

## THE BENNINGTON COLLEGE JUDSON PROJECT

Judson Memorial Church in New York City was a major center of artistic ferment in the early 1960's. The revolutionary spirit and sheer intelligence of the artists, dancers, and composers who performed there shook the roots of dance and theatre in this country. The vitality of the Judson group affected artists of all areas to such an extent that now, almost twenty years later, the Judson movement is widely recognized as a crucial period in performance history.

The Judson Dance Theatre was collectively founded in 1962 by a handful of the most innovative artists of this generation. Artists of all disciplines participated in the Judson experiments. Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Morris, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton (who used to teach at Bennington), David Gordon, Lucinda Childs, and Judith Dunn (who is still a member of the Bennington dance faculty), are a few of the people who organized concerts and presented their work at Judson. One interest they all shared was the crossing of boundaries between the several arts--movement, sound, and visual material. In effect, they redefined these media, infusing the very phenomenon of performance with new life.

Many of these people have continued to do interesting work in their fields, or have shifted to become innovators in other media. The Bennington College Judson Project, conceived and co-directed by Wendy Perron of the Dance Division, and Tony Carruthers of Dance/Drama, is an examination and documentation of the Judson Dance Theatre from 1962 to 1966 as well as a follow-up of current work by Judson participants. At the same time, it is a way for Bennington to renew its connection to the most contemporary developments in the arts in New York City and around the country.

The project has three parts:

### 1. RESIDENCIES AT THE COLLEGE

As part of courses being taught in Spring 1980 by Tony Carruthers and Wendy Perron, there will be a two-week period of performances, showings, workshops, and discussions conducted by key people of the Judson Dance Theatre: Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, and photographers Peter Moore and Babette Mangolte. Students in dance, drama, art and photography will benefit from this program.

### 2. RESEARCH VIDEO PROJECT

A team of Bennington students and graduate students have been working on a video project over Non Resident Term. They are videotaping interviews and performances of about twenty Judson participants, some of whom are nearly legendary figures by now. We have already shot interviews with Remy Charlip, Philip Corner, David Gordon, Linda Childs, John Herbert McDowell, Phoebe Neville, Jackson MacLow, Simone Forti, Carolee Schneeman, and Robert Rauschenberg, Alex Hay, and Trisha Brown (the last three in one group). We plan, by the end of summer 1980, to

have completed interviews with Kenneth King, Meredith Monk, Deborah Hay, Bill Dixon (currently in the Black Music/Dance Divisions at Bennington), Al Carmines, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Ruth Emerson, Elaine Summers, Robert Dunn, Anna Halprin, and Robert Morris. We are working in collaboration with Sally Banes, whose book *Terpsichore in Sneakers* has just been published by Houghton Mifflin, and whose next book will be about the Judson Dance Theatre. This project will yield approximately twenty-five hours of tape, which will be shown concurrently with the PHOTO EXHIBIT:

3. THE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

We propose a photography exhibit at the College's Usdan Gallery in September 1980 that will travel to New York City, where it will be housed at Grey Art Gallery (affiliated with New York University) in January 1981. This is the first time a major exhibit will focus on both the specific performances given at Judson Church and on the role photography played in formulating the aesthetic of the time. Peter Moore, a featured contributor to the proposed exhibit, was the first photographer to enter into the subjectivity of the performer's world, thus establishing an exchange with the performers. (He is currently in possession of at least 100,000 negatives of performances of the period.) It is as a separate creator of the event that each photographer added to the general excitement and, ultimately, to the further meshing of all of the arts.

Bennington College and Grey Art Gallery have jointly applied for funding for this exhibit to the N.E.A. Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis has shown interest in importing it, and we are seeking sponsors in California and in London and Paris. We are excited about the project for the stimulation it affords us, the faculty, and the considerable educational benefits to the students. Also, we feel that the Judson Project, and the photo exhibit in particular, will do much to renew Bennington's image as a progressive school in the arts.