

VDC Interview Transcript
Subject: Maggie Patton
Informant: Pam Bishop

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Vern Riffe Building
Studio 3
77 S. High St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Key:

CF: CF Feck

PB: Pam Bishop

JC: Jessica Cavender (VDC film team)

MDB: Megan Davis Bushway (VDC film team)

JD: Jane D'Angelo: (Ohio Dance Director)

CF: I'm Candace Feck, and I'm talking with Pam Bishop in The Vern Riffe Building, Studio Three. Today is August 19, 2019.

CF: Pam, I think the obvious place to start is to hear how you first came into contact with Maggie.

PB: Right. So, the first time I heard Maggie Patton's name was from Helen Alkire¹ at Ohio State. I had been accepted into the graduate program for dance in Fall of 1977. And a couple weeks before I came, my husband and I had quit our jobs, we were ready to go, and we had a financial setback. So I had to sit down with Helen and say, "I can't... I can't afford it, I don't have any money." And she said, "Well, we'll hold your spot for a year, but you have to stay in shape. You have to dance while you're working." And I said, "Okay, I don't know anything or anybody," and I asked, "Where should I take classes?" And she said, "Well, for ballet you should go take Daryl Kamer's² class at BalletMet³ and for modern you should take Maggie Patton's class with Dancentral.⁴ And that was the first I'd heard of Maggie.

CF: Were you coming from another city or had you grown up here?

¹ Helen P. Alkire (1915-2015) founded and chaired the Department of Dance at The Ohio State University, retiring in 1983. Alkire is separately featured in the OSU portion of this site.

² Academy Co-Founder and current Coordinator of Children's Division, Kamer has taught ballet for more than 30 years, and has served in numerous positions within the BalletMet organization.

³ The professional ballet company and school in Columbus, OH, BalletMet began as Columbus Civic Ballet in the early 1970s. BalletMet is a selected feature of the VDC website.

⁴ The company, Columbus Ohio's first professional dance company, founded by Maggie Patton in 1973. As the company's artistic director, Maggie created more than seventy major dance works for subscription seasons and regional tours.

PB: I'm from Michigan. I had gone to Western Michigan University⁵ for my undergraduate work. I had lived in Salt Lake City for a couple of years and did some dance with some friends who were in the graduate program there. Met my husband, got married, and was ready to start graduate school again; I'd already started in Kalamazoo and didn't finish and so I was ready to start all over again. I got accepted at Ohio State and we were ready to move here.

CF: So a year later, you entered the program?

PB: I did not (she laughs)! No, I'm a three-time loser. I did not. I started working and during that year that I was working and trying to save money to go to graduate school I met Maggie Patton, and started taking classes. She started using me in rehearsals and then she offered me a position as a dancer in Dancentral. I was also teaching for her, which I really loved to do. And I thought, "Well, I'm doing all of the things I wanted to do, and this is fun." So I had to go back to Helen and tell her I was not coming, and she was gracious.

CF: So Helen sent you to Maggie. Where were those classes offered?

PB: Helen sent me to Maggie and it was at the Columbus Junior Theater,⁶ which is across the street from where the Cultural Arts Center⁷ is now. That building is long gone, but there was a stage in the back and we danced on the wood floor that was basically not great, but it was a wood floor and it was big enough and it was sort of a little rabbit-worn there, but that's where I met Janet Druen,⁸ and Anne Rigsby Louis, and Barbara Visintine, and a lot of really great people.

CF: Do you have a first impression of Maggie that you can share with us?

PB: Yeah, I do. I felt like Maggie was very approachable. She was *funny*. I actually attended a concert of Dancentral before I started taking classes. So it took me a few months to kind of pull myself together in a new town, new job, and they had a concert and I wish I could remember the dates but I went to the concert and I *loved* what I saw, I loved her work and as soon as the lights came up, I ran down to the front and introduced myself to her and told her that Helen had suggested I take her class. And she said, "Come on over! We'd love to have you." So that's how I met Maggie.

CF: Would you be able to retrieve your memory of that first concert and recall what it was that you found so compelling?

PB: I can't remember exactly the pieces that I saw, except because I danced with her for a few years, I can imagine they did *Jumpin' Off* (1977), I think they did the piece that she created, after they had

⁵ Located in Kalamazoo, MI, WMU is a mid-sized public research university, established in 1903. Its dance department currently consists of over 120 majors, and emphasizes equal training in ballet, modern dance and jazz.

⁶ The Columbus Junior Theatre of the Arts (CJT), founded in 1963 moved from its original location on West Broad Street to Trinity Episcopal Church, and then to a newly purchased building on Main Street in 1966.

⁷ The Cultural Arts Center, located at 139 W Main St, Columbus, OH 43215, operates under the auspices of the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, and serves as both an arts exhibition space and educational facility.

⁸ Druen was an original member of Dancentral, and is also an informant for the Maggie Patton/Dancentral feature of the VDC.

gone to Edinburgh, Scotland, which was a funny little Scottish thing and they were dressed up in these get-ups, like old golfers. And I just remember there was an energy to it, there was a musicality to it that was complex and very interesting to me as a dancer — it was something I could relate to. And then there was the humor. The humor of it really got me. It just seemed so approachable and it was something that anybody, anybody at that time, who wanted to experience dance could do [appreciate]. And I also felt like there was a really interesting connection between modern and ballet — back then, it was one or the other — you didn't do both. Now, that divide is almost unrecognizable, you don't really separate. But back then I could see a lot of ballet in Maggie's choreography, yet it was purely modern.

CF: How would you talk about or describe the culture within the company? What it was like to be on the inside of that group?

PB: Yeah...It was very comfortable because we were all about at the same place in our lives, and we had all chosen to be in Columbus, Ohio. A lot of friends that I had from many, many years decided they wanted to be in the big cities and they wanted more opportunity to dance, and *we* had all chosen to stay in this Midwestern town, Columbus, Ohio. My first month here I thought... it was September by the way — so all you heard about was football. I kept thinking, what *is* this place? But we all chose here. We were all then, after I was in for a year or so, we were all starting to have families, which was another bonding experience for each of us. So there were many times where there were little children running around the studios. We would have parties. Janet [Druen] was *great* — she would always have groups of us over at her house, and she had two little ones. So it felt like a family.

CF: Janet mentioned that family feeling, and she also mentioned food as a major focus of company gatherings.

PB: Right, there was always food. Maggie was an *amazing* cook. *Amazing!* And she *loved* to entertain and she *loved* to make these... I remember she made paella once, which is crazy — like, who does that? And she would have these dinner parties where she would invite different people that she knew from different work places. So it was always interesting. At Janet's it was... we spent a lot of time in Janet's kitchen in German Village, just standing around eating constantly. Yeah, there was a lot of food (laughing). She's right.

CF: Before I get too much into your years with the company and your getting to know Maggie, you mentioned what a shock it was to come into Columbus at football season in 1977. Having come from Kalamazoo and then Salt Lake City, how did you perceive the *dance* culture here? And why was it OSU, to begin with? What did the landscape of dance in this town seem like when you got here?

PB: Well, at that point, there were really only three organizations that were held in regard at that time.⁹ And they were all fledgling, so there was ŽIVILI!¹⁰ which was the ethnic dance company.

⁹ Dancebelt, a concert subscription series in 1978/79 featured four performances around the city by all three companies annually.

¹⁰ ŽIVILI Dance Company was founded in 1973 by Melissa Pintar Obenauf, ŽIVILI's executive director and dance director, and Pamela Lacko Kelley, the company's artistic director and choreographer. The company disbanded in 2006. ŽIVILI is documented in another feature of this collection.

BalletMet was still semi-professional — they didn't go professional until '78. And so Dancentral really was further along than any of them. And so here was this little tiny company of, like, eight people, and it was the big one! I grew up in the Detroit area so there was a lot going on there, but that was many years before. Kalamazoo¹¹ is its own little small town. Salt Lake City has a really *strong* arts scene, so they brought in great performances all the time— and it's a very cultural city, just because of the culture of Salt Lake City. And so it felt...it didn't feel that different from anywhere else except for the football thing — which I didn't get.

CF: May I ask you why the choice of Columbus from Salt Lake City? Did something draw you here?

PB: Yeah, my parents moved from Michigan to just south of Springfield [OH]. I'd been living away for a couple of years and when I thought of going back to school and finishing up my masters degree, they had just moved here, so it kind of made some sense.

CF: Okay, and I think that a lot of the early company members came right out of OSU or through Maggie's contacts there.

PB: Yeah — or Denison. Yeah. So I think so. Janet, and Mary Schladen, and Susan Alexander — some of the early ones did come right out of Ohio State, and they were sort of more contemporaries of Maggie. Then, as she started recruiting out into some of the other schools, that's where Annie came from Denison. Barbara Visintine LeVeque came from... actually, I think she started at Denison and then finished at Ohio State. So yeah, I think I was the only one that sort of moved here unknowingly and had no contacts at all.

CF: Did you stay at that Junior Theater building, then? Janet mentioned in the early years, the search for space was ongoing and problematic.

PB: The search for space was ongoing, and I would say it was a *huge* stress on Maggie. When Maggie finally stepped down from the company, I sort of reflected back on some of those things that happened to lead to that, and finding space was just devastatingly hard. So we started at the Junior Theater and then we got this great opportunity through Lenny,¹² I think, to get this space over near campus. And I don't even know if that building is still there, I think it was like on 18th or something like that, was it?

CF: Maybe on 17th?

PB: 17th, yeah, 17th. And it needed work, it was an old church and we got in there and there was momentum. It was great, it was sort of a new beginning and it was bigger and it was our own. And Maggie was very excited and we were actually able to teach classes, which I loved because I really wanted to teach. And then we got the rug pulled out from under us. And that's sort of my most bitter recollection that I've never gotten over, is how that happened. It's just the landlord decided that he could make more money in rent if he rented it out to a church. We were paying our rent! We were doing everything right. That was *so* hard on Maggie to have to now go back out and try to find

¹¹ A reference to the location of Western Michigan University

¹² A reference to a member of one of Columbus, Ohio's most prominent families, Lenora Schottenstein, who served as President of the Board of Trustees for Dancentral.

space again. And so we ended up at Fort Hayes¹³ for a while. I think we were even at Columbus Academy¹⁴ — we did some rehearsing and things at Columbus Academy. But it just never was the same after that.

CF: Were you in that building on 17th very long?

PB: I think it was a year. I really only think it was a year. It could have been longer — I don't remember, but it was yeah, that was a tough one.

CF: And performing space, I guess the same situation?

PB: Yeah, there were very few places you could perform. So we'd perform at the Drake¹⁵ at Ohio State; Columbus Academy had a nice space, on Cherry Bottom Road; we performed at Sullivant Hall.¹⁶ We performed one season at the Ohio Theatre,¹⁷ which was a huge thrill. We were on a bill with Alvin Ailey¹⁸ — it was like a dance series and it was Alvin Ailey Company and I can't remember who the other one...¹⁹ it might have been ŽIVILI, I don't remember, and then Dancentral. So that was a huge thrill to be able to dance at the Ohio Theatre.

CF: Back to your teaching... the teaching wing of Dancentral, which of course always goes hand in hand with a dance company — how was that? Were the classes well-subscribed? Did you have a following?

PB: I think yeah, it takes a while to get a following, but we had some good classes. Of course, Maggie taught, and she always had a following. Janet was a great teacher. Carolyn²⁰ was a great teacher. Carolyn was the faculty member at Fort Hayes for many years. She ran the dance program

¹³ Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center, also known as Ft. Hayes Arts and Academic High School, is one of 21 high schools in the Columbus City Schools. Located approximately 1 ½ miles northeast of downtown Columbus, its mission is to blend the arts, academic and career programming.

¹⁴ Founded in 1911, Columbus Academy is a private school for students from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade, located in the eastern suburb of Gahanna, about eight miles from the center of downtown Columbus.

¹⁵ The Drake Performance and Event Center is located on the campus of the Ohio State University, along the Olentangy River. The Drake houses the Department of Theatre and hosts a variety of theatre and boasts several theatrical spaces.

¹⁶ Sullivant Hall, a three-story Neoclassical Revival building on the campus of The Ohio State University that dates back to 1912, is the longtime home of the Department of Dance.

¹⁷ A prominent architectural and cultural landmark, the Ohio Theatre is a large (currently 2,779 seat) Spanish Baroque performing arts center located in the heart of downtown Columbus, Ohio, on the site of the old Columbus City Hall. Known as the "Official Theatre of the State of Ohio," the historic 1928 movie palace was saved from demolition in 1969 and has been completely restored. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1977 as one of the nation's finest surviving grand theaters. As such, the Ohio Theatre typically presents nationally known or highly acclaimed local performance events.

¹⁸ The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT) is a modern dance company based in New York City. Founded in 1958 by African American choreographer and dancer Alvin Ailey, the specifically multi-racial company is one of the preeminent dance companies in the world, and is widely regarded as one of the nation's most successful arts organizations. In 2008, for example, the United States Congress passed a resolution designating AAADT a "vital American cultural ambassador to the World."

¹⁹ Twyla Tharp Dance, see p. 10

²⁰ Carolyn Fannin taught at the Arts Impact Schools in Columbus, OH

at the Fort Hayes Career Center for the Arts — is that what it's called? And so Carolyn was a great teacher and so yeah, there was some... China White²¹ would teach. There were some interesting classes, Richard... he was at Ohio State-

CF: Richard Burrows?

PB: Yes, Richard Burrows²² was an amazing teacher. So he probably was my favorite, other than Maggie.

CF: Was China White in the company?

PB: No, she wasn't but she would teach Ballet and so she would come in and do our ballet classes for us. And she was — yeah, she was beautiful.

CF: Describe if you would, since the focus is Maggie here, Maggie's movement style, choreographic style, anything that you could say specifically about that? You've touched on humor and the musicality. Is there anything more you could add?

PB: Let me think about that. I would describe Maggie's choreography or her style as classic and yet there were always a few little quirks in there. She *loved* to do very, very quick, compact movement, which for someone like me was closer to what I was able to do, but then you put that on a Janet Druen who had legs “up to here” and she's tall and lanky and Janet could never quite... she was always struggling to get the footwork right. And Maggie was a stickler for the musicality: if you were even slightly off, you were doing it again. And so I think that Maggie's choreography fit my style of dancing a lot better than maybe some of the other dancers who had a much wider, taller look to them.

CF: I know there was the family aspect of the company, but I think that you and Maggie also became very good friends...

PB: Yeah, we did.

CF: What kind of friend was she? Is that something you feel like you can talk about? I guess what I'm wondering about is just what kind of person she was.

PB: She was very caring, she was the one that *always* brought the group together. So she was almost, always the one that reached out and said, "Hey, it's been a long time, “Why don't we go have lunch?” “Why don't we go have dinner?” She liked to go to performances and so a lot of times she

²¹ China (Melva) Murray White is a former ballerina with the Dance Theatre of Harlem and is currently the owner and Artistic Director of Theatre Street Dance Academy, and educator of the Pre-Professional Dance Program at Ft. Hayes Arts and Academic High School. Ms. White is featured as a principal informant for Bettye Robinson, who is a featured subject of this collection.

²² Richard Burrows is currently working as an arts advocate based in Vancouver, WA. He danced for many years with the Repertory Dance Theatre of Utah prior to joining the faculty at The Ohio State University for several years. His subsequent career has spanned many states and occupations, including Director of Community Outreach and Engagement of the Historic Trust in Vancouver.

would take me to performances that I probably wouldn't have sought out on my own. As you know, she was very much into opera. Opera wasn't something that was in my repertoire at all, but I grew to appreciate it a little bit more because of Maggie's involvement. So we would do things like that, and then she would go to concerts. I worked at BalletMet for nine years. I was the development director there, and during that time I would bring Maggie to performances every once in a while and she was very open about critiquing them, *unsolicited* (she laughs). But the last performance, actually the last email I got from Maggie before she got sick, she had come to a BalletMet performance and it was during a time when Jimmy Orrante²³ had sort of moved from being a dancer to being a choreographer and he had done a few things, but he was growing in his confidence, in his own vocabulary and she sent me an email and said, "So I went to the concert, I liked the Orrante piece... he's getting better," or something like that. So yeah, but she would — whenever you went out, there was always food, there was always wine. She would talk about a lot of things as the years went on; we didn't talk about Dancentral, of course. We didn't. We might touch on some people, but she talked a lot about her traveling. She traveled all over the world. I remember her talking about her trip to Hawaii. She and Dave had gone to Hawaii, I think it was for a month. And they had stayed in this little rental hut thing that was right on the water. It was before Airbnb, but it sounds like that's what it was. And so I would sort of live through her travels a lot of time because she *loved* describing it. They would spend months studying where they were going to go and what they were going to do, and understanding the history and she would just tell these great travel stories, which was wonderful.

CF: Was this maybe after Dancentral and she was at Kenyon, and had the wherewithal or the leisure?

PB: Yeah, actually I think it was after she retired from Kenyon. They really, really stepped up the travel after that. And she had always wanted to travel more, so it was after she retired from Kenyon.

CF: What do you know about where she got her training, her ear, even her ballet background?

PB: If we had a video of *A La Mode O'Day Day* (1983), you would understand Maggie, because it was autobiographical. And every section of that piece was from a different era of Maggie's dance life. So there was a whole section, which was *ridiculous*, and it was baton twirlers and tap dancers — it was Janet Druen in a sailor uniform. And it was just sort of this “dance school”; dance schools did tap and ballet and jazz, and all of these things that you do when you go to dance school. And then it evolved into sort of a more sophisticated thing, and I can't remember all of the pieces. There was one that was *Alonzo Imperfecto*, which was a piece that was done with a dummy. And it was Anne Rigsby Louis and myself and it was like the reverse of a Tango. So, she got in sort of that ballroom part of it, because she really loved ballroom. And we were sort of the sadistic reverse of the tango just throwing this dummy back and forth — it's hilarious. And then her solo,²⁴ which I performed, was *her*. It was about her, sort of at the peak of her career, and it was very, very *her*. It was all super fast. Have you ever seen the video?

²³ Orrante was a principal and well-loved performer of the professional ballet company of Columbus, OH, BalletMet, itself a featured site in the VDC Collection. Performing at BalletMet for twenty-two years, Orrante retired in 2015. During his tenure there, he choreographed more than fifteen premieres for the company, including his full-length ballet, “The Great Gatsby,” which was reprised in BalletMet’s 2014-2015 season. He remains in Columbus, where he teaches and choreographs for ballet companies throughout the United States.

²⁴ *You Can't Dress Me Up, But You Can Take Me Anywhere*, 1982.

CF: No.

PB: It's really very fast movements. There were certain things in it that I never got right because it was her — she made it up. But there's a section in that that's almost like a dream kind of thing and it was these things she would do with her hands and she would have them like this²⁵ and I really could not get it because then the feet were doing something else. I could not get it. And right before she passed away, I went to visit her and there were a couple of us there and it was pretty dire at that point. She was at Kobacker House²⁶ and I just suddenly thought “I've got to get that music,” and so I ran home and I found that video that I now cannot find, or I pulled the music — I just remembered the piece of music; I can't remember if it was just the music I found or what. And I ran back to Kobacker House and we put the music on and she went from just kind of laying there, knowing we were there but not really able to talk anymore and suddenly...

CF: Really?

PB: Yeah, her arms, she started doing this²⁷ and then I think she died about two days later. But she had those kinds of movements and it was in her, and any of us who have danced a piece — the music comes on, and you remember the piece that that came with it and you can do it. You can do it in your head and I know she was doing it; I *know* she was dancing that piece. So it was very special.

CF: What was the music?

PB: It was jazz — flute something.

CF: And was that solo part of the autobiographical piece or was it a separate piece?

PB: Yeah, mm-hmm (affirmative), I think it was, they were all sections of it.

CF: So it was called *A La Mode O' Day*?

PB: *A La Mode O' Day* I think was the name of the whole piece and then I can't remember the name of the solo — maybe Jane remembers.²⁸

CF: And then how you came to do that solo, you were saying off the record — would you mind repeating that?

PB: Yeah, so Maggie was teaching at Kenyon at the time, and she was still trying to keep Dancentral going, so she was doing both for a period of time. She was teaching a class, and she snapped her achilles and she had already choreographed that piece and it had been performed at least once that I

²⁵ She lifts her wrists to chest level, bending the arms inwards at the elbow, and rolling one wrist around the other, unfurling as they reach above her head, and following them with her eyes. It's a gentle, rolling motion, almost like smoke rising. As she watches the movement, her torso twists slightly from side to side

²⁶ Kobacker House is a Hospice Center in Columbus, Ohio, associated with Riverside North Hospital, founded more than thirty years ago, by members of the Kobacker family.

²⁷ See fn. 20. Bishop indicates the same movement, but without the torso involvement, commensurate with Patton lying very still at this point.

²⁸ See fn #19.

know of. And then she wasn't able to do it again. And so she asked me to do it and I was able to do it a couple of times and then I took that piece a couple of times on my own with her permission and performed it.

CF: What do you recall about... did you say you got to go to Edinburgh?

PB: I did not, that was right before I joined the company.

CF: I see; that was just before?

PB: Yeah, and that was such a bonding experience for all the rest of them. I always felt like I didn't get to share that because they just would have all of these private jokes and things they'd be laughing about and talking about and I just wasn't part of it.

CF: Well, for you, what were the highlights of being in the company? You already mentioned getting to dance at Ohio Theatre as one of them.

PB: Yeah, doing her solo. Dancing at Ohio Theatre. We had a review once in a dance magazine, which was pretty cool for being this little teeny company, but I think it was... there were a couple of pieces that were really fun to do and one of them in particular was called *Menuetto* (1979), which was very musical and it was almost impossible to do because it was so much repetition but then just slightly different. You never quit moving the whole time and it was a trio and yeah, it was really difficult, but I loved that piece in particular.

CF: So what about the... I don't know if you can quite get the chronology because we can't seem to get it straight about...

PB: Don't count on me to help.

CF: Okay, well, it's like a puzzle. We get little pieces...

PB: Right, right, right.

CF: For example, how she went from full-time with Dancentral into Kenyon and then eventually full-time at Kenyon? What was that transition as you recall it?

PB: Yeah, well it was all during that time that I was there. So I was only with them with for five years and so it had to have been after the loss of that space. I think it was at that point she started feeling like, "Okay I've got to figure out what's next for me." And her children were getting older and I think she knew that, you know, Eric was getting older and they were looking at colleges and I think a job at Kenyon was something that would be great because of the transfer ability for him to... what was it — like, a tuition break?

CF: Yes, a tuition benefit for the children of faculty members, often transferable to specific academic institutions

PB: Yeah, I can't remember what it's called, but I think that she felt like with Dave at Ohio State and her at Kenyon that that would make it easier for the boys to afford college. So I think that that's *part*

of it, but I think she *loved* Kenyon. And, you know, they named their dance studio the Maggie Patton Dance [Studio]. So I went there, when I went to the dedication of that when they dedicated that dance studio in her name and she was *so proud* of that, I mean just so incredibly proud of that.

CF: Well, do you recall... okay, so there's the opportunity to go to Kenyon and have a better way to get her kids through college, okay, that makes total sense to me. And there was this sort of exhaustion after losing that one space and having to start again, constantly having to search for spaces that didn't exist really — like beating your head against a wall. And then, was there something else? I feel as though — and I'm not sure about this — that Janet indicated maybe there were problems with the board, maybe there was anger involved...

PB: I have no idea. Yeah, I didn't experience that. I know that Maggie, she was a great business woman and yet, she was just like most founders, she knew what she wanted and she knew what it was supposed to be, but at that point I didn't have any kind of knowledge of that. I know that there were times when Maggie would bring me along when we were looking for space. Actually, she took me over to the Great Southern²⁹ and she was looking at that space, and it had not been renovated at that point and the seats were like trash! It's so beautiful now, you can't even imagine it, but it was *awful*. And I was able to see a little bit of what she did when she wasn't in rehearsals or when she wasn't teaching or we weren't performing. I was getting a sense of *all* of the things that it took to keep this vision of hers going. And it was things I had no idea [about] and then she would take me to meetings, she took me to a meeting with a donor or something and afterwards I just said, "Why are you bringing me?" And she said, "Well, I'm grooming you to be my development director." I said, "I don't know what that is." She said, "Well, the development director's the one that goes out and asks people for money." I said, "This is a horrible job, why would I do that?" — And (laughing) I just raised \$10 million for the organization I work for now. So she saw something in me that I didn't even know existed. But she was always trying to develop, I felt like she was trying to develop *me* and my career, even though I wasn't going to be a choreographer, or my path wasn't going to be her path. But yet, I think she saw that I was able to do some of the business things — but that was an eye-opener for me to see how *stressful* it was and how hard it was to keep this company going. Most people had no idea. They just saw her come in for rehearsals and be prepared to start teaching and be funny and they didn't know all the background.

CF: It was a repertory company,³⁰ correct? So she didn't do all the choreographing...

PB: She did *most* of it, but she did from time to time bring some other choreographers in.

CF: Do you remember anybody in particular?

PB: No, I don't.

²⁹ The oldest surviving theatre in central Ohio and one of the oldest in the state, the Southern Theatre opened in 1896 as part of a performance space and hotel complex on the corner of High and Main Streets. The Southern changed hands and uses many times over the decades, becoming primarily a silent movie house by 1931, and eventually closing in disrepair in 1979. The 925-seat Southern Theatre was saved from the wrecking ball by the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) and reopened in 1998 after a dramatic \$10 million renovation.

³⁰ A dance company structured to present the work of various choreographers, as opposed to a company based on the identity of a single artist.

CF: Because I guess perhaps before you joined, they brought Mark Morris in and some other big names...

PB: Yeah, yeah, well we did... oh, I just remembered who the other company was — it was Alvin Ailey, Dancentral and Twyla Tharp³¹. Yep, a “small” one that I forgot all about. Anyway, it was pretty cool, but Twyla's company came in and they were in residence with us for a week or two, which was an amazing, amazing experience. But I don't think... we didn't do a piece, so I don't know. I remember that there would be some people from time to time that were OSU graduates or maybe Kenyon students and they would do some work. Sometimes they did work on themselves or they brought their own dancers, but I don't ever remember... It doesn't mean it didn't happen, but I don't ever remember working with anybody other than Maggie.

CF: You have already mentioned Maggie's legacy at Kenyon, for example, and the dedication of the space there in her name, but what do you think is her lasting legacy here in central Ohio? How would you talk about that?

PB: I would say... that's a hard one. I would say that Maggie had a deep, deep affinity for children, and teaching children. And that was some of the work that she was still doing; after she even left Kenyon, she was working at the opera and she was doing education programs for the opera. And she called me one day and said, "I'm doing this program over at Ohio Avenue Elementary and I'd love for you to come over and see what I'm doing." It was *so* much fun, and it was these little kids and they were learning dance and opera. I know she was in *heaven*. She was in heaven! She loved it. She loved the energy and the innocence of children and the joy in their movement. And I think that in a lot of ways, those are the days that were the most memorable for Maggie — just the impact that she had on children and knowing that as those children would grow, hopefully, they would remember that crazy little tiny person with the husky voice who came in and taught them about dance and opera.

CF: Did that span a number of years or?

PB: Yes, I think she did that for a while. I think she always did things off and on. With Dancentral, we did residencies with children all the time. We would take *Peter and the Wolf*³² on the road and do classes for children. And so she really loved teaching children. She worked with Evan Whallon³³ and

³¹ An important American dancer, choreographer, and author highly sought-after choreographer of broad national and international reputation for excellence, Twyla Tharp founded her company, Twyla Tharp Dance, in New York City in 1966, but her career has extended into numerous genres and types of venues.

³² Sergei Prokofiev's Op. 67 was composed as “a symphonic fairy tale for children” in 1936. One of the most frequently performed works in the classical repertoire, the narrator tells a children's story, while the orchestra illustrates it. Patton choreographed a major piece that Dancentral often toured to great acclaim.

³³ Evan Arthur Whallon Jr. (1924-1998) was born in Akron, Indiana, and trained at the Eastman School of Music. He served as conductor and music director of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra from 1956 to 1982, and during his years as the conductor of the Columbus Symphony, he and Patton enjoyed a rich and productive collaboration.

the symphony on some of those Popcorn Pops Concerts³⁴ and that's where *Peter and the Wolf* sort of came out of. And then she did another one that wasn't nearly as successful or clever as *Peter and the Wolf*, but it was called *Masked Man*. It was the Lone Ranger and it was tongue in cheek and ridiculous and funny and we had a great time doing it. But she just loved doing performances for children, and then teaching children.

CF: Was she able to pay the dancers?

PB: Oh yeah. Yeah. Oh yes, we made pretty good money — for 1978. And my first year I was still working part-time. So I would work part-time and then I was dancing full-time, but it was three days a week and we were able to... she was pretty good at fundraising. We had support from the Ohio Arts Council³⁵ and Greater Columbus Art Council³⁶ during that time. Yeah, so I don't know, there wasn't a big fundraising push, nothing like you would see now.

CF: But not a capital campaign — because one wonders why she couldn't have gotten her own space.

PB: Yeah, that's just maybe why she thought I could help (she laughs).

CF: Let's see. What did Dave, her husband, do at OSU?

PB: Dave, worked in, I think, Labor Relations on the faculty side and he worked with the Extension Service too, I think.

CF: He was not an artist?

PB: He was *not* an artist. No, he was not.

CF: — But a very supportive spouse, I guess.

PB: He was! She was home during the day while he was gone, and then by 3:30 - 4:00 pm, she was out the door. So he had the kids in the evenings.

³⁴ The Popcorn Pops is a program for children ages 3-12 and their families, presented by The Columbus Symphony. The concerts feature free popcorn and pre-concert activities designed to introduce children to symphonic music.

³⁵ The Ohio Arts Council, created in 1965, is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. With funds from the Ohio Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts, the OAC provides financial assistance to artists and arts organizations through grant funding programs and by providing services that help to enhance the growth of the arts.

³⁶ A community arts agency begun in 1970 under the auspices of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce to serve the city of Columbus. Columbus City Council later assumed this mantle, and GCAC is now recognized as one of the most successful city arts organizations in the nation, sponsoring the sprawling Columbus Arts Festival each June, and awarding Individual Artist Fellowships, as well as Operating and Project Support for organizations, among other responsibilities.

CF: I'm wondering about highlights and lowlights of the company during your years there, or watching Maggie go through a particularly high point and/or low point.

PB: Nothing comes to mind, I just know that she always wanted more for us and I think it always made her feel bad that she couldn't... Still, losing that space, that was just really devastating because it was one of those where everybody was like “Finally, finally we've gotten to this point where we can sustain and we can begin to grow and reach our potential,” and then boom, it was gone, and I still think that had a really big, big impact on her. Maggie was happy when she was choreographing, she was happy when she was dancing, she was happy when she was cooking, she was happy when there were little kids around, she was happy when she traveled. She *lived* life. She lived a good life.

CF: It must have been terribly difficult for her to leave the company. It was her baby, and it was the first non-university related dance company in the city.

PB: Yeah, and I think when she left — and others maybe understand the history a little bit more than I do — that she didn't want it to fold. She wanted it to carry on, and so there was a year where the board, I think, spent trying to find the next leader — and do you remember what his name was — was it Robert Small?³⁷

CF: Well, I thought it was Robert Small.

PB: It was Robert Small.

CF: But Janet recalled that it was David Parsons.³⁸

PB: I don't remember it being Parsons. I remember Robert Small, and I remember that because it's on a poster or it's on something that I saw that was about her final tribute, and that he was going to then take over the company. I think that only lasted...[a short time]. So I don't think she felt like the company was folding because she was leaving — she felt like there was a legacy there that someone else was going to take over. But it was a difficult time because there were a lot of us that were all starting young families and so not very many of the...[company remained]. So Robert would've had to basically start from the beginning anyway. I don't think there was anybody left that was still dancing.

CF: You did not stay on to dance with Robert?

PB: No, no... I had my final performance of *Peter and the Wolf* as the duck (laughing).

CF: You went out as a duck?

PB: I went out as a duck. I went out as a duck, rolling around on my stomach in a yellow duck costume, and I was pregnant. Yeah, that was my big exit — pretty dignified exit!

³⁷ Formerly a member of the Murray Louis Dance Company, dancer, choreographer, and teacher Robert Small formed Robert Small and the Small Dance Company, touring nationally and internationally through the late 1980s.

³⁸ Founded in 1985, Parsons Dance is a New York-based contemporary dance company founded by choreographer David Parsons.

CF: You left before Maggie, then?

PB: Yeah, that was probably, I'm guessing, my youngest son is... that would have been in the spring of 1983. So I think it was right around that time. I can't remember when she left, but it was shortly after that.

CF: What did you hear from the dancers about working with Robert Small?

PB: I don't think I even knew any of the dancers anymore who stayed and worked with him. So the dancers that I was close to had all sort of dropped back too, but I can't really remember, and if they stayed it was such a short period of time.

CF: Did she share with you her feelings about that folding, that she didn't see that coming?

PB: I don't think she saw that coming. Yeah, I don't think we really talked much about it. I think she decided to just move on. I think she was proud of what Dancentral had accomplished during its time, but I think once she made the decision to leave and hand it over to somebody else, she was out the door at that point and so yeah, I don't think we talked too much about it after that.

CF: And she very much built the department at Kenyon? My understanding is that there had been dance classes, but no department really.

PB: Right, yeah — yeah, she did. She absolutely did. And that was another thing: she was on to another adventure of *building* something new, somewhere else. So I think that took her time and her attention, but yes, I think that later on... I don't think she was bitter about it. I think she felt really good about what she had created and the legacy it created and the relationships that were fostered during that time.

CF: I know that she didn't have a lot of time between her diagnosis and her death — it was pretty quick. What happened?

PB: It was less than a month. It was less than a month.

CF: My worst nightmare...

PB: Yeah, yeah. It was less than a month. From what I understand, she hadn't been feeling very well, they had some traveling they were going to do, and I think she had a doctor's appointment set up for *after* they returned home, but by the time they got home, she was really feeling worse and worse and then... I mean, it was within a week she got the diagnosis and I think she was gone within two weeks. So we didn't, nobody got a lot of notice.

CF: What was it?

PB: It was a cancer of the blood. So it took away... she wasn't... and then it got through her body, but then it was in her brain. And so it was about two weeks of just her brain starting to shut things down. When I saw her, she wasn't able to talk anymore and that was less than a week after her diagnosis. So yeah, and she was already, I think she was at Ohio State [hospital] for a short period... well, I can't remember where she was, what hospital she was originally in. And then she went right into the Kobacker House.

CF: Is there anything that I haven't asked that you think should be said about Maggie or Dancentral?

PB: Yeah, yeah. It was a time in our lives, it was a once-in-a-lifetime for a lot of us who had, you know — we wanted to dance, we didn't see ourselves as dancers who wanted to make this our only life goal. We had other things we wanted to do, and I think that it was just a great period of time where these things can happen. You come together with a group of people and it clicks and it's a great time and you learned a lot and you built some relationships and lot of great memories. And then it goes away, and hopefully you keep some of those relationships going. I think that that would make Maggie happy — that she was able to pull this group of people together and we all shared so much. I mean, we *laughed* — we laughed through every rehearsal. It was a *joyous* place to go to rehearsal and to go to class. You were always, you worked really, really hard, but you were always, always laughing. That's what I remember.

CF: That's a great memory.

PB: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CF: One of the things that Janet commented on and that I remember for myself is that when I started the graduate program at OSU in '79 and became pregnant in my last year, it was frowned upon...

PB: Right. Yeah, yeah...

CF: ...and it sounded to me like that was one of the sort of collateral things that Maggie *gave* to all of you that you could have a family and dance. Did you feel that as something special?

PB: I *really* did. I felt like it really... nobody had to apologize for it — we all figured it out. The other thing that I did forget to mention was — I can't remember what year this was but it had to have been '81 — I got a call from Maggie and she said there's a position open at Otterbein³⁹ and I've told them that you're going to apply for it (she laughs). "Okay." And she said "It'll be perfect," and I said okay and at that time I was in the process of trying to get pregnant, and I went to the interview and learned the morning of the interview that I was pregnant. And I kept thinking, Maggie would be okay with this, but these people will not be okay with this. And so I went to the interview, I didn't cancel it, and it was with Dean Joanne Van Sant⁴⁰ at Otterbein — did you know Dean Van?

CF: Just the name.

PB: Yeah, yeah, formidable! And I sat down and said before we even started talking, "I need you to know that I'm pregnant," and she said, "That's *wonderful*." She said, "That's wonderful, congratulations! You'll be able to bring the baby with you, just put a playpen in the studio and you can have the baby *right* there with you." And I thought, wow! That was... yeah. So that was my other experience and it was too distracting for me, I couldn't deal with it, I was very bad at that. But that

³⁹ Located in Westerville, a community located to the northeast of downtown Columbus, Otterbein University is a small Liberal Arts institution that includes a dance minor within the Theatre and Dance academic area.

⁴⁰ Joanne Van Sant (1924 – 2012) was an administrator at Otterbein from 1948 – 1992.

whole thing of being able to have a family and not be ruled out for having a family as a dancer, which still happens everywhere, we know.

CF: (To the VDC film team): Megan or Jessica, do you have anything you'd like to ask that I didn't?

MDB: There's a lot on *Peter and the Wolf* — and even in the library, there's a manila folder of drawings from the children, and thank you notes.

PB: Oh really?

MDB: Yeah. It just seems like that was a big piece — maybe the education aspect, maybe it was accessible, but I know we have a lot awesome pictures. And I was hoping you could just talk a little bit more about what life she brought to *Peter and the Wolf*. How did her modernism come through? Did you do any roles other than the duck?

PB: I did. Let's see, I was the bird. I was the bird. Yeah, I think I did bird and duck. I can't remember doing anything else, but yes, the fact that it was sort of our educational shtick and so she would promote *Peter and the Wolf* as an educational program all over the state of Ohio. We traveled all over the place and the company had been doing that before I started. But again, it was her humor that made it so accessible to children. It was a brilliant piece of music, first of all, and to be able to bring the music and the movement, and the characters, and the humor to children, that was a joy. We never turned down an opportunity to do *Peter and the Wolf*, but it was silly. It was silly. There were jokes in it that children didn't get, but a lot of what Maggie's choreography would be — a lot of times, it was just a look and you'd have to do the “Maggie look.” Nobody from the 12th row back could see the look, but you still had to do this look, this very dramatic Maggie look that she would do that was funny; it was supposed to be funny. And those quick little takes that were even part of *Peter and the Wolf* and some of her funniest pieces, were very *her*. And anytime she choreographed that in, people who knew her would say that they knew that that was her. That was the Maggie that they knew would make those kinds of looks. And she would do that all the time, even when not on a dance stage, but yeah, *Peter and the Wolf* was fun.

CF: So, following her retirement from Kenyon — because she did that and then had some years as a retired person. Was that difficult for her? I wonder about her being able to let go of this great joy and pleasure of her life?

PB: Maggie then did something she had always wanted to do. So, she did the Dancentral thing, she did the Kenyon thing, and then she did the Opera thing. She wrote an opera! She was directing operas at Opera Columbus⁴¹ after she retired from Kenyon. So she was working with the opera, she was choreographing it *first*, and then she started directing. I think she directed *Pirates*,⁴² and my husband and I went to see that at the Southern Theatre. She *loved* it — she was brilliant at it, but she really then got into opera, which was something she'd always been interested in, but had never really pursued. So even after she retired from Kenyon, she was still finding a new challenge.

⁴¹ Founded in 1981 and based at the Southern Theatre, Opera Columbus brings opera to Columbus stages with mainstage productions, education and community engagement programs.

⁴² *The Pirates of Penzance* is an oft-repeated comic opera in two acts with music by Arthur Sullivan and libretto by W. S. Gilbert, which premiered in 1879.

CF: If you wouldn't mind, could you speak to the fact that, from what you've said, it seems that Maggie set you up on your own current career path, unbeknownst to you.

PB: Unbeknownst to me, yes.

CF: Would you mind telling us what that path has been? I know you worked part-time while you were with Dancentral, and then...?

PB: Yeah, yeah. I continued when my children were young, I continued to teach just on a freelance basis. I taught at Otterbein, Ohio Wesleyan, Columbus Parks and Rec, Saint Agatha Schools, Hilliard City Schools, Latchkey programs, and so I did a lot of that, and then I took a job once my kids were in high school with a nonprofit organization and started doing some grant writing and kind of got into development. — And I remembered Maggie had said, "I'm grooming you to be our development director," and then it wasn't until *then* that I understood what that was and realized "I could do this, maybe." And so I applied for a job in 2000 — this was a number of years later at Columbus College of Art and Design as an Assistant Development Director working with Denny Griffith.⁴³ And yeah, I was able to go back into the arts world and Maggie was really happy about that; she was so excited that I had done that. And so I spent a few years, three and half years, at CCAD⁴⁴ just kind of learning, mostly. It was almost a start-up there because CCAD had never done any real fundraising until Denny Griffith got there, and he started building a program. And then Nancy Strause,⁴⁵ founder of BalletMet, decided she was retiring and they were looking for her successor. And again, somebody came to me and said, "Oh, I was talking to Nancy Strouse and I told her that you would be the perfect person, and that you're going to apply for the job." And so I said, "I'm not doing that." And you know why? I said, "Raising money for dance is too hard. It's too hard." And I felt like that's a tough job, but anyway, I agreed to talk to Nancy Strouse and so then I was at BalletMet for nine years as development director and did my first capital campaign there. Then I got a call out of the blue one day from a recruiter that there was a job at Columbus State⁴⁶ and they were looking for somebody to come into their Foundation and basically build it, almost from scratch, and it felt like a good time to go do something new. So that's what I've been doing for seven and half years and we launched our... I was Executive Director of the Foundation at Columbus State. We've raised \$25 million since I got there and we just dedicated Mitchell Hall,⁴⁷ the

⁴³ Dennison W. "Denny" Griffith (1952-2016) was a beloved painter and highly impactful third president of Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD) for 16 years, from May 1998, when he was appointed to the post, until his retirement in June 2014.

⁴⁴ Founded in 1879, Columbus College of Art and Design is one of the oldest private, nonprofit art and design colleges in the United States and, in 2019, celebrated 140 years of creative excellence. CCAD offers 12 BFA programs and two master's programs in art and design.

⁴⁵ Strause is a Columbus, OH civic leader who has been instrumental in the founding and development of BalletMet since its beginnings in 1977. Strause, who has served many roles in the organization is a principal informant for the Ballet Met feature, one of the selected sites of this collection.

⁴⁶ Columbus State Community College (CSCC) is a community college in Columbus, Ohio. Founded as Columbus Area Technician's School in 1963, it was renamed Columbus Technical Institute in 1965 and then renamed again to its current title in 1987. The college has grown from an initial enrollment of 67 students in 1963, to its current enrollment of over 27,000 students over two campuses, nine regional learning centers and online courses.

⁴⁷ Named for Columbus restaurateur and major donor Cameron Mitchell, Mitchell Hall is a newly dedicated (2019) building on the campus of Columbus State Community College. A public/private partnership, the building houses the culinary and hospitality programs of CSCC.

new culinary school — which has been my project for five years — on Monday. So Maggie saw something that really fit, and I look at those years as a dancer, and I tell young people this all the time: "The skills that you learn as a dancer will follow you the rest of your life. You can do *anything*." Because they're first of all, *great* employees because we're perfectionists, we know what it means to work really, really hard, we're not afraid of something hurting. We're creative, we can work our way out of any kind of problem and it's just... I can't say enough! At BalletMet, I hired as my part-time assistant — and now she's running the database and some events and some other things — a young woman who was a retired dancer from BalletMet, and she's doing a great job there for all of those reasons. So that's where I've been.

CF: Wow. Congratulations on the dedication of Mitchell and that program, which is so exciting, I think, for the city.

PB: Thank you. Yeah. Yeah.

CF: I wonder if you would care to comment on the difficulty of raising money for dance and why it's so hard?

PB: (She laughs.) Yeah. Well, it's been different over different time periods. I think that getting the message out — there's a lot of people that think that they know what dance is and they get it in their head, and they decide "I don't like it because I don't know anything about it." They're *intimidated* by it. I feel like dance is probably — and I'm a little biased — I think it's the most sophisticated of the performing arts because...you know, you can play a musical instrument, or you can create a painting but [in Dance] you have to keep time, the whole time, have a smile on your face, be sweating and have your leg up to here. It's such a culmination of so many art forms that I think it's difficult for people to open themselves up to it and *unless* you can relate to it, it's hard for people to support it. Back many years ago, when Columbus was a smaller town, you could go around to the business community and make the case that "you may not know what dance is, you may not think that you understand" — they feel like they have to understand it — "but you *can* make the case that Columbus Ohio needs a strong arts community." And so you were able to use that rationale for a long time. Corporate fundraising is very, very different now then it was even fifteen years ago. So I think a lot of it is just the accessibility of it, and it's really a niche and so you find [yourself] having to constantly raise more money from the people that are already engaged, so you hit your limit eventually. If you have a strong academy component, you're sort of bringing in new generations as you go, making it accessible to future audiences. And I think Columbus has done a *great* job in *all* of those aspects over the last several years — but I just think that it's still... there are very few... Columbus is also under-endowed. There are very few big family foundations. You get a lot in Cleveland, there are a lot in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh... there just aren't — we're a newer city and we don't have a lot of those big foundations. So yeah, I think GCAC is being very creative, Tom Katzenmeyer,⁴⁸ the whole ticket tax is something that when I was at BalletMet we started working on and it took *years* and years to get it through. We did study after study after study after study to the point where it's like "Who else do we need to convince?" But I think this latest round has finally really succeeded. So I look forward to being able to see the arts flourish here a little bit more.

⁴⁸ President and CEO of the Greater Columbus Arts Council (Arts Council). Led by Katzenmeyer, GCAC pushed for a successful 5% ticket tax on ticketed arts, cultural, entertainment, and professional sporting events to provide public funding for the arts and for cultural facilities upkeep in Columbus.

CF: Well, thank you so much for giving us time out of your workday.

PB: I'm part-time now.

CF: So, you're raising \$10 million, part-time?

PB: Part-time, yeah.

CF: Well, we'll have to keep that in mind!

PB: There you go, yeah, yeah. No, it's been lovely. Thank you. And it's always fun to go back and think about Maggie and what she did.

CF: Is there anybody else that you think we absolutely must talk to about her...

PB: There have some people who have been... like, I don't know if Lenny Schottenstein would talk to you. Lenny's been... yeah, I just don't know. I know that Maggie's children were very young when she had Dancentral, so they would remember her sewing costumes, they would remember running around theaters as children and... I'll put some thought into it. Yeah, I didn't pry with [her son] Eric, but I'll probably have a chance to talk with him once I can get him set up with a couple of people to meet with. Unfortunately, some of the people that were around during those early years — Barbara Visintine is in town, she lives in New Albany. She might be somebody, she was there about the same time I was. Ann Rigsby-Lewis...

JD: Barbara is LeVeque now?

PB: She's LeVeque — she's Barbara LeVeque now.

JD: She was supposed to come the last time...

PB: Oh was she? She's very ill. She's very ill.

JD: I know. I know...

PB: I saw some pictures of her on Facebook post from Pelotonia. There were some people writing in her honor. So Anne Rigsby Lewis, I don't know. Anne's dad loved Maggie, but he passed away a couple of years ago, too. Just trying to think if there were any others who were maybe on the board during that time, but I can't think of anybody... Ray Hanley⁴⁹ would have known her really well. Ambre⁵⁰ — I mean, Amber didn't know her during that time, but Amber and I met with Maggie.

⁴⁹ President of the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC) from 1985 until his death in 2006, Hanley is widely considered to have secured a reputation for GCAC and Columbus as one of the nation's leading arts agencies and arts communities.

⁵⁰ Ambre Emory-Maier is Director of Education for BalletMet and Associate Director of BalletMet 2, a Dance Academy performing company of 6-8 dancers that brings dance to the larger community, and serves as pre-professional training and experience for high-level academy students at BalletMet.

Maggie was trying to bring sort of education program. She would have loved to have taught some classes through the education programs at BalletMet but they couldn't quite figure it out. Maggie wanted to do it on her schedule and it didn't quite fit with anybody else's schedule.

JD: How old was she when she passed?

PB: It was 2011. Eight years ago.

CF: Well, thank you again.

PB: Thank you!

CF: It's been a delight to know more about her from your point-of-view.

PB: I hope it was helpful.

CF: Very! Thank you.