

VDC Interview Transcript
Kerri Wilde
Elaine Valois

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Ohio Northern University
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Key:

CF: Candace Feck
KW: Kerri Wilde
MDB: Megan Davis Bushway (VDC film team)
JD: Jane D'Angelo: (Ohio Dance Director)

CF: It's June 26, 2018. I'm Candace Feck, and I'm talking with Kerri Wilde at Ohio Northern University.

Kerri, you danced with the Valois Company of Dancers. Is that right?

KW: Yes.

CF: Perhaps it would be good to go back a bit before that time, and know where you are from and where you got your training.

KW: I'm originally from Springfield, Missouri. I started ballet at four years old — that “ballet/tap” class type of thing. Then we moved and my mom put me in a ballet class and I took classical ballet all the way up until I graduated from high school. We ended up moving to Perrysburg, Ohio in, like, 8th grade — when I was in 8th grade. I had a choice: BG (Bowling Green State University) or UT (University of Toledo), my dad said, so I picked UT, and I ended up being a dancing Rockette, which is their little kickline, and another member of the team was like, “You know, there’s a dance company here,” and I’m like “No, I did not know that.” And she goes, “You need to audition...” So it’s my freshman year, auditions opened up, and I became a member of the Valois Company at nineteen? Yeah. So that was my first introduction to modern dance — I had never done it before. I had taken a modern class with Cathy Latta — she was my first modern teacher, and I was like, “Oh, I *like* this! I can do whatever I want, I can just move anyway that I want, I don’t have to be in this posture, and turn-out. It was just so freeing, and liberating, and so that was the beginning of me with Elaine, and learning her passion, and going out to other classes...I was like the youngest member — the rest of them were mostly faculty, so it was really interesting to be a student, dancing with faculty members who had been in the company for awhile, so I really learned from them, and they kind of brought me under their wing and I learned the repertoire, which was amazing. And then, just through the years, building our own repertoire and learning to move from the inside out — which I had never done before. (She is tearing up, her voice getting wobbly): I don’t know why...!

CF: Well, clearly Elaine carries a lot of emotion for you and others who have worked with her. She had quite an influence — yeah, it's okay. Do we...I don't know if we have an tissues...

KW: Well, I didn't think I'd do this!

CF: It's okay! And in fact, it's important.

A team member goes in search of a tissue.

KW: Yeah... Oh, I don't know why! Sorry...

CF: Don't worry! I don't know if you're crying because you're nervous or because of Elaine...

KW: Well, I was in a car accident two weeks ago, so I'm like...rocked. I got hit from behind by someone going 65...so I'm kind of shaky, and then going back into all of this...Oh, I'm ruining my make-up!

CF: Actually, Laurie got very emotional talking about Elaine before you...

KW: Just give me a minute...

CF: What was your major at University of Toledo?

KW: I went undecided for two years, and then Elaine introduced us to Dance Therapy, and I think that's the emotion — because we were taught, you know, dance is Life. Dance is Real. Dance isn't artificial. And it *moves* you! It changes your mind-set, it makes you deal with stuff you normally wouldn't deal with — and to let it go, and I had never — being a ballerina, you know: “Stand up! Your head's wrong!” It was all just very structured. To have somebody go “No, what's going on in here (she gestures to her heart), what's going on emotionally? Let's bring that out.” — And just being part of a family, and... there was this one piece called *Prayer*. And it was a structured improv, and I got partnered up with Tanya Stewart — and it's just this embracing, and we were kind of going with the flow, and Elaine was just giving out words — you know, feelings of what we were embracing, and just kind of following her guide — and Tanya just started crying, and she ran out, and I kind of looked at Elaine, like — and she said, “Go see if she's okay.” So I go in the bathroom, and I go, you know, “Tanya...” — and this is the same girl who told me about the company, and I go, “Tanya, are you *okay*?” And she was like, she said “I feel like home.” She goes, “I'm out in the community, and you know, they see my color, or they see my education or where I'm from...you know, everyone is judging me, and I just felt this warmth of I'm not being judged, I'm being seen for who I am.” And that's — you know, you just hit that studio door, and everything that was going on, you just left it behind and you could be just part of a safety net, that people could understand you...And trying to recreate that as a teacher, it's hard. And you try to — that's what dance is to me, it's this close-knit family, where you can move, and love one another, accept them for who they are, and Elaine...(she breaks down).

CF: Let's just take a minute. I mean, I could cry with you — it doesn't bother me at all, but I just don't want you to see yourself on screen with water streaming down your face, so just take a minute.

KW: (She is laughing at herself and crying at the same time.) Oh, my God!

CF: Take a minute.

KW: We've opened up a floodgate!

CF: Yes, but you see this, I think, speaks to the power of dance and the power of Elaine.

KW: Oh, it does! And, you know, she comes *back*...

CF: Yes, I know.

JC: One of the things that I've always noticed about dancers that I don't think I find with any other group of people is the ability to come to trust very *quickly*...

KW: Yeah...

JC: ...you know, because you have to trust your physical body with somebody and there's the respect of the space, and everybody is in that and that creates such a place for that support...

CF: And I think that particularly, sometimes, depending on your previous training — coming from a very strict ballet background where, as you said, it's about shape and position and control, and then whoa!

KW: Right. Yeah, yeah.

CF: ...opening the doors!

KW: Being an emotional person, as it is...obviously. Yeah, and as I said, my world has been kind of rocked here, so...I was lucky I just saw it coming, and I just went (she adopts a limp sensibility here) — Elaine was always like, "If you fall, just go with it." And I was like, "I've got to take this impact, and I can't, and I was just like... (she exudes a decisive exhalation of surrender) — and just let it go, so I'm lucky, *physically*, but it just messes with...you just go through those what-ifs, you think of your children, you think of your husband— and then reminiscing about all this stuff, you're like, "Oh my God!" She sniffs: Okay, I'm alright. I think I'm good.

CF: Perfect! I'm just going to review: You grew up in Missouri and then you came to Perrysburg in 8th grade, so really it's only four year slater that this all happened to you...

KW: Yeah. Well, dance has always been — and I moved around quite a few times — and dance was always that staple — you know, even the ballet: you knew what to expect. So most of my friends — I didn't really have friends in high school, because most of my friends were from ballet class, because there's that, that close-knit bond: you're dancing together, you're sweating together, you're creating things together, so it just was always...when we moved to Perrysburg, I was like "Okay, we've been here for two weeks. When are you signing me up for dance class? I gotta' be in dance class. So, it's always been there. So, to go from the staple, the stability, then all of a sudden taking it up *several* notches, of being in a group but also being an individual in that group...unless you're doing also in ballet, you're part of the corps, so you're going to have to be part of that group, and blend — but to be part of that group but to be an individual within that group — to move and

dance with these people but to not have to look *exactly* like the person next to you, and it just was like, “Yeah, I’m little, I’m petite, but I can keep up with the tall girls” — you know, it was just moving and dancing and learning to *choreograph* for the first time, from what I wanted to say, what inspired me or what my emotions were was just an *amazing* gift to be able to say “Turn on the music, close your eyes. What do you see? What do you hear?” Picking up a book, pulling from it. So she really taught me there’s inspiration *everywhere*: it’s not always from music. It can be from nature — and taking us out and blindfolding us, and having our partner lead us in touching trees, just taking out a sense and learning from different avenues. And it was so inspiring, and so different from anything I learned as a child, and it just opened up massive doors — and I was like, “I’m going to do this. I’m going to figure out a way to do this for the rest of my life.” And my major was Human Performance with the Emphasis of Dance. She touched on Dance Therapy, so her goal was to lead us into the Dance Therapy realm, which we did — I didn’t know, especially in those company classes, learning to dance through issues or soreness or problems, or communicate through dance what was going on with us, individually. And then bringing it into a group setting and having people support you *physically*, and mentally, through dance. So it was just *crazy*-inspiring! (She laughs.)

CF: Sounds like it. It sounds mind-opening

KW: Yeah.

CF: So, what was the year you started college?

KW: ’85 to ’89. I ended up graduating and one of the teachers ended up having a child, so I took over. So right when I graduated, I started teaching. I was teaching jazz, so I was still part of the company — I got to stay a little bit longer, just because I was teaching. And that gave me a different avenue — now I was on the other end, teaching kids that could potentially be in the company.

CF: So Human Performance was an academic area?

KW: Bachelors of Education. We were at the time in the Education Building, with the PE teachers, which was funny: we weren’t part of the Art/Theatre [Area]...she ended up moving over at the tail end, right before she retired; she moved it over and then it just kind of folded in. Because they wanted — you know, the money started cutting back and they were like, “Well, what was the last thing that arrived here? Dance.” They tried to get rid of Film, but Film’s sticking in there — they’re still there, so it’s kind of weird...

CF: So you were really with her in her last years of teaching at the university...

KW: Yeah, I was “the last hoorah” of the dance company, which was amazing — because a lot of the girls that came in at the end didn’t have the experience of dancing with teachers, and the experience of learning the repertoire *from* the people that had learned it the first time — even though we built some more stuff on that. I was part of the cast, I was the baby.

CF: What was that repertoire like?

KW: She did the *Tao of Love*, which was a Chinese trilogy, she had one called *Flight*, which was encompassing flight and pulling through, we did one that was set for the last members — it was called *Drums*: — there was no music — it was all our feet and our breath, and just flipping our feet and just *whaaah!* (she exhales), and then it turned into traveling. So she was inspired by change; it was

never really “blocked in a box” — she pulled a lot of inspiration from *us*, and in each other— and that’s how I learned to choreograph: I don’t really *repeat* anything that I’ve done. Being a school teacher, I get kids for *maybe* seven years? If they start in sixth grade and I get them until...but I like the energy in that, pulling from “What can you *give* me? What do *you* have to say? And how can we blend this?” And I try to recreate that family that she had taught me, and a lot of that was, you know, her, in touch, and it wasn’t always verbal, it was just her in *touch* with the energy in the room, and how it felt (she demonstrates, dropping her voice to an excited whisper): “Let’s go with *this*.” — Or, “All right. We’ve got this to do! Alright, we’re going! Let’s move! Let’s roll with it.” And it was always this positive energy that you could just see it coming, bubbling up through *her*, that you were just “Show me! Show me! Show me!” It was just this energy that *you* wanted to learn, to be a part of, that was inspiring her and vice versa. So it was really not this (she adopts a mock-reverent tone) “Elaine, the Teacher.” It was always this circular group of people that were *in* the moment, creating stuff.

CF: How big was the company?

KW: It varied in size. It was never more than ten, when I was around — close to eight. It was always very small.

CF: And *your* teacher, your first modern teacher, was Cathy?

KW: Cathy, yes.

CF: And she was also *in* the company?

KW: Yes. Yeah, they kind of *trickled* out, so Cathy was like the last teacher. It ended up becoming more student-bound. Because they were getting married, and having kids and moving on with their lives, so...

CF: I’m aware of her interest and involvement in dance therapy — I don’t know whether or not she was certified. But you suggest it more came through in the way that she formed the community that was her company; she didn’t specifically teach you dance therapy...

KW: No. It was an aspect that she *believed* in, and it was...I don’t know when dance therapy was coming around — I know I ended up going to Columbia College in Chicago, and working on getting my Dance Therapy licensure, but I think it was just something that rung true with her, and that she experienced — and that virtual body that she’ll talk about – she still does workshops, and she’ll come back and talk to *my* students even though I’ve kind of circled back through where I’m teaching ballet *and* modern, which is kind of funny, but I kind of try to pull that modern aspect in teaching ballet? Especially through choreography: you know, “Where are we going with this? What do we feel? What’s the story?” Always communicating with them about, you know, where *they’re* coming from, *their* feeling of what’s the story that we’re creating through this choreography – even though we have *pointe* shoes on. And so a classical type turns into a more contemporary one; I get them in a conversation, so they know what’s going on, so then we’re all vested into what’s being created.

CF: Kerri, tell me a little more about *your* trajectory then. You stayed on, somebody had a baby and you filled in, you said, for about a year...

KW: Yeah, I ended up — it was probably a year, because I ended up moving to Chicago — I got into a dance therapy program at Columbia College. So I moved away, and then ended up coming back and heading up a dance show. Elaine was already gone, she had moved...there were a few people trying to keep the dance department going...I did some help with putting on a production because they knew I had already been there, I had done it and had been through the ropes, knew the channels to go through. So I directed a show. And I ended up starting a family, so I had a child, and ended up starting the dance program at the YMCA in Perrysburg because they had no dance program, and so I started that. Worked at Toledo Ballet for awhile, and did outreach at UT — did classes there. I was the first dance teacher at Owens Community College...I've kind of been everywhere! And then finally got a job at Toledo School for the Arts. This will be my fifteenth year. I started doing Intro, but then they had no ballet program, so I started a ballet program, and I now teach all ballet levels, and modern.

CF: Did you finish up in Chicago?

KW: Yes.

CF: So you got certification in Dance Therapy?

KW: Yes.

CF: Was your thought that you were going to be a dance therapist?

KW: My thought was that I was going to find a way to *do* dance no matter what it was! But I think that training helps me as a teacher because I pick up things with kids when they come through my door. I pick up a vibe: They're like "How do you *do* that? How do you *know* I'm not okay?" And I'm like "Guys, your body language is *telling* me that you're not okay! So they're like, "Don't look at me with— you'll make me cry, you know? I've become Mamma Wilde, now, with the kids that have been around with me because I'm the one that...they come to me, if they've had me. I'm like: "Where are you supposed to be?" And they're like, "Hey, Ker — "Can I just hang out in your room for a bit? I just need to be in this room." And I'm like, "Yeah, you can come sit in the room." So, it's just — it's there, and it's also the training that Elaine did, and how she created and taught and treated me as a student. I'd end up back in the studio when I'd be on campus (she laughs). I was just on campus the other day, and I was just like, "Maybe I should go back up in the studio just to be in those four walls, in that space again." It's a second home!

CF: You mentioned the Toledo Ballet. Were you with Marie Bollinger Vogt?¹

KW: Yeah, I was there as a part of the transition, before they moved their studio upstairs. So, Nigel Burgogne² was there. But I taught all the little kids and then my deal was that I get to have at least one modern class, so it was really set up where when the company members were done, they would

¹ Marie Bollinger Vogt, the Founder of the Toledo Ballet, is the featured subject of another section in the Virtual Dance Collection.

² Nigel Burgogne was once the Artistic Director of Toledo Ballet, but is currently heading up the Ballet Theatre of Toledo.

come over and do modern with me, which was a lot of fun. So I was always kind of mixing the ballet and modern for most of my life...because the training's important — you know, that's where everything began...But I just liked feeling the sense of self, giving those ballerinas a sense of “Hey, how are you feeling? What do you want to move?” And I think ballet's going that way, it's going into more of a contemporary [direction]. So I think it's important that they have a sense of self.

CF: You learned a lot from Elaine about what dance means, how important it is to feel like an individual in a group, and so on...

KW: Yep...

CF: But what can you tell me about her. She sounds like a phenom...

KW: (She gasps in agreement.)

CF: And did you ever learn where that came from? Or do you have a story to tell that kind of encapsulates it?

KW: (Deep sigh). I'm trying to think — because there are so many stories. She's a very in-the-moment woman, so she doesn't really...Funny, she grew up in Napoleon, Ohio; I ended up moving to Napoleon; I live in Napoleon now — which I did not know until I'm like “Oh, I'm moving to Napoleon and she's like “Oh, I was a river rat up there, I grew up in Napoleon. And I was like, “You grew up in Napoleon!? That's so *crazy!*” And she just told the story of her parents, just letting her be free-willed, and Napoleon is very “country” — it still has not changed, probably, from when she grew up there — it's very country, it's very ...you know, people don't move. It's a very stable place. And she was like, “My parents were forward-thinkers. They would let me do and create and move and do whatever I wanted, and just had that freedom of being a little left of center in a place that was everything right. And just always moved her own way. It's so hard — Kathy probably has more stories. She doesn't really talk, when I'm around her, it's “What are we doing now?” And I ask her, are you going to come back to Napoleon? And she's like, “No, been there, done that.” And I think that's why she's going to be ninety. She keeps moving, and she keeps coming back, because she's always looking for that next thing. I don't really have a particular story that of her childhood that she's ever told.

CF: No problem. I want to ask you something that I asked Laurie: When you think of Elaine, what three adjectives come to the top of your mind that really kind of speak to her.

KW: I'm trying to think...she's like a ball of energy in a small package. (She laughs.) She's maybe 4'11, and just a bundle of energy. I've never seen anybody [else] walk into a room and people are just drawn to her, and she hasn't even said a word yet. Trusting. We were in one of the schools and she said “I trust you kids. I'm going to just fall back, and we're looking at the kids and we were like “They're not going to catch you — they are *so* not going to catch you!” And she'd just trust, and fall. And we were all just like “Whaaaaa?!” and went to catch her. And she's that person: if she falls, she falls; if you catch her, you catch her. You know, she's just *in* the moment, *all* the time. I can't think of...I mean, I just know that when she comes back, I try to get one-on-one time with her, because she'll just start talking to you, and she'll tell you something, and you'll start moving, and she'll just direct you — it's just this improvisation where she just guides you. She sees where you need to go, and she just takes you there. And being a dancer, you try to look in the mirror, and she's just like

“DON’T look in the mirror! *Just* trust your insides.” (She laughs) And I’m like, “Alright...” “Just follow what I’m saying.” You know? You’re moving from inside out. So, I’m *constantly* learning from her. I *can’t* wait for her to come back once a year. And I’m like “I need my one-on-one.” And she always does workshops, you know, it’s just a constant learning. She’s constantly cultivating...

CF: So, do you go to this annual October dinner?

KW: Yes. She usually calls me, she’s like “I’m here for two weeks! Calendar’s filling up. When do you want me in?” So I always try to get her in to my studio to teach some of my kids. She’s done workshops in my studio. She takes them various places, so she has a following. She comes back, and they all come back around and do her workshops.

CF: Is your studio at TSA?

KW: Mmm-hmm, yeah.

CF: And, in terms of her legacy to *you*, do you find yourself mentioning her, or just trying to channel her or adopting certain things that she has said or done...

KW: Oh! All the time. Yeah. She’s always constantly there, even when I’m not even thinking about her. She’s the one who taught me how to touch base with the kids and how to choreograph... And she’s the person that, you know, I *look* to and say, “Hey...” when she comes back to town, I have a running list of “Can we talk? You know, I’m working on this. How do I get this to happen in this dancer?” It’s sometimes very difficult for young kids to get in tune, or they’re afraid, used to being judged, so I’m always looking to her...I’m like, “I’ve got this situation...How can I solve it?” And you know, she’s “Try this path. Have you ever tried this?” You know, she’ll always have some way of helping me. Even when she comes in, we’ll always have lunch after, and she’ll, you know, give me guidance on how to take it to the next level with those kids, and have them journal...So it’s always a teaching moment for me, to have her come back in, to help me. So I think I’m *continuing* her legacy in *my* own way? To have *myself* in it? (her voice wobbles) So, that’s cool. I’m sorry (she whispers) – I’m going to start crying again.

CF: That’s okay!

KW: (She laughs.)

CF: Do you stay in touch with her, besides when she comes back?

KW: Oh, I’m really bad about that. Only when she comes in. She’s really busy. She keeps herself busy. I’m really busy right now, too. I’ve got teenage boys that play sports, so...yeah. But I usually, when she comes in, that’s when I get the maximum out of her that I can. I think when my life settles down, hopefully, I’ll be able to call her more? But yeah, she understands... It’s always going to be there. It’s one of those — the whole group is, if we don’t hear, it’s just that family coming back again. The Beirut.³ We go to the Beirut — it’s tradition. We order appetizers and she sits and we all

³ A Mediterranean/Lebanese restaurant, The Beirut is located at 4082 Monroe Street Toledo, OH 43606, about ten minutes northwest of the Toledo School for the Arts.

just reminisce, and it's falling right back into family members that you haven't seen — of different ages, different races, different, you know, walks — we're doing different things, always somewhat in touch with dance. But, I think out of the company, there are a few of us who have continued down the path of actually being teachers. I think the ones out of the last company members is the one kind of continuing the legacy of being directly *doing* dance, and teaching dance.

CF: Now, you nominated her. You wrote the nomination.

KW: Yeah...

CF: So is there something to say here about what led you to that?

KW: I don't know. Toledo is just, I call it a big "country" town? It's very small-minded... It's got a *wonderful* art community that I don't think a lot of people know about. And for her to — could've probably gone anywhere? And to have planted her feet in Toledo and create this institution, at a college? To come back to Toledo to continue bringing what she's still learning, still creating, as a dancer — you know, she could just tuck herself away in Kawaii, but you know, she comes back. It's important for her to have that energy and that dance still alive in Toledo. So, you know, it's *wonderful* for her to be able to do that. I look around, and Toledo has ballet, Marie Vogt — and Elaine Valois — and I think that a lot of people don't know about Elaine because she was tucked in the university. But we did *so* much outreach. A lot of her work was in the school systems, teaching dance, and us creating art integration, which is what Toledo School for the Arts does, which I learned from Elaine! You know, going into a school system and, and asking, "What are you *learning*? How can we make this a deeper...how can we deepen this learning of history, mathematics, poetry? How can we move that? How can we make something off the cuff? We went as company members and had to create this with these kids — in a day! It's just amazing, the energy... We had to have a band and clay and a big gym, and kids running around everywhere, and breaking them up into groups and creating. So, I don't think a lot of people know *that* end of it — to bring it back into an educational field, and that dance is for everybody, not just for certain people who might have a talent. Everyone is a mover. Not just dance. And she used the words "being a mover: we're movers." We're creators and movers. I mean, our whole life — we can't *go* anywhere unless we're moving somewhere, physically, so...

CF: About how many people come to this annual dinner, would you say?

KW: Well, this year it's going to be large because she's turning ninety, so this one is going to pull... It varies, 20, 25, sometimes thirty. (She laughs) Yeah, they come! I haven't been to the workshops for awhile. She'll do a workshop. The haven't for awhile, but the last one that I hosted at my studio was probably fifteen, twenty people. And she'll do it for *hours* — it's not just a two-hour blip. It's four or five hours, and people will come and go, so the energy changes and moves, and if you can't get there right on, you just kind of glide in and start moving with everybody. I've brought students in, and [told them]"Just open your mind, and listen, and let it go."

CF: Are these "The Imaginal Body" workshops?

KW: Yes!

CF: Can you help me understand what that is, a bit?

KW: Wow! I can ...tell you the process. The one that sticks out the most she introduced us to in college, and then, I think, she came back to it. So, you physically reach out your arm. You reach up to the sky, and then move your arm down. Next, you *imagine* your arm moving up and through. And then *physically* do it again, so you can imagine and actually start feeling like your arm is moving when it's actually not, and then having your imaginal arm pass through, then you have your imaginal arm and your physical arm pass through one another, and then you separate again. She can explain it way better than I can! It's just taking your mind further...

CF: So these workshops that are four or five hours are centered around the Imaginal Body, or are there other things going on?

KW: Some are specific to the Imaginal Body, others are not. Usually there is a warm-up improv, shaking up the body, introducing each other — usually non-verbally, you know, walking around. It really depends on her vibe. Sometimes she is specifically going in and doing that; other times it's, you know, "Let's see what happens." The last one I was at, I was climbing up somebody and up in the sky being lifted and being brought back down and I was like (she laughs), "I guess *that* just happened!" So, it varies. It's her guiding us through improv sometimes, but then she does have her specifics — her Imaginal Body and her specific things that she wants to teach us and she'll be, "Okay, we're going here..." There've been so many, I can't even...the Imaginal Body is the big one.

CF: Did she ever talk, in the course of working with her as a teacher and as a director of the company, about *her* influences? Anybody she named?

KW: It's so funny because just to do the nomination, that's when I actually had to call and learn, and did not know that — Oh my gosh, I know she went...I know she was in New York for awhile and studied with Martha Graham and others at some point...I am drawing a blank...

CF: That's okay. I did see all of those names, and it's interesting because there are the well-known dance figures — the Graham and the Cunningham and the Hawkins — but then there's also Margaret Mead and Joseph Campbell and Jean Huston and the scholars of human potential movement...I wonder if she ever brought that up with you.

KW: The only story that I can remember, which I thought was amusing and funny — Merce Cunningham, going to a concert. And he's sitting on the edge of the stage, and people are just watching him and couldn't figure out what was going on. And she finally looked and looked at his abdominals, and he was just moving his abs. And she said she didn't know if anyone else caught that, but the whole dance was in his abs. And I was like, *what, really?* I just thought it was the coolest thing. And it was one of the stories that she talked about where, you know, you have to *watch* —sometimes the movement is very subtle or the meaning is very subtle, and you have to have an open mind, and open your eyes to situations, and she said a lot of people were probably upset that he was just sitting on the edge of the stage, to them, not doing anything. But to open your eyes and really look, and say, "Wait a minute." His *abdominals* are moving, he's moving all of this— all the movement is here (she gestures to her torso), and created a whole [dance]...So that was one of her mentors that she really found amazing, and how little things can be as important as the big things in movement — and stillness! I tell that to kids, too. They're like, "Aren't we going to do something on this count?" And I'm like, "No, we're going to let everybody breathe for a moment, and connect that breath..." That's the last thing that she taught my kids, was to take a piece of choreography that they had already learned, and what is the breath and how does it go with it, and is it different from you to me,

and how does it deepen, how do you change the choreography, now that you've put the breath to it. And that was last year, and I had the kids journal and they were like, "Oh my gosh! I could feel the *floor* underneath my feet!" You know, it transitioned the whole choreography from doing *movement* to *doing* movement, you know, like *feeling* the movement, feeling the breath, feeling your body through space. So, I think that's what *she* saw when she went out and saw Graham and contractions and the subtleties of movement rather than just boom, boom, boom! I can do all these leaps and jumps, but be conscious of what's happening in the body and *why* you're doing it.

CF: This is perhaps a rather obvious question, but do you find that in addition to all that she's given you, and all that she's made you aware of in your teaching and what you view as your purpose in the classroom and the studio, and as a choreographer, do you find that her "wisdom," I'll call it, do you find that it spills into your everyday life, your life with your family, or...

KW: Yeah... The one thing I think that's important that she's taught me is to continue moving for yourself. That, you know, it's not always giving it away; it's something that you can always do. (She laughs) My husband always catches me dancing through the house. And at first, it was like "What are you *doing*?" Now, it's just like — even my kids — "There goes mom, do-do-do-do" I'll just move through the house sometimes, and it's just that, you know, what she's taught me is that it's always there. It's okay. And I think as a teacher, you give, give, give, give, give — and you forget: "Wait! *I* need to move. This is important to *me* to feel *myself* through space, and deal with stuff that you deal with your whole life, you know, to move it.

CF: Is there anything that you'd like to say that I haven't given you an opportunity to talk about with regard to Elaine?

KW: I think I *got* everything... Do *you* think?

CF: Oh, it's been great — but I don't know everything!

KW: Right.

CF: You nominated her, so I want to be sure you have said what you wanted to say...

KW: I think so!

CF: Thank you so much!

KW: Thank you!