

## **MaggieKast\_20190515\_Trint.3gp**

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:00:25] Okay. Well the first thing is really easy. We are compiling a sound collage of everybody that we interview just to kind of give an idea of the scope of this project. So if you would please just say this line for our sound collage.

**Maggie Kast** [00:00:45] I guess I...

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:00:45] You took your glasses off too soon. [laughter]

**Maggie Kast** [00:00:49] My name is Maggie Kast and this is the Chicago Dance History Project.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:00:54] Perfect. Great, thank you. So as you probably know the main focus of these interviews is to examine your Chicago dance career. But I always like to get an overview in general of everything. I know you grew up in D.C. Is that right?

**Maggie Kast** [00:01:12] Mmhmm.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:01:12] And can you just talk a little bit about that and your initial experiences with dance?

**Maggie Kast** [00:01:20] Well, I had my first dance class with Ethel Butler who was a member of the very early Martha Graham Dance Company, and the class was at the fairly newly formed, at that time, Georgetown Day School which was--became an independent not-for-profit parent-owned school and it was just part of the curriculum. And I remember sitting down on that floor, my first day in class, putting the soles of my feet together and bouncing my head on my feet and then sitting up straight. And I think at that point I was hooked. I just wanted to dance, forever. And I...Ethel had a children's company that performed along with her adult company. We would do like one piece on the program? And then I gradually graduated to the adults company. And when I was about 13 I saved up my babysitting money and went to take the June course at the Graham School in New York City, which was great. I lived with two women about 10 years older than I in Greenwich Village and I went to--took the subway to the Graham studio and had two classes a day, and peeled and ate oranges in between classes. And you know...had a great time. It was a great way to spend your adolescence.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:02:32] So how old were you when you started classes with Ethel?

**Maggie Kast** [00:02:35] 6.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:02:38] 6?

**Maggie Kast** [00:02:38] Maybe 7.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:02:39] And what do you think it was about your family and your parents that--you know--an arts education was valued in your upbringing?

**Maggie Kast** [00:02:50] Well, my parents always valued the arts. Neither one of them was an artist, although my father had been a musician and had still played the guitar, but he had been--you know--groomed to be a professional musician and then was not admitted to the Eastman School, I think, or maybe it was the Kodak school, I don't remember, but one

of the big music schools. And so he went to the University of Wisconsin and ended up becoming an anthropologist. But he had played the violin, before, and he still played the guitar when I was growing up. So I think his musicality was a big part of my upbringing and meant a lot to me. But as far as education goes, yeah. They always thought arts education was just as valuable as any other kind, and they helped start Georgetown Day School. So when that curriculum was being developed, I mean, even when it was just six students and myself and the director who was Agnes Inglis O'Neil, we had a dance teacher Ethel Butler, an art teacher Dante Radicce, and a drama teacher who was named David Campbell. So you know, that was always part of the curriculum along with learning how to read from the beginning. So that was just part of the way that they looked at education.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:03:58] And I know from your memoir those teachers were pretty influential to you.

**Maggie Kast** [00:04:04] Very much so. They were real mentors to me. Yes. And not just artistically but personally, also.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:04:10] Is there an idea or a practice you can identify that they instigated that has carried with you throughout your life and career?

**Maggie Kast** [00:04:21] They were just very spontaneous and very...not afraid of expressing emotion, which my family was. So I would say it's a way of living is what they communicated to me, rather than a practice or...But they were also both very committed artists, you know. So I think, I think maybe, maybe that had an effect too.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:04:47] And you studied with Graham at 13?

**Maggie Kast** [00:04:49] Mhmm. Just the June course, you know, it was a 1 month course. But it was...It was very memorable. I probably told you. I probably wrote about it. If I didn't, Robin Lakes, who is a Chicago dancer, also wrote about it in an article that she published in The Chronicle of Higher Education, where she was talking about better and worse methods of teaching dance and she was very shocked when I told her about the very exciting day when Martha Graham was teaching us how to do a fall from a seated position, a fall to the left. Graham dancers only fell to the left, the weak side. And so, she came up to me real close, and she said "No, I'm going to slap your face," and she did, and she slapped my face hard and I did fall to the left with full, full feeling and full surrender and we were both pleased. Of course I was shocked, but I was...I felt very honored. Robin did not think highly of that. [laughter]

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:05:46] A slap in the face from Martha Graham was a badge of honor.

**Maggie Kast** [00:05:49] Yes it was.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:05:50] I can see that. It probably wouldn't happen in a class these days, but...

**Maggie Kast** [00:05:54] Yeah, right. [laughter]

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:05:56] Wow. And so how did that technique feel on your body, was it..

**Maggie Kast** [00:06:01] That's hard to say given that I live in my body now, because my body was not made for it in the sense that, you know...Graham did a lot of things that just

she could do, you know, or other people that are built like her, but you know, to do that stuff where you sit on the floor looking like a swastika, as my parents used to say, you really have to have the inward rotation, you know, in your...And I just don't have that, at all and the older I get the less I have it. I can no more sit that way now than I can fly. And...but you know. It felt fine. I mean. You know. I liked its emotionality. I liked its emotional expression and, you know, we studied choreography in the Louis Horst method at the same time because that was part of the curriculum that Ethel had grown up with at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. So we've, you know, first we did all those pre-classic forms, you know, looking--going sideways to look medieval and so on, and then we did modern forms, and when we got to modern forms, there was a lot of, you know, expressing expressing emotion in ways that postmodern dance would think was a bit silly.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:07:07] So you were choreographing as a young student?

**Maggie Kast** [00:07:09] All the time. Yeah. All the time, yeah. So we had a choreography class on Saturdays I guess. I mean once I...When I was just, just having dance at school it would--might just be a couple times a week. But then we also, soon, me and my close girlfriends, a group of maybe five. We all studied with Ethel on the weekends also, in her studio, and then we had a choreography class as well, as well as a technique class.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:07:35] Pretty rare.

**Maggie Kast** [00:07:37] Oh yeah. Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:07:38] It was special.

**Maggie Kast** [00:07:39] It was great. Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:07:41] So you said from the moment of your first dance class on you knew you were going to dance. At what point did it become professional?

**Maggie Kast** [00:07:53] Well, I really stopped dancing when I went to college. I felt like it was going to be kind of either or in terms of having a life or being a dancer, and I mean that was not that common then. A lot of people would feel like you couldn't marry and have kids if you were going to be a dancer. So I didn't...for a period of at least...When I was in college at the University of Chicago we did have, there was a, we did have an extracurricular dance club, Orchesis? That's what it's called. Yeah, we had an Orchesis group, and that was organized by Anadel Snyder who's still alive and works for the Bellas Artes in Mexico as a dance researcher and Carl Wolz who ended up with the dance department at the University of Hawaii, but is not alive anymore. So that was the three of us, and they didn't have any faculty in dance because at that time it was one of these situations, like at the University of Wisconsin, where there were some problems with the existing tenured faculty and so they just closed the department. So yeah, there was nobody really to teach it. So we just taught our own classes. And that's when I met Neville Black and started doing some dancing with him. So, but I still wasn't sure that I was going to actually devote my life to dance at that point, until I met the man that I was going to marry, and he began insisting quietly that yes I was going to dance again. So I was still in college then. I had about a year to go, not maybe a year, just a summer to go. But he was very...In fact, he pushed me harder than I wanted to be pushed to form a company and all of that. He was older than I was, and if he had his way I would have gone out and bought a building and remodeled it and [laughter] made a company then and there. I didn't feel like I

was ready. And it was a good thing that I spent a lot of time, you know, dancing with other people and taking technique classes and so on before I had kids.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:09:50] Okay, so is college what brought you to Chicago?

**Maggie Kast** [00:09:53] Yes.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:09:55] Any particular reason why you chose University of Chicago or the city?

**Maggie Kast** [00:09:59] Well I think it was in my, in my...What you want to say...People would say DNA, but it wasn't. It was...It was in my traditions! Because my, both of my parents went there. My mother went there for undergraduate and my father went there to get his PhD in anthropology after he graduated from the University of Wisconsin, and that's where they met. So...Oh! I went...I went early! So they had at that time...that's really why I went, and I actually went to Shimer College first. I think I had the idea that I wanted to go to college. I'd had one year of high school as an early entrant at Western, so I had finished 10th grade. Western was a public high school...segregated public high school. And by the way Georgetown Day school was the first integrated school in Washington D.C. that, the private school...But this was a public school. They were all segregated at that time. So I wanted to go to college, and I think my mother wrote to the university and said, "What do you have that would be appropriate for a 15 or 16 year old?" Whatever I was then. And they wrote back about Shimer College, and Shimer College had the, what at that time, was the Hutchins program? It's like a Great Books program for undergraduates...was developed by Lawrence Kimpton who became a chancellor of the University of Chicago. But Robert Maynard Hutchins was the chancellor who developed it. And so I ended up going to Shimer and taking the same classes that you would take at the University of Chicago, in this program that, the Hutchins program, which was all general studies. There was no choices. No electives. There was no dance. There was...There was humanities. There was a three year humanities sequence and a three year social science sequence and one year of physical science and one year of biological science and one year of foreign language and I think a writing year, like English Comp, sort of. Yeah. And that's it. Then you got a BA. So. So that was how I ended up at the University of Chicago, but obviously it meant something to me also because my parents had gone there, and that's what my second book is--a coming of age story of a young woman in the '30s and in Hyde Park. So I felt...I felt close to her story, at least at that point.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:12:15] Did you miss dance during this time?

**Maggie Kast** [00:12:19] No. I think I was just ambivalent about it. I was you know...because that's when I took ballet at Stone-Camryn, and then I didn't start with the Ellises probably until I was...Until after I met Eric. Yeah, I was just, you know...I was ambivalent about it. It was...I mean like anything it's, you know, it's a hard thing to do, and...But once I...Once I met my husband...I guess it sounds like I'm saying, 'Okay check that off, now I can go dance.' But it wasn't quite like that. It was more, more of an inner thing.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:12:51] Okay so...

**Maggie Kast** [00:12:51] And he...he was persuading me you know. He felt that it was my, what would I say, my...my vocation, you know.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:12:59] So you may not have founded a company had it not been Eric's persuasion?

**Maggie Kast** [00:13:07] Yeah, who knows. That's very hard to say. I might--I certainly would not have founded a family. And I certainly would not have been the same person, but God knows what I would have done. It's very hard to say, 'if not,' you know, 'what if.'

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:13:21] So, let's talk about the company a little bit. Say what it was called?

**Maggie Kast** [00:13:28] It was Chicago Contemporary Dance Theatre, and it was incorporated in 1963, and the members of it then were myself, Trencha Schempley, and Neville Black. And we had our first concert at the 11th Street Theater, and Claudia Cassidy reviewed it. And at that time my hair was exactly the same as it is now. And she wrote in her review that I danced in a white wig [laughter]. Blonde wig! Blonde wig. Not white wig. Blonde wig.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:13:59] That's what stood out to her. [laughter]

**Maggie Kast** [00:14:00] Yeah. She said some other things but I don't remember what they were. I just always thought that was so funny. I remembered it. She was famous for mean reviews. I don't think...I don't think she said anything too mean. Later on I had some bad reviews, like from Ann Barzel who was very friendly in later years but...in the early, when I was just getting started, yeah, she was--She didn't like things that were abstract or strange you know, so.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:14:24] Right, right. Yeah. So, you met Neville and Trinta both at the university?

**Maggie Kast** [00:14:29] Oh how did I meet Trinta? Gee. Well Neville was dancing in Chicago. He wasn't connected with the university, and I don't know how I met him, and I don't remember how I met Trinta. I mean I was taking classes. Looking for people to take class from. So I might have met Trinta through Neville? I really don't know. That's a hard one. I have no idea.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:14:54] Yeah. What was the city's dance landscape like at that time?

**Maggie Kast** [00:14:59] It was zilch. There was no theater and there was no dance. The only theater that came here was travelling companies. That was before Second City, Second City was just getting started in, in bars on the South Side. So I used to go to that. You know...go and see them, and they were wonderful. Nichols and May, you know, did skits there and so on. But no. There really wasn't any. And you know, they didn't even have...I mean they didn't even have the arts programs at the University of Chicago that they have now. I mean they had no film department, obviously. They had no...The art was--They had no studio art. They did have an actual physical studio called Midway Studios, but I think it was very limited, and the music was, you know, musicology. But no. I don't think there was any actual composers or, or instrumental musicians or classes of that kind. Conservatory type classes. It was pretty much all just the study of...

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:15:50] So, given a somewhat barren landscape then, how did you navigate those early years of the company? How did you build an audience and find resources and things like that?

**Maggie Kast** [00:16:02] Well it was, you know...The expectations were lower and you know...You could find places to...I mean, I got a studio to start with through the Allegro School of Ballet because they were in the Fine Arts Building and there was an extra studio right next to theirs, and I think I just paid maybe ten dollars to be able to teach class in there, and I attracted people by teaching a class and then I...I taught ballet for them, also. So I kind of got to know their community and...So I taught there, and then soon as...Then when I had the studio which was, would be in the '60s, in the...I had, my first child was born in '66, so I started teaching then on the top floor of my house. So I had classes, you know, on a regular basis there, and, you know, I had just gotten to know people by going to class and stuff, you know, and taking classes wherever I could. And yeah. So people came to my classes, and then I gradually formed a company from them. That was a little later than Trinta and Neville I think because...I think by then probably Trinta had moved to New York, and Neville may have already gone back to Jamaica by then. And there was...There was already a dance group on the South Side. They called themselves the South Side something. Woman named Lucinda Kaufman was in that? And another one named Joanna Hall who taught for a long time and so I got to know some people through that...A woman who's still a very good friend of mine who became the associate director of my company and I still see her with some, Carter Frank. She left early in the '60s and went to New York and danced with Kenneth King for a long time but that's...She...I met her through that South Side company, and I don't know where I met everybody else. [laughter] But people did come around. I mean there was a lot of people. Then I did shared concerts at this place called The Last Stage. That would be earlier though. But Neville was in that and Trinta. So that would be like an overlap. And..so that would be throughout the '60s I think. But just like with anything, you know, you...You don't have support like you have now. You know, although I did get funding from the NEA, in the early years of the NEA, through the dance program, in the...I mean it wasn't funding like people call funding now. There was nowhere near that much money. But they did have fellowships, and in the early '70s they gave them out somewhat freely. And somewhere in there, there's pictures of concerts that I did with Carter, with Carter Frank, from that early period, from that NEA funded period, and then I got funding from the Illinois Arts Council. Never got private corporate funding I don't think.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:18:54] Was your company a 501(c)(3) or was it...

**Maggie Kast** [00:18:55] Oh yeah. Well it was, but it wasn't founded as one, which was a big mistake because it's very hard to get the 501(c)(3) if you don't start with it because they wonder what were you doing before. I just...I just didn't know that I should have done it. So I think we went a couple years without that and then when we tried to get it we had to do a lot of finagling just to show them that we really were not for profit. So yeah we were always...I mean ever after the first two years we were 501(c)(3). Otherwise we couldn't have gotten NEA or Illinois Arts Council funding. And then I did Illinois Arts and Education, this bill would be a later period. But I did that which was a state funded thing and...And then we had a long period when we were...This is much later now, in residence at the Body Politic where we were funded under the CETA program, the Comprehensive Employment Training. What's the A for? Comprehensive Employment Training something. Anyhow, it was a way of combating unemployment. And they...You got grants for, you know, for people to make like under ten thousand dollars a year. And what we did is we took that money and divided it up. So that was, we hired more people than, than we were supposed to and thus were able to have a good, good sized group of people there. For a while we had like seven people or so.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:20:13] So that money was used to hire dancers and collaborators?

**Maggie Kast** [00:20:16] Dancers and...No. Dancers and administration. That's when Alida Szabo was our first administrator? And she helped do all that with the CETA program. I think she got pretty tired of that. And yeah. So that would all be at the Body Politic and I can tell you when that was because that, that was like right after Natasha was born. So that would be in the early '70s.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:20:44] Okay. Yeah. You know, you mentioned the Body Politic as a place. That was...you just were in residence there, is that..

**Maggie Kast** [00:20:53] Yes it was...It had several different companies in residence. There was a theater company. Jim Shiflett was the head of it, the guy whose...son was recently retired as the head of the Fiction Department at Columbia?, No. I'm going to get this wrong. Now I can't think of how they were related. Anyhow, his name is Jim Shiflett, and he was a community arts organizer. And so it was a community...community based building, Body Politic. And it had a theatre company. And then it had us. We were a dance company, and they gave us a studio and we put up a barre and mirrors and so on. So we have all that and then there was a theater that we shared with a theater company. Now it's called the Green Lantern. Is that right? Green...what?

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:21:41] Oh. The new space? The Green Line...

**Maggie Kast** [00:21:45] No it's the one...it's on Lincoln Avenue at...

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:21:47] Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [00:21:47] It's called The Green something. I think it was...I think it's the Greenhouse. Anyhow, it's a theater, now, and if you go in there you can look up and see the tin ceiling that all the dancers in my company had to scrape. [laughter] I went there to see a reading, and I looked up and I saw that ceiling. And I mentioned it to Carter. She remembered scraping that ceiling.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:22:09] Okay. So I looked up...Is it now the Victory Garden?

**Maggie Kast** [00:22:13] No. It's nearby. No, it's now...It's called the Greenhouse or Green something. But it is a theater and it has, it could be Green Lantern but I think it's just Greenhouse.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:22:23] Okay. Alright. Well that's...So you've had, it sounds like, pretty good luck with spaces.

**Maggie Kast** [00:22:29] Yeah. I was really lucky to have that. Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:22:33] So in the studio and in your home...

**Maggie Kast** [00:22:37] Yeah. And you know, then I mean, but I danced in a million other spaces before that and after that. I mean after that, you know, churches and gyms and stuff but...But also before that. I mean I remember doing a concert at Parker, Francis Parker School? They have a nice theater. I remember doing one at, well again this would be later, but at the Cultural Center in the basement. You know they have that theater? The only problem with that was there's a part--This was when I was doing the organ-and-dance

concerts and the dancers had to run up and down the aisles, and at the Cultural Center they're sharply raked. So they had to run uphill [laughter]. It was very hard. But anyhow. Yeah. Those were all good things. And you know that, video of that, and I don't think I have that. But video of that concert, which included a lecture demo at the beginning? That played forever on cable access, and I would go into gas stations and people would say, "Oh, I saw you on TV." Even long after the fact. I guess they just run out of stuff to show and they keep showing it over and over. Not lately but for a long time.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:23:39] Chicago dance celebrity.

**Maggie Kast** [00:23:41] Well, gas station celebrity. [laughter]

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:23:45] That would make a good T-shirt. [laughter] So for folks who were never privileged enough to see Chicago Contemporary Dance Theatre work, how would you describe it?

**Maggie Kast** [00:23:59] Well, in the very beginning, it was [clearing throat] only my choreography or predominantly Neville's, and then Neville's and Trinta's and some other visitors that came in, like a woman named Helga Schulz and a guy whose name I've forgotten. And then for a long time it was just mine. And then it became--then when I had a bigger company, we started doing concerts that were specifically company members' choreography, and so then there was a lot of other people, and some of those were, then went into the repertory. So that would be pieces by Carter Frank and pieces by Marjorie Synakiewicz. And then we brought in Carolyn Lord, who was an old friend of mine from University of Chicago, but she had moved to New York and had gotten quite a reputation as a choreographer and she came back and did a piece for us. And that was really nice. So I did get that converted to digital one time but it didn't show anything, was really not any good. She did a piece called Spy/Counterspy. So you want to characterize it? I mean it's, it's modern leaning towards experimental. Some...maybe say if you look at a piece like that one--Oh then Jan, Jan Orchard did a piece for the company, also for my company as opposed to this one that was done for her company. And that would be more traditional modern I think? So I would say leaning towards experimental, but you know like the piece with the trombone and...Using a lot of, a lot of words. Sometimes, text. Really interested in collaboration with musicians. So a lot of that...I didn't say anything about "Tropical Juice". That was a piece for, we collaborated with, I collaborated with Douglas Ewart, the musician, who's still active with the AACM, the Academy for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. And he did a wonderful score for that. In fact I ran into him in Links sometime last year and said hello. I hadn't seen him for 25 years or more. So yeah. Collaboration with costume designers and other set designers and so on. So yeah...That--those would be the two main influences on me, would be like Graham and traditional modern and then you know. But, but a lot of ballet training and then some...I've some Cunningham, when I would go to New York and take classes, so I would say that's kind of, for Graham it's ballet. You know, is in Cunningham technique. Which is probably a bad characterization of it but so, that's how it seems to me. And then just a lot of interest in, in experimental ways of...doing dance. You know, I never saw the works of Judson Church in the '60s but I read about them. And so I really got my education through...until stuff started coming to Chicago, I got my education by reading you know, books of Marcia Siegel and reviews by what's the name of the critic for The Village Voice? Debra...something?

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:27:12] Debra Jowitt.

**Maggie Kast** [00:27:12] Yeah. And so on.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:27:16] Yeah. Okay. So let's talk about what you did. I know you were really busy running a company and having a family. Did you have much time to see other dance?

**Maggie Kast** [00:27:30] Well there wasn't so much to see here. I certainly saw everything that came through. And I remember we used to go get in the car and go up to Alverno College where they had a modern dance series--that's near Milwaukee--and see whatever came there. And then we went to Europe, and I saw some really interesting stuff in Europe, there's a woman named Jeanine Girard, I don't know if you've ever heard of her? I think she came out of Maurice Bejart? But he started--in fact he started coming here. And so I saw that early on. And then Susan Lipman had this thing called, an organization called Performing Arts Chicago, briefly, and she brought in international theater companies. And so I saw, you know, really wide variety of wonderful stuff that way and all of that, you know, influenced me. She brought in Robert Lepage from Montreal. She brought in a company from a remote part of Siberia. The Yakut People of northern Siberia. So those all influenced me a lot. So physical theater, when I got to see it, influenced me a lot. A group called Carbone Quatorze from Montreal, Carbon 14, came in and did, saw them twice. So what dance did I see...I saw Pina Bausch on film but not live. And then I saw, I mean I grew up seeing a lot, you know, I saw a lot. A lot of ballet and Graham. I saw Graham every time she came to Washington, so I saw that. What did I see then...I don't know, I just remember I saw a film once of DV8, I thought they were great. I don't know. You're just, you eat up what there is, you know. But that was not--it wasn't like today where you absolutely exhaust yourself going to see what there is in Chicago.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:29:23] Right. Yeah. And. Thinking about, you know, you referenced, what did Jim call it, the three grandmothers..

**Maggie Kast** [00:29:31] Right.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:29:31] Of Chicago dance?

**Maggie Kast** [00:29:32] Of modern--Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:29:34] You, Nana, and Shirley, they both came after you.

**Maggie Kast** [00:29:44] They certainly started before me but I don't know about coming after. I mean Nana--when I met Nana, she was dancing with Phyllis Seybold. And I did this piece, I can date it because it was the same time as the Kent State shootings. So that would've been the early '70s. I did this piece called Vietnam Story with Richard--which again was a dance play, used text and, text and movement and set design and projections and actually a leaflet dropped from the ceiling, which we did, you know. That's how they would go into into communities where they suspected that there were Vietcong fighters, they would--and couldn't tell them apart from the other people because, you know, they all looked alike, they were all Vietnamese. So they would drop leaflets, and I--and I had a friend who was actually in the army who sent me home some of these leaflets so I could see what they looked like. And you know, they, they said, they were discouraging people from feeding soldiers of the Vietcong and so on. So I duplicated those leaflets but with English, you know. So we did--did an actual leaflet drops on the audience. So that was a really good political piece I thought. And so that was with Nana, and Richard Arves was in it for a long time. And Joseph Holmes, you would know Joseph Holmes, was in it and a couple of other people that I don't know as well. So that time Nana was--I didn't--I did

something--I was in a piece that Nana choreographed, and I was never in a piece that Shirley choreographed until Jan did this piece. And then we each choreographed our own section actually. So I would say Nana was just, she was maybe just a year or two older than I was, but she was established as a dancer before I was. But I would say--and Shirley also is just a little bit older I think.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:31:31] Right, yeah. She and her company celebrating 50 years.

**Maggie Kast** [00:31:34] I know, and they're going to perform at Links.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:31:36] Right, yeah. So you know, one of the things we're really interested in is kind of just tracing these connections and roots and branches. And I know that a lot of Chicago dance exists now that we can trace back to your influence as a teacher or choreographer. Who's working in the city today or even in the past 20 years who, who has come from studying with you or dancing with you?

**Maggie Kast** [00:32:13] Well, I don't know. I mean the, the main people that I worked with would be like Carter Frank, who is not dancing now, but she danced for a long time with Kenneth King, and then Marjorie Synakiewicz is out in Oregon and doesn't dance, now. I don't know. I mean there's--I know a lot of people, but that doesn't mean that I--that they--The people that danced with me, let's see that might still be dancing...I mean, they're mostly gone to other places. I mean like Beth Leonard is, still dances in New York, with--oh Carolyn Lord has something called the Construction Company. And she has put on performances from time to time and she--Beth often choreographs pieces, Beth Leonard, so she was with me for a while...Diana Conforti is out in California...Actually her husband has become a fairly well-known movie and TV maker with HBO and maybe some others. And...but I mean people that have companies here? No, did not ever study with me. Like Hedwig. No. I don't think so. I think we've all either grown up or died or, like Richard Arves...I mean he was an artist in his own right but he did perform in Vietnam Story over a number of years, but then he left and went to Florida. So yeah, I think they're kind of all gone.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:33:39] And at what point did teaching become a part of your career...Is it after your son was born?

**Maggie Kast** [00:33:45] Well no, I've been teaching from early on, you know, from, from teaching in the Orchesis group at the University of Chicago, and at that same time I taught some classes at--for Hull House, and I taught some classes for--at Ida B Wells. I'd been teaching dance for pretty much all the time. And. Yeah. And then as soon as I was, when I was at the Lyons taking ballet, I taught ballet for little kids, to teach, teaching them to hold their arms like this [gestures], six year olds. And, and taught modern then. So I was always teaching. And then I went on to teach later. I taught dance at Valparaiso in the '90s and then, sort of segued over to, taught freshman seminar and then started teaching English after I got my MFA.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:34:35] And you also taught at Columbia right?

**Maggie Kast** [00:34:37] Yeah. Well I taught, I started teaching there with freshman seminar, because they were hiring people in all different fields to teach freshman seminar, which no longer exists. But. But I'd been teaching it at Valpo and so...[clears throat] So I taught freshman seminar and then added English. And then when they gave--dropped,

and then changed freshman seminar, I was teaching just English and I went on teaching English there until 1916. 1916? 2016.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:35:09] [laughter] Okay, yeah. But you were teaching dance as well, or?

**Maggie Kast** [00:35:12] At Columbia? No, I never taught dance. Took dance there but never taught it.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:35:15] Yeah. And obviously, you're quite a prolific writer at this point. How did writing figure in, if at all, to your dance making and performing? What's the relationship between those two, any?...

**Maggie Kast** [00:35:30] Well, you know, I did...I wrote for practical purposes, you know, like press releases and stuff. And, and, and some articles, you know. But as far as really getting interested in writing? I think that happened more after my husband died and I was...didn't have anyone to talk to. And so I started, you know, talking to the page. But it did, then, engage me pretty deeply...Gradually. And, and then dance overlapped with that, because the whole of the '90s I was both dancing and writing. And then I didn't go to MFA school until like 2000, 2001. So it was, there was a good like 10 years there of overlap...And the first things that I wrote were about dance. I wrote the first piece that I published and it was in Image Journal and it was about the sacred and contemporary choreography and I wrote about somebody that I've wanted to see ever since then and he was in Lyons when I was there at the Biennale last summer. But I didn't get to see him. it's Angel--I don't know how to pronounce his name really. But I think it's Angelin Prejocaj. He's a Romanian, and I don't know how you pronounce their names. But you know who I'm talking about?

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:36:38] Mm mm.

**Maggie Kast** [00:36:39] Well he did this piece that was performed here and you know, I went to see a lot when...I mean as soon as there was a lot to see. I've always gone to see everything. And he did this wonderful piece that was about the Annunciation. And it was just, it was very, it had this incredible...symmetrical dance, you know the--that in the Annunciation the Angel comes and speaks to Mary, and they did this incredible unison dance for these two totally different kinds of characters who were somehow communicating by means of dancing together. Anyhow it was, it was really wonderful. And I really wanted to see him and he was performing but not when I was there. So he's still around. So I wrote about that and then I wrote about Muntu. Which you know does--a lot of their performances have a very strong ritual character. And I think I probably wrote about one other. Anyhow that was the first thing that I published.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:37:39] Okay. And that was the '90s?

**Maggie Kast** [00:37:41] Oh yeah. Again, I could--I could verify that by looking at the journal but I don't remember...It was surely in the mid-90s sometime.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:37:49] And Chicago Contemporary Dance Theatre lasted until 1980 or so, is that...

**Maggie Kast** [00:37:56] I think it...I think I started using, when I started doing liturgical dance I gradually just changed the name. There is a time when I changed the name legally

and I don't know exactly when that was to cast and company, but it would be in the '90s, yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:38:12] Okay. And that sort of marked your shift into more liturgical?

**Maggie Kast** [00:38:16] Right, and I was--I did a lot of dance in churches and temples then but I also...I've got a review there from when I did that piece called "Vienna" that is titled From Sacred to Secular. So I don't know, I sort of just started kind of trying to fuzz the boundaries? And early, in 1990 I think, I went to Hong Kong to this sacred dance conference and...in fact I went with Jane Siarney, who just stayed here last weekend, and what I noticed there was a lot of the participants there came from Eastern countries, China, Japan, India, and that, you know, when people raised questions about sacred and secular, all those people from those countries said "Huh?" You know. You don't know what that means. It's all just one thing, you know. So I kind of began to feel like that's how it was for me also.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:39:06] Can you tell me more about that shift? I know from reading your book you joined the Catholic Church in the '80s. Can you just talk about the relationship between your spirituality and dance making?

**Maggie Kast** [00:39:18] Well when I, in the early days of my conversion, I really wanted to dance, I wanted to dance my spiritual feelings, my religious feelings. So I was eager to have a studying liturgy at Catholic Theological Union and I wanted to...But I always had an urge to keep, keep broadening it. You know I had, I had fantasies which fortunately were never fulfilled. I may have even written about that, of having a great dance technique Mass in my backyard, where everybody would dance. I think that might have been a problem. But I still--my interest in it keeps broadening. You know, I mean, one of my strongest mentors and most effective mentors when I first came into the church was a Jesuit named Frank Clooney who was young then. But he'd spent his, his time with...Jesuits go out to teach right after they finished their undergrad, I guess. And he'd gone to Nepal and spent a lot of time with young Hindu and Buddhist young boys, and just mixed up their religions entirely. And I mean I'm still fascinated by what he wrote about that time. You know, it's...I think it's just a broadening that seems, still seems really important to me. And in the book that I'm about--that's coming out next May, I engage with Animist religion which is a lot stranger than, than Buddhism or Hinduism. I mean at least by Western standards, you know. It's like where you really see spirits and everything.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:40:48] This is the new book, you said?

**Maggie Kast** [00:40:49] It's about the Hmong, the Hmong community.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:40:52] Okay, non-fiction?

**Maggie Kast** [00:40:54] No, it's fiction, all fiction.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:40:58] And can you kind of help me...So I was raised Catholic, and...reading about staging dances in a Catholic church, you know, even now to me I was like, 'Whoa, that would have never happened in my church growing up.' Can you just kind of just describe that a little bit and talk about how that came to be?

**Maggie Kast** [00:41:18] Oh well, you know, there's a lot of liturgical justification for it. I mean the sense that it's really important to bring your body to worship, because the whole

idea of liturgy is to change us and have us believe the church, ready to actually do something with our bodies that'll help the world, you know. So the idea of involving people was part of what Vatican II was all about, the idea of involving people--body, heart, mind, and spirit, rather than just having them sit and have something be pumped into them rather than fully participating, is not such a good idea. So when I was at St. Thom--well, they were very much in favor of that, at CTU, because a lot of what they were doing then was updating priests and sisters who were coming back to school. Post Vatican II. So there was a lot of, you know, modern theology being taught there. But then at my church of St. Thomas, the person who was the pastor then, who unfortunately is not there anymore, he was really for it, you know. And he did wonderful things himself. I mean, first of all, I mean he would, he thought it was great to have dance as part of the homily for instance. And to encourage people to move in different ways. And so sometimes, you know, because people don't like to have the Mass interfered with if they're really used to it being one way? But we did things like evening prayer during Lent where we would actually have the assembly do gestures and sitting in a smaller space like up on the altar, you know, around the, around the celebrants so that, you know, they just got used to it. And. And you know. I think we did wonderful things with liturgy when I was there, I'm sorry that doesn't really happen anymore. But for instance on Good Friday, when the whole Gospel John is read, he had the readers memorize the whole text so that they could actually speak it to each other as though they were in a real situation. And so that it became a kind of a play you know. And that was wonderful, I thought. I wasn't in that, but I watched it. And yeah. He even got up and danced sometimes even though it was not natural to him you know. So yeah. This was part of a whole, the whole renewal that started in '69 with Vatican II. And I would invite you to come up to St. Gertrude. I don't, I don't have anything to do with the dance there and I don't think, it's certainly--it's not wonderful dance, but I'm very glad that they do it, and it's done with great spirit and enthusiasm, and you can just see what a community is like. I mean they don't dance every Sunday, but in any case the gym Mass is what I go to, at St. Gertrude, and just being in a gym makes it more informal and it has very strong community emphasis including the dialogue homily, and things of that sort. So just, if you want to experience it you should come.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:44:13] It sounds like by the way you described certain of your projects and works, theatrical or liturgical or otherwise, it sounds like you have a particular sensitivity to whatever audience it was made for. There is something in your book where you talk about dance in this particular setting and how it can look or feel out of place if it's too professional. And I would like to know more even just about that especially when you combined trained dancers with folks from the church community and things like that.

**Maggie Kast** [00:44:53] Yeah. It can fall flat on its face, you know. But actually it does make me uncomfortable when somebody gets up on pointe shoes in the gym and does a little dance on Easter, you know, I don't say anything about it, but I don't think--I would much rather just see...I like--I know I did describe that, the lighting of the Advent candles? I mean I love that. And it's just the kids walking and they have a little dance they do, it's just a silly dance, you know. And they can barely get through it. And in an Advent they usually do have, you know, this--because there's four weeks, they have the littlest kids do the first week and then the kids that do it get...Then the second week, the second verse is done by older kids so by the end you see little ones and then bigger and bigger and bigger and you know that includes teenage boys sometimes. But none of them, I mean, they're not trying to dance they're just trying to do a few gestures and light the candles. And so I like that a lot better and I have, I have seen occasionally they bring out a semi-professional young lady on, with pointe shoes on Easter and I think, 'Oh God I'd rather not see that.' But you

know it's--I've lots of criticisms, but that's not important. It's just--I just like the spirit of it and I'm really glad that they do it.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:46:07] How, if at all, did your goals as a dancer or choreographer shift when you moved more into the liturgical realm?

**Maggie Kast** [00:46:17] Well, I think it started to get...meaning dominated in a way that it wasn't before. Certainly not going to call it interpretive. But it started to get--it started to come from a source that was just detached and a little bit--I mean, the way I describe it to myself was I got so that I couldn't think movement. You know, I was, I was just find--I was just finding the movements that would work for something, I wasn't really thinking, thinking with my body anymore. And that's really when I thought, you know, I don't think I really want to do this anymore. That was in the mid-90s, even though I kept on a little bit but I--that didn't feel right to me. I thought well I don't want to just fill out the space, you know. As long as I was really trying to solve a problem with my body or with movement then that felt good. But when I started just trying to like fill in with, 'We need something to do to fill out these bars of music' or something, that did not feel right. So I think that...I remember having the thought, when I got that award from the Chicago Dance Coalition? And that was in '95, thinking, 'Yeah I'll do this and then I'll quit.' Not that--I didn't, but I I think I had the sense that it was time to quit.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:47:40] Just when you got the Ruth Page Award?

**Maggie Kast** [00:47:41] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Because a lot of stuff after that just didn't feel like it was something I really wanted to do.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:47:53] You said, "As long as I was trying to solve a problem." Can you say more about that or give me an example of what that was like?

**Maggie Kast** [00:48:03] Oh! Oh maybe I haven't--I've had several images, the things that I liked in movement, that I would try to make happen. Like an appearance of a certain kind of machine, or a certain kind of interaction amongst a large number of bodies. And I love it when I see it. It's easier for me to talk about it in terms of something that I've seen that I liked, than...So I would say--Yeah, like, like--just recently, not so recently, but this past year I saw this piece by Doug Varone? That's called something about ships or migration or something. To me it looked like it was about immigration so I'd probably forgotten the title, but did you see that?

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:48:39] Was it here?

**Maggie Kast** [00:48:39] Yeah, Columbia.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:48:42] Columbia? Yeah, I did...

**Maggie Kast** [00:48:42] The Doug Varone concert. Okay. So he had this thing where he would take a large group of people. And they would be all over the place. And then suddenly they would form into a recognizable shape? But the minute the last person got there, it would break apart, and then they would go somewhere else. Do you remember that one? Well that's the sort of thing that I would love to be able to do. I obviously didn't think of it before I saw it, but there were plenty of things like that. Images I had that I would try to, try to make happen. So to me that was good. That was what I liked trying to do. Even if I didn't succeed. But when I started just like trying to fill up the space then...I

started relying more on dancers to make up movement, then. Which is okay if that's the way you want to work. But I... Yeah, I definitely was not doing it myself.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:49:33] So what would you say was one of your more challenging experiences as a dancer here in Chicago?

**Maggie Kast** [00:49:43] As a company director or as a dancer or both?

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:49:46] However you want to answer.

**Maggie Kast** [00:49:48] Well, [coughing] the first thing that comes to mind was a dirty floor? Dancing on a floor in a nursing home that had cherry pie filling on it? So that would be most challenging as a dancer. I mean, just off the top of my head. As a company director, it would be sending my company off for a residency which must have been under the dance training program in Michigan in the middle of winter, and not going myself because I was pregnant and my husband was afraid something bad would happen. I'd lost the previous pregnancy as well as losing the previous child so I kind of gave in, but I felt-- And Alida went along on that and she did not have a good time. And I felt terrible about letting them go to this cold, freezin.. place and dealing with all these schools. I don't think the dancers liked--I didn't say anything about children's shows because we did those for a long time. The dancers didn't like doing the children shows, you know, they said it was a real buzzkill. So yeah, I felt bad about that. So that's my two worst.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:50:54] Okay. And you did a lot of children's shows even though the dancers didn't like them?

**Maggie Kast** [00:50:58] Yeah. Well, they got paid for them you know. And the company got paid for them. You asked how we made money, I mean that was it. We'd had two children shows and they were both, I thought, pretty good but it's just, you know, it's not that interesting for the dancers to do. The one for little kids was called "Hop, Skip, Run, and Dance," and it used some things kind of like Sesame Street does, asking the kids to tell which dancer was different, you know. And then one for adolescent kids. I forgot what it was called, but it used Dave Brubeck's music? He's got a 9/8 piece that they used. Can't remember what it was called it's--

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:51:34] 9/8, is it "Blue Rondo"?

**Sean Rafferty** [00:51:38] "Blue Rondo."

**Maggie Kast** [00:51:38] Yeah. And I'm in love with his 7/8 piece but I don't think we actually use it, that's called "Unsquare Dance".

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:51:43] Oh yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [00:51:44] You know that one? Yeah. I don't even remember what we did in there. But we did do it quite a bit. And we did it outdoors, you know, on playgrounds and in gyms and so on.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:51:57] And how often did your company tour outside of Chicago? I know there's that, at least that once.

**Maggie Kast** [00:52:02] Well ,when, when we had the dance touring program, it would usually be just one trip at a time but that...Oh no, there was a whole period before that with Vietnam Story, when we went all over the Midwest with that in buses, in Greyhound buses. And just going to different colleges and stuff. Yeah that was uh...It was strenuous but fun, I would say.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:52:30] Tour by Greyhound bus, that's one I haven't heard. So you must not have had set or props.

**Maggie Kast** [00:52:33] Well, all we needed for that was our, our, our leaflets, and we did have a tech director that went with us so that person would work with the lights and arranged the leaflet drop. So we had to have a tech person for that, but we didn't have any other props. Just costumes.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:52:48] So we talked about challenging, what about a particularly rewarding experience?

**Maggie Kast** [00:52:58] I really liked doing travels and farewells at the old Columbia College. You know, by that I mean the dance center on Lawrence and Sheridan? Which, they did a lot of performances there actually. But because this had a lot of different kind of scene changes and it was possible there to have different things happen from different parts of the space and so on. And...I think I liked doing that a lot. I don't know. There are a lot of pieces that just didn't come off, you know. [laughter] I mean it's not all successes. I guess I liked doing Vienna, that was first done at Links I think. And yeah that was good.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:53:49] The old Links.

**Maggie Kast** [00:53:51] That was at the old Links.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:53:55] Yeah. Okay. How--what was your involvement with some of those spaces in the '70s, '80s, and '90s? Links Hall, MoMing, all the old--

**Maggie Kast** [00:54:04] Yeah, yeah. I did a lot of them at the--at MoMing? I had started doing environmental work there and I guess I called that piece City something? Maybe it was just called City. Anyhow we designed dances for each of the different spaces at MoMing. So there was a kitchen dance and a bathroom dance and some real big dances that went around the balcony and so on and the audience was just invited to move through space all during the piece, and as I scored it I was reading Anna Halprin's book there, maybe it's Lawrence Halprin's book about space? And then we did that piece again outdoors in--many times outdoors actually. But first time I think was for a fair on Lincoln Avenue. And then, you know, part of it would be done for, you know, on the street and part of it would be done inside a building and so on, and people just would go back and forth. Yeah, a lot of burnt feet when we did it in the summer when it was hot. A lot of performances, you know, I just, I can't begin to remember them all but every time I think of one of the pieces I think of well we did this in so many places, you know...And then later on with the liturgical dance I was very influenced by architecture, and a lot of things that people had written about sacred architecture, and so. I did a lot of workshops with people, speaking with people who were reluctant to dance in churches where they got to be, where they went to a church empty. But you know, and really went around improvising with different physical parts of the church. What does it feel like to have my body and the body of the church come together, you know, and that was very fruitful I think.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:55:41] Wow, yeah. And again like, at least in the church I grew up in, it's even just a radical thought to imagine, whoa, I can lay on, on this bannister. You know, just approach the space in a different physical way.

**Maggie Kast** [00:55:58] Yeah. Yeah, yeah. You know, I learned a lot from all of that...you know, from reading about the architecture and there's this one writer--can't remember his name, but he talks about the sacred path through the church that's very important, you know, put--where you go, what kind of a path you make, and how your body relates to the body of the church. So where did you grow up?

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:56:21] Northwest Ohio.

**Maggie Kast** [00:56:23] Northwest Ohio.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:56:24] Outside Toledo.

**Maggie Kast** [00:56:25] Yeah. I don't know anything about the church in Ohio, but I think it's very different from neighborhood to neighborhood, and from city to city, and from diocese to diocese, and you name it, you know. In fact I know that because there's a woman who's very active in sacred dance, I think she may have died recently, her name was Kathryn Mihelick, but she was in Ohio. And she was forbidden by her bishop to dance in church and she wrote a whole manifesto, you know, trying to justify it. Yeah. And I've just never had to deal with that.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:56:57] Did you...Were there any particular artists or dance makers working in this way that you looked toward, or..

**Maggie Kast** [00:57:06] Oh yeah. I mean there's a whole, there's a whole lot of really good people. One of them I even saw fairly recently, Carla DeSola is her name? She's got books out and articles...And then another person who was wonderful, was a big influence on me, but who disappeared as a liturgical dance person, her name was Carolyn Deitering. I even got a new name for her. Another marriage, I guess, but I've never seen anything by her since then. I don't know. But she was great. I was--At Pacific School of Religion was a big center for liturgical dance, and a guy named Doug Adams was the head of dance, there. Maybe even the head of the whole place, I don't know. But anyhow it was a multi, non-denominational school in Berkeley. On a hill for those five theological schools of different denominations. And they all kind of got together and influenced each other and--did all kinds of wonderful stuff, and they had a sacred dance week out there every summer and I went one summer and it was great. I mean we were--I worked with Carla DeSola, who I got to know then, and the InterPlay people, I think I mentioned Jane Siarney. She's currently an InterPlayer, and I don't know if you've heard of Interplay, but anyhow it's a form of improvisation using words and music and dance. And so yeah. Cynthia Winton-Henry and Phil Porter were there and I got to know them...So I got to know a whole bunch of people in liturgical dance nationally and internationally, and also at the Sacred Dance Conference in Hong Kong. So that's, that's different, you know. See, a group like the one at St. Gertrude is very insular, you know. People don't necessarily want to get together or,, you know communicate with others about it. So for instance, church dance in the Black community is very different. You know it's much more--it's actually in some ways a lot better,,, because it's very very spirited and less self-conscious. You know. They call it praise dance and they, you know, sing and, sing and clap. But the--but internationally it's much more. There is a whole body and group and groups of people. There's a--there's a whole wonderful book that was an old book now but it was...Can't

even remember the name of it but it was...this was a dance scholar that worked a lot with Doug Adams of Pacific School of Religion. Her name was Diana Apostolos-Cappadona. Long name. But anyhow...Yeah. A lot of people have written stuff about it and thought about it and so on. So it's a thing. It's out there.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:59:30] Yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [00:59:31] But it's not particularly Catholic. It's...it's essentially non-denominational. It's probably more Protestant than anything else.

**Jenai Cutcher** [00:59:38] Okay, yeah. You know, I just--I got the sense, at least from what little I know, and from my upbringing that you know maybe..You were kind of at the forefront of that, at least locally. Is that true?

**Maggie Kast** [00:59:52] No, I mean well, only in--only an isolated way. I mean because...The Black churches were doing it anyhow. And -

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:00:04] Yeah, I meant in Catholicism.

**Maggie Kast** [01:00:07] Well, I didn't know about St. Gertrude then, because I was on the South Side...But no, I was preceded by Fountain Square Fools, which...because that was a Jesuit school theology in Hyde Park that left just about the time that I got into Catholicism. But they were...they were wonderful and they--they were--but...you know a dance and theatre company. And then they went on to be in Ohio somewhere I think. Anyhow. They were at St. Thomas before I was. And I remember somebody saying, "Go in by the church," and hearing the sound of pigs squealing and not knowing what on earth this could be. And of course they were acting up the Prodigal Son. [laughter] Yeah. So no. Fountain Square Fools was before me and Betsey Beckman who was part of the Fountain Square Fools, that's a person in the sacred dance community that I know and who I saw, she was in Seattle and I went to see her with my last book and she's still publishing DVDs and sending out emails and stuff. So no, it was, I mean I was not the first at all. I went to her church when I was out there, and they were really making a specialty of communicating with the hearing and sight impaired people so they had...By the time I got there, all the people in the congregation had learned to sign a little bit. And so they were all signing the Lord's Prayer for instance. And then they also had a special...had companions for people that were blind and deaf that would communicate to them what was going on. So that was you know just--that leads people to move a lot more and not to be so self-conscious about it. But yeah it's...And Carla DeSola's Catholic. The InterPlay people are not but they--I mean--they include Catholics. Yeah. I mean, you know, like most things in this world it has, you know, both left and center and right wing parts of it.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:02:01] Right. Right. I have a few more questions but just wanted to pause and check in. Are you good? Do you need a break?

**Maggie Kast** [01:02:08] No I'm fine.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:02:09] Okay. So I guess you know my last few questions are kind of more like broad stroke things. And we've sort of touched on this in a few ways but I wanted to ask it directly. Who or what do you think helped you most...create and hone your voice as an artist?

**Maggie Kast** [01:02:43] Probably the people that I worked with like at the Body Politic. So that would be like Carter Frank and Marjorie Synakiewicz and...but also like Jan or Kurt to some extent you know by fertilization. Carolyn Lord, through, through time because, you know, I knew her way back and then she came and did a piece for us. And I learned a lot just by--I mean, I used people's individual dance styles and abilities a lot when I made work for them? So each of them from the way they moved, you know, like I did a piece for Carter based on "Order of Insects" which is a story by William Gass and she--where she turned into a bug, and she was very good at that. So I used her body for that. But Alida Szabo, very much, you know. So all--I'm thinking of all the people that were involved then...Beth Leonard, just because of the way she moved in her body. Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:03:50] And can you recall one particular point in time where you were especially satisfied or inspired by dance here in Chicago?

**Maggie Kast** [01:04:01] Oh, I think that would be mostly since it's, it's gotten to be so big. That would be things I've seen, probably, and I have seen great things and...can't think of one right now. Let me--let me come back to that.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:04:21] Okay, yeah, sure. Well, you're still involved in the dance community particularly in a service capacity, right?

**Maggie Kast** [01:04:29] Right. And that's more recent. I really got into that through my daughter who came back from arts management school and started volunteering at Links. And...Then I got, so, I kind of came in the back door there, you know. But now yeah I...I'm very interested in Walkabout, Links, Khecari. That's about it. Physical Fest...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:04:53] And you serve on all their boards?

**Maggie Kast** [01:04:54] No, I don't serve on more than one board because I can't. No, in fact when I...I do help out with those companies but I tell them that I cannot fundraise for more than one place and I'm not even good at that. I do not have friends with money in this. No, you know, it's just, it's not happening. I can't even get people to come to a show as much, like anything else. So no, I support them but I don't...I cannot be on another board. So where were we...Oh, good shows! Oh! Well, one of them is coming. This, this I saw at Links. I've seen wonderful things at Links. I mean that's, you know, I think, you know, Links is an incubator, so not everything they do is like finished or, or even wonderful. But I've seen fabulous things there so that--those would be the ones I would mention. So Walkabout Shows have been fabulous. The one that's coming is a Danish company called outofbalanz, spelt with a Z at the end? Do you know them? You should go see that, it's going to be part of Physical Fest. That is, it is a great show. I'm probably overselling it because I've been talking about it so much, but I did love it when I saw it before. The show is called Next Door, Next Door by outofbalanz. So that was great. A Mexican clown show that was at Links, not produced by them. But that's--Seth Bockley was involved in it and called "Guerra", just war. So as you can see there's not--oh, the Doug Varone piece. Oh, and then I was very influenced in terms of what I like, by Mourad Merzouki's company that came to Columbia with this, he--they called--he called himself...He called his company Compagnie Käfig? Which just...are you familiar with that? Did you see that show? Well I went to--I hardly went to the Biennale Lyons to see his work, because he was in it and I did see his work. But, but he takes street dancers, from the suburbs of the cities in France which are mostly immigrants? And they're, you know, they're people that have street names, and as dancers, and he takes their movement and choreographs. So you get this big rich tapestry of stuff that is just really very popular, but

very effective because of how it's put together. And he just did two pieces on that program, and one was called Running and one was called Water. So, you know, you don't have to ask what it's about. You know? One of the pieces was running and the other one was water. And so I love that. I mean I love that it stands for itself you know. So that was--that influenced my tastes a lot, and I've seen some things at the MCA. I don't think I can think of any right this minute but I do go to see a fair amount there and I've seen some things that I liked a lot.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:07:41] In your experience, how do you think that dance here in Chicago has shaped other facets of the city's culture?

**Maggie Kast** [01:07:50] Well I think it's kind of woken the city up to the importance of culture. Because I mean, you know, they're--look at the Logan Center. I mean the university, you know...hadn't had any live arts. And now they're bringing in experimental people...like Erica Mott had a residency there, Walkabout had a residency there. I think it's just woken up the city to to the 20, you know, 21st century, and to the arts and to the significance of the arts. And I think it's also, I mean this is partly slanted by my being at Links but I think it's also a force for integration. You know, of people of color and, and, and, and people without financial means.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:08:32] Something the city could use as much of as possible.

**Maggie Kast** [01:08:37] Absolutely, yeah...and Links is committed to that. You know, to supporting both.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:08:44] Yeah. Why do you choose to stay in Chicago?

**Maggie Kast** [01:08:49] Oh, because I'm here. [laughter] I have...I have no reason to go anywhere else. I did...You know, when my husband died, I did think of moving to San Francisco because I had family there. But then I have a son in Austria. But I had no desire to move to Austria. My, you know, my connections are all here. I mean, everything that I do is, is based here. I mean. It was a big step for me to move my house from Hyde Park to here. So that was enough.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:09:27] And when you moved here for school...were you assuming it would be temporary or at what point did you realize--

**Maggie Kast** [01:09:35] Well, when I met my husband he was already established here. He was a physician and he had a medical practice here. And so he was not about to go any further--I mean he wanted to get a house in Austria, but he was, you know, he would be glad to have two houses but. I always knew that, you know, it would be...where's the fork, where's the spoon, where's the, where's the kitchen, the mixer, you know, because I could never have two houses. My parents had a, just a cabin that was like 10 miles from their house. But that's not so bad. You could bring stuff back and forth you know. But I-- But as soon as they died I got rid of the cabin.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:10:12] Okay. I always ask this question. Or I try to always--Oh you know what, we didn't talk about Liz Lerman at all.

**Maggie Kast** [01:10:21] I...that was the last dance, real dance thing that I did. At the same time--funny, things happened to me at the same time--at the same time as I got admitted to the MFA program at Vermont College, I had gone down to her, to her...she has a

summer thing that you can go to, like two or three weeks? And then she told me if I was interested in being in the company as a senior dancer that I should go to that. So I went to it, and after--I'm just trying to remember what happened. Afterwards? I wrote her back. I did not think that I had been accepted into the company...and then at some point they wrote me back and said that they had mixed me up with somebody else or something, which is funny because this is an old friend of my sister's, I don't see how she could mix me up with somebody else. But they did. They just--they mixed me up with Margot Greenlee who also did get into the company, but anyhow I got into the company. So I was there and that--but at the same time I got into the MFA program. So I wasn't sure that I could do both, but I'd just decided I won't do anything else, and I shut everything else down. And it was only like a half time job, it was six months out of the year divided up. So it was great. I just went all over the world, all over the country and all over the world with, with Liz and all of the rest. Whenever I wasn't dancing or rehearsing I was, you know, writing. And it was really great. It was like I just--you know, I was just--I didn't do anything else and...So I did that for about a year and a half. And then, then she didn't need me anymore and that was over. It was a lot of fun. So we did, we danced to the, well the Hallelujah Project, that was the year of the Hallelujah Project. So that was, I was in Toussaint a couple of times for that, because they'd been doing that over a three year period working with all different kinds of groups. And then we brought up the--greeted the dawn of the millennium, at actual dawn, on the easternmost point of the United States which is Eastport, Maine, where it was very cold at 4:00 in the morning. Right down there on the water. And that was a community dance that we did with a whole bunch of people from the community. And she's going great guns now. I don't know if you follow her now but she's, there's a dancer from, from her current group who's just recently moved to Chicago. So I didn't know him before, but I do now, and I've been talking to him about--because he goes out there to rehearse with her every few months, and she's got a good PR team that sends out e-mails called "Team Liz" and they have videos on them and good information about what and why she's doing and so on. And yeah she's going great guns. She's been away from the Dance Exchange now for a number of years...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:13:06] And who's the dancer based here, who's working?

**Maggie Kast** [01:13:08] His name is Sam Horning. He's a young man. I don't know what he's going to do. I've talked to him a couple of times, he's gonna come help me with the brunch on Sunday you can meet him if you come then. But I got the word from the folks in Walkabout, apparently he went to one of their workshops, and they said he's great. He's a really good dancer. I've only talked to him so I don't know what kind of dancer he was at all. But apparently he's really good. You wouldn't know it to talk to him, because he's very much like, he's not sure what he wants to do, he's not sure if he wants to take class, you know...I know people like that who are maybe very talented but they probably haven't done a lot of actual dance practice. But apparently he does fabulous. So...we'll see.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:13:45] All right cool.

**Maggie Kast** [01:13:46] Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:13:47] And for you, working with Liz, was it something that you sought out?

**Maggie Kast** [01:13:52] Oh yeah. Well...I went there. I'm honored to be a member of her company when I was--I was, you know, that age. And so that's why I think--maybe I made an inquiry and she said if you're interested you should come to this three week thing. So I

went, I stayed someplace, I don't remember where, and just went to her studio every day. And yeah, I wrote about that for Contact Quarterly way back. And yeah she never...she never really liked working with me. I mean, she found me easy enough to get along with, which I always am. But she...she used to make comments about, you know. "Could the two"--if I was improvising with somebody--"could the two of you act like you actually know each other?" She wanted a lot more...I don't know. Less abstraction and more personal presence I guess.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:14:42] Mm hmm. Yeah. How. How does one get there with that sort of direction?

**Maggie Kast** [01:14:50] Oh, I don't know. I didn't, so I couldn't tell you. But yeah. I mean you know. You have to see her work, but she's--she's tremendous at, uh, working with community--communities and with anybody that has her way of doing things.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:15:11] So...I mean you've had all of these experiences, you've seen dance internationally...Is there anything in particular you could pinpoint that makes dance in Chicago distinct?

**Maggie Kast** [01:15:32] Maybe a little bit of freedom from trends? You know? Makes it a little bit different from New York, it's not so much that you have to be doing whatever is the hottest thing at the moment. So a little bit more variety, a little bit more different kinds of tastes. You can appeal to...I mean like there's Dance Crash, that's completely different from...And there's the people that--I mean I'm the--I'm on the program committee at Links the people that we choose? For the residencies? Are, you know, very different from each other. I mean they're...People are trying out lots of different things that, you know, because they have the freedom to to fail or...So some things are fairly conventional, you know? In terms of, or at least in New York might be thought of that way and some things are really very experimental. So.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:16:24] What do you think it is about Chicago that allows or supports that freedom from trends?

**Maggie Kast** [01:16:31] Oh, just...being in the Midwest, being second city.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:16:36] Less pressure?

**Maggie Kast** [01:16:37] Maybe. I mean...let's just say less value put on competition. Now I may just be speaking from a very limited point of view there, you know, that's...But I think there is this variety. I mean I see an awful big variety in what people do.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:17:00] Yeah, that's a good way to put it, less value placed on competition.

**Maggie Kast** [01:17:04] Yeah. I mean, it's not just to get to the top of the stack. You know. Because what stack? [laughter] Of which stack, maybe I should say. Yeah, because I mean like...Well, I don't know who's, I mean who's, who's replacing Yolanda at the MCA?

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:17:23] Right now? Uh, it's a woman named Tara Willis.

**Maggie Kast** [01:17:27] Yeah. No, I know Tara. Yeah well, she'll--I mean if she brings--because Yolanda was really bringing in very experimental stuff...even to the point that I

wasn't--Wasn't as many things that I wanted to see as there had been in the past. Not that I don't like the experimental stuff, it's just a lot of it was Spanish--Spanish language theater with some super titles? Which are hard to watch. But anyhow. Tara was involved in some fabulous stuff last year, you know, that was the Claudia Rankine piece, did you go see that? Wasn't that amazing? Whoo! It was incredible. Yeah, that was great. Well that's another, another really good thing. Yeah. You asked about my, my preferences and what I like and what I don't like. I'm not that interested in what Rowell unfortunately calls "pretty dance". I'm not as...I don't mind that it's, if it's beautiful, but I think that--When I feel like people are just doing stuff because they can? You know, which is often the case, you know, because you develop a certain amount of technique and you start just jumping around, because you can. That kind of modern dance...I'm pretty tired of. So I--you know I like the stuff that is a little bit more theatrical. But then the Doug Varone piece wasn't particularly that theatrical but it was just really great. I like Mark Morris, especially that piece whose name I can't say because it's three movements of a piece of music in Italian. And I don't even--you know the one I mean? It's like Il Allegretto and Il something else and Il something else.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:18:57] Okay yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [01:18:59] Have you seen that?

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:19:02] Um... I don't--what's the title of the piece itself?

**Maggie Kast** [01:19:04] This is the title. It is the title of the piece, it's--it. Yeah. Anyhow, it's pieces he hardly ever does because it takes a big orchestra. But anyhow it's wonderful, I mean...he's amazing working with music.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:19:16] Oh my gosh. I just saw Pepperland at Champaign-Urbana.

**Maggie Kast** [01:19:20] What's it called?

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:19:20] Pepperland?

**Maggie Kast** [01:19:21] I don't know that.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:19:23] He made it in 2017 and it debuted in Liverpool. It's based on...I think five or six tunes from the Sgt. Pepper album, and then five or six other Beatles songs...You know, rearranged by his--one of his musical collaborators Ethan Iverson who's a piano player. And it's, you know, like Penny Lane in a 5/4, or something like that.

**Maggie Kast** [01:19:46] Oh, I wish I could see that. I'm glad to know about it.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:19:49] Oh, it was so fantastic.

**Maggie Kast** [01:19:49] It sounds great.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:19:50] Yeah, yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [01:19:51] Yeah, there was--you know, a long time ago I had a tape from Saint Mary's. And I think it was just from a dance history class. It was Indi Dieckgrafe who teaches there. He gave it to me and there was--there was a Beatles' song that was done

by--something about a dog. I don't know if it was...I don't think--I don't think it was Mark Morris but it was Mark Morris-ish. Anyhow, whatever. It just came to mind.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:20:17] Yeah. If you dig the Beatles and Mark Morris...

**Maggie Kast** [01:20:21] That would be great.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:20:22] Yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [01:20:22] Well I just like his, his, oh, his little excursions into literalness...They are so cute. And that's, that's what he did in that classical piece. Once in a while there were--where there was a little bit of text that went with the music, he would be making you--incorporating it. Without saying it, you know, it's very nice.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:20:41] Well is there anything that we haven't covered that you want to make sure we do?

**Maggie Kast** [01:20:45] I don't think so, that's a lot of coverage there. [laughter]

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:20:50] Well we did...[SHIFT FROM INTERVIEW TO GOING THROUGH FILES]

**Maggie Kast** [01:20:50] ...from 1980 to '95. Probably is not that complete. And this one is from '95 to the present...And these are just small old flyers. And these are pics from the Last Stage which is really early, that was where--it's where Camelot High School is now, and they had a field there called the Last Stage. And so I was--Trinta was in on that.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:21:12] Okay.

**Maggie Kast** [01:21:13] So. So these are photos from that, that period and those people. So this is Neville Black, who unfortunately died, but he's in, in, in uh, he was in Jamaica. And right there that's me. And that's Trinta. And...that's Trinta, that's very, very Trinta-ish. This guy's name, Kermit Hopkins, he was a steelworker but he danced with me. Wow...So these are all just...you know, of the same. And it's--it's a good picture of Trinta. You can see her face there. She's blonde and she has a very pretty face. And so are--these are all the ones--probably look at all those--Anyhow, then these are...these are more current photos, so this would be by--I mean still a long time ago but these, uh, '91, '93.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:22:09] Okay.

**Maggie Kast** [01:22:09] [laughter] '91, '93, when you were 10, I'm sure. So these are...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:22:15] You're so organized.

**Maggie Kast** [01:22:16] Yeah, I try to be. So yeah this was the Vienna piece that has really great costumes made by Caryn Wegrarz and she--I've got the--Susan Ershow did furniture for it, that I still have upstairs.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:22:28] Okay.

**Maggie Kast** [01:22:28] You could look at that if you want, it's like a cafe table and chairs. She had been doing chairs as part of her artwork of all different varieties. So she made

chairs in the spirit of Klimt and, who's the young one, the young crazy one, Egon Schiele. Yeah so that's, so, they look like that. Now that dancer's Lee Ritchie, you know, there's a bunch of those. Bill photocopied those photos I think.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:22:52] May I?

**Maggie Kast** [01:22:52] Yeah, go through them.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:22:53] Okay. Yeah I've seen this one somewhere and--

**Maggie Kast** [01:22:57] Well, Bill Frederking put all his photos online at some point, so.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:22:59] Yeah...Yep, you can spot a Bill Frederking photo, can't you.

**Maggie Kast** [01:23:09] [laughter]

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:23:09] Gorgeous.

**Maggie Kast** [01:23:11] That was it. Solo that I did called Search.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:23:21] So this is post Chicago Contemporary Dance?

**Maggie Kast** [01:23:24] Yeah, but then it's Kast & Company Liturgical Dancers.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:23:28] Okay.

**Maggie Kast** [01:23:28] And this stuff is all, in this thing, is all like that, that, pretty '90s.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:23:33] Okay.

**Maggie Kast** [01:23:34] And these are, oh, that's Brian Saner. This says "Woman at the Well", but it's not, although it's the same period and it was done in a church. So there he is, on the church railing. That was the piece about the Hindu god Agni, the god of fire. There's Brian...Brian and me...We had good, a good costume for this designed by Caryn also, but we're not wearing it in that picture.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:24:01] And what church is this?

**Maggie Kast** [01:24:03] St. Thomas on the South Side, designed by Barry Byrne, I think? And this is from the group piece of the same, the same thing, and I have a lot of those and also in color...what, that, a lot happens is that...from that period...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:24:17] This is the same piece that based on the Hindu guy that you?...

**Maggie Kast** [01:24:21] No, that was like a little short piece that was like a curtain raiser. And this was--it was part of an Organa dance concert. So this was...if I can remember who's the music...Messiaen, Olivier Messiaen. And so it was a longish piece and this is like getting towards the end of it.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:24:39] Okay. That one you talk about in your book.

**Maggie Kast** [01:24:42] Yes. There's also pictures from--

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:24:43] Yep, mmhmm.

**Maggie Kast** [01:24:45] Okay, so. This said "Woman at the Well" but it wasn't. Let's see if there's any actual pictures of Woman at the Well. Oh yes. This is actual...This is based on the story of the woman at the well in John, John 4. Gospel. That's me and Lee Ritchie. And that is--oh, I was dancing in a church with a guy named James Yana that I worked with for a while. I don't remember what piece that was, if any. That's just a picture that was posed for the Hyde Park Herald.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:25:14] Very cool.

**Maggie Kast** [01:25:16] So we did that a lot, and a lot of, a lot of school residencies, and church things, and nursing homes, and all over the world. Uh..

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:25:31] So when you choreographed a piece like Woman at the Well did you have a certain venue in mind?

**Maggie Kast** [01:25:37] No, we just had a pitcher of water and--"We sure that it was okay to get the floor wet?" And no, it didn't. We did it and it was just supposed to be adaptable.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:25:46] Okay.

**Maggie Kast** [01:25:47] And we did do it wherever it could be done really anyway. And then these are just--let's see--maybe--some of these--Oh, these are, yeah, pictures, more of the Last Stage pictures, so you already saw those. And these are...I think these are a lot of those St. Thomas pictures. You know, we do a lot of older pictures, all social anyhow. Wow. Oh yeah. Just kind of nice to see these in color because they're quite striking.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:26:17] Oh wow. Yeah. Stained glass.

**Maggie Kast** [01:26:19] Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:26:21] It's beautiful. Yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [01:26:24] It was fun. And these are...Yeah, this is a much earlier period, when I was working with a composer named Phil Winsor? And we did a piece that involved a live brass player, I forgot what the instrument was, and three great big boxes that we had to lug around [laughter] when we went and did it on tour. And when we--that was--at that point we were supported by the Dance Touring Program, and so we went around, did it in different places. Some places it came off well, and in one little town in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, they hated us with a passion and wrote horrible things, about how it wasn't really dance it was just body movement.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:27:06] Huh. Wilkes-Barre...[laughter]

**Maggie Kast** [01:27:10] But I used that. I took that letter and made it into a display that we put up when we danced at Columbia College. A lot of...I actually can't remember all these other--Oh yeah. What I found out here was the name of this photographer, which I did not remember, Alan Cohen. When we were doing--we did some stuff with the MCA and so this took a lot more. You know, definite--Pretty much. Here's the--

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:27:36] The trombone.

**Maggie Kast** [01:27:37] The, the trombone, yeah. A lot more, um. It had to be done in a definite place just because of the big boxes. And this is me with Neville Black. So that's gotta be--I have no idea what that dance was, but it's a long time ago. It's probably even at the Last Stage. These are pictures that were taken in my studio which was on the top floor of my house in Hyde Park. It was...Can't really see much of what's going on in there. Here's the--Seth with the boxes. I think they were pretending to eat that person who was lying down. [laughter] Here, you can see what the studio looks like, which is kind of nice.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:28:21] Oh, wow...

**Maggie Kast** [01:28:22] Yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:28:23] Oh my gosh.

**Maggie Kast** [01:28:24] Yeah. It's just an attic you know. But it worked. And it had a low ceiling so you couldn't jump very high.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:28:30] But hey, it was in your house.

**Maggie Kast** [01:28:32] [laughter] Right, right. So I started really using that when I had my first kid, you know. Yeah. This is it. No this is--oh, this is a later piece but--I don't know where it was done though. So...anyhow. Too many, too many to look at everything.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:28:50] Very cool. How many works do you think you choreographed?

**Maggie Kast** [01:28:57] Oh, I don't know, I...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:28:59] Seem pretty prolific.

**Maggie Kast** [01:29:01] Yeah, I felt that way when I looked at all this just, you know, I...you forget about it. I mean...I used to keep a list you know. That was pre-computers, so I don't know if I would be able to find it. Oh I'm sure I could find something...maybe 30, maybe, something like that, just off the top of my head. And these are just folders for individual pieces, so they have like reviews and flyers and stuff like that. So if you ever want to look at any of the reviews, then...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:29:31] Cool, wow.

**Maggie Kast** [01:29:31] So I'd say yeah.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:29:35] Thank you, thank you for...

**Maggie Kast** [01:29:36] You're welcome.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:29:36] ..gathering all of this.

**Maggie Kast** [01:29:38] I just dug it out of the closet, wasn't too hard to do...except that I have to put it back.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:29:45] I can help if you need.

**Maggie Kast** [01:29:45] Oh, no, you don't have to do that. If you did that for everyone you're interviewing, you would be [laughter] lugging stuff forever.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:29:55] Yeah, this is, you know, this is the fun part.

**Maggie Kast** [01:29:57] It's great that you could, it's great that you can do some of that conversion, because it's...

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:30:00] Yeah.

**Maggie Kast** [01:30:01] Yeah, I've used a lot of different people to try to do that, and some of the things that I really couldn't get converted were seven and a half inch reel to reel sound tapes...except that, that one that says Fafa on it, that's actually one of my sons--now much too old to do this--as a child reading the introduction to a...a book of short stories by William Gass. Yes, it's just this lovely thing that he imagines, kids say, "Tell us a story Fafa," and then whatever he tries to tell them they say, "No, we want to cry, you know, make us cry," and then they say, "No, we don't want to be sad we merely want to cry," and then they keep correcting him. You know, "No, there was a snake that..." Whatever he says, they correct. Anyhow, it's just a great little sort of summary of storytelling acted out. So I used that in a piece.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:30:50] How cool...And it's your son?

**Maggie Kast** [01:30:52] Yeah. Yeah. When he was--yeah. He's now about 50 [laughter].

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:30:57] What a cool record of him, too, though.

**Maggie Kast** [01:30:58] Yeah. Yeah. I really wanted to get that recovered, because it'll never sound the same way from anybody else. And I actually used that same--quotes from that same essay in a critical essay that I published in *Writer's Chronicle*, just because it's such a great way to sort of summarize the idea of storytelling.

**Jenai Cutcher** [01:31:16] Very cool.

**Maggie Kast** [01:31:17] Yeah, I liked it.