

Fall 2012

Ballet Review



**From the Fall 2012
issue of *Ballet Review***

**A Conversation
with David Vaughan by
Rebecca Hadley**

Cover Photograph by Costas:
Karl Paquette in *Giselle* at
Lincoln Center Festival 2012.

Ballet Review 40.3
Fall 2012

Editor and Designer:
Marvin Hoshino

Managing Editor:
Roberta Hellman

Senior Editor:
Don Daniels

Associate Editor:
Joel Lobenthal

Associate Editor:
Larry Kaplan

Copy Editor:
Barbara Palfy

Photographers:
Tom Brazil
Costas

Associates:
Peter Anastos
Robert Greskovic
George Jackson
Elizabeth Kendall
Paul Parish
Nancy Reynolds
James Sutton
David Vaughan
Edward Willinger
Sarah C. Woodcock



- 4 Moscow – Clement Crisp
- 5 Wolfsburg – Darrell Wilkins
- 7 Chicago – Leigh Witchel
- 9 Birmingham – David Mead
- 11 New York – Harris Green
- 12 London – Leigh Witchel
- 15 New York – Don Daniels
- 17 Paris – Clement Crisp
- 18 Toronto – Gary Smith
- 19 St. Petersburg – Kevin Ng
- 21 New York – Sandra Genter
- 22 Budapest & Vienna – Leigh Witchel

Tim Scholl

- 26 *Serenade: From Giselle to Georgia*

Joel Lobenthal

- 36 *L'École de la Danse*

Rebecca Hadley

- 48 *A Conversation with David Vaughan*

Jay Rogoff

- 56 *Two Weeks in Another Town*

Carla DeFord

- 65 *A Conversation with Maina Gielgud*

Janet Mansfield Soares

- 68 *An Ocean Apart*

Ian Spencer Bell

- 76 *Running Upstairs*

Jeffrey Gantz

- 78 *Pathway to Success*

Joel Lobenthal

- 84 *A Conversation with Karl Paquette*

- 91 *London Reporter – Clement Crisp*

- 94 *First Position – Jeffrey Gantz*

- 94 *Music on Disc – George Dorris*

Cover Photograph by Costas: Karl Paquette in *Giselle*
at Lincoln Center Festival 2012.

A Conversation with David Vaughan

Rebecca Hadley

BR: Now that the Cunningham Trust is leaving Westbeth, what is happening with the company's archives?

David Vaughan: This is our last week here, June 15 is our last day, and practically everything as far as the archives are concerned has gone to the Dance Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. There is going to be one more pickup by the library because I've found a few press clippings and things I didn't think had gone. Other people have other things to send.

After that I will be unemployed, because the Trust has taken over already, and the Trust has an office at City Center. I'm not part of the Trust.

BR: Will compiling of press clippings and further articles cease?

Vaughan: I suppose the library will collect as usual. I talked to Jacqueline Davis, the executive director at the library, and she asked me if I would be interested in coming in and being there one day a week or one afternoon a week, just to answer people's questions or whatever is needed.

I told her there should be a notice saying, "The Archivist is In." I probably will do that, but I haven't decided when.* Otherwise I really am unemployed.

BR: You started as the archivist for the company in 1976?

Vaughan: That was when I was officially appointed. It formalized what I had been doing for my own interest up to that time. And then Jean Rigg, who was what we would now call the executive director of the foundation, de-

*The schedule has been set. David Vaughan will be in residence on Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 5 pm. On the last Wednesday of each month at 2 pm he will introduce and screen a film or video, beginning with *Channel/Inserts* and *La Fille Mal Gardée*.

ecided that we should do something. What I was doing was the first time, as far as I know, that anyone did that on a regular basis with a dance company. She got a pilot grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to appoint me with that title, which was for two years, and at the end of that time everybody decided that it was obviously an open-ended thing.

BR: How has the work at the archive changed over time?

Vaughan: We had all kinds of things we were doing. I have an assistant, Kevin Carr, who was working mostly on the films and videos and was also part of the team doing "Mondays with Merce." In the last couple of years my work has been much more involved with the Legacy Tour because I went on all of that tour – or most of it, I didn't go to Hong Kong – not only to collect material for the archives, but if necessary to talk with people. That was always part of my job with the archives.

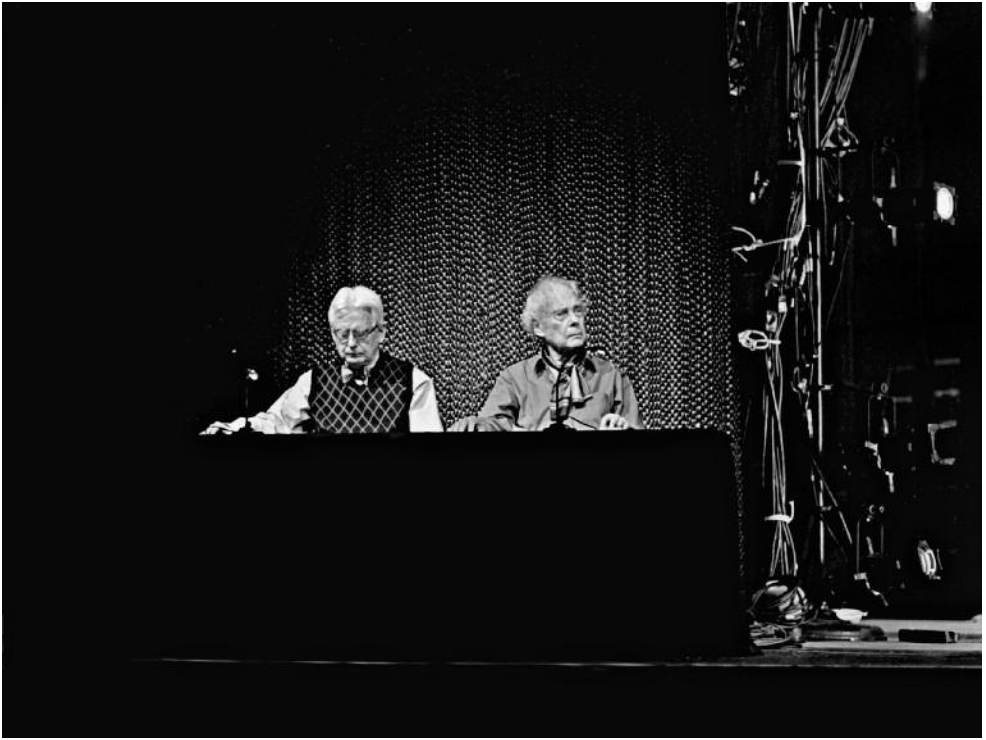
BR: Will there now be printed programs to collect?

Vaughan: There will because, for example, the company in Lyon, France, has just done a program with two Cunningham works, so I'll get a program from that. I will keep my running chronology of works on my computer at home, but that's just for myself. Also, I have these famous card files on which I have everything. That's how I started the archives. I'll keep those up to date for my own interest and so that I can answer people's questions.

Part of my job working as archivist at the Cunningham Company has been either collaborating with people who are making exhibitions or even co-curating an important exhibition that traveled around Europe. I also worked closely with the people at the library when they did a Merce show in 2007.

BR: How often do you get requests from people who either want to collaborate or just come in and have a look?

Vaughan: It still happens. Still, questions about the archives or requests for material from the archives we aren't able to do anymore. We have to say, "Sorry, you have to go to the library."



David Vaughan and Merce Cunningham at the side of the stage reading John Cage stories for *How to Pass, Kick, Run, and Fall* at Lincoln Center Festival 2002. (Photo: Tom Brazil)

BR: Do you know if special permission will be required to view a lot of the Cunningham material?

Vaughan: No, I suppose it will be the usual library way. Whether stuff is processed enough to make it available at this point, I'm not quite sure. But I don't think that we have placed particular restrictions on anything. One of the things that's going on in the last days of the Cunningham Foundation is the creation of dance capsules, which are still being worked on. These will be available to scholars, but probably not right away. They are mostly for practical purposes, with all the material you would need to reconstruct a dance.

BR: So choreographic notes, videos, and so forth?

Vaughan: Yes, things like that. These will be available to the people who are doing the fellowships.

BR: What other archives do you keep out of

personal interest? Are there any other companies or artists?

Vaughan: Ashton, because I have a website called ashtonarchive.com, which has rather fallen into disuse for the last couple of years, but I'm taking that over and bringing it up to date. Also, I've been working on from time to time and now will be able to devote myself to a book on the choreographer James Waring. I have all his archives at home, too. Plus my own.

BR: Why did you write your book on Frederick Ashton?

Vaughan: Ashton's work was the most important to me in ballet for many years, and I would say it formed my taste from my school-days in the 1930s onward. Some people could never understand how I could like Merce and Ashton, but I think liking Ashton's work made it possible for me to like Merce's.

In 1965 I received a letter out of the blue from Arlene Croce. She had read a few things I had written – because I also wrote some film

criticism in *Sight & Sound*, things like that – so she wrote asking if I was the David Vaughan whose pieces she'd read, and would I be interested in joining this idea she had to start a dance magazine? So I started writing for that – it was *Ballet Review*.

So did Don McDonagh. Don said to me one day, "You know, you really should write a book." And I said, "Well of course I'd like to write a book about Ashton, but I think Clive Barnes is going to do that." And he said, "Don't wait for Clive Barnes, do your own book!" I wrote to Ashton and he wrote back saying, "Now that I'm retired I can write my own book." But then he said, "If I ever change my mind, I'll remember you."

I thought that that was the chink in the armor for him. So I wrote a long piece in *Ballet Review*, ostensibly to review another book about Ashton, but really to show the sort of book I would write. It happened that Mary Clarke, the editor of *The Dancing Times* in England, had been approached by a publisher in London asking her who could write a book about Ashton. She showed them my article and said, "I think this is your man." In other words, I was commissioned by the publisher, Adam & Charles Black, to write the book.

I wrote to Ashton saying, more or less, "You know I have the commission to write the book and I'm going to do it whether you like it or not," but in fact he cooperated. Over the next few years I was writing that book, and it came out originally in 1977. But it got written, that was the most important thing. They did such a beautiful job, really marvelous, produced with so many illustrations.

BR: Were you a fan of ballet from a very early age?

Vaughan: Even in school, in the 1930s, I was addicted to ballet. I'd seen the Russian ballet companies, but I also saw a Vic-Wells performance in about 1938 that happened to have two or three Ashton ballets in it. So from early on, I always particularly looked for his ballets. During the war when I was still at school, before the air raids started, the Vic-Wells had a long season in the summer of 1940 and I went

along with friends from school and gradually it was intensifying my interest in it and my appreciation of it.

BR: What drew you to Ashton's work?

Vaughan: Looking back, I think it was the fact that the dance itself is the most important thing in his ballets. He's a great storyteller when he needs to be, but for me the stories were always the pin to hang the dancing on. I don't know how analytical I would have been about it at that time, but looking back, that's what it was.

BR: Had you begun dance training at that point?

Vaughan: Not really. When I was about ten years old I had a few classes with a local teacher. She was a teenager at the time who went to the same church that my parents did. Her name was Bidy Pinchard and she became quite a famous London teacher. I didn't last very long because I got sick. Then, when I left school in 1940, I told my father I wanted to study ballet and he wouldn't hear of it, typical of a middle-class English father.

It was only later, when I came out of four years in the army in 1947, that I thought, Now I can do what I want to do, I would have money from the government. I'd taken a few classes on and off during that time. I took a few classes at Rambert, for example, with Marie Rambert, and then I found this remarkable teacher who didn't say, "Oh forget it, go home," but actually accepted me as a student. Her name was Audrey de Vos, and she had an amazing ability to develop not only people's technique but also to change their body, because she had an extraordinary knowledge of anatomy. I was puny and weak but she built me up and made it possible for me to dance.

Which made it possible for me to accept the scholarship to come to America, work at the School of American Ballet, take a grueling class like Anatole Oboukhoff's, and get something out of it. I was amazed when I met someone recently at some performance and she said, "I remember you from the School of American Ballet, Mr. Oboukhoff's class, you were a fa-

vorite.” I thought, What?! He was somebody I absolutely worshipped, but to think he appreciated the fact that I was very devoted to him.

BR: So no one else in your family performed or danced?

Vaughan: My parents did amateur theatricals a lot when they were young, and even when I was a child I remember going to see them in some sort of show they did. In fact, there was a skit they did called “The Burglar and the Girl,” in which my father had to threaten my mother with a gun, and I was carried out of the theater screaming. My brother was a musician, not a professional musician, but a very good amateur clarinet player. He used to act at the university, we all did that. But I’m the only one who pursued it seriously.

BR: Does your interest in dance history and preserving material date from your first interest in dance?

Vaughan: Oh yes, absolutely. When I was a teenager I started reading ballet books and I started making lists of the repertoires of ballet companies I was very interested in. All that sort of chronology of dance and ballet. In fact, that’s what led me to write a book like the Ashton book.

BR: Do you have a favorite Ashton ballet?

Vaughan: *La Fille Mal Gardée*, of course. *The Dream. Scènes de Ballet*, which is not often being performed.

BR: I read something you had written in 1999 about Ashton’s ballets in England, and how they weren’t being performed much. Has that state of affairs improved at all?

Vaughan: In the Royal Ballet? Yes, in 2004 especially, for the Ashton centenary they did some very good programs, which was when they brought back *Sylvia*. I had to go over there to see all those things. I’m going over in a few weeks to see the last programs of the season because there will be two Ashton ballets plus *Les Noces*.

BR: You mentioned your book on James Waring. How did you come to know him? Was it through Merce’s classes?

Vaughan: No, when I first came to New York I came to take up a scholarship at the School

of American Ballet and Jimmy took classes there. We met in class and became very close friends right away because we had so much in common. Then I was in pieces that he choreographed. He was in one or two of mine, I think.

BR: When you initially came to the School of American Ballet it was because Lincoln Kirstein had invited you. How did you meet him?

Vaughan: This is all in the book that Nancy Reynolds did, *Remembering Lincoln*. I wrote an account for it. When New York City Ballet came to London for the first time in the summer of 1950, I was dancing in a show in London, but I would go to the matinees of City Ballet. I wrote to Lincoln, saying there was one ballet I couldn’t see because they didn’t do it at matinees – *The Four Temperaments* – and I thought it was an important piece, so could I come and see a rehearsal?

The next morning the phone rang in my parents’ house where I was living and it was Lincoln, saying, “Come to watch the rehearsal this morning and see me afterwards.” I went up to the opera house at Covent Garden and made my way to the wings. I was watching the piece when he came and found me there and said, “Come to lunch.”

He took me to lunch and was curious, was asking me questions about what kind of ballets I wanted to do. It happened that I had the idea of a ballet based on a short story by E. M. Forster, and it happened that Lincoln knew Forster very well and was always trying to get him to write the scenario for a ballet, but Forster wouldn’t do it. This set it up in Lincoln’s mind, and Lincoln was the sort of person who, if something was set in his mind, it was already happening for him. Before we’d finished lunch he said, “You’d better come to America and do the ballet.” I was completely nonplussed by this.

Lincoln actually didn’t stay much longer in London, but he told the company manager to arrange it for me. So I quit the show. It turned out that Lincoln was doing this with a lot of people; he was giving people jobs right and left

and picking people up in bars and giving them jobs, but in my case it was because I'd written this note to him.

So in October that year I came to New York and started studying at SAB. That's where I first encountered Merce, which as it turns out was one of the most important things that happened to me there. Another was meeting Jimmy, and another was studying with those wonderful Russian teachers, especially Oboukhoff. Of course the ballet never happened. In Lincoln's mind it was already happening, and if it didn't, that was it.

BR: How long did you study at SAB? Was there a moment when you left?

Vaughan: Yes, because after I'd been in New York for five years I went back to London for a year, ostensibly so I could decide for my family's sake where I wanted to live – I knew perfectly well I wanted to live here. At the end of the year I came back but didn't go back to SAB. That was when I started studying with Merce, when I really got to know Merce.

BR: During that year in London you were writing?

Vaughan: I started writing for the magazine *Dance and Dancers*. I was also doing a lot of television shows and the like. I was still dancing, but not choreographing. Jimmy and I started a choreographers' cooperative called Dance Associates, for which both of us and other people choreographed. But my choreographic ambitions were limited – by my lack of talent, I would say, or lack of sufficient talent.

BR: What happened with Dance Associates?

Vaughan: The idea was that everybody was free to do whatever they wanted. We started out rather ambitiously with a couple of concerts at the 92nd Street Y, with live music. Jimmy found young composers to write music for us, but we couldn't continue to do that, so we used to give concerts at the tiny old Amato Opera Theatre on Bleecker Street or at the Master Institute, which is on the Upper West Side and had a very nice theater.

In one of the first of the concerts, at the Henry Street Playhouse, Paul Taylor did pieces

for us, early pieces, because he was our friend at that time. I was in one of his pieces, not dancing but doing a character walk-on. There were people like Aileen Passloff, who's still around choreographing and teaching at Bard College, Toby Armour, Alec Rubin.

Eventually it became Jimmy's company, but there was an interim period when sometimes it was advertised as Dance Associates and sometimes as James Waring Dance Company. Jimmy taught a very innovative composition class even before Bob Dunn did at the Cunningham studio, because people like Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, David Gordon, and Valda Setterfield were all in Jimmy's company or in his class. He's a forgotten figure now, so it's important for me to write that book.

BR: Did he give a technique class as well? What was that like?

Vaughan: It was unconventional, but it was good training. He made people think about what they were doing, which is, in a sense, rather like Tudor's class. That was an important thing for me about Tudor's class: you didn't just copy what he was doing; you had to think about what it was, figure it out for yourself. He was a wonderful teacher, Tudor, and so was Jimmy. He would teach on Sunday morning so there was a class that people could go to when nobody else was teaching.

BR: Has Tudor's work been as interesting to you as Ashton's?

Vaughan: When I was at Oxford, I started taking a few classes with Rambert during vacations. The Rambert Company was still dancing from time to time in that little Mercury Theatre where those early Ashton and Tudor ballets were first performed. I used to go, and saw things like *Jardin aux Lilas* as well as forgotten ballets like *The Planets*.

All the ballets they did at the Rambert Company interested me very much. There was a Ninette de Valois ballet called *Bar aux Folies-Bergère* based on that painting by Manet, and I did a painting in school based on that ballet in the summer of 1939. I got a prize for it. Tudor's choreography and his classes were very important to me.

BR: Over the years has ballet been more consistently interesting to you than modern dance?

Vaughan: Oh no. One of the wonderful things about de Vos was that she opened my eyes to the idea that it's all dancing. You don't have to pigeonhole it all the time. It's possible to like and be interested in every kind, although some more than others, obviously.

BR: What sort of dance did you write about during that year in London?

Vaughan: I wrote a series of articles about what I'd seen in New York. Remy Charlip, who was in Merce's company, showed the one I wrote about Merce to him. Merce was interested and invited me to his class. As I said, that was when I really got to know Merce.

BR: What else had you seen in America that you liked or didn't like?

Vaughan: I was interested in other contemporary dancers like Sybil Shearer, who was someone I wrote about, Katherine Litz, Merle Marsicano, and Shirley Broughton, who was one I worked with. Also I wrote about the ballet. I wrote about Balanchine because when I was studying at SAB I went to the ballet practically every night.

That was really the beginning of my writing, in a sense. I'd written a few things before that for the Oxford University Ballet Club magazine and things like that, but I hadn't really thought of myself as a dance writer. I was still more interested in dancing, and even choreographing.

BR: How about acting versus dancing?

Vaughan: One of the things I did as a dancer was in a summer stock theater in Cleveland for three summers; the three summers before I went back to England that's what I did. I choreographed there, too. But I also started doing parts in musicals, which involved acting. The Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* and the title role in *Where's Charley?* were among my parts.

When I came back from London I got a job in a summer tour of *The Boyfriend* as an actor in a character part, playing the old man, Lord Brockhurst. That went on for years because we did it for a long time. It opened off-Broad-

way after the end of that tour in 1958 because it was a success. That started me off on a whole career as an actor. In the late 1960s I worked for five summers in a wonderful theater in Seattle where we did very good work. And that was completely acting.

Then the Judson Dance thing was happening, but also the Judson Poets Theater, which presented original musicals written by Al Carmines who was the associate minister of Judson Church. He wrote marvelous musicals that we did in the church that often transferred to off-Broadway. All those things ended up giving me a small pension from Actors' Equity.

BR: When was the Judson Theater?

Vaughan: Judson Dance Theater began in the early 1960s; 1962 was the first concert and it took the Judson Dance Theater name in 1963.

But before Judson and after I got to know him through his classes, Merce opened a studio of his own in December 1959 in the Village, in the Living Theater building on Sixth Avenue and 14th Street. He asked me if I would be interested in working as the secretary of the school, and he could pay me fifteen dollars a week. Since I was in an off-Broadway show at the time, making only forty-five dollars a week, the fifteen was worth it.

That's when I started officially working for Merce. They now say I was the archivist then and I did start doing all that when I was working for him. By 1964 the world tour of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company was being planned. I put that tour together. John Cage asked me to see if I could organize one for the company, which I had never done, so it was a completely haphazard and amateurish organization, but we went and were gone for half a year. It was an important turning point in the history of the company.

Judson Dance Theater had started a few years before. But I didn't start doing the musicals until late in the 1960s – 1966 or 1967. That's how I got to work in Seattle, in fact, because they recommended me to the director in Seattle for the company there. Seattle

became an important part of my life because it's a place I love and I have good friends there still.

BR: After you became secretary at the studio and when you were planning the world tour, did you still have time to take Merce's classes?

Vaughan: Yes, and I still took ballet classes, although not at SAB. I started studying with Tudor at the old Met, which was important. When the old Met closed and they didn't continue the classes, I took a few classes at various places, but then I started studying intensively and for many years with Richard Thomas and Barbara Fallis until they lost their studio in the early 1980s. I still took class with David Howard and at Ballet Theatre until I couldn't do it anymore.

I continued always taking the Cunningham class; even after the last tour last year I would take company class or the warmup of it, which was all I could do. Dancing has been the most important thing in my life all the time, right from the beginning.

BR: Were you ever interested in dancing in the Cunningham Company?

Vaughan: I was never quite that good at dancing, or that kind of a dancer. No. But I did perform with the company during the narration of the John Cage stories for *How to Pass, Kick, Run, and Fall*, which is now being workshopped by Rashaun Mitchell.

BR: Are you going to read for the showing?

Vaughan: Yes, Robert Swinston asked me to do that.

BR: Do you have a favorite Cunningham ballet?

Vaughan: I always liked *Fabrications* especially. *Exchange*. There are so many. My favorites are ones that aren't performed much anymore. *Rune*, we never performed *Rune* really frequently, and it was always one of my most favorite pieces, one of Merce's most rigorous pieces of choreography. It's why it didn't get performed so much, it was difficult to keep.

BR: Difficult technically?

Vaughan: There are works that needed a lot of rehearsal to keep them up, which took away

time from making new work and that was what most interested him.

BR: You've written that after having gained notoriety abroad, the Cunningham Company gained acceptance in America. Do you think that the international audience was generally more open-minded?

Vaughan: The international audience hadn't seen much modern dance. The Graham Company had performed in London before we did and it was a complete flop the first time. But of course there are always a few people who are interested.

It was interesting to me that when we played in London and had an extended run, it was theater people who were our best audience, not many dance people, certainly not many ballet people. Ashton came, and Fonteyn and Nureyev, I think even then. But a lot of young theater directors came and were interested in the way Merce used theater ideas. Of course, we had Rauschenberg with us, so painters came a lot. It was the fact that there was so much writing about the company. Every self-respecting paper in London had a dance critic and people were beginning to write about dance.

A lot of it began for me and for people I knew in London [in the early 1950s], even before Merce went there, when we first saw Balanchine. Clive Barnes and I knew each other then because we had sat in the gallery at Covent Garden before we were writing, and went every night to see those Balanchine ballets.

It was seeing ballets like that that opened one's mind to a more analytical kind of writing than existed in England at the time. There were a few writers who were not just writing personal reactions to a ballet, but something about what the material of the choreography was. Some of the early writers were Arnold Haskell, who was a dance fan not a critic, or even C. W. Beaumont, who was a kind of historian but didn't have a real eye for the material of choreography.

BR: Do you feel that your writing about dance has improved over the years?

Vaughan: I had a whole career, but one of the things that happened was I suddenly found I was a regular critic for *Dance Magazine* in the 1970s. When I look back on what I wrote then, it seems to me it was really quite good. I think I was probably a better writer then than I am now.

BR: Why do you say that?

Vaughan: Because I was really devoting more time and thought to it than I do now. And I think the Ashton book, I have to say, is a pretty good book. I can always dip into that and read anything, find it interesting. But I still try to write good, plain English prose, that's the thing.

BR: I was wondering what changes in the dance scene in New York you've noticed over the years?

Vaughan: It's very interesting, I think, that some of the first people in the Judson Dance Theater are still important. There's David Gordon doing a four-week series of performances at the Joyce SoHo, and Trisha Brown's company is performing at the Armory this summer. Of course there's still a lot of independent activity and some of those people are very interesting to me. Pam Tanowitz, for one.

What's changed, of course, is the fact that it's economically even harder than ever for a young choreographer, a young company to perform somewhere. It's still quite a lively scene, I think. I don't go see quite so much of

it as I used to, mostly because I like to be at home in the evening.

BR: Aside from your book on James Waring do you have any articles coming up soon or any topics that you might write on?

Vaughan: I was thinking that I might write about Alexei Ratmansky, about *The Firebird*, because he's very interesting to me. Then I have this other obsession, with the French composer Emmanuel Chabrier. I wrote a piece about him for *Ballet Review*. I'll review one of his operas that is going to be performed at Bard this summer. But I really have to devote myself to the Waring book, that's the most important thing. I hope it will be possible to produce it with a CD or DVD.

Even my Merce book is coming out as an app. Brought up to date. It's *Merce Cunningham: 65 Years*, with film clips and some more sound interviews with Merce, some of them from "Mondays with Merce." It'd be great to do the Waring book like that, with film clips so people can see what it was, although there are not really films of Jimmy's early work.

BR: Are his films in your collection?

Vaughan: It was Charlie Atlas, who filmed so many of Merce's works, who also filmed a lot of Jimmy's pieces, just after Jimmy died. A few things like that. Not much is available on film, which makes it difficult. It's difficult to write about dancing so that people see what it was like. But that's one of the things that the critic should try to do.