Yvonne Rainer Interviews Ann Halprin

Halprin: I was trained as a traditional modern dancer. The big brea came for me about fifteen years ago when I left the scene. I didn know what I wanted to do except to leave that scene—that's when w built our outdoor platform.

Rainer: Had you been doing solo work before that or collaborating?

Halprin: Solo work. I also had a group.

Rainer: And you choreographed for the group?

Halprin: Yes. I had a studio together with Welland Lathrop, and w part of that tradition of modern dance. But then I felt a break. I w in a New York Dance Festival, an ANTA thing. I wasn't very stim lated, as I had gone to New York as the only dancer from the We Coast, but hadn't seen what was really going on in dance. When came back I wasn't excited about anything. That's when the big bre came. The workshop idea started when I left San Francisco and ca out to Kentfield. Some of the students who had been working with in San Francisco followed me. Because I didn't know what I wanted do, or what I wanted to teach, we set up a workshop situation in wh I gave myself permission to explore. Even though I was the catalyst the group and somehow or other the teacher, I still made it very cl that I wasn't teaching in the usual sense. I didn't feel that I had to kn an answer and teach it to somebody.

Rainer: What was the role of the people you brought?

Halprin: They simply wanted to have the opportunity to stay in cont with the kinds of activities I was interested in. They also wanted explore and work together.

I wanted to explore in a particular way breaking down any preconceived notions I had about what dance was, or what movement was, or what composition was. I began setting up situations where we could rely only on our improvisational skills. Everything was done, for quite a few years, with improvisation. The purpose of the improvisation was not self-expression. I was trying to get at subconscious areas, so things would happen in an unpredictable way. I was trying to eliminate stereotyped ways of reacting. Improvisation was used to release things that were blocked off because we were traditional modern dancers.

Rainer: Was the focus physical? Did you start out with the body?

Halprin: Sometimes it would be purely physical; we worked on technique this way. My training is in anatomy so it was easy for me to go into the bone structure and the muscle structure and to work like a kinesiologist. We would isolate in an anatomical and objective way the body as an instrument. We would improvise with rotation or flexion or other anatomical structures. We would say, we're going to begin to work with how you can articulate this part of the body, isolate it from another part of the body—what is the efficient way to do that movement, do we really need to do this or is it just habit? When we improvised we were finding out what *our* bodies could do, not learning somebody else's pattern or technique.

As the teacher or director of the group, I never told anybody why a movement should be or how it should look. In that sense, too, they had to build their own technique. Even now in our company there is no unified look; there's a unified approach but everybody is different in movement. And we used improvisation to explore space and certain kinds of dynamics. We would set up a situation where two people had a focus that concerned the amount of space between them. They would improvise to get a feeling of what could happen, and what one person did would elicit a reaction from the other. We got involved in cause and effect. After a while we noticed that this was restrictive. But that period gave us a certain technique which is still one of our resources. All of us began to feel the need for another step.

Rainer: How long after was this?

Halprin: I think we worked together for four years using improvisation and starting really from the beginning. Out of that period we evolved

compositions which were completely improvised with particular focuses. We began to allow the voice to become an integral part of movement, where breathing became sound or some heightened feeling stimulated certain associative responses and a word came, or a sound, or a shout. Free-association became an important part of the work. This would very often manifest itself in dialogue. We began to deal with ourselves as people, not dancers. We incorporated actions that had never been used in dance before. Works that came out of this period included the *Trunk Dance* and *Four-Square*.

Rainer: Were the dances improvised for performance?

Halprin: No. They were improvised in order to get at the result; once that result was there it was fixed. You can see how that would wear itself out. The next step was a system whereby we would be forced to adapt ourselves to some outside direction.

Rainer: In performance?

Halprin: No—now we go back to work. Each performance represents several years' investigation. Each new work represents a new concept, a new system of composition. We have never been a repertory company; we may repeat a piece within the year that we're doing it, but once we have felt the need to explore another area, we drop what we're doing.

We began to explore systems that would knock out cause and effect . . .

Rainer: You mean between people?

Halprin: Between everything. Anything that had to do with cause and effect got you back into your own resources again. I wanted to find out things that I'd never thought of, that would never come out of my personal responses.

Rainer: Did you find that you moved in patterns?

Halprin: Yes. It wasn't so much repeating patterns, it was a repetition of similar attitudes that didn't lead to any further growth. Improvisation is still a basic part of our technique. Everything we do keeps growing; it's not that we don't do something any more, it's just that the skill is there but it's not used in the same way.

The next step was to find a way to separate the elements that we were using. We had gotten enormously involved in a lot of complex and diverse materials. We were using vocal materials and words, musicians were improvising with us: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Warner Jepson, Bill Spencer. We were using objects, and props—we were using space in a determinist way. I wanted to isolate these elements. I began to work with a system where all these things became independent of cause and effect. In order to get the music to do *this* you didn't have to do *that*.

Rainer: The musicians worked out their things in a different place, or what?

Halprin: We separated from the musicians for a while. I began to chart movement; I put everything on charts; everything became arbitrary.

Rainer: Movement patterns, space patterns?

Halprin: Anything I was dealing with. I could do it with a movement. I have a great pamphlet in which I've taken every possible anatomical combination of movement and put them all on sheets of paper and given them numbers. One sheet had to do with flexion, different joints, another sheet had to do with extension. I would pick off these things and I'd make a pattern. These were movements I hadn't evolved myself. And then I tried to do it. I got into the wildest combinations of movement, things I never could have conceived of. All of a sudden my body began to experience new ways of moving. We applied this in bigger compositional ways. We would experiment with all the elements we worked with, even combinations of people. In *Birds of America* I used a pie-shape and I made pies with a different interval for each one; I put different elements into each pie, and then I'd have another transparent wheel on top of that to mix them up so that each one could be rotated for a different combination. I'd say: "We'll try this combination and we'll make a composition based on these particular elements coming together, now let's see what'll happen."

Even though I got the composition system formalized, we still worked it out with improvisation.

Rainer: So you invented new movement.

Halprin: We invented new movement possibilities, new ways of com-

bining the elements. But when the dance was finished it was fixed.

Rainer: In arriving at the final product you improvised with those things you had found through manipulating the wheels?

Halprin: That's right. I could have manipulated the wheels several times and gotten any number of versions, and this is what I intended to do, but we got too involved in our next problem so we took another jump before we explored any further. *Birds of America* was about fifty minutes, our first long work. We spent two years doing exercises, exploring things that led to this system; then it took us about three months to compose the work. We performed it once. By that time we had gotten into doing something else. With that system we could have composed other works, but I wasn't interested. Something else was happening.

By chance I happened to become very aware of the space in the theatre, the stage. I just didn't like it, it bothered me, I didn't know what to do. I got this flash: just before performance I put a bamboo pole in everybody's hands including mine, and we had to do the dance that we'd always done, holding bamboo poles.

Rainer: Throughout the fifty minutes?

Halprin: Yes. The poles were very long and they created their own spatial environment. This was the beginning of our next jump. I became preoccupied with movement in relation to environment. I began to feel that we had paid such strict attention to self-awareness, kinesthetic responses, and each other, that we developed a stifling introspection. So we began to extend our focus to adaptive responses in the environment. We had worked with musicians, painters, all kinds of artists . . .

Rainer: Could you go into some detail about that?

Halprin: In *Birds of America* they came into a situation we had already established as dancers. Their influence was not a real cross fertilization yet. But the music wasn't accompaniment, we'd gotten away from that when we began to work with separate elements.

Rainer: Background?

Halprin: Not even background. The dance was always first. It was a matter of finding sound, finding costumes—whatever it is that would be suitable to the dance. In that sense the dance was still the focus,

but I felt that breaking up the categories would be much more exciting. The people we were working with had many resources and they weren't really using them. We were by that time interested in finding out about what there was on the outside that could affect our ideas for movement.

The next big thing was *Five-Legged Stool.* This was a full-length evening, in two acts. This work further developed the cross fertilization idea. Up until then we had been content with using the space that we had. But I got discouraged with having to be up there in that relationship to an audience. I began to look at the lobby, the aisles, the ceilings, the floor. Suddenly I thought: "Who says we have to stay on that stage, this is a whole building." In *Five-Legged Stool* what happened was that all these independent elements were developed: the use of sound, vocal material, the word and its content, the painter and the way in which a painter became, very often, the choreographer. 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.

Rainer: Supposing you had not wanted to do what you had to do with those wine bottles?

Halprin: It worked out fine, because I had also gotten attached to the idea that I wanted people to have tasks to do. Doing a task created an attitude that would bring the movement quality into another kind of reality. It was devoid of a certain kind of introspection.

Rainer: I remember that summer I was here with you and you assigned tasks. 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.

Halprin: Afterwards we became much more concerned with doing the task itself. Then we set up tasks that would be so challenging that the choice of a task would be the idea of the movement.

Rainer: Rather than it being transformed?

Halprin: That's right. Jo was in on all this. The wine bottle task that she gave me was so challenging and so difficult that I was quite content

to do it. I couldn't get up and down; I had to stay in a stooped-over position or I'd break my back. Then I had the task of taking these wine bottles, putting them overhead, getting them to disappear in the ceiling I had to balance on a stool. The task was sufficiently compelling in itself that I was able to turn my full attention to it. It took me forty minutes.

Rainer: Did all the movements in *Five-Legged Stool* have to do with tasks?

Halprin: Yes, and all the tasks were chosen for different reasons. For example: John Graham had a plank that was on a diagonal resting on a ceiling beam. He crawled up to the ceiling and his task was to slide down that beam head first. It was a complete fantasy; it had nothing to do with anything functional; it wasn't the kind of task that had to do with something as recognizable as carrying out a bottle and placing it.

Rainer: Did he do it?

Halprin: Yes. By achieving the impossible he arrived at an incredible bit of fantasy.

Rainer: In that particular piece did being yourselves, not having a character, carry through?

Halprin: Yes, quite automatically. Actually I was very pleased by it. In doing these tasks we were not playing roles or creating moods; we simply did something. By the choice of the objects and tasks we could determine the over-all quality. For example, in the first act of *Five-Legged Stool* each person had several gambits that could be done in any combination, even though each time they had to be done the same way. Things like pouring water. I had a big box of colorful material and tin cans, and other things that I had chosen, and just throwing them as high as I could would be another task. There would be a task like changing clothes. There would be another task that had to do with falling, a movement task. Even though these things were repeated exactly the same way in every performance, their sequence changed so that the composition would be different for the audience and the performer. This was the first composition where we had a different performance every night.

Rainer: In looking at the photographs, a lot of the visual impact has

to do with the decor and costumes, which were not essential to the carrying out of the tasks.

Halprin: True. There was an enormous amount of juxtaposition in *Five-Legged Stool* and it was done deliberately. There was an attempt to really break down cause and effect. I wanted everything to have such a sensory impact that an audience would not question why. I didn't want anything to look as if it had meaning, or continuity. What we wore had nothing to do with the tasks. We went down to McAllister Street and everybody was asked to collect things that interested them for costumes. I had a jag for dresses from the 1920's, those spangly things, beautiful colors and very luminous. I had a thing about those dresses and I'd go down and collect as many as I could. Other times we used everyday clothing. It was a big thing for us—the first time we hadn't used tights and leotards. They were taboo. We danced with shoes on. I felt like a naughty little girl the first day, because a modern dancer used bare feet, and suddenly I was wearing high-heeled shoes. Leath was wearing tennis shoes.

This was for us a very important break-through, and helped us have completely new images of who we were. It was the last time that we ever really thought of ourselves as dancers. The other thing about *Five-Legged Stool* was that we began to use the space; we explored the entire theatre—it was a small theatre—the outside, the corridors, the ceilings, the basement, the aisles, everything. What happened was that the audience was in the center, and the performance went all around them. Above them and below them and in front of them, and outside, sometimes they would hear things out on the street.

Rainer: In that theatre the sidewalk is right outside.

Halprin: Something happened in that performance that we'd never experienced before, and began to establish a next step. We got a violent audience reaction. That's when people started throwing things at us. That was the first time. People would throw shoes on stage. The dance ended with five minutes of just feathers falling from the ceiling, all you saw was five minutes of feathers falling. The windows in the theatre were open so that the street sounds came in, and the wind came in, and just these feathers dropping.

Rainer: Were the performers on the stage?

Halprin: No. Everything was cleared away. This got people quite involved for some reason. I remember one woman said, "Isn't this the silliest thing? I'm just sitting here in this theatre spending my time just looking at those feathers drop." The people would talk, they wouldn't just whisper to each other, they would talk loudly so that everybody could hear.

Rainer: What happened during the performance?

Halprin: They talked all during the performance, they talked to the person next to them as if that person were ten miles away, as if everything they said to each other was a public announcement. There was a definite kind of involvement that we had never experienced before, nor did we know what to do with it, or why it was there.

Rainer: They didn't actually interfere?

Halprin: Often they did. People would come up onto the stage and start to grab the feathers. One time during the bottle dance, when Leath and I balance on a stool and shout at each other, people in the audience started shouting and throwing shoes at us. We were completely naïve about what we were doing. We didn't know this would affect anyone else. Everything made complete sense to us because, after all, we spent two years investigating these techniques. We'd worked with juxtaposition, this kind of unrelatedness. We couldn't figure out what was wrong, why everybody was getting so excited. People would walk out in a rage. We gave sixteen performances of this and always got this kind of a reaction. When we did it in Rome it was ten times worse. Just absolutely violent. When we came back we were concerned about what we were doing to an audience.

Rainer: This was after Rome. What else did you bring to Europe?

Halprin: *Esposizione*, a commission. Luciano Berio saw *Five-Legged Stool* and felt that he wanted to work with us. He had been asked to write a small opera for the Venice Biennale. He asked us to work with him. We started out with the architecture of the Venice Opera House. The first thing that occured to me was that the stage looked like a fireplace in somebody's living room—if we tried to dance on the floor we'd look like little ants. There were only six of us in the company, we'd be drowned by that space. It's built like a horseshoe, there are

five tiers of seats and only two hundred people on the bottom floor. The first problem was how to integrate ourselves into that space. I felt that we needed something vertical, and we evolved the idea of suspending a cargo net across the proscenium, forty feet in the air. The bottoms were stretched out like wings over the orchestra pit and way back into the stage. This is the way in which we were able to alter that proscenium and allow the dancers to be able to move vertically.

Rainer: Was one cargo net enough?

Halprin: Yes, it was a very big one. We built a big ramp, too, on the floor, so that we really had no floor. The floor itself was a slant.

Rainer: You built the ramp out of boards?

Halprin: Out of fiber-glass. We cut down eucalyptus trees from Marin County and we shipped them all the way over to Italy because we had worked with this cargo net on those trees and it was real scary forty feet in the air. We weren't about to take any chances, so we shipped our own trees there. That dance evolved out of a spacial idea, an environmental idea. We said the theatre was our environment and we were going to move through the theatre. And we took a single task: burdening ourselves with enormous amounts of luggage. The whole group had this one task, to be burdened with things.

We chose objects for their texture and form; they were all everyday objects: automobile tires, gunnysacks filled with things—at one point we had a big hassock filled with tennis balls—bundles of rags, parachutes that were stuck into containers, newspapers rolled up that were stuck into things, things that could come out and explode. Each person had to carry these things and to allow his movements to be conditioned to speeds that had been set up for him. Some started in the plaza, some started in the prompter's pit; they started all over the place, so that it was like an invasion. The music started at a different time, dancers started at different times. You just didn't have any idea when anything started. The cargo net started going up during intermission, and people couldn't tell if things were starting or if this was preparation. The whole dance—it took forty minutes—was a series of false beginnings. Nothing ever got anywhere. As soon as something got started, something else would be introduced. The dancers' task was to carry things and to penetrate the entire auditorium. This meant they had to go through

that stage area which included the cargo net. One of the most compelling parts of the dance was the effort of carrying those things up that cargo net, because the stuff would fall.

Rainer: It actually did fall?

Halprin: Yes. We had a hassock filled with two hundred tennis balls and one dancer's task was to take that hassock up there and when she got it up there to overturn it, so that the tennis balls came flying down. When we reached the high point—there was an enormous amount of objects there by that time—automobile tires were rolling down, tennis balls were falling, it was just a great crash of things. The tennis balls bounced all over so that the whole space exploded. People's bodies dropped down through the net and were caught by ropes, they would hang on; we turned into acrobats. We worked on that cargo net for a year. We got so that we could fall from one point to another, catch ourselves on a rope, hang upside down. We developed a whole technique to operate on that cargo net. The nine-year-old child who was in it, started off at the top of the cargo net, jumped into a perpendicular rope, and swung; she got a big momentum going and she swung clear across the heads of the audience in the first few rows and all the way back into the stage. *Esposizione* was a very bold use of the architectonic concept of space. It also was just a continual repetition and variation of one task.

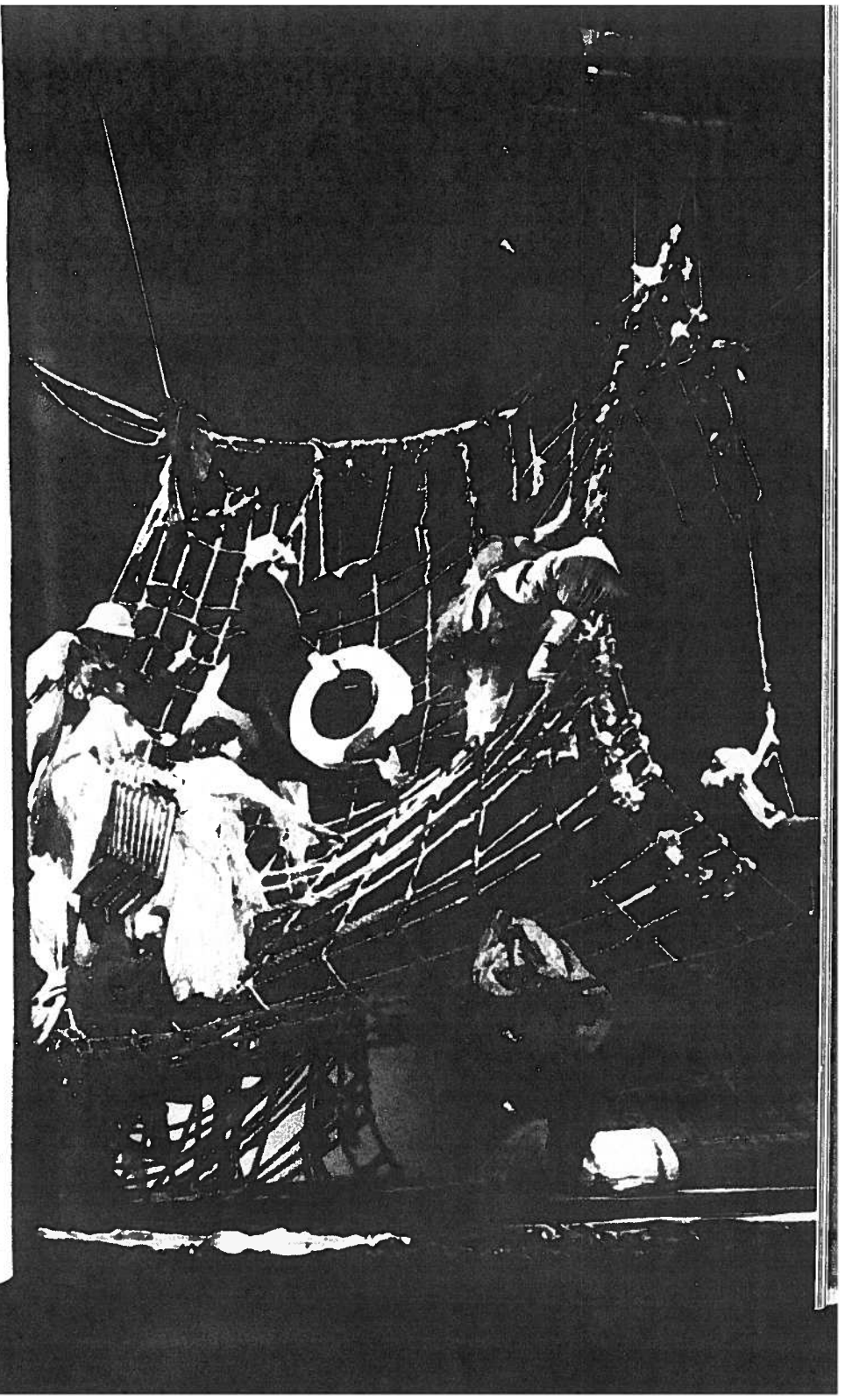
Rainer: Did people have set speeds that were constant throughout?

Halprin: Yes. We had time scores. Everything was done according to seconds. We never heard the music until the night of the performance and the time score helped us correlate with the music. We had so much time to get from here to here. This is what determined the effort of our movements. Sometimes it was almost impossible to cover a certain terrain in a certain length of time, because of the burdens we carried. We would stumble, it was like a life and death situation.

Rainer: You had cues in the music.

Halprin: No. We never heard the music.

Rainer: How did you keep time?



ESPOSIZIONE: *climbing the cargo net*

Halprin: We had five people stationed all over the place who were giving us cues.

Rainer: Vocally?

Halprin: We would keep track of them, we would look and they would give us hand signals. Each person in the dance had his own conductor who managed to get to various spots, and just like musicians we looked at our conductor from time to time and found out where we were. We just jolly well had to be where we had to be when the time came.

Rainer: The conductor would be where you were supposed to be?

Halprin: No. He would be in a place where we could see him. We had worked it out.

Rainer: So they moved around?

Halprin: Yes. It was so important for us to do that task that if necessary we had to drop one of our bundles in order to get somewhere. We left a trail of litter everywhere. Litter in the balconies, in the aisles.

Rainer: Did you take all this stuff over with you?

Halprin: Yes, we did, which was really stupid. We got very possessive about the things we collected. And our costumes were designed in such a way that we could only wear them for the night of the one performance. The cargo net ripped the costumes to shreds. The task, the effort of doing it, the amount of stumbling, and having to get through certain environments would just rip us to shreds. We would start out absolutely beautifully attired.

Rainer: What kind of costumes?

Halprin: The costumes were designed as extensions of our props. Each person was very different. John Graham had a tuxedo and a gold helmet, and it was all black and white. Daria was just full of different transparent, thin things, she was very bulky but very soft and transparent. Each person was really designed as an object. We never wore our costumes until the night of performance. By the end everybody was in shreds. John Graham only had his trousers left. His coat had been ripped off, he was completely bare from his waist up. We had a vocal score in three different languages. We had to sing and speak in Italian, English, and Greek.

Rainer: How was this established?

Halprin: Berio simply gave us the score. At certain times, according to its elements, we said the score, or sang it.

Rainer: You learned it?

Halprin: Yes. The parts were sent to us. John Graham did an amazing thing on the cargo net. I was giving him one task and Berio was giving him another. They were both very difficult. He had to be going as fast as he could up that cargo net carrying this tire and other baggage, and at the same time Berio gave him a score which took seven minutes to read in which he was constantly talking and shouting. He had to alternate speaking Italian and English. He didn't understand a word of the Italian, so he memorized it. It was just this continual bla-bla-bla-bla of words coming out and every word had to be memorized, it had a particular sound value to Berio. It was considered a small opera because we had that much vocal activity. Then he had vocal people—two young boys and a woman who sang. The only trouble with the vocal material was that we never heard it in performance because the audience shouted so much and responded so excitedly to all the vocal material that you couldn't hear ours as being any different than theirs.

Rainer: Do you know what the vocal material was, I mean in Italian?

Halprin: Yes, we knew. Rona had a passage in which she was sitting out in one of the tiers, blowing soap bubbles and wearing a yellow raincoat, telling a biblical story in Latin. We were trying to get up to the top of that cargo net with all of our baggage falling. We were scrambling and being torn apart. And she was, at that time, sitting out there and telling this biblical story in Latin. These are things that Berio had planned and that became very interesting juxtapositions.

Rainer: You never did *Esposizione* here?

Halprin: We've never done it anywhere else. It was a difficult work because of the musical score and an eighteen-piece orchestra. It was a very complicated thing.

Rainer: What are you doing now?

Halprin: When we came back we took a long rest. Then we began to explore the audience. We wanted to find out what an audience was, to understand a little bit more what we were doing to an audience.

Rainer: I'd like to know. Was it mostly outrage that you experienced in Europe?

Halprin: Not with the cargo dance. They were very excited; they'd never seen anything like that. They had never been so overwhelmed with performers all around them, and so forth. I felt hostility only one time: when the music became very repetitious and monotonous, they started yelling "Basta! Basta!" The press was interested in it as a new form and there was no hostility. They responded to it for what it was, not because it was or wasn't dance. They were appreciating the fact that it was a new form; what Stuchenschmitt called a "sur-naturalism," a new use for dance and movement, that had gone into new areas. There was hostility to *Five-Legged Stool.* It was very controversial in Zagreb. It was almost cancelled after the first performance.

Rainer: Why?

Halprin: "Decadent Western art." That audience didn't say a word. They just sat absolutely still. Apparently there was enormous hostility. In Italy they threw things at us, but asked us to come back. They said they'd never had such a gorgeous scandal. That's apparently what they enjoyed. They didn't care whether they liked the dance, they had permission to misbehave.

Rainer: The response affected you?

Halprin: I was concerned not that it offended me, but that we had this kind of power to stir people up. If we have this kind of power, how should we use it? I was concerned with our own naïveté. In Rome the audience was very hostile; they really knew how to be effective with their hostility. When they threw a shoe it hit. There was no pussyfooting.

Did you hear the famous story about the guy who came twice and waited for the special time when everything was quiet? He marched down and stood in the spot-lights and turned and announced to the audience: "It's all Christopher Columbus's fault." And he marched out and everybody applauded. That really was clever. These are people who really know how to use their power. For the first time I realized there was a real encounter going on between audience and performers. This is what we were interested in exploring next. We invited fifty people to join a series. It was announced as *A Series of Compositions*

for an Audience. We explored this power: where is it, who has it, and how can we use it? We set up situations where the audience could investigate its role as an audience and learn how to use its power and then we could measure what it did to us.

Rainer: Do you feel that it's a moral issue? Can this power be misused, do people have to be educated?

Halprin: No, it's not a moral issue. It's throwing something away. I never realized that we were stirring people so deeply. I know now why. It gets at their pre-conscious and kinesthetic responses. It's very sensory and primitive. The more we know about this power the stronger we can be in using it. The audience has a power too, and if they can be given an opportunity to use it, we could have an encounter that would really send sparks. At Cal when a girl got up and smashed a lantern, she was using her power as an audience, but because we didn't appreciate the fact that she was using her power we threw it away. Had we responded and allowed the audience to realize that her act was a spontaneous, unplanned, vicious attack—WOW would they have had an experience! Instead, we just threw it away, by pretending that we didn't really react to it.

Rainer: Describe what happened to you.

Halprin: Let's go back a little. In three works this year, incidents happened. Chuck Ross, a sculptor, brought some big-scale things down the aisles—it was just overwhelming: they're over your head and they're all around you. He blew up great big weather balloons that started flying all over the place. The whole place was full of sound, action, and props. When we did it outdoors in Fresno, it was like a gigantic three-ring circus. People laughed; they had a wonderful time. But when we did it in a closed area, it was always terrifying. These big things were moving around, crashing, flying, and exploding, and the dancers were moving in such risky ways.

Rainer: Was this at Cal?

Halprin: Yes.

Rainer: Did it happen over the heads of the audience?

Halprin: Well, the big weather balloon was over their heads, the stuff that was carried in the aisles was going right past them. They could

put their hands out and feel the metal. They could see the dancers, they could feel the tension of their movement right at their feet, or balancing on something over their heads—they were that close. It really did get them enormously involved. We knew that it was going to do this; we knew it would stimulate this kind of response in our audience. So it happened. About three-quarters of the way through some girl just couldn't stand it and she got up from her seat, rushed onto the stage, took this lit lantern—it was the only light—everything else was black at that moment—and smashed it against a metal frame. Glass went flying all over the place and kerosene. The plastic—there was a lot of it around—could easily have caught fire. The dancers were shocked; they just gathered together and took a bow as if nothing had really happened. The audience thought that this thing was planned. They didn't appreciate their power and we didn't use ours.

Rainer: Stalemate.

Halprin: We learned from that summer that we and the audience had power. What we didn't have was the experience to deal with it when the encounter happened.

Rainer: Can you really prepare for this kind of thing?

Halprin: We did. We had a week of thorough therapy on this. We became completely brainwashed; we analyzed that thing from beginning to end. Now we're just waiting for the opportunity to see how we'll use their power, not throw it away, and not throw ours away.

Rainer: Are you going to deliberately provoke an audience?

Halprin: No. Never. Now we know that because of the things we do and the way we do them, we will stir people up. We've accepted that, we're not naïve about it any more. Now also we have to take the consequences when we stir up an audience, and we have to have an attitude for dealing with it.

Rainer: What was the name of that piece?

Halprin: *Parades and Changes.* It is compositionally one of the most satisfying fulfillments of an idea that was started in *Birds of America.* A very complicated score was worked out by the musician Mort

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ESPOSIZIONE *at the Venice Opera House, 1963.*

Subotnik and me. It permitted us complete and total flexibility. When we take this to Stockholm in August [1965], we will take absolutely nothing but the score. We will use only the materials that we have in the theatre and collect when we get there. *Parades and Changes* has a set like cell blocks. Each person is in his own medium: the lighting person, the musician, the dancers—everybody has his own series of blocks.

Rainer: Which are not coordinated?

Halprin: They're not coordinated at all. They can last five to twenty minutes. The selection of the blocks was made on the basis of their contrast—there are eight completely different uses of sound. One might be magnetic tape, one might be lute, one might be live sounds, one might be vocal sounds, another might be a Bach cantata, for example. Each block has been chosen on the basis of the differences.

Rainer: Different lengths?

Halprin: Yes, they're completely flexible.

Rainer: The Bach cantata can go on and on?

Halprin: No, that is the one thing that can't. That's "a set piece." It's exactly four minutes. That's the only one, and it can be coordinated with any number of things. Sometimes the dancers work as musicians, and sometimes the musicians use our material. We are conducted by a conductor. The dancers become musicians and sometimes they are also environmentalists: we work as crew.

Rainer: What determines when things take place?

Halprin: All these little cell blocks—it's like you arrive with a trunk full of different clothes, and then, depending upon the weather, you decide what you're going to wear that day. This is exactly what we do. We come into that theatre and look at it and study it. What is it? What will work here? So we say: "I'm going to pick out five of my blocks. I'm not going to do two of them because they just won't work here." The musician picks out what he wants, and so forth.

Rainer: No one depends on anybody else?

Halprin: That's right. Then we get together and decide which ones will work in sequence, which things will work together, based on practical matters. Very often a whole new section is invented during the performance in order to make a link between one block and another. Sometimes blocks overlap in a way that they never have before, in order to fill the space or contract the space.

This has been a delightful composition to work with because so far we have given three performances of it and they are so completely different that people that have seen them all don't even know that they are the same dance. It's been a culminating point for us in developing a system of collaboration that we started five years ago.

This is completely different from another work, *Apartment 6,* that we're not taking to Europe because of the language barrier. It's done with a lot of dialogue. It's more of a play than *Parades and Changes.*

Rainer: How long is *Parades and Changes*?

Halprin: It can be anywhere from five minutes to five hours—completely fluid in its duration.

Rainer: And *Apartment 6*?

Halprin: We've done it as a full-length work, a two-hour piece in three acts. This is new for us and it's very hard for me to talk about it because I don't quite know what it came from except that Leath and John and I—there are only three people in it—have been working together for fourteen years. We know each other so well that our relationships are terribly complicated. What happened was that we set up a problem for ourselves: let's use each other as material, let's see what will happen if we don't use any props, music, or anything. Let's just use each other. Let's explore who you really are in terms of me.

Rainer: Are you talking about feelings?

Halprin: Yes—what we really feel about each other. We were in therapy together, the three of us, to explore what our feelings were about each other. We worked on the piece for about two years. We had outside supervision, a psychologist to help us expose our feelings.

Rainer: Why did you think this was important? Artists can work without knowing their feelings, or analyzing them.

Halprin: Partly by chance, and partly by intuition. We felt that unless we began to work this way we wouldn't be able to work together any more. We wouldn't be able to get any feedback from each other any more. We had to go further, otherwise we were finished with each

other. Everything that we evolved, we evolved together with Patrick Hickey, Jo Landor, Morton Subotnik, Terry Riley, and La Monte Young. But the three of us, John, Leath, and I, were the nucleus.

Also it was something that we were beginning to feel about everybody. The person who is the performer is working with his body as an instrument, he's making sounds, and he's doing everything as if he were an object, when he's more than an object; he's full of the most fantastic psychological phenomena, but he's completely cutting these off and blocking them. But these are the most unique parts of the performer. The musician can't do this because he's got an instrument between him and the thing he's doing; and the painter has his material. But the dancer and the actor are their own instruments. They can find out why they are different from chairs or flutes or tape recorders.

There was also a desire to find out more about the human interior. To tell you the truth I was scared to death about this whole thing. I don't know if I'm the only one, I don't know how you feel about it, but when you start exposing your unconscious behavior—perhaps that's the wrong word—but when you start exposing your feelings about other people or yourself, you're opening up a lot of areas which are very uncomfortable, and it would be much easier if you just left them alone. It was uncomfortable and torturous. I approached it as a technical problem. I said, "OK, this is just new material that's been buried for a long time. I'm going to expose it, and try to find the skill to use it." There were times when I was upset and depressed because I was beginning to find out things about myself that I'd just as soon not know. I kept working on it from the point of view of: "How can I use it as an artist?" That's how *Apartment 6* grew. We set it up as a domestic scene, so that the audience would have definite things to deal with. We cooked. I fixed a breakfast for John on stage, we read newspapers, we played the radio, we talked.

Rainer: Your roles in relation to each other, were they what they really are, so you were not acting?

Halprin: I was myself. John was himself. I pretty much knew by then what some of our relationships were all about. We spent three years

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PARADES AND CHANGES *at the Five Arts Festival Arena Theatre in Fresno, California, May 9, 1965.*

developing the skill to deal with this. We would set up focuses. I would set a task for myself to do. John would set a task for himself. Each person had something to do, so that we had a very formalized structure. The process of trying to do this task would always be encountered and interfered with by the other person, this is what we couldn't help. We were so aware of how we were using each other.

Rainer: Was it always interference?

Halprin: It was either interference or reinforcement. Both altered the work. Also we developed a technique that we called "three realities." When those three realities went on at different times there would be a fourth reality. One was the simple act of doing something, which could be cooking—I made my pancake mix and I just made it. I followed the directions on the box. People would come to the theatre and they would see John reading the newspaper, really reading what was in the newspaper that day. It was absolute, complete realism. Then there would be another kind of realism—say that Leath is reading the newspaper, John is playing the radio. The radio is beginning to annoy Leath, so he wants to turn it off. He's dealing with another reality at this point. He's beginning to get feelings about that radio which put him in contact with John. All Leath's hostility against John is stirred up by the blasted radio. So he puts the newspaper down and does the most violent movement you've ever seen. He might explode in mid-air. That's how he's feeling about John at that particular moment.

Rainer: It's not what he would do in reality necessarily.

Halprin: No. That's it. We had great limitations. John was allowed to express these kinds of feelings in words, Leath was not, Leath had to express them in movement.

Rainer: Why did you restrict them?

Halprin: It's very complicated. We wanted to guarantee that Leath would be able to make very sudden shifts. If he talked out his feelings, the audience would lose direct touch with what he was feeling because his verbal material came out so sarcastically. But when he used movement he was direct. John uses words, and they come out in a way that transfers.

Rainer: You're making aesthetic judgments on the basis of . . .

Halprin: On the basis of our particular skills and development at that moment. We were able to bring certain formalized controls to these things.

Rainer: It had to do with effectiveness?

Halprin: It had to do with our skills at that particular moment. At that time Leath couldn't handle words in that situation so he used movement. In certain areas of fantasy he would start using words which would come through fine.

We got strange juxtapositions of realities going on at the same time. I might be in an absolute tizzy about my pancakes and go into a terrific fantasy about those pancakes and Leath would be just sitting at the table eating his grapefruit and reading his paper, while John was listening to the radio. Do you see what I mean?

Rainer: Yes. Sometimes people were using different realities at different times. What was the third one?

Halprin: The fantasy. Leath would simply turn into a dog, or a dart board, and John would throw darts at him. But he really fantasized these things, like day-dreaming. So he could do it in action.

The fourth reality is when the other three [realities] come together in their peculiar ways. We had it divided up: Leath and John first, then John and me, then Leath and me. There were three completely different relationships, which became the three acts. The performances were completely different each night. It was the here and now, you couldn't do any pretending. Everything was completely real at that moment. What came out of the radio, what you read in the papers, your feelings about the other person might change a little bit from one day to another. It was very, very exhausting to use your skill at a consistent level all that time. It wasn't until the last, the sixteenth, performance that I felt we had captured what we wanted to do, which was to simply have two hours on that stage of a real-life situation, in which you as performer and you as a person were completely the same thing. That finally happened. It worked for us and it worked for the audience.

Rainer: The Stanislavski Method, as it's taught in New York acting schools, seems close to what you were doing.

Halprin: I don't know anything about it. I tried to read Stanislavski but I don't understand it. It doesn't appeal to me.

Rainer: You don't see any connection?

Halprin: None at all. In our situation there's absolutely nothing pretended. We don't play any roles. We just are who we are. I don't know where it's going to lead to. We use our skills as artists to respond to the material. We use certain structures to guarantee a possibility for the audience to be in on it. We avoid personalizing.

Rainer: Do you feel a necessity to relate what you're doing to dance any more?

Halprin: No. I don't even identify with dance.

Rainer: Do you have another name for what you are doing?

Halprin: No. It's as much dance as anything—if you can think of dance as the rhythmic phenomena of the human being reacting to his environment. Essentially this is what dance is. If the audience accepted this definition, then I'd say yes, it's dance.

Rainer: What was the response of the audience? How did the power thing relate to this situation?

Halprin: There was not any of that. It affected them very differently than *Parades and Changes.* They laughed a lot and they cried a lot. Some people were crying and some people were laughing at the same time. I don't know why. Nobody really cried and felt sorry for anybody. And we cried and our thing on stage was the material we used for our crying. It was a very curious thing. I don't ever remember feeling sorry that so-and-so was crying: "He's crying, that's my material, I really feel it, I'm crying." You may not know why you cry; something hits you and you cry. The audience does the same thing. I never experienced anybody crying before in an audience. I don't really know very much about this yet. There was none of that power bit.

What I heard from people is that they identified with us closely. There were people who walked out, too—who thought they came to see a dance concert. One person had an interesting reaction, she said: "I enjoyed myself thoroughly while I was there but I'll never come again." Patrick asked why. And she said, "It just isn't art."

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