

## **Acknowledgments**

Perhaps any act of writing involves a dance with one's past. My mother Virginia A. Graff had a keen sense of moral justice. The socialist vision which she embraced was increasingly unpopular during the era in which I grew up, but nevertheless influenced me. My father, who shared this political vision, believed firmly that things of the spirit could be set into words. Fê Alf, the German modern dancer who lived next door to me as I was growing up, taught me to dance and led me to an understanding of what movement could mean. How, I now ask myself, could I have written on any other subject but dance and politics.

I owe my gratitude to many. First, and most important, the dancers themselves, whose efforts and talents and passions are the subject of this book. Edith Segal, Edna Ocko, Sophie Maslow, and Jane Dudley gave generously of their time and memories in interviews with me. Dancers Fanya Geltman, Nadia Chilkovsky, Paula Bass, Mura Dehn, Sue Remos Nadel, Lili Mann Laub, Anne Lief Barlin, and other WPA workers shared their histories with Karen Wickre as part of the Research Center for the Federal Theatre Project, and I am indebted to them and to Karen Wickre who conducted the interviews. Pauline Bublick Tish, a dancer in the original *How Long Brethren?*, generously shared her own research with me. My memory of performances by dancers Muriel Manings, Donald McKayle, Pearl Primus, and other members of the New Dance Group influenced the writing of this book and to them I also owe thanks.

Colleagues and relatives of the dancers represented in this book were generous in sharing information and in helping me to obtain personal records; Shari Segal Goldberg gave me access to files and photographs of Edith Segal, and Daniel and Zachery Sklar contributed photographs and memories of the work of their mother, Miriam Blecher. I owe thanks to Frances Sosnoff and Emanuel Geltman, who encouraged my first re-

search efforts by showing me how widespread involvement with the leftist community had been, and how many of the lives that surrounded me in my Upper West Side community had been touched by the movement of the thirties. I happened to speak with Frances one day while waiting for a bus on the Upper West Side. She kindly asked me about my work and I shared with her my obsession with what I believed to be an obscure area in dance history. Oh, she said, you should talk to my sister-in-law. She was part of the WPA project. Her sister-in-law is Fanya Geltman, a principal in these pages. Manny Geltman was a founding editor of the political journal *Dissent*.

The influence of my dance teachers, first Fé Alf, later Gertrude Shurr, May O'Donnell, and Martha Graham, is written on my body as well as on my soul. They taught me that movement is a spiritual commitment and I believe this still. To colleagues who first showed me how dance and scholarship could be combined, most especially Cynthia Novack and Deborah Jowitt (who also read this manuscript in its earliest form and offered invaluable comments), I am deeply indebted. Janet Soares always provided a supportive and critical ear as well as endless ideas and a willingness to share her myriad connections. I probably can never thank Marcia B. Siegel, my adviser, enough; she read the very first drafts, provided generous commentary, and believed in me and this project long before I did. Thanks to Rachel Toor, of Duke University Press, for her encouragement, and to all the editors who have helped guide this project to fruition, including Pam Morrison, Bob Mirandon, and Barbara Palfy.

Barnard College provided me with a special leave to finish this project, for which I am deeply grateful. To Sandra Genter and the Barnard College Dance Department I owe thanks for creating an atmosphere in which dance and scholarship could flourish. I am likewise grateful to those students who listened to my lectures about the thirties and asked pointed questions, always sending me back to the drawing board, including Rachel Feinerman, Dillon Paul, Rachel Ebling, and Peter Von Ehrenkrook. Thanks to colleagues at the Department of Performance Studies at New York University, where, as graduate students in dance, we struggled to bridge the seemingly impossible gap between body and intellect, between performance and academe, especially those members of the Fem Grrrr (Feminist Group): Ann Cooper Albright, Judy Burns, Ann Daly, Leslie Satin, and Carol Martin.

Friends and associates have read and commented on portions of this manuscript at various times; I am most especially indebted to Susan Manning. Thanks also to Judith Bennahum, Lynn Garafola, and the editors of *Studies in Dance History* for their support and also to all those who

made possible the June 1993 conference in New York City, “Dancing Of, By, and For the People.” The scholarship of others working in the field, including John Perpener, Russell Gold, and Barbara Stratyner, was both informative and stimulating. I particularly thank Stacey Prickett for generously sharing her writing and research with me.

Librarians at the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts were always helpful, especially Monica Moseley and Rita Waldron. I am grateful to Karen Powell, Walter Zvonchenko, and Vicky Wolff at the Library of Congress for their help and to the staff of the Tamiment Library. Tim Wheeler of the *People’s World Weekly* was generous in providing access to the photographic archives of the *Daily Worker*.

Thanks to Nancy Stevens for invaluable advice about the photographs, and to her parents Nat and Irene, who like my own family were fellow travelers in the world I grew up in, and whose vision helped shape my own.

Finally, and most important, thanks to Frederic Kimball, who read and commented on various drafts, contributing his keen writer’s ear and his understanding of American history, to a project which was otherwise unfamiliar to him, and to my children Harry and Camila for their patience and understanding.

Portions of chapters 1, 2, and 5 appeared in “Dancing Red,” *Of, By, and For the People: Dancing on the Left in the 1930s, Studies in Dance History*, 5, no. 1 (1994).