

Input 4-10-86

Background of The Workgroup

To define the specific nature of The Workgroup, its history and reason for coming into being, is most clearly given by quoting from two letters and from the mimeographed sheet that was used initially to invite dancers and others to join in its work.

Statement mailed out November 1969 to initiate
The Workgroup

Dance now is in a beautiful state of flux and indeterminacy. Just as audiences are learning to expect anything as they enter today's dance theatre, so do the choreographers approach each new work with less predeterminacy and certainty than at other periods. Ironically, those least prepared for the new directions and demands are often the skilled dancer performers who have been trained in the romantic tradition.

There is still another phenomenon to be reckoned with: The Open Theatre, The Living Theatre, The Polish Lab Theatre and other acting groups are moving away from literature and the domination of the word towards movement unleashed to a degree never seen in Western drama. The actors are dancing and despite their technical limitations, in profoundly moving and personal ways. By contrast, most professional dance works take on the gloss of elegant body control and clean movement designed to bury under good manners and romantic aesthetics what is really there.

Another challenge comes from the young people who are dancing on their Saturday nights with freedom, invention and personal expressiveness that makes most theatrical jazz forms look stilted and mannered.

Going out into the streets and onto the campuses across the country, the political demonstrations take on theatrical and choreographic forms that challenge the very vitality and relevance that has defined American modern dance.

The plan of The Workgroup is no plan. It takes its shape from those dancers who participate in the exploration of the new challenges. The Workgroup is open to choreographers, intermediate and advanced dancers. Also, musicians, composers, film-makers, playwrights are invited to participate.