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Landscapes of Dance: the 1960 Summer Workshop of Anna Halprin

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Harmony Violet Wolfe

September 2012

Thesis Committee:

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The Thesis of Harmony Violet Wolfe is approved

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INTRODUCTION

On September 6th, 2011, I participated in a movement class, called “Movement Ritual and Dance Explorations,” at Bay Area choreographer Anna Halprin’s renowned dance deck at her home in Kentfield, CA. Pulling up to her home, I was filled with nervous energy. Halprin and her deck are legendary in dance history: Halprin for her legendary contributions to modern dance on the West Coast and her dance deck for the dance luminaries that graced it such as choreographers Merce Cunningham and Meredith Monk.¹



Figure 0.1. Halprin’s dance deck. Kentfield, CA. Courtesy of the author.

¹ This thesis discusses both Anna and Lawrence Halprin, and in doing so, the question of how to reference them became a vexing question. Do I use their first names, despite no personal introduction, or do I oddly refer to them by their full names? I decided subsequent references to Anna Halprin would be Halprin, because she figures so prominently in the 1960 summer workshop and in this thesis. By referring to Lawrence Halprin using only his first name, it is not meant to demean contributions or significance.

I pushed a redwood gate open and tentatively walked down a steep set of stairs that circled around the house. After changing into sweats, I followed other students, who seemed more familiar than I with where to go, onto the dance deck. The range of textures and shapes, such the deck's non-rectangular shape, the smooth redwood slats and dappled light filtered by the trees overwhelmed me. I felt totally removed from San Francisco, from where I drove. Hanging thirty feet in the air further adds to the sensation of feeling suspended in nature.

In 1952, Halprin's partner, the landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, with lighting designer Arch Lauterer, designed the deck as a platform for her kinesthetic investigations. Lawrence designed the deck in relationship to their home and to surrounding views of Mount Tamalpais. The formal properties of the deck, such as its non-rectangular form and relative removal from the Halprins' domestic space, shaped her choreographic practice. The deck is accessed from the Halprin residence by curving steps meandering a series of madrone, oak and redwood trees. The deck is not immediately apparent from the house; rather it is perceptible through a series of glimpses. The redwood deck, ensconced by surrounding trees and tiered benches, creates the sensation of privacy from the residence while still close to it, creating a world apart. Halprin has said the deck's access to sunlight as well as the absence of conventions found in dance studios, such as mirrors, had forced her to become responsive to qualities of her improvisations. She explains, "Since there is ever-changing form

and texture and light around you, a certain drive develops towards constant experimentation and change in dance itself.”² In addition to constant experimentation, the dance deck enabled Halprin to have continued access to a studio, day or night. This accessibility supported pedagogic components of her practice, such as facilitating workshops throughout the 1960s that continue today.



Figure 0.2. Lawrence Halprin. 1960 Summer Workshop participants on Halprin dance deck. Museum of Performance and Design. San Francisco, CA.

² Lawrence Halprin, “Dance Deck in the Woods,” *Impulse* (1956): 24.

Fifty-one years earlier, Halprin had gathered with another group of individuals on the dance deck. In the summer of 1960, dancers and choreographers Shirley Ririe, June Ekman, Yvonne Rainer, Sunni Boland, Trisha Brown Lisa Strauss, John Graham, A.A. Leath, Jerrie Glover, Willis Ward, and Simone Forti; composers La Monte Young and Terry Riley; and visual artist Robert Morris, joined Halprin, amongst others, in a month-long workshop.³ Some of these dancers, composers, choreographers and visual artists would, in a few short years, inaugurate post-modern dance, experimental music and the visual arts movement known as Minimalism. These disciplines marked post-modernism in art.

In this thesis, I argue that the workshop in the summer of 1960 has resonance in subsequent works by Brown, Rainer, Forti, Young, Morris, and Halprin. I selected these particular participants because of available archival materials and due to their roles in shaping overarching fields of dance, visual arts and music. Through articulating the significance of the workshop as influential on artistic process, I frame the 1960 workshop as in concert with the larger world of the avant-garde, including Allan Kaprow's Happenings, Fluxus performances, Judson Dance Theater, Minimalist sculpture and post-war experimental music.

³ Yvonne Rainer, *Yvonne Rainer: Work 1961-73* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 312-313.

In addition, I extend the concerns of event-based performance into the lexicon of landscape architecture by acknowledging Lawrence's role in the workshop as the architect of the deck and marital collaboration with Halprin. Eventually, he adopted scores into his architectural practice, designed scores for Halprin's dances and focused on pedestrian activities in his designs of public spaces.

The Introduction presents a review of literature and situates Halprin's choreographic practice and motivations for the workshop, including a review of how participants came to be involved in the workshop. Chapter One argues that the 1960 summer workshop registered a shift in scoring from primarily a concern of music to a form adopted by choreographers and architects that allowed for innovative forms of communication between different disciplines. Chapter Two shows how the workshop introduced task movement into choreographic, sculptural and musical practices, transforming the means for generating and composing work. Both scoring and task-movement enables the interdisciplinary work that became characteristic of the era.

Archival sources for the workshop are housed in various public and private collections. The San Francisco Museum of Performance and Design houses the Anna Halprin Papers, which has included letters between workshop participants and Halprin, dance programs, photographs and scores. The Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

has an interview with Forti where she explicitly states the value of the workshop. The University of Pennsylvania's Architectural Archives contains the Lawrence Halprin Papers, which provided letters and writing on scores. The Getty Research Institute has the Yvonne Rainer Papers, which has photographs, letters and applications for subsequent workshops. Rainer's interview with Halprin also includes a discussion of the 1960 summer workshop (1965). Rainer and Forti mention the workshop in their memoirs, respectively *Feelings Are Facts* (2007) and *Handbook in Motion* (1974).

Existing scholarship on the 1960 summer workshop mostly only connects the workshop to individual artists' practices. The literature primarily exists within dance studies, especially in research focusing on West Coast practices. Peripherally located in monographs of the workshop's more acclaimed avant-garde participants, the workshop is always framed as central to that particular artist's transformation. Dance historian Sally Banes, in *Democracy's Body*, frames the workshop as crucial for improvisation in Judson Dance Theatre.⁴ Dance historian Janice Ross catalogues the workshop's key function as pedagogic. She explains that the 1960 summer workshop "created the educational context for these dancers to find themselves, the content of their dances, and to reach toward a new definition of the performing body..."; however she does not concretize

⁴ Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983) xvii.

this relationship with specific examples.⁵ In musicologist Jeremy Grimshaw's study of Young, the workshop signals an "emphasis on the bodily, physical experience of sound" that becomes a crucial feature in Young's later works.⁶

Unfortunately, however, none of the archival or secondary sources include film recordings, extensive photos, or other accounts of the workshop. Thus, this thesis engages in a historiographic problem of how to examine something that does not materially exist and that has left relatively few traces. This problem is a different issue from analyzing performance or dance, which tends to leave some materials beyond its execution, such as props, program notes or recorded documentation. I've addressed the historiographic problem by relying on interviews after the workshop and existing scholarship to reconstruct the 1960 summer workshop.

The thesis puts participants from different disciplines into conversation with each other. While existing critical accounts typically group Forti, Brown, Young, Rainer, and Morris together, introducing Lawrence to the narrative of the workshop allows us to relate concerns of landscape architecture to movement, experimental music and sculpture. My grouping, however, leaves out the

⁵ Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 153.

⁶ Jeremy Grimshaw, "Music of a More Exalted Sphere: Compositional Practice, Biography and Cosmology in the Music of La Monte Young" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2005) 151.

contributions of the workshop to other participants who did not go to New York City, such as Graham, Leath or Ririe.

I realize these goals by focusing on the workshop as a laboratory environment for individuals exchanging ideas and practices. Rather than mapping routes of influence, I argue the workshop encouraged a circulation of ideas through scoring and task-based improvisation. Scoring and task-based improvisation became strategies to develop interdisciplinary approaches in the post-war period. The workshop implicitly, like so many art practices in the post-war period, challenged disciplinary specificity between the arts.

Halprin's previous dance experience, in college, teaching, and performing, led her towards offering workshops on the dance deck. Training with Margaret H'Doubler at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1938-42, confirmed the importance of dance as a means of self-knowledge. H'Doubler's anatomical exercises stressed building knowledge through individual experience that led to self-realization rather than a career in concert dance. Following Lawrence as he studied at Harvard's School of Architecture under the tutelage of former Bauhaus-director Walter Gropius, the Halprins placed their creative practices at the center of their lives, especially as a way to understand their lives. Halprin adopted the term 'workshop' from her encounters with Bauhaus-style experimentation. In her role as teacher, she fostered an egalitarian format that

encouraged individual experimentation through her commitment to the structure of a workshop.

For Halprin, the workshop symbolized a break with the conventions of modern dance, such as working inside a studio, formulating choreography based on narrative, or using codified movement vocabulary. Retreating to the dance deck served as a way for Halprin to develop movement, composition and relationships to other art forms away from what she perceived as the boundaries and rules of American modern dance. Forti explains in an interview with art historian Virginia Spivey:

Anna Halprin had decided to let go of the modern dance and to really focus on improvisation. She had just built this outdoor deck of the studio across the bay and was starting to completely focus on developing her way to teach improvisation and to work with it.⁷

The workshop served as an incubator for Halprin to develop her choreographic practice, nurturing her growing explorations with improvisation and environmental responses to generate movement and composition. In a 1965 interview with Rainer, Halprin has said that she held the workshops as a way to connect with people who were interested in exploring ideas with her. She explains, “They simply wanted to have the opportunity to stay in contact with

⁷ Forti, Simone, interview by Virginia Spivey, July 14, 2000.

the activities I was interested in. They also wanted to explore and work together.”⁸

Several of the key participants in the summer of 1960 workshop had previously worked with Halprin or with each other. Forti had danced with Halprin since the mid-50s, in dances such as *Rites of Women* (1959).⁹ Simultaneously, Forti also taught in the dance co-operative that Halprin founded in the Bay Area and Forti’s then-husband Morris often accompanied her to Halprin’s classes while living in San Francisco.¹⁰ Forti and Rainer met through weekly improvisation jams in New York City in 1959-60. Forti persuaded Rainer to accompany her and Morris back to San Francisco.¹¹ At Halprin’s classes, they encountered composers Young and Riley. Composer John Cage put Young and Halprin in touch, recommending Halprin to Young as an individual who might be receptive to Young’s work.¹² Other participants came for reasons unrelated to their artistic practices. Brown came to the workshop in search of pedagogical tools. At that time, she taught dance at Reed College and was searching for new

⁸ Halprin, Anna, Interview by Yvonne Rainer. *The Tulane Drama Review*. 10, no 2 (Winter 1965), 142.

⁹ Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*, ed. Rachel Kaplan (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 257

¹⁰ Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, (Nova Scotia, the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 31.

¹¹ Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), 143.

¹² *Ibid*, 142.

material for the dance curriculum. She explains in an interview with Ross, “I needed to give them a dance experience without having to rely on these kinds of techniques and I had begun to work in improvisation, so that’s why I went to Ann.”¹³

After the summer workshop, in the fall, the participants that this thesis focuses on played a role in events, organization or collaborations that usher in the diverse aesthetic practices that came to be known as post-modernism. Rainer, Brown, Forti, and Emerson attended the foundational class taught by composer Robert Dunn at Cunningham’s studio that inaugurates post-modern dance through subsequent concerts at Judson Church. Young, as curator of a series of concerts at Yoko Ono’s loft, presented his event scores, performed by Morris, and Forti’s *Dance Constructions*. Scores by Morris, Young and Forti appear in *An Anthology*, Young’s 1963 tome designed by George Macunias, which also featured scores or notations by Ono and Cage. Lawrence devised a scheme for using scores as a tool for designing landscape architecture, which subsequently leads his architectural concerns into social and political realms. Halprin expanded her choreography into a “total theatre,” which eventually aligned her choreography with experiential performance.¹⁴

¹³ Ross, *Anna Halprin*, 148.

¹⁴ Halprin, *Moving Toward Life*, 256.

Using archival material, secondary literature, historical evidence and visual analysis, I will argue that Halprin's 1960 summer workshop connects to subsequent activities of its participants. I argue that scoring and task-based improvisation are two specific activities of the workshop that offered techniques, strategies, ideas, forms and tangents for participants to adopt, contest, overturn and alter in subsequent works. Thus, because the participants I focus on are linked to larger shifts in dance, music and visual arts, the workshop and its foundation in dance contributed to these shifts that formed a significant transformation of artistic practices in the twentieth-century.

CHAPTER ONE

Genealogies of Scoring: Approaches in the Practices of La Monte Young, and Anna and Lawrence Halprin

As part of her 1960 summer workshop, Anna Halprin often invited artists from other disciplines to present their ideas or projects. According to choreographer Simone Forti, experimental composer La Monte Young was one of the artists that Halprin invited to share in the workshop's open-ended afternoon sessions. In a 2010 interview with dance critic Claudia LaRocco, Forti explains,

Especially in Anna's summer workshop, the morning would be bodywork, the evening would be improvisation with different structures, the afternoon we would be working on our own or she would give assignments. Or, she would invite an outside artist to do the afternoon, and she had invited La Monte a few times.¹

In addition to leading these afternoon sessions, Young and fellow composer Terry Riley were musical directors for Halprin's 1960 summer workshop. Prior to the workshop, they had collaborated with Halprin on her 1960 dance, *Birds of America or Gardens without Walls*, contributing Young's influential proto-minimalist composition *Trio for Strings* (1958).²

¹ Simone Forti, interview by Claudia LaRocco, *The Brooklyn Rail*, April 2010.

² Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*, ed. Rachel Kaplan (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 257.

In an undated letter to Halprin, Young outlined his planned presentation of a series of sessions on scores for the workshop (Figure 1).³ Recycling a scrap of paper as stationery, he proclaimed his enthusiasm for the workshop sessions. In addition to the proposal, he complimented a concert by composer Richard Maxfield, expressing to Halprin that she may have enjoyed it. He closes the letter by referencing a previous conversation about relationships between music and dance (he thinks music and dance are related, underlining “are” for emphasis).

The proposed six sessions cover the topics of writing and performing compositions. Young planned on introducing participants to different forms of notation derived from 1950s experimental music. He proposed introducing students to tools for writing and performing their compositions by passing out a reading list, discussing what he lists as “graphic” notation and familiarizing students with then-contemporary composers and musicians.⁴ In the majority of sessions – two through four – students would encounter the works of composers and musicians through tapes and live performance. He explains, “Music will cover many composers – Schoenberg, Webern, Cage, Wolff, Feldman, Flynt,

³ While the letter does not have a date on it, the folder where it is stored in the Anna Halprin Archives at the San Francisco Museum of Performance and Design, lists the date 1960. Existing literature, from musicologist Jeremy Grimshaw, claims Young taught a series of sessions on scores for Anna’s 1960 summer workshop (see *Music of A More Exalted Sphere*, pg 149).

⁴ Grimshaw lists “graphic” notation in his research on Young’s scores during this time period and implicitly provides an explanation of the term “graphic”: “... Young expressed particular interest in open or graphic scores – or as he sometimes called them, “chart pieces” ...” (Grimshaw, *Exalted Sphere*, 115).

Ann

In further answer to last letter.

- (6 sessions would be fine. I'm enthused and already preparing and arranging the material.

basic outline

First session

lecture and noises introducing the concepts to be covered. Will pass out a reading list (only for those who want extra reading)

Sessions 2 through 4

discuss the new (graphic) notation (this is readable to anyone - non-technical). Playtapes + live performances in class of new music. Presentation of Avant-Garde Essays. ~~Then~~ Presentation of the philosophic aspects. (Music will cover many composers - Schoenberg, Webern, Cage, Wolff, Feldman, Flouret, Maxwell, Bussotti, Stockhausen, Lande, w plus ourselves).

Session 5

Terry + I will actually write on the spot + perform examples in class. Prepare them to bring new sounds or "compositions" to class next time

Session 6

Performance of their sounds and compositions in class.

I think sessions 5 + 6 will perhaps be the most valuable to them of all, especially after they've had 2 through 4.

You say you don't think ~~music~~ there is such a thing as music in relation to dance — I think I know what you mean + probably agree but I state it much differently. I think Music + dance are related. But BT think over all this in the

Figure 1.1. Front of letter from La Monte Young to Anna Halprin. 1960. Anna Halprin Archives. Box 1, Folder 76. Museum of Performance and Design. San Francisco, CA.

4) word is needed. I really mean Tio and it has
 & has been important in my thinking & action. But when I
 state it that way it probably doesn't disagree with your
 statement so well. I think Maxfield
 Sorry you didn't make it for the concert - we had
 was ship for the occasion (we had a lot of
 pieces) and I thought you would probably have enjoyed
 meeting him.

I am interested in your continuing to
 "love him what is going on" (see paragraph for
 a lot of things original are handwritten)

Count: Where am I? What's going on? (pushes both of them away)
 What has happened?
 Count: We're here to help you, don't be disturbed, sweetheart.
 & Bas: We're here to help you, to preserve your honor.
 Bas: Oh, about the page... what I said... was only some... something I suspected.
 Count: He's malicious, he's a liar, don't believe his tales.
 Count: That lady-killer has got to go. *Su & Bas.* Poor little fellow, poor little
 fellow.
 Count: (Ironically) Poor little fellow! Poor little fellow! But I have caught him
 out again.
Su & Bas. How? Where? Where? How? How? Where?
 Count: (Hesitative Sarcasm) At your cousin's... yesterday I found the door open.
 I knocked, Barbarina opened it, but she looked strange... I became suspicious... I
 looked, searched all around... (illustrates by taking hold of the dress of the chair)
 (in Tempo) ...and I lifted... gently, very gently... the cloth... from the little table.
 I saw the page... (surprised) Ah! what am I seeing? *Su.* Ah! cruel! *Bas.*
 (laughing) Ah! better and better!
Su & Bas. Count: You most virtuous woman... Nothing worse could happen... The ladies will
 do it every time... etc.
 Count: Now I understand what's going on. *Su.* Heavens, what's going to
 come of this? *Bas.* (delighted) The ladies will do it every time. There's nothing
 new about this.
 Bas: (maliciously to the count) Oh about the page... what I said... was only something
 something I suspected.
 Count: *Su & Bas.* You most virtuous woman... Nothing worse could happen... The ladies will
 do it every time... etc.
 RECITATIVE
 Count: Basilio, go get Rigoletto at once; I want him to see... *Su.* And I should like to hear
 go get him. *Count.* (to Basilio) Wait a minute. What's happened? What have you
 have? *Su.* An innocent person doesn't need no excuse. *Count.* But he'll do that
 page come in? *Su.* He was with me when you were in... we were making... go upstairs
 to intercede for him, but your arrival... he had in the...
 Count: But I saw him in that place...
 Count: And when I went behind...
 Count: However, that he has heard everything...
 Count: What's happened?
 Count: (pushing Barbarina out of the chair) ...

Figure 1.2 Back of letter from La Monte Young to Anna Halprin. 1960. Anna Halprin Archives. Box 1, Folder 76. Museum of Performance and Design. San Francisco, CA

Maxfield, Burnett, Stockhausen, Cardew, plus ourselves.”⁵ These experimental musicians and composers were key figures in transforming music and notation, whose use of unorthodox forms of scoring was part of a larger historical project of transforming music notation in order to produce new sounds; thus Young’s list in his letter to Halprin can be interpreted as a series of ideas and techniques he planned to introduce. Inclusion of early twentieth-century predecessors Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern suggest that Young planned to discuss the twelve-tone scale, a compositional method ensuring that all twelve notes are used with equal frequency. Introducing John Cage, and his protégée Christian Wolff, perhaps entailed an introduction to chance procedures and indeterminacy. Young’s inclusion of Cornelius Cardew, Henry Flynt and Richard Maxfield, and other contemporaries presumably indicated new musical directions after Cage.⁶

In the last two sessions, Young proposed that he and Riley would “actually write on the spot and perform examples in class,” then students would follow suit by composing and performing their own sounds in class.⁷ Following Halprin’s implied open-access policy, Young stressed that his material would be

⁵ La Monte Young, Letter to Anna Halprin. 1960. Anna Halprin Archives. Box 1, Folder 76. Museum of Performance and Design. San Francisco, CA.

⁶ Young likely included these individuals through encountering their works as a graduate student at Berkeley and composer Karl Stockhausen’s 1959 summer composition seminar in Darmstadt, Germany.

⁷ Young, Letter to Halprin.

“understandable” to any participant. He explained his material as “accessible to anyone – non-technical.”⁸ Thus, Young’s planned curriculum parallels Halprin’s pedagogical guidelines by introducing students to materials through observation and subsequent hands-on practice and exploration.

In this chapter, I argue that the 1960 summer workshop propels a shift in the use of scoring from a concern of musicians and composers to its proliferation in adjacent fields such as dance, architecture, and the visual arts. While diverse forms of notation for dance and architecture existed already, the collaborative exchanges encouraged by the workshop’s interdisciplinary curriculum promoted scoring as a mode of generating and organizing movement for post-war choreographers and architects. The chapter frames the workshop as shaping a liminal place between dance and music through the production of scores. Young’s presentation served as a catalyst for deploying scores as a malleable form that participants adopted, transformed and reconfigured according to their own interests and agendas.

I use the workshop as a backdrop for delineating these shifts using Young’s *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (1960) as a point of departure. I claim that Halprin reconfigures Young’s sense of indeterminacy in her score for *Bird’s of America or Gardens without Walls* (1960). Then I use Lawrence Halprin’s transformation of how scores are used for *Nicollet Transit Mall* (1962) to explore

⁸ Ibid.

how Lawrence interprets scores for landscape architecture, resulting in what he terms Motation, his system of scoring movement. Finally, I conclude with an analysis of the Halprins' *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (1968) to demonstrate how the initial encounter with Young's sense of scores expanded into the Halprins' subsequent workshops for visual artists, city planners, architects, musicians, and dancers.

La Monte Young: *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)*

Composed in October 1960, *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* is part of a larger suite of scores bearing the title *Composition 1960 #* (Figure 1.3).⁹ Young and poet Jackson Mac Low eventually published several of these in *An Anthology of Chance Procedures* (1963), a collection of scores and other materials culled from visual arts, poetry, dance and music. The short text score simply instructs the performer to "Draw a straight line and follow it." Written in the imperative tone, the statement is composed of two commands, to draw and follow.

According to art historian Branden Joseph, in this series of scores Young was responding to Cage's use of indeterminacy by exploring and questioning it.¹⁰ Joseph explains the principles structuring Cage's sense of indeterminacy as disconnecting sound from previously established meanings; reconfiguring

⁹ Jeremy Grimshaw, *Music of a More Exalted Sphere: Compositional Practice, Biography and Cosmology in the Music of La Monte Young* (PhD Diss., University of Rochester, 2005), 155.

¹⁰ Branden, Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage*, (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 92.

relationships between sound and listener; allowing interpretation to give way to “experimentation;” reshaping relationships between composer, performer, score and listener; and challenging the disciplinary status between the arts.¹¹ Young mentions Cage in his letter to Halprin, and Young may have included an explanation and demonstration of how indeterminacy could manifest in writing and performing scores.

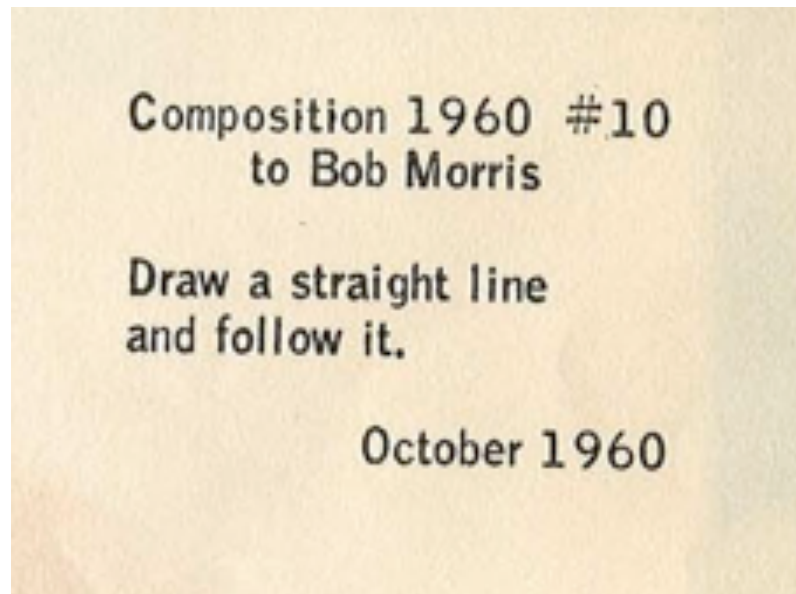


Figure 1.3. La Monte Young. *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)*. 1960.

How does Young respond to and go beyond these influential Cagean tenets in *Composition 1960 #10*? Through its extreme brevity, the openness of the score reconfigures the role of the composer, the performer, score and listener. A normative staging of these roles assigns the composer responsibility for creating a form that the performer then interprets. Instead, in this score, the distinction

¹¹ Ibid, 77-82.

between these roles becomes blurred. Young sets the frame of action but does not determine its outcome, or even specify materials or instrumentation. He articulates the primary characteristic of the line as straight but offers no other qualifiers of time or distance. He does not coordinate the performer's body along the parameters of time or space, thus the composer and performer collaborate through the score on the resulting performance. The performer's agency extends from interpretation to actively defining the materiality of the performance. The performer decides how to draw the line, where it will take place and how long it will last. This line is the result of the interpretation, indivisible from the performance of drawing it. The listener becomes aware of the visuality of sound rather than its aural property. The performer enacts visually and durationally through movement the action of the score. Joseph claims a tension emerges between the ideal of the line and inevitable shortcomings from realizing it. "Being performed was a dialectic, executed in time, between the ideal of a straight line (as the shortest distance between two points) and the inevitable alterations that arise in actual, real-world production."¹² Despite this tension (or perhaps because of it), there are several interpretations or reconfigurations of *Composition 1960 #10*. Fluxus-founder George Maciunas honored Young in his *Homage to La Monte Young*, which called for the performer to "Erase, scrape or wash away as well as possible the previously drawn line or lines of La Monte

¹² Ibid, 112.

Young or any other lines encountered, like street dividing lines, ruled (sic) paper or score lines, lines on a sports fields, lines on gaming tables, lines drawn by children on sidewalks etc” (January 12, 1962).¹³ At the 1962 Fluxus International Festival for Very New Music in Wiesbaden, Germany, Nam June Paik performed this score as *Zen for Head* (Figure 1.4).¹⁴



Figure 1.4. Nam June Paik. *Zen for Head*. 1962.

Paik dipped his head in black paint and drew a line on a scroll of white paper. The resulting trace of the line became an art object, smudging the boundary between performer and performance. Poet Yoko Ono included in her book *Grapefruit* three varying *Line Pieces* from the spring of 1964, which included the

¹³ Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 358.

¹⁴ Roberta Smith, “Nam June Paik, 73, Dies; Pioneer Whose Work Broke Cultural Barriers,” *The New York Times*. January 31, 2006.

command to draw a line with yourself “until you disappear.”¹⁵ These diverse examples illustrate what musicologist Jeremy Grimshaw claims was a primary project of the *Composition 1960 #* series:

“If there is an idea that ties all of the *Compositions 1960* together, it is their various attempts to transgress particular presuppositions about what the musically normative, from the ritual expectations one brings to a concert to the aural assumptions one makes about musical and nonmusical sounds.”¹⁶

The open structure of *Composition 1960 #10* did not merely support multiple interpretations, it enabled varying results by inspiring them.

And what might have participants in the workshop taken away from Young’s example? Young used a single, terse command to set in motion a wide range of interpretative possibilities separate and distinct from his personality. The resulting line of *Composition 1960 #10* does not bear a specific mark of its author. These characteristics may have appealed to workshop participants as a way to expand the possibilities in generating and composing movement. Halprin, especially, sought this workshop as the means for developing material specific to her own aesthetic concerns, which included supposedly natural movements that were free of habit. She explained, “I wanted to explore, in a particular way, breaking down any preconceived notions I had about what

¹⁵ Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), n.p.

¹⁶ Grimshaw, *Music from an Exalted Sphere*, 156.

dance, or movement, or composition was.”¹⁷ Using short, action words to propose movement may have inspired her and other participants, especially Forti, Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer, to explore and experiment with task-oriented movement.

Anna Halprin: *Birds of America or Gardens Without Walls*

In 1960, Halprin began choreographing *Birds of America or Gardens Without Walls*.¹⁸ The fifty-minute dance premiered at the University of British Columbia on September 24, 1960, featuring John Graham, A.A. Leath, and Anna and Daria Halprin. For musical accompaniment Halprin selected Young’s *Trio for Strings* (1958), and Patric Hickey and Jo Landor designed lighting and costumes.¹⁹ *Birds of America* is part of a suite of dances that Halprin contextualizes as breaking the boundaries between the arts and creating a “total theater.”²⁰

No detailed documentation of this dance makes a thorough description of the movement or choreography impossible. In Halprin’s *Moving Towards Life*, a collage of photographs gives some clues about the aesthetics of the dance. The photographs show dancers standing still, wearing light colored unitards and brandishing long poles (Figure 1.5). Dance critic Jack Anderson described the

¹⁷ Anna Halprin, interview by Yvonne Rainer. *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), 142.

¹⁸ Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: UC Press 2007), 139.

¹⁹ Anna Halprin, *Moving Towards Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*, ed. Rachel Kaplan (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press 1995), 257.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 256.

dance's theme as "a gentle, lyric dance suggesting basic relationships between men and women," suggesting that the choreography may have effaced a strict, overarching narrative.²¹

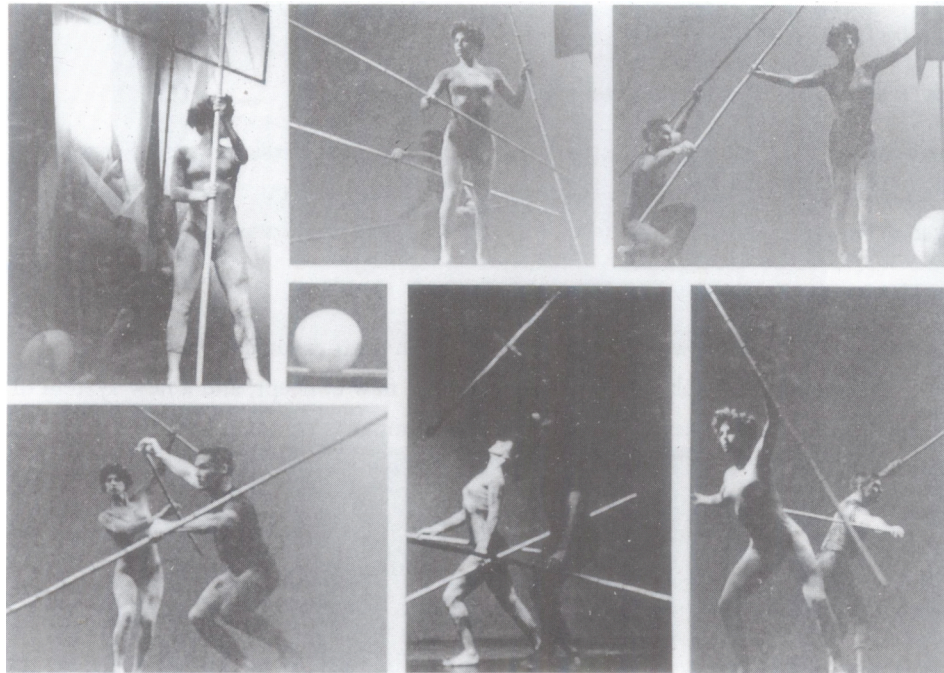


Figure 1.5. Photographs from *Birds of America or Gardens without Walls*. Chester Kestler. 1960. From *Moving Towards Life*, 80.

The one-page score for *Birds of America* demonstrates how Halprin separated movement from narrative (Figure 1.6). The score, measuring 26 by 20 inches, diagrams movement using a large circle and rectangle. The evenly drawn circle has sixty small ticks, like a clock. A multiple of five notates every five notches (5, 10, 15, etc.). Tracing the contours inside the circle is a series of curving lines. Each curved line has a circled letter near it. The letters list the alphabet

²¹ Jack Anderson, "Manifold Implications," *Dance Magazine* 37, no. 4 (April 1963): 46.

from A through F. In the center of the circle is the letter G, with a circle around it and a black 'X' appears drawn over this circle. Eight arrows point out from the letter G. The circular shape and choice of integers in multiples of five suggests this symbol temporally organizes the movement. It is round like the sun or a clock. In a 1963 interview with Anderson, Halprin admitted how sensations of nature informed her choreography.

It happened that I was looking at sunlight on a tree. For no reason at all, and without apparent preparation I became intensely aware of a foghorn in the bay, a red berry at my side, and passing birds overhead. I saw each thing first as a separate element and then as independent elements related in unpredictable ways.²²

Halprin uses the sensorial experience of elements from nature, such as the blare of the foghorn, the brightness of the berry and the sudden flight of birds occurring simultaneously and juxtaposes them to produce a contrasting structure. Adopting what she perceived as structures in nature afforded ways of producing other kinds of meaning besides synthesizing narrative gesture and dramatic expression.

On the left hand side of the score, underneath the dance title's abbreviation, is a block of text. Beneath the title is a qualifier for the dance: *Dance for 5 to 12 people*. Below this is a series of movement sequences with a corresponding letter to the letters in the circle. Each section (letter) has a

²² Ibid, 44.

a topic heading in bold, with further movement listed underneath. Yet neither the topic headings nor the movement phrases provide overt, detailed explanations of the movement quality. The layout of the rectangle effaces sequencing (how one moves from section to section), tempo and rhythm.

It is unclear what the different titles of each section on score mean. They possibly categorize each section according to key elements. For example, for section C, the bolded heading reads: **BALLS**. The text underneath it reads: *rhythmic regularity bounce roll throw high in all directions*. These words likely refer only to this particular section. The titles apparently outline who should be on stage and what props should be used during each section. This means that Section A is executed by having at least four people, of which one should be a child, on stage with poles. Therefore, the block of text explains the role of the alphabet in the circle.

The text underneath each title uses a variety of words. Some list action words without providing stage directions. Everyday verbs, such as lie, roll, sit and carry are the most common movements rather than technical terms such as *tendu*. Nor does she reference movements more strongly associated with American modern dance, such as “contraction” (Martha Graham) or “fall” (Doris Humphrey). Other sections list specific dancers, as Leath or Daria. The imperative tone of the action words suggests the words might provide a movement order, but it is unclear. Halprin’s interest in separating herself from

determining the choreographic process suggests the listed movement could be in arbitrary order, but in section E, she listed short phrases that could be interpreted as a particular movement phrase: *man carry woman on back – man separate woman/left in space – woman rejoin man – man carry woman.*

What are possible relationships between the block of text and circle? The circle could be like a clock, measuring each section (letter) according to a prescribed amount of time. The letters follow the order demonstrated on the score, sequencing from A-F. But how to explain the letter G? On the block of text, G stands for repeating any cycle. On the circle, rather than sequenced with the other sections on the perimeter of the circle, its location in the center suggests it is a dial or fulcrum around which the dance rotates. The arrows pointing outward support this suggestion. The circle could still operate as a time signature, but instead of letters sequencing in a preordained order, the sequence could be left to chance. What if the G functioned as a dial in which an arrow might be spun six times (once for each letter), determining the sequence of sections? Does each section's association along the circle reference, not the performed order, but the amount of time each section should take?

These questions offer terms for comparing the uses of indeterminacy in Young's *Composition 1960 #10* and Halprin's score for *Birds of America*. As noted above, Young located indeterminacy in several registers. The execution of *Composition 1960 #10* could not be determined in advance between the performer

and the score; between the score, performer, and composer; or between performances – all the qualities immanent to the score itself. An understanding of indeterminacy in Halprin’s work, however, would require comparing a performance of *Birds of America* and the score, but the dearth of performance records makes this impossible. Dance historian Heidi Biegel, in her research on Halprin, explains that the score obviously used indeterminacy in a more general sense of re-ordering and recombining individual elements.

The scoring method for *Birds of America or Gardens without Walls* clearly is in the realm of indeterminacy. There were a finite number of activities and elements represented...but their combinations and sequences were not known or planned by any of the performers prior to the time when Halprin...determined the score.²³

Biegel claims indeterminacy occurs between the rehearsal process (when movement was generated) and the making of the score. She implies that Halprin used indeterminacy in the making of the score, rather than using a theme, musical form, or narrative to organize the movement. Extending this interpretation, we can infer that indeterminacy was not an aspect of the performance. In other words, once Halprin organized the movement and activities on the score, the choreography was set.

²³ Heidi Biegel, “Anna Halprin: Dance Scoring as an Alternative to Choreography” (MA Thesis, University of California, Riverside, 1988), 33.

Halprin use of indeterminacy to organize movement but not inspire new configurations strongly contrasts with Young's use of it. She inserted indeterminacy in the production of the score rather than circulating in the outcome and execution of the score, as it did for Young. Yet a degree of indeterminacy exists in Halprin's dance by the mere fact of its performance. A performance is never the same twice, since a dancer's phrasing of the movement is inevitably different every time.

Halprin and Young's contrasting use of indeterminacy points to contrasting aesthetics that are manifested in their scores markedly different visual presentations. The score for *Birds of America* comprises a large sheet of paper composed of a circle and rectangle, while Young's *Composition 1960 #10* is a single statement without any graphics. While the font is perhaps an aesthetic choice, Young's score primarily uses language to propose numerous interpretations. Halprin's score also uses language but words describe the steps rather than propelling them.

Given the fundamental differences between their scores, what did Halprin draw from encountering Young and his scores? Halprin may have adopted Young's use of language yet transforms it towards her choreographic goals (which contrasts from Young's project of contending with the legacy of Cage). She appropriated the very notion of scoring as a way to efface her own biases and preferences as a choreographer, such as imposing her own version of

dogmatic technique hiding personal idiosyncrasies. Halprin uses words to describe the movement of her choreography instead of using a story or theme to divine the movements, a practice that ultimately dismantled habits caused by learning compositional and movement technique, which she saw as a hindrance to further innovations in modern dance.

Halprin continued to use scores as part of her process to organize movement and communicate with dancers and performers. Biegel explains, “Halprin has found scoring to be increasingly valuable in her explorations of movement and dance.”²⁴ She has included a score with every project proceeding from *Birds of America*, thus scoring became a vital part of Halprin’s choreographic practice and transformed the way she communicated with dancers and developed her later works with non-traditional performers.

Lawrence Halprin: *Motational Study: Nicollet Transit Mall between 6th and 7th Streets*

In addition to a professional training employing blueprints and models that in a sense embody a score function, Lawrence, as artistic and marital collaborator with Halprin, likely encountered diverse experimental graphic and textual scores through Halprin’s use of them. Integrating aspects of each other’s

²⁴ Ibid, 2.

practices into their own was common throughout their careers, resulting in spatial sensitivity for Halprin and privileging motion for Lawrence.²⁵

In 1962, Lawrence designed a complex and highly idiosyncratic score as part of his commission from the Downtown Council of Minneapolis for the landscape layout of the Nicollet Transit Mall in Minneapolis, MN (Figure 1.7).²⁶ His responsibilities as landscape architect on this project was placing, arranging and designing various objects along the mall such as kiosks, bus shelters and trash receptacles, functions that he outlined through the detailed rectangular score he termed a “Motational Study,” a term he invented. Composed of the words “motion” and “notation,” Motation refers to Lawrence’s early conception of scoring as a device to anticipate movement and thereby shape an environment. Later, he ceased using the term “motation” as the scores became associated with events. I use the term “score” to describe his activities.

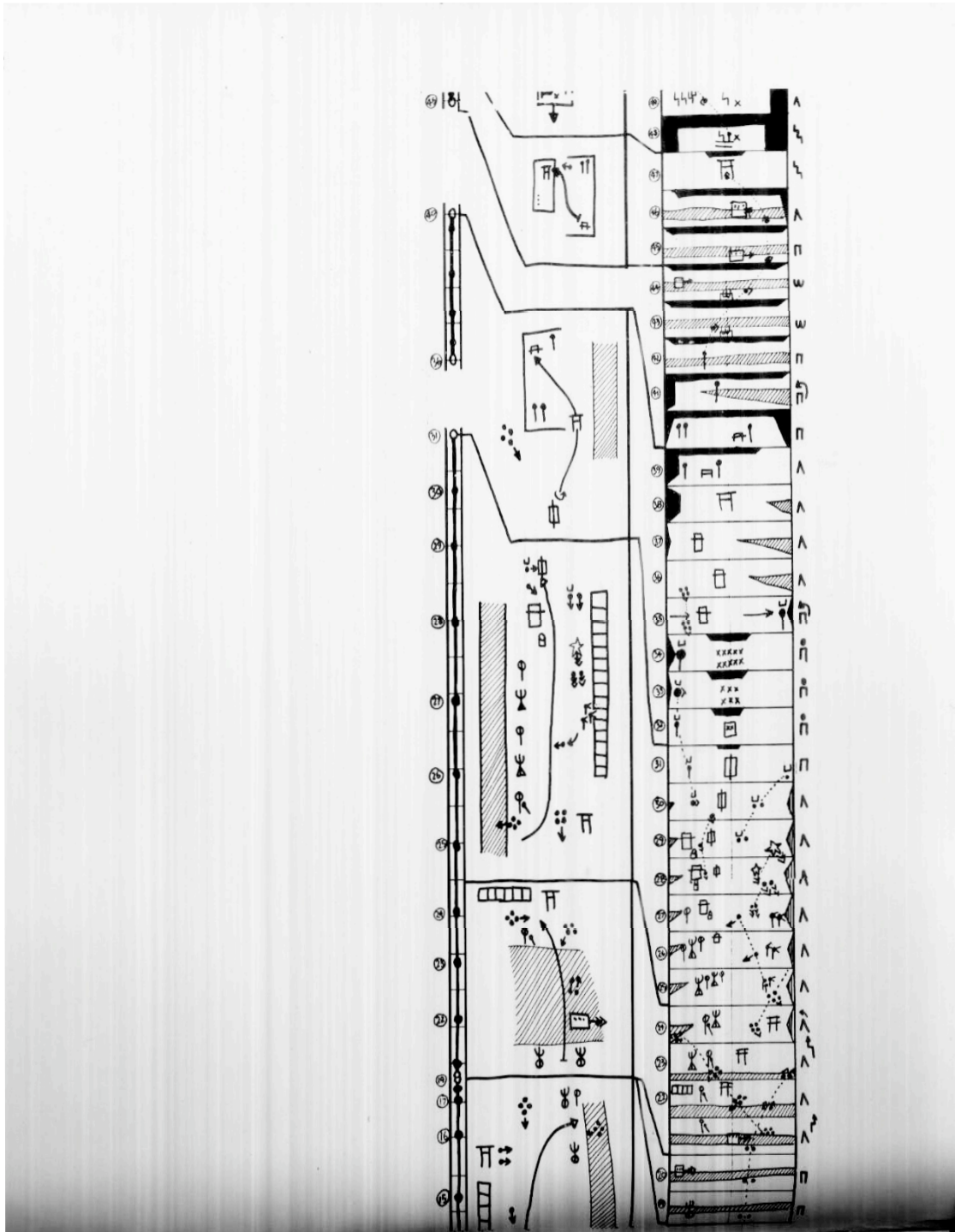
In a 1965 article for *Progressive Architecture*, he explained his reasons for creating this system. “It is imperative that we have a system to express this movement graphically – a tool that will permit us to work with movement itself as an essential and determining element in design.”²⁷ He conceptualizes movement as the key factor in architectural design – the movement determines

²⁵ Ross, *Anna Halprin*, 96.

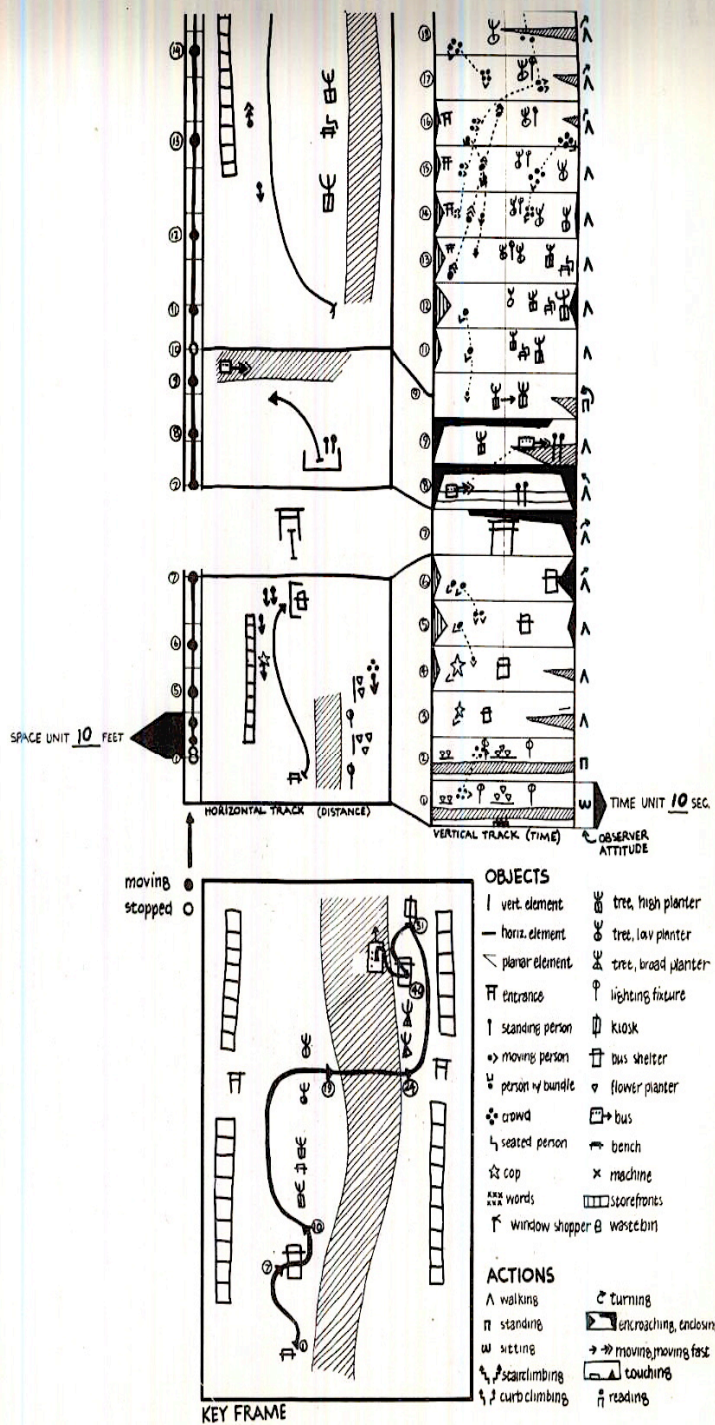
²⁶ According to architectural historian Alison Bick, the Council determined the transit scheme and serpentine pathway prior to Lawrence’s involvement, in 1955. The project was completed in 1968.

²⁷ Lawrence Halprin, “Motation,” *Progressive Architecture*, (July 1965): 126.

Figure 1.7.. Lawrence Halprin. Motational Study – Nicollet Mall Between 6th and 7th Sts. 1962. From *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment*. New York: George Braziller, 1969. 68-69.



MOTATION STUDY —
 NICOLETT MALL BETWEEN 6th AND 7th STS.
 Lawrence Halprin & Associates



the shape of a building and landscape. The idea behind Motation is that the *use* of an object or building defines the design, rather than aesthetic conventions determining the structure and appearance of an object or building. Thus, Motation is an idiosyncratic system for notating movement to generate future design.

Four rectangles comprise a Motation schema: what he termed a Horizontal Frame, a Vertical Frame, a Key Frame and a Key.²⁸ Lawrence conceptualizes these frames as sequencing movement in a series, like a filmstrip or a comic book. "The idea of the Motation system resembles the technique of the animated film in the individual pictures or 'frames,' separated in space, is relevant in time to form apparent movement."²⁹ The Motation form charts how people move in spaces, and the space itself.

As the name suggests, the Key Frame sets the scene for the other frames.³⁰ It acts as the ichnographic view of the movement, condensing the main body of the score into a smaller frame, outlining a projected path for one pedestrian. S/he walks in a curving pattern through the mall, passing through the bus shelter, crossing the street, waiting at another bus shelter and then taking the bus out of

²⁸ The Motation form is a standardized form that Halprin designed to be applicable in any design situation.

²⁹ Halprin, "Motation," 128.

³⁰ The term 'Key' has a different meaning than a key for a map. It does not mean an explanation of a symbol; instead the Key Frame centralizes the main plan for the design. The Key Frame is the condensed view of the walker's path through the transit mall, but does not explain the meaning of the path (as a map key explains what a symbol means).

the frame. Beside the Key Frame is the Key. It serves as a map key to the Motation form, explaining the meaning of important symbols, which it divides into two categories: objects and actions.³¹ Each symbol, from abstract (horizontal or vertical elements) to human (standing person, moving person, person with bundle) has a symbol and corresponding term explaining its meaning.³² The symbols suggest a circle, which Lawrence claims is the basis of all movement. “The dot, the arc and the straight line are the basic symbols.” Without Lawrence’s explanation, the symbols are too numerous to keep track of or decode, requiring a highly literate reader to comprehend them.

The remaining sections of the score elaborate on the Key and Key Frame. Horizontal Track is the main body of the score, unfolding the walking path in the Key Frame, looking at the movement from overhead. According to Lawrence, “This track is used to map the path of travel within an environment.”³³ The Horizontal Frame describes in fuller detail encounters during the walk. Adjacent to the left of the Horizontal Track is a series of rectangles, which comprise what he terms the Speed and Distance Track. The Distance Track describes the slope of

³¹ His consideration of people as objects is not lost on me here. I think it may be part of a larger, proto-Minimalist trend of treating materials (including individuals) as objects. I am thinking of how Anna treats herself and fellow performers as objects to be randomly rearranged rather than feeling subjects, which I will discuss further in an analysis of *The Five Legged Stool*.

³² He equalizes the varying materials by ordering them all under the category of objects. Placing moving people under the category of objects suggests Lawrence envisioned people employed in the same register as benches or stop signs: articles equally belonging to public spaces.

³³ *Ibid*, 129.

the walking surface, indicating degrees of elevation, therefore showing ladders, stairs or a ramp. "Special events," such as sound, smell, color or weather, are indicated in this strip. The Speed Track describes changes in speed of the walker. In the Vertical Track, to the right of the Horizontal Track, Lawrence imagined what the walker sees as s/he walks through the environment. "This track is plotted as a record of the 'normal' visual horizon – what we see ahead of us as we ride or walk."³⁴ In his forty divisions of how and what a person experiences for ten seconds (or longer), Lawrence presumed what an individual visually encounters while walking through the transit mall such as other people (boxes thirty-nine and forty) and congregating around trees and park benches (boxes nine through thirty-one). He placed various objects as miniature environments to be encountered and explored by the citizens of Minneapolis. This sense of encounter and exploration illustrates a conceptual collaboration with the future pedestrians of the transit mall.

This score demonstrates his perspective on the role of the city in the imagination of its citizens. In 1963, while designing landscape elements for the transit mall, Lawrence completed his book *Cities*, which describes and provides the score's theoretical underpinnings. According to Lawrence, "the purpose of cities is to provide a creative environment for people."³⁵ For Lawrence, creativity,

³⁴ Ibid, 129.

³⁵ Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (New York: Reinhold, 1963), 7.

rather than function or utility, is the primary characteristic of the environment and experience of cities. He defines creativity not according to individuals shaping their environment, but he explains, "By creativity, I mean a city which has a great diversity and thus allows for freedom of choice; one which generates the maximum number of interactions between people and their urban surroundings."³⁶ Despite valorizing freedom of choice, he is not encouraging people to find their design solutions to their everyday experiences. The architect still has the primary role in making this creative environment by arranging trees, sidewalks and benches.³⁷ Movement and access to movement between these materials function as the impetus for realizing creativity.³⁸

Thus the score, as Lawrence designed it, is not a framework shaping the experience of the city or a tool enabling creative expression (which is the focus of his future articulations on scoring in the RSVP Cycles). This score is not an instigator or catalyst, rather the author (architect) is the catalyst, because the architect uses the ideas generated by the score for subsequent design. Rather than a way to approximate chance, instead, the score imagines possible future uses of the space and conceives of those uses and motion through its detailed

³⁶ Ibid, 7.

³⁷ Absent from his notes or score is the economic or political factors of store locations or access to municipal government or grocery stores.

³⁸ Lawrence seemingly posits walking as the primary mode of movement accessing and conjuring creativity. Walking as a particular relationship to environment is perhaps part of an American tradition of the individual's relationship to nature that resonates with the traditions of Walt Whitman and Henry Thoreau.

inventory of activities. Lawrence's notation system recasts scores as using the body to do something – walking on a city street or circling on a stage, thus at the center of Lawrence's scoring system is the human body with an infinite capacity for movement.

Despite their different forms and uses, the scores for *Birds of America* and *Nicollet Transit Mall* consist of graphic and textual elements in an idiosyncratic form, and in doing so they transform Young's strategies through their function and use of text and symbols. Each score is composed of circles and rectangles, employing the arc, dot and line as key motifs. Placing the arc, dot and line in concert with each other may signal to a shared aesthetic history. While an architectural student at Harvard, Lawrence studied with Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus, and Anna taught dance classes for faculty. They might have encountered the notion associated with Paul Klee, also an instructor at the Bauhaus, that "a drawing is simply a line going on a walk."³⁹ Klee explained motion as the impetus synthesizing drawing and arranging lines into a cohesive form, integrating movement and graphic forms in new ways. Rather than using lines as a form of stasis as described in more conventional landscape architectural plans, lines enable the Motation form. Lines connect the tracks to pictorially elaborate them.⁴⁰ Lines also mark the pathway of the walker, which

³⁹ Paul Klee, *Notebooks Volume 1: The Thinking Eye*, (New York: Lund Humphries, 1961), 123.

⁴⁰ A conventional landscape architectural plan has contrary representation. It presents static, timeless view. Concerns such as embodiment or tactile, visual or aural experience of a space are

Lawrence used to determine the placement of landscape elements. The movement of the walker in turn describes the surrounding environment of the Nicollet Transit Mall. Yet the use of text contrasts the scores. Text functions as a way decoding the symbols in Lawrence's score. *Birds of America* uses language to initiate and propel movement.

The practical uses of these scores and scoring systems illustrate how they transformed Young's use of scores manifesting an interpretation into specific goals tailored for individual projects. The score for *Birds of America* is a choreographic device, so that a reader of *Birds of America* can conceptualize the subsequent performance; thus there is a direct relay between the drawing and the performance, commanding the choreography. The detail proffered in *Nicollet Transit Mall* requires a careful, close reading that still requires outside explanation. It does not command movement or organize it; instead its primary relationship is not to users but to its author, meaning it is not intended for the individual whose movement it describes. The score is a device for generating further design.

These formal resemblances, role of text and use ultimately point to understanding the score for *Nicollet Transit Mall* as transforming and therefore transfiguring the tenets emerging from Young and his cadre of experimental

absent. In his explanation for the Motation system, Lawrence does not address the role of line. It merely functions as one of the key motifs, amongst the dot and the arc. It does not communicate the same information as a conventional landscape architectural plan, although each drawing does try conveying an idea in three-dimensions.

composers through Halprin's task-based movement. Lawrence takes these ideas of duration, saturation and erasure of conventional notation and rotates them into strategies for his own craft. He universalizes the concept of scoring into a rational system of thought. Ultimately, Lawrence conceptualizes scoring as an activity extending outside of the realm of music or dance or literature. He defines scores as "symbolizations of processes which extend over time."⁴¹ Lawrence's definition conceives scores as an explanation of an action rather than the action itself: a score is not an action; it gets you to the action. He crystallizes his conclusions about scores in his 1969 book, *The RSVP Cycle: Creative Experiments in the Environment*. In Lawrence's idiosyncratic formulation, the RSVP cycle was an interactive process for designing environments, entailing Resources, Score, Valuation and Performance. Each letter has a corresponding meaning; R stands for Resources, S for Scores, V stands for Valuation and P for Performance. Resources are the collection of all the knowable quantities and goals in a given situation. The score, or letter S, is situated as part of a larger project realizing some ambition. Under Lawrence's conception, place becomes central for scores, demonstrated by including the term 'Environment' in the title.

⁴¹ Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (New York: George Braziller), 1969), 1.

Conclusion: The RSVP Cycles

What relationships might we trace between Lawrence's RSVP Cycles and the early models of experimental composition offered in Young's workshop presentation? In session two, Young's goal was familiarizing students with notation through their employment of pictorial or linguistic symbols, in order to encourage students to write their own, individually suited scores. It was possible no two scores would look alike. Both Anna and Lawrence Halprin adopted highly individualized scoring mechanisms, as pictorial or textural forms, and internalized them in idiosyncratic ways specific to their own individual practices. Thus the role of scores in their practices illustrates the way they ultimately reconfigured whatever demonstrations Young may have imparted in his workshop presentations. The Halprins transform scores into tools as part of a larger scheme that enables their practices. In *Birds of America*, the score was designed as a way to figure out the choreography; once the score was designed the choreography became set and the score was no longer used. In *Nicollet Transit Mall*, the score was a platform for future design; it was not the design itself. Young's conception of scoring, on the other hand, implicitly posits scores and performances of them in a causal relationship: a score causes its performance and contains within it multiple interpretations.

The RSVP Cycles illustrate how the Halprins' reconceptualized scores as part of a process. *The RSVP Cycles* outlines a four-part structure supposedly

capable of galvanizing the creative process. Each letter has a corresponding meaning; R stands for Resources, S for Scores, V stands for Valuation and P for Performance. Resources are the collection of all the knowable quantities and goals in a given situation. The score, or letter S, is situated as part of a larger project realizing some ambition. Scores, according to Lawrence, “are the vehicles by which groups carry out their activities.”⁴² The score organizes the resources and deploys them with a specific intent. As demonstrated by his various illustrations, his approach to what manifests a score is loosely organized around movement carried out in space and time. He includes everything from the I Ching to calendars and musical scores. Scores are a basic direction expressed in graphic or textual form. According to Lawrence, “there is no one method of scoring. Scores symbolize processes and cannot be separated from the process itself.”⁴³ Anything leading towards action, from pictorial representation to language, can be considered a score.

Using the RSVP Cycles as a form of communication between different artistic disciplines, the Halprins alter the summer workshops to fully integrate Lawrence and design principles. Starting in 1969, they collaborated on Experiments in the Environment, a series of workshops encouraging the integration of creativity and design. Like the 1960 summer workshop, these

⁴² Ibid, 190.

⁴³ Ibid, 190.

workshops were open to any interested individual and were taught collectively by musicians, architects, choreographers, sculptors and painters. The three scores addressed in this chapter also suggest another crucial theme of the summer workshop: pedestrian movement. Each score uses pedestrian, task movements such as walking, running and following. In the next chapter, I will examine more closely the role of task movement in the workshop and traces of it in subsequent works by Halprin, Rainer, Young and Robert Morris.

CHAPTER TWO

The Task of Improvisation: The Role of Task-based Movement in the Works of Anna Halprin, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Morris and LaMonte Young

In her 1983 book *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-1964*, dance historian Sally Banes traces the historical links between Anna Halprin's 1960 summer workshop and the subsequent activities associated with Judson Dance Theatre, the influential New York-based collective that famously inaugurated post-modern dance. Banes explains,

Several of the Judson group studied with Ann Halprin in San Francisco. From Halprin came another kind of freedom in dance: freedom to follow intuition and impulse in improvisation. Related to this freedom was a desire to be closer to nature: students worked out-of-doors on an open platform in the mountains of Marin County. Halprin also encouraged an analytic approach to anatomy and kinesiology: students were asked to understand and analyze the physical changes they experienced during the course of their improvisation.¹

Banes argued the resonance of Halprin's workshop for participants associated with Judson Dance Theater lies in Halprin's emphasis on improvisation based on biological responses and sensations. However, in a 1965 interview between Yvonne Rainer and Halprin, Rainer recalled Halprin's legacy as far more than exercises based on anatomy and kinesiology, insisting instead on the importance

¹ Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), xvii.

of task-based action and structures. She recalls, “I remember that summer I was here with you and you assigned tasks.”² These differing accounts suggest a second look at the movement in the workshop.

This chapter shows how Halprin’s 1960 workshop encouraged task-based movement as the primary form of movement from which participants would derive materials for subsequent experiments in music, sculpture and dance. In order to do this, I unearth Halprin’s own improvisation training with dance educator Margaret H’Doubler, connecting their descriptions of anatomy, biology, and task-based movement to each other and the 1960 summer workshop. This historical context crucially locates the workshop’s improvisation exercises in a specific tradition of *movement*, rather than technique, in American modern dance that focuses on self-efficacy and experimentation. After exploring task-based movement as a generative force for Halprin’s *The Five Legged Stool* (1962), I examine how task structures were adopted and reconfigured in Yvonne Rainer’s *Hand Movie* (1966), Robert Morris’s *Box with Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) and La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 #2* (1960). For each of these artists, task movement will manifest in different ways but serves the purpose of realizing their aesthetic goals of rupturing conventions in their field and transforming the normative experience of dance, sculpture or music. In arguing for the inclusion of task-based movement in histories relating the workshop to subsequent

² Anna Halprin, interview by Yvonne Rainer. *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), 147.

activities in post-modern dance, experimental music and Minimalism sculpture, this chapter shows the crucial role of task action in American art in the 1960s.

What exactly is task movement – and what is a task? A task is a pedestrian, everyday activity that anyone can do – for example brushing your teeth, sweeping a floor, or jumping rope. Defined more by pragmatic purpose rather than method, tasks are not part of a codified technique, thus they disrupt the conventions of dance technique by focusing on individual interpretation rather than learning specific steps. Eschewing training, technique, or virtuosity of execution, task-based movement encouraged the “democratic body” that scholars such as Banes found so crucial to the development of post-modern dance by redesigning the significance of the dancing body. Tasks simultaneously humanize and universalize bodies. Tasks humanize by their very form, which anyone can do, dismantling the dancer as embodying a mythological creature. In doing a task, however, the person doing it becomes emblematic of anyone, stripping the performer of narrative personality. Crucial to understanding the impact of task movement is the realization of how it encouraged *anything* to be a source for movement. The structures embedded in modern dance or ballet at that time, such as movement vocabulary, exploded when task became paramount. Movement became equivalent to any other material, thus adaptable to manipulation based on duration and repetition rather than emotional or

psychological expression. Because it is so accessible (anyone can do a task), task movement enables the interdisciplinary atmosphere crucial to the era's activities.

Improvisation

In a 1987 interview with Nancy Stark Smith, Halprin described a working definition of what improvisation might entail for her:

Now what I call movement improvisation is...if I'm sitting here right now and I were to start to improvise, it might go something like...[sitting in place, Anna spontaneously moves her arms and head and torso]. That might be an improvisation. I have absolutely no idea, it just came out of a nervous response to just being totally present. And it's nothing I could possibly be familiar with. It just came out of some physiological response.³

Halprin explained improvisation as spontaneity and biological responses based on her anatomy. She defined improvisation as the way bodies move without codified technique or conditioning, supposing bodies contain the same capacity and range according to a universally shared skeleton.

When Halprin described her early forays of improvisation with words such as "physiological" and phrases such as "nervous response," she is drawing on her training with H'Doubler, with whom she studied from 1938-42 at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. H'Doubler's background in physical education reformed dance training from emphasizing dance as an emotional

³ Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*, edited by Rachel Kaplan (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 192.

expression to a curriculum molding young women's bodies through rigorous physical and intellectual activity. She guided students through anatomical explorations of their bodies, thus teaching students about themselves using their individual bodies, and in doing so effaced an ideal, technically proficient body. The program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, prepared students to teach dance, not to pursue careers in concert dance as choreographers or performers.

In a 1945 article for *Dance Observer*, H'Doubler explained her views of dance education as "the integration of personality by means of participation in dance as a creative art experience – affording students the opportunity to know dance as a special way of experiencing aesthetic values discovered in reality."⁴ She perceived dance education as sensitizing students to aesthetic experiences by giving them tools to analyze their own experience. The ability to develop their own criteria and values carried into students' experience of the world outside the dance studio. How exactly did she achieve this feat? Dance historian Ellen Moore explains H'Doubler's role in the classroom: "She helped them find the magic of dance in their own body structures and the way they moved in space and time rather than in the body of a model external to themselves."⁵ Instead of using

⁴ Margaret H'Doubler, "A Question of Values and Terms," *Dance Observer* 12, no. 7 (August/September 1945), 83.

⁵ Ellen A. Moore, "A Recollection of Margaret H'Doubler's Class Procedure: An Environment for the Learning of Dance," *Dance Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (Autumn/Winter 1975/76), 13.

technical proficiency as a form of progress, H'Doubler placed herself as a facilitator creating the conditions for exploration and assigning her students the responsibility for negotiating their range of movement.⁶ Her approach created a forum for students to articulate and confirm their self-efficacy through conceptualizing and then embodying movement.⁷

H'Doubler began class using a human skeleton to examine a specific action and its effect on adjacent joints.⁸ The moving joint could involve any part of the body, such as rotation of the legs in the hip joints, the flexion and extension in the spine, or extension in the shoulder. Students would then re-imagine this demonstration through their own bodies while lying on the ground. They would gently explore the range of movement available in their own bodies, widening the range of movement until other body parts became involved (Figure 2.1). For example, they might investigate the range of movement in the hip joint by circling a bent knee, which could lead to rotating the torso. The preliminary exercise of exploring the hip joint developed a comprehension of the role the pelvis and its connection to the overall skeletal frame. In her classes, students progressed from lying down, to sitting, to standing, to finally moving and using different muscles surrounding the joints as themes for movement. These

⁶ Janice Ross, *Moving Lessons: Margaret H'Doubler and the Beginning of Dance in American Education* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 193.

⁷ By self-efficacy, I mean how one judges one's own competence to complete tasks and reach goals.

⁸ Moore, "A Recollection," 14.

explorations would then be arranged into movement phrases performed to varying tempo, for students to experience musical phrasing within their movement constructions. Her form of improvisation is a system of movement exercises relating physical experience with intellectual reflection in order to confirm an individual's sense of self-worth and ability to accomplish tasks they imagine in the world. This philosophy stresses the agency of an individual, her ability to make decisions, and finish projects.⁹ The confidence to pursue individual-suited projects inspired students to feel they had freedom from formal dance constraints. Dance historian Janice Ross confirms H'Doubler's vision for dance as focusing on the development of individual creativity and selfhood rather than performance. She explains that H'Doubler articulated a "vision of dance as a means for focusing on the development of self rather than performance."¹⁰ She rooted her curriculum in the scientific method of testing a hypothesis based on observation and analysis, contrasting from considering improvisation as an activity of unfettered movement.¹¹

⁹ The application of this philosophy towards conceptualizing female gender, whom dance was educating, in the early 20th century is beyond the scope of this thesis but is a topic dance historian Janice Ross examines in her analysis of H'Doubler's contributions to dance education.

¹⁰ Janice Ross, *Experience as Dance: Anna Halprin*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 29.



Figure 2.1. Margaret H'Doubler teaching a master class at Mills College in the 1970s. From *Moving Lessons*, 149.

H'Doubler and Halprin privileged dance education over dance performance. Their anatomical emphasis on individual expression with one's skeletal frame understood dance as an activity based on reason and experimentation through scientific principles. H'Doubler eschewed terms such as *plié* or *tendu*, shifting students from duplicating movement to instead inventing their own styles and movement vocabularies. The privileging of dance education instead of performance was unusual. Modern dance choreographers such as Doris Humphrey or Martha Graham had schools of dance that either prepared students for careers in performance or choreography (or both). As celebrated choreographers, they used or developed technical vocabularies that

reproduced their own ideas of movement and composition. They also adhered to more traditional tropes of choreographic convention such as A-B-A form, theme and variation, and following musical or narrative form in structuring movement. H'Doubler, and subsequently Halprin, differentiated themselves from existing dance models through their use of scientific principles and their focus on the individuality of each student.

According to Ross, the German choreographer and dancer Mary Wigman was the only concert dance model who received H'Doubler's approval.¹² Prior to the outbreak of World War II, she visited Wigman in Germany. In an interview with Ross, Halprin hypothesized why H'Doubler would have been drawn to Wigman. Halprin speculated, "the appeal of Wigman for Miss H'Doubler was that she used improvisation and was so open-ended in her approach."¹³

Although H'Doubler initiated movement from the human skeleton and Wigman styled her exercises around theories of rhythmic and spatial energies, their shared use of improvisation is a sibling relationship. Both women prioritized individual expression for their students, seeking to provide the conditions for movement exploration and invention. Dance educated individuals about themselves. Dance critic John Martin contextualized Wigman's dances as "fully revealed in its own sphere; it is not story telling or pantomime or moving

¹² Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 164.

¹³ Ibid.

sculpture or design in space or acrobatic virtuosity or musical illustration, but dance alone..."¹⁴ Martin's analysis offers Wigman's choreography as an analog to H'Doubler's focus on dance and the moving body as a vehicle for itself rather than in the service of music or narrative.

What is the relationship between H'Doubler's notion of dance improvisation and the roughly contemporaneous models of musical improvisation associated with jazz? While both shared concerns with individualism and freedom, crucial principles of jazz improvisation such as mutual understandings of rhythm, harmony, and melody, and spontaneity in performance (built from an understanding of existing compositional forms), are absent in H'Doubler's curriculum. Students executed movement without thought to spontaneity or compositional form until they mastered the desired range of movement. After H'Doubler determined they mastered the initial exercises, students accented accumulated exercises to recorded music – thus, movement was separate from theories of composition.

Halprin drew upon these theories of a dancing body espoused by H'Doubler – value on anatomy, connecting senses and intellect, experimentation – and transferred them into her burgeoning interest in pedestrian movement as a way to combat her own choreographic and movement habits. By the time of the 1960 workshop, Halprin had shifted her

¹⁴ John Martin, *America Dancing* (Brooklyn, NY: Dance Horizons, 1968), 235

improvisational practice from themes of anatomy and biology into a model of so-called task-oriented movement. In the same interview with Stark Smith, she explained her investigations in improvisation as initially focusing on the kinesthetic impulses and transiting into the kind of movements possible through tasks:

At the beginning it was mostly *pure* spontaneous movement using space, time and force for the playing of elements. Then I went into tasks like carrying logs and passing them to people, fall and stand for twenty minutes, lean on 25 things, etc.¹⁵

In contrast to the supposedly “pure” improvisation, task-oriented movement provided certain boundaries. The limitations that Halprin imposed, such as establishing the limit of *twenty* minutes, enabled her to find or invent new material. It avoided the possible circuitous route of a “spontaneous” improvisation by forcing her to process the material in a certain way. Although the means are different, task-oriented movement achieved Halprin’s goal of finding movement material supposedly unique to herself and not in service of finding universal emotional expression. Improvisation still, for Halprin, constituted the means for generating material but not the sequence of movements with relationship to music or lighting. Her dances used movement in a pre-ordered sequence that was generated by improvisational exercises.

Task movement served her choreographic and performance goals at the

¹⁵ Halprin, *Moving Toward Life*, 192.

time. In the same interview with Rainer, she explained, “Doing a task created an attitude that would bring out the movement quality into another kind of reality. It was devoid of a certain kind of introspection.”¹⁶ Thus, Halprin’s practice of improvisation, because it focused on the human skeleton as the source for movement, divorced narrative and emotion from gesture. She prioritized a physical exactitude rather than relating feelings or communicating stories from movement. Divorcing narrative and emotion from gesture, style, duration, tone and phrasing, transformed the way meaning is produced through movement by relying upon the audience to build meaning through personal associations. Conventional compositional forms such as A-B-A, narrative, or recurring themes are no longer present.¹⁷ An arm circling overhead loses narrative significance and becomes the physical fact of a rotating, extending limb.

The format of the workshop integrated both Halprin’s task-based movement and anatomical improvisations by holding movement sessions in the morning, where Halprin or another individual (sometimes dancer A.A. Leath) led exercises similar to H’Doubler’s guided explorations, and in the evening improvisation jams, where participants could explore movement ideas and prompts at their own pace. Rainer recalled of the workshop format, “In the

¹⁶ Halprin interview with Rainer, 147

¹⁷ A-B-A is a compositional form where a section of choreography is designated A, another is designated B and they are repeated after each other. The repetition gives a specific beginning, middle and end, and a sense of structural closure.

afternoon we worked on short projects and assignments involving objects, tasks, fragmented speech or vocal sounds.”¹⁸ In the workshop, movement covered both anatomical explorations and task-based movement that Banes and Rainer described earlier as characteristic of the workshop.

Anna Halprin: *The Five Legged Stool*

At the conclusion of her 1960 summer workshop, Halprin began rehearsal for an evening-length dance that eventually resulted in the fifty-minute dance *The Five-Legged Stool*. Premiering on April 29, 1962, at the San Francisco Playhouse, it featured Halprin, John Graham, Lynne Palmer, and Leath.¹⁹ Lawrence Halprin, with colleague Curtis Schreier, produced the score for the dance in the same year (Figure 2.2).

The plotless dance overlapped pedestrian activities, objects, and music without revealing a clear narrative or thematic structure. The performers did not appear as themselves or as specific characters. Instead, they appeared as archetypes with the titles of Woman or Man. Task movement such as moving bottles across the stage, running through the audience, and talking casually occurred. No part leads to any other part; objects and movement are discarded without indicating individual motivation for doing so. Objects such as bottles, scarves, feathers, candles, and a tricycle also played a role in the choreography

¹⁸ Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 193.

¹⁹ Halprin, *Moving Towards Life*, 258.

and staging, used as props or crowding the stage. The performers' are costumed in real clothes, such as Halprin's sparkly dress and heels or Leath's suit. The resulting effect of task movement and everyday objects crowded the spectator with visual, aural and tactile sensations without leading to any specific moral or purpose.

The dance demonstrated Halprin's burgeoning interest in a "total theatre" to challenge audience and performers' expectation of what constitutes dance.²⁰ Task movement enabled this choreographic goal by situating a particular relationship between spectator and performer. Task movement confronted the audience with natural movements that in turn emphasized the materiality of their bodies rather than virtuosity or spectacle. After moving forty-nine bottles, Halprin became exhausted and lay down. Leath bicycled around the stage, working up a sweat. Movement was not slowed down or speeded up according to musical tempo or narrative. The tasks of moving bottles and bicycling forced the audience to watch the entirety of their movement and exposed the duration of time involved in completing the task.

Such use of task movement showed Halprin's process. In developing tasks for the dance, Halprin did not develop an idiosyncratic movement system or vocabulary. The task itself was the movement. The movement performed, such

²⁰Ibid, 256.

as Leath removing his trousers, was executed without decorative flourish or emphasis. Tasks also blurred the roles of performers, musicians, set designers. Juxtaposing visual arts, music and movement, Halprin confused the roles of the performers, musicians and set designers. In the same interview with Rainer, Halprin provided an anecdote of this experiment:

For example, in Act II, I wanted to keep bringing objects out and putting them down and going back, taking objects out and putting them down. The painter we were working with, Jo Landor, kept watching this going on and one day she came in with forty wine bottles and said, "Here, I want you to bring these in." She almost set the kind of movement I did. It's pretty hard for me to know who choreographed that work, Jo Landor or me.²¹

Task movement transformed discipline-specific roles and responsibilities, proposing innovative ways to collaborate. Dancers became concerned with the imagery of their movement, set designers choreographed movement for theatrical elements and humans, and musicians focused their attention on where sound occurred in space.

Yvonne Rainer: *Hand Movie*

As a student during the 1960 summer workshop, Rainer witnessed and experienced the wide range of improvisatory investigations that Halprin embarked upon at her dance deck in Kentfield. She recalls the memory of task

²¹ Halprin interview with Rainer, 147.

movement: "But as I understood it, the tasks were to make you become aware of your body. It wasn't necessary to retain the task but to do the movement or the kinesthetic thing that the task brought about."²² Task-based improvisation generated movement predicated on the performer's physical range rather than emotional expression. In *Hand Movie*, a short, 1966 film, she adopts the separation of narrative from emotional gesture by integrating formal properties of her material, the body, such as duration and texture into her practice.

Hand Movie is a silent, black and white, five-minute film of Rainer moving only her right hand. Shot by fellow dancer William Davis while Rainer convalesced from major surgery, the film presents Rainer's hand stretching through various poses and stances. The film's title, like *The Five Legged Stool*, does not explain a narrative or plot involving the hand and what journey it might experience. The title ambiguously references a hand without any other signifying factors.

Already shown in the first frame, Rainer's hand is presented as an object, against a white background. The attached forearm, shoulder, or neck is never shown. It does not enter or exit the camera's eye at any point during the film, thus announcing itself as an enduring presence. In discussing her choreographic interests at this time, Rainer implicitly explains task movement forces a certain

²²Ibid.

relationship between performer and spectator because the “actual time it takes the actual weight of the body to go through the prescribed motions.”²³ The performer confronts the spectator with the duration of the movement, requiring the spectator to take the time to see the work. In *Hand Movie*, Rainer’s use of task movement initiates that relationship between her performing hands and the spectator by isolating the hands from any psychological references on a crisp white background. Like a butterfly pinned to a neutral background, the hands are objects for analysis.



Figure 2.3. Yvonne Rainer. Still from *Hand Movie*. 1966. 8 mm black and white film, silent, 5 min. Cinematographer: William Davis.

Rather than logically moving each finger from left to right, the middle finger begins moving, curving towards us. The arm attached to the hand rotates,

²³ Yvonne Rainer, *Work 1961-73* (New York: New York University Press, 1974), 67.

showing us the palm side. Rainer's ring and pinkie finger press against the others as the tendons tighten into a fist and stretch into an exclamation. She presents the hand, 'in profile,' displaying its range of motion and capacity for moving in a various directions. Like Halprin's anatomical explorations of flexion in a human body's joints, Rainer investigates the range of her wrist and individual fingers. Individual fingers press together and slide along the ridges of skin around nails, folding gently into various arrangements permitted by the range of motion. The anatomy of her hand, not the choreographer Yvonne Rainer, stars in the film. The cast of actors includes her tendons, fingers and thumb. The dissolution of individual from body parts is parallel to Halprin's separating character from performer. The hand inconclusively sequences through permutations of finger crossing or rotation. The film does not reach or resolve a specific tension. Each finger gently explores its range and articulation at an even pace. At one point, the hand darts halfway outside the frame, quivering slightly as it balances on the edge between our view and whatever else lies outside of the camera's frame. It moves towards the center again and the film ends.

Displayed without any signifying adornment, it is hard to tell the gender of the hand. The rotation of the hand from side to side and front to back also suggests its orientation to a sculptural object. It can be examined from multiple angles like pieces of Minimalist sculpture. Yet the hand is not without

personality. The spare background and absence of narrative markers highlight the texture of Rainer's hand, the shiny nails, taut skin and slight wrinkles. Even individual fingers take on personal resonance. The middle finger curves wryly towards the viewer. Fingers gang up on the ring finger, moving in front of and curling over repeatedly. The thumb lurks behind the palm, hiding from view.



Figure 2.4. Yvonne Rainer. Still from *Hand Movie*. 1966. 8 mm black and white film, silent, 5 min. Cinematographer: William Davis.

According to art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty, Rainer purposefully explored the paradox between “neutrality” and anthropomorphism present in this film as part of a larger project of questioning the role of the object in American art in the 1960s. She noted Rainer “took the inquiry in two directions, working with mere objects saturated with cultural associations, and with human bodies in their material objectness.”²⁴ Rainer enacted this paradox by using task

²⁴ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 176.

movement. In *Hand Movie*, Rainer adopted Halprin's suggestion of developing movement through exploring the physical range of a body part, which she explored in the movement range of individual fingers and wrist rotation. Her adoption of this tactic encourages her subsequent aesthetic project of questioning the role of the body and the object in American art.

Robert Morris: *Box with Sound of Its Own Making*

Halprin's suggestions for generating movement through tasks also offered tactics beyond the sphere of dance. In *Handbook in Motion*, choreographer Simone Forti recounted Morris' participation as a sculptor in the workshop's activities.

Once in a while Bob Morris would take A.A. Leath's classes and I remember vividly the movement Bob did on this particular day. He had observed a rock. Then he lay down on the ground. Over a period of about three minutes he became more and more compact until the edges of him were off the ground, and just the point under his center of gravity remained on the ground.²⁵

Morris' embodiment of an object's formal properties shows how task movement brings attention to the physical properties of the human body or everyday props or objects. Like H'Doubler's framing of her students as scientists of their bodies, confirming their self-efficacy through movement, the assignment to observe an object relies on the full participation of the student to intimately sense the characteristics of whatever they are studying. The surrounding trees did more

²⁵Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion* (Halifax N.S.: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 31.

than offer pleasant views; the assignment proposes how observing nature and task movement contrasts from using deep, psychological searching to produce and organize movement.



Figure 2.5. Robert Morris. *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*. 1961. Walnut. 9 ¼ inches by 9 ¼ inches.

Morris's 1961 *Box with Sounds of Its Own Making* translates task movement and some of its resulting characteristics into a sculptural form (Figure 2.5). A perfect cube, measuring 9 ¾ in by 9 ¾ inches, the box contains a three hour tape of its making. Made of walnut wood, the cube highlights the various browns inflected in the wood grain. The confluence of object and sound of its making blends process and product into this work and offers an analog to Halprin's task movement as unmasking the artifice of codified technique.

What is the task movement in Morris's *Box*? Unlike Rainer's *Hand Dance* or Halprin's *The Five Legged Stool*, the fact that *Box* is an object without physical traces of the artist's hand renders the involvement of task movement less obvious, not present visually in the display of the box, rather registered through the accompanying sound. The three-hour tape evokes the task of its production, such as scraping, cutting and staining. The attention to texture, form and color also reference the sensitivity of Halprin's improvisations to articulating the materiality of the body as made of skin, bones and muscles rather than mythological characters. In Morris's *Box*, task movement, instead of focusing on feelings or psychological expression, emphasizes the physical properties of the material.

The focus of formal properties also recalls Halprin's Bauhaus heritage. Bauhaus instructor Johannes Itten described a drawing assignment of rendering a lemon as revealing the world of objectivity through the senses. This objectivity

was understood to mean the real properties of objects or materials – the hardness, the shininess, the coldness of metal, the roundness and muteness of pebbles, the rhythm-within-variation of woodgrain – and the laws of color and form.²⁶ The assignment of observing nature found in Halprin’s 1960 summer workshop replicates this purpose of showing the material shape and weight of nature (or other materials) through embodiment.

Yet attention to sensual properties does not necessarily entail simplifying a spectator’s encounter. Simplicity of form, as Morris points out in subsequent writings, “does not necessarily equate with simplicity of experience.”²⁷ Like in Rainer’s *Hand Movie* and Halprin’s *The Five Legged Stool*, task movement simultaneously displays simple formal properties of color, texture, and shape as well as highlighting the humanness of bodies. This simultaneity presents a paradox encountered by the spectator, resulting in an embodied view of the work.

La Monte Young: *Composition 1960 #2*

Besides offering a workshop on musical composition, Young’s role as co-music director for the 1960 summer workshop included providing musical accompaniment to the dance improvisation jams. Watching dancers improvise to his music no doubt shaped how he conceptualized movement as related to

²⁶ Johannes Itten. *Design and Form*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1975.

²⁷ Robert Morris, *Continuous Process Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993: 8

sound. In his "Lecture 1960," Young explained, "Sometimes when I was making a long sound, I began to notice that I was looking at the dancers and the room from the sound instead of hearing the sound from some position in the room."²⁸ His work, since his interactions with Halprin, prominently figured the performer's body in non-narrative actions. In particular, *Composition 1960 #2* demonstrates how Young focused on the range of movement for a human body, or for other physical materials, as part of his project of transforming musical conventions (Figure 2.6).

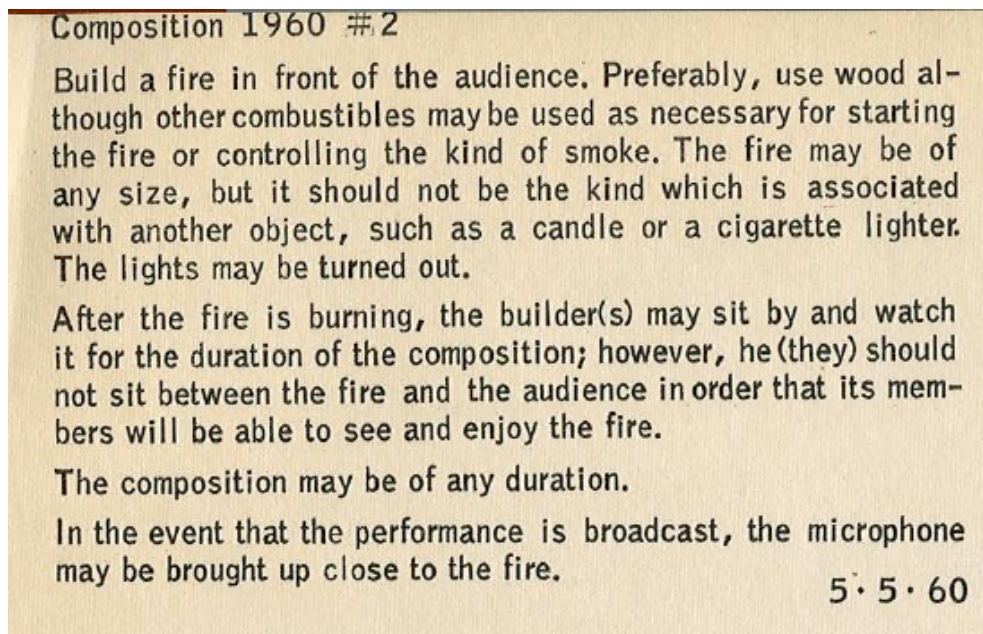


Figure 2.6. La Monte Young. *Composition 1960 #2*. April 5, 1960.

Part of a longer series of scores bearing the title *Composition 1960 #* that is discussed in Chapter One, *Composition 1960 #2*, written in April 1960, reads, "The

²⁸ Young, "Lecture 1960," 81.

performer is instructed to build a fire in front of the audience.”²⁹ The score outlines a task: building a fire. What does building a fire entail? Collecting wood, building a structure of the materials to support a fire, lighting the materials and maintaining the ongoing flame. How do any of these activities respond to and question what Young perceived as the legacy of composer John Cage that is crucial to this series of scores? Musicologist Jeremy Grimshaw emphasizes that Young used various tactics in attempting to reconfigure relationships between performer, score, and listener that Cage also transformed through chance procedures and indeterminacy. He explains, “Young also defers the responsibility of sound creation in #2 and #5, which rely on natural phenomena – a fire and a butterfly, respectively – for their content.”³⁰ Young’s use of what Grimshaw calls “natural phenomena” can be construed as pedestrian or task movement – already occurring actions that do not necessarily require technique or a particular facility to execute them.

The simple act of building a fire evokes Halprin’s use of elements from nature and task movement and references the experience of working on the dance deck. In *The Five Legged Stool* and *Composition 1960 #2*, the task determines the length of the performance. Both are completed when the task is completed. Young’s scores and Halprin’s use of task-based movement also share the premise

²⁹ Jeremy Grimshaw, *Music of a More Exalted Sphere: Compositional Practice, Biography and Cosmology in the Music of La Monte Young* (PhD Diss., University of Rochester, 2005), 154.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 157.

of reframing the materiality of sound and movement, forcing a new relationship between spectator, audience and performer. Audiences for both *The Five Legged Stool* and *Composition 1960 #2* have to carefully pay attention to see the dance or hear the music. Like the audience for *The Five Legged Stool*, the audience for *Composition 1960 #2* must decide what constitutes the performance. Is the act of making the fire the performance? Is the fire itself the performance? Are the sounds that come about because of the production of the fire and the fire itself acoustically proper for music? This sense of activity without being able to hear or see it is the conclusion of Halprin's task movement. By making movement so pedestrian and predicated on everyday tasks, the movement disappeared from attention. Dance could be composed of any movement and happen anywhere. Halprin's transformation of emotion and gesture from causal to associative means that movement appropriate for dance can come from any source. Likewise, music could emit from any source or occur anywhere.

Conclusion

Task movement, for Rainer, Morris and Young, emerged from the 1960 summer workshop as an accessible form that supported their widely varying interests in transforming their specific disciplines. Task movement proposes a singular, individual body that can then be transformed and re-transformed based on objective parameters such as time or direction. Thus, task movement provided a decisive alternative to older conventions such as using pathos or

narrative to organize an artwork. Task movement transformed relationships between spectator and performer in the form of duration and repetition, challenging the spectator to simultaneously bear witness to a body and engage with the performer in their task. The spectator distantly observes and intimately connects through task movement. Yet, as works such as Rainer's *Hand Movie* demonstrate, the use of task movement is not without feeling. The resulting movement brought attention to the facticity of the human body; its weight, texture, and shape. In so doing, it reminded spectators of the power, fragility, and even mortality of the human body.

CONCLUSION

Dance historian Janice Ross proposes that a sense of experimentation was the defining feature of Halprin's 1960 workshop.

Her 1960 summer workshop created the educational context for these dancers to find themselves, the content of their dances, and to reach toward a new definition of the performing body that was highly individualistic, attentive, responsive, and resilient.¹

How does this quality of experimentation and individuality manifest in the workshop and how do participants employ it in subsequent works? For the conclusion of this thesis, I examine works by choreographers Trisha Brown and Simone Forti to trace the long-term resonance of the strategies of experimentation developed in the workshop. By locating a relationship between the workshop and works produced long after the workshop (rather than shortly afterwards), I show how the workshop formatively shaped Forti and Brown's choreographic and performance practices. Both Forti and Brown integrated the two forms I've discussed in this thesis, scores and task-based improvisation, and this conclusion illustrates how they have used and recycled these forms for their different aesthetic projects, thus manifesting the qualities of a new performing body and innovation that Ross claims is crucial to the workshop. I examine Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* (1978) and Forti's *News Animations* (1989) as using both scores and improvisation, and arguing they

¹ Janice Ross, *Experience as Dance: Anna Halprin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 153.

transform both forms and display contrasting performing bodies that are equally individualistic, attentive, responsive, and resilient.

Why specifically Brown and Forti? These choreographers have seemingly contrasting aesthetics and conceptual projects. Brown was a founding member of Judson Dance Theater who eventually pursued a more “conventional” career in dance through establishing a company and repertory. She presents pure, abstract dances without overarching narrative or plots. Yvonne Rainer and Brown, because of their more visible involvement with Judson Dance Theater, seem a more likely pairing. Forti, on the other hand, has pursued dance through a plethora of collaborative efforts without prescribing to a dance company model. She presents dances using experiences and ideas drawn from life. While these are seemingly contradictory perspectives, I argue in this conclusion that these innovative choreographers have had more in common with one another than most existing literature would suggest through their experimentation of dance forms, and their continual experimentation draws on forms from the 1960 summer workshop. In doing so, I position them as inheriting the legacy of the workshop.

Trisha Brown: *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*

In a 2004 interview with critic Klaus Kertess, Brown articulates the impact that Anna Halprin’s improvisational exercises had on her choreographic process, especially in using voice during movement. Brown explains, “My experience

with Anna and her style of improvisation assailed my sensitivity about dance, I didn't know dancers could talk and which went on into *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*."² Brown's choice of this particular dance, made almost two decades after the 1960 workshop, demonstrates how the experience of that workshop can indirectly manifest and take time to show itself.



Figure 3.1. Trisha Brown. Still from *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*. 1978.

Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor premiered in February 1979 at Oberlin College in Ohio (Figure 3.1).³ In the solo, Brown traces her bare feet through a series of patterns, wearing white pants and a top. She talks to the audience, weaving movement and stories without ever reaching a specific

² *Trisha Brown Early Works 1966-1979*, directed by Trisha Brown and Babette Mangolte (2005; ArtPix), DVD.

³ Trisha Brown, *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*. Alive from Off-Center series (program #207). Produced for Alive from Off-Center by KCET-TV, KTCA-TV, Trisha Brown Company, Inc., and UCLA. Producers: Carole Markin, Edward Saxon. Executive producer: Phylis Gellar. Director: Jonathan Demme. Cinematographer: Jacek Laskus, 1986.

climax. Her performance persona is casual and easy going. She doesn't show any mistakes as she cycles through ever changing movements and stories.

The choreographic structure of *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* is three different conceptual processes cut and re-conjoined at different junctures. Brown's recycling of choreographic material and structures illustrates the constant transformation of material into new forms that Ross cites as characteristic of the workshop. The first component is *Accumulation* (1971), which begins with the tell tale thumbs and builds through accumulating gestures and tasks. The second component is talking, which was later added as an extra layer (1973). The third component is *Watermotor* (1979), beginning when Brown nods her head.

The dance is primarily composed of task movement and gestures that is anything but easy to watch. Beginning with the often-reappearing hitchhiker's thumbs, Brown walks, jumps, kicks, and turns throughout the dance (Figure 3.2). The movements are laid next to each other without any obvious transitions: she flings her arms into the air then kicks and gestures with her upper body as though she is unlocking or opening a door. The resulting affect startles the spectator with the cool ease with which she executes apparently random movements while talking at the same time. Thus, simplicity of the task movement highlights the difficulty of cutting abruptly between movement and layering talking on top of that movement.



Figure 3.2. Trisha Brown. Still from *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*. 1978.

She also uses a score, albeit invisible, in structuring the choreography. She modifies the organization of a score by internalizing it, relying on an internal rigor to structure her movement and stories. As the dance continues, Brown tells two stories: Story A, about Brown receiving an alumna award from her high school in Aberdeen, Washington; and Story B, narrates being met at an airport to perform “this dance.” The movement tone between each story stays the same as she moves through *Accumulation* and *Watermotor* without any noticeable difference. There is no distinction that would preclude her from assigning specific movements or gestures to an individual story. Yet each story and movement section (*Accumulation* and *Watermotor*) stay distinct from each other without any overlap. In a 1979 interview with Rainer, Brown told her how the stories became surprisingly personal. She explains she found herself saying, “‘My father died between the making of this move and this move.’ Which

knocked me out. I was amazed that my body had stored this memory in the movement patterns.”⁴ Rather than writing movement down to organize it as Halprin did in *Birds of America* and thus erase personality, language in *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* is an embodied structural principle that sequences the movement and flavors the cool gestures with personal anecdotes.

In her juxtaposition of language and task movement, Brown forces a confrontation with her limits as a performer. The task of clearly articulating repetitive movements while at the same time keeping her stories straight produces a performing body blithely working through the struggle. Like Halprin’s task of moving forty-nine wine bottles, Brown’s inclusion of text and repetition creates new qualities that in turn render her performing body as more than just exhibiting a personality-laden solo. Dance historian Ramsay Burt argues that Brown’s rigorous structure and personal narrative produced “formal, conceptual structures that took care of otherwise imponderable subjective choices but in the process created work whose performance made her feel extremely exposed and made spectators extremely tense.”⁵ Brown’s choice to challenge herself and present that challenge as choreographic material ruptures the choreographic convention of displaying dance as purposefully motored by

⁴ Yvonne Rainer, “A conversation about *Glacial Decoy*,” *October* 10, (Fall 1979): 33.

⁵ Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 145.

narrative or musical form.

Simone Forti: *News Animations*

Instead of locating the resonance of the workshop in a specific dance, as Brown did, Forti locates its traces in the formation of her choreographic practice. In an artist statement, she explains, “It was a process in which the teacher gave the student a point of departure for an exploration...The teacher’s instructions would...provide a focus (sometimes called a “problem”) for which each student would find his or her solution.”⁶ The workshop and Forti’s work with Halprin structured her choreographic practice by demonstrating how to shape her questions and find strategies and ways to address them. As Burt points out, Forti has often called her earlier work “Conceptual pieces,” because “she did not use her sensitivity towards aesthetic qualities within movement as a starting point for her creative process.”⁷ The resonance of the workshop, for Forti, is conceptual rather than material.

An example is the narrative/dance performance practice she developed in the 1980s, called *Logomotion*. It is the practice of talking and moving using various sources to generate movement, speech, and composition. One of the results of this practice is a series of structured improvisations titled *News*

⁶ Simone Forti, “Animate Dancing: a Practice in Improvisation,” in *Taken by Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader* ed. Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere, (CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 57.

⁷ Burt, *Judson Dance Theater*, 58.

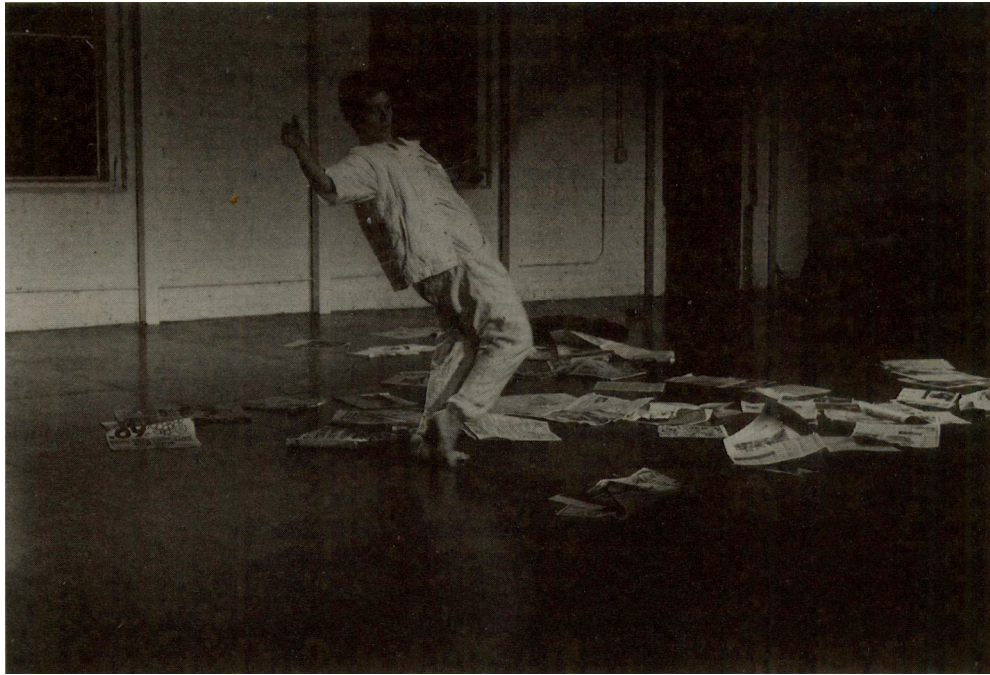


Figure 3.3. Simone Forti. Photograph of *News Animations*. 1989. From *Taken By Surprise*, 58.

Animations (Figure 3.3). In this solo, Forti strolls and tumbles through scattered newspapers, sometimes silent and other times talking. Casually dressed and in bare feet, she does not directly engage with the audience in her stories, rather she appears introspective and largely ignores the audience's presence.

News Animations, like *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*, is primarily composed of task movement and gestures. Forti strolls around the stage, carrying newspapers and dropping them to form a trail. Eventually she reads from the newspapers, occasionally talking, and performs the verbs she gleans from the newspapers. She explains how the verbs featured in the articles attracted her:

Most of all I started to accumulate kinesthetic impressions of pressures, wedges and currents, balance shifts and impending collapses. So much of the language of the news media is in terms of physical dynamics: the dollar in *free fall*, Lebanon as a *slippery slope*, and Iran sending *human waves* into the invading Iraqi army.⁸

Forti dives towards the ground, rolls around amongst newspapers, and jumps across them, trying not to land on the floor in-between. The action words in the articles, describing movement, marry the formal and linguistic characteristics of the newspaper. Unlike Brown's talking, which has no affiliation with the choreographic structure, for Forti they overlap and are contingent upon each other, but their relationship is constantly shifting. Forti approaches their relationship as an open question that is addressed, but not answered, in performance. Forti also uses the newspapers as a score to generate composition and movement. The dancing and talking are both informed by paying attention to the physical and conceptual properties of the newspaper. The physical properties of the newspaper, such as its rectangular shape, fragile texture and crinkly sound determine the composition of the performance. The content of the paper, its words in articles and advertisements, inform the content of her talking.

The act of reading the news has a biographical resonance. After the death of her father, who was the keeper of the news in the family, Forti began reading the newspaper. Besides a connection to her father, it gave her way to know

⁸ Forti, "Animate Dancing," 57-58.

herself. She explains, “This practice has been a way for me to know what’s on my mind.”⁹ Forti integrates her personal relationship to the news into her choreographic practice, developing a form specific to her interests that can address her questions about talking, dancing, the news, herself, and her father.

Brown and Forti’s use of personal, biographical material in the form of remembered stories illustrates the capacity for experimental dance performance to connect previously inconceivable affiliations between memory and movement in a dancing body. Both dances are starkly different displays of scores, task-based movement and biographical material, especially because both Forti and Brown interpret each of those characteristics in different ways. Forti uses newspapers as a score, culling movement and choreography from the stories, layout, and verbs. Her father is associated with the newspaper for Forti, so he is present in her explorations. Brown uses the stories as a way to further challenge her physicality, another layer that she must fulfill. Her internalization of a score, which takes the form of memory, paradoxically reveals obvious biographical material (*My father died in the middle of making this move and this move.*)

Yet how are their dances related to the 1960 summer workshop? Halprin’s dance training with Margaret H’Doubler idealized a sensorial, curious body at the center of her movement explorations and Halprin brought this conception to the 1960 summer workshop. Contrary to the dogma of conventional dance

⁹ Ibid, 57.

techniques, this body was already confirmed as knowing and valid and was reproduced through each individual's interpretation of what they conceived as valid. Experimentation is necessarily embedded in this vision of dance and seeped into the atmosphere of the workshop, including La Monte Young's sessions on experimental music. Forti and Brown's exposure to this line of inquiry meant their interpretations and subsequent innovations were already confirmed as valid and valuable contributions to continuing American modern dance. Whatever Forti or Brown interpreted as "a score" and "improvisation" merely served to expand the parameters of those practices.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with questions about the 1960 summer workshop and participants' work in order to understand the larger histories of post-modern dance, experimental music and Minimalism in American art. Recall that in the fall, each participant played a role in events, organization or collaborations that usher in post-modernism. Brown, Forti, Rainer, and Robert Morris attended the foundational class taught by composer Robert Dunn at Merce Cunningham's studio that inaugurates post-modern dance through subsequent concerts at Judson Church. La Monte Young, as curator of a series of concerts at Yoko Ono's loft, presented his work and that of Forti and Morris. Scores by Morris, Young and Forti appear in Young's collection *An Anthology of Chance Operations*. Lawrence Halprin designed his Motation system for using scores as a tool for

designing landscape architecture, which subsequently leads his architectural concerns into social and political realms. Halprin expands her choreography into a “total theatre,” which eventually takes her choreography beyond the concert-dance stage.



Figure 3.4. Lawrence Halprin. 1960 Summer Workshop participants on Halprin dance deck. Museum of Performance and Design. San Francisco, CA.

These artists’ participation in the workshop just before they emerged as historically significant figures cannot be a mere coincidence. I tried framing the workshop as crucial to the formation of their artistic practices by focusing on the workshop itself. This approach reverses existing scholarship on the workshop, which largely understands its significance in relation to individual projects. The absence of detailed historical documentation, however, means that much of this

argument remains speculative and conditional on the fragility of memory. Nonetheless, crucial tendencies that surface in subsequent activities of participants, such as improvisation and scores, can clearly be traced to activities and exercises in the workshop. Comparing participants' transformations and reconfigurations of these strategies yields relationships between works and participants that concretize the workshop as significant to their artistic practice and formation to the history of art.

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APPENDIX A:

1. Correspondence between La Monte Young and Anna Halprin

Undated letter

Ann

In further answer to last letter.

6 sessions would be fine. I'm enthused and already preparing and imagining the material.

Basic Outline

First session

lecture and noises introducing the concepts to be covered. Will pass out a reading list (only for those who want extra reading)

Sessions 2 through 4

discuss the new (graphic) notation (this is accessible to anyone – nontechnical) play tapes & live performances in class of new music. Presentation of Avant-Garde Essays. Presentation of the philosophic Aspects. (Music will cover many composers-Schoenberg, Webern, Cage, Wolff, Feldman, Flynt, Maxfield, Bassatt, Stockhausen, Cardew plus ourselves).

Session 5

Terry & I will actually write on the spot & perform examples in class. Prepare them to bring new sounds on "compositions" to class next time

Session 6

Performance of their sounds and compositions in class.

I think sessions 5 & 6 will perhaps be the most valuable to them of all. Especially after they've had 1 through 4.

You say you don't think there is such a thing as music in relation to dance—I think I know what you mean & probably agree but I state it much differently. I think Music

& dance are related. But I think everything in the world is related. I really mean this and it is & has been important in my thinking & action. But when I state it that way it probably doesn't disagree with your statement so much.

Sorry you didn't make it to the concert. Richard Maxfield was up for the occasion (we did one of his new electronic pieces) and I thought you would probably have enjoyed meeting him.

I am interest in and continue to b generally bored by what is "good." (in regard to your statement that "a lot of things original are sometimes very bad").

La Monte