

# Directing with the Viewpoints

*Joan Herrington*

Since Anne Bogart began to develop the Viewpoints in the Experimental Theatre Wing of New York University (ETW) twenty years ago, her approach has become a training tool, a staging tool, an “everything” tool, adopted and adjusted by theatre artists around the world. The Viewpoints, a technique used to focus actors’ awareness on different elements of performance (tempo, duration, gesture, spatial relationship), no longer remain exclusively among the avant-garde; rather, in the last decade, a generation of mainstream directors has begun to incorporate Viewpoints training and practice into the rehearsal process. Some have studied with Bogart; some have studied with her students; some have studied with Viewpoints creator Mary Overlie; and some have only attended a workshop.

The only significant source of information on the Viewpoints is a collection of articles, *Anne Bogart: Viewpoints* (1995), which was a welcome response to a clamor for information. But this multiperspectival work raised more questions than it answered, lauding the benefits of working with the Viewpoints while affording only a few glimpses into their application in rehearsal. Jon Jory warns in the foreword that “lots of people are going to incorporate [Bogart’s] theory into their practice, and just like Konstantin’s acolytes, many will misunderstand it, do it badly and give it a bad name” (xvi).

Motivated by Jory’s words, and aware that there was much to learn from theatre artists well-versed in the Viewpoints, I attended the rehearsals and workshops of three directors: Bogart, Leon Ingulsrud, a founding member and director of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI), and Kevin Kuhlke, director of the ETW.<sup>1</sup> I also interviewed several other directors, including Scott Zigler, who studied with Bogart and is currently director of actor training at the American Repertory Theatre. These directors apply the Viewpoints in both professional and academic theatres, and their varied techniques, continually reexamined and reshaped, are creating theatrical works of unusual physical and visual clarity. In doing this research, my objective is to examine how these directors incorporate this tool into the rehearsal process and to describe what happens in the creation of shows. While we wait, as Jory notes, for Bogart to write her book, I hope this article provides insight into how she and other Viewpoints directors do their work.

**Basic Principles**

There is not, as many believe, a “right” way to apply the Viewpoints. In fact, there are variations in the approach to cast training, the degree of integration, the process of staging, and the format of improvisation. Because the Viewpoints have evolved slowly over the past twenty years, and because different directors have encountered them at different points in their development, even the four directors discussed in this article employ different sets of Viewpoints.<sup>2</sup> Despite this diversity, I found remarkable agreement on the rewards of their use. It became clear to me that, despite their mystification, the Viewpoints produce effects that are quite specific.

The primary and most obvious benefit is the collaboration between actors and directors, which generates “viscerally dynamic moments in the theatre” (Bogart qtd. in Drukman 32). The Viewpoints assume that actors who are sentient and open to the complete environment, who are motivated by instinct unimpeded by intellect, will create powerful stage movement and composition. In her plenary speech at the Viewpoints Conference in January 1997, Bogart clarified, “In the Viewpoints work, nothing is invented—everything is a response.” Viewpoints training and its integration into rehearsal empower actors by providing the tools, vocabulary, forum, and secure ensemble with which actors can independently conceive a stage composition or enhance staging provided by the director. Less acknowledged, and sometimes more difficult to reconcile in rehearsal, is that working with the Viewpoints involves relinquishing some of the control it has taken directors a century to acquire. When actors become active participants in the overall creation of the show, power is redefined: the traditional director/actor hierarchy disappears.

Veteran Viewpoints directors are clearly willing to make this trade in order to reap other rewards. Because practice of the Viewpoints often includes the physical definition of a scene prior to the introduction of dialogue, this work promotes reexamination of the relationship between a physical score and the text. Use of the Viewpoints moves actors away from blocking, which is more traditionally illustrative of the dialogue, and instead encourages stage movement, which is often juxtaposed against the text. This is a key element of Bogart’s, Kuhlke’s, and Ingulsrud’s work. Directors who incorporate the Viewpoints without pursuit of this goal risk confusion, creating blocking that merely demonstrates the script and caters to audience expectation; they use new means to reach old ends. The Viewpoints are intended to encourage the discovery and presentation of the unexpected.

This complex work is not necessarily done early in rehearsal when the staging is originally conceived and set. Rather, throughout the rehearsal process, the Viewpoints enable performers to create something that may startle an audience—a surprising composition, an unexpected gesture. It is the Viewpoints work done in week two, week six, or even during the run of a show that facilitates the continual reawakening of a production. These later Viewpoints sessions provide a forum to reexamine text and staging in a new context, free from decisions that have been established early in the rehearsal process.

Practice of the Viewpoints also provides a fresh approach to character through an emphasis on instinctual behavior and physical expression. The Viewpoints allow the body to explore its natural instinct to move in space and react to external stimuli; as Bogart notes, actors inhabit characters directly, viscerally: “Character is situation. Character is an expression of the situation the person is in, so the Viewpoints enable you to be in a series of situations and you are expressing those situations spontaneously” (April 1999). Within these parameters, the Viewpoints encourage actors to explore their instincts as a way to explore characters, to find new meanings, to try new things—which, Bogart admitted, “might be ridiculous or might be brilliant” (Opening plenary). Director Tina Landau describes this process:

The Viewpoints enable performers to find possibility larger than what they first imagine—whether it is in creating a shape they didn’t know their body was capable of or in discovering a range of unexpected gestures for a character. By using Viewpoints fully, we eliminate the actor’s ability to state “my character would never do that.” By using the Viewpoints fully, we give up our own heady decisions and judgments. By using the Viewpoints fully, we give ourselves surprise, contradiction, and unpredictability. (24)

Although often associated with postmodern techniques, the Viewpoints actually bring theatre closer to contemporary realism in their promotion of a more natural, instinctive behavior; the truth of the resulting acting work tends to be more vivid than behavior traditionally seen onstage. Kuhlke explains, “It’s a very direct way to get actors to physicalize dramatic action.” The Viewpoints are not an exclusive method of directing or acting, as some have understood them. Their use does not negate extensive text analysis or preclude psychological realism. Instead, the Viewpoints complement and enhance a wide range of individual skills and practices by providing an approach shared by an entire company.

A cast’s previous experience with the Viewpoints obviously determines the degree of introduction necessary to incorporate them into a rehearsal process. When Bogart works outside the SITI Company, she typically includes in her rehearsal process a three-hour Viewpoints workshop. Unlike the more specific work Bogart undertakes with her own company—work in which the Viewpoints sessions relate directly to the themes, styles, relationships of a given text—these introductory sessions present an overview of the training and demonstrate its essential demand: that all acting choices be dictated by an instinctual response to what is happening onstage. The actors exercise their awareness and react spontaneously and viscerally to a movement, sound, line of text.

The Viewpoints training generally occurs early in the rehearsal process and is often incorporated into the “table work” (examination and discussion of the script). Bogart believes that introducing the Viewpoints to her cast early speeds and smoothes the work, making a vocabulary available for the rehearsal process and encouraging actors to participate in the staging: “They understand the principles that I’m working with so they can make it up as opposed to me telling them what to do. I’ll say your shape should be clearer or you’re not kinesthetically responsive to someone else,

and they'll say, 'Oh right, I understand'" (June 1999). The actor immediately comprehends, through Bogart's shorthand, that her physicalization is vague or that she is working too much in isolation, without sufficient relationship to the other actors. In other words, Bogart does not redefine the actor's work but rather redirects the actor's focus. If she finds that the stage picture has become muddled, she may speak in Viewpoints shorthand, advising actors to "fix the spatial relationships," encouraging them to reorient themselves to create a more evocative image.

The Viewpoints not only provide the form in which actors can create effective staging but also encourage them to participate in a way rarely offered within the traditional actor/director relationship. According to Kuhlke, "It allows me to communicate to the actors: 'I'm interested in you creating staging.'" Still, the inclusion of Viewpoints work in rehearsal is not easy. Experienced cast members can be reluctant to learn new ways. Kuhlke has run into resistance when a cast member finds the Viewpoint training too much "like school." Other actors, who have experienced the vast disarray of Viewpoints applications, are justifiably defensive about their use in rehearsal. Even when everyone agrees to venture into this territory, limited rehearsal schedules can make it difficult for directors-for-hire to provide extensive lessons in the Viewpoints and devote precious rehearsal time to their practice. But, for many, the benefits outweigh the extra effort, and the Viewpoints are tenaciously included, in some form. When time and money are short, Kuhlke begins his work with an abbreviated version of Viewpoints training—a "sketchy, quick, and down and dirty" version.

Bogart's colleague, Ingulsrud, also practices the "rapid" training approach. Ingulsrud believes that even a brief introduction often yields significant results. In his experience, interested veteran actors are able to respond quickly to the training because the Viewpoints are, basically, a redirection of principles that are often contained within other forms of actor training. While Zigler agrees that Viewpoints training engenders valuable skills, he chooses not to offer the training to professional actors in rehearsal; he finds casts reluctant to follow his lead: "If you are working with Anne, you go into the experience expecting that training. But people who work with me don't expect me to do that." On the other hand, he does offer it when he's working with actors in an educational setting. Concerned that American actors are slow to use their bodies and have a "shoulders-and-up method" of performing, Zigler sees the Viewpoints as a way to "expand their physical vocabulary. They become more apt to react physically, rather than intellectually. The intellectual process *never* leads to good acting" (qtd. in Drukman 34).

Bogart believes that even a modest introduction to the Viewpoints helps to move the actor "out of his head" and into the realm of the intuitive, which, she believes, "is the true domain of creativity." Although Bogart feels that creativity is "not foreign to anyone," she believes that it is often blocked (June 1999). Time constraints, societal pressures, and often previous training can encourage actors to make too many decisions from an intellectual point of view: "All artists and scientists agree that to do one's best work, one has to bypass the frontal lobe—just essentially

stop thinking and just respond and work intuitively” (June 1999). Allowing the body to speak facilitates physical discoveries that might otherwise be impeded by the intellect. The approach also encourages the unexpected, which Bogart treasures: “I think that a great theatrical experience should be a diversion wherein you experience something nonhabitually because you have somehow been diverted off your path of habit” (April 1999).

The specificity of the physical work enables the performer to be more fluid on the stage; by setting the form, the inner life is freed. When that happens, actors and audience may be surprised, and surprise tends to elicit a deeper response and, ultimately, deeper recognition. Indeed, Bogart believes nothing onstage should be exactly as one might expect it, and her recent work places even greater emphasis on this goal: “One wants the work to be awake, therefore everything that’s put on the stage, whether it’s a gesture or an interaction or a desk or a chair, has to be slightly turned. . . . There needs to be something about it which is not quite dismissible” (April 1999). Thus, work with the Viewpoints becomes about product as well as process.

While Bogart continues to pursue the unexpected, this does not necessarily support the common assumption that using the Viewpoints to prepare a production connotes an approach largely dependent upon improvisation and the pursuit of abstract staging at the expense of other approaches to acting, such as connection with the text and traditional preparation. The Viewpoints do encourage improvisation, a new approach to acting, and a redefined relationship with the text, but they also embrace more traditional methods as well. Bogart believes that the depth of the intuitive work done in rehearsal results from the intensity of the study that precedes it: “It’s not about not thinking beforehand but about not thinking in the moment of rehearsal. I spend a lot of time preparing a rehearsal and also analyzing it afterward, but during . . . I try not to think” (April 1999). Bogart expects her actors to be equally well-prepared, having studied the text extensively when they come into rehearsal. All of Bogart’s rehearsals include many hours around a table, huddled over the text; this work situates actors in the freedom of the Viewpoints. The Viewpoints coexist with traditional text work, promoting informed spontaneity—a combination of careful script and/or character analysis with a nonintellectual approach to onstage movement.

It is wrong to assume that Bogart’s work and practice of the Viewpoints stands in opposition to realism. Because Bogart has been vocally opposed to “method acting,” she is frequently deemed anti-Stanislavsky. But it is the Strasberg interpretation of Stanislavsky to which she objects—reliance on the use of sense memory and the recreation of emotions. Thus, Bogart opposes the school of American realism that attempts to codify realistic effects; Bogart’s emphasis on stage movement creates a new dynamic of realism. Playwright Eduardo Machado writes, “Anne works on a play by choreographing moves driven by the actor, which begin to fill up the stage like a moving painting. . . . Actually, what the movement is doing is making the words live in a theatrical reality instead of a television reality” (74).

Training the body to respond instinctively may, in fact, create more natural life onstage than “realistic” behavior; instinctive behavior will have a more profound effect because ultimately it is more truthful than behavior chosen merely because it is recognizable. SITI Company member Ellen Lauren describes the benefits: “In the best of rehearsals, the body’s priority over the text allows a truer emotional response to surface. One is simply too busy to act” (“Seven” 64). And, here again, Bogart returns to Stanislavsky: “The idea of being too busy to act is one which Stanislavsky was trying to explore. In his earlier work he was trying to get the actor busy with certain psychological and emotional obstacles so there would be a genuine act as opposed to acting” (April 1999).

Bogart actually favors actors who have trained in psychological realism, and actors with whom she works claim it is a necessity. Veteran SITI actor Tom Nelis writes,

The *physical* explorations that [Suzuki and Bogart] are involved in are radically different from anything I had previously connected with psychological realism, yet without an understanding of psychological realism, I think I would be swimming in their work. I wouldn’t be able to make sense, so I don’t think it would make sense for the audience. (qtd. in Coen 31)

Bogart thinks of this work—the actor’s work—as “directing the role,” a term she borrowed from a Russian actor. She defines her job as “directing the play and getting out of the actor’s way” (April 1999).

### **Bogart at Work**

Despite a general understanding of the collaborative nature of the Viewpoints work, many still believe Bogart is the primary creator of the productions that bear her name. Yet, the Viewpoints can have no *régisseur*, in the traditional sense. Bogart’s conception for a show is theoretical, not practical; it does not define the final product. Bogart provides the original idea, but she does so with the expectation that her cast will “rend it and restructure it and reform it and completely destroy what she’s gone in there with” (Lauren interview). Bogart inspires the actors; actors inspire Bogart.

When Bogart works with members of the SITI Company, actors with years of training in Viewpoints technique, fifteen minutes of daily Viewpoints practice becomes the key to the staging of the play. Each daily Viewpoints session provides the framework for the rehearsal that follows. Bogart begins by introducing something simple—a scene, a setup, a situation that might include a reference to types of people, to style, to one piece of a composition. She might start with an abstract physical image: “I might come to a rehearsal and say, ‘I know that Tom Nelis walks a diagonal line,’ and that will start us off” (April 1999). Or, the opening direction from Bogart might address the physical space in which the play is set, focusing on a specific Viewpoints element, such as architecture: “I just did a show in Salzburg and there were nine actors and nine very particular chairs, and so I would say, for example, you could never leave the chair in the whole Viewpoints session” (April 1999).

Bogart sits at rehearsal behind a music stand, her script scribbled with what appears to be hard-to-decipher musical notation. As SITI Company member Will Bond says, “She gives you the score, such as it is that day, and we take off and she conducts it” (qtd. in Coen 72). The “score” might also be more directly connected to the nature of the material in rehearsal. This was the case in the creation of the SITI Company’s recent production, *Cabin Pressure*. Premiered at the 1999 Humana Festival of New American Plays in Louisville, *Cabin Pressure* was created from audience interviews, talkbacks, and journals, combined with the words of theatre theorists. The show answered Bogart’s own call for an exploration of the actor/audience relationship. Seven months before the company arrived in Louisville, the members defined preliminary staging for the piece—“Viewpointing,” as Bogart describes it, off of large ideas and small chairs. What her company did with the chairs and the Viewpoints is what Bogart likes to do first: create a physical structure, a preliminary detailed blocking of the scene, prior to the addition of any defined text. The goal is to create stage composition that is visually clear for the audience and based on the exchange of energy between performers; they must “meet without speaking” (April 1999). It may take an hour; it may take a week.

Bogart prefers to select and define movement early in the rehearsal process. She uses the Viewpoints session to allow actors to discover and to discover for herself movement patterns, shapes, gestures, and relationships that later may be incorporated into the production. As Bogart watches the daily Viewpoints, working with an eye to incorporating what the company creates, she identifies points of interest: “I’ll say, at the end of the Viewpoints session, ‘I really was interested when such and such happened.’ I don’t necessarily say where it will apply but I put it out there” (April 1999). Bogart’s final product relies on her ability to recognize dynamic stage movement and imagery as it is happening. Elements chosen from the Viewpoints session might provide a starting place for a later Viewpoints session, or they may be solidified to provide a basis for that day’s rehearsal of a scene.

Bogart works quickly; she likes to “set things really fast” (April 1999). When she knows it is right, she ensures it is remembered, remarking, “That was great. We better do it again.” Her work is very specific, establishing a body position, a hand position, the exact word on which the actor moves. These choices are not immutable, however. If they work, they are kept; if the company is not satisfied, the choices are revisited with changes possible even throughout performance. For Bogart, there is a clear advantage to setting the material (terms she prefers to “blocking” or “staging”) early; she believes that “the real work comes later, once everything is set and we start working on how it’s done. The how is the most important and that takes years” (December 1999).

For *Cabin Pressure*, the complex physical score was set very specifically, very early. At one of the first sessions, Bogart put out those five chairs and told the company that the focus was talkbacks, and the Viewpointing began. Lauren describes the process:

We all filed in this door one by one, took our seats, lots of silly jokes and *lazzi* between us all. And then we go back and we do it again, and then we go back

and do it again and again and again until we have a physical score or choreography. Now we don't go at it like 5-6-7-8. But after doing it six or seven times in a row, working with the Viewpoints, you have it incredibly choreographed down to: when they're 3/4 of an inch from the chair, I'm standing up; the chair bangs, I turn; the door opens, all the chairs bang, sit. You fold your leg, I shift my arm—things that even the audience wouldn't necessarily pick up on. So we get this physical score. (interview)

Interestingly, the physical score for *Cabin Pressure* was created before the text that would accompany it. The early Viewpoints sessions were, therefore, not influenced by any existing dialogue, only by the assembled raw materials (transcribed interviews, theatre theory, etc.) from which the text would rise; the movement steered the creation of the text.

In other circumstances, where there is an existing text, Bogart still uses the Viewpoints sessions to explore and define the physical world of a play prior to any use of dialogue. The advantage of Bogart's approach is that actors' onstage movement does not merely physically represent the text, it adds dimensions to the text. Bond summarizes, "Voice should be the last thing—the poetry—when there is nothing else left to do" (qtd. in Lampe 106). Once Bogart has a sketch of the physical, what she refers to as "scripted movement," she introduces the text, laying it over the choreography, working encounter by encounter or scene by scene. The result is often an apparent incongruity between the physical movement and the spoken word. In the American theatre, where an audience is more likely to encounter blocking that is directly aligned with the text, this dichotomy may seem strange. But Bogart sees value in the contrast:

I think that's what people do in life. I think what's strange is when people onstage illustrate what they're saying with what they do because people don't do that in life. I mean, rarely do we actually do what we're saying, we're usually doing one thing and saying another. (April 1999)

With these incongruities, Bogart's theatre aims for a different type of reality than that traditionally witnessed in the American theatre, a truth recognizable beyond the frontal lobe.

In a rehearsal that I attended of the SITI Company's latest production, *War of the Worlds* (see figs. 1 and 2), an exploration of the life and art of Orson Welles, Bogart's directive for one morning Viewpoints session focused on a more philosophical element of the production. As the company began its work on act 2, which Bogart described as "very muddled at this point," she gave her cast this instruction: "The play is about time, one man's time. So let's focus on choices in relation to time—the quality of time between people." Following the Viewpoints session, Bogart approached the actors, thanked them for their inspiration, and noted what she found most compelling: cast groupings that left Welles alone; a chair spinning by itself; Welles surrounded by lights; a gesture made by the actor playing Welles indicating the onset of a magical moment. The company also noted the



moments, movements, relationships that they found most interesting. Then, Bogart picked one image—men walking in with lights, Welles seated, center, in a chair—and work started on the first scene. Such Viewpointing off of a theme seems to represent the next step in her development as a director.

*War of the Worlds* also presented a new challenge to the company as it worked collaboratively with playwright Naomi Iizuka. Occasionally, when the stage movement inspired changes in the script, Bogart, the company members, and the playwright huddled together to recreate sections of text. They were not coordinating the language with the staging but rather enhancing the text through the discoveries they had made in the Viewpoints work about character or rhythm, space or time.

### Adapting the Viewpoints

Other directors, particularly those who work with younger actors, or actors less experienced in the practice of the Viewpoints, begin with a more traditional methodology when approaching staging. Ingulsrud sets out a rough blocking, what he terms “a shape on the stage, a spatial relationship.” He provides this to the actors with the expectation that they will “mess around with it. The Viewpoints give them the criteria by which to break what I have given them.” Kuhlke, too, likes to set the basic parameters for his actors. He’ll have a starting point with marked entrances and exits, and a few compositional moments—signposts along the way. Then, the

FIG. 1. Stephen Webber and Akiko Aizawa in *War of the Worlds* by Anne Bogart, Naomi Iizuka, and the SITI Company at the 24th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays. Photo: Richard C. Trigg



actors “improvise many, many times through those scenes so that they start to organically create the staging.” While this work is somewhat removed from Bogart’s current “purer” Viewpoints approach and, to some degree, undermines a completely collaborative process, it is a viable and useful application of the Viewpoints. It affords actors significant ownership of the staging, offers new opportunities for character exploration, and facilitates exploration of the text and the stage from a new perspective.

The Viewpoints also provide a valuable tool for the continual rediscovery of a production. Even after a piece has been set, the Viewpoints sessions are an opportunity to revisit text, blocking, characterization—to refocus the work, reinvent material. For example, during a Viewpoints practice session, variables such as lines of text, selected movements, and styles of performance are explored in no particular relationship to the previously established construct. The dialogue and staging are thus re-energized because they are explored out of context. Text falls on different staging, is spoken to different characters, creates new timing. The process demands the reinvention of situation and continually creates new options for the actors and director.

This sophisticated work with the Viewpoints is not only available to those with years of training. Both Kuhlke and Ingulsrud use it extensively with casts of undergraduate students who have had anywhere from one month to one year of Viewpoints practice. Kuhlke sees such open Viewpointing, which he calls

FIG. 2. Ellen Lauren and Stephen Webber in *War of the Worlds* by Anne Bogart, Naomi Iizuka, and the SITI Company at the 24th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays. Photo: Richard C. Trigg



“improvisational work,” as very useful; he employed it extensively in his recent NYU production of *Romeo and Juliet* to establish what he calls the “world of the play.” For him, such improvisations are multipurpose: they define the relationships between characters, facilitate character development, and help to refine staging.

About one month into the two-month rehearsal process, I’ll start bringing in groupings of six or seven actors for an evening’s rehearsal—actors whose characters all have very strong relationships with one another. They’ll start with being very still and then head into working with space and shape and time and improvising for about fifteen to twenty minutes. They can add character gestures. Then they can start working on any of the memorable text from the play. Anybody can use any text that they know from the play. It’s not playing the scenes, it’s improvising with Viewpoints, but it has the background of action analysis and the character work that they have done.<sup>3</sup>

Actors, Kuhlke continues, begin to “make improvisations that are very strong visually. They’ve made connections between the inner life of the character and the physical manifestations of that life in concrete space, shape, time choices.”

Kuhlke, who has done a significant amount of work with improvisation throughout his career, finds that the Viewpoints are a particularly effective construct for the volatility of this type of exercise because they organize the activity spatially and provide what he refers to as “fairly strong containers—a container being something that can withstand strong emotional life.” Kuhlke even uses the Viewpoints late in the process, when the cast moves onto the set, to explore space and to encourage actors to relate to the set as architecture: “When actors begin under the hypnotic spell of the given circumstances, they can literally not see things. You wipe all the circumstances away and say, ‘Here’s the architecture, play around with it,’ and they’ll end up finding things out about the set that you hadn’t dreamed of.” He will even do Viewpoint improvisations every now and then during the run of the show “to stir things up a bit.”

Ingulsrud agrees that the incorporation of Viewpoints training throughout the rehearsal process reawakens the relationship between the actors and the text:

You may have a gesture that within the context of the play is very quotidian. But by exploring it in the Viewpoints, suddenly you find an expressive aspect of that gesture, and that allows you, when you go back to rehearsal, to apply that in a sense, to then have that expressiveness overlaid over the quotidian.

Some directors also apply Viewpoints technique directly to their rehearsals of text—to specific scenes. And this has been a point of controversy among Viewpoints practitioners. Zigler believes any direct application to be misguided:

I would suggest that any technique should be used unconsciously and not consciously. If everyone is sitting around talking about the technique that they are using in rehearsal, for me something has already lost its way a little bit. If you are sitting around in scene work talking about which Viewpoints am I going

to use here, that, to me, is a mistaken application of the theory as much as if you were sitting around going, “What affective memory am I going to use here?” My understanding of training is that you train in a theory so your ability to bring it to bear in rehearsal becomes unconscious. To me, open Viewpoints is purely training.

But Ingulsrud disagrees, and he uses the individual Viewpoints in rehearsal to allow actors to explore the text in new ways. After a scene has been blocked, Ingulsrud will rehearse the scene and constrain one thing, telling his actors, “OK, this is your spatial relationship, you can do anything you want but you can’t change that. You can’t change your position on stage.” By constraining one element and allowing the actors to focus elsewhere, Ingulsrud creates variety in the exploration and the playing of the scene. He finds this approach particularly helpful in differentiating between scenes that are dramaturgically similar. “If you have a scene that’s a reprise of something, then that’s very, very useful.”

The Viewpoints can provide excitement, create energy, open new frontiers. Most importantly, they can generate an extraordinary level of cohesion and trust. Walking into a SITI Company rehearsal, it is sometimes difficult to identify the director. Although Bogart’s is the final voice, all those present have what is usually considered to be directorial input. At one moment in preparation for *War of the Worlds*, eight people huddled: two actors and six “directors” worked on blocking and timing. Ideas are not judged but rather explored—never vetoed without trial. Because the actors trust the instinctual response their Viewpoints training has engendered, their attitude is to try it.

The Viewpoints are evolving, and their incorporation into the process of directing is in flux. Bogart herself continues to explore new physical Viewpoints. She challenges her actors to apply them to more abstract themes and issues and to use them aggressively to create new texts. Bogart is also developing aural Viewpoints as she applies these principles to sound and speech. Other directors and teachers are also redefining the Viewpoints. Overlie recognizes the distance her work has traveled since she conceived the Viewpoints in the late 1970s: “A whole family of artists has been enthusiastically warping, trampling, adding to, and extracting from this work.” Her colleague Wendell Beavers is excited by the shifting Viewpoints:

Because the Viewpoints are a working technique, they must be actively engaged, negotiated, and recreated every time they are used. . . . The sequencing of the material, the relative values placed on different areas, how the material comes together—all these will vary to reflect the individual’s creative vision. In short *there are many points of view about The Viewpoints*. (n. p.)

Bogart, too, is excited about the proliferation of interest in the Viewpoints, but she fears that her intentions may be misunderstood:

I worry that people think of the Viewpoints as an answer as opposed to a question. This is what terrifies me. My big concern is that people see it as a technique as opposed to a practice. I worry that Viewpoints is considered a

method. It is a fluid process which is just a way of thinking about . . . well, you know. (June 1999)

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### Notes

1. SITI was founded in 1992 by Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki.
2. Kuhlke currently works with Overlie's original six Viewpoints: Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement, Story. Zigler works with the six Viewpoints that Bogart had established at the point he studied with her: Shape, Gesture, Spatial Relationship, Repetition, Kinesthetic Response, Architecture. Ingulsrud works with Bogart's current nine: Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, Repetition, Shape, Gesture, Architecture, Spatial Relationship, Topography. Bogart continually redefines them for herself.
3. The "character gestures" to which Kuhlke refers come out of his work with Michael Chekhov's psychological gesture.

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