

interview 4/7/06

Andrew Dawson

talking with RoseAnne Spradlin

Andrew Dawson: Is it sunny?

RoseAnne Spradlin: It's raining here.

AD: It is here as well, so that's ok.

RS: Can you just give some brief biographical information?

AD: I've been performing and working in theater for 25 years – something like that. I originally trained as a dancer, and then in mime, and then in theater. I've always worked independently of other companies. I had my own company for a while, and we produced various shows that went into London's West End and toured the world. One being *The Three Musketeers*, which was a mad adventure, and another show based on the TV series *Thunderbirds*, which was very popular in England, Australia and Japan - particularly Japan. I'm always working in a physical theater world, in a way, not a less text-based world, producing and directing little bits and pieces and different sorts of work, and finally arriving at *Absence and Presence*.

RS: And you're performing later this month, April in New York. Is that the first time you've performed here?

AD: It will be the first time I've performed in New York. Yes, at P.S. 122, it opens on April 27th.

RS: Did you study here too?

AD: I did in 1983; I was at the Cunningham school.

RS: I thought I saw a little Cunningham in your piece.

AD: Yes, yes, I do a little homage to Cunningham. That's my venture back into that. It's fantastic to actually perform the piece in NY because part of the show has letters from my father that were written to me while I was in New York.

RS: Ah, ok.

AD: The audience receives as a program an envelope, which has a New York address on it, which is not because I'm in New York. It's because these were always the letters that meant the most to me.

RS: And that was where you lived? It's an actual address?

AD: Yeah, it is an actual address. I actually really was there.

RS: I wanted to ask you a little bit about the context of creating this particular work. How many pieces have you made that are in this same vein.

AD: This is the first time in a way. The very first show I made in the early 80s was a one-man-show of short pieces, and this is the first full length one-man-show I've made since. So, in a way, it's taken more than twenty years to come back to performing solo again. This has come at a very critical point in my career really. It's a big step to venture into a piece that is more performance art in many ways than the more theatrical... A lot of the work I made before, the West End shows and other things, were inspired by things that already existed: *Thunderbirds* being one. And I directed and wrote a stage version of *Wallace and Gromit*, which of course is now very popular. So they were based on things. And this story about my father, this personal story had always been needling away in the back of my mind. So, in a way, it was a big step to risk it.

RS: Was there any certain thing that triggered your decision to make this piece when you did?

AD: Yeah, it's interesting. My father died in 1985, so it's been a long time. He died and lay undiscovered for ten days, and it was always that time that he was undiscovered that fascinated me... that time. And over the years, I've had various little, half-attempts to create it as a little film project, or something. I'd start it, and then it would be put back in a drawer and wouldn't quite see the light of day. And then I decided to apply to my local funding body here in London, the London Arts Board, to see if they'd give me a grant to make a piece. In a way, the whole writing of the application... I think this happens to a lot of artists... The process of writing the application is already an enormous creative effort, and you put the application in, and you go, "I feel much better for that." And then of course they turn around and say, "Oh, yeah, we really like it, and here's the money." "Oh no, now I've actually got to make the thing I've talked about." There's that realization that somebody else thought it was a good idea as well. When you're dealing with a personal subject, you never know how interesting that is to everybody else, until you start.

RS: How long did it take you to make it, once you got the grant?

AD: I spent a year making it. My wife was very clever in saying that I didn't need a rehearsal space for this piece, that I needed a studio to work in, so I rented a studio near where I live in North London, and spent a year in there fiddling and filming. I painted one end black so that it was like a little TV studio. I learned to tap dance, and I made this sculpture, this chicken-wire sculpture of my father.

RS: Oh, you did that yourself?

AD: I made that. Everything is made. All the video stuff I made. I had collaborators who came in and out, who helped me through various parts of the process, but most of the time I... And because it was my space, I could leave things. I could walk away from it for a week and come back to it. And live through the piece slowly carving, literally carving the shell out in a way. Rather than writing and rehearsing it, which is what one might normally do.

RS: So you lived in it for that year.

AD: I lived in it... yeah, yeah.

RS: I watched it twice, but of course the DVD on the TV is not like seeing it live.

AD: No.

RS: But, I really look forward to seeing it when you're here. I'm going to ask you a few questions, and if there's something that you feel, "I don't really have anything to say about that," you can just keep going.

AD: (laughing) Ok, sure.

RS: I read the reviews that were on your website, and people write about it very nicely too, but many reviewers mentioned this theme of a parent and child, or a father and a son not understanding each other. Do you feel that we need to be understood by our parents... as artists particularly?

AD: I think I was very much part of a generation where, certainly as a young artist, my parents were in another world. I have two children of my own now, and my son is 13, my daughter is 6, and we are of such a different generation. We shop in the same shops. I buy a nice bag and he steals it and uses it for his school bag, and I say, "That's my bag; you've stolen it!" That never would have happened with my father. We were very separate. We share so many things today..."those shoes, can I borrow them?" So, in a way... whether that's good or not, I don't know. Only his generation and the next generation will say, "God, we shared too much with our parents." You know what I mean? We don't know how that will pan out. I think I was very much of a generation that had awkward communications with our parents. My parents were very... My mother had died 5 years before. She was very interested in theater and film. We had a very loving relationship, but my father was always very strained because he died when I was in my 20s. It would be interesting if I could talk to him now... whether we'd have a different relationship. In a way it was hard to access him, and I think during my travels, and during my time in New York, I would receive these letters from him, and he was a very lonely, depressed man. He had medication for depression, and so on. I never realized or appreciated the love that he had for me and for my brothers. So, in a way we felt we were in very, very separate worlds. It's only now, in making the piece, I realized the kind of relationship he was trying to have with me, that I didn't realize was happening. When you're in your 20s your busy doing your thing, doing your life. You don't want to worry about that old bloke back at home. You're in a very different space.

RS: Did you feel like you came to understand him better as you made the work?

AD: Yeah, very much. And that was a surprise because I made the work thinking I was making it about the ten days that he was... that he lay undiscovered... that being the starting point. But actually, in the end, I made a piece about the absence of a relationship, and the lack of presence that we had together. I think that's where the reviews and the people that talk to me relate to the show, because they share in that expression of their relationship with their parents.

RS: And yet, I got this feeling watching it that, on the somatic level... just the body feeling... I felt like you had some memory of, say, his touch, or something. There's the time when the two people take hands. It's the father taking the hand of the child.

AD: Yes.

RS: It seemed to me that you could almost remember what that felt like.

AD: Yeah. Well, and some of that is remembering that with him, and some of that is reliving it with my own children. I remember holding... very conscious of taking their hand, and more so having made the piece. I'm really conscious of it now. My memory of his is vague and faint. It's elusive, that memory, so you try to recall that in some ways. What is very strong in my memory of him is his posture, and how he would walk. I can feel that very close. It's almost like I have it in my bones.

RS: Yes, I'm sure you do.

AD: Maybe we all do in some way, if we can recall it in some form.

RS: You know one critic mentioned this feeling of guilt in the piece, and I thought that was pretty interesting. Do you feel like that is the shadow of the work, in a way?

AD: What, that I have guilt?

RS: Yeah, I mean, do you know which review I'm talking about? There's one where it says, "Oh, this work feels guilty."

AD: Yeah.

RS: I thought that was kind of a strong statement for that reviewer to make, but interesting and intriguing.

AD: Yes, I think often that those reviews come from their feelings. I think often, more than any other piece I've made, I'VE read reviews about the piece where you can actually feel the reviewer – and you feel people commenting on their own lives, but through commenting on mine. Because I don't really have guilt.

RS: So that's not something...

AD: It's not something I carry now. I certainly, at the time... you know, it's a very weird thing to realize your father's been dead for ten days, and where were you. There's all that kind of guilt involved with that. But, in a way, I've long reconciled that. I think it's interesting that people comment about those things, because they're busy thinking that, but in a way, I think it's really interesting that the piece creates... brings those echoes of other people's lives out in their writing.

RS: I guess because you're dealing with something so universal too.

AD: Absolutely, that was one of the things. One of my aims was to make something in a universal way. In the application, one of the phrases I used was that I wanted to look for the ultimate universal gesture of loss. That was one of my aims.

RS: Did you find it?

AD: I think I did. I think I found it for me. I think it's in different places for different people, of course. Everyone comes from their own perspective. For me, it's when I lose the ring and swim after the ring.

RS: I was going to ask you about that. Was that a recounting of something that really happened?

AD: It is. When my mother died 5 years before. I had her wedding ring, and I went swimming in the sea when I was 21 or something, so she'd only died a couple years before, and I lost it in the sea.

RS: And you never found it?

AD: I never found it. I sat on the beach for hours and hours because to me she was still with me when I had the ring, and then I finally lost her completely. And I hadn't realized that I still had a bit of her with me, even though it was in the form of this ring. Then I thought, well, shall I try and tell that whole story in the piece? And then I thought, well, it's actually quite nice and true, that it stays as a metaphor for loss. Ultimately, you swim and you swim and you swim, and you never find it. It's gone, and then you have to move on.

RS: Yeah, that was beautiful, and I think watching it on TV, I couldn't quite tell what happened. I couldn't quite tell if you found it, or didn't find it...

AD: Well, you don't quite see probably in one hand you become a very miniature swimmer, and then a big swimmer, and a miniature swimmer, and eventually you get down and there's... the ring lands on the book, and then it just carries on, and it's not found.

RS: What about the image of the moth? How did you come up with that, and at what stage? Was that something you came across early?

AD: No, quite late on actually, quite late on. I was always trying to find ways of beginning the piece, and I was playing with this image of the lamp on the TV a lot. My father had died and was found on the bed in his pajamas with the bedclothes off the bed, and the bedside light on. So the lamp comes from the idea of the bedside light. And the fact that you have a light and a moth. I was always intrigued about the things that would be still going on in the house. Like, you would hear the fridge go on, and the phone would ring, and grass would grow. One of the other images was that a moth would fly around, and you had this movement of a moth flying around the light. Moths are also associated with death.

RS: Well definitely I felt that and also maybe the life force itself, the last flickering or the last movement of that force.

AD: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely, that that would flicker - no one else would witness it - and then that would die as well - and it wasn't witnessed. It's a kind of private event.

RS: What about... did you think that much about how you use the light and dark in the piece as you were making it, or did you just kind of work intuitively or...

AD: Very intuitively. I've always lit my own pieces, and in the little studio I had some little lights I played with a lot. So when I filmed all the stuff on the TV, that it's changing from like night to day, kind of thing, the blue to white and the dark... I'd always had this image that this white... like an installation: kind of white walls and white floor. And to play very subtly with light; direct light and lines and...

RS: And again I was watching it on TV. Sometimes the way the light would come on suddenly, it also had this feeling a little bit of being a shock you know. Also then the darkness would kind of set up this meditative feeling.

AD: Yes

RS: This quiet reflection that somebody maybe is being very still in order to wait for some thought or feeling to come, you know, and then suddenly the light will come on and it's like oh! It's such a shock.

AD: It's like a door opens.

RS: Yes, exactly.

AD: The light pulls into a room, suddenly the room is alive again, is activated.

RS: That way it seemed to me like the piece really had something to say about how we record and recall our experience. I thought that was very beautiful because that's something that, I don't know, like who would start out to make a piece about that, you know.

AD: Quite, yes.

RS: And yet somehow it comes in there very strongly.

AD: Yeah. I think if I'd set out to do that I may not have done it. I mean that's where the piece is lucid like that because you set off on one journey and then little by little it became another one. And I think one thing I'm really glad of and one I'm very conscious of and think about the work, new works and things, is having time to let them just stay properly because I think in *that* process you start to get rid of the... You start to hone it down a bit and tune in your intuition a bit more, about what really works and what doesn't, and about rhythm and things.

RS: How many times have you performed it now, do you think?

AD: About 60.

RS: Oh, aha. And does it feel different now than it did in the beginning?

AD: It gets harder to do.

RS: Does it? In what way?

AD: Emotionally it's easier, because it's familiar so I don't have to go on the journey in that sense because you become the performer. You have to do that in a way. But it

becomes harder to me because I want to be more and more precise. So, when I walk slowly toward the chair, you know, I want to do it exactly right. You don't want anything to be out of place. So, in a way, it becomes more of a challenge to do it more and more precisely. But I really enjoy that.

RS: But so, emotionally, now you feel like you've kind of...

AD: In a way, yeah. Because if I went on that emotional journey with my father every single time I did it, I'd be a wreck I think. But I mean, that's not to say I don't go on that journey with it, I go on it in a very specific way I suppose. I go as the performer. There are moments when I really meet him and sometimes that catches me out in different performances. "Oh, god, he's here." Sometimes I feel his presence very strongly. Sometimes I feel my mother's presence very strongly and I suppose that's the natural life of performance: you never know quite what's going to happen even though you're trying to be really precise and it runs to the DVD, to time, you know, it runs a random second longer or shorter. So, it's amazing how much you can move within that constraint.

RS: I noticed in reading on your website that you have studied the Feldenkrais work.

AD: Indeed, yes. I did my four-years training, 1990-94.

RS: I know it's kind of a, there's probably not an obvious answer to it, but how does that work come into the way you create your pieces, do you think?

AD: I've been thinking about this a lot really, because I haven't been, since I've been concentrating on performing, I haven't been thinking about teaching so much—the Feldenkrais method. But I'm busy with it in the making of the work, and the way I think about work, what is beautiful about the way that Feldenkrais looked at movement and looked at the body and looked at the skeleton and used different view points. You might look at something from the external to the internal first, or from the internal to the external, or create a constraint and using a constraint would create a liberation in another part of movement. I could give you a bad example, but if you fix one leg maybe you realize how much the other leg can move you know. By having something fixed you realize the liberation somewhere else. So, those sorts of strategies that he created in looking at movement and I look at in terms of making work. Often you use his kind of thinking behind what Feldenkrais was busy with.

RS: Can you give me an example of that, I mean you did with the leg, but

AD: In the piece?

RS: Yeah.

AD: Um, let me think. Well I suppose there's an interesting moment when I sit still for... Well, there are two things. One is walking; a slow walk to the chair. In terms of Feldenkrais, using a lot of awareness through movement as I have to be aware of what I'm doing in order to walk very smoothly and very easily. So I am very conscious of the way my balance works, and how one shoulder relates to one foot, and the other foot to the other shoulder. And I'm busy in the process of my whole self being part of the movement, so it's not just about walking in slow motion. I've become very aware of my

whole system in that moment. Other things, in terms of what I was saying before, about the constraints and liberation. I suppose there's some ways, like when I sit still. I sit still for over a minute and there's just my face breathing on the screen and in a way I find that stillness is a liberation for your mind and for the audience because I think it's a moment where you stop. You can think about the way you realize you're actually in the theater for a minute, 'cause you're waiting for something to happen. So, in that [stillness] you actually.... Maybe you hear the traffic outside or you're aware of your own breath. It shifts your audience's awareness all the time and then, you bring them back again.

RS: Yeah, you *do* do that, you do that very well. It works.

AD: Good (laughs). So, I think it's playing with attention, which is a lot of what Feldenkrais's work is about: shifts of attention. It's interesting to talk. My daughter rode her bicycle for the first time today without little stabilizers. And in the last couple of days it's amazing how I used the method (Feldenkrais) instinctively to know what she's going to do, so that she learns faster, you know. Because you know that if you...as you're running along with her, if I hold her jacket if you hold her bag, then she's not sitting on the seat properly, but if I hold the seat then she really feels the way she's really sitting on it and then of course, you gently let go and she doesn't know you've let go. And then she's riding and she says, "look, look" and I said, "but I'm not holding you anymore." (Laughs) Then she learns very fast... Ah! It's very hard to explain.

RS: No, I get what you're saying.

AD: You get what I'm saying?

RS: Well, I think maybe because I've studied some somatic-type work. There's something about facilitating the other person's nervous system...

AD: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

RS: ...so they think they're doing it, and the moment you let them go, they are doing it.

AD: and they are doing it and they know they're doing it. And when you're six it's just wonderful because they don't have anything else in the way; they're not intellectual about it. They just do. And if only the rest of us could do that that easily. (Laughs) That'd be fantastic.

RS: Yeah.

AD: 'Cause we've spent all our time thinking; it gets in the way.

RS: As a mover, have you always had that kind of lightness and fluidity that you have now? Even before you studied (Feldenkrais)?

AD: Yeah, yeah. It gets me into trouble 'cause they say: "oh, you're not making enough contact with the ground." (Laughs) I can't do that, I'm good at being up. But, yeah I always was very light and always very fluid. It's always been my trademark, I suppose, in that sense.

RS: Is there anything else about the piece that you'd like to say that I didn't ask you about?

AD: Um, I suppose what I really like about the piece is that often people think that it's a sad story, that it's going to be quite a struggle to watch. What I really like about the piece is that actually it's quite uplifting. And that people feel very positive, some people feel very moved. But it's quite a positive experience; it's not grim in any way because it's dealing with death. And sometimes it's hard, until people see it, to realize that.

RS: It's good that you said that because that's true in watching it, it's not at all grim.

AD: No. And we're dealing with real stuff.

RS: Yeah, I was just going to say I was reading...somebody had just given me this article about meditation and you know this writer was making the point that whatever is happening, if you experience it fully, then that's all you have to do, really. So, there's something about...it's not sad, it's just what happened and you're living in it.

AD: Yeah. Well that's a very good, a very good thing to say. Can you experience it fully? How many things can we do that's always a battle to be present.

RS: Are you able to support yourself as an artist?

AD: Yeah, just about.

RS: Switching the subject around a little bit...

AD: It's, well actually, God, you know. Five years later I have a house in North London, which is no mean feat. My wife does work as well, she works in production for corporate companies like Motorola or people like that. But she works; she freelances, so it's always precarious. Most of the time one of us has always been here for the children. So, I go on tour, she's here, and then if she has a bit of work, I'm here. So, we juggle it. I work as a hand model (laughs).

RS: Oh, you do?

AD: I do, I actually make TV commercials as a hand model. How bizarre is that?

RS: That was one of my questions that I didn't quite get to, that something about hands, you know like hands are so important in the piece.

AD: And I made a piece, I'm going to do one performance of, I think, at P.S.122 on Wednesday, the first Wednesday. I can't think what date that is... [Wednesday, May 3rd, immediately following the regular performance] of a piece I've done many times called "Space Panorama". It's a half an hour piece and I recreate the entire Apollo 11 moon mission on a table with my hands.

RS: (laughter)

AD: To Shostakovich's tenth symphony (laughs), which is bizarre but is very good fun. And in 2000, I performed it for an astronaut reunion in Houston so I performed it for Buzz Aldrin and all these bunch of astronauts and they really liked this.

RS: I was going to say, did they love it?

AD: They absolutely loved it; they'd never seen anything quite like it.

RS: That's great.

AD: So, it is a homage to the moon landing. It's all me and hands at the table. But I will give one performance of that.

RS: Okay, that's good to know.

AD: A little extra. 'Cause hands have always been important and then someone said, "oh, you have nice hands, you should model them." And... "really, can you do that sort of thing?" And I now have an agent called "Hired Hands" and they call me and they say can you do a job for McDonalds, and I go off and make commercials with hands in them. It happens from time to time. They're nice when they happen. Like all these things like voiceovers and things, you can do three in one month and then nothing for six months. But they're fun when they happen.

RS: The three you do help pay the bills.

AD: They help, no absolutely.

RS: I have at least one more question for you...

AD: This thing about the piece was, or two things, one is the music, Joby Talbot. He wrote the music for "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" and he's particularly wonderful composer. One piece in it, the piano piece, is actually called "Absence and Presence" and he now performs it when he plays that he also runs a movie, which I made of the handwriting. The piece has another life when he plays, that's always nice.

RS: Did you tell him what you wanted? Or did he come and see you?

AD: He'd had a similar experience in that his father had died some time quite recently and so we had a meeting of minds about loss, and then he just fed me bits of work. Some of it was previously written some of it in development. There's one—the big orchestra section—I could never have commissioned an orchestra to have recorded a piece like that, but there's something he just did. And then he said I think I'm going to write this piece specifically for the show, and we discussed that. And then he wrote it and then I ended up choreographing to it. It's sort of become a two way street, really.

RS: One thought I had when I watched it, was that the music a little bit took it out of a lot of work that I see around here, that would fall into the category of performance art, because the music seemed to take it into a larger scope. It's kind of ambitious or dramatic even.

AD: Well, I love the way music, like in films, I kind of...

RS: Definitely very film-like.

AD: I tend to use it like that. I can create to music. I run a lot. I'm running in the London marathon in two weeks time. I fly to New York the day after having run the marathon for the first time. Oh my god, oh my god. But I listen to, now with iPods and things, you can listen to music all the time. I run and dream out stuff whilst I'm running. And I never used to do that. How fantastic!

RS: It is fantastic.

AD: Yeah, 'cause you never had an iPod before, too. And I never ran before. The two things are rather wonderful.

RS: Running is something that you've taken up later?

AD: Only in the last four years.

RS: Really. Does that go okay with your body? You don't suffer too much from it?

AD: When you study enough Feldenkrais you don't need to suffer (laughs)

RS: Okay, very good. (laughs)

AD: It might hurt but your muscles still hurt, it doesn't save you from that. But it does save you from injury and it does mean you run smoother and easier, and use your whole body to run.

RS: Interesting. I guess there's a question I had for you. I wanted to ask you what kind of work do you like when you go to see, first of all, dance. Are you that interested in seeing dance work?

AD: Yeah. In Edinburgh I saw lots of work. Usually when I'm home here, I tend, with having a family and so on, I tend to go out less really. But in terms of dance I like Sasha Waltz very much and Pina Bausch. Cunningham, I've come back to bizarrely. I loved it at the beginning because I did it, and then I hated it because it was too abstract and too weird and I just couldn't access it. And now I've come back to the beauty of line and form and shape in a way which excites me to come back 'cause then I think maybe I could make more things like that. They're less story-led, so that's interesting. I mean, the Wooster Group, I've always been a big fan of, and SITI: the Saratoga Institute.

RS: Anne Bogart's company?

AD: Anne Bogart, yeah, yeah. Do you call them SITI, do you call them that?

RS: I think she does use that name here.

AD: Yeah, I just saw on the website. I saw that piece "Bob" which I thought was very nice, very nice. That was quite influential in the fact that seeing how much one person could hold the stage so well. And I thought, god you know, sometimes you need to see things like that so you know you *can* do that.

RS: That's right.

AD: Spaulding Grey was a big influence early on. Because of how simple you could be in the theater. I thought that was magic. Lepage, Robert Lepage's "The Dragon's Trilogy" certainly, Peter Brook. Those sorts of...I mean...dance, I've been very frustrated seeing dance. And very excited at other times. I go through extremes.

RS: Just say a little bit about what frustrates you?

AD: Oh, I suppose because more often than not, dance is about the dancers and not about the dance, and they're so busy with themselves and this lovely video image that's created or whatever in the background or... And then I go but I'm asleep. I'm not activated by it. And when it works really well, or a rhythm really works, or when it works, when it transposes itself off the body and into the space between us, that's what I try and aim to do, to have it live in this space in front of the performer and in front of the audience so it creates a third thing.

RS: Have you ever tried to teach somebody how to do that?

AD: Yes. (laughs)

RS: How do you get somebody to do that? There may not be a short answer to that.

AD: No, yeah, 'cause I think I'm still busy trying to figure it out. I worked with a company, the Fabrik, in Potsdam (Germany) a lot. They're wonderful performers and we made a piece called "Pandora 88" where these two performers, Wolfgang Hoffman and Sven Till spend all their time in a box. And it was very interesting making that transition out of the box, even though they were staying in the box. So, they would create this third space. It's a kind of stage, I think, for the performer that you have to get to. So, I'm exploring it really. That's for myself to find out what it means for me, and I'm sure these things can be translated into one form or another. It's finding strategies to bring it out. I'll let you know... (both laugh) I'll figure it out.

RS: Well, I guess that's about it, unless there's something else you would like to say.

AD: There was one other thing, yes. One of the reasons it has so little dialogue in the piece or why I'm interested in the visual particularly in "Absence and Presence". In those moments of extreme emotion, we're often at a loss for words. People say they're at a loss for words. So, I thought it would interest me to go to that place, where you don't have to say it. We just are, in that state. So it goes beyond words.

RS: I think that works really well in your piece. You did that. You accomplished it.

AD: Good (laughs), and most of all from the video....

RS: Have you started working on your next thing yet? Your next creation?

AD: Well, I'm messing around with a few things. At the moment I have a small grant from the Welcome Trust here, which is monies that puts science and art together. And I have a little grant for a piece called "The Process of Betrayal." I'm working with a neurologist called Jonathon Cole and a filmmaker and an Alexander teacher and dancer

and we're interviewing on camera and talking to people who have an extreme movement impairment of some kind. So we've talked to a man with a motor-neuron disease who can't move from the neck downwards, and a woman with MS, and a woman who's a tetraplegic who broke her neck at C6, at the base of the neck. And we're not quite sure how the piece is going to manifest itself, I mean, I think it'll be a short film to start with 'cause it's all been filmed. Somewhere in this, in the heart of the stillness we'll talk about movement. In the extreme lack of movement we'll talk about how much we really move. So, some things are peering out, but how it's going to, whether it's going to be... It might be an installation, it might be a theater piece, I'm not sure. We're sort of in the middle of that at the moment.

RS: That sounds very interesting.

AD: There's an extraordinary man, Michael, whose dying of a motor-neuron... I mean, you don't survive. And he used to play the cello and he talks eloquently about the way he played the cello. And he can't move anything and it's very profound, you know.

RS: Because you mentioned the grant that you got to make "Absence and Presence," if you don't want to answer this, I totally understand but, just because finances are such a big issue here in NYC, I thought maybe... how much money did you get to make that piece?

AD: To make "Absence and Presence"?

RS: Yeah. Like how much did it take to support this yearlong process?

AD: I had... the grant was 24,000 pounds, so that's about \$50,000.

RS: Wow. Okay, good (laughs).

AD: I don't know whether you should print that or not, I think maybe *you* should know that.

RS: Would it be okay for me to print that?

AD: Well, I don't see...put it down and let me think about it.

RS: Okay. I'd like to print it for dance funders here to see that because we usually get grants that are like \$7,000. \$10,000 is a big deal. You know, \$20,000 would be the biggest anybody would ever get and you might get that one time in your life. I mean I'm talking about the people in the kind of downtown community. The Mark Morris's or whoever, get a lot more, but...

AD: Well, it's always a battle here, and whether I'll get that again. I mean it always depends on your application at the time. I mean generally our funding here is pretty good.

RS: It takes money to make work. It definitely does.

AD: And, god, that money doesn't go very far. I mean you never have... the moment you start to print, publicity and then you get collaborators in and you start filming something

and you rent a space and you get a...all that's gone. It doesn't... 'cause space isn't cheap here. Everything is expensive. You always struggle within the parameter you're in, don't you.

RS: Yes, we'll transcribe it and we'll run it by you before we put it up on the website.

AD: Yeah, 'cause that would be a good thing to think about, whether that...I'm sure that you could go to the London Arts Board and find out how much people fund, I mean it's not a secret, know what I mean. Put it in, and then it depends how it sounds in terms of the way you put it down. We can think about that.

RS: Okay, and after you get here, if either of us feels the need we could do a few more questions if we want to add to....

AD: Yeah, lets. Also, when you've seen it in the flesh, as it were.

RS: And you run for two weeks...

AD: I run for two weeks, and then I stay on in New York for another two weeks because I'm working with a company called "Rainpan 43." They did "All wear Bowlers."

RS: I don't know that company.

AD: They're two guys and they're called Trey (Lyford) and Geoff (Sobelle) and they were a big hit in the Edinburgh Festival last year. One lives in New York and one lives in Philadelphia. And Geoff in Philadelphia, he's worked with the most famous company in Philadelphia whose name escapes me...anyway, it'll come back to me. They're working on a new show so I'm going to start work on a show with them.

RS: Great.

AD: That will happen in Philadelphia in September. So, I am around.

RS: Then we'll touch base.

AD: What are you rehearsing at the moment? Because you were rehearsing yesterday.

RS: A piece that my own group performed in December, and then next week, I think on the 18th, we have a one day gig in New Jersey. We're just rehearsing that.

AD: Do you have your own company?

RS: Well, so to speak, it's hard to call it a company. I do about a show a year usually, and some of the people, a couple of the people, I mean this is just four people that I'm working with now but several of them I've worked with for a while, six or seven years.

AD: Great. And do you manage to survive?

RS: Um, It's tough. I actually went back to school to study acupuncture and I'm practicing acupuncture now and trying to support myself doing that along with making dance work, choreography, but it's a little touch and go.

AD: And it's hard for your brain to flip it, because I often thought about teaching Feldenkrais all the time and it's very hard to be, "now I'm going to be that person and now I'm this person."

RS: It is hard. It is very hard.

AD: There are not enough hours in the day.

RS: I'm not sure I really recommend it, but on the other hand I feel like in a way it may be the new paradigm for artists in NYC, because you can't really not work anymore. When I first came here in the 1980's people didn't work that much and people tried not to have real jobs. Now, you kind of have to have a real job because you can't support yourself otherwise. So, everything's changed and I feel like, well, we just have to be flexible and keep trying to adapt to what the situation is. And, at least I feel like everything I'm doing is about movement in some way. Because the bodywork and acupuncture is all about that too.

AD: Yes, and one informs the other.

RS: Yes, they really do.

AD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and you develop a much deeper understanding, it's very nice.

RS: And I was excited to see that you'd studied Feldenkrais, because I don't know if you've ever heard of this work Body-Mind Centering (BMC)?

AD: I have, yes.

RS: That's the kind of work that I studied for many years. And people have always asked me, how does that influence your work? There's not an easy answer because in a way it's just like the food you eat, it goes in you and it becomes a part of you and...

AD: It's hard to say when you're not using it and when you are using it.

RS: But, I'm interested in the somatic practices because I think they really do deepen the work, they deepen the performance, they deepen the choreography and it's something that I hope to see more of.

AD: And you really see it when you see performers that have that understanding.

RS: Yeah, you really do.

AD: And it doesn't matter whether they're doing classical acting, they're inhibitors in some way. It makes a big difference.

RS: So, thank you Andrew.

AD: Pleasure.

RS: And it'll be fun to meet once you're here.

AD: You can stick needles in me and then I can make you roll around on the floor. (both laugh heartily)

RS: Sounds good.

AD: Sounds like a trade. (laughs)

RS: And you know how to get me by email if you need to get in touch and then I don't know how long it will take to get it transcribed, hopefully just a few days of so. I'll get back in touch with you.

AD: Brilliant, okay. No problem, if you need to call again, just call or email or whatever because I'm around this week. Mainly running, training.

RS: Well, good luck with that (laughs). I wish I could do that.

AD: It's kind of a thing to do, mad... must be mad, but there you are.

RS: Alright, so you can just hang up and then I have to go through a little process.... this conference call. Alright, talk to you soon, okay. Bye.

AD: Speak to you soon, Bye.