The Process Made Visible:

Anna Halprin’s RSVP Cycles in Creating
*Ceremony of Us* (1969)

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“Anna is waiting upstairs for you,” her assistant said; I walked up the stairs from the lounge at the Mountain Home Studio in Kentfield, California. As I turned the corner on the last of the 24 steps, I found myself incredibly far from Barnard College and in front of one of the most renowned and influential outdoor dance spaces of the 20th century: the outdoor dance deck. In a haze somewhere between feeling star struck and engulfed in the vibrancy and silence that enveloped me, I was greeted by Anna Halprin, the post-modern dance pioneer I thought I would only have the chance to meet in videos and photographs. Regardless of the fact that she refuses to call what she does “post modern” (Daly 48), Anna Halprin is undoubtedly one of the most generative theater artists of the latter part of the 20th century, having created more than 150 experimental works in her 94 years of life. Despite her age, having overcome cancer twice, and losing her husband and creative partner of over 50 years, Halprin continues to stand on her outdoor dance deck creating community-based and process-based dances with anyone interested in working with her. Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Meredith Monk and many other remarkable artists have graced this deck, and in October of 2013 I was lucky enough to also be welcomed into the space where Halprin encourages, with complete abandon, the confusion of life and art.
A weekend workshop titled “Creating Dances with Anna Halprin”\textsuperscript{1} brought me and 20 other acolytes to California and face to face with how Anna Halprin, the “breaker of modern dance” (Ross 2007, 23), creates her art. We began the workshop on the dance deck, in a circle, holding hands. In any other circumstance, this would seem like a hokey way to begin, but Anna didn’t want to waste a moment without “setting up the energy” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013). We were an eclectic bunch. I was by far the youngest, while the oldest attendees were a husband and wife in their 70s who had been dancing and working with Halprin for over four decades. Among us were yoga instructors, Alzheimer’s therapists, doctors, dancers, non-dancers, actors, teachers, computer scientists, and stay at home mothers. For our first exercise, Halprin gave us two simple directions: introduce your name with a signature movement phrase, and your hometown with a unique sound. As we went around in a circle, making gestural phrases, animal sounds, and getting to know one another, no two people did or said the same thing. An exercise simply intended for us to learn each other’s names became an open space for theatricality, individuality, humor, and vulnerability. When participants would hesitate before moving or speaking, Halprin would remind them: “you can’t make a mistake, just go” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013). When it was my turn, a wave of safety overcame me. I realized for the first time in my dance career, standing in a circle with a group of people all vehemently willing to be themselves, that there was no way for me to do this wrong.

The diverse range of participants in attendance at the “Creating Dances with Anna Halprin” workshop is a testament to the kind of artist that Anna Halprin is, as well as the ways she encourages a reconsideration of the conventional understanding of what it means to be a “dancer”. Halprin saw a dancer in every human being, “whether trained to move or not” (Banes

\textsuperscript{1}The workshop took place on October 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} from 10 AM-5 PM at the Mountain Home Studio, Anna Halprin’s residence, in Kentfield, California.
She often tells the story of being a little girl and seeing her grandfather, a conservative Jewish rabbi, dancing as he prayed. Because his white hair and white beard matched the descriptions of God she had heard in myths and tales, Halprin assumed that God was a dancer, and as his children, so were we. She embraced the idea that dance was an inherent part of every human being and not something one was taught or learned with time. For Halprin, no person was more or less of a dancer than any other person, and thus she felt that the idea that distinguished “good” dance performances from “bad” dance performances was fallacious. In Moving Toward Life, Halprin’s edited collection of interviews, essays on her theory and methodology, and photographs, the artist remembers this fervent impulse to abandon product-based methods for creating dance for a “process which is, itself, the experience” (Halprin 1995, 101). She felt that while a product-based approach excluded those who weren’t “dancers” in the highly trained and conventional sense, a process-based approach could systemize a way for anyone to create dance, regardless of technique, training, gender, age, race, or career. As evidenced by the 20 varied participants on the dance deck that morning, Halprin has devoted her life to fulfill what she once felt was an “urgent need to clarify a process of creativity that would allow many different people with different lifestyles to come together and create collectively” (Halprin 1995, 124). Out of this need emerged Halprin’s RSVP cycles, a four-step process intended to generate any form of creativity. Established with the ingenious input of her architect husband Lawrence Halprin, the RSVP cycles were intended “to explore nothing less than the creative process—what energized it—how it functions—and how its universal aspects have implications for all our fields” (as qtd. in Halprin 1995, 124). The Halprins’ RSVP cycles include collecting resources to use for the process, writing a score, or task, that you want to execute, performing or acting out the score, and finally valuating, or analyzing, the experience and value of the first three steps.
Because the RSVP cycles suggest only a form and not content for artistic creation, Anna Halprin claims they “make everything so simple, [and are] something you can do with everyone and about anything” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013). As opposed to a product-based approach, which usually includes an authoritative voice guiding the group towards a desired end, a process-based approach to creating art is more flexible, all-inclusive, self-sustaining, and can respond to a limitless number of contexts. This approach proved particularly useful and potent in 1968, when Halprin was transitioning in her career from creating theatrical works to creating therapeutic pieces that simultaneously acknowledged and addressed an urgent social agenda. In response to the escalating race divide in the late 1960s, and the Watts Riots that occurred only six hours from her home, Halprin began an RSVP cycle that put to the test the process’ ability to be applied to anything, even the most current and heated of situations. Halprin worked separately with a group of all African American dancers from Watts and a group of all Caucasian dancers from San Francisco for an entire year. Ten days before their scheduled performance, Halprin brought them together for the first time, and Ceremony of Us (1969), as the piece was called, came into fruition. This unique way of navigating the terrain of race initiated a process and lead to a piece of dance, that no one, not even Halprin, expected.

As I stood among the varied group of people who came to this workshop in order to integrate and apply the RSVP cycles to their own work, as Halprin did in order to create Ceremony of Us in 1968-1969, I began to wonder if I could generate a piece of scholarly analysis about Halprin’s method for creating dance by using the RSVP cycles. Halprin claimed that the RSVP cycles were infinitely adaptive and could explore anything as long as the entire process was made visible. More interested in the journey than the final destination of creating art, Halprin believed that this transparency was not only “means for a more authentic theater” (Ross
but necessary for creating something profound that could transform life. In honor of Halprin’s deep desire to see the process made visible, I wrote a thesis in which a reader can see me do the RSVP cycles about *Ceremony of Us* in the same way that through my research, I was able to see how, and more importantly why, Halprin used the RSVP cycles to create this seminal work. While Halprin used the RSVP cycles to create an original and controversial piece about centuries of repressed social tension, I am going to use the RSVP cycles to create an original argument about the benefits, and costs, of that approach. I began my own RSVP cycles to better understand Halprin’s use of them. Why did she feel that *Ceremony of Us* would not have yielded the same cathartic experience for both groups of dancers, as well as the audience, had it not used a process based approach of creativity, such as the RSVP cycles? Does a process-based approach have more ability than a product-based approach to prove that not only can “art be a reflection of life, [but] art can also be its guide” (Halprin 1995, 46)? Will a process-oriented technique, such as the RSVP cycles, which Halprin has applied to a plethora of topics and ideas ever “go out of style” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013) or lose its potential to be universally applicable? To this day, *Ceremony of Us* is valued more for the process it used than the product it created; It stands out to both Halprin and the devout scholars that study her, like Janice Ross, as a nexus of life and art, made possible by a collective and democratic process. By embedding a thematic exploration of how Halprin used the RSVP cycles to create *Ceremony of Us* in my own RSVP cycles, I plan to subject her process to itself in order to explore what made it so unique and influential in 20th century dance.

Anna and Lawrence Halprin broke up the RSVP cycles, intended to generate any form of creativity, into four parts: Resources, Scores, Performances, and Valuactions. According to the RSVP cycles, embarking on a new creative pursuit in dance, architecture, or any other field
begins by collecting the resources that could inform and contribute to the generation of new material. “Resources” refers to the inventory of emotional and physical assets as well as resources of space, time, and movement that one can utilize in order to probe a new concept. Once resources have been collected, a score is written. A “score” is a loose framework for artistic creation that delineates how the resources that were collected can be used. During the workshop I attended, which was focused on giving its participants the experience of going through various RSVP cycles, Halprin said that when making a score she always asks herself five questions: “What is the activity? What is the use of space? How should I use people? “What is my time frame” and “What is my intention?” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013). Once a general consensus about the score has been formed, those involved in creating the score go on to perform it. “Performance”, the third step in Halprin’s RSVP cycles, “does not mean [that one] is required to exhibit a professional stage presence in the terms many people have associated with dance performance” (Halprin 1995, 50). “Performance” simply means implementing the score. Even when a group of dancers is performing a score on stage in front of an audience, as they did with Ceremony of Us at the end of the year-long creative process, a large amount of the performance still remains susceptible to the authentic impulses of the moment; the score gives the dancers a set of tasks and objectives, but does not tell them how to go about accomplishing them. Finally, the “Valuaction”, which is the fourth step of the cycle, assess the value of the resources that were collected, the score that was written, the actions that were completed in the performance, and the efficiency of going through the cycle as a whole. The “Valuaction” analyzes the results of collective decision-making, and as its name suggests, addresses the “action-oriented as well as the decision-oriented aspects of the cycle” (Halprin 1995, 124). When valuacting the resources, the scores, and the performance, Halprin asks herself
“What worked? What didn’t work? How may I develop this? How may I use this in my own work? How can I continue this? What is really my intention with this work? Why am I doing this? What impact can this work have?” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013).

Lawrence Halprin spent a large part of his career defining and redefining the steps of the RSVP cycle in order to pinpoint what made them so effective across fields. Through the RSVP cycles “he redefined landscape architecture to include a whole social, political, and participatory point of view” (“Breath Made Visible”), which later inspired Anna to do the same with dance and choreography. The cycles, which illustrated a process of “applied democracy” that “differed in that it systemized and made visible the whole creative process as it is occurring” (Halprin 1995, 48), fulfilled a pluralist impulse that arose in the postwar era. The dismantled and disconnected nature of society was finding its way into art, leaving Halprin with a desire “create consensus among participants” (Ross 2003, 37) instead of just allowing one person to control the movement, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of the others. What makes Halprin’s process-oriented work so different than the methods of dance creation that came before is its ability to both honor the individual and foster an intensely collective community simultaneously. As we stood on the dance deck in a circle, it was clear we all came from different walks of life, with different hometowns, religions, interests, and careers. Yet somehow we formed a cohesive unit of artists willing to be open and honest with one another, despite our individual differences. As Halprin guided us in our introductory movement tasks, she emphasized how a process-based approach, specifically, honors the individual as well as the collective that contains it: “you will not be taught to do movement here. It has to be movement you’re all personally involved in creating together” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013). She “attempted to find a process that united personal and artistic growth, life and art, the individual and the collective,
with one aspect continuously feeding off the other and coming together in new ways” (Halprin 1995, 101). Because the RSVP cycles could uniquely honor both the individual and the collective at the same time, they created a potent space that could both honor the world she found and address the world that she wanted.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, R.S.V.P means to “respond to an invitation”. When the Studio Watts dancers and the San Francisco dancers came together in 1969, they were literally responding to a pressing social need that called for their attention. Halprin felt that a process-based approach as suggested by the RSVP cycles was the only way to explore how “interwoven the many threads of cultural life are—social, political, spiritual, and aesthetic” (Halprin and Schechner 67) and to address the places where those ties had been severed by racial injustice in the United States. For this thesis, I began my own RSVP cycles in order to better understand why Halprin felt she had to use them to create Ceremony of Us. When Halprin brought together the two groups of dancers on the dance deck in 1969, she hoping that their unfamiliarity with one another would uncover new and creative solutions to long-standing problems. Similarly, I am engaging in an act of collective creativity by bringing together my own thoughts about Halprin’s process with the thoughts of those who have already written about her, to hopefully reveal new dimensions about the merits, and weaknesses, of her approach.

I began by collecting my resources, the first and most predominant being the workshop I attended at Anna’s home in mid October of this year. In addition to being a participant observer, I spoke with Anna Halprin and fellow attendees of the workshop, one of whom was in the original cast of Ceremony of Us. The majority of my scholarly research came from professor Janice Ross who has worked extensively to analyze and situate Halprin’s work in the landscape of contemporary dance. I also studied archival programs, magazine articles, and photographs
found at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Library of the Performing Arts. Furthermore, I read her autobiography and watched her most recent documentary Breath Made Visible. Finally, I read a series of interviews and articles that put Halprin in conversation with prominent choreographers, dance scholars, and performance theorists.

After compiling my “resources”, I wrote a score to delineate my research objectives:

I will use the above-mentioned resources that I collected to understand and explore how and why Anna Halprin used each step of RSVP cycle to create Ceremony of Us. I will discuss each step of the RSVP cycles in detail, as well as how Halprin applied them to create this ground-breaking work. I will look at how Halprin, her dancers, and her audience members felt about the rehearsal and performance of a piece that “both draws on life’s realities and aims to change them” (Halprin 1995, 111). Finally, I will analyze and reflect on the experience of going through the RSVP cycles myself.

Thirdly, I am going to perform the score I have written, which simply means to execute, “implement and carry out” (Halprin 1995, 50) what I have set out to do. This will constitute the meat of my paper, and I will delve deeper into both the theory of the RSVP cycles and the application of them to creating Ceremony of Us. I will look at the resources she collected, the scores she wrote, the performances of those scores and their implications, and finally how she and others valuated Ceremony of Us and the RSVP cycles that created it. Lastly, I am going to wrap up my own RSVP cycles by valuating my experience of going through them. What have they taught me about Ceremony of Us that I couldn’t have learned by writing this paper in a more traditional manner? How are they different from the normal scholarly approach to research? How would I recycle my score if I were to undergo the RSVP Cycles again? What
more would I want to learn? Are the RSVP cycles really as applicable and universal as Halprin claims? And finally, has my doing of the RSVP cycles about her RSVP cycles demonstrated that in my experience, process is more fruitful than product?

_Ceremony of Us: Resources_

Anna Halprin’s work was so revolutionary partly because she was pulling from a well of resources previously not associated with dance. Unlike many of her predecessors, Halprin drew on the resources of human beings and everyday life more than those of dancers and the life of the stage. She was actively trying to “wipe away preconceptions about what a proper dance action was” (Ross 2007, 272), by focusing instead on that fact that for the RSVP cycles, everything was dance and everybody was a dancer. In _Moving Toward Life_, Halprin says that resources can include any or all of the following: “movement; categories and ideas; spaces: their size, quality, and essential nature; sounds; people: their destiny, capacities, talents, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, special interests, and their bodies; feelings; and fantasies” (48). Highly influenced by her religious upbringing, her progressive education, her move to California, and the historical context of the 20th century, Halprin felt that anything that occurred in the human experience could be resource for the creative process. In _Performance Theory_, Richard Schechner bolsters this point by saying that “all elements of theater are (like experience generally) on the same plane—there is no priori hierarchy, no way of determining before rehearsal what will be the dominating element, if any” (63). Although Halprin and Schechner’s views conflicted with some of the 20th century impulses to avoid certain controversial topics, desires, or realities from the creation of dance and the sphere of performance art, in the world of the RSVP cycles, the more
varied and wide-ranging one’s resources were, the more likely they were to create an authentic piece of dance that encompassed human reality in its purest form.

This level of inclusivity and openness became a trademark of Halprin’s innovative dance pieces and her process-based approach:

“We can no longer depend on our masterminds. There is too much for one mind to master. Its more enjoyable and more unpredictable to let things happen that just let everybody be, and its wonderful to see what comes about when you release people’s resources. You can allow yourself to find out what is possible and not just what you think should be. One person determining everything for everybody: it just isn’t like that any more. It doesn’t have to be like that” (Halprin 1995, 151).

In order to transcend the idea of an authoritative voice, one of the most prominent “resources” that Halprin used when creating Ceremony of Us emerged from her experience living on the east coast. The works of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Merce Cunningham and Hanya Holm which she had seen when she lived in New York, made very clear to Halprin what she didn’t want to do, who she didn’t want to work like, and what bothered her about the current condition of modern dance. In a magazine article by Luger and Laine from 1978, Halprin says that “there are two types of artists, vertical and horizontal. The vertical [like Martha Graham] perfects an idea and keeps at it. The horizontal is primarily an explorer, like me”. Halprin coined herself a “total artist” with an aim to “break as many barriers as we possibly could, [including] break[ing] the proscenium arch” (“Breath Made Visible”). Janice Ross, in her book on Halprin titled Experience as Dance comments that “her choice of [this] metaphor delineates, in bluntly functional and unromanticized terms, the literal task of an iconoclast, a
breaker of icons” (2007, xiii). Ross notices that the metaphor of “breaking” became a common way that Halprin described her move away from academy, formalism, and mimesis to a space of exploration as seen in her process of creating Ceremony of Us. By embracing unmediated exploration, Halprin attempted to confront the Watts Riots and the years of racial unease that had been buried underneath them through dance. The unearthing of this new resource was largely facilitated by her move across the country. Associating New York with choreographers like Martha Graham and a “city linked by uniform stylistic traditions” (Ross 2007 73), “Halprin initiated her artistic divergence from the New York Dance Establishment through a geographical separation that eventually grew into an aesthetic one” (Ross 2003 25). Relocating to San Francisco exposed Halprin to experimental artists in other fields that were creating more honest, raw, and innovative works than what she was seeing on the East Coast stage.

In the 1950s, Halprin went to ADF for a two-week performance series with some of the most influential artists of mid 20th-century modern dance. What she saw deeply offended and concerned her. She saw Martha Graham. And then behind Graham she saw an “army of [Martha Graham] clones” (Schechner and Halprin 70). Halprin humorously says in her documentary “I didn’t have [Martha Graham’s] hair. She’d flip over and her hair would flip. My hair is slinky. I could never move my hair like Martha. I couldn’t move like that” (“Breath Made Visible”). But for Halprin, this realization far exceeded hair texture and flow. At this moment, Halprin began to comprehend that this mimetic form of dance, rigid prestylization, and the encouragement to copy someone else’s movement rather than use a process to generate your own, was stifling creativity in a way that threatened her “fierce loyalty to the uniqueness of the individual” (Schechner and Halprin 70). Halprin preferred “to have people told what to do but not how to do it” (Schechner and Halprin 71). This view was fueled by Halprin’s understanding that dance was a subjective as
opposed to an objective experience. “Doesn’t it say somewhere that thou shall not bow down to a
golden image?” Anna Halprin asked herself at ADF that summer. “I felt like, in those days, you
had to bow down to figures like Martha Graham” (Herschthal). By giving the dancers that she
worked with a framework through the RSVP cycles, Halprin guided them to discovery how their
own body wanted to move and what they most authentically wanted to say with that movement,
which is different than what someone like Martha Graham would have wanted to say. This
resource of the organic and personal as opposed to the mimetic made dancers the executers of
their distinctive creative impulses in a way rarely seen before Halprin’s time.

Halprin aimed to unlock the inherent dancer in every human, rather than teaching a
specific and defined technique like she saw Graham do at ADF in the 1950s. The RSVP Cycles
that Halprin went on to create may appear to be a formal set of rules, but it only utilizes the value
of its structure in order to map out a creative process that eventually transcends the formal.
Schechner describes these rules as frames: “Some rules say what must be done and others what
must not be done. Between the frames there is freedom” (13). In fact, the RSVP cycles capitalize
on the possibility of freedom and encourage experiments in improvisation, mind-body
connection, and “organic choreography in contrast to representational choreography” (Ross
2007, 87). Halprin’s daughter, Daria Halprin, who continues to teach the RSVP cycles at the
Tamalpa Institute for the Expressive Arts, says that her mother “encouraged us to find our own
stories other than dance Swan Lake or other people’s stories” (“Breath Made Visible”).
Similarly, when Halprin created *Ceremony of Us* in 1969, those 22 dancers were dancing no
one’s stories but their own.

Realizing that neither her nor dancers had Graham’s hair, body, or movement style, Anna
Halprin felt that there was a natural and intuitive movement vocabulary on which she could draw
that would prove to be more resourceful for creating original art than simply learning a prestylized technique. Halprin believes that “movement is generated from that innate bodily intelligence that we all possess” (“Creating Dances With Anna Halprin” 2013). Anna’s childhood and religious upbringing planted the seeds for her radical understanding of the dancer inherent in every human being, and her primary school education further solidified this association. At a young age Halprin’s parents placed her in the progressive Washburne School system which tailored, or rather “untailored”, a curriculum that emphasized the fundamental value of the individual in the infrastructure of education (Ross 2007, 11). The Washburne school system encouraged academic learning as a process one undergoes rather than a product one arrives at. According to Janice Ross, the untraditional pedagogical approach at the Washburne schools allowed Anna to see how a process-based approach to learning enables the uncovering of one’s intrinsic intelligence and understanding.

When Halprin continued her education at a premier dance program at the University of Wisconsin, she was able to see how the process-based approach she learned in her formative education could be adapted to dance and creativity. One of her most influential teachers at the University of Wisconsin, and someone who significantly impacted the way Anna approached making dance, was Margaret H’Doubler. H’Doubler “emphasized training the ‘thinking dancer’ rather than shaping students for careers in the professional dance world; her thrust was on creating conditions for students to discover dance possibilities within their own bodies” (Ross 2007, 28). Unlike traditional modern technique and repertory, H’Doubler did not teach prepared phrases of movement, and instead encouraged her students to find what was true in his or her own body (Ross 2003, 32). In Experience as Dance, Ross quotes Halprin from the 1955 issue of Impulse magazine saying that “there must be no preconceived notion to direct the action…he
must be a craftsman as he uses his kinesthetic sense, and a creator as he thinks with it. He will improvise as a way of unleashing inner experiences, and will shape and define this experience with creative intelligence” (89). Halprin recalls the radical nature of H’Doubler’s method: “what other dancer at that time in history ever had anyone get down and crawl?” (as qtd. in Ross 2007, 30). It was H’Doubler’s method that lead Halprin to question what made someone a dancer or a non-dancer and if perhaps these categories were products of arbitrary social ideology; that perhaps the most resourceful movement we do is not the movement we have learned but instead the movement that innately exists within us?

Halprin is always puzzled why “people say [she work[s] with ‘non-dancers” (as qtd. in Kerner). “There’s no such thing”, she adds. “You just push a button and now you’re aware of yourself dancing” (as qtd. in Kerner). Janice Ross claims that “her work in particular hinged on her intuitive capacity to use dance as a way to foreground non-dancing bodies. She would not only have dancers use non-dancers’ actions but also put non-dancers in the situation of dancers” (2007, 74). Halprin’s cross country move, following her revolutionary education with H’Doubler, lead her to question this duality between dancer and non-dancer that other choreographers took so seriously. By embracing that the body is not necessarily a dancer’s body, Halprin moved into the realm of the postmodern and unleashed a plethora of new opportunities for dance. H’Doubler’s awareness of natural bodily intelligence and the physical and psychological logic of the body, regardless of any formal training, is reflected in what Halprin calls Movement Ritual. On a large chart, Halprin has jotted down many anatomical combinations of movements and numbered them. In a random fashion, Halprin would pick some elements and put them together resulting in “the wildest combinations of movements, things [she] never could have conceived of [herself]” (Halprin 2007, 81). Halprin states that by doing these exercises, her
body would instinctively come up with new ways of moving that were beyond what the rational mind could generate. Not a single of the Watts dancers that Halprin worked with for *Ceremony of Us* had taken dance classes before. By using Movement Ritual to help them better understand their anatomical structure and capabilities; intuitive bodily intelligence became a primary resource for this process in particular. In an essay in Sally Banes’ *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s*, Janice Ross says that “the human body, which customarily had to be made extraordinary in order to become an art medium in dance, was now being made noteworthy by virtue of its physical ordinariness doing task procedure movements”, such as Movement Ritual (30). The movements generated by Movement Ritual were ordinary, trite, and routine, and Halprin often employed pedestrian movement vocabularies previously considered unfit for dance. Ross says that “the self that unfolds on [Halprin’s] stage is plural—the routinized selves of everyday actions, encounters, and exchanges” (2007, xiv), as opposed to some idealized and fabricated subject. Knowing that both the dancers from Watts and the dancers from San Francisco were equally capable of doing these “task procedure movements”, Halprin’s first score upon bringing them together was for each of them to make lunch for the group. As a result, both groups of dancers began to become familiar with and aware of their own bodily resources while completing this trivial activity. Subsequently, even the members from Watts who had no formal dance training, realized that in Anna’s eyes, they were just as qualified to be a part of this process and her own company members.

Halprin’s understanding of the ordinary human body and its innate intelligence for movement, regardless of training, was the first of many other resources that drew from the natural fabric of life. Real bodies, real spaces, and real people with real emotions became the tools out of which Halprin would create *Ceremony of Us*: a piece more about life than about
dance. The type of dance and theater preceding Halprin’s work were aimed at social diversion and entertainment, which Halprin fervently rejected. In an attempt to reverse this trend, Halprin “reintroduced dance as a medium for social investigation and activism” (Ross 2007, xiv).

Halprin did not want dance for distraction and did not want it to be detached from the realities of everyday life. Instead, she believed that if dance emerged directly out of the nuances of daily experience, it would exist “somewhere between the stage, the environment, and the home” (Ross 2007, 75). Halprin’s dance deck, a literal junction of stage, environment, and home became the place where Halprin raised her children, developed the RSVP cycles, and shaped Ceremony of Us. On this deck, located in the heart of Northern California’s natural landscape, she aimed to “have no recognizable style, unless you consider being totally real a style” (Ross 1992, 52). With this multipurpose outdoor space, Halprin was able to “inaugurate the rougher life-as-art dance theater of post modernism” (Ross 2004, 49), that would become the foundational idea for Ceremony of Us. The latter part of the 20th century gave Halprin a copious amount of “real things” to use as a resource in the creative process. Ross states that “Halprin’s dance lives in the once-sacred landscape where the American dream of family, happiness and purpose was imploding” (2004, 52). In an earlier essay, she points out that Halprin felt perplexed by choreographers who could “dance about being inventive and cute and funny” when our planet is in such danger and the world is in a state of crisis and deterioration (Ross 1992, 53). In Ceremony of Us, Halprin and her dancers called on their real life experiences and danced about what they knew, what they saw, and what they felt. By using their realities as the material for their art, they were able to explore a new and provocative dimension of interiority and authenticity. Halprin laments that “dancers rarely study the emotional life, they simply study movement. But movement is related to the emotional, and the RSVP cycles gives you a system
for looking at those feelings” (1995, 12). The racial divides of the 1960s, as evidenced by the Watts Riots, were characterized by deep emotion that neither Halprin, nor her dancers, could afford to ignore. The series of events deeply inspired Anna to dismantle the boundary between life and art, and let reality, in its most uncensored state, be her biggest resource. Her dancers for this work, seven men and four women from the Watts group, and eight women and three men from the San Francisco’s Dancer’s Workshop (Ross 2007, 267) were life-size. They were real “people whose actions onstage, ran with the simple honesty of someone unashamedly and untheatrically doing something real” (Ross 2003, 25). If Halprin was committed to exploring life as it really was, the shame and prejudice associated with being someone of color was embedded in that. What Halprin did remarkably well as she worked with the ton-trained members from Watts and her own dancers simultaneously, was that she did not shy away from “this confrontational aspect of her process even as she moved into race as her topic” (Ross 2007, 273).

To the contrary, Halprin addressed race by jumping head first into it. She was “hoping to express the elusive shape of racism by embodying, and perhaps defusing it through the language of participatory theater” (Ross 2007, 256). As she moved into a topic that was highly charged and sensitive for both groups, she chose to focus on the group more than the individual. She felt that the collective was a highly valuable resource that could assist the individual dancers in overcoming the physical and emotional triggers entrenched in the problem of racial inequality. Ross emphasizes that “desire and suspicion are emotions that can be frightening across racial lines, but that they had a chance to be aired and acted on within parameters of safety” (2007, 276). By using the collective as one of the central resources in the RSVP cycles for Ceremony of Us, Halprin was able to create this space of safety that otherwise seemed non-existent to the dancers. Halprin acknowledges that the process of creating Ceremony of Us was so pivotal
because it used as its resources “real people dealing with their real life issues” (Ross 2007, 275), as opposed to ideal or abstract concepts. In order to navigate years of cultural and physical memory, Halprin used the resources of the organic over the mimetic, the body as a well of deep knowledge, and the reserve of real and authentic emotions and experience. What emerged from these resources was a work that affected not only the people in it, but the people who witnessed it as well.

**Ceremony of Us: Scoring**

Scoring, the second step of the RSVP cycles, was a way for Halprin to focus on the untapped potential of her resources. A score is simply an organization of the resources collected into a series of written down tasks that can each be completed in an infinite number of ways. Lawrence Halprin always felt that the “seat of creativity” resided in scores, and “this is the phase of the cycle that he emphasized” (Kupper) above all the others. Agreeing with her husband, Anna believed that a score is what enables the creativity to happen and what allows each individual artist to use, at their own discretion, their body, their feelings, and their experience. The writing down of a task in scoring orients and focuses a creative activity without limiting the individual. In *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s*, Janice Ross emphasizes the opportunity for individuality in the scoring process: “Each performer was allowed to first find his or her individual voice and manner of dealing with the general instructions Halprin gave, Halprin’s work depended on an inherent faith in less governance, whether in life or art” (40). Halprin was simply a facilitator of creativity, never an authority on it.

Halprin explained that the reason scoring is so central to a process-based approach is because it is intended to break the predictable cycle of cause and effect that hinders the unlimited
possibility of creative options. John Graham, one of the first members of the San Francisco Dancer’s Workshop, describes the scoring process as revolutionary and novel in the 1960s: “We had a series of tasks and as we were going along we had to pick these things up and put them on us and not consider how we were doing it. What a profound idea, to NOT consider how we were doing it” (“Breath Made Visible”). Although the scoring process does resemble improvisation, Halprin claims that some limits are necessary to guide and focus the artistic process. Therefore, she didn’t refer to very open scores as improvisations, but instead as explorations. In an interview with Nancy Smith she says that “An exploration requires that you stay on that particular path, focused on dealing with a particular element, for a given length of time. And that you can’t just run off. Or you can’t just move into some more familiar way of doing things” (Halprin 1995, 192).

The lack of governance over the scoring process, as well as a written task’s ability to keep participants present while addressing an intense topic “without running off into some familiar way of doing things” (Halprin 1995, 192) were fundamental for the creation of Ceremony of Us. The tragic riots lasted 6 days, killed 34 people, injured 1034 people, burned down 1000 buildings, and involved 31,000 African American participants. Knowing the severity of the situation and the involvement of two of the Watts’ dancers’ parents in the Riots, Halprin had to approach the scoring phase of the process with sensitivity and caution in order to ensure that it wouldn’t scare off some of the dancers. The first score Anna wrote was for herself. She was to work with the all-black Studio Watts in Los Angeles and her San Francisco’s Dancers Workshop in San Francisco separately for the duration of a year. This task “would create a structure, a container, into which both groups could sift their viewpoints and imaginings” (Ross 2007, 256). To many critics, it seemed counterintuitive that Halprin would work with the two
groups separately on a dance associated with bridging racial divides. Halprin’s intention for *Ceremony of Us*, however, was not a melting pot (Halprin 1995, 52). Instead, she intentionally separated the two groups as a way to honor their differences and maximize diversity, so that when she brought them together, cohesion rather than conformity would occur. Not intended to be segregational or discriminatory, this score was Halprin’s way of honoring the deeply personal and different experience of whites and blacks during the Watts riots, and going through a creative process “with a community” instead of “for a community” (Halprin 1995, 153).

When Halprin was working in Southern California with the Studio Watts dancers, she gave them one of the same scores that I had done while at the workshop in October: The Blindfold Score. The score asked the dancers to blindfold themselves and hold hands while she guided them on a walk through the neighborhood surrounding their studio (Ross 2007, 269). Due to “centuries of fear, mistrust, and hate due to inequality and ignorance” (Ross 2007, 271), the dancers were disconnected from one another and reluctant to welcome Halprin in. Not only was this score intended to foster kinesthetic awareness of one’s body in relation to other bodies, but it was also meant to increase the level of trust that the dancers had in Anna.

These deep-rooted feelings of wariness were at an apex when Halprin brought both groups together on her dance deck a week and a half before their scheduled performance. She remembers the first meeting as “electrifying and frightening” (Ross 2007, 270), and felt that scoring would be the most prudent way to allow physical and emotional negotiations to take place. The joined workshop was intended to be a microcosm of the racial dynamics at play in society, and scoring was to be the vehicle with which to explore them. Although Halprin had done many scores with each group individually, new scores were needed when the blacks and the whites came together. She now had two of her resources in the same physical space, and thus,
needed scores that reflected that: “Ann was trusting the interaction of the two groups to generate the shape and focus of what would be the final performance. The black group and the white group now both had a voice in movement; [the scores] created a physical conversation for the stage” (Ross 2007, 270).

In *Moving Toward Life*, Halprin lists some of the first scores and tasks the group performed:

“When you hear your voices on tape calling each other’s names, begin the action of looking and touching each other, responding to your immediate feelings about the person you are looking at and reacting to” (Halprin 1995, 161)

“When you feel repressed by group action, break out into center space and begin your own thing. Group members continually try to reinforce each other’s actions” (Halprin 1995, 162)

“When you first performed these scores, both groups were filled with fear and curiosity. Halprin couldn’t believe that this was 1969 and “this was the first time that this particular group
from Watts had ever been in any kind of intimate relationship with a group of white people. And vice versa” (Halprin 1995, 18).

One of the participants at the workshop I attended, Melinda Harrison, was an original member of Halprin’s San Francisco Dancer’s Workshop and part of the white group Halprin used in the process of creating *Ceremony of Us*. When I asked Harrison what it was like to come together and perform scores for 10 days of uncomfortable yet groundbreaking collaboration she told me about her state of awe and shock: “these black guys were amazing. The one I danced with had never danced with a white woman before” (“Creating Dances with Anna Halprin”, 2013). Harrison, unlike many of the members from Studio Watts, felt up to the challenge that these scores presented due to the training in kinesthetic awareness, exploration, and RSVP cycles she had received from studying with Halprin from an early age: “as a child I danced on the deck. I was much more aware and had a more developed kinesthetic sense. I understood that to be non-verbal was very intimate. I was intimate with nature and trees and those around me. Easy touching—I was comfortable to work with another person and make contact” (“Creating Dances with Anna Halprin” 2013). As the group was “moving through a series of getting to know oneself and each other as well as physically supporting each other” (Ross 2003, 33-4) Halprin was surprised to find that racial tensions were not the only things coming to the surface. Unexpectedly, sexual tensions between the African American men and the white women were beginning to deteriorate the ability for direct communication between the groups, and Halprin knew she had to go and revise the score in order to deal with the tense rehearsal condition. To address the hostility between the men and women, Ann separated the sexes into different studios for two days. She did this not to diffuse the tension, but instead as a way of honoring that the men and the women were having different experiences that they needed to work through in their
own ways. She honored and maximized their gender differences, just as she had honored and maximized the racial differences of the two groups at the beginning of the rehearsal process.

When Halprin separated both the blacks from the whites at the beginning of the process, and the women from the men when the need arose, she had no intention for closure or resolution when bringing them back together. Daria, Anna’s daughter and one of the white dancers in Ceremony of Us, claims that “it was more about letting it all hang out than letting it all hang out for the purpose of putting it back together in a way that was healthy” (as qtd. in Ross 2007, 277). Halprin cared more about the process of revealing these racial and sexual tensions than packaging them into “smooth collective, non-messy theater” (Ross 2007, 256). She knew the latter was illusory, and embraced the impossible neutrality of working with racial and gendered bodies. Scoring allowed Halprin to set aside any desire for closure that would have suppressed the intense overflow of fear and emotion that made Ceremony of Us as cathartic as it was. Halprin was not intending to be political with her scores for Ceremony of Us. The political elements of the work simply emerged on their own accord out of a process that was open enough to let all voices be heard, even those of the audience’s. Halprin’s focus was solely on using the RSVP cycles to allow whites and blacks, women and men, to be “visible, vocal, and noticed on their own terms” (Ross 2007, 256).

**Ceremony of Us: Performance**

“Performance”, the penultimate step of the RSVP cycles, occurs many times throughout the scoring process and includes but is not limited to the performance on a stage. “Performance” refers to the choices one makes, in rehearsal and on stage, of how to carry out a score. Due to the element of personal choice inherent in the scoring process, a performance is left up to the whims
of the dancer and their experience in that moment, and is thus highly unpredictable. During the 10 days of collective collaboration, the Studio Watts dancers and the dancers from the San Francisco Dancer’s Workshop wrote and performed a variety of scores. This lead to a great deal of discussion about the racial and sexual undercurrents at play within the group and the subsequent score revisions needed to address them. As a choreographer, Halprin was able to help her dancers decide on which scores they wanted to pursue and “mold in[to] a more or less finished work” for their on stage performance at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles on February 2, 1969 (Ross 1995, 33). Although the selection of scores they were going to perform was more or less decided beforehand, the improvisatory element of performing those scores was largely retained when the dancers moved from the dance deck to the stage. What made the performance at the Mark Taper Forum different from all the scores they had performed in the workshop process was the addition of a new and transformational resource: the audience.

Many of the audience members who attended the performance on that February day, expected to watch dancers perform scores, not to perform scores themselves. Halprin, however, “did not want spectators” (Schechner and Halprin 71), but instead wanted engaged witnesses. The flexibility and choice involved in how to respond to a score, which the dancers had been doing for over a year, was extended to audience members who found their role as active participants in the process foreign and uncomfortable. Halprin “forced each ticket-buyer who wanted to enter the theater to get to his or her seat by walking through a corridor of either black or white performers” (Ross 1995, 42). In doing so, Halprin attempted to discard the idea of “anonymous spectatorship”, and forced audience members to confront their own skin color as well as the prejudices or beliefs they had about race at large. As audience members, who were just as racially mixed as the dancers they came to see, chose which aisle they wanted to walk
down, the performers engaged them in another workshop task: holding up mirrors to their faces and reciting “this is what I see”, “this is what I imagine I see”, and “this is what I want to see” (Ross 2007, 278). In true pluralistic fashion, if Halprin encouraged the dancers to come face to face with their beliefs, feelings, self-perceptions, prejudices, and fear during the workshop process, she felt she had to ask the same of the audience during the performance. In rehearsal, Halprin’s dancers were urged to confront the racial status quo as something that they had been involved in establishing, and then they were encouraged to explore how it could be transformed. The audience members were just as accountable as the dancers for the way things were in 1969 America. Halprin would use scores that violated their physical space and infringed on their privacy, such as the aisle score and the mirror score, as a way to use art, which was a direct reflection of life, to awaken its participants and profoundly alter the source from which it came.

Changing the role of spectator from one of “audience” to one of “witness” (Nees) is primarily how Halprin’s pieces, including Ceremony of Us, which were not choreographed as political statements, became anything but.

Once the dancers moved from the aisles to the stage, the performance was highly emblematic of the workshop process that had taken place in the 10 preceding days. Janice Ross describes the performance as a “physical metaphor for the process of getting to know one another and for the discovery that encountering other people as individuals makes them far less threatening than when one thinks of them only as a part of an intimidating and monolithic social or ethnic group” (Ross 2003, 42). By directing the dancers to carry out the scores they had formulated in rehearsal, Halprin did not reveal a final and tailored product, but rather made the entire process visible and tangible for its audience members. Halprin says about the performance: “The audience saw the process of how we came together, how we fought, how we kicked and
screamed, and how we loved” (Metz). Halprin acknowledges that audience members expected to come see dance forms and styles that they recognized, but these moments of “decorative and highly theatrical entertainment, as her modern dance predecessors Martha Graham, Ruth St. Denis, and Ted Shawn had done,” did not interest her (Ross 2004, 51). Instead, she wanted them to experience something novel, radical, and disconcerting and find ways to creatively address the feelings that came up, just as she encouraged her dancers to do in rehearsal. By having her audience members perform scores, they were no longer simply watching a product, or even watching someone else’s process, they were in the process, whether willing to be or not. As indicated in her 1961 production notes, Halprin refrained from handing out programs to encourage the audience to not only be a “group member of the composition” but also to give them the freedom of interpretation, without ever “imposing a single center of focus on them” (Ross 2004, 54). Just like Halprin’s dancers had the liberty to choose how they wanted to carry out each score, her audience, without a program in hand, had the same ability to choose how to understand, analyze, and respond to this dance. The power to carry the message forward into society was not in Halprin’s hands, but instead distributed equally among all who invested their time and energy in being part of the creative process. Towards the end of the performance, audience involvement reached its climax when “bowls of water were brought out and the performers washed each other, followed by dancers going out into the audience and washing and dancing with the audience. That was totally experiential” (Metz). This ritualistic cleansing was a score aimed at “metaphorically washing away surface differences of skin color” (Metz) for both the dancers and the audience members as they worked together in a space of mutual discovery. With an audience engaged in participation, interpretation, and self-reflection, Ceremony of Us became the intersection of life as it was, with its social, sexual, and racial norms, and life as it
could be. Political scholar Barbara Epstein distinguishes political activism in the 1960s from that of the 1930s: “Unlike the activists of the thirties,” she argues, “who gravitated to the issues of political and economic power, the activists of the sixties tended to gravitate to what seemed more fundamental issues of how social life as a whole should be organized, what ideas it should be ruled by” (1991, 38). The process of creating *Ceremony of Us* was not about politics for Halprin. It was about *people* with a deeply rooted cultural and social history that sparked violence, inequality, resentment, and shame. The audience members were not seen as political activists either. They were *people*, just like the dancers, who were simply asked to connect to their humanness, their empathy, and their deep sense of commonality despite surface differences of race, nationality, economic status, or gender. Halprin’s work did not change politics, Halprin’s work changed people. She even acknowledged that *Ceremony of Us* might have no effect on the status quo, but felt that everything was different because the people who were part of the process were different having gone through it. Halprin had broken, through scoring and performance, the proscenium arch has she had intended to do when she first devised the RSVP cycles. She demonstrated through dancer-audience collaboration that “the real theater isn’t simply what’s on the stage. The real theater is meant to take place in your minds and in your hearts where you will find your own experiences” (“Breath Made Visible”).

*Ceremony of Us*: Valuaction

The day after the performance of *Ceremony of Us*, the Studio Watts Dancers, The San Francisco Dancer’s Workshop, and Halprin came together to conduct a formal “Valuaction”, the fourth step of the RSVP cycles. Although the group had been valuacting individual scores throughout the entirety of the rehearsal process to determine which ones to bring to the
performance in Los Angeles, this was the first time the groups sat together to discuss the experience of performing the work in front of a highly engaged and participatory audience. The valuaction turned out to be just as contentious and heated a process as scoring and performing: “Suddenly we crashed head-on with suppressed problems: angry complaints about personal recognition, money, control versus self-determination, desire for inclusion, fear of losing black identity—screaming, fighting, crying, comforting, walking out, and coming back. As people and artists, blacks and whites, we had to face these conflicts which opened up like a whole shocking new beginning” (Halprin 1995, 160).

The conflict that arose during the Valuaction emphasized that every step of the RSVP cycles is democratic and participatory, and that the individual voice still mattered to Halprin even after the dance was created and the performance was done. In essence, a valuaction is an assessment of the resources collected, the scores written, and the performances accomplished for a particular work. It promotes open dialogue about which parts of the RSVP process felt authentic, and which felt forced; which parts the dancers liked; and which they disliked, and finally how they would like to recycle and revise the resources and scores they used in the future. Just like resource collecting, scoring, and performing, valuacting offered those involved in the RSVP Cycles, including Halprin, another opportunity to reveal transparently their thoughts, feelings, and desires about the creative process as a whole.

Although Halprin claims she did not pointedly try to be political, it is difficult to argue that Ceremony of Us did not have political implications and ramifications. Wanda Coleman, one of the dancers from Studio Watts, voiced that she wished Halprin had been more political from the start. She “felt that Anna had deliberately steered away from looking at the core of the Watts experience—the 1965 riot and racism. To her racism was the implicit, but never satisfactorily
addressed in *Ceremony of Us*” (Ross 2007, 274). Coleman felt that a choreographer who attempted to make everything visible still shied away from making racism explicit by simply “bringing black and white dancers together to create a performance” but not making a formal statement about racism in mid 20th century America. Janice Ross, despite being a lover of Halprin, later agreed with Coleman’s valuation of *Ceremony of Us*. Ross argues that “what [Halprin] wasn’t equipped for, and eventually would choose to ignore, were the larger implications of social tensions and societal racism” (Ross 2007, 273). Given Halprin’s attempts to transparently exemplify race issues as human issues in order to inspire empathy and a sense of universality, it is possible that that the black community felt unacknowledged despite all her efforts to accomplish the contrary. Ross adds that “invisibility of oneself and one’s issues can be achieved inadvertently, just when one thinks one is proceeding toward visibility” (2007, 282). According to Ross and many of the Studio Watts performers, Halprin was unable to find a middle ground between not emphasizing race, and over emphasizing race. Furthermore, the African American dancers also felt disrespected when Halprin received a grant to have their workshop filmed, but put all that money towards the San Francisco’s Dancers Workshop instead of distributing it evenly between both groups (Ross 2007, 281). Ross claims that as a result of this breach of trust several of the Watts dancers felt exploited, “their worst suspicions confirmed” (Ross 2007, 281). Critic John Rockwell added to the stream of criticism towards *Ceremony of Us* and wrote in the Oakland Tribune that he noticed a gap “between what he felt the intentions of the dance were and the ways in which it failed to reach those goals” (as qtd. in Ross 2007, 282). This schism could have been the consequence of going from the extreme of a product-based approach, which Halprin resented from her early dance education, to a process-based approach without finding a midpoint in between.
At this official meeting and in later interviews, Halprin continued to justify why she felt that given the intensity of the material at hand, a process-based approach, such as the RSVP cycles, was the only methodology that she could have used successfully. Ross asserts that for Halprin “to start from a political statement (a product) was simply antithetical to her notions of how meaningful art is generated” (Ross 2003, 36). She didn’t deliberately try to get art to influence life. She just processed what was real, and hoped that something productive and constructive would emerge naturally. Interestingly enough, not associating the process with a distinct political agenda is what made it so pervasive and contentious. After the performance of *Ceremony of Us*, Halprin was not only open to hearing people’s experience of the piece, but she was also willing to hear their views and feelings about the RSVP cycles that created it. Many criticized the RSVP cycles as a form of therapy, as opposed to dance creation. Others felt that “success in the world of the studio’s reality—a frank performance of tasks, for example, doesn’t automatically equate with success on the public stage” (Ross 2007, 283). Nevertheless, the process of creating *Ceremony of Us* lead Halprin deeper into “the studio and away from the stage” (Ross 2007, 283), for this is where she felt the process of art creation began, and only by going inward could one effect any outward change. *Ceremony of Us* became a turning point in Halprin’s career that largely defined her “raison d’etre”: “trying to connect dance to people’s lives” (Ross 2007, 284). Halprin kept her feet firmly planted in process, and as she moved even further away from product, she was able to understand that even if a “piece failed at art, it succeeded as an experience” (Ross 2007, 283).

**Conclusion: My Valuaction**

Upon researching how Halprin, her dancers, and various critics have valuacted her use of
the RSVP cycles, specifically in the creation of *Ceremony of Us*, I felt prepared to valuact my own use of them in this thesis. What I have come to see by collecting resources, writing a score, and performing that score is twofold. Firstly, despite my initial assumption, the RSVP cycles are not so different than the scientific method or the normal research method used in academia. They map out a process for working with what you have, one step at a time, in order to hopefully create something that has not been done before. However, it is not their structure that makes them unique, but rather that they make the creative process visible as it is occurring, as opposed to after the fact. What made Halprin’s RSVP cycles for *Ceremony of Us* so controversial and profound was not just the racial and sexual issues that it explored, but the fact that audience members and dancers alike had the opportunity of watching the process unfold in real time. Collecting resources and writing scores are not merely means to an end performance, but they are the performance itself. I have realized that it was not just the steps of the RSVP cycles that I adopted in order to write this thesis about *Ceremony of Us*, but also their quality of visibility that made them so distinguishable. After attending the weekend workshop with Anna Halprin, I felt that nothing could have given me a better understanding of what makes her such a revolutionary dance maker than simply watching her do what she does for two days straight. Her genius is in the “doing”, and in doing the RSVP cycles myself for this thesis, I understand why she felt she had to use them to create *Ceremony of Us*. What mattered more to Halprin in the creation of that work was not if it was or wasn’t politically successful. What mattered was simply the fact that she did it, and revealed every moment of that process. In *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner argues that for a process made visible, “the smooth “professionalism” of the “good actor” is replaced by “rough and unexpected turbulences, troubled interruptions. These are not stylistic, but the genuine meeting between performer and problem” (50). The “genuine meeting
between performer and problem” is evident both in Halprin experience of creating *Ceremony of Us* and in my writing of this senior thesis. When Halprin approached the violence and tragedy of the Watts Riots, she used the RSVP cycles to both acknowledge what she saw and then respond to it. When I approached her contested use of these cycles to create this piece, I used the RSVP cycles to both acknowledge her methodology, and then respond to it with the help of other scholars who have posed similar questions. The RSVP cycles are intended to be a no goal process focused more on progress than perfection. There is a product that emerges, for example Halprin’s *Ceremony of Us* and this thesis, but you don’t intend on it. Interestingly, what is left after one has gone through the process is a product that simply becomes the resource for the next person’s process, and the cycle begins once again.
Tune your instrument
- internalize (eyes, nose, ears...)

Ressource
Performance
Score
Value Action

Mut
- arms up
- pulsing up & down, flex hip joints, feel sit bones, ribcage, scapular, neck
- put elbows up
- hurt: sit on chair, stand up in a sitting down position, scapular slide up
- get off the toes, add arms, try your own variation
Works Cited


