

Preface

I choreographed *Lamb, lamb . . .*, a dance for forty-one individuals, during a four-month workshop titled *Playing Awake 1991*. The audience who attended the performances of *Lamb, lamb, lamb . . .*, expressed a worshipful fixation in watching a prominently situated male figure, clothed in a white jock strap, who with great passion and sensuality writhed uninterruptedly for an hour. There was another figure, even more prominently situated onstage, present throughout the dance. It was a woman, whose movement direction was to witness and reflect, as simply as possible, whatever she saw in the large cast of dancers onstage. Few people mentioned the subtlety and innuendo evident in her dance. I find this fact to be a yardstick for the time it will take audience and performer to appreciate and explore shade above power from a brilliant sun.

Lamb at the Altar / the story of a dance is about the whole body of a dancer exploring dying. I understand dance to include the action of dying, whether or not I choose to realize it. I am making an effort to come to terms with dying as an experiential process of which I possess negotiable comprehension. I want to include the perception of dying in my performance practice because it invigorates my living each moment. I am not talking about the emotional, psychological, clinical, or cultural attitudes about dying, although I use the energy surrounding these beliefs to fire my attention.

Lamb at the Altar / the story of a dance is about the forty-six people who came to Austin, Texas, from all over the country to take part in *Playing Awake 1991*, a performance workshop for trained and untrained dancers. (I have conducted twelve annual large-group

workshops in Austin, Texas, since 1980.) They trusted, and at other times had difficulty trusting, during their four-month commitment to play in the shade of my movement explorations.

Lamb at the Altar / the story of a dance contains a movement libretto with photographs and original drawings, highlighted with the philosophy, stories, and intrigue that influenced the April 1991 premiere of *Lamb, lamb, lamb, lamb, lamb . . .*

The Afterword reflects changes I made as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer during the *Playing Awake 1992* workshop and concludes with a score for my solo *Lamb at the Altar*.

Lamb at the Altar is the story of a dance. It is my personal tribute to the humor, limitation, and abundance within the particular arrangement of particles that suggest individual identity.

The paragraphs in boldface type signify the movement libretto for the dance *Lamb, lamb, lamb, lamb . . .*. Italicized phrases indicate my performance meditation practices and names given to some of the movements. The regular text represents the stories that bind the performance practices (italics) with the movement libretto (boldface).

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