

## VDC Interview Transcript

Lillian Weisberg

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**Key:**

CF: Candace Feck

LW: Lillian Weisberg

CF: Lillian, before we talk about the development of the organization that you helped to found, I wonder if you could describe the dance landscape in Cleveland as it existed pre-1955 when you started your activities.

LW: Well, I studied with Eleanor Frampton,<sup>1</sup> who had been an associate of Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey, and she came to Cleveland to teach because Doris couldn't. The Cleveland Institute of Music wanted Doris to come start a Dance Department. But "Frampie" (her nickname) came instead, and I studied with her when I was in college. Then the war came a few years afterwards, but I know there was an association of Cleveland modern dancers, and these women had their own groups; I'm sorry at this moment I can't remember the names of the other dancers. They were really pioneers from way back, and just when I was ready to join the organization, they disbanded. So that was a great disappointment to me. But it wasn't until after the war — wait a minute: there was Karamu!<sup>2</sup> And Frampie was asked to teach at Karamu, and she also taught at the Institute of Music. Karamu had a little storefront where they gave dance classes and they had drama classes, and they had a drama group and they had a little dance group that was led by Margaret Johnson.<sup>3</sup> At one time, Frampie had a little dance group that I joined, and Margaret Johnson had her dance group. And Frampie and she choreographed a dance for the two dance groups; it was supposed to be the white group versus the black group. The story was that we each did our own dance, and then some of us crossed over, but there still was one person on either side who didn't want to join. I remember that very well!

Frampie had her dance group, and we danced at the [Cleveland] Art Museum, and that's where I met a lot of Cleveland dancers.

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<sup>1</sup> Frampton (1896-1973), born in Lincoln Nebraska, had studied at Denishawn in Los Angeles with Charles Weidman, and came to the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1931.

<sup>2</sup> A neighborhood settlement, known for its dedication to interracial theater and the arts. It was founded as the Neighborhood Association, at 2239 E. 38th St. In 1915, it became popularly known as the Playhouse Settlement, until 1927, when it was named "Karamu," Swahili for "a place of joyful meeting," a name then adopted by the entire settlement in 1941. (The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: "Karamu House." <http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=KH>, accessed 3.20.17.)

<sup>3</sup> In 1940 a modern dance troupe from Karamu trained by Marjorie Witt Johnson (1910-2007) was noted by *Life* magazine for its appearance at the New York World's Fair; In 1980, Johnson, together with Karamu artistic director Linda Thomas Jones, founded the Imani African American Dance Company, a troupe that danced to African drum beats, reminiscent of the original Karamu Dancers. (The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: "Karamu House." <http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=KH>, accessed 3.20.17.)

Right after the war, I read in the newspaper that a woman named Miriam McCollum<sup>4</sup> was giving a performance. I didn't notice the right date, and I went down the day after. It was at Cleveland College, which was my alma mater. I did get to meet Miriam, and I went to take her classes at Laurel School. Then she formed a dance group, and we gave little performances. She had, at one time, danced with Leonide Massine, and she had studied mime with Jacques Lecoq — and she was wonderful. Then later on, she became our first president. What else? I've spoken only about modern dance, but at the same time, there were ballet schools all over the city. I studied at two of those, but I really wanted to be a modern dancer. And that happened, oh — when I was a kid, probably, without knowing it. Any more questions?

CF: Oh, yes — many! You mentioned that you studied at Cleveland College. Were you born here in Cleveland?

LW: Yes.

CF: So you did know the scene pretty well, growing up. Did you take classes as a child as well?

LW: I did. I studied with Viola Nappin and Omar Chalet, who were different kind of ballet teachers — they had a studio downtown in what was called Carnegie Hall. It was on Huron Road, just near Euclid and 14<sup>th</sup>. They brought master classes; they had Adolph Bolm, a famous ballet teacher, and Edward Cayton. Edward Cayton was an American, but his father took the family back to Russia, because he was invited to do something with the Tsar's horses. I don't know what Cayton's education was in dance, but he was a very famous dancer, and he taught us for a while. Now, my mother used to bring me on two streetcars, and she would sit and watch the class and talk to Edward Cayton. They both suffered from headaches, and they both spoke to each other in Russian. So they really enjoyed that — and I loved the classes! I loved to dance.

CF: When and how did you get the modern dance bug?

LW: Oh! Well, my father had seen Isadora Duncan dance, and he had seen Anna Pavlova dance. And when I was a little kid, I never *stopped* dancing — anytime I heard music. And then, my dad would sing, and I would dance. I was a real “ham” — anybody came to the house, I was dancing! And he would tell me something about how Isadora danced, and that was my introduction. But it was the six lessons I had with Eleanor Frampton as a college student that blew my mind! Turned out I was the only person who signed up for the class. There was an arrangement between our university and the Institute of Music, so I could take classes without paying extra, and it was a summer course — six lessons. I don't remember the composer's name for sure, but it had a Lloyd in it, and he became a famous composer, and he was my accompanist.

CF: You don't mean Norma Lloyd?

LW: Yes! Norman Lloyd.

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<sup>4</sup> McCollom, according to an article in *The Cornell Daily Sun*, Volume LIX, Number 101, 20 February 1939, presented a program of dances at Cornell University the previous year. The article notes that she had spent eight years in the study of Russian ballet, Dalcroze Eurhythmics and the Wigman method of modern dance in Brooklyn, New York and Paris.

CF: Oh, my!

LW: Can you *believe* it? It was a front room in what is now the Mather Mansion, and Frampie taught in the ballroom on the third floor, and years later, we had Dance Therapy workshops in those places. It was just wonderful. Wonderful! That ballroom was marvelous! So it's a curious story.

CF: It *is* curious.

LW: I can remember what I learned in the very first lesson — it was the Swing Study.

CF: Were you, in fact, the only person in the six-week class?

LW: Only person! And she was willing to teach me!

CF: Wow. Okay, that lays some of the context and the framework for the years preceding CMDA — I guess it was 1955 when Gertrude Schurr came?

LW: You know the story.

CF: Tell me about it.

LW: Oh, alright. Marian Holmes<sup>5</sup> studied with Weidman and, I think, Doris (Humphrey) in New York briefly, and she taught dance, I believe, at Flora Stone Mather College. She was a student of Eleanor Frampton, and I met her there. And then she was the one who started the week-end workshops with Gertrude Schurr.<sup>6</sup> And that's where I met about thirty-five dancers from all over the city. And that gave me the idea — I was so thrilled — the idea that we *had* to continue this, we *had* to have an organization.

CF: And there had been, as you said, a previous organization that had disbanded before the war.

LW: Yes, yes.

CF: Do you recall the name of that organization?

LW: No, and I have nothing written!

CF: Perhaps the fact that there had been a previous organization allowed you to consider such a thing...

LW: I don't know. It's just that I was so excited; I had a nine-month old baby and a four-year old little girl. And it was a way to get away. And I... that was just the thrill of my life!

CF: So, you and a group — if you could tell us — I believe you met in a church basement?

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<sup>5</sup> According to the DANCECleveland website (<http://www.DANCECleveland.org/about-us>, accessed 3.20.17), in April 1955, Marian Holmes, a physical education and recreation instructor, organized a master class with Graham dancer Gerturde Schurr.

<sup>6</sup> (1904 – 1992): An acclaimed member of the Martha Graham company, among others.

LW: Okay, I'll tell you about that. I went to Marian Holmes and I said "We have to bring all of these people together again. Won't you organize something?" And she said "I'm too busy. Why don't you ask Patty Jewitt?" Patty was teaching at Lake Erie College for Women. And she was also teaching at Hathaway Brown; that's where she was. And she said "Oh, no, I'm too busy. I want to have four children, and I want to get pregnant." So then I called a few people, and Joy Kane was the only person who was willing to meet with me and start something. So that's how it began. We had the first exploratory meeting at Joy's house, and I think I've said there were nine people there — I'm not sure. And then we decided to have an organizing meeting in January; Marian Holmes was a member of the First Unitarian Church, and she obtained the Social Room, which was in the basement. And that's how it began. We had quite a few people come to that first meeting, and we organized.<sup>7</sup>

CF: That was 1956?

LW: That was January, 1956. Yes.

CF: How did it proceed from there?

LW: Well, we met every — I believe it was Tuesday — for an hour, or an hour and a half; I don't remember. We decided to have a membership fee of fifty cents. And then after a while, we raised it to a dollar. At first, the classes were taught by our own members, and they were not paid. But then we started to pay our teachers a minimal amount — maybe it was \$5.00 — I don't know. After we could no longer use the basement of the church, we were able to rent gymnasiums from Shaker Heights school system — and there we had lots of classes. Marion suggested the very first summer that we have a June workshop at Flora Stone Mather College, and she suggested Charles Weidman. He came for two weeks, he stayed with Frampie, and I've forgotten her partner's name. It was wonderful! We were so happy! Then we had him come in the wintertime, too, I believe. That was the beginning.

CF: Were these classes open to the public or just for your membership?

LW: Oh! Open to the public! Yes. And we charged — I don't know what we charged at the beginning, because we paid Charles. Not very much... (she laughs) and that was the beginning. And we kept doing that, year after year after year. We also decided to have a week-end workshop at Thanksgiving — and Christmas workshop. They were all very successful.

CF: It seems that from almost the beginning, your organization not only offered classes and workshops, but was also tied to presenting.

LW: Yes. I don't remember whose idea it was, but I think it was in '46. I had studied at the Martha Graham Studio for a short time, and in '48, I went to New York and took classes at the Weidman

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<sup>7</sup> According to the United Way of America website (<http://volunteer.truist.com/ue/org/10318773002-printer.html>, accessed 3.20.17), "six women [who had attended a master class in 1955 given by Gertrude Schurr], Lillian Weisberg, Joy Kane, Marian Holmes, Miriam McCollom, Iris Kleinman Feuer and Miriam Glazer, were joined by four other interested women (Thelma Brock, Patricia Jewitt, Vivienne Krupkin and Dorothy Mozen) to form the [CMDA] association in January 1956.

studio. And also at the Katherine Dunham School, because by that time, I was teaching the first children's classes at Karamu. Frampie started me teaching. I taught after school in five different settlement houses. (She laughs). Yeah, I used to take my record player and my drum and my records.

CF: And you said you're not sure whose idea it was to start presenting? I am curious, since that's become a hallmark of the organization.

LW: Yes, I think...I don't want to get mixed up — I think it was six weeks after we organized, Frampie brought José [Limón] — she brought his company. There was a Lakewood organization that brought concerts in: music concerts, and this was one dance concert. Six weeks after, we sponsored a master class with him; Betty Jones taught and he taught, and Iris Kleinman [Feuer] was one of their students; she had studied with them, and she was the person who demonstrated, you know. It was very wonderful! Then maybe it was a year later that we had our first concert. I probably remembered better when I hadn't talked to you (laughing). Yeah. It was the Dance Drama Company<sup>8</sup> with Emily Frankel<sup>9</sup> and Mark Ryder.<sup>10</sup> And so the story is — it was in the depth of winter — each member had to take fifty tickets and be responsible for selling them. The night of the concert, there was a terrible snowstorm — BUT — and we sold, I think, two or three tickets at the box office — we made enough money to pay the company and have a few dollars left over. We were on our way.

CF: Where were these companies performing?

LW: It was a very old theatre, with a very bad floor. I believe it's the Agora, around 55<sup>th</sup> and Euclid; it is now a rock and roll hall. So that was our first one, and then — I'm not sure when it was, but we brought Jean Erdman — not long afterwards, in the same hall. She did a *beautiful* solo!

CF: How was it that you had the idea — I mean, maybe this is not even answerable, but — this idea of educating people: offering classes for yourselves and the wider community, *and* presenting?

LW: Oh! Well, our mission — which I used to know by heart — was to make modern dance known as an artform.<sup>11</sup> And our members had *ideas*, you know? The first thing we wanted to do was dance *ourselves*. Then we wanted to be inspired, so we started with master classes and workshops, and we *had* to see the product — we wanted to see concerts — and we couldn't *all* go to New York! Many of us had small children, and we decided we would make it work. But you know, we weren't the only ones in this country! I believe there was a group in Westchester, New York that did the same thing — but I think we're the last ones existing, and (looking across the room to Pam Young) due to Pam, we're very, very successful.

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<sup>8</sup> Originally the Dance Duo Company, Emily Frankel and Mark Ryder formed this group, which toured from 1955-1964.

<sup>9</sup> Originally performed with Charles Weidman but went on to form the Dance Drama Duo and then the Dance Drama Company with then husband Mark Ryder.

<sup>10</sup> a member of the Martha Graham company, Ryder was brought to Cleveland in 1961 to build a dance program at the Jewish Community Center in Cleveland Heights.

<sup>11</sup> According to the DANCECleveland website (<http://www.DANCECleveland.org/about-us/mission-and-history>, accessed 3.20.17), the mission has remain unchanged: "To bring the passion and verve of modern and contemporary dance into the hearts and minds of the people of Northeast Ohio."

CF: Well, certainly in the sixty-one years since then, you have had your ups and downs...

LW: Oh! *Yes*...

CF: ...as an organization. Perhaps you could tell us about some of the hallmarks and some of the challenges you're overcome along the way.

LW: Where should we start? Well, the reason we *thought* about having a studio was that Kelly Holt<sup>12</sup> who was teaching at Mather Dance Center, wanted us to have our own studio. We had a meeting with him, and he said "You should have your own studio." Well, we didn't have money to have our own studio. But we had a June workshop with Clyde Morgan<sup>13</sup> and Carla Maxwell<sup>14</sup>, and their drummer — Chilly Walker, I think his name was. It was *so* successful — we had lots of money, we made *lots* of money. We had around fifty people in a class and we had a lot of classes. We sold the workshops as a unit, you know, but people could also pay individually. And one of our members, or two of them, found the studio. And then there was a work crew who got together, and Janet Karl was the — I think she was the hardest worker of all, and they painted the studio, and I don't know what else they did. And we began. And we were fairly successful — we were holding our own. But at that time, the fitness craze began.

CF: Could you identify the approximate year?

LW: Oh, golly! Well, we started September of 1970...maybe it started in '74? I'm not sure. We had our own teachers, teaching the classes. And Miriam McCollom started the mime group; they went to schools and put on performances. And then Caroline Colz came to Cleveland, and she had a performance which she had done as a solo artist, and she gave us the choreography, and she directed it, and it was called *The Box Tops*. Kathy Karipides<sup>15</sup> danced in it, and Joan Hartshorne<sup>16</sup> and Tommy Hartshorne and I'm not sure about — Eileen Pearlman — I'm not sure of the names of all the people. But we worked *so hard* on that publicity! We created little boxes, and sent them along with the information to schools because we wanted to go into schools — we believed in Dance in education very, very firmly. And everybody worked! In 1973, I think it was, we were told by the Cleveland Arts Council that what we needed to do was have an Executive Director. Because it was getting very hard — we were all lay people, all devoted, but we needed a lot more. I was president at the time, so I had to sit down and write a grant proposal, and that was the first one I ever did! And we were successful. We had an Executive Director, Phillis Levine,<sup>17</sup> who worked for us for a few years, but you see, we had a certain amount of money the first year, less money in the second, and even less money in the third — and the idea was that the Executive Director would raise funds.

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<sup>12</sup> Kelly Holt, a member of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company and a regular guest artist with the CWRU company, joined the Case Western Reserve University Dance faculty in 1975.

<sup>13</sup> Clyde Alafiju Morgan was born Jan. 30, 1940 in Cincinnati. Graduate Cleveland State University. Studied at Bennington, Karamu House, Ballet Russe, New Dance Group. Debut 1961 with Karamu Dance Theatre; joined Limon 1965, and also performed with Anna Sokolow and many others. He retired from the dance faculty of SUNY Brockport in 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Carla Maxwell joined the Limón Dance Company in 1965. She soon became a principal dancer under Limón's direction and, in 1975, Assistant Artistic Director under Ruth Currier. Ms. Maxwell was appointed Artistic Director in 1978, and currently as Legacy Director.

<sup>15</sup> In 1956, Kathryn Karipides joined the Western Reserve University Physical Education faculty.

<sup>16</sup> A Limón dancer, who became dance director of Karamu House in 1961.

<sup>17</sup> Phillis Levine served as the First Executive Director of Ohio Dance: 1978-1985.

Philiss had many attributes, but that wasn't one of them, and we were hitting hard times. But there was a man who was hired by the Ohio Arts Council to help organizations when they had financial trouble, and I don't remember — Jerry Kettlar might have been his name — and he came and he gave us a lot of direction. And at that time, I think Miriam Glazer was president, but...oh, I don't have the archives in my head...

CF: This is the mid-'70s now, and you started in '56. Were you still meeting as that original group, more or less? Meeting once a week? How were you making all these decisions?

LW: Oh, I see! We had an Executive Committee, and we met — I don't know if it was once a month or more frequently — we met at each other's homes. And we had annual meetings, in which everyone who came to the studio had to join the organization, so we would have a lot of people come to the annual meeting and elect officers. It was a very democratic, grassroots organization.

We had a member who wanted to start her own dance company, and at that time students of Kathy Karipides — her graduate students — were all our teachers; they were teaching our classes. Well, this would be — a director of a dance company — was the vice-president for programming at the studio, and the organization decided that we did not want to sponsor her company. So she left us, left all our teachers. And Miriam [Glazer], who was president at that time, didn't know where to turn. But she managed to get teachers from New York, and I think that's when *you* studied with us. I can't remember their names, but they came for approximately three months at a time.<sup>18</sup> Oh, we used to put people up at our houses, and my third floor, which has its own bathroom, was very well-occupied by our teachers. It was a hometown, home-bodied kind of organization.

CF: Before you continue, perhaps along the line of the consultant who came in to help your organization when you had financial difficulties, a couple of things I'm really interested in: one of them is the big connection between your organization and Cleveland dance, more generally — and dance therapy. Could you talk about how that developed?

LW: Oh, yes. It was probably in 1965. I was dance coordinator at the Jewish Community Center. I had a group of women — I taught some of the classes, and other people taught other classes —but I had a group of women who came in Monday morning — I think the class was at 9:00 or 9:30 — some of them came in from the West Side. And I supposedly taught them something called *Dancersize*, so it was supposed to be a combination of dance and exercise, but it was beginning modern dance. We somehow or other coagulated into a group; it was group process that began with that group. And in the summer, we didn't have class, but when we met again in the Fall, one of the members of the class — and she was from the West Side — had had a terrible divorce that summer. The whole group gathered around her and gave her so much support! I didn't know, really, anything about dance therapy at the time, but I was a member of the American Dance Guild Association,<sup>19</sup> and in the newsletter I read that there was such a thing as an American Dance Therapy Association.<sup>20</sup> And I began to read and study, but it wasn't until 1974, I think, that I went to a conference in New York. And I was *hooked!* Hook, line and sinker! To me, dance therapy is the ultimate reason for dancing, because when I danced, it felt wonderful: it was my therapy. When I

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<sup>18</sup> Interviewer's note: I recall studying at CMDA in those years with Terry Creach and Steven Koester as well as Ahuva Anbary, among others.

<sup>19</sup> Also founded in January, 1956, at New York's 92nd Street YM-YWHA

<sup>20</sup> Founded in 1966 by Marian Chase

had the little kids and I could go once a week to a dance class? That was my salvation! So, that's how it began. And being always an organizer, I went to — let's see — I brought the idea of bringing dance therapy workshops to Cleveland to the executive committee, and we did. My good friend for whom I worked was Dick Hoffman at the Cleveland Music School Settlement, and he co-sponsored together with Lake Erie College for Women, our first dance therapy workshop, which was with Penny Bernstein. She was one of the leading theorists of dance therapy, and had just written a book.<sup>21</sup> We had a wonderful turnout, and then we brought her again; I think we brought her in the Fall and then we brought her again in March. That was the beginning. Then I went to Detroit and to study with Stephanie Katz,<sup>22</sup> who had been a president of the Association.<sup>23</sup> She was teaching at Marygrove College. I *loved* — I just loved the course! It was a one-month course. I stayed with friends in Detroit and I drove home on the week-ends. Stephanie was supposed to teach a Masters program there, but something happened and Marymount decided to do away with the Dance Department, and so there was no Masters degree program *for* me. I never picked up roots and went to New York, you know, like other people did — or other places. So I took my first course with Stephanie — I think it was '73/'74. She came to Cleveland to do a number of workshops, and we had demonstrations — one was at a Cleveland Psychiatric Hospital<sup>24</sup> — which is now an office building where I take art lessons! Fairhill Partners<sup>25</sup>, it's called. I'll always remember how she did that session with about twenty patients, and our whole group — we were in this huge gym. She also did a demonstration with a child behind a two-way mirror at Beech Brook.<sup>26</sup> By that time, I had a dance therapy group at Eliza Bryant Nursing Home, and Stephanie came and did a demonstration with the people in my group, so we really had a strong introduction.

CF: Is it true that Kathryn Karpidies received the first “Dance Therapy” Scholarship?

LW: No, it wasn't dance therapy. I had read that Hanya Holm was giving a workshop in Arizona or someplace, and I should have gone, but I couldn't leave home. And I proposed to the Board that Kathy [Karipides] be given a scholarship, and we raised the money, sent her, and then she came back and taught. She wasn't Head of Dance, yet.

CF: Somewhere I think I read that the Cleveland Modern Dance Association, probably into the time when it became DANCECleveland, had a thirty-year connection with Dance Therapy, so I'm just trying to clarify that...

LW: Well, we started in 1972 — that's when we started. And in 197...I have to go back and look at my — you know, I have all my fliers. I believe I gave a copy to the office...so Penny Bernstein was the first, and then Stephanie, and then I went to the American Dance Festival in New London [CT],

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<sup>21</sup> *Theory and Methods in Dance-Movement Therapy: A Manual for Therapists, Students, and Educators* was first published in 1975, by Penny [Lewis] Bernstein.

<sup>22</sup> Stephanie S. Katz studied modern dance and ballet at the Juilliard School of Music and danced with the Jose Limon Company and the Baltimore City Ballet. In Detroit, she chaired the Dance Department of Marygrove College

<sup>23</sup> Katz served as President from 1986 – 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Originally located on Turney Road, The Cleveland State Hospital (1852-1975) was a state-supported psychiatric facility for long-term care.

<sup>25</sup> Fairhill Collaborative Campus is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide direct and ancillary services to older adults, their lay and professional caregivers, and others who serve them.

<sup>26</sup> A long-established behavioral health treatment agency for children in Cleveland.



and studied with Lynni — she’s now Lynni Diehl, but I don’t remember her maiden name — for three weeks. It was a very intensive dance therapy course, and I brought her the next year — in ’77. And I believe we had maybe three or four workshops that year! We brought Sharon Chaiklin<sup>27</sup>, who was one of the founders of the American Dance Therapy Association...so many! So many! We held the first one partly at the Music School Settlement, and partly at our studio — mostly because on Saturdays there were children’s classes at our studio. Then, when we no longer had a studio — you probably have the history of how Miriam Glazer saved the organization ... that’s another story!

CF: I don’t have that story, if you’d like to tell it!

LW: Oh, you don’t? Wow! Let’s see. It was in the ‘70s and we were in dire straits, and Jerry Kettlar told Miriam that we had to get a business board of directors — we had to get people in business. And Miriam started — she began the first Board of Trustees that had — oh! I think it was right when we incorporated as a non-profit. And she started it somehow and that’s when she brought the teachers from New York. We had no teachers. But we could not sustain our studio. There was a problem — there were people who took drugs in the building. Also, we had a terrible elevator, and people were afraid — besides the fact that we had competition. There was a very dry period, when we had a one-room office on Juniper Road, and then we had a closet at the Music School Settlement. By the way, Bill Wade<sup>28</sup>, I think, is at the Settlement now — I don’t know if he used that closet first (she laughs at this memory)! At that time, we had hired a woman to be an Executive Director, and she was awful — she did none of the work. I think Ann Ennis<sup>29</sup> did most of it, besides the other people on the Board.

CG: So Miriam really saved the day.

LW: She really *saved* the organization. Oh! We had *no* money. And my husband was an excellent professional fund-raiser in the city of Cleveland. Miriam asked him what to do, and he said “Call together members of the Board who would be willing to contribute money.” And I think there were five families: the Glazers, the Ennises, the Weisbergs, and then Janet Karl and Lee Rothschild. So we had a little kitty and we were able to keep going. You know, it’s a homegrown story!

CF: Indeed, it is a wonderful homegrown story. Let me pick up on one thread here. You had three big things going: you had classes for yourselves and the public, you had presenting, and you had this dance therapy wing.

LW: Yes.

CF: That’s a lot to sustain, for a homegrown organization.

LW: Well, the dance therapy paid for itself.

CF: Okay...

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<sup>27</sup> Sharon Chaiklin served as president of the American Dance Therapy Association from 1968 – 1972.

<sup>28</sup> Bill Wade is Executive/Artistic Director of Inlet Dance Theatre in Cleveland. I could not confirm a relationship with the Music Settlement.

<sup>29</sup> Ann Ennis was Board President of CMDA in 1982, and is also past president of Verb Ballets (formerly CRP: The Cleveland Repertory Project)

LW: We were fortunate we didn't have to pay for — except for *one* time — we didn't have to pay for the facilities. Cleveland State [University]<sup>30</sup> was a wonderful partner, and we met there until the state of Ohio closed down all of the Sunday activities of the state colleges and universities. Then we moved to Mather Dance Center, and Kathy [Karipides] gave us the space. But we did very well! We charged very *little* compared to what's charged nowadays, and we paid our teachers — oh, we also met at the Beck Center!<sup>31</sup> We had lots of interesting partners...

CF: Takes a village!

LW: I does! It does, really. It takes a *lot* of people. As time went on, it was harder and harder to get enough people to come to pay the expenses. One reason was that we could not get CEU's. We couldn't get them from the Counseling and Social Work organization: they gave them to us once, and after that, they wouldn't. And it was really *killing* us, because people could not pay the tuition out of their own pockets, unless their organization or their institution paid. Finally, I retired as Coordinator of the Dance Therapy program; I couldn't *do* it anymore. It was a tremendous job!

CF: What year was that?

LW: I think it was in 2001, something like that...yeah. And I brought a number of presidents — or *we* (CMDA) brought — because I couldn't do it myself; the organization had to be interested in wanting to do that. But I had the connections; I went to every single annual conference of the organization after '76, I think. I went every year. That's how I got my education, going to those courses. And Katherine Mihalic at Kent State [University] — she and I were roommates at one, and then she brought a workshop to Kent. Yeah...

CF: There's another piece that I'm interested in...we can see if this is productive or not. I know that your late husband was very much a social activist.

LW: Yes!

CF: Something that interests me personally is the linkage between social activism and modern dance, broadly writ.

LW: (nodding, and smiling): Ahhh..

CF: I wonder if you'd care to talk about that at all...

LW: Well, I guess modern dance started in the '20s, and began to flourish in the '30s. There was the New Dance Group in New York, and most of them were radicals. That reminds me, you know, Joseph Gifford<sup>32</sup> was our first June workshop teacher; he came for two years and then Mary Anthony<sup>33</sup> came — so we had people from the New Dance group. I think Doris Humphrey was a radical: I say *With My Red Fires* is evidence of that, but I don't remember it. They *had* to be — they were poor *dancers*! You know? Yeah... But when we organized our CMDA, it wasn't a social activist

<sup>30</sup> Formerly Fenn College, Cleveland State University was established as a state-assisted university in 1964.

<sup>31</sup> Founded in 1931, Beck Center for the Arts is located in the Cleveland neighborhood of Lakewood.

<sup>32</sup> Originally a member of the Humphrey-Weidman group.

<sup>33</sup> Anthony (1916 – 2014) began with Hanya Holm, and later founded her own company.

group at all — it was just pure dance. My husband was a social activist, and I was a social activist — and maybe the word is going to *scare* you, but we were active in the Socialist movement. Because my parents and his parents came from Russia, where they were active.

CF: That does not scare me! As a dance historian, I have watched those threads running alongside each other for a long time...

LW: Oh, sure.

CF: ...which, in a way, leads me to another question, and that is: In your sixty-one plus years of modern dance/contemporary dance involvement, you have witnessed a lot of changes...

LW: Oh, yeah.

CF: Would you like to talk about any of that?

LW: Hmm. Well...I love the old modern dance, you see. I don't know how to begin. I feel that dance has to say something. And Joe Gifford used to say you had to have a point of view — you had to be saying *something*. There has to be something beyond just the movement-for-movement's sake. Of course, then I studied with Nik,<sup>34</sup> and I loved Nik *so* much, and he was movement for the sake of movement. But I just loved the movement! I loved his work, and I also loved the old work, I loved the European work... Much to our surprise, my younger daughter Laura, who lived in Cambridge for twenty-six years and moved to Durham, North Carolina where the — *Oh, it's getting late! Oh my goodness! And I have to go home and get my purse — Oh!* — Anyhow, the American Dance Festival is there. Now I'm too old to take classes! You know. It was always my dream! But I got to see a lot of dance there, and I love the European, I love the French, I love the German, I love the Israeli — I love dance, you know! (She laughs) What can I say?

CF: That's a great place to end...

LW: I could talk forever! (As we prepare for the next interview): What I didn't tell you is that my husband always said he learned his skills from the Young People's Socialist League. Well, he also learned them from his father...(getting up to leave): Oh! I talked too much!

CF: No! You didn't talk enough, but we didn't have enough time! Thank you so much for this.

CF (As we are shifting from this interview to the next): What's interesting, given that I made the trip to study at CMDA when I lived in Youngstown, Ohio in the late 1970s is that in hearing you describe those years, they were dry, precarious years for your organization — and yet during my time there, I had no clue. From my point of view, I drove over (from Youngstown) and took classes with the most wonderful people, in the most wonderful space — and I was thrilled for the opportunity! So, it's just interesting that the internal suffering of an organization isn't necessarily obvious to the public.

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<sup>34</sup> Alwin Nikolais (1910-1993)