Janis Nelson

"I'm not afraid of dying or things coming to an end. What I'm really afraid of is suffering."

Those were the words that Janis spoke as a child actor in *The Unborn,* the only film which Muriel produced and directed as part of The Production Workshop, words which she remembers to this day.

Janis was a teenager when she started studying with Muriel at the 92nd Street Y. "I was 12 or 13 or maybe 14 or 15 years old. I was always interested in acting, I wanted to perform, I had a lead in a school play, I took local classes, including ballet."

Fun fact: Her mother learned about Muriel's classes from Jessica Walter's mother, who lived in the same apartment building complex in Long Island City as they did. Jessica, who had been one of Muriel's students, was by that time performing on Broadway.

Janis' memories of Muriel are centered around friendships she had as a child growing up in New York City in the 1960's. She had a few friends from Hunter High School who studied with Muriel and who she knew before she took classes at the Y. *Maia Danziger and Ruth Katz were 2 of them." Her memories of friends and classes move in and out of her remembrance, and it was this mosaic of classes and friends that shaped her memories, moving seamlessly from one to the other as she spoke.

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These were among the first words Janis said to me when we spoke, quoting her lines from *The Unborn*. The year was 1966 and the film was based on the improvisations of the child actors as they pondered whether to choose to be born, knowing that both beauty and suffering awaited them. Janis remembers several sessions in people's home, "where we hung out and talked."

When *The Unborn* was screened at the Performing Arts Library of the New York Public Library, Maia Danziger was one of the guests and it was Maia who recognized Janis Nelson and Ruth Katz in the film. These friendships from Muriel's classes spanned decades and led to this remembrance.