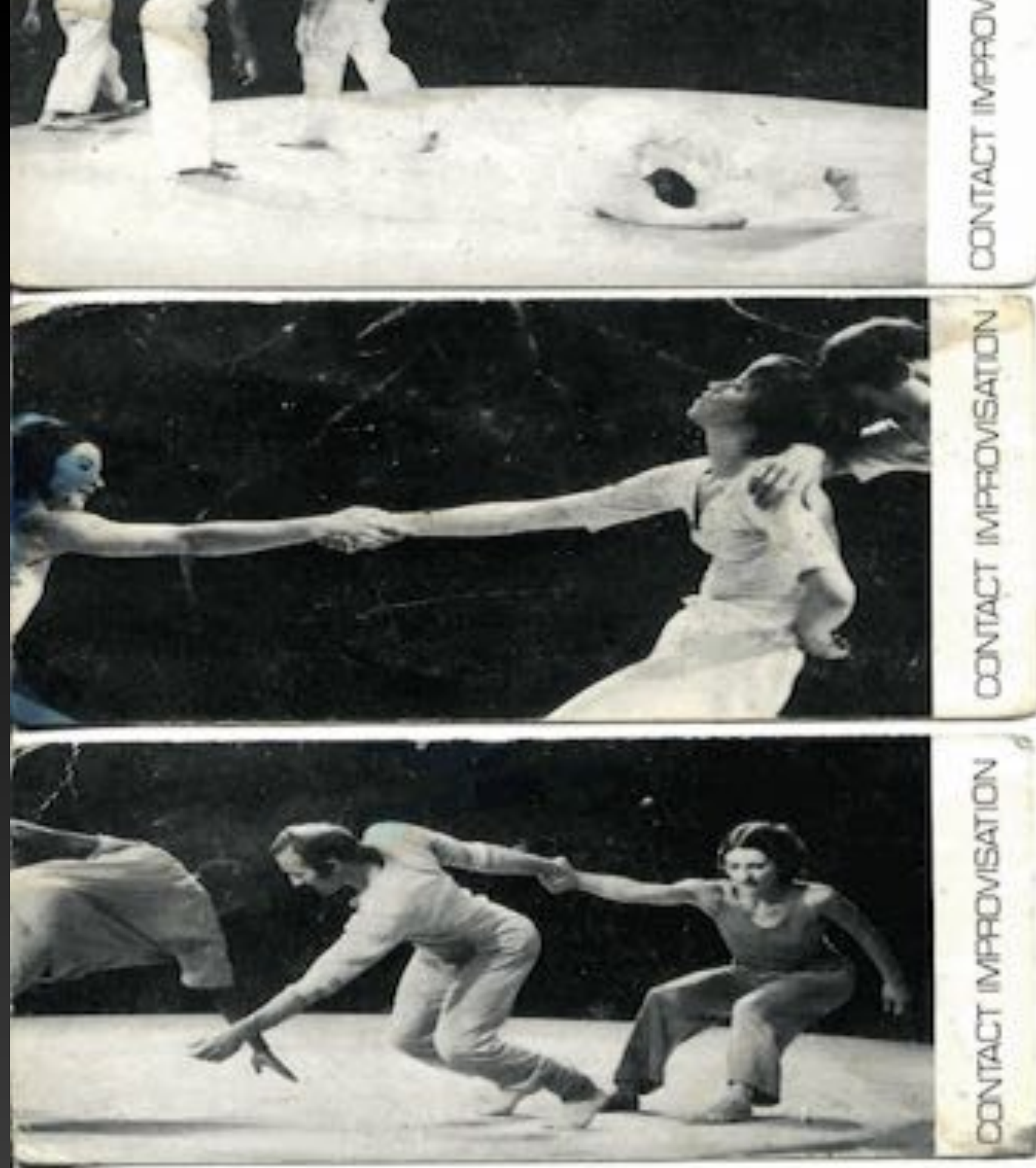
A Collective Possession

Founded 1975 NY (non-profit)

Focus: CI, post-modern dance

Rooted in CI **ideology**

Umbrella for **multiple projects**

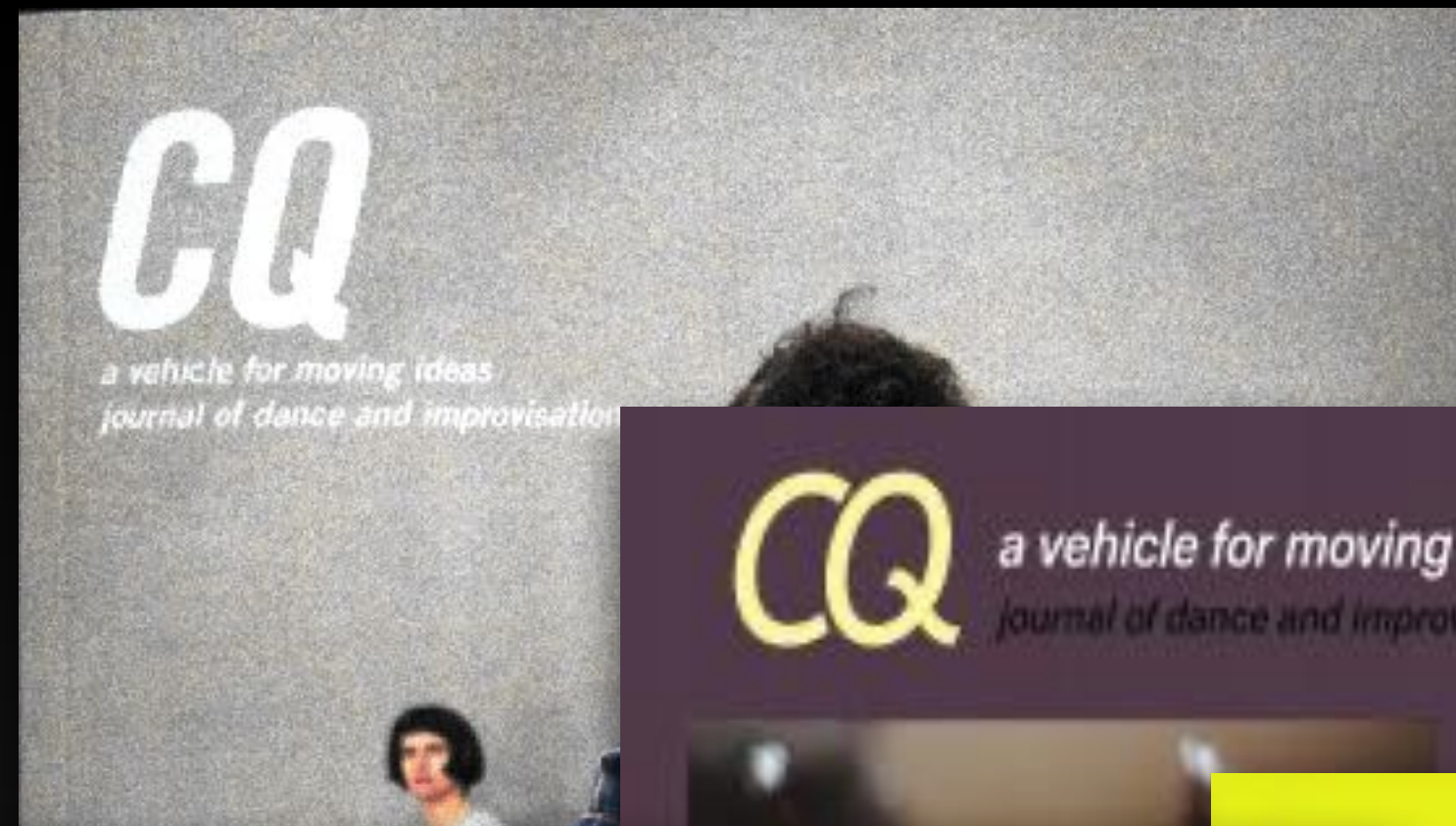


Contact Quarterly

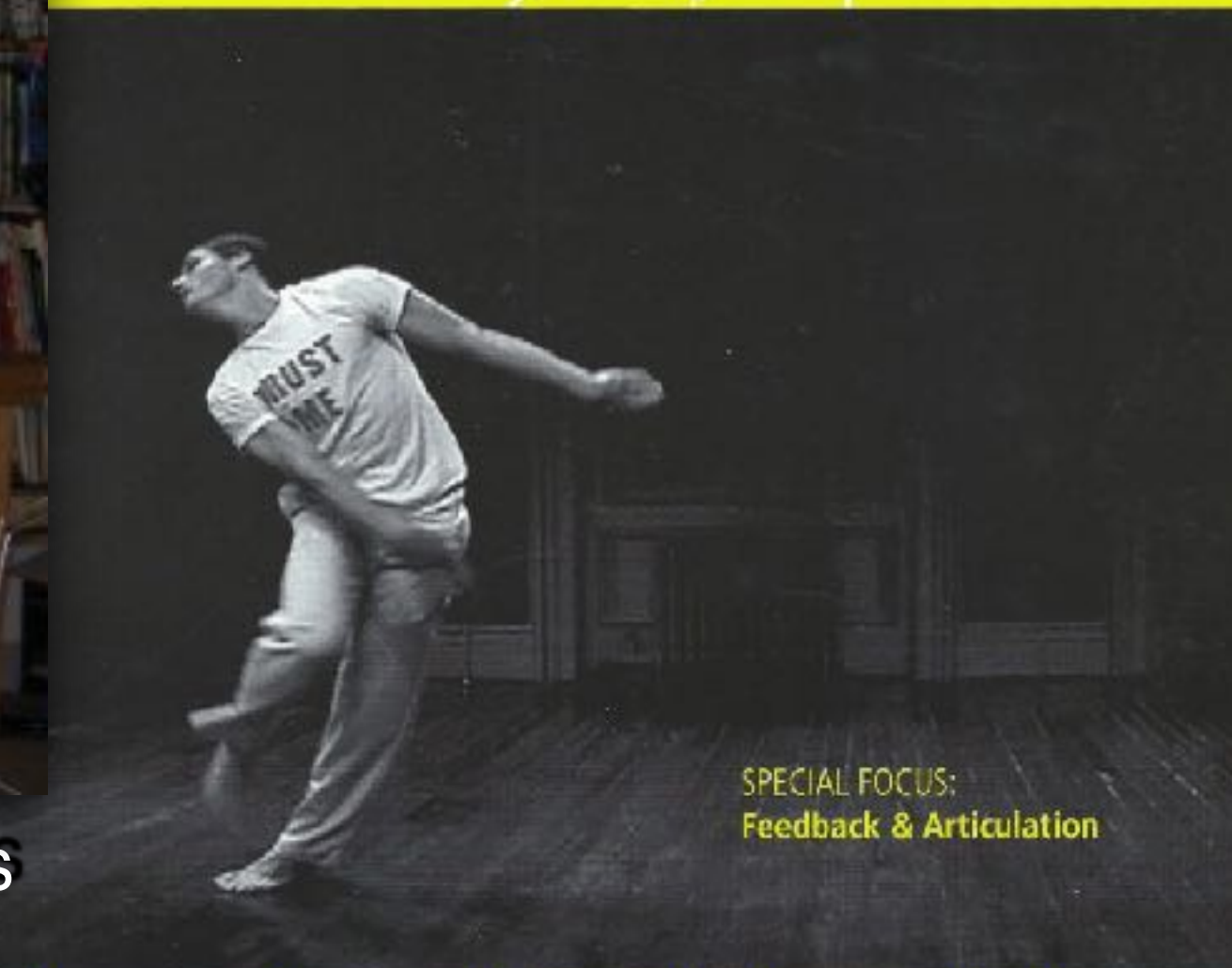
A vehicle for moving ideas

Mainly **Nancy** and Lisa
Former “Contact Newsletter”
Exchange, share, unify
Open **platform** (Paxton?)
Social network (**contacts**)

“This network really worked. You could call anybody listed in CQ and stay with them.”
- Ellen Elias



2005, Nancy at CQ office in Massachusetts



SPECIAL FOCUS:
Feedback & Articulation



End of CQ

45 years CI compiled

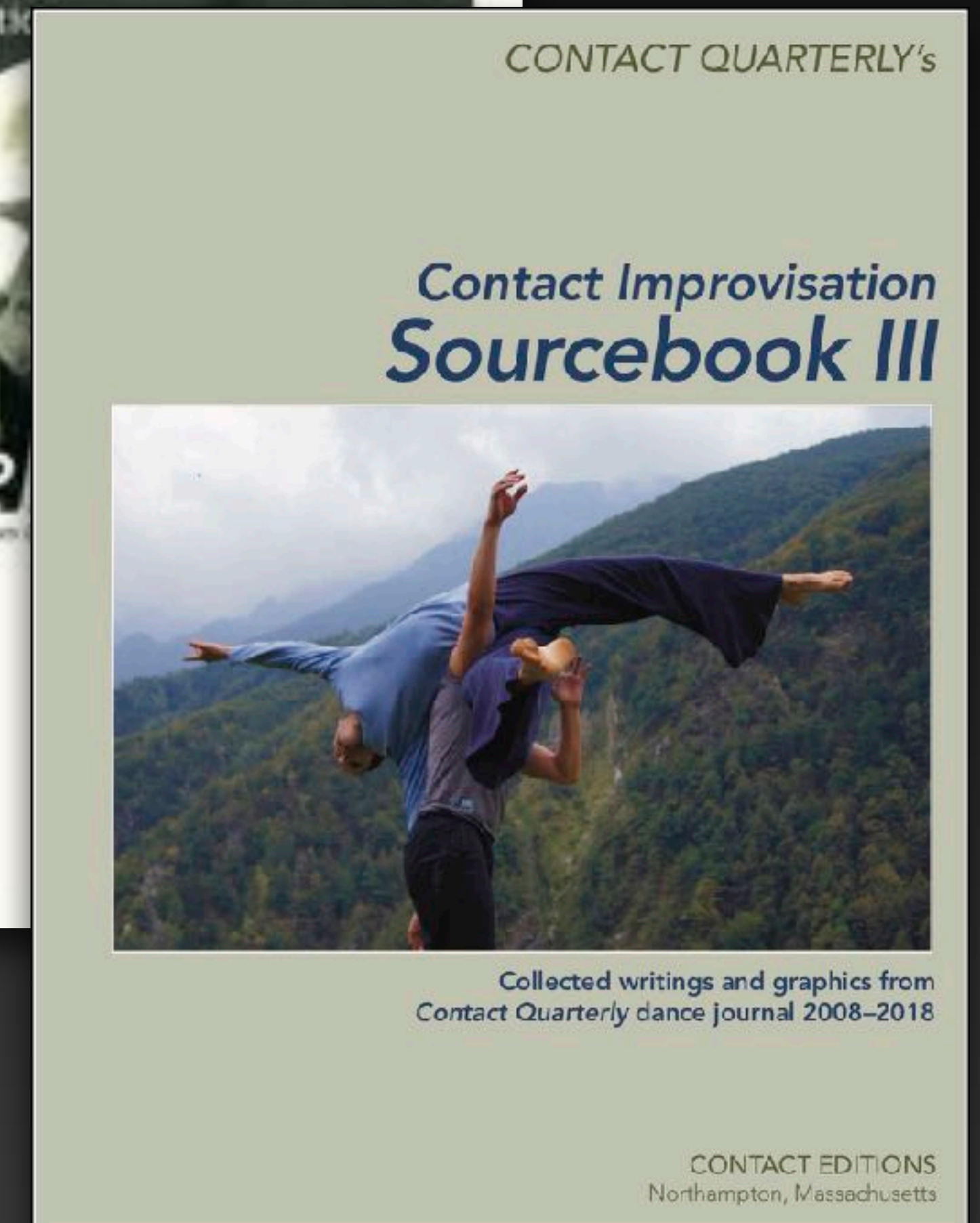
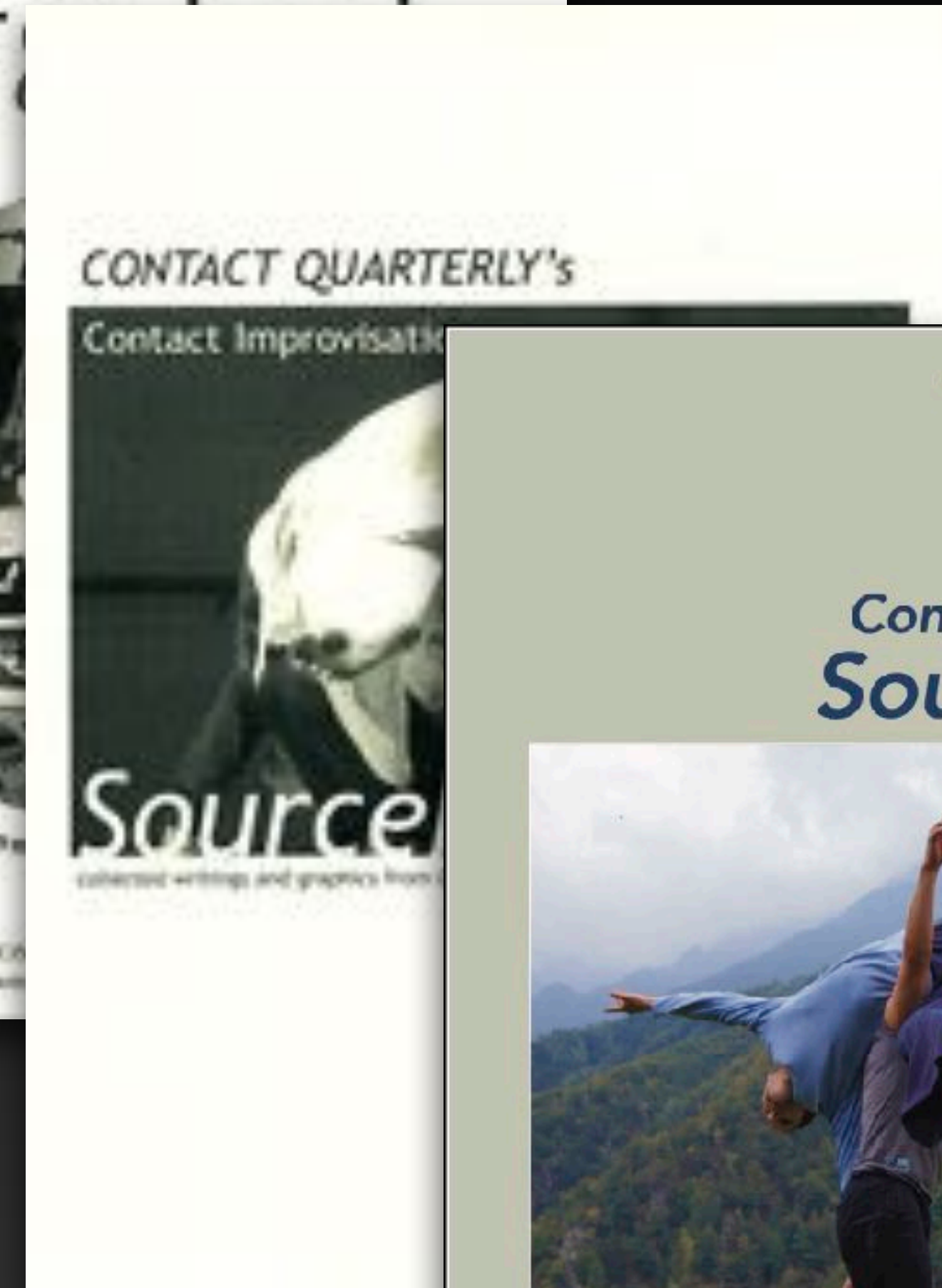
80s **fewer** articles, more variety

Editors took over all writing

Final print 2020

Sourcebooks (compendium)

**“CI has never really been promoted.
So much more could be done from a business angle.”**
- Roger Neece



Attitude, Culture, Values

Core Values

Who are we?

Social nature/consciousness

Changes over **decades**

70s: risky, raw

80s: smooth, flowy

Anti gender roles/hierarchies

Spontaneous in nature



Egalitarianism

Or Elitism?

No distinction, no director

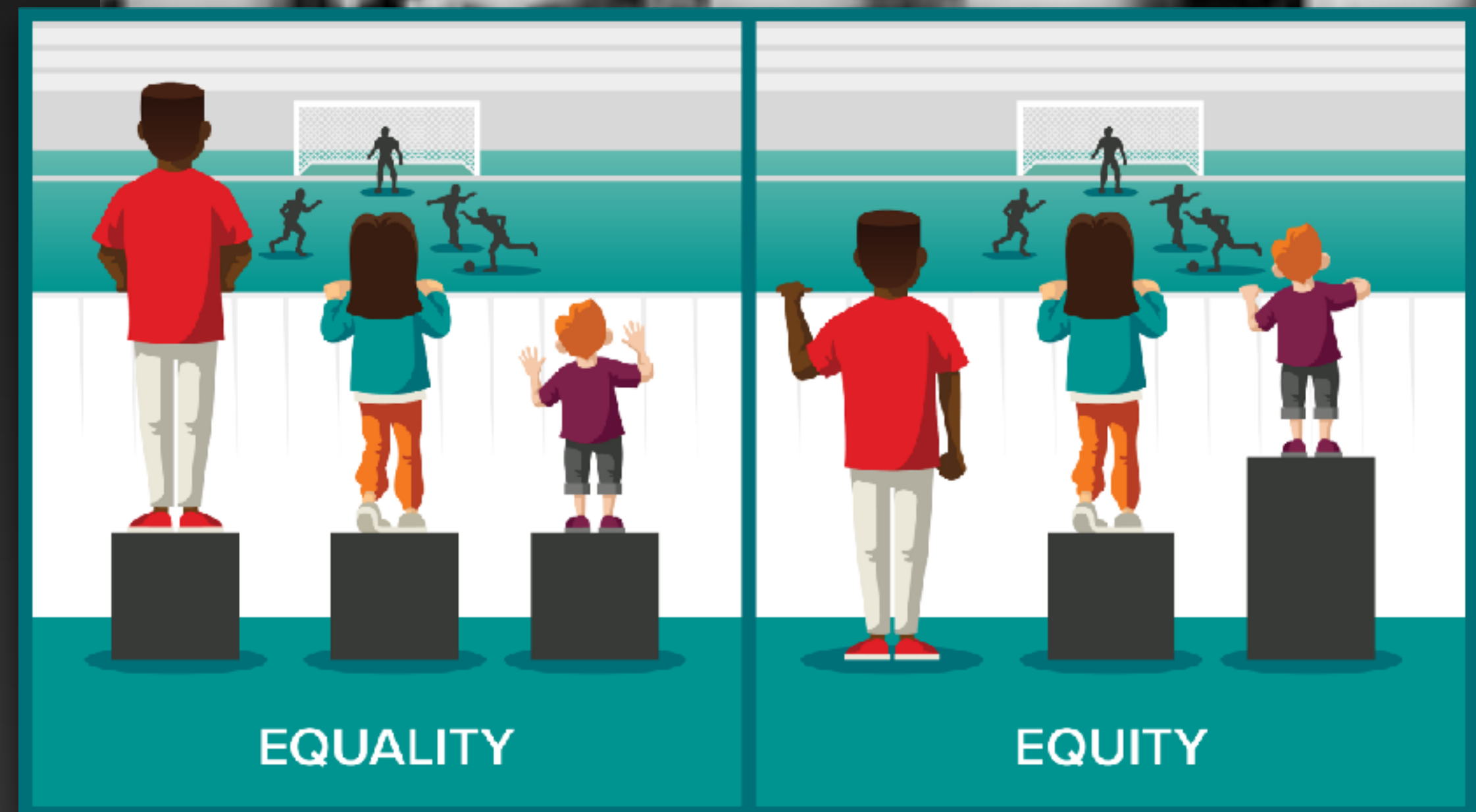
Everyone with everyone

Communality to loyalty

Insiders vs. outsiders

**“There was a hierarchy.
People tried to pretend
there wasn’t.”**

- Elizabeth Zimmer



Cultism

Being Special

Fanatic, infatuated, daily

Suspicion about “mystical CI”

Imitating Steve & Nancy

*“They are just like **ballet** dancers”*

Arrogant, exclusive

“I never wanted to be called a contact improviser. It bothered me to be labeled as such.”

- Lisa Nelson



Research & Principles

"Spread possible because no ideologies, no licensing"



"Discipline in researching into experience of movement"

Branching Off

(R)Evolution

Authenticity

When older isn't better

Authentic = Better?

Old = less developed?

Evolution without roots

Renaming to differentiate?

Maintaining **essence**

Need for a clear **definition**



**“I want to go on record as being pro-physical-sensation
in the teaching of this material.
The symbolism, mysticism, psychology, spiritualism are horse-drivel.**

**In actually teaching the stand or discussing momentum or gravity,
I think each teacher should stick to sensational facts.**

**Personally, I think we should guard our thoughts about auras/energy fields,
until we can actually demonstrate/teach such matters.**

**Personally, I've never seen anything occur which was
abnormal, para-physical, or extra-sensory.**

Personally, I think we underestimate the extent of the 'real'.”

– Steve Paxton, Contact Newsletter April 1975



Metaphysical

Psychic & Dramatic

Tension and disagreements

Holistic health, therapy

Self-righteous flow

Stay **open** and unified 💖

Mid 80s **integrated** therapy



Ecstatic (Contact) Dance





Five Rhythms vs. CI



“The issue has become quite charged between those who want to do CI and those who hate having it in the space, and Michael has become upset about having to police it. Several times I heard him say, ‘No Contact Improv’ during the dancing, and every time I heard it, I got upset. I don’t want people to have the idea that CI is a disrespectful dance form that cannot be done in a 5 Rhythms context.”
[...]

[...]

“... more and more rolling around on the floor and lifting was happening -often with little training and awareness, and with some near injuries-and the issue arose of CI taking up too much space in the crowded room.”

[...]

“To me, in a broad definition of CI, much of what goes on between people in the 5 Rhythms dance is a form of Contact Improvisation, since it involves some sort of moving point of contact—whether energetic, emotional, physical, or eye contact. I have been told the issue is nationwide at 5 Rhythms dances, and that it’s common to ‘outlaw’ CI at those dances. I decided to take this opportunity to try to heal the issue.”

Maxima Kahn

Contact Tango



@mervouss 10 maanden geleden

I could not reconcile the logic of tango with contact improvisation.



Beantwoorden

Contact Beyond Contact ©[®]™



Conscious Movement CI



Sensual CI



Tuning Score

From **Karen** Nelson

Influences:

Contact Improvisation

Material for the Spine

Dance **improvisation?**



Contemporary CI



Safe'n'Sane CI



What have I become?

Once too **avant-garde**

Now offered in **institutions**

Fun reputation, social dance

Once **risky** and raw

Now **aesthetically**, smooth, flow

Safe, secure - almost boring

Steve's **supervision**, his invitation

Stopped completely in 80's

Disliked what it had become...

"This exit, my major artistic achievement." - Steve Paxton



Thank you for watching

