

**An Interview with Linda Rabin
Canadian Dance History Project
University of Victoria**

Date: June 28, 2011

Place: Montréal, QC

Interviewee: Linda Rabin

Interviewer: Dr. Allana Lindgren

Transcribed by: Jana Millar Usiskin

Interviewee has read the transcript: Yes

Introduction

Linda Rabin is a teacher, dancer, choreographer and somatic practitioner based in Montréal. In this interview, Rabin narrates her experiences as a dancer, starting from her first dance classes as a child and continuing to the present day. She discusses being a student at Juilliard School in New York as well as her work as a dance mistress and choreographer in Israel with the Batsheva Company and in London with Ballet Rambert. She elaborates on her choreographic methods and innovations and contemplates how those methods emerged from contemporary techniques alongside personal experience. Rabin discusses the reasons she left the world of dance, and the interview ends as she considers the possibility of reentering the classroom.

Rationale of editing/transcription choices

The following transcribe has been edited for clarity, though the content remains an accurate reflection of the conversation.

-Interview-

Allana: Today is Tuesday, June 28, 2011. I'm in Montréal with Linda Rabin. Linda, I'm wondering if we could start with you discussing a little bit about how you got involved in dance.

Linda: Okay. I actually began because my mother sent me to the neighbourhood dance school, which is actually in the same neighbourhood where I live today. The building still exists; it's now a Montessori school. And I studied – I don't know if I studied – I think I played at the age of five with tap and ballet. Because I loved it so much, I continued during my elementary school education. I had classes with a ballet teacher named Tatiana Kuchinsky who taught after school hours.

From there I went to a ballet school in Montréal run by Mary Beetles. While I was there, I heard somebody speak about improvisation – a creative modern dance class. I'd never heard about this before. All I knew was ballet. I thought, "Oh this is interesting for me, I'd like to do this," and so I went home and told my mother that I heard about this and I wanted to explore it. And turned out it was Elsie Salomons, and Elsie is the aunt of Judith Marcuse and Betsy Carson, who both are in the dance field, or Betsy used to be, as a dancer. I went to the class – by then I was about fourteen – and I totally fell in love with the whole atmosphere of creativity and exploring movement in a more expressive way. That really was what launched me onto my path in my interest in modern dance. [Pause]

One other thing I think is interesting is that, at the time, television was new in our lives, and when I say at the time I mean before the age of ten or around ten or

eleven. There used to be a show called *The Hit Parade* on television, and the top songs were always performed with choreography, and when I saw that I thought, wow I like this, I want to do this, and I felt very proud of myself that I knew this big word. I'd learned this big word called "choreography." I decided I was going to become a choreographer. It was all because of *The Hit Parade*. If I think about it today, many of the young dancers who come to the school at LADMMI [Les Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal inc.], which is the school that I co-founded back in 1981. Many of them come today because of their exposure to hip hop and breakdancing, and also, with what's going on TV now, with all of the *So You Think You Can Dance*-type programs, and probably that's the version of today that turns young people on. My version of that time was *The Hit Parade*. [Laughs] It's an interesting concept.

Allana: So how do you go from someone who's very interested in choreography, who loves dance classes, to becoming a professional?

Linda: Meaning a professional choreographer?

Allana: [Overtop] Choreographer and . . .

Linda: Well I, first of all, if I can backtrack a little bit. When I met with Elsie Salomons, I said to her, "I want to be a choreographer." And she said, "Well first, why don't you start dancing?" [Laughs] So I knew I wanted to dance, but I knew I wanted to be a choreographer. Let me see, while I was at Elsie's I started to read *Dance Magazine*, and I became more aware of what was going on outside of Montréal in terms of dance, and also I started to look and to see what's going on in the city, what's happening elsewhere, and I became exposed to a variety of approaches, not because I studied a variety of approaches, but I began to know that there were many different people who were teaching or dancing and so on. But what really interested me is what I read in *Dance Magazine*, and I discovered something about Martha Graham, José Limón, Anna Sokolow and the New Dance Group that drew me in the direction I wanted to take. I went to Connecticut College in the summer, New London, Connecticut, which is where the American Dance Festival was in those years. I'm talking about the very, very early sixties. Now it's in North Carolina. Before Connecticut College it was in Bennington, where it all started. I had exposure to these great artists of the time, meaning Martha Graham and José Limón and members of their companies, and so when I came back to Montréal, I knew that I wanted to pursue that direction in dance.

So I went and looked up where I could study to become a professional. To satisfy my parents, I looked under university programs, and they were just getting started. They didn't exist yet in Canada, I don't think, but they did in the US. As I looked up all, you know, whatever catalogue I found, it was clear to me that I had to go to Juilliard, because it was there that I'd be in New York City. I'd be in the centre of it all, I would be working in the techniques that I admired and wanted to pursue. I knew I would have professional training – a professional direction that was in accordance with what I was looking for. So that's where I went.

So this is my long-winded way of responding to your question about how do you become a professional choreographer. One of the courses that we did at Juilliard was Composition class. I took Composition with a woman named Janet Soares, who followed the approach of Louis Horst, and Louis Horst, for those who don't know, was a musician-composer, who was a mentor for Martha Graham, and had composed

some pieces for Martha. He developed a style for teaching composition based on musical structures. It's funny I haven't thought about this in a long time. There's a book that is out called the, I think it was called *Preclassic Dance Forms* and another one called *Modern Dance Forms*. The *Preclassic* would be references to minuets, sarabands ... and we would learn structure based on those musical structures, and create dance studies based on that. Then the *Modern Forms* – I can't remember what that included, but clearly it was more about modern style composition, like the music of Satie or Ravel.

So I did that, and then I studied with Anna Sokolow for one of the courses, and that was a very important one for me because she was such an individualist, and she was a rebel in many ways. Her approach to teaching choreography was to say "Don't borrow, steal." In other words, go all the way. If you're going to do something, go all the way. Don't hold back. Something about her way influenced me, in terms of minimalism, and I became very interested in that. So that's how it began. In those days, and maybe it's true today, you learned choreography by simply doing it. It wasn't so much what you studied and then you became a choreographer, it was really more you practiced, you did the work, and if people appreciated your work, you were encouraged, and so you continued. But I find that it was helpful that I had those tools, to have had some practice in composition before actually getting going.

My practice as a choreographer began in Israel, and that's because after my four years stay in New York, I started traveling, and ended up rather quickly in Israel, thinking I'd stay there for three weeks, but I actually stayed for five years. I had many opportunities to work there, as a teacher, as a choreographer, and also as a dancer and as a rehearsal mistress.

Allana: With which groups?

Linda: Well, I first started to choreograph and teach, to choreograph with the Kibbutz Dance Company, which is an official professional dance company today, and tours Europe a lot, has been here in Canada as well. At the time they were an amateur group. The school was developing, and I would go up and teach there. They were in the north of the country, and I would go up and teach there for two days a week. I'd go the end of the first day, and stay for the morning of the second day, and then come back home. During that time I would rehearse, and I'd create a piece on them.

So that was my first opportunity. Then with the Batsheva Company, it was actually under Brian Macdonald, who was the artistic director for a period of one, maybe two years. It was a very challenging time for any artistic director with the Batsheva Company in those years because the company was resisting the idea of foreign directors coming in. They were constantly being directed by artistic directors from United States, Canada, Europe, and they were starting to come into their own, and wanting to have more Israelis being in charge, which is totally understandable. So there was a lot of friction going on at the time. So I can't remember if Brian was there for one year or for two.

Brian knew that I was there in the country. He didn't know me, but I was Canadian, and so he was. He wanted to support, I guess, another Canadian – I'm assuming. He invited me to come and be his assistant, which meant that I worked as a rehearsal assistant. I was new at it. I'd never done it before. I was in my early twenties, so I was quite young. It was the beginning of my professional career. He gave me eventually an opportunity to choreograph a class demonstration. Following that there was a choreographic workshop. I did a piece, and it was taken into the

repertoire. It actually toured the United States when the company went on tour back in 1972, I think it was. So that was my professional debut.

Allana: What was that like? What does it mean to be just on the brink of this career and working with professionals, and giving – being given this opportunity? What are your impressions from that experience?

Linda: You know, if I look at myself from the perspective of who I am today, I think, what the hell was I all about then? I had so much guts, so much belief in myself and nothing was going to get in my way. I knew what I wanted to do. I had no problem. I had a lot of confidence, so it was easy.

What was hard was the temperament of the Israeli dancers. The Israeli dancers at that time – I don't think it's the same at all today – but at that time, that particular group from the late sixties, early seventies – they were lions. They were lions on stage. They gave phenomenal, passionate, dynamic performances, but it was hell in the studio, because everybody behaved as a director. Everybody was the boss. And who was this little kid coming from Canada, who was in her early twenties, who hadn't been in the company before, telling us, you know, where to put our arms, or how to do the contraction, or where to go in the spacing? But the truth was if there were five people doing the same movement, there were five opinions on how was the right way. That was the hard part. And that kind of chiseled away at my confidence.

I remember that when it was time for me to leave, meaning I knew that my stay in Israel was over and I wanted to move on, I was heading back to Montréal and I got sidetracked by Ballet Rambert in London, England. That happened because Norman Morrice, who was artistic director of the company at the time, had come to Israel to set one of his pieces. He was a lovely man. I adored him. He needed somebody to direct, or to run, what was going to be a branch-off company – is that the way to say it? Like a separate company that was going to tour schools. He needed somebody who could take charge of that. I said I wanted to choreograph, and he said I would be able to choreograph in that context. He basically won me over. And so I came back to Montréal because I had a teaching contract, and then I went to London. When I got there the project fell apart, and that job didn't exist anymore, but he invited me to be rehearsal director, or rehearsal assistant and company teacher. I was disappointed. But I stayed. And I said, "I'll stay for a year."

But what was fantastic, the reason why I'm telling this story, is because it rebuilt my confidence. As challenging as the Israeli dancers were, the London dancers were like sheep, [Laughs] you know? You asked them to do something, they did it, no question, not challenging. I could just sigh with relief. However, on the other hand, I found that their performances were very nice performances; they were very correct, and very clean, but they didn't have any of the passion that so excited me and audiences, the way the Batsheva Company did. So there was, you know, there's both sides to it. But it really helped; it just made me feel a lot better about myself. And then after a year, I came back to Montréal, and then started to look at how and where I wanted to live, and develop my career as a choreographer and as a teacher.

One thing I want to say is that my career has always been about teaching and choreographing, and how do I marry the two? It was never very easy for me to figure out how to marry the two. Because both demanded different kinds of energies.

Allana: How so? What are the energies?

Linda: Yeah, well, choreographically, I needed to be very available to my creative self. And as a teacher, I needed to be more pedagogical. And I think the pedagogical side won more often than not.

Allana: Why is that, do you think?

Linda: [Sighs] I don't know. Sometimes I say it's my karma, but maybe it's more my nature. Maybe it's because I had more opportunities to teach than to choreograph. It's true that when I choreographed, it was because I would have invitations; it was through commissions. I can't say that I was compelled to choreograph, that there was always another idea chasing me that I had to put forward. One of the few times that that occurred was when I did *The White Goddess*. And another time was when I did what I called "The Chair Piece," which was called *A Moment Sitting*. That was actually choreographed in Vancouver, in 1975. In other words, a year after I got back to Canada.

Allana: Do you consider these among your most important works?

Linda: Yes, definitely. The piece *A Moment Sitting* was ... It's a piece that's been done a lot. I feel like it represents the essence of what I – I don't know, maybe it's even the essence of who I am even up to today. I'm saying that very spontaneously. I'm not sure. "The Chair Piece" was based on sitting, walking, and crawling. It was a minimalist piece. And I invited the performers to do the – my question was ... Let me backtrack. My question for that piece was, "How can I express the most from within the performer by doing the least on the outside?" In other words, how could I take away the artifice of dance and present the human being as the person, as the person that one is, and let all of the internal life come alive, so that that would transmit across the stage and touch an audience? So that way I took everything away. I stripped the piece bare, and based it on walking, and sitting, and crawling.

Granted, I used music. It was based on a *Ceremony of Carols* by Benjamin Britten. It has a slight, or more than a slight emotional tone to it. It brings up feelings, which helped. It helped to stimulate the mood and feeling from the inside.

The concept of how to move on and off the chair, how to walk, or get off from crawling up off the floor to standing. All of those kinds of movements were very inspired by my experiences from the Alexander Technique, which was an approach that had a major influence on my experience of my body as a dancer, and how I looked at dancers when I taught or when I worked with them as a choreographer. That experience of the Alexander Technique came into my life at the very end of the sixties into the early seventies. So it was right there. It was very alive for me. That piece was a way to put those concepts that so informed me and intrigued me and were a part of my interest at the time. You know, it was there for me to put into the piece. It was inevitable.

Allana: How does that compare with your experience of *The White Goddess*?

Linda: *The White Goddess* has traces of that. Because the minimalist aspect is always there. It was primarily there for much of my work until I kind of went into a more technical side for another reason. And you can ask me a question about that after I answer this one.

Allana: [Overtop] [Laughs]

Linda: *The White Goddess* was created – it was performed in 1977 – so it was created in 1976 into '77. The year prior I had worked with a man named Richard Pochinko, who together with Ann Skinner and some other people founded the Theatre Resource Centre. Richard – The Theatre Resource Centre was based in Ottawa at that time. It was meant to be a centre for people in theatre and eventually in dance, in the performing arts basically, and different branches of theatre, meaning clowning as well as regular theatre. It was a place for professionals to come and get resourced by the kind of techniques that he had to offer. They were very rich techniques, an approach that cultivated a deeper sense of the internal world that each one of us carries and which informs our performance. In essence he was providing me with tools and insight that I had been exploring in “The Chair Piece,” and that had been triggered in me by my experiences in the Alexander Technique, but I didn’t have a name for it – I didn’t have – I couldn’t name the tools I was using. I was working very intuitively. So I found that what he was doing was taking what I was practicing, and also exploring even further.

Those tools became a basis for how I approached *The White Goddess* piece. And that meant I drew on improvisations with colour, with sound, with taking the letters of a word. For example, if it was ~~the sea~~ – let’s say the sea. If we were exploring the sea goddess. The idea of the word sea – S-E-A. If you take the sound of sea and you think of each letter. The ssss-eeee. Even though the A is not sounded, you can feel that the A is at the end of the word and it has a feeling tone to it. So what would it be like to internalize the sound of each of those letters in the same way as what would it be like to internalize the kinesthetic feeling, ~~right the wake of~~ ~~kinesthetic feeling~~ of a colour and really smell it, and taste it, and let every pore of your body be it, from the inside out. And then let that move you. That’s how we created the piece. That’s how I researched the different concepts that I explored on the theme of *The White Goddess*, that was based on what I had read in Robert Graves’s book.

So that’s how those two pieces are different. You know, one worked on the tools just described as a way of bringing out the piece, of creating the piece. Whereas “The Chair Piece” had the form based on the Alexander Technique, but I was working totally blind. I had no idea – I was being led by, by blind sight, which might be what you call intuition [Laughs], you know?

Allana: Yes. Can you talk, before we talk about the technical turn [Laughs], can you say a little bit more about *The White Goddess*, and the themes you were pulling out of Robert Graves’s work, and how they fit into the time period for you, and what that piece meant for your career?

Linda: Yes. *The White Goddess*. Uh, [Sighs] Where to begin? I feel different angles, different threads that informed how I began with this. I knew I wanted to do something that was in part inspired by the richness from all the work I did with Richard at the Theatre Resource Centre. I was also very inspired by the structure of a work, and the freedom that I felt, the freedom in creativity that I felt from the work of theatre director Andrei Serban. I had seen his Greek trilogy that he presented at La MaMa, in New York, in 1970 – I don’t know, what was it, four-five, something like that maybe it was even '76. I don’t know. I don’t remember. I’d have to look it up. Maybe the listeners can look it up. [Laughs]

Allana: [Overtop] [Laughs]

Linda: It was phenomenal because it was very alive theatre. The voices were speaking the Greek tragedy but it was contemporary. It was animal. It was instinctive. It wasn't in a proscenium setup. It was in a vast space, and different events happened in different areas, and the space itself was transformed so that audiences sat on either side of a long narrow pathway. It depended on the piece that was – there was *The Trojan Women*, I remember, and I'm wondering if one of them was *Electra*. I can't remember what the third one was. Anyways, I was very, very inspired by that, and so in a way I took that concept and used it for *The White Goddess*.

I came to the theme of *The White Goddess* because I knew that I wanted to do something, but I didn't know what. And I went to bed with three books. One that was based on kabbalistic writings, actually Chasidic tales about rabbis, written by Martin Buber, or edited by Martin Buber. They were brilliant stories that again spoke about the life of letters and language and feeling from within. It was a book that I loved, but clearly was not going to work for choreography. I took another book that was by Heinrich Zimmer, which was about Indian art and civilization, and it was filled with symbolism, Indian symbolism. And it was the beginning of my Jungian days, so reading Jung and the importance of the collective unconscious and the symbols in Indian art. But that didn't work either. And anyways, so I had those three books in bed with me. And I just opened them – opened one [Makes snapping sound]. Closed it and put it away. Opened the other, closed it and put it away. Then I opened *The White Goddess*. I opened it and didn't close it and put it away. I kept reading and reading and reading.

I was amazed because I had been given that book a couple years earlier by Norman Morrice, who I met in London, England, who was the director of Ballet Rambert. He was the one who turned me onto the subject. And I couldn't fathom that book at the time, but I bought it. Or he gave it to me. But when I opened it then two years later, I thought, how come I didn't get it then. It just so totally spoke to me. So what was your question? [Laughs]

Allana: Some of the themes that you were pulling out . . .

Linda: [Overtop] Okay. SO this is my good old lead-up, right? Too much storytelling here [Laughs]. Basically it divided itself into the different stages of the goddess or what the goddess represented, meaning the full life-cycle. There's the cycle of birth, to initiation, to consummation, to repose, and to death, which corresponded also with the seasons of the year from spring to winter, and would be symbolized by the different goddesses, like the Sea Goddess, the Earth goddess, the Tree Goddess and so on.

I looked at these different ways of how I could possibly structure the piece, and ended up dividing it up into the five stages that I just mentioned, from birth to death. There is in the Celtic alphabet what's called the tree alphabet, where each tree relates to a different letter of the alphabet, or each letter of the alphabet is related to a different tree. So I took the five trees, where each one is associated with a particular season, and I created a, a dance section for that. I created a solo that was for Margie Gillis that was the Sea Goddess. I created a Sow Goddess dance, which was with Susan Rome. There was a Crane dance, which was basically the story of how – as Robert Graves tells it – that the cranes travelled across the sky from Greece bringing

the alphabet over to the Celts. That dance was performed by Stephanie Ballard and Leslie Dillingham and Margie Gillis. That piece didn't start with that, but let's say it travelled first with the cranes, and then it went to the Sow Goddess and then to the sea goddess, or was it the sea – no, the Sea Goddess, comes out of the water, and then to the animals, the Sow Goddess, and then it was the Tree dance. From there, the woman who represented the White Goddess, Candace Loubert, came in. Then there was a whole reenactment of the five stages once again, but through the image of a person representing the White Goddess. And there was a man, Robbie O'Neill, an actor.

It was about birth, initiation. He was being initiated like an animal finding its legs. Then consummation was a relationship-love duet between Candace and Robbie. Then repose was the aging process, the realization that death was coming, and the death knoll sounded throughout the dance. The rest of the group that did the first part with the cranes, and the Sea Goddess, etc., they were there as a kind of chorus for Candace.

The piece structurally started with the audience in the foyer of wherever it was performed. All of the performers would filter through the crowd chanting and then singing the first part of the poem by Robert Graves. They had bells and candles. It was presented like a ritual, more of a ritual or celebration in honour of the White Goddess rather than as a performance per se. Basically the performers led the audience into the larger space where the piece would be performed and the audience remained standing and would walk to one area of the room, high up on a platform where Margie danced the Sea Goddess, and then higher up on a balcony was the Sow Goddess dance, and then the Tree dance was on the ground floor and the audience was seated on either side. The rest of the piece pretty much happened with the audience seated.

The music was the dancers singing melodies that I composed using the text of Robert Graves's poems about the White Goddess. There was a text spoken by Robbie O'Neill, the actor, which was again text drawn from the Robert Graves book, which was "The Song of Amergin" – an ancient Celtic poem that speaks to the seasons and the tree alphabet. And then there was in the last half an electronic score that was composed by David Sutherland, who I don't think is composing anymore. I think he – it was quite unique. He was more of an electronic, sound technician person and was interested in electronic music composition at the time, and he did a wonderful piece for us, for the work.

Allana: Hm.

Linda: So . . .

Allana: [Overtop] And what was the reception of that piece?

Linda: Oh it was quite remarkable. People were very touched by it. I think they were touched by it because it wasn't a performance. It was something meant to be lived. It was something meant to be lived, and witnessed the way villagers might witness a celebration that happens yearly. And that the people who were performing were those who were the ones who were chosen to do the play, if you will, that year.

I think that all of us who were engaged in the work – it drew on something very deep in us. We knew we were doing something important – important for ourselves and for each other as a community. I think that transmitted to the audience. There was probably something on a universal level that was being touched.

Allana: So how is it that you went from that experience to, to a more technically focused approach?

Linda: [Overtop] Yes, well. We're skipping a couple of years, but I'll probably backtrack right now and not skip a couple of years. I created another work in a similar vein the following year that was called *Women of the Tent*. It wasn't well received by the reviewers. I'm not sure what to say about it. I mean, I didn't think it was so terrible. But anyways, it was again with live music, and speaking, chanting. There were only four performers in it. I forget her last name, Patricia –

Allana: Frazer?

Linda: No, Patricia Grogan. This was the actress, who spoke the text. And there was a dancer from Guatemala, who came on an exchange, because I had gone down to Guatemala after the earthquake there in the seventies. It was a project with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. I won't go into it, but basically I was sent down there and spent six weeks teaching. And then this dancer, oh, what's her name? Lisa Mertins. She came and participated in the piece. Candace Loubert was in the work, the woman who played the White Goddess. And Jo Leslie was in the piece.

It involved water, fire, silver and gold. This was taken from an image of a pre-Raphaelite painting of the three muses, or the three, not goddess, but help me, anyways, there's a word that's not coming to me. They're busy spinning thread that turns into gold. That was what inspired the research for that piece. The composer for that was Michael Baker. So I did that piece.

When that was over, I was a little bit crestfallen, because it wasn't received very well. I sort of was wondering what next, where am I going, what do I want to do, and I met with a Japanese dancer who was a choreographer, had her own company, who was a colleague friend from the Juilliard days, and she was in New York performing that year. I went down to meet her. To make this very long story short, out of that, I decided I wanted to go to Japan and study for a year, where I could do a self-study program, and strengthen my interest in dance-theatre. Fortunately I got a grant from the Canada Council and went to Japan for a year: 1979-1980.

While I was there I was very struck and taken by how dance studios functioned. The students stayed with a teacher for a long period of time, and they were devoted. They weren't popping around, taking classes in different places. So there was a very strong bond and connection between teacher and student. It somehow had an influence on me, and made me realize that if I wanted to really have an impact as a teacher, because now we're ~~were~~ getting to the teacher side, which will answer your question about the shift in choreography. Anyways, I knew that to be the teacher that would have an impact on students, I needed to stay in one place, and not move around so much. I remember there was one student who appreciated my classes. He said, "You know, Linda, it's not fair what you're doing. You know, you come for three weeks and then you leave. You come for three weeks and then you leave." He says, you know, "It's a tease." He wanted me to stay put so he could study more fully and more deeply.

So I think while I was still in Japan, I wrote to Candace and said, "What do you think about us opening up a school?" And when I came back, which was in the summer of 1980, we talked about opening up a school, that would respond to the technical needs as well as the whole internal creative, expressive life that we had

explored in *The White Goddess*, and what had been learnt at the Theatre Resource Centre. In other words, all of that, plus what both of us had experienced through our separate and common practices in what we call today somatic education, but then we called it body awareness, I think. So there, we had all these tools that we wanted to marry - a deep expressive internal awareness that infused and informed the technical dancer. Which at that time seemed to seem separate, and at that time, it wasn't as – It wasn't happening in that way in dance.

So we started a school in 1981, in January 1981, and decided it would be important to have a company to go with it. So a company was started in about 1982. And the idea of that company was to create pieces that would challenge the technical level of the dancers and would simultaneously draw all of the internal richness that we were working with.

Allana: [Overtop] What was the name of the company?

Linda: Triskelion. The company existed for two years, because after two years I said, "Candy, I can't do this. It's too much. It's too much, too fast. I have to do one or the other and the school is more important right now." That started a whole wave of pieces that I choreographed which were more based on how to develop a technical vocabulary, and I worked very closely with the music, which was not unusual for me, because I was very music-oriented in my pieces in general. Most of them were repertory pieces, meaning short pieces. At the same time, I was also choreographing for Les Grands Ballets. I'd be commissioned every once in awhile. It started in 1974, and then 1975, but then in 1982 or whenever, when I made these pieces for Triskelion one of them went into the Les Grands repertoire a couple years later and then after that I did another piece, and another piece, and so on.

So those years there was a shift, and it was more conventional, mainstream type of choreographies. And if there was anything that was not so mainstream, it was the way in which I would see and, and *exige* as they say in French, demand or, you know, expect, want out of the dancers. I mean, how to speak from your personal truth but don't get stuck in your personal story; let's go beyond into something universal. So that's how I was working. You know, find something that's your true vulnerability, who you are in your deepest sense, and that – somewhere that place in you touches a universal theme that touches everybody. That's what I was always looking for, and that was also present in these pieces that were more technically oriented.

Just to go on, beyond your question, the whole business about how do I marry being a teacher, and running a school, and choreographing – It came to a head for me in the late '80s. I started to feel that I needed to make a choice. I couldn't do both. It was as though the creative side was being compromised by my teacher-self, by my pedagogical side, and so I decided to stop choreographing and just devote myself more fully to teaching. And then I started to feel I needed to create again, and I stopped my teaching side, and just choreographed. And when I went back to choreography, what was interesting is that I went back to working more like the way I did with *The White Goddess*.

That's when I did a piece called *Katabasis*, which was a coproduction with Montréal Danse, Danse-Cité and then the Canada Dance Festival when it was in Ottawa. I can't remember if it was in '91 or '92. I think the piece was done in '91 but maybe it was presented in '92 in Ottawa, I can't remember. But it was around that time. *Katabasis* involved the dancers of Montréal Danse and a few outside dancers, who could come in through the Danse-Cité organization. In that production, I

researched the way I did in *The White Goddess*, only without colours, it was researched only with words. I explored the theme of death – death and transformation, quite a bit. A good friend of my mind, visual artist Sylvia Safdie, did the décor, which was made up of rocks of wonderful shapes and sizes, and large tree limbs and sometimes rope hanging from the end of a tree limb with a rock hanging at the end. And the dancers rubbed the rocks, banged the rocks gently creating little sounds. Or the rocks suspended on rope would be pounding on the earth. The piece was very raw, very animal. Almost primitive in many ways. It was like a new beginning for me. And that was an hour long work.

Which reminds me, if I go back to talk about *The White Goddess*, one of the unusual things about that piece for that time is that it was a full evening work. Up until then in contemporary dance what people were doing were repertoire pieces, so they would be ten-minute pieces, twenty-minute pieces, maybe thirty-minute piece, but not a full evening work, and I think that represented the first time that was done, if I'm not mistaken. But then very shortly after that started to pick up. I think Édouard Lock very soon after started to do his first full-evening work. As you know, today that's de rigueur. And maybe it will be novel to do repertoire pieces very soon.

But coming back to *Katabasis*. After that – out of that piece there was a solo, which was done by Manon Levac, who was a member of Montréal Danse. That solo was part of the piece but was also performed independently. Right after that I did a solo for the dancer Jacqueline Lemieux, ~~and I did~~ a piece called *In The Time of Waiting*, based on the poem by T. S. Eliot. That piece was also in the same vein, very raw and primitive, more theatrical and expressive from the inside out. It involved a pool of water, that was – like a kid's pool, but large enough for her to lie in and get wet in, and the water was wet with the colour red, like blood, like menses blood, and she would swim in it and she held bells in her hand which was the sound score throughout. So it was in silence with the sounds of the bells sometimes, sometimes not and in different ways they were rattled, and then the whole wetness of the pool. And out of the pool. It was a circular pool, but there was a cloth, ~~but~~ a canvas cloth that was painted, that was square, that was her space. That was the delineated space in which she danced. That was the last piece I did, which was in 1992. And after that I stopped everything, no choreography, no teaching, good-bye dance. It was over for me.

Allana: Why?

Linda: I just felt that I was so caught up in the persona of being the director of the school, being the choreographer, you know, being a teacher who was known in the community at the time. So I had to keep up face of how I function and what I do, and simultaneously it was being projected onto me. You know, I was the so-called “authority,” in quotes, and people would be afraid of me because, you know, I was the director of a school, if people wanted to come in. If I just did – said a little word, it would be read in a certain way. It would be read in a certain way that made me into some kind of wolf. ~~probably~~ Probably I put that out enough anyways, [Laughs] to some extent.

I felt that this was not working for me, and something needed to change. I had gone through analysis at that time, was doing a Jungian analysis, and that, for sure, played a role in how I started to look at my life, and how I was engaged in my career, how I was engaging in relationships, not only in my personal life, but also in the studio and with dancers and with the students. I started to understand and recognize

ways of being that, you know, I hadn't been aware of. I was more psychologically aware. I needed to bring more of that awareness into my pores, into the whole body of who I am.

I literally woke up one morning hearing a voice that said, "Linda, if you want to evolve as a human being, you've got to give up dance." I knew that that was right for me at that time. So I went to the studio and I told Candy, and I was balling my eyes out. I said, "I don't know what I'm going to do." I had to give class. So I finished the season at the school. But I would stand there in the class feeling that I was a whole other person, that I wasn't the same. I could barely teach anything. I guess I got through with it, but I wasn't the same person. In between classes I would be balling my eyes out or even during classes my eyes would be in tears. I was just going through a whole transformation.

For about two years, I weaned – I, I basically got out of dance, and then slowly found some other path to take. I slowly weaned myself out of the studio. I then completely left it, and I started meditating, and I rode my bike a lot in town. I started to swim, which is something I never did very well. I decided, I want to learn how to swim well, and I was going to go to the pool and that was going to be my physical activity.

Then I met up with an osteopath who was like magic for me. She became my anchor for the next couple of years. I remember her way of diagnosing was with a – was with a pendulum, and I asked her, you know, what do you see that I can be doing from here? I just don't know where to go. I have a sense I could do something with the body, maybe something in the field of therapeutic work. She, you know, the pendulum twirled. And she said, "Linda, you're, you're not going to leave the field of dance, it's too much in your blood, but it's your relationship to dance that's going to change." I heard her words and I said, "Fuck you, no way." I was so pissed off. Because I knew that I could not be in dance again, there's no way. I had to do something else, and I was going to prove her wrong. And um- anyways [Laughs].

I proved her wrong ... for awhile. But, but she was totally right. Dance was and is too much in my blood. And although I am involved in somatic practices as my main work, you know, I'm back in the studio working with young dancers at the school I cofounded at LADMMI (the school changed its name in 2011 to *École de danse contemporaine de Montréal*). I don't teach technique class anymore. I myself don't dance per se anymore. But I do a kind of movement that comes from my Continuum Movement practice, which for me represents the essence of dance. It's the dance that underlies ~~underneath~~ all movement, that's how I see it. I communicate some aspect of that, or maybe I do communicate that through the kind of course that I teach at LADMMI now, which is called in French *Recherche Créative*, which in English means Creative Research, but it's really about personal and creative process. I draw on my background in the various forms of somatic practices that I've learnt, on movement improvisation, on the work I did in the Theatre Resource Centre, and obviously on my background as a dancer, and my eye as a teacher and rehearsal director and choreographer. So all of that comes into play. I feel that what I do in the class, what I work on with the dancers, is to make them more aware of how much of who they are can participate in the dance. And to what extent they can let go of what they think they have to do, and trust into what is innately there in the intelligence of the body system, and to cultivate trust in their own creativity and how that plays a role when they're working with other choreographers, teachers, or dancers. It's really trust in the intelligence of a human being while you're training in your technical practice. Trust in the intuitive information that comes through. So that's what I'm really in

now, in cultivating and teaching. Actually, at the time of this recording, I'm also, now on an – on an edge of wanting to going back into the studio to dance a little bit.

Allana: [Overtop] [Laughs]

Linda: So how does – you know, how does Linda at the age of sixty-five, go in and reconnect to dance movement, without having to do a thousand and one *plies* and *tendus*, and working my body in a way that doesn't belong to a sixty-five year old, but to somebody so many decades younger? I'm looking for someone who wants to be in a class like that, and if not, I'll have to figure out how to do it myself or with a group of others.

And I've been dreaming of even performing a little bit. What would it be like to perform, to come back out as a dancer, but with all of this experience inside me now?

Allana: That sounds fantastic.

Linda: [Overtop] I don't know. You know, it's fun to think about it. And I'm putting it out. The fact that I'm saying it here, live on recording.

Allana: [Overtop] [Laughs]

Linda: You know, maybe putting it out so more voices can hear it. I don't know if I'll actually, if I need to realize it in the way that I imagine it. But it's fun thinking about it, and it gives me some, some vitality in my physical system, just to consider the idea.

And all to say that we change all the time. And isn't it kind of great that, that we can give ourselves that opportunity, that we don't have to stick to the same thing all the time, and nor too how we think it's supposed to be. Yeah?

Allana: Very inspiring. As we wind down the conversation... I think that's sort of – where you are right now is a new beginning. It's very exciting, very exciting.

Linda: [Overtop] Yes, it is like a new beginning for me.

Allana: As you, as you bring that and look back at the whole career, is there anything else that you would like to add, or that we should know?

Linda: [Overtop] I feel like . . . I feel like. . . No, it's kind of interesting that I did say what I did right now at the end, because obviously it's very alive in me and ready to come out. And no, who needs to look back? I think it's time now to be present with what's here and now, and let's see what tomorrow is going to bring.

Allana: That's wonderful. Thank you very much, Linda.

Linda: Thank you. This has been great fun. [Laughs] Okay.