

## DANCE



By JANE GORDON

**T**HE six dancers of the Judy Dworin Performance Ensemble were improvising one rainy morning in early spring for their new dance piece, "Timeout," while Ms. Dworin sat on a folding chair against the wall of a hall at Trinity College in Hartford, calling out images of time to the dancers as they moved about the floor. The creator of the company, she no longer gets up to dance.

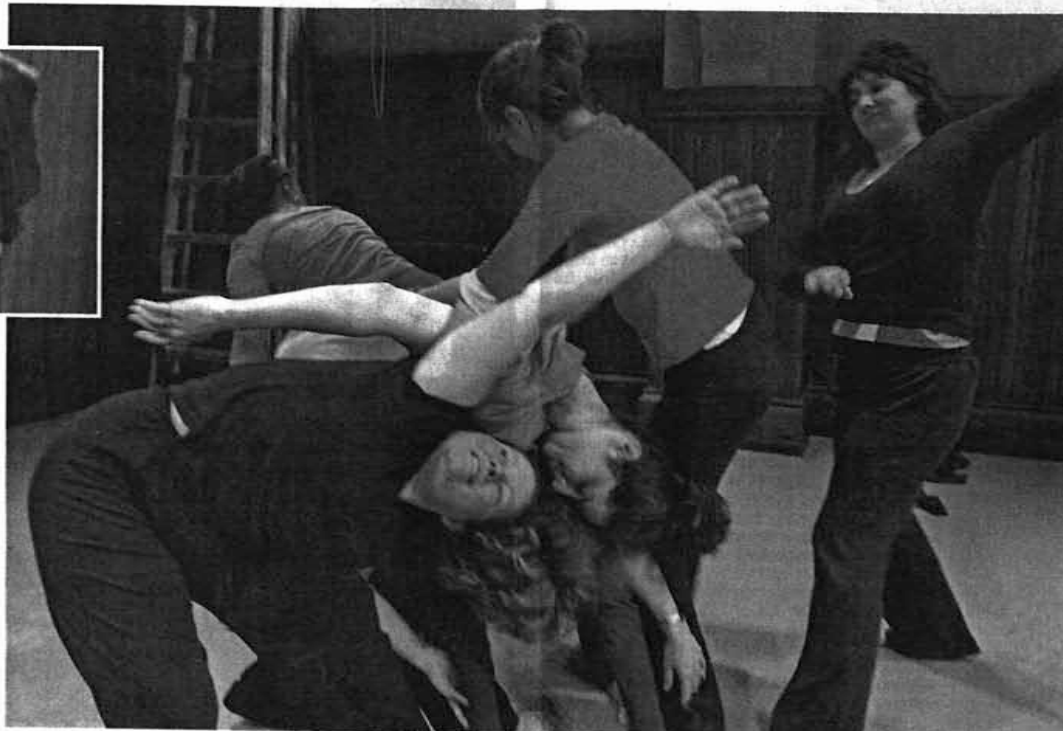
When she did get up, to stride across the room, she moved like a gazelle, feet barely skimming the floor. But it was movement with considerable effort. Walking is sometimes a challenge, dancing almost impossible. Driving is out of the question.

In 1999, Ms. Dworin suffered a major onset of Ménière's disease, a chronic condition of the inner ear that causes episodes of vertigo, hearing loss and tinnitus. But she has kept to the dance in other ways, teaching movement to students at Trinity, and working with the members of her ensemble to deliver political messages to dance audiences throughout the world.

"Do I miss dancing? Oh, yes," said Ms. Dworin, 56, the chairwoman and a professor in the department of theater and dance at Trinity, as the members of her troupe gathered to sit in a circle. "I think it's just such a gift. I'm still teaching, and I watch these kids open up to the beauty of dance as an expression of their spirit, and I'm very tempted to join them. I'm starting to think I will do it again."

Ms. Dworin, a Trinity College graduate who has been dancing since she was a child in Hartford, has a three-decade association with the college and with dance in the city, a span that surprises even her.

"It is unusual to be around this long," she said. "Hartford is not the most arts-friendly place to live. Trinity isn't either, because that hasn't been its orientation historically. In some cases, it's been a bit of an uphill climb. I guess I must be attracted to uphill climbs."



Photographs by George Ruhe for The New York Times

## Politics in Motion

### Communicating Through Dance, Even From the Sideline

Since its start in 1989, Ms. Dworin's dance ensemble has focused on cultural and political topics, taking its varied messages to Bulgaria and Tibet. One performance revolved around mothers of political prisoners in Chile and Argentina, using poetry and song to tell their story. Others have centered on those accused of being witches and their death by fire, racism, nuclear arms and the disaster at Chernobyl, environmentalism, war and the aftermath of 9/11.

Perhaps the performance that most related to Ms. Dworin's illness and search for recovery was the "The Glorious Knot" in 2002, which offered a Tibetan Buddhist world view of an endless knot that symbolized the connection of all people. The concept was derived from a trip the ensemble took to Tibet, where Ms. Dworin suffered a severe attack of Ménière's after a 34-hour trip and was confined to bed in a Tibetan convent for

three weeks. The nuns prayed to the female deity of compassion for her recovery. Ms. Dworin became enamored of Tibetan Buddhism and its search for balance.

"I think the works really reach people, whether they know about the subject matter or not," said Lisa Matias, a dancer, guest lecturer on dance at Trinity and the owner of a dance studio, the Lisa Matias Dance Center in East Hartford. "It's the gentle way Judy guides people to do their best and challenges people to go places they would not necessarily go."

The dancers in the troupe serve as a support group, sharing their lives outside the ensemble — tales of marriages, childbirth, illness, divorce, death. Although Ms. Dworin is the artistic director, all the dancers contribute to each piece. "All of these small voices together create the shouting voice," said Tracy Lombardo, a dancer who owns

the New Steps Dance Center in Glastonbury.

Although the ensemble members said they wished Ms. Dworin could still dance with them, Ms. Dworin said that as artistic director, she had not been performing with them much even before she was afflicted with Ménière's.

"I had started to perform less and less with the company years ago, because I think it's really hard to be a good outside eye and be inside of it," she said. "If I was in pieces at all, I would take on a more narrative outside role and occasionally, I would sing. Then the Ménière's made it hard to walk. Sometimes it was hard to watch them moving, because when my ears were not functioning well, I relied on my eyes. All that movement can be dizzying as well."

There is no cure for her illness, but Ms. Dworin's treatment includes integrated manual therapy, a hands-on physical ther-

Guiding from the outside in: Judy Dworin, far left, can no longer dance because of illness, but she still teaches movement classes at Trinity and runs her contemporary dance company.



apy that attempts to restore the body to its natural alignment. Acupuncture and Chinese herbs are also a part of her treatment. "It's a combination of a Western view with alternative treatments," she said. "It's made a huge difference. But I have to be patient."

Patience, and perspective, is the point of "Timeout," the ensemble's next work.

"We are working on a piece about time," Ms. Dworin said. "How can we catch up with our lives these days? I think the movement has given me a sense of spatial time, a three-dimensional sense of time that we have lost track of in the linear sense."

"Movement becomes this huge teacher, and there's something I want to communicate about that in this piece coming up. If everybody learned the language that movement gives, what it teaches us about humanity, the world would be a different place."