

**steve roden**  
**dear mr. kaprow, 2008**

printed in the program for performances of allan kaprow's 18 happenings in 6 parts at LACE.

dear mr. kaprow,

i wanted to let you know that i have been invited by carol stakenas to direct a performance of your 1959 work "18 happenings in 6 parts".

carol and i began by visiting the getty to see your notes for 18/6. we were very enthusiastic (and a little delusional) in that we assumed the vast amount of material meant everything we needed was there. we wished you had left us a better roadmap, but we figured it would be easy enough to build one ourselves. i guess you were smiling to yourself, knowing we had no idea what we were getting into.

when we realized there was no complete score to be found, i'm not sure why we didn't give up. it must've had something to do with your words being so inspiring. i realize now that you didn't leave a complete score behind on purpose. i think you believed that if we found one, we'd follow it. you knew we'd come to know 18/6 differently if we built it ourselves. we struggled a lot with the concept of reconstruction, and i blame you for the lengthy discussions that missing pieces generated. eventually, we managed to build a framework. i guess you knew we could do it; because i think your work suggests that struggle only gets you to the starting point, while an open mind is needed to embark upon the journey.

next, we added two voices. rae was my first thought in approaching your movement. her sensitivities towards ritual, dance, and everyday actions seemed perfectly in line with your notes. she pieced things together, filled holes; and, i think you will agree, brought new life to the notations. i should also let you know that we wondered if the first performers really memorized over 40 positions taking place during a minute and a half of movement as you notated it... or was its near impossibility part of your experiment?

michael also seemed a natural choice to navigate your sea of text. like rae, his research was exhaustive, and he needed to use a very sharp knife to whittle down enough material for a 6 day reading into what fit the piece. he found connections in things, creating a reasoned, as well as intuitive, path for what would go where. he noticed how you repeat certain things in different forms - such as talking about time, before an image of a clock, before reading while counting. i know you must be happy how deep our discussions got once rae and michael were onboard, as well as the fact that michael has never performed. sometimes, when we had no answers, we joked about wearing bracelets that say "what would allan do?"; but of course we knew you'd want us to consider your notes and come to our own conclusions.

when we added three more voices, the piece started to come to life. flora brought movement that is non-traditional and continually exploratory; and steven brought an energized and varied performance history. what can i tell you about the presence of simone. you know, of course, that we are

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unbelievably lucky to have her as a collaborator, instigator, challenger, and performer. we six built this thing together.

i suspect you knew skylar would participate, since he already worked with apple shrine. i assume you are laughing out loud at the ways he has given your props a new language of movement and interaction. i'd also like to introduce you to elonda, who has added a level of intimacy to the environment - another landscape within the landscape of audience participation. i wonder if these forms would surprise you, and what you also might think of the set. while managing to retain all of your original intentionality, stephanie has created a form that is entirely new. could you ever have imagined 18/6 happening within the framework of such a wonderful space?

before i get to the end, i think i should mention how much i love your original sound. being a sound maker, i simply couldn't help it... i wanted to collaborate with you. i've left two of your compositions intact, and i've inserted myself into the other two, one of which was missing. i hope that the cues i took from your notes have generated something that reeks of both of us.

mr. kaprow, at this point i think i should call you allan, because i truly feel that the piece in its present form is as much ours as it is yours. we have done our best to meet you on your own terms, and we've also asked you to meet us on ours. we wanted to open the piece up, so that 50 years later it can live connected, as well as disconnected, from its past. yes, it's still your skeleton, but it's our skin. the hope is that it can still generate questions.

i'm sure you understand our decision not to document the performance in video. this should ensure that the next group reaps similar benefits through similar struggles. rather than leave them our roadmap, we felt you would be happy if we simply added a few extra breadcrumbs to help them find their own way.

thanks much,

steve

