

3 Days

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Joint Forces, a dance company founded by Alito Alessi and Karen Nelson, has presented four annual DanceAbility workshops, sharing Contact Improvisation dance with hundreds of people, some able-bodied and some with various physical disabilities. This year's DanceAbility, produced by Alito, took place for 3 days in mid-March, 1991. Now the trainings entail four weeks of full-time study, accompanied by a manual including 100 exercises.

Eugene, Oregon is a city designed to be wheelchair accessible and has provided the Hilyard Community Center for disabled folk as well. It is a handsome center, and as an able-bodied person, I enjoyed the extra space and wider doors which result when a building is designed to accommodate people who use wheelchairs. A problem for many disabled folk is our society's commercialization of space. It can be difficult these days to get out of a car without chipping paint on the doors of three vehicles. Vans modified to raise and lower wheelchairs need the equivalent of two spaces.

So, for those disabled people able to drive to the center on Friday, it was easy to park, descend to ground level, wheel into the building with its automatically opening doors, and attend the orientation meeting for DanceAbility.

Originally, DanceAbility was to be held at the Center, but Saturday and Sunday's workshops had to be relocated to a more spacious high school gymnasium. The planners had not foreseen the large turnout for the event; disabled people are known stay-at-homes.

Some disabled folk objected to the concept of the purpose-built spanking-new community center for the disabled. The problem is how to integrate the populations, not segregate them into separate facilities. Bruce Curtis noticed that the men's toilet had no urinals, and though admitting it was a detail, felt that it was a symptom of a lack of consideration for the able-bodied, and as if all men with disabilities were in wheelchairs.

Getting pissed-off about the pissing facilities expresses the sensitivity of the activist. Bruce was invited to DanceAbility as a facilitator. He is a quad-a quadriplegic-in a wheelchair, from San Francisco. He has been

active in teaching and performing dances with his able-bodied partner, Alan Ptashke. Alan is a veteran of a movement form called Contact Improvisation, a sort of partnered gymnastic improvisation. He answered the phone one day and found Bruce at the other end. Alan is a gifted partner and he and Bruce, who has no control of his legs or fingers, began to work out together.

Most forms of dance partnership suppose that one partner leads, the other responds: in CI however, either dancer may initiate or respond. After the movement starts, a new possibility arises; to follow the momentums established and to continue them while remaining in touch with the other's body. This is the 'contact' part of the form. The 'improvisational' aspect of it allows either partner to be in any position relative to their partner or to the floor. Essentially it is old-fashioned touch dancing taken from the vertical of the ballroom into the horizontals and obliques of wrestling, with, hopefully, the ability of the snooker player to intuit momental affects.

Bruce began dancing, I believe, from a political motive, a desire to ensure that the equality of the disabled folk was addressed; as well as his own need not to be marginalized, which included not letting his body degenerate in a wheel-chair. Bruce came to Eugene without Alan this year, which is a measure of their success, and drove up the coast in a VW bus he had modified to cope with his chair and the ways that his limbs work.

He is accepted as a performer, invited as a teacher. Have we heard of a quadriplegic dancer-teacher before? No, we have not.

Yet, at DanceAbility, Bruce was not unique. Charlene Curtiss teaches wheelchair aerobics in Seattle, for another instance. Emery Blackwell has recently resigned the presidency of OIL (Oregonians for Independent Living) to devote himself to dance. He has cerebral palsy to a degree which makes speaking difficult. Words are stretch tones distorted. His vocal mechanisms and jaw, like the rest of his body, reflect the aspect of CP which exaggerates the motor nerve impulses, sometimes producing kicking and quavers in the legs, large arm gestures, flexed (athatoid) wrists and extraordinary finger movements.

For three years, Emery has worked with Alito Alessi and they have made a duet which uses the paraphernalia of the disabled-wheelchairs and crutches. Alito recently had an extraordinary accident. A bottle of carbonated water blew up and severed the muscles and tendons of the front of his right leg above the ankle, requiring surgery and extensive

rehabilitation. So, he has experienced a profound, if temporary, disability. He was no stranger to the disabled; his mother was wheelchair-bound from an auto accident when he was young, and his duet with Emery reflects his familiarity in a playful way with the mechanics of the support systems.

Emery has also produced a short solo, for which he made the music on his synthesizer.

Bruce, then, is not alone in taking the creative initiative in dance. It is an extraordinary thing they are all doing. We have seen paintings produced by disabled artists; music of distinction has been composed by disabled musicians. However, dance uses the body as a medium. Unlike other arts, when one looks at a dance made by somebody who is disabled one is looking at the dance and also the disability. This contravenes our society's protocol regarding looking at the disabled. But theater exists in part to provide the opportunity for frank appraisal of human beings and perhaps it suits the agenda of disabled performers to use the theatrical conventions to allow us to get used to their conditions. Then they get on with the creation of dance under those conditions, without necessarily referring to them.

These thoughts arose because we saw two dance works featuring Emery at the introduction to the workshop. One was the solo he choreographed in which he rolled across the floor, rose to his knees, turned in place, and then descended and rolled away. What we see is that the rather simple format of the dance is taxing. Emery is working at the edge of his capabilities, just as many dancers do.

He is a striking man. The CP exaggerates his movements and features, but his long curly head of hair, his thin face with goatee often wetted with saliva, his intelligent and frequently merry blue eyes suggest a character of some flamboyance. Bruce once said that the disabled are either ignored or viewed as martyrs. But I think Emery would be extraordinary even if the facade of CP did not provide such a lavish filter through which to appreciate his spirit and thoughts.

Emery's spirit lights up his actions and face. His thoughts are thoughts set in a new body language.

Emery has said that to get his arm raised above his head requires about 20 seconds of imaging to accomplish. Extension and contraction impulses in his muscles fire frequently and unpredictably, and he must somehow select the right impulses consciously, or produce for himself a movement

image of the correct quality to get the arm to respond as he wants. We observers can get entranced with what he is doing with his mind. More objectively, we can see that as he tries he excites his motor impulses and the random firing happens with more vigor. His dancing has a built-in Catch-22. And we feel the quandary and see that he is pitched against his nervous system and wins, with effort and a kind of concentration we haven't seen before. He has mechanisms in his mind we able-bodied have not had to learn. His facility with them allows us to feel them subtly in our own minds.

The taste of this we get during the short solo is much amplified in the duet with Alito. This dance is longer and requires that Emery be where he needs to be in time to coordinate with Alito. The choreography provides a new filter to show us the man. The CP appears to mask the logic and intent until events show us that what we see has been carefully calculated by Emery and Alito.

Can these dances avoid the obvious trap of being curiosities, grotesqueries, or analytical, quasi-medical displays? It depends on the artistry, of course, and the failures of this new genre will probably be absorbed politely, just as the theatrical misadventures of the able-bodied usually are.

Theoretically I see no problem. Usually we think of dance as the development of human movement potential to superhuman levels. Another way to look at dance techniques is to notice that they exclude more movement potentials than they develop. Ballet works in the realm of extension of the limbs. It does not include the contractions of Martha Graham nor the asymmetry and sexy pelvis of jazz. Each of these techniques operates within its own logic, and each may borrow or quote from other systems, but at heart they are defined by how they are limited. These definitions are aesthetic ones, though, and it is a difference of kind when the limitations are the result of mischance or malady.

But we quickly grasp the logic of the limitation, be it aesthetic choice or physical disability, and this is the point at which the mind and spirit of the performers take over to convey us through the moments they are there to perform. I have seen awful Balanchine ballets. I have seen ballerinas with superb bodies who could not hold my attention for sixty seconds. And conversely, I have seen disabled performers who, without evoking pity or morbid fascination, kept me riveted to their work.

Jose Limon, a famous modern dancer, once said he felt most alive when on stage. I have similar feelings, which may be hard to understand by

those who don't perform regularly. What happens is that the rigidity and self-consciousness of stage fright change to fluid extra power and deeper self-awareness. For that moment, you have more of you. I guess it is adrenalin and other hormones surging through one's system, which mixes with one's own feelings and the feelings of the audience -- who are there to witness feelings, after all. What a broth.

For Bruce and Emery, perhaps this performance high is the same. I view performance as an empowerment, and a healing, or wholing. They may have found this as well. There is something in it for them, in other words. And if they find it, their transcendence will fuel our transcendence.

Will we find it more natural to design the disabled into our urban environments because they will be in/on our minds? Or are we struck with novelty? Will it wear thin?

The audience at the Center absorbed the performances with appreciation and then watched a video of last year's DanceAbility workshop so they could see what they were in for on the weekend.

Saturday...

We were all together from eleven until six p.m., about 60 people at any one time, and slightly fewer disabled than able-bodied which is a comfortable ratio. Not all the disabled needed help, mind you. Those with CP dice Emery, Jeff, Pete, Dana, for instance, are wheelchair bound, and also need others to be 'hands' for them.

Jan however is a single amputee who walks with crutches. She teaches skiing and could sit to the floor on her leg and arise as easily. She needed no assistance.

Rhoda was my partner for an initial contact improvisation and then a verbal introduction. Having introduced ourselves to each other, we were to then join a circle and introduce our partner to the others in the group. I gave Rhoda my history first. She replied with, "I have an overeating disorder. And I was molested as a child." It seemed clear that she was introducing herself as alter-abled. So not everyone had physical disabilities.

Now I looked around the room with a new attitude, and a sense that even those of us with virtually no cause to consider ourselves disabled might in fact be there for other reasons that a good workout and altruism.

I asked Rhoda if I should introduce her as frankly as she had introduced herself to me. She said I should. At the end of that session a couple of

women thanked her for her forthrightness. Indeed, why shouldn't people simply declare what happened and clear their air? Rhoda was seeking an experience of safe touch. I believe she found it on this weekend, as we all did.

We also got a lot of exercise and physical challenge. It was at first difficult to manipulate a body in or out of a rolling wheelchair. People not in chairs quickly discovered where the brakes were, and learned the advantageous ways to extend the dance beyond the chair. Not that the chair didn't have a lot of possibilities. Certainly, square-dancing arm figures could be used between partners of different abilities. And the chairs are designed for strength so it is possible to clamber up on top of a seated partner, to lay across the armrests, to catch a ride on a backstop or footrest. Several children spent little time in their chairs; being small they spent a lot of time being carried, flown and rocked.

Others were heavy to lift and manipulate, and all available contact improvisation skills were used to turn the transitional moments into fluid ones. It certainly seemed possible that someone would be dropped. But it became clear that those who could leave their chairs enjoyed the adventure, and those who couldn't such as Bjo Ashwill with arthritis and a recently operated hand still in traction, knew their limits, which were respected by their partners. As the information that we were in a safe touch, safe adventure environment dawned on us, the warmth grew. First came safety, then came warmth. Then came... well, what one goes dancing for. Meeting people, doing and seeing unusual things, finding physical challenge while laughing. Being moved.

Our Western society has marginalized physicality. Not just to mention the voluntary couch potatoes, or car potatoes, or office potatoes. We marginalize physicality by smoothing the environment, contriving convenience. By removing its challenges, we reduce the environment's ability to stimulate our potentials. There is a trap laid for us by city planners and architects, decorators and designers-the couching of the country. We adore youth, but what with one thing and another- parenthood, jobs, etc.-we lose it too early, then cling to its superficial qualities with makeup and varieties of cosmetic surgery. News services distributed a 'filler' this last summer: the same percent of the U.S. population is overweight today as was in the 1960s. The joggers are more evident, the potatoes are not in the public eye.

So, if it is normal for us to marginalize physicality, the folk who are disabled are relegated to an even more sedate existence. Emery, however, has found a way out He is a notorious bicycle rider. He tours

Eugene for hours most days, cycling 30-40 miles on a bike specially designed for him. With this and dancing with Alito he has a body packed densely with muscle; and when he is lifted, the hoister quickly realizes that, although he appears slim and cannot control many actions, his is an athletic body.

Gerry Overington, who is blind, finds most available forms of exercise boring. Tandem cycling or running, without the visuals, is just work for the legs and a little wind on the face. Touch dancing with a sighted partner allows Gerry to move his body freely, without worry about the space. Gerry has become proficient at contact improvisation because it provides the fun of moving, and because he and his partner meet as equals in the sense of touch.

For the quads, paraplegics, CPs, etc., the exploration of spherical movement retains its thrills, and the kinetic pleasure of leaving the chair and having a dance which includes rolling, taking and giving weight, guiding and being guided, accelerating, pausing, and balancing alone provides enormous stimulation. Emery and Pete seemed to become rapturous when dances went well.

The spirit of the event was nothing like the usual physical therapy. In fact there is no 'therapeutic contract' with the participants. The contract is to experience contact improvisation.

With the video and the performances of Friday evening everyone had a notion of what it is. But teaching it physically is another, more complex, matter. A group including various disabilities is like a United Nations of the senses. Instructions must be translated into specifics appropriate for those on legs, wheels, crutches and must be signed for the deaf. Demonstrations must be verbalized for those who can't see, which is in itself a translating skill, because English is not a very flexible language in terms of the body.

Questions and discussions may be slowed by the inability of some of the participants to speak clearly, or at all. Pete, for instance, communicates by glancing at letters and numbers on a plexiglass board. Sighting through the plastic and meeting Pete's gaze, the reader can see the letter Pete is looking at. When it is verbally identified, he changes to the next letter. This is ingenious, if laborious, but Pete's patience never seems strained. Several children were both physically disabled and deaf, and Penny, a fluent signer, was on hand to ensure they weren't left out. Bruce called the large group to order every so often and talked about skills of weight-giving or rolling. Perhaps he was not so concerned with

imparting skills as changing the atmosphere from the good-natured chaos which tended to prevail to one where anyone who was confused, or in an unhappy partnership could find ground and conscious change.

The rest of us who were there to facilitate, Karen Nelson, K.J. Holmes, Riccardo Morrison, Alito and I, tended to roam the gymnasium looking for difficulties. We would expect at least some minor difficulties in such a huge mixed group of relative non-dancers, but few if any were found over the weekend. I think we tended to err on the side of caution. Folk who weren't dancing were choosing to watch or rest. But their presence at the event spoke for them. They had come to dance.

Sunday...

And dance they did. All day Saturday, all day Sunday. By Sunday afternoon the gym was spread with picnic lunches and people were casually sharing their food. I sat around a generous spread with a number of others, and realized that most of it had been provided by Rhoda, with her overeating disorder, who had brought enough for others who might have overeating disorders. It was consumed.

People talked and laughter echoed often. Children of participants played in and out of groups, appropriating empty wheelchairs to play in. Being children of disabled parents meant they knew how to use them. One toddler had bells on her shoes. Her main amusement was to toddle, and the jingle on her feet let her mother, a young blind woman, know where she was.

What her mother didn't see was that her daughter toddled in and out of dancing spaces where adults were contending with difficult balancing and fairly high-level physical forces. Occasionally gasps were raised among watchers. But the child spent ten hours over the weekend doing this and never came to harm. She just tinkled through whizzing wheelchairs and under lifted adults, the bells giving us some warning that she was there. Perhaps having a blind mother gave her a sense of responsibility for her own seeing and moving far beyond her years, because rarely did anyone have to alter movement to accommodate her, and finally everyone accepted that she could participate as she pleased.

Another woman brought two kids, a boy of about 8, and a small, sweet-faced girl about 4. This child was not as independent as tinkle-toes, and sometimes wanted to crash her mother's dances-to join in the fun or reclaim her mother's physical attention. Her brother however, with many a strange noise and apparently casual intervention, would divert his little sister. He would step in the way or invent a pulling game, or distract her

with a fantasy image. Sometimes this didn't work. When she persisted, she was welcomed into the dance by both dancers. Or mom would see that her daughter did need some individual attention and excuse herself to dance with her. The boy's job was effective though. Part sheepdog, part Charlie Chaplin, he managed to give his mother a lot of dancing time.

Pete's Story

Pete Theophanes, 19, had in Emery a strong ally in communication. Emery had taken him out for events and knew Pete's situation at home. When Pete needed to express an urgent problem, Emery provided the background information which clued the rest of us into the picture. We were pulled into the thick of it.

It happened during a meeting of the whole group, when one of the facilitators had called for a round-robin, in which the group forms a circle and a few couples at a time dance in the center. Outside the main group, a few of us were circled around Pete, taking turns reading through his letter board, trying to figure out what he wanted. Cerebral palsy happens at birth. If born with an inability to consciously control one's body, including speech, it can be a struggle to convince the world to take one's mind seriously. Pete's body has to be propped up in the wheelchair, with both elbows tucked inside the armrests, or he slumps alarmingly to one side. His wrists are flexed 90 degrees. Pete could control only the direction of his eyes. Before he learned to read there must have been little communication.

On Saturday, he had a good time, I gather, because he came again on Sunday, though against the wishes of his grandparents, his guardians. They are devout Christians, and Sunday is the day for church. Nonetheless, they allowed Pete to return for the middle part of Sunday's workshop.

Pete didn't want to go home. He wanted to explain that we should call his aide and tell him to come at 6 rather than at 4 p.m. But as interpreters we were too tired to keep this long sequence of letters in mind; Emery sat pondering as several of us tried and failed. Suddenly he got it and said, "What about your grandparents? We'll have to phone."

Pete's excitement was contagious at this point. He was grinning and sighting out his message: "Phone her, tell her I'll be home at 6. And hang up before she can answer."

It came to me to make that call. I could not follow Pete's script, though. I had been warned about the strength of personality of Pete's grandmother,

and in the event my proposal of a two-hour extension for Pete was swept aside. Pete had to get ready for church. His driver was coming.

These aides are sometimes in delicate relationships. When Pete's aide learned what Pete wanted, he was torn between Pete's needs and rights, and the agreed arrangements. Pete was proposing to change that arrangement on his own, yet if the aide granted Pete that power, he would be dismissed, or in hot water, at least. Pete, at 19, is legally able to determine his own schedule. And grandparents might be old-fashioned, stuck in their ways, and overprotective. But an agreement had been made.

Those engrossed with Pete and this issue, an island where time went by in the single letters of the complex story, were Emery, Alito, the aide, myself and a young woman named Gani. Though sympathetic to Pete's desires, we were counselling a pragmatic approach: don't jeopardize your aide and stress your grandparent's generosity for just two more hours of fun. It could curtail future chances.

Gani, to her credit, said, "Having heard their advice, if you still want to stay I'll support your decision." Pete needed that support. Circumstances had deprived him of the power to execute his wishes. Friends counselled against his direction. But at least one person put Pete's wishes at top priority. Gani recognized his right to do a thing, albeit a rash one, and kept her focus right there, rather than looking sagely at the larger picture.

When I returned from the phone call and told Pete what his grandmother said, Pete emitted a peculiar sound it was a shriek through clenched teeth. The intensity of frustration was ominous, but quickly passed on the outside. Pete was invited to a last dance, and was lifted into the air by four dancers, and soon was smiling down at us as they paraded by. His aide allowed this little extra time, then Pete left; back to a world where there would be no parades, nor much movement at all. He would, we were told, be taken from bed in the morning to a couch, where he would watch T.V. and his spasming legs would be tied to protect him from falling off. Or on fair days, he would be wheeled into the yard for airing and sunning, his arms tucked inside the armrests of his chair. No wonder he enjoyed the movement this weekend.

I hope his tardiness didn't harm his relationship to his aide, or to Emery who had invited him. Emery believes Pete can live, as Emery does, in a place of his own with an aide. Knowing someone who believes this encourages Pete to try to achieve it. How does a person get from here to

there but by belief? What encourages belief like the agreement of one's 'big brother'? Emery is important to Pete.

Until the last moment before DanceAbility began it was not clear that video coverage could be afforded. Tom Giebink, from Austin, agreed to exchange taping for participation and made a visual record of the weekend.

The tapes usually focus on a pair of dancers and some exciting moments were preserved, but beyond the immediate subjects the background extends like a savannah and the event is rather like a wildlife film-herds on the Serengeti of Africa, with different animals grazing and interacting peacefully, young ones tripping through the foreground, encounters, withdrawals, peripheral activities.

This effect is heightened by the live music which was provided on Sunday by Suse Millimon. It was amplified voice and keyboard with long chords. The atmosphere it made was meditative and earthy.

To shoot the final meeting Sunday afternoon, Tom sat in the center of the circle around which we all sat or squatted, hunkered down in. It was a moment for every voice to be heard, or read. People spoke up when there was silent space and they felt moved. Most participants thanked the other participants, and the organizers. It was difficult not to be a little teary inside. We had spent three days together and a warm bond had grown. Everyone had had fun, been treated with dignity; so we respected each other and felt an intense vicarious pleasure in each other's smiles and laughter.

A large family group was headed by the Klopen-Owens, a couple from Corvallis, Caucasian, who have 4 kids--at least 3 of whom were from India, two of whom were deaf, one of these with CP as well. He was Dana, a small 9 year-old.

Dana is a bit athatoid, like Emery, with bent wrists, and is unable to stand alone. At some point Sunday morning Alito had placed him in my arms. He was a light bundle and felt fragile. During this dance, I became hopelessly confused about Dana.

For one thing, he had frequent involuntary movement of his head which was, in ordinary body language 'no'. When he became excited he squealed. His smile was bright and handsome, but when he was asked a question, the effort of answering caused it to fade. The sort of question I asked was, "Is this OK?" The smile would fade, the head shake 'no'.

When carried on my shoulder, he shouted, "Dad, Dad!" and shrilled a squeal. A bit insecure by this point, I assumed he was frightened. Later I discovered he just wanted his dad to see him, like most kids.

But most perplexing was an event which occurred mid-dance. The enormous gymnasium was constructed with a raised center ceiling panel, and between this and one of the side panels a forlorn basketball was lodged, having soared and stuck. Lifting Dana high, I said, "Do you see that basketball?" and he immediately said, "How did it get there?" So ordinary. Later I was told that Dana was deaf, and I never heard another sentence from him. It does sometimes happen; a state of grace slips in during an unconsidered moment, and clarity emerges. But when self-conscious or under social pressure, grace goes and communication is strained with the distortions and complications attending the affliction.

Penny used sign language with him, and we have on tape what I take as an interesting misunderstanding between them. Alito was dancing with Dana, and Penny chanced by. Alito asked her to ask Dana if what he was doing was OK.

She sign-mimed the question. Dana thought it over. His smile faded, his head shook from side to side, and with effort he made a sound. To me, it sounded affirmative. Penny thought it was negative and asked if he wanted to go slower, if anything had hurt his body. Dana struggled to reply. He had trouble coordinating 'yes' and 'no'. Now he had to convey that nothing hurt, and that he loved to fly.

Alito intuited what was going on and said, "Naw, he wants to go fast, don't you?" Dana grinned. So, Alito, holding Dana in the cup of his belly, rocked over backwards, and continued to rock forward and back, higher and higher. Dana's smile got bigger and wider.

Later I saw Dana's father flying him. With his hands under Dana's arms, he swooped him up from the floor, circling him high into the air and back to the floor. This probably was what Dana was accustomed to.

As we were saying goodbye to each other in the final group circle, Dana's mother and father spoke for their kids. They thanked all of us who had touched their children's lives, and Mrs. Klopen-Owen thanked us all for giving her a day off. "We did hope that Dana would meet others like him. It isn't easy for a little guy with CP to find a role model. But luckily for him, Dana has found Emery, and has something for him."

And with that, Mr. Klopen-Owen held up Dana's arm. Clutched in the small hand was a yellow scrap of paper. "His address!"

Dana's head was, for once, not wavering. His gaze was fixed on Emery, and he grinned hugely as his arm was raised.

But then no one knew what to do. A protocol had been tacitly accepted not to give aid unnecessarily. So, his parents did not convey the address, or Dana, across the circle to Emery. Dana fidgeted off of his father's lap, and a few feet beyond. Then his coordination failed him and he lay, limbs moving uselessly, still trying to get to Emery.

Emery was hip to it and reacted quickly. He heaved himself off the several friends he was draped across and heaved and rolled, just as in his solo, over the expanse of the gym floor.

No one moved to help him, either.

Spasmodically, grotesquely, Emery humped over to Dana. He attempted to take the paper, but a further problem emerged; neither he nor Dana could make their hands work to make the transfer. Emery's fingers were all coiling with effort but not coordinating. Dana's hand could not unclench. Emery began to emit groans.

Failing to refine his motor effort, Emery tried to envelop Dana, address and all. Both were, at this point, on the floor at angles to each other and no available coordination created the cuddle which was intended. In the attempt Emery was flailing Dana with his wrists, and emitting involuntary roars of effort.

Dana was mostly without expression, looking dazed. Fortunately, a smile appeared to reassure us viewers that he was not frightened by the energy directed at him. He might well have supposed that his role model was trying to devour him. Dana managed to unloose the note. It fell onto Emery's chest then to the floor between them.

Emery knew he couldn't manage the finesse of picking a paper up from the floor, and rose unsteadily to his knees above Dana. His arms stretched out from his shoulders and his wrists bent down with fingers writhing like sea anemones. He looked like a mad magician triumphantly incanting over his victim; or possibly about to topple on his victim. But then, all these images are beside the point. These are masks, the body language thrown up by CP, which cause a confusion in interpretation.

All Emery was trying to do was hug Dana, and this he managed, sort of. He rolled Dana up against his knees, then sank down beside him, pinned him with his forearm, and nuzzled Dana with his goatee. Dana grinned.

Finally, someone from the circle spoke. "Will anyone describe what's happening for those who can't see?" It was the stuff of old Russian novels, or operas, or long silent films, but as I described it, it flattened in my mouth into a street corner encounter. What a high failure of communication: Fifty-eight people saw a moment of drama, and the blind heard only the plot line. The sighted heard my pitiful effort, but only a couple of people spoke. Under the pressure of the moment we gave up and in silence felt the gaps between the senses.

Emery meanwhile was declaiming...something. "Songay ewiri whyyeahh ooeyer." "Someday," Emery was telling Dana, "we will ride bicycles together."