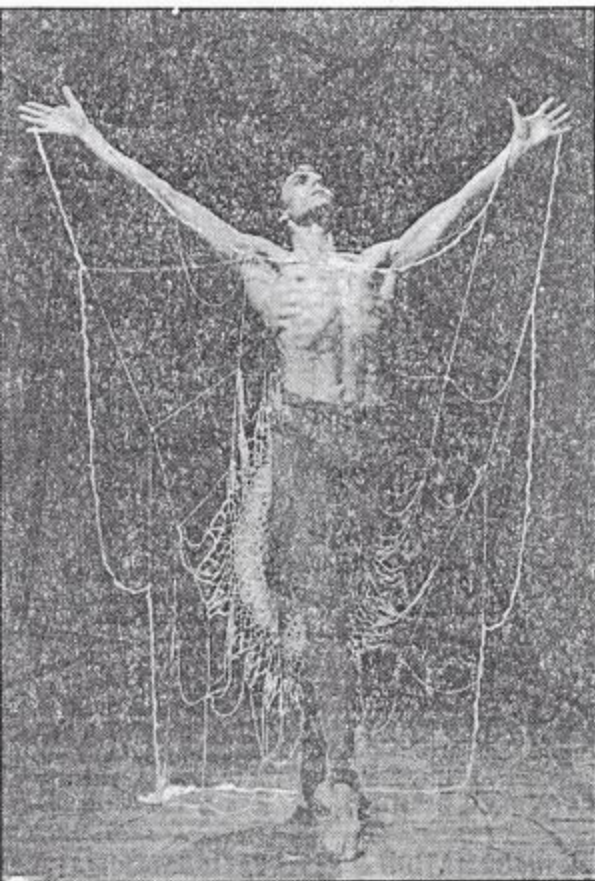


WEEKENDER

The Pittsburgh Press

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Kent Baker is part of day-long performance art

'Meltdown' caps day of experimental shows

By Ann Daly

The Pittsburgh Press

THE DIFFERENCE between one of Rick Russo and Bronwyn Rucker's "meltdowns" and a traditional stage performance is the difference between TV when it was live and TV with canned laughter.

There's excitement in the spontaneous.

The "New York/Pennsylvania Meltdown" that caps an afternoon of experimental performances Sunday at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in Shadyside will be an unrehearsed, hour-long multi-media event.

Not that total chaos will reign. Six dancers, musicians, poets and actors from New York City will improvise at intervals dictated by the roll of dice and a graphic chart.

The performers "find ways to be complementary," says Russo, but the outcome is unforeseen.

The fun of a meltdown — which is, by definition, "separate and unrelated activities happening simultaneously" — is in the process, not in any climax or grand finale.

Russo composed the framework of the piece. He is a composer in the John Cage tradition, experimenting

with chance operations and invented instruments and sound.

He adheres to Cage's mini-manifesto: "I write in order to hear what I've never yet heard."

Ms. Rucker is an actress, playwright and singer who has written and directed a number of original theatrical works. Raised in Mt. Lebanon, she graduated from Point Park College. She and Russo performed a meltdown called "Inclines" at the center in February.

Sunday's outdoor extravaganza, called "New Trends/New York: The Artpark Meltdown," will consist of new instrumental and electronic music, experimental theater, modern dance, alternative comedy, poetry and readings and performance art.

The afternoon will begin at 2 with a panel discussion entitled "New Ideas." Individual performances will proceed non-stop until "New York/Pennsylvania Meltdown" begins at 7 p.m.

Other performers Sunday will be Jackson Mac Low, poet and composer; Kent Baker, dancer and choreographer; Anthony Coleman, keyboard artist; Danitra Vance, actress and writer; and Michael Canick, musician.

Performances will be in Mellon Park.