

BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES

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DAVID GORDON'S *THE PHILADELPHIA MATTER - 1972/2020*, A 60-MINUTE, REMOTELY CONSTRUCTED VIDEO WORK, PREMIERES ONLINE SEPTEMBER 10 – OCTOBER 4 AS PART OF THE PHILADELPHIA FRINGE FESTIVAL

Christ Church Neighborhood House Commissioned *The Philadelphia Matter - 1972/2020* and Is Producing It in Collaboration with Pick Up Performance Co(s). Major Funding Has Been Provided by The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage

Gordon Addresses Our Moment of Physical Distancing with the Ever-Growing Legacy of His Work

David Gordon's *The Philadelphia Matter - 1972/2020* will premiere on September 10, the opening day of the 2020 Philadelphia Fringe Festival, and will stream on the Christ Church Neighborhood House website through the end of the festival on October 4. It further evolves the legacy of Gordon's *The Matter* works (first presented in 1972, and most recently reconceived for MoMA in 2018) and brings the choreographer's trademark blurring of everyday life and performance—as well as his self-reflexive integration of process into presentation—into the present, with all its creative obstacles and potentials. The work, made with video collaborator and editor **Jorge Cousineau, features more than **30+ Philadelphia performers** in addition to **Wally Cardona** and **Pick Up Performance Co(s)** members **Karen Graham** and **Valda Setterfield**.**

Since Gordon began conceiving a performance work to premiere at the Christ Church Neighborhood House over a year ago, the process has drastically shifted. While the project was originally intended to connect performers dancing in both Philadelphia and Manhattan—accompanied by a live-stream of their fellow dancers in the other city—Gordon determined to start anew in response to the pandemic.

"I am used to the fact that whatever the plan is it may have to be part of a bigger plan than yours," says Gordon. He cites as examples the sudden incorporation of turning into his dances (from beginning to work with Dean Moss, who it turned out was exemplary at triple pirouettes); to the dance *Chair*, made for his wife and lifelong collaborator Valda Setterfield to dance after suffering injuries in a car accident; to his 1962 solo *Mannequin Dance*, which figured into the original *The Matter* and which Gordon made to shortly after coming from the hospital to visit his wife and their newborn son, Ain.

"I don't start by saying 'I'm going to make this,'" he explains. "I learned very early on that that was not very useful because I then had to fight what developed. After 50 years, I still don't know what it is I'm making until it begins to assert itself as something. At which point I either panic and throw out everything I've done and start again—or I start to support the thing that seems to have started growing."

The remote collaborating process began in June responding to over 100 audition online submissions: Gordon sent potential Philadelphia performers "Song and Dance," a solo from the 1979 version of *The Matter*. ("Song and Dance" was part of the only section of that performance—much of which considered and emulated Eadweard Muybridge's photography and its impact on our perceptions of motion— that resembled dance; further slyly subverting audience expectations, the traditionally-dance component occurred solely during intermission.)

Auditionees were encouraged to film themselves making what they thought Gordon would want to see based on it—for as Gordon proudly admits, he does not yet know what he wants to see. "I asked them to please show me the space they might be going to work in their house; I've asked them to be aware of the quality of the image they're sending me. I am going to be finding out what they do, how they do it, and why they are doing it," says Gordon, whose works often integrate video and text as they lay bare the means by which they were made.

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The very process of figuring out what the work will be within its specific context—both as it unfolds within Gordon’s personal life and across our extreme historical moment—may, itself, become central to the work. As *New York Magazine* once wrote of Gordon, the choreographer “has never been too impressed by the difference between life and art. What he likes to do is set up shop right on the border.”

The Philadelphia Matter - 1972/2020 continues Gordon’s decades-long journey of constant self-reimagining through fragments of past works. As the 84-year-old artist restarts his intuitive choreographic process, he enters the unknown as he continues to bring the past with him to work through—and likely put on full display—the constraints and new possibilities of the present.

About David Gordon (Writer/Director/Choreographer)

Commissions: Actors Studio, ABT, ACT, ART, Barbican, BBC Ch 4, British Dance Umbrella, BAM, DTH, DTW, Danspace, Guthrie, Joyce, KTCA, Mark Taper, NYTW, On The Boards, PBS Great Performances, PBS Alive TV, Lincoln Center, Spoleto USA, TFANA, Walker Art Ctr, White Oak Dance Project, etc.

Awards include: 2 Obies, 3 Bessies, 2 Dramalogues, 2 Guggenheims, 2 Pew Charitable Trust Grants (Theater & Dance), 3 NEA American Masterpiece grants (Theater & Dance), Doris Duke Performing Artist Award

Current member: Actors Studio

Previous panel/chair: NEA

Founding artist: Pick Up Performance Co(s)/Grand Union/Judson Church

Previous performer: Yvonne Rainer/James Waring

About Jorge Cousineau (Video Collaborator and Editor)

Jorge Cousineau was born in Dresden, Germany, where he attained his diploma in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1997 he moved to Philadelphia to work as a theater designer and has since designed sets, lights, sound and projections for numerous dance and theater productions. Over the last twenty years his designs have been seen and heard internationally in Germany, France, and Poland, regionally in New York City, Denver, Louisville, Minneapolis, Seattle and all over Philadelphia. With his wife, Niki Cousineau, and Scott McPheeters he co-directs their company subcircle, a collaborative performance/installation group. Jorge is a recipient of two Independence Foundation Fellowship grants. He was awarded the F. Otto Haas Award for Emerging Theater Artist and is a 2011 recipient of the Pew Fellowship in the Arts. He has received several Philadelphia Barrymore Awards as well as a Lucille Lortel Award.

About Christ Church Neighborhood House

The Christ Church Neighborhood House Program serves a core constituency of cross-disciplinary performing artists who imagine new and experimental works in our ADA-accessible, 110-seat theater located in the heart of Philadelphia’s historic district. Established in 2011 with a mission to provide a platform for new work, the Neighborhood House Program has evolved to offer artist residencies and presenting opportunities throughout the historic Christ Church campus.

About the Philadelphia Fringe Festival

FringeArts is Philadelphia’s home for contemporary performance, presenting progressive, world-class art that expands the imagination and boldly defies expectations. Its programming exposes audiences to genre-defying performances and installations by accomplished and emerging innovators who push the boundaries of art-making and redefine the artistic landscape worldwide. Every September, FringeArts presents the annual Philadelphia Fringe Festival, a multi-week celebration featuring over 1000 curated and independently produced performances. In 2020, the Fringe Festival goes largely remote, with virtual and distanced productions across genres and platforms.

About Pick Up Performance Co(s)

The company was founded in 1971 and incorporated in 1978 (as Pick Up Performance Co., Inc.) to facilitate projects by David Gordon, the company was expanded in 1992 to include projects by Ain Gordon and renamed **Pick Up Performance Co(s)** in recognition of the dual father/son leadership with independent projects by each artist. PUPC continues to be artist-led with

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multi-generational NYC roots supporting the wide-roaming interests of both artists in dance, theater, media, social practice, and the fusing of disciplines. This work manifests annually in both New York City and nationally. For 50 years PUPC has charted a personal aesthetic path.

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