



February 15–April 21, 2013

During the 1950s, a group of Beat poets, painters, environmentalists, composers, and psychologists gathered together with choreographer Anna Halprin on an outdoor dance deck in Marin County built by her husband, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, and experimented with developing new artistic forms that could reflect the basic needs of human expression. As she later told her biographer Janice Ross, “What we were all after was to have our art be more reflective of real life issues and to do this we all tried to break down the aesthetic barriers we had inherited. And since movement was my medium, out of that came a new kind of realism.”<sup>1</sup> Rejecting the hierarchy of the traditional dance company, the Halprins began to organize these gatherings as workshops, using a term borrowed from the Bauhaus curriculum.

Anna and Lawrence Halprin were eager to bridge the disparate communication styles of the various workshop participants and create a common language. They sought to develop a formal notational system that could be applied to many creative endeavors—to make visible the process of gathering and selecting resources, acting on those resources, and evaluating the results. *Parades and Changes*, first performed in 1965, was the culmination of hundreds of workshop experimentations. More than a piece of choreography, it is a compositional method. Taking its name from everyday parades that ritualize daily existence and the changes that throw these rituals into question, *Parades and Changes* can never be performed the same way twice.

Morton Subotnick, the composer of the original musical score for *Parades and Changes*, contributed the idea of “cellblocks” that designated activities to be shaped by each collaborating artist (musician, choreographer, lighting designer, sculptor). Recorded primarily on index cards, Halprin shuffled these directives, changing their order in relation to each new environment in which the performance took place. Sometimes cards were taken out and new ones added, and then different transitions needed to be developed. The cellblocks provided a structure that was different from improvisation in that it required all contributors to assiduously workshop and prepare for these transitions. By creating a system in which interactive situations can arise, rather than by simply choreographing them to occur, *Parades and Changes* embodied an inclusive process that depended on collaboration and personal choice.

An important element of *Parades and Changes* has always been generating new ways of observing everyday life. At the Stockholm Statstheater in 1965, spotlights meandered offstage to illuminate dancers, camouflaged as spectators within the audience, who began the dance from the theater seats. In another segment, dancers slowly and methodically removed their clothes while making eye contact with a member of the audience. After segments of the dance were broadcast on Swedish television, Halprin received a letter from a farmer, Sven Kyberg, who wrote:

The dance impressed me very deeply. At first I was very skeptical, because a lot of modern art seems to me to be much too egocentric

and without humanity or humility. But in the taking off of clothes and the rolling out of paper . . . I saw the naked human animal unafraid and shy and clean, just like one of my own newborn cattle or lambs, approaching, going nearer and nearer, something unknown...I felt cleansed and washed and shaken.<sup>2</sup>

The Swedish dance critic Sten Broman exclaimed:

Anna Halprin's ideas are marked by intuitive brilliance. She puts human bodies and objects in motion by means of processes showing the birth of a work of art. However, the partially improvised playing presupposes many strict stylistic exercises in expressive balance and shifting tempi, plus a sleepwalker-sure coordination of all these movements with speech, sound, music, lighting, color, costumes, and decor in constantly mobile forms. The combination points the way to a brand new field for artistic invention.<sup>3</sup>

However, reactions were not always so positive. When *Parades and Changes* was performed at Hunter College on April 21, 1967, the New York Police Department, provoked by the dressing and undressing sequence, issued a warrant for Halprin's arrest for indecent exposure. Times have changed. In 2009, after Anne Collod and her French company performed the dance, with nudity, in New York City, they were awarded a Bessie.

The initial event that inspired the dressing and undressing sequence occurred when Halprin's performing group began regular sessions with famed Gestalt psychologist Fritz Perls. In one particular session, Anna noticed a man wearing a black business suit, who wasn't part of the group. She immediately connected him with the "establishment." Halprin stood defiantly in front of the bewildered "establishment" man and began to rip off her clothes until she was stark naked. The man started to weep. Back on the dance deck, she began experimenting with nudity, not as a provocation, but as an invitation to relearn an image of the body free of prejudice and distrust.

In 1970, despite his fear that the controversy surrounding the piece might upset the trustees, Peter Selz, the founding director of the University Art Museum, Berkeley (now UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive), programmed *Parades and Changes* to open the new Mario Ciampi building. The building was empty; *Parades and Changes* was the first exhibit. Halprin and her Dancers Workshop received accolades, as did Selz for ushering in an era in which museums support living artists and experimental projects.

When it was first performed, *Parades and Changes* redefined dance as an instrument for observing life. Now, forty-eight years after its premiere, as we prepare to close our present building, we return to *Parades and Changes* with the final three performances of the dance as well as an exhibition of scores, photographs, and other documentation of its history. For this last staging, Halprin is reunited with her original composer, Morton Subotnick, longtime collaborator

and lighting designer Jim Cave, and associate director Shinichi Iova-Koga. They have workshopped the piece with a group of talented dancers and theater artists to create a new iteration of *Parades and Changes* that reflects the uncertainties of our present time.

## Dena Beard

Assistant Curator

1. Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 123.
2. Sven Kyberg, letter to Anna Halprin, December 16, 1965, from the archives of Anna Halprin.
3. *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, September 6, 1965

## Performances

Friday, February 15, 7:30

Saturday, February 16, 7:30

Sunday, February 17, 7:30

Anna Halprin (born 1920) created an epistemological revolution in dance by focusing on movements generated by internal sensations and everyday tasks. After starting her Dancer's Workshop in 1955, she was joined by contemporaries such as Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Meredith Monk, Yvonne Rainer, John Cage, and Robert Morris, who built a community based around the fundamentals of kinesthetic awareness, apprehending the body as an instrument. Halprin has created 150 full-length dance theater works, many of which are based on scores. She is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including a lifetime achievement in choreography from the American Dance Festival. She is the author of three books and has received numerous honors from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Dance Guild, and many others. In 1997, Anna received the Samuel H. Scripps Award for Lifetime Achievement in Modern Dance from the American Dance Festival.

**Anna Halprin / MATRIX 246** is organized by Assistant Curator Dena Beard. The performances of *Parades and Changes* are made possible in part by The Creative Work Fund, a program of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund supported by generous grants from ArtPlace, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The James Irvine Foundation. Additional support is provided by The Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, the Fleishhacker Foundation, Meyer Sound, and The Apartment, Vancouver. The performances are a fiscally sponsored project of Dancers' Group.



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FRONT Anna Halprin: *Parades and Changes*, 1970; performance by San Francisco Dancer's Workshop for the opening of the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum on November 6, 1970. Photo: Paul Fusco.

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