

THE
GRADUATE
SCHOOL **PUBLIC**
LECTURES
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Bill T. Jones

PUBLIC LECTURE TRANSCRIPT



BE BOUNDLESS

UW.EDU/PUBLICLECTURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION, page 1

Yvette Moy, Director of the Office of Public Lectures
Elizabeth Cole Duffell, Director of artistic engagement at the Meany Center for
the Performing Arts

FEATURED SPEAKER, page 2

Bill T. Jones, Artist, choreographer, dancer, theatre director and writer

Q&A SESSION, page 6

INTRODUCTION

Yvette Moy

Director of the Office of Public Lectures staff

Hi, everybody, thanks for coming out tonight. Not saying home for the State of the Union, what? I didn't either. I am Yvette Moy and I'm the Director of the Office of Public Lectures here at the University of Washington and our office is housed in the Graduate School. Before we begin, I have a couple of housekeeping items that I need to go over with you. And the first is if you would mind checking your cell phones and turning them off or silence, off is always better, don't you think? Like, I like off. There's going to be no video or audio recording of this evening's lecture. We do have our NPR affiliate KUOW here with us this evening, who will be making an official archival-quality copy of tonight's lecture and it will be made available through the UW Media Center. And then, finally, please refrain from taking photographs while our lecturer is on stage. Our guest here tonight, Emile Pitre, who's an emeritus faculty, will be our official photographer and he'll take photographs for the first five minutes of tonight's talk. And then he will not take any more. Right, Emile? Okay. I also want to take a couple minutes to acknowledge our special guests from New York Live Arts. They flew all the way out from New York City to be with us in the 206 and we really want to thank you all for being here. I especially want to acknowledge Kyle Mott, thank you so much for everything that you've done, as well as Hannah Emerson with New York Live Arts. You guys have been instrumental in making sure that this event is running smoothly and flawlessly, and we really thank you so much for being a great partner.

Before we begin, I also want to share a little history on the endowment that allows us to bring our speaker this evening. It is sponsored through the generous Jessie and John Danz Endowment. It was created in 1961. And this endowment has allowed the University of Washington to host over 160 speakers and public intellectuals. John Danz was an immigrant who arrived in Seattle with his family from Russia in 1881 when he was four years old, and as a youth, he grew up with a deep understanding of hardship and poverty. After working in a variety of positions, including as a newsboy, a cow hand and a traveling merchant, Mr. Danz entered the motion picture business and became a very successful businessman. Always regarded as an independent and unorthodox thinker, John Danz

was self-educated and read widely and liberally. He was fascinated by scientific developments and liberal religious movements, especially humanism. In creating this endowment, his goal was to bring to the University of Washington, distinguished men and women, quote, "who have concerned themselves with the impact of science and philosophy on man's perception of a rational universe." I never get tired of saying that, it's so interesting. Mr. Danz' wife, Jessie, shared his vision, and she augmented the endowment with additional gifts throughout her life. Please join me in expressing appreciation for this invaluable gift to the university and the citizens of our region. Tonight's Danz speaker, Bill T. Jones, will be introduced by Elizabeth Cole Duffell. She's the director of artistic engagement at the Meany Center for the Performing Arts. Thank you.

* * * * *

Elizabeth Cole Duffell

Director of artistic engagement at the Meany Center for the Performing Arts

Thank you, Yvette. Good evening and thank you for joining us. As Yvette stated, I'm Elizabeth Duffell from Meany Center for the Performing Arts. It is my great honor and privilege to be here with you tonight to introduce this evening's speaker, Bill T. Jones. Bill T. Jones is a multi-talented artist, choreographer, dancer, theatre director and writer. Throughout his career he's received major honors including the Human Rights Campaigns 2016 Visibility Award, the 2013 National Medal of Arts and in 1994 MacArthur Genius Award. He was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2009, and was named an irreplaceable dance treasure by the dance heritage coalition in 2000. Mr. Jones attended the State University of New York at Binghamton where he became interested in movement and dance. He became the co-founder of American Dance Asylum in 1973 and in 1982, he formed the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company with his late partner, Arnie Zane. Today, Mr. Jones is the artistic director of New York Live Arts. His work engages with race, class, gender, history, and identity, and as Wyatt Mason from The New York Times recently wrote, "like all great attempts at artistic expression, his art manages to model compassion for the spectator, to make us feel what it's like to be dealing with an intense feeling, not our own, but one that becomes ours to deal with." Tonight, he will discuss the four-year creation process of the analogy trilogy, which will be presented by Meany Center for the Performing Arts, just across Red Square there, Thursday to Saturday night

of this week. And this is only the second time the full trilogy has been presented back to back like this. So, we're very pleased to be presenting it and yes, tickets are still available for all three nights. So please welcome Bill T. Jones.

FEATURED SPEAKER (5:35)

Bill T. Jones

Artist, choreographer, dancer, theatre director and writer

Thank you. I'm doubly flattered, triply flattered, because the most powerful man in the world is actually addressing the country tonight. No? I didn't mean it as a laughline, actually, it sort of makes me sick. But you chose to be here. Yeah. Right. Okay. So art or talking about art is going to save us, right? I don't believe it. That's not a laughline, either. Winning will save us. Voting will save us. Hey Mile. You don't agree? Yeah. Okay, well, we'll talk later. John Cage. I had just finished a series of works that were going to prove for the last time that I was truly a choreographer and not a politician disguised as a choreographer. So, I made a number of works that were, quote, "pure music works." And those works, good works. But when they were over, I was left with that familiar, sinking feeling, why make another one? What in the hell do you dance about now? So, I thought I turned to the great saint of modernism, whose name is John Cage. And how did he do it? What did he do? Supposedly, the story goes, that there came a certain point, was it in the 40s, and he was having a kind of a breakdown. The breakdown was that he felt it was the Cold War and the work that he was making was not really speaking to a world. He was living as a heterosexual man with a wonderful woman. And then he met this young, beautiful male dancer named Merce Cunningham, and they fell in love. And his partner, this woman and he, suddenly, something changed that was pretty drastic. And he thought, I don't know. And he started working with a teacher, an Indian teacher, who pointed him toward the direction of Eastern mysticism, saying, you know, John, you don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to know everything. And he began to think about indeterminate action. Make a list of things, make another list of things, and then toss them and decide what the order is going to be. You don't have to have compositional sense. As a matter of fact, John Cage was

known to say, and he's often quoted, and excuse me if I quote him too much, that the more an artist gets out of his work, the more room there is for the audience to get in it. Nice, huh? Except if you have a huge ego and you're a performer by nature, and what's more is you're a seducer by nature, and you want to be loved. Right? People spend years understanding how to get you to love them, and what they make. Market study. What do people like? Well, I decided to sort of mock him, you know how you mock people you love? He did, as you well know, a very famous work called Indeterminacy, back in the 50s. And what it was is he wrote stories, and he read them, one-minute stories, with no transitions, one after another, boom, boom, about his mother, boom, about his art, boom, about his feelings about anarchy, boom, about Zen Buddhism, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. And it was bewildering, mind boggling. There was no transitions. So I thought, well, why don't I do that? Now he could do that because he is John Cage, or he's a white man who can be neutral. He can just be about form. I said, well, you know, you know, times changed, you know, why don't you do that? So John Cage's stories were about his spiritual beliefs about all sorts of things except sex, very little about race, religion, you know, he's an Irish Catholic, and so on. So I thought, why didn't I write my own stories and then do chance procedure? And I did. And what's more, we took all of our choreography, this is something we sort of borrowed from Merce Cunningham, choreography from 30 years, my wonderful collaborator, and of course director Janet Wong and I, and we began to slice them up arbitrarily things that Arnie Zane and I would have been doing, things that came from the more lyrical aspects of what we were doing and it could be, no transitions, it drove the dancers crazy. Crazy. When Paul and Jennifer had a meltdown, you should talk, I'll talk to you about that, right? There's no transition! How do I go into this? You know, just go into it. And we really wrestled with that thing. And that was a series of words called Storytime. Should have cleared out all the concerns I had about success and failure. Supposedly, he was free of those things. Well, then it ran its course. We go to a few places now doing it. I love doing it. But what was the next work supposed to be about? Why are you making anything? My dancer, feeling, he's heard this so many times, Taiwanese as opposed to Chinese dancer, that she reminds me quite regularly, she and I were talking in our reviews and every 18 months about what are you doing Bill, so on and so forth, and she voiced what a lot of them were voicing because by this time I had already been, done two shows on Broadway, won two Tony's, I was, was very starry, you know, Jay-Z, Beyonce, they produced one of the shows that I did. And she said to me,

frankly, where's your interest? You know, it's like when your family, you've been like sort of tiptoeing around and one of your kids or somebody nails you and says, do you really love us? Are you pretending? And while I said my interest right now is in literature. And it was true. Nothing held me like a book in the hand, written by somebody who had an extreme command of language and form and one such book was W.G. Sebald *The Emigrants*. And this book had four parts. The third part was the one that really moved me. It was called *Ambrose Adelwarth*. Which, I love that name. You know, *Ambrose Adelwarth*. And it's a story about a working class German boy born about 1890, who, really precocious, he becomes a first rate manservant, he lives all over the planet. And he finds his way to New York in 1911. And he is quickly employed by the quote, richest Jewish family, the Solomon's, toxic brew, huh, working class German, Jewish family, and they hire him to guard their eccentric son, Cosmo. Cosmo has an unlimited bank account. He could do whatever he wants to do. So, they gamble and I won't try to tell you the whole story except there was something intriguing about what he doesn't say. We're led to believe they had a very special relationship. But the author never names it. And what's more, it's only intimated by people talking about them. Around this time, I thought, that's what I should be doing. But I remembered that I had done an oral history with my companion, my husband, Bjorn Amelan's mother, who was in her 80s at that time, French Jewish woman who had been working in internment camps, not a concentration camp, during the war. And I had recorded her stories that her son told me that when they grew up, they didn't hear these stories. not unusual for people who survived the Holocaust as I understand, but she was telling these stories all the time now. So, I recorded them. So as I'm thinking, I'm going to put her stories, which is roughly the time frame of *Ambrose Adelwarth*, together, and then I'm going to triangulate with my young dancers. I think like a lot of us we are concerned that one thing that the internet has done is taken away a sense of history. Everything is like, so, there's no, you can have everything at the touch of a button. You can have access to everything. You don't have to know anything. So, okay, why don't I have them really, know Dora's words by saying those words. But it was too soon for *Ambrose*. So we started with *Dora*. Let's listen to the beginning of *Dora*. Can you call what was happening when you came in the room now? But you heard? Yeah. I wonder. Because that's how I live. I'm always catching up with what I, my senses tell me, but I don't register it unless it's somehow bracketed and framed. That is where the process begins. Nick, as soon as I move these, let's play that. Let's bring the lights down and play the beginning of *Dora*. You're going to hear my mother-in-law who

is now 97 and has just recently had a debilitating stroke. *Dora* is almost history now. She was very palpable when we made this work. Funny thing about time, isn't it? Just the beginning of *Dora*.

Bill T. Jones: What does it mean again *Dora*?

Dora: The sun has an appointment with the moon. But the moon is hiding itself and doesn't know that he is looking for her. But to meet her, you need night, you need night, and the sun not knowing it is blowing. So the light was not there. And the movies.

(music playing, someone singing)

Bill T. Jones: Yeah, so *Nacht und Träume* is the name of that piece. I had done a solo show, soon to be almost 20 years ago and I danced the whole string of Franz Schubert and there was one that I was going to get to, but never got around to and it was this one. So 10, 15 years later, pops back up again. The list and the translation is something like, when the mist spreads over the mountain, and the moon battles with the clouds, the old man takes this harp and walks toward the wood quietly singing 'holy night, soon it will be done. Soon I shall sleep the long sleep which will free me from all grief.' Then the green trees rustle, sleep sweetly, good old man and the swaying grasses whisper, 'we shall cover his resting place' and many a sweet bird calls let him rest in his grassy grave. The old man listens. The old man is silent. Death has inclined toward him." Morbid, romantic bullshit. Sorry, a child is in the room. Well, I am a romantic. What is this thing about memory, the old man, the moon. I didn't know what the words were when I was so moved by it. But it stayed with me. And I knew that I wanted to open it up. And it was the door through which I stepped through. I thought it was going to be, has anyone seen Visconti's *Death in Venice*? But you know how he uses Mahler brilliantly in it, to talk about decadence, and all of that? Once again, we always turn to the Germans when we want to talk about that place of kind of moral prurience and beauty all tied up together. And that's what I thought I was going to do with the *Ambrose* story. Then, I found that it seemed to be something about fitting with this old Jewish woman who was talking to me about being 19 years old when the Germans marched into Belgium, and her mother was dying of cancer. So, drama, so much drama, but so real. And yet my young dancers, I thought that they would benefit, one, I want them to be close to what I love. I love the Schubert. I want them not to be intimidated or feel that it's something dead white men art but it's something alive. But I also wanted to find a way to be closer

to Dora. Because I'm getting old. And it's flattering to have, gorgeous, they're right here. Look at, look at them right now. They're beautiful. And I keep getting a fresh group of them. It is as if they're eternally young and I'm getting old. It's nice and when it's not then what the hell are they? Are they my colleagues? What is it? What's the connection? We had thought form was the connection. We had thought that the style of dancing was the connection. There was once a time when you spent all this time learning Graham, or then you learn Cunningham. And those styles would connect you to your materials, which were the dancers. Well, what happened? Something happened with the postmoderns. We wanted it all. We were not terribly schooled. But we had a lot of ambition and we had this thing called conceptualism. If the concept was strong, it didn't matter what the execution was. So we thought. Generation of the 40s would have thought you guys are fooling yourself. What would Martha Graham say? The foot is either pointed, or it's not. No two ways about it. But we, almost quoting modern quantum physics, we think we can be both. And we don't think, a line doesn't have to be finished. An idea for a dance can be little more than just an idea for a dance. What was the idea? As you were coming in? What was happening? That was just life happening, me indulging, or was it an opportunity for you to make a work in your head? That's what I was taught by postmodernism. We're having a conversation with your creation. Matter of fact, John Cage says creation is actually a setter, self-alteration. That's what he felt a good work of art was, a good work of art was an opportunity for the maker and for the audience to rearrange something. Back to Bill T. Jones, I want to make something achingly beautiful. I want to talk about things like life and death and I want to talk about aging. I want to talk about time. I want to talk about metaphor. And so what I tried to slyly do was, once I had this idea of what we would be, what it would feel like, then the question would be, what will it look like? I wanted you to see that section because the number of things were being laid out, you meet Dora and Dora is almost an idea, Dora, we, every day, we're hoping that we have her longer, but Dora will not be with us for a long, but she's 97, but she has a cousin who is 10 years older. God knows, you know, who knows, all bets are off, but she's an old lady. There is Dora and then there is my beautiful dancers. And then there is this ritual of these things that they're moving around. Someone said, one of the nicest thing that that particular critic has ever said about my work, and maybe one of the nicest things said about this work was, "oh, the opening, they're like constructing memory." So, I had said to our, our host, you know that it would be very useful if the audience could come in and get a whiff of what it was like

when I was listening to the music. Now it's yours. And then you would connect it to what you see. And not only do you connect it to what you see in here, but now there is this language of these things moving. There is also the decor which moves like this. It's actually a dance floor which usually runs this way but Bjorn Amelan decided to make it go that way. And he said it should be a space that is a memory space.

So, analogy is a work that actually compares something. What's it comparing? Sometimes when I want to be particularly playful with writers I say, "Oh, it's, it is comparing a life well lived." Okay. Dora's is a very good story. She's 19 years old running through the streets of Antwerp. The dancers are beautiful. They tell, are telling us a story. If I'm allowed to say so it's a charming piece. And it has, it has something but it is also, it tastes good. While making that work, my nephew, Lance Theodore Briggs, my sister's only son, and a young actor, not actor, young dancer, model who I've known since he was in his mother's belly, he and I have recommenced the conversation, and we think he's dying. If you know anything about me, my bio, death looms large, because I had a very public death of my companion whose company, whose name the company still bears, Arnie Zane, who died in my arms after 17 years. So, Lance, we think that he may be going that direction. Now, you just made a quote, "charming, winning peace with a strong Jewish lady." What can you, without going to Europe, can you come home with your themes? What is the history? What is memory? What is love? What is death? And what does art have to do with it?

So, I started making an oral history when he was in the hospital. And I asked him questions, like I asked Dora, such as where does your name come from? Your parents? Tell me about your relationship to this and that. He was a young dancer at the School of, San Francisco School of Ballet when he was eight years old. He and I, he said that I was his hero. His uncle Bill was two people that he really, I don't know if he, you know, he's capable of flattery, flattery. Believe me with his life. He learned about seduction. He said, you and Michael Jackson. Oh, oh, so, we do this oral history and the question is, I know that there are people who said, "Well, you know, you're going to do this story about this heroic white lady. And now you're going to do a story about this dysfunctional life of a black man." Well, why not? Well, Black Lives Matter. Ferguson, Michael Brown, at risk, black people violence, drugs. So shouldn't it be also, should it

also have an uplift? Don't, I owe it to the time because there's now kind of a code, have you noticed how correct we've become now? Right? Notice how many more brown people are selling Fords. I mean, more brown people are having holidays in Barbados. Trying to get it right now. No, it's not a white country. No, no, no, no, that's not, that's not, that's not true. No, it's not a white country. You see, in our advertising now brown people, brown people, does it feel a little forced to you? You don't have to speak to me. It feels forced to me. We're all trying to be so correct. So good. Well, let's move the concerns of the culture away and get down to the business of art and association. Let's talk about metaphor. Let's talk about character. Can you do that independent of concern about the discourse around the black male body? My nephew wants to work with his uncle. Can we talk as two men, two black men, in a world where, quite frankly, I love you all being here, but let's do a little racial looking for a minute. This is my life. This is the truth of my life. It's been this way always. Does it make me crazy? Yeah. But I know, so what? It is part of the job description, this kind of craziness, alienation, what have you. So we went into it making a work about his exploitation at the hand of pederast, cocaine, drugs, money, being a sex worker, and the same spirit, Dora talking about being that brave, 19 year old running and getting laudanum from her mother working in a concentration, in an internment camp. And then, so what are these pieces about? About what is a life well lived. When we beat him, he's almost dying in the hospital of complications from HIV/AIDS. He didn't die. Haha, he didn't die and what's more, he tells me that he is going to make something out of his life and he is an artist. And what's that? At one point he and I have a discussion about, he reminds me that once I said to him, you're not an artist until you can make something beautiful out of the ugliness of your life. It made me cringe a little bit. I can imagine having said that to him years ago. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I said, you know what, I don't even think it has to be beautiful anymore. But you've got to make something out of something that has, that's expansive. And that's probably one of my biggest concerns right now with my field. I'm not quite sure that I care enough about what I go to see. I'm not quite sure the stakes are high enough. Now, you can't, it's almost like saying, you know, the relationship you're having with your lover is not deep enough. That's for you and your God and your lover. So when someone, the work that they make, I can't judge it. But I know from me, I oftentimes see things and I think, what if there was a caption on what I'm seeing? What if what I'm seeing was actually a description of something that was tangible, frightening, real? What if it really

had real consequences for me or the artists making it? This is what I tried to do with Lance's work.

The interesting thing about it, form is actually a safety net for me, or, what do I want to call it, a seat belt. That floor is there in Lance's well. There's refrains of Schubert still there, although we're using my nephew's rhythm and blues songs, as he sees himself as a songwriter, and through his drug addiction and his crazy life, he was still doing stage shows. He was a very beautiful man. He was modeling. He was doing all those things, but he, that crack pipe was something that Dora didn't have to worry about. So we soldiered on and at a certain point in the piece, he and I have a real fight. This most inappropriate thing to air that to a room full of strangers, me saying to him, I think you did something you're ashamed of. Do you say that to someone you love? I did. Am I going to hell for it? Where's artist hell? Mark him, mark him whoever said that. You're going to ask him to explain that. Okay, well, so Lance happens. It is a very, it's not everyone's liking. It certainly doesn't taste as good as Dora does, but it has something else and now I can smell it. Now, let's get back to where you started. That novel. That novel which is, I think, Carlo Nueva here, he says when, in the piece, Ambrose, he mentions the origami of the storytelling. The man, W.G. Sebald, is such a wonderful writer that he can take the past and fold into the future and vice versa. He has researched things so that he, sometimes there's a little digression about something that you never thought was related to this thing. But suddenly it's there and you're, you're really moved by the relationships in it but you're now thinking about a flower. You're thinking about the taste of food, you're thinking about an atmospheric condition. You're thinking about history, all of that and I realized I was very envious. So we set out to make the third section which is called Analogy, Ambrose, the emigrant. And that idea has been one of the most rewarding things I've gone in pursuit of. I don't think I could have done that without the other parts that I did do before. Analogy, the comparison of things, a metaphor where one thing stands in for another thing. The origami of storytelling, where form, you can move things around, you can develop a very personal language that the audience can buy into, and then they become co-creators with you. That is where I think the strength of this work is for me in all the things I have made.

So, what about the politics? Tonight we were going to show a bit of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Uncle Tom's Cabin happened at a time

when Jesse Helms was standing on the, in the legislature waving a book of Robert Mapplethorpe's filthy photographs. And they were taking away from funding for people that were challenging family values. And they were, it was the, at that time the liberalism was in the ascendancy, and we were all convinced that that is the way it's going to go. Bill Clinton played the saxophone on Saturday Night Live. We baby boomers, we were in charge now. And we knew we were right. We're fair minded, generous, non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic. The way is smooth, clear. How'd we do with that? Well, that was Uncle Tom's Cabin and Uncle Tom's Cabin was like a traveling show. My friends John Coles and Sage Coles, two real leaders in the community in Minneapolis. Maybe you know them. John Coles was the publisher of the Minneapolis Star. And they had retired and they wanted to do something and they were real good liberals. That guy, they actually dropped everything and went on the road with my dance company for two years, ending every night, fully naked, with all sorts of different people. I mean, you had to have been there. I don't remember the one here, but we did, we did perform them, I'm looking around for somebody, we performed it here, right? Yes. And that's what I thought we would have started tonight with, but I wasn't sure if I could like, ever go back there again. I was so sure. Come one, come all, stand with me. Tell Jesse Helms to go to hell. We're not afraid of our bodies. We're not afraid of each other. We don't even know your breasts are hanging here. Your balls are hanging here. It's beautiful, fat people, skinny people, men, women, transgender people as I remember. I don't think it even crossed my mind at the time. And it worked. It worked. It was supposed to have answered every question I had about art and politics, morality, it was supposed to have answered all the questions, but as we know, or as I'm learning, just when you think you've answered all the questions, gotcha. So that's where we are now. And I have made this work that just described to you a work that is as much about aesthetics as it is about psychology. And I asked myself, what happened to your politics? Well, you know, Justin Vivian Bond is? She is a wonderful trans woman who says glamour is resistance, she says. It's something that she can say with a wink and maybe not even with a wink. So is form resistance? Is beauty resistance? Is the kind of puzzled state that a work of art places you in that's not clear to anyone, is that kind of resistance? I don't know. So that's what I came here tonight to talk to you about, how the work gets made, what I was trying to do, what I thought I was doing, and now it's done. And this engagement here is the first time each work will be seen in a sequence Bjorn's decor, this cage he made, makes music, my company, some of the people who are no longer in

the original cast are no longer with us, but they are, they're here. And the question now remains, what next? Why make another piece other than the business of art, other than it's what we do, other than the habit of art or maybe now I don't even have to know why. Can I be so comfortable in the world that I can be generous? Like it was putting these words up and playing. Have I earned the trust of enough of you that I can just play? Years ago, I was an affiliate artist, and if you know that program, a very important program, decentralizing art throughout the US. And they, a community, for instance, my friends in Iowa, bought my time for eight weeks. And I came to their community, and I belonged to the community and I did informances, informal performances or informative performances. And I was trained by a woman whose name is Shirley Potter, and she said something, which was very important. I mean, maybe it made me a terrible ham. But she also said, you know, you got to allow yourself to be looked at. She said, you ever noticed you go to a party and there's a child over in the corner playing and the child can stop the whole party and they're looking at the child, so absorbed in what they're doing. She said, you can learn something about that. So maybe is that what the next part of this career is? Maybe it doesn't have to mean anything. Maybe it has to feel good to us. Then you will like, maybe we have to be totally disarmed and disarming and that is its meaning. And that is the resistance and that is its politics. Maybe I don't have to try anything. Grow old in public and be generous and apparent. Check back with me on that one. Sebald finishes his book. And I'll finish with this. Memory often strikes me as a kind of dumbness. It makes one's head heavy and giddy, as if one were not looking back down the receiving perspective time, but rather down on the earth from a great height, from one of those towers whose tops is lost to view in the clouds. Thank you very much.

Q&A SESSION (49:02)

Bill T. Jones: Thank you. Thank you, shall we, um, shall we chat a little bit? This gentleman's already getting to come to the microphone. And please don't hold your erudition to the last 10 minutes because you'll never get, be brave. Step up now. Hello, sir, do you mind telling us who you are?

Participant 1: My name is Sandy.

Bill T. Jones: Sandy?

Participant 1: Sandy. 40 years ago, I saw you doing the Parking Ramp Dance.

Bill T. Jones: Oh my gosh. Wow. Yes, Lois Welk, the Parking Ramp Dance. Can you get a little closer to the microphone?

Participant 1: So 40 years ago. Could you, what was your vision, then, that has been both the same now 40 years ago and what was lost?

Bill T. Jones: Hmm. Well, you know, I have a story in the story time and someone asked me that question at the Kennedy Center and they asked me what has never changed. I'm sure not sure if you're asking that but what has never changed and I said "doubt." That sense, that unease has never changed. You know, an amazing thing happens when you're, when you're young. And it's true, I mean being a gay man, a lot of, you want to be fabulous. You want to be attracting everybody, but there's something that happens to all of us as we get older. And you lose confidence in your ability to command space. Something else happens, maybe a kind of humility. But there is something that young dancers have, young makers have. It gets really interesting when you, it all seems like you've been running down a hill, and then you start climbing, that's exhilarating. And then it gets really hard. That's all of your accomplishments. That's all of your reviews, everything on your back and then you hit a plateau and then it's really upsetting when you look and you say, oh my god, there's another mountain coming. So that's where I'm at right now, what's not changed? That sense of climbing. You know, I don't want to stop. It's still, my mother always said, keep on scratching, keep on scratching, you know, or she would say keep on climbing. Right. Thank you for that question. I will take it to bed with me tonight. Wake up tomorrow. Hello.

(51:30) **Participant 2:** Hi, I'm James from Meany Center. As a dance major back in the early 90s,

Bill T. Jones: What?

Participant 2: A dance major, here. My first piece to watch of yours was Still/Here. Many people still seem to think that HIV/AIDS is still not a problem

Bill T. Jones: Is what kind of problem?

Participant 2: It's still not a problem. It's not a problem anymore. Many, I'm not saying all. Do you think you would ever bring that piece back to remind people that it's still relevant?

Bill T. Jones: Well. Here's my wiggle answer. First of all, I never thought that piece was about AIDS. It was made in a time when people were really concerned about death. The woman who encouraged me to make it, Sonia d'Pre was a breast cancer activist. She thought I should make a piece about breast cancer. And I told, I didn't know anything about it, I'm a man. She said, that's why you should make it. So when I started asking people to come into it, suddenly my own HIV positive status became forward and the time needed something to think through. So, we tried some years back on the anniversary, we tried to do, tried to bring it back. But you know what, I don't know if it's a weakness in the work. But there was something, the time for that work had passed. The bodies were no longer there. And, quite frankly, the conversation had moved on and gone deeper. So I don't think I can, I think it's, the impulse has got to be in everything I do now. And, are you choreographing?

Participant 2: Well, I enable art to happen, I'm the payroll and purchaser for Meany Center, so I'm paying for your salary here.

Bill T. Jones: Thank you, thank you. Well, I would, I would have to turn it back and say, you know, well, is there still need for it? Is there somebody who wants to answer the need? There's, there's nothing more I can do with that. But let's just see what happens as this life putters to its end. What other things are to be? I'm always looking for that thing. But thank you for that question. And I somehow, there, I see it as a challenge, you know? Yeah, but don't, but you heard me say I never thought it was an AIDS work. It was too tidy, that they made that work about AIDS. Mortality is what it was about. Nobody gets out of here alive. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. Hello, sir.

(54:15) **Participant 3:** Hi, my name is Tyrone Brown. First of all, I just want to say thank you for tonight.

Bill T. Jones: My pleasure.

Participant 3: Also, I had the opportunity to see Fela! on Broadway and I thought it was amazing. One of the best productions I've ever seen. So, I just thank you for bringing that show to Broadway and, well —

Bill T. Jones: That's Steven and Dell. Do you know that what happens on Broadway, there was a producer behind everything you see, and you know, he was the man that thought that Fela! should come to Broadway, so, but I thank you very much on his behalf

Participant 3: A lot of questions I had but I'll just narrow it down to one. I'm curious, you talked about going to see art or performances and not necessarily being, you use words impacted, but the questions it brought up, but I'm curious, what artists or things you'd even see recently that actually really spoke to you or that you found compelling.

Bill T. Jones: Yeah, I see a lot. I see, I see a lot of film. I read a lot. And I do see performance. You know what a weird thing I saw, well, it's not weird at all. You know who Roseanne Spradlin is? You might be interested in her because I thought that I understood something about rigor in art. But she is a choreographer, a woman who has been making work for a while and she made a work for three people. And this work was very, very curious. She, she introduced and says, well, you know, it's my take on politics, but from formal, in a formal way. Hmm I thought that's what I was doing. But these strange things happen to a man comes out crying, yet another man had this strange kind of fighting. She told me later the bodies didn't matter because one was white one was black. She said, no, no, it was that wasn't the point for her. Then go through permutations, a woman comes out with a ballet bar. She does hold it provocatively in one but doesn't have a leg on that end, it looks like a giant direction. Then they put the legs on it. Well, what gets to the last part, was excruciating. They had, I think, was it three bars? And they would, they would, the bars would be lifted one at a time and taken way upstage while somebody was actually sitting down here. And then it would be someone might pose and then it would all happen again. It was over relentless, relentless, and I realized as I'm watching it, oh my God, oh, it's moving three inches every time across the whole stage. So every time they would go up and come back, I realized that it's inching, inching, inching, is she really going to go all the way across the stage? Oh my god, she is, I'm going to scream, I'm going to run out of here. But I didn't run out. And I realized, oh, I think I see the idea. And I got happy or you know in the black church when you get happy in the church, and it was almost like a race and I know, that's, she's really going to do it. The twentieth time, up and down, up and down. And I say, I came out of it, I had a revelation. I thought I learned this back in cinema class back in the 70s, art is not about my pleasure. Art is about an idea. That's what she had the courage to do. And she, maybe, many people, probably half the room did not like it. And because we're in a kind of an avant garde space, unlike the space it was premiered in, people left in droves where it was premiered. But people stuck it out. She has made, she dared do it. Now I am moved by that. Was it the work itself? There was something behind it, the intelligence and the

commitment, rigorous investigation. That is, that is true. Yes. I saw The Band's Visit on Broadway. Very charming, very fragile. Set in Israel, an Egyptian group comes through, sets everyone's world on fire, people fall in love, people have fights and all, all because of these outsiders coming in and singing beautiful music. That was very charming. Yes, I saw Lady Bird, and was very moved by it. Yes, I saw the Hidden Thread. The movie itself, the acting was so profound. Yes. Yes, I have been reading some things lately that made me want to be a better person. That to me, yes, I won't name any other names but I have faith in art, if that's what your question is. I think it makes a difference for me and I couldn't live in a world without it. Yes.

(59:12) **Participant 4:** Hi, I'm Sharon Swayback. Hi Tyrone I interviewed you a long time ago about race. But I have a question. When you have a concept or an idea that you begin exploring whether it came from literature, where have you, wherever it comes from, once it's complete, do you feel a sense of resolve and healing from it, or does it continue to simmer —

Bill T. Jones: Or does it explode?

Participant 4: Or does it explode! Or does it become those artists who now it's upon, does it become theirs? I'm just wondering your process.

Bill T. Jones: Well, you know, it's always different, but you know, I have a real pathology. I mean, my own work, there is a thing that happens when a work is premiered and I go home, and for 24 hours or until the first thing is written about it, I am in love. I lay, I can't sleep at night, I'm playing, "oh wasn't that sequence great? Didn't she look good doing that?" That was so beautiful, you know, and I'm just loving it and then, quickly, somebody has an opinion. And I have to, that opinion, if it's a negative opinion, it's huge. And there's a great many positive opinions, but that negative one, now isn't that horrible? Your baby? Someone said your baby, oh, you know, that's, they're a little fat. They're your fucking baby, you know, like, but, no, that happens, that happens. Now, once it's done, that's what the best thing I can do is to get away from it and make another one. I don't trust myself with it. I want to try to improve it. I want to try to change it. You know —

Participant 4: Does it ever become a stranger?

Bill T. Jones: That becomes a stranger? Yes. It does. It does and that is where art history comes in. And that is one of the cruel things about making time-based work. Did the work change or did I change? Did the work change or did the world change? I can't control any of that. So you got to love it, are you

choreographer? Aha? Well maybe you want to answer that question then.

Participant 4: I saw a piece of, your original piece in 1988 in New York in a very small studio that, I wish I remember, anyways

Bill T. Jones: Was it Chicago?

Participant 4: No, no in Manhattan. And I remember walking away and feeling that it told a very deep story which you don't always feel when you see work and that sitting here listening to you now so many years later, I was 18. Now I'm 50. That, so, it just, is the process just like to me is like did that work so long ago for him still have the same meaning that it did the time I saw it?

Bill T. Jones: This is what I wanted to get at tonight: your take on it is as valid as mine. You have that work inside of you and I have forgotten it. You know?

Participant 4: You answered my question, that was perfect.

Bill T. Jones: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Ah, they're circling. Right? We're going to bounce to this side, I'll come back, sir. Yes, sir.

(1:02:24) **Participant 5:** My name is Santiago, and I'm going to allude to what you said when you first came out about like, you come out, and this is your reality, which basically means your reality is you're producing art for people that I'm guessing that aren't from our culture.

Bill T. Jones: And are you talking about race?

Participant 5: Yes. And so what I was, it also led me to think that I don't quite know exactly where you come from, your background, but I'm, I'm guessing it wasn't a silver spoon?

Bill T. Jones: No.

Participant 5: So with that in mind, how does it feel to come from that background and know that you've gone all over the world and people are waiting

Bill T. Jones: Well you don't know that of course when you're coming from it.

Participant 5: Exactly, what I'm talking about now, now you go all over the world and people are waiting, you know, listening, waiting on your every word and you treat it like, you know, something like a, like a phoenix, a comet, how does it feel —

Bill T. Jones: A unicorn?

Participant 5: Yeah, that one too. Like, that's basically it —

Bill T. Jones: That's sort of slipped in there lately, hasn't it? You notice that? Well, how does that feel? You know, I wish certain people who I, the people I come from, I wish they could feel it. And that's always a little bitter that they know you're famous. They know you got this award from the president. You got that, you got that. But that's what he does. Yeah, that's what he does. You know, but, you know, they teach me in black history month. Oh yeah? Literally, nieces and nephews coming home after seeing a poster, right? There's this guy, his name's Jones — Oh yeah, that's your cousin. You never told her about me. You never brought them to a performance? Well man that's what you do, you know, you know, don't push them because they say, you know, my brother once told me, you know, look man, it's like noise to me. Can you say, you really want them to tell you what they really think? You know? So that, so those are the people I come from. There are some, you know, my nephew, that's why I work with my nephew because he calls himself an artist. There's a, there's a handful, my sister, Odessa Jones is an artist but it's a huge group of people. Why so few artists? Is it authentically not black enough? Is that what it is? I mean, are they putting up with my pretending for the white people? Yeah you know what that is, you just trying to get over with white people. You think that's what my whole life is? That hurts. But look, people came out tonight, you know, and they're not the same color as me a lot of them but you know what, our hearts at least vibrate. And I think they, maybe believe in things I believe in. You know? You got to make peace with that. You have to make peace with that. If not, you are sad. You're sad, you will be sad and very angry. Thank you for that, sir. Can we get a little press the flesh here? Thank you, sir. Thank you. Thank you, sir. Yes sir.

(1:05:53) **Participant 6:** Hey, I'm Ben Guzman.

Bill T. Jones: What's your name again?

Participant 6: Ben Guzman. Thank you. I was reading a book by Meg Stewart from Brussels. And I thought I saw your name in the context of a series of improvisational works called the Ash Landing.

Bill T. Jones: Indiana.

Participant 6: Yeah, I was wondering —

Bill T. Jones: What did she say?

Participant 6: It was actually by someone that was in the work themselves. And they saw something, you come into a scene that was totally not what you thought it was. And they thought it was grotesque and kind of out of the blue.

Bill T. Jones: That I was out of place?

Participant 6: Yeah, yeah. But I was curious about how you engage in improvisation.

Bill T. Jones: Well, let's talk about it for a moment. It was called Crash Landing. And it was supposedly a bunch of kickass improvisers. It's true, some people had no arms and legs. So they were doing, moving them around and all, it was shocking and all. So I thought, well, hell yeah, I'm an improviser. And, why not? That seems to be they're inviting the unexpected. So I came out, I'm beautiful. I was very beautiful at that time. Strong, black. You know, everything you put with strong and black in a European imagination, I was that. So is that what they meant by grotesque because, here you are. How can you have this person that looks this way actually just wants to be themselves with everybody else who is not perfect? I'm not perfect, but you know, that's what they were seeing. And they were very offended by it. Why are you, you can't dance with us. What do you mean I can't dance with you, that's who I am. That's what I'm saying to you, my brother. How do I deal with it? Deal with it. That's what I do. You understand what I'm saying? Yeah? Let's improvise. You come from where you come from. I come from where I come from. Let's make something. I came into it with no prejudice. Obviously they did not.

Participant 6: Um, sorry, I, I think that what I meant was you came in at a moment when what was going on, in adjacent to what you were doing was sort of surprising. Not that you were as a person —

Bill T. Jones: So what's wrong with being surprising? So you're passing around the person who has no legs, no arms, and you're on the floor. Pass them to me. Why not pass them to me? You know? Was there an unwritten rule about it? It was supposed to be crash landing, radical, unexpected. It felt phony. It felt false. And it had no room for real inclusion. I don't want that to happen to our political conversation here. Understand? Now you got to get me right on this. Right? Don't fall for that. Always question, always, if there is a party line, you go there because if you're as really badass as you say you are, you are constantly adjusting. You hear me my brother? You hear me?

Participant 6: Yeah, I hear you.

Bill T. Jones: Please, please, please. Do you mind, so these old knees don't have to step down? Not a laugh line either. This is real. We had this moment. Yeah.

Participant 6: Yeah. Thank you.

Participant 7: Hi. Thanks Ben, I know him, he's really nice. Now my question's all over the place. But I want to say the first thought that's on my mind, which is, I wrote a couple days ago that sometimes white spaces are inaccessible even to white people.

Bill T. Jones: Whoa, whoa, whoa. I'm sorry, white spaces are what?

Participant 7: Are inaccessible, even to white people. And I guess maybe that's a good start to my question. I saw you first when I was about 12. My grandparents, I mean, I love to dance since I was a kid so they always took me to dances. And I feel like something seamless happened in my brain, seeing all different kinds of bodies move, and that's always just been a foundation for my existence. But flash forward to my 27th year and I had, I'm 28 now but last year, I had so many deaths, this character of death as this like. (Horn blasts). Woah. There you go. So, um, I was interested in some things you were saying with character being, or death being a character in our work, and I guess in some ways I've had to, like, kill myself metaphorically and in some of my artistic communities and in some of the conversations that I'm having. Because maybe they're not existing in my brain that's been seeing —

Bill T. Jones: I'm sorry believe it or not what?

Participant 7: Um because I feel like people maybe have not been existing in my brain of seeing bodies moving and different things. And I guess —

Bill T. Jones: You're not coming from the movement world, is that what you're saying?

Participant 7: I feel like I'm coming from the movement world, into a world of ideas, into the world of hip hop, into a world of people that question whether or not I belong in that moment, and so I've had to do or not even I had to do, I've just experienced some personal deaths. And so I guess my question is, what has been your experience with artistic conversations that you're having with people that you're no longer directly communicating with?

Bill T. Jones: People I'm no longer communicating with, people who have passed away? Or people who literally I don't see eye to eye anymore with? What do you mean?

Participant 7: I think both. I think what I'm asking is, do you continue to speak to things that are no longer right in front of you? Do you continue to speak to ideas and to people and to things that may or may not be directly receiving what you're offering?

Bill T. Jones: Well, you know, I, I was never convinced that anybody, even an audience of people, real people sitting on their butts, were really there. I think it was a real existential problem. Did I really think that communication was possible on that level? That's why a lot of it was about seduction. It was trying to get over, to, to touch some part, which is their desire on some level. That's what I thought I was doing. Now, you know that Damien Hurst work, *With the Shark*, you know the name of it? You seen it? Go out now and, and Google it and think about what I'm about to say. The name of that work, it's a big white shark in formaldehyde. Giant, there was a scandal. It's called the impossibility of death in the mind of the living. Now think about that. Is it impossible? Is death really impossible in the mind of the living? I think it is. And he showed this most tangible thing, and he named it this kind of outrageous name. I don't know if there's something that you're trying to get at right now. Well, one thing I, what do you do? Are you a creative?

Participant 7: Yeah, I am a writer and a dancer.

Bill T. Jones: And a dancer?

Participant 7: Yeah, and both seamlessly.

Bill T. Jones: Why?

Participant 7: Well, writing, I'm obsessed, I can't stop. I just write in my head and then I write it down and then I feel the need to share it.

Bill T. Jones: You do feel the need to share it?

Participant 7: I do feel a need to share, I feel the need to share it not always but usually, I feel the need to share it. In that way, it's compulsive almost and then dancing, I have an injury, a birth injury on my shoulder ergs palsy and so I got put into dance as therapy and then fell in love with the world. I got into modern —

Bill T. Jones: You got into modern and you started where?

Participant 7: In high school, in public school, I had a modern —

Bill T. Jones: No when people say they got into modern they started in ballet or tap or jazz or hip hop, and then they got into modern.

Participant 7: Yeah. I mean, my parents threw me in whatever dance classes were in the community, ballet, jazz, whatever —

Bill T. Jones: So the language that works for you.

Participant 7: No, the language never really worked for me.

Bill T. Jones: No, dance though.

Participant 7: Yes, dance is a language that works for me.

Bill T. Jones: Right, right, right, right. Because, you know, I feel like I, I can almost feel what you're trying to do. You want to, you want to dance. There's something that my mind, my mouth will never satisfy.

Participant 7: Yeah.

Bill T. Jones: And I wonder how brave you are. You know, I, you have to tell me, brave in the sense that if that's real, what you're expressing to me, you're going to be on fire. And you are going to be frightening to watch. If it's real, because right now you're using words in a way that is, that is building something around you. You know? Now how do you get breakthrough your own words? What are the actions that you're doing, what are the gestures that you're doing? What are you making? Right? And what will be your criteria of judging it? If at all. So you got some work to do.

Participant 7: Yeah, I do. That's a really great question. Yeah.

Bill T. Jones: I think, I think you're brave. I think you're brave. So I want to see what the fly, what the fire is going to be like. And if you are the person who I think you are, it will be a fire. It will be, now see you on the other side, my sister.

Participant 7: Thank you. Yeah.

Bill T. Jones: Okay, we got to close it down soon. But this is fun. I hope you're enjoying it because I'm, yeah, God knows what will happen next.

(1:17:00) **Participant 8:** Hey, I'm Spark and —

Bill T. Jones: Sorry?

Participant 8: My name is Spark.

Bill T. Jones: No, really?

Participant 8: That's my nickname.

Bill T. Jones: That's wonderful. Hi, Spark.

Participant 8: Hi. I really loved your talk about history and the worry that the current millennial internet world can really divorce things from context and a kind of history that can be passed through the body.

Bill T. Jones: Please excuse me for any arrogance in that sense. I don't know all millennials

Participant 8: I am not a millennial. I'm actually born in '78. I slipped right in and I claim Gen X only because that's really where I, teachers really come from. But I also, I often moonlight as a millennial, but I'm not. I'm really interested in that generation gap kind of obsessively, maybe it's all made up. But there is kind of a difference between having grown up without the internet until like age 13 or 14. Anyway, my point is about being embodied

Bill T. Jones: What now?

Participant 8: Being in the body, in the present, like you and I are right now. I really wanted to know how you, how you work with that in creating dance. What kind of assignments do you give your dancers? Or what kind of ways do you try to break the, the kind of tangled up Internet where everything is at once, but nobody's really paying attention to the physical form

Bill T. Jones: Well, first of all, this is one of the big questions right now about keeping a dance company. It's hard. Yeah, it's expensive. I'm getting older. I don't have the hoot-spa as I used to. And then my wonderful collaborator, Janet Wong, she keeps reminding me of what a gift that is and it's worth everything we go through to have it because she said there's a repository of knowledge in those bodies and in this what we're doing. Now that's one way, that's not the same thing as wanting to as I used to think I'm going to rock the whole world, you know, I did an audition once in Boston. 50 women, I improvised with, 50 of them, because I, because I could but I also wanted to, it wasn't enough just to look at their dancing. I wanted to sweat together. 50 people, you know, that was how I used to do it. There's the, that's the honest sweat, real sweat —

Participant 8: Because you're improvising, you mean?

Bill T. Jones: Improvising and we were meeting, two bodies, we're meeting at that moment, you know, and can you take my

weight? I'll take your weight. Can we run? Can we roll? I don't know you, can I trust you? I trust you implicitly. That's how you do it when you're young. That's how you do it when the knees, when you trust the knees and the lower back. I think there must be a way and I made it work recently over the, with my company and the work that we showed at A-PAP, and I realized who I am. I don't remember movement well. And you know, here I am making movement all the time and on them about learning and I don't learn it will, never have. But that's not what I claim to do. And it was intimate, very intimate. I cut a far. I cut more than one! You know, it happens when you get older, your gut, it does, but I had to tell them about it. I had to let them know, this is who I am and if I'm dancing with you, you're not dancing with a 25 or 30 year old digestive system, you're dancing with a 65 year old digestive system, you know. So that level of intimacy already is saying, here I am. That's one way I do it. I don't do it every day anymore. I'm not generous enough and I don't have enough energy to do it every day. So, there needs to be a time right now. We could rock and roll right down the floor, right now, right now. The hour's late, and it would be showboating. But that's way, that's the way I used to do it, now it's all about how will I do it, if I'm going to stay in this game? Do we dare call it a game or this religion?

Participant 8: Somewhere between the two.

Bill T. Jones: Pardon?

Participant 8: Somewhere between the two extremes?

Bill T. Jones: Are you a dancer?

Participant 8: Yeah.

Bill T. Jones: Does it feel like a sacred thing to you?

Participant 8: Yeah, the more I, the more I experience the present moment with movement, yes, it's really, it's liberating.

Bill T. Jones: Within one's performance, within what's performance, you put your religion on display?

Participant 8: It's what you said about kids. It's being willing to be seen.

Bill T. Jones: Really, to be willing to be seen, but now why do you want to be seen?

Participant 8: Because I'm here now, with everybody. And that's kind of —

Bill T. Jones: I'm seeing, I'm seeing, I'm seeing. What's the difference?

Participant 8: Do you think it's different

Bill T. Jones: Yeah. I know it is. And you don't have to back off for it. No, no, no.

Participant 8: I don't think I know enough yet. I haven't performed that much lately.

Bill T. Jones: Oh, well, you've got to perform more.

Participant 8: Yeah, that's the point.

Bill T. Jones: And then you have to really think about what's going on with those eyes on you. You know? Yeah.

Participant 8: Even just asking this question was my version of a performance, just asking this question with my version of go up there because you don't know what you're going to say, exactly.

Bill T. Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Participant 8: See what happens.

Bill T. Jones: I know. Well my love, Miss Spark. All right, let's say, we got to do some triage here now.

(1:22:15) **Participant 9:** I'll make this quick. Okay. See.

Participant 8: I was just coming up to say thank you

Participant 9: I just wanted to ask you something.

Bill T. Jones: Who are you? Do I know you?

Participant 9: My name is BJ Bullard. I'm a filmmaker, I teach at Antioch University.

Bill T. Jones: I thought we had met, maybe.

Participant 9: You look familiar, I think it may have been —

Bill T. Jones: You look familiar to me too. You know?

Participant 9: Well, I wanted to ask you about Syvilla Fort because Syvilla is from Seattle.

Bill T. Jones: Wow.

Participant 9: And I'm working on a short film right now.

Bill T. Jones: Did that Alvin make a piece about her?

Participant 9: Johnathan Cage did, Cage did, Cage wrote music.

Bill T. Jones: Yeah, yeah, of course, of course. Yeah, there's a, there's actually an Ailey piece within, not the same person, I made this mistake before.

Participant 10: Did you know Syvilla Fort?

Bill T. Jones: I did not know Syvilla Fort. I've read about her. Yes.

Participant 10: Well, I was just going to talk about how wonderful she is.

Bill T. Jones: How old is she?

Participant 10: No, no, she's in another world at the moment.

Bill T. Jones: I see, so she's left this world.

Participant 10: She was from Seattle. So with all this talk about —

Bill T. Jones: Was she black, she a black woman?

Participant 10: Yeah.

Bill T. Jones: And John Cage worked with her?

Participant 10: They were at Cornish College of the Arts.

Bill T. Jones: Yes. You know, I think it is the same one that Alvin Ailey made the piece about?

Participant 10: I believe so because I think she studied with him. But I'm just working on a film inspired by the idea of the Space Needle as a woman, a female dancer.

Bill T. Jones: But what is?

Participant 10: The Space Needle, the symbol, the icon. So my thought was, oh, wouldn't it be interesting if Syvilla Fort could have been a model for one of the artists that created the shape. That's another story. But anyway I want to thank you —

Bill T. Jones: This is a poignant way to end because those legends like that who were black people, right now, I wish that I knew them better. In the world that I thought was the important world, that kind of the, quote, hip downtown slash white avant garde. I thought that that was the one that had the most food, and it had great food. But I didn't even really know how to relate to black artists who were much older than I was. And I now, I regret. I regret it. So don't you regret.

Participant 10: Well, thank you so much for that. I so appreciate the way you talk.

Bill T. Jones: Well, thank you. And I can sometimes dance. Thank you all very much. Thank you very much.