

11 Drama

Exam

Revision

Topic 3:

Approaches to
Directing

Preliminary Drama

Approaches to Acting and Directing

Use and manipulation of theatrical styles, techniques and conventions

Understanding of context is important – how did the time they were working impact their work?

This topic explores approaches to actor training and directing in the 20th century and its realisation in theatre production or other forms of drama performance. The study involves the theoretical and experiential exploration of the philosophical and practical approaches to two practitioners' works and the manifestation of their techniques, process and specific exercises, for performance. Students must consider the director's relationship with actors and designers and how they create audience engagement. Specific examples from the practitioners' theatre works, contemporary theatre practice and the student's own experiential learning should be used to explore the topic.

Directing in other medium, such as film, television, street theatre, performance art, etc.

Need to know the theory AND practical application of both approaches – that is, write about the practitioners' work and what led to that work, as well as apply their strategies and techniques in your own work.

Julie Taymor &
Anne Bogart

Understanding of how the director, actors, and designers all work together to create a meaningful and engaging experience for the audience through the strategies and techniques studied throughout the topic.

Understanding of how the director works and collaborates with their creative/production team to make meaning.

APPROACHES TO DIRECTING AND ACTING

JULIE TAYMOR & ANNE BOGART



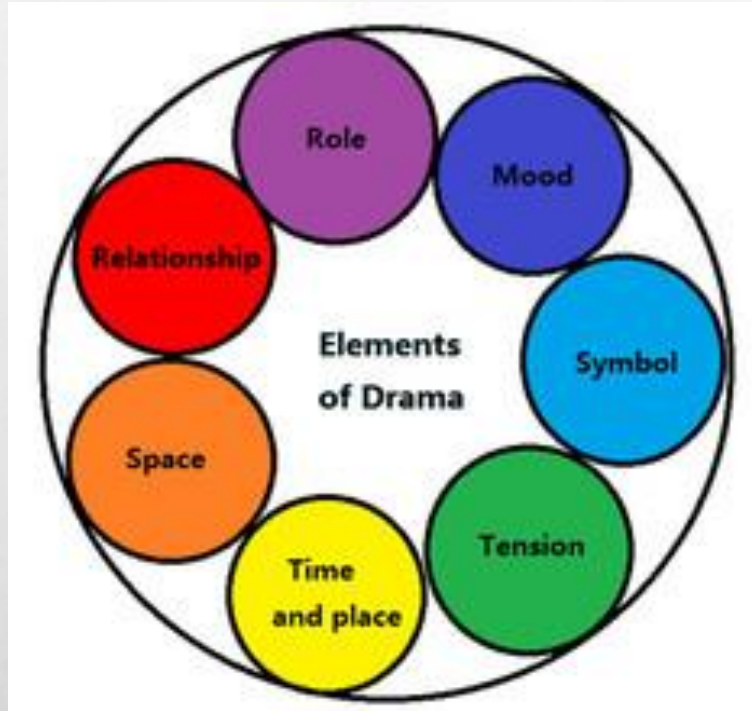
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM A DIRECTOR?
short conversations 2010 - 2011

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THE TOPIC

- This topic explores approaches to actor training and directing in the 20th century and its realisation in theatre production or other forms of drama performance. The study involves the theoretical and experiential exploration of the philosophical and practical approaches to **two practitioners' works and the manifestation of their techniques, process and specific exercises, for performance**. Students must consider the **director's relationship with actors and designers** and **how they create audience engagement**. Specific examples from the practitioners' theatre works, contemporary theatre practice and the student's own experiential learning should be used to explore the topic.

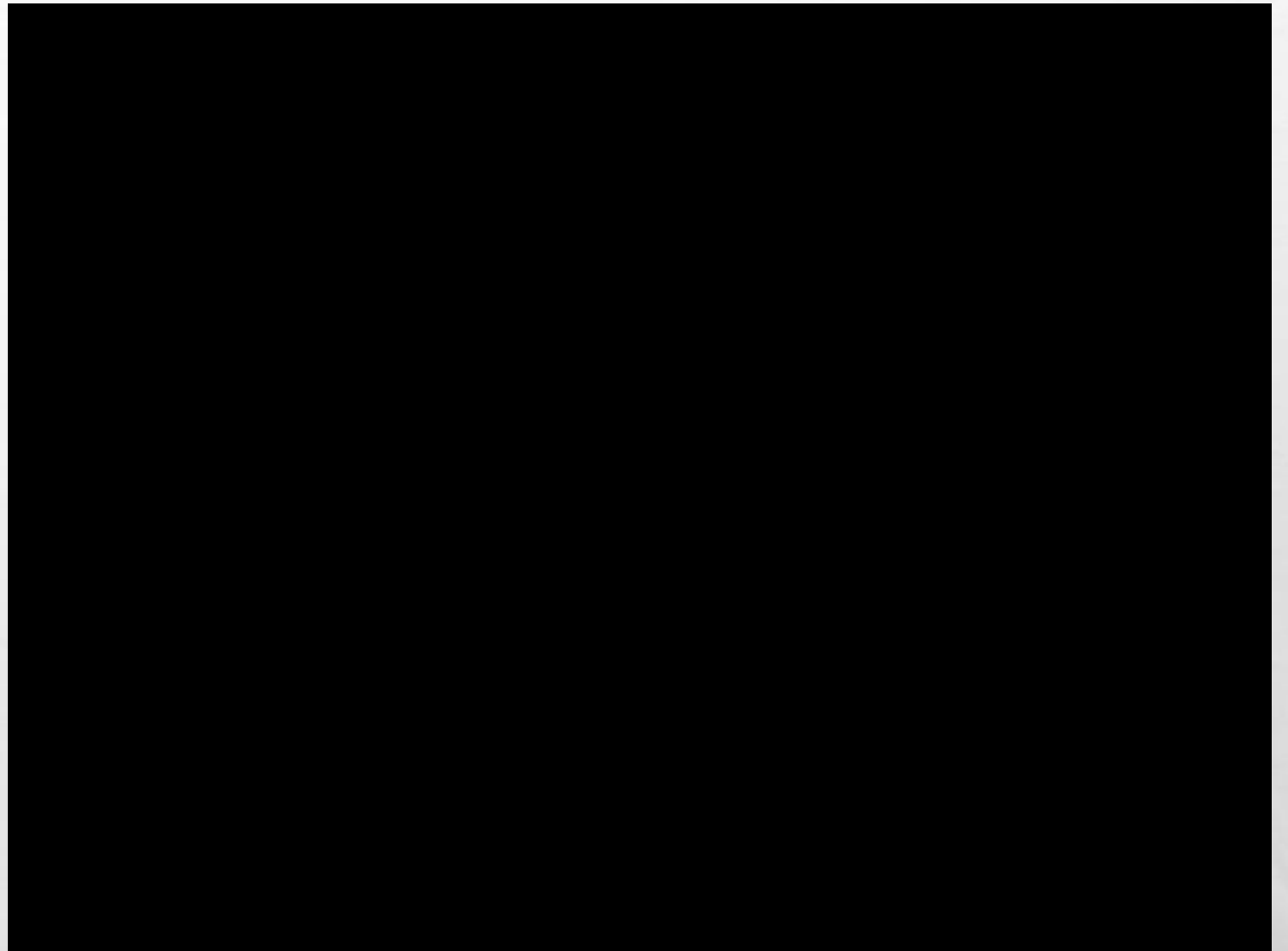
MAKING MEANING



- The director manipulates the Elements of Drama (EoD) to create intended meaning – that is to **communicate dramatic meaning**.
- Do they do this alone?
 - They work in conjunction with the performers and designers to communicate this meaning – they must be able to communicate their thoughts and vision clearly!

**Tony Award winning
director Doug Hughes
ponders his role as a
theatre director and his
responsibility as a voice
for the audience.**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MslAUPmT_kbl



THE 'CONCEPT'

ARTISTS ARE INDIVIDUALS WILLING TO **ARTICULATE IN THE FACE OF FLUX AND TRANSFORMATION**. AND THE SUCCESSFUL ARTIST **FINDS NEW SHAPES** FOR OUR PRESENT AMBIGUITIES AND UNCERTAINTIES. THE ARTIST BECOMES THE CREATOR OF THE FUTURE THROUGH THE VIOLENT ACT OF ARTICULATION. I SAY VIOLENT BECAUSE **ARTICULATION IS A FORCEFUL ACT**. IT DEMANDS AN AGGRESSIVENESS AND AN ABILITY TO ENTER INTO THE FRAY AND **TRANSLATE THAT EXPERIENCE INTO EXPRESSION**.

--ANNE BOGART, 2001



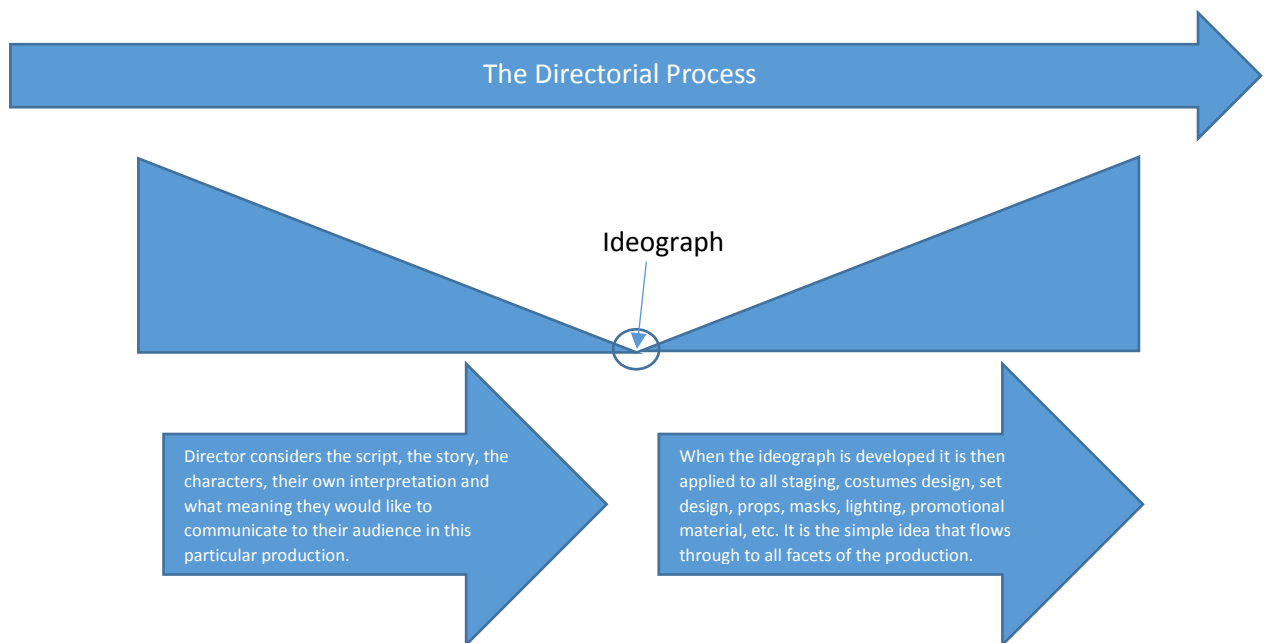
*To communicate the changing and numerous experiences of **society** into a clear and **unique expression** on the stage through performance and design. This can comment on, and inspire, change.*

DIRECTOR 1 – Julie Taymor

Julie Taymor's process is useful for aspiring directors and theatre makers to adapt. What her process does very well is to simplify large and complex ideas, placing them in highly visual forms. The use of the **ideograph** allows for effective employment of symbolism in staging and design.

Taymor explains that, in her work, the **ideograph** is the single most refined image that she can create which captures the essence and meaning of the piece that she is directing. The image of the circle in her Broadway production of *The Lion King* was key to the audience coming to understand, in a very visual way, the cycles that occur in the plot. The circle of life, the coming of age, the filling of the father's footsteps – these were all communicated through staging and design based on the initial ideograph of a simple circle. Representations of the circle occur in the sun that rises at the opening of the show, in the mechanics of the bird puppets that are wheeled across the stage and in the circle of water which disappears at the start of the second act as the Savannah becomes drought stricken. The circle also appears in the design of Mufasa's mask, though this ideograph is contrasted in the design of Scar's mask – emphasising the high capability of Taymor to represent characters through her directorial process and skills in mask design.

The process of using the ideograph is interesting insofar that it requires complete simplification of a complicated plot in order to then direct a detailed and intricate production.



In relation to the Elements of Drama, Taymor's process of using the ideograph is focussed on **engaging** the audience in the truest visual exploration of the intended **dramatic meaning** of the director. By using the visual process of creating the single highly meaningful image, the director and their design team are forced into making effective use of **symbolism** and **contrast** in order to make the ideograph work within the **style** of the performance.



JULIE TAYMOR

SYMBOLISM

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

IDEOGRAPH

SYMBOLISM

WHAT IS IT?



SYMBOLISM

A symbol implies a greater meaning than the literal suggestion and is usually used to represent something other than what it is at face value. Symbolism in the theatre can be achieved via characters, colour, movement, costume and props.

Symbolism in art implied a higher, more spiritual existence and aimed to express emotional experiences by visual means.

In the theatre, symbolism was considered to be a reaction against the plays that embodied naturalism and realism at the turn of the 20th Century. The dialogue and style of acting in symbolist plays was highly stylised and anti realistic/non-naturalistic.

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

- Through symbolism, meaning is created.
- Symbolism, in the theatre, allows for deep meaning to be communicated in simple and effective ways.
- When the audience understands a complex concept through symbolism, they are suspending their disbelief:
 - E.g. “I know that is just a person wearing a red mask, but I understand that the person is representing all things evil”.

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

- The term **suspension of disbelief** or willing **suspension of disbelief** has been defined as a willingness to **suspend** one's critical faculties and believe the unbelievable; sacrifice of realism and logic for the sake of enjoyment.
- You need to direct your production with a particular style of theatre, or effecting combination of styles, to earn trust enough from the audience so that they are willing to suspend their disbelief and believe what you are presenting and representing.
- How?
 - Design
 - Staging
 - Performance
 - Set
 - Props
 - Costume
 - And.....?

JULIE TAYMOR

- Born 1952, American stage and film director, playwright and costume designer.
- Known for her inventive use of Asian-inspired masks and puppets.
- First woman to win a Tony Award for best director in 1998.
- Effectively utilises the concept of “the suspension of disbelief” by using visible puppeteers and masks.
- Interesting concept of the *ideograph* used to stimulate a concept and the directorial process.



JULIE TAYMOR



- Experienced theatre director and has moved into the film industry also.
- Has a keen interest in other cultures which influences her work.
- Finished college in the 1970's and travelled to Asia on a fellowship.
- Established her own theatre company in Bali – **Theatre Loh.**
- Stage that she was impressed by theater's role in society there.
 - “I was very taken with the fact that the theatre productions there were a part of everyday life. . . . You don't do it because . . .you're going to be reviewed in Time magazine, but it's part of what it is to be a living human being.”
- Has one awards for scenic, costume and puppet design as well as directing.

JULIE TAYMOR



Spider-Man, Lion King and Life on the Creative Edge



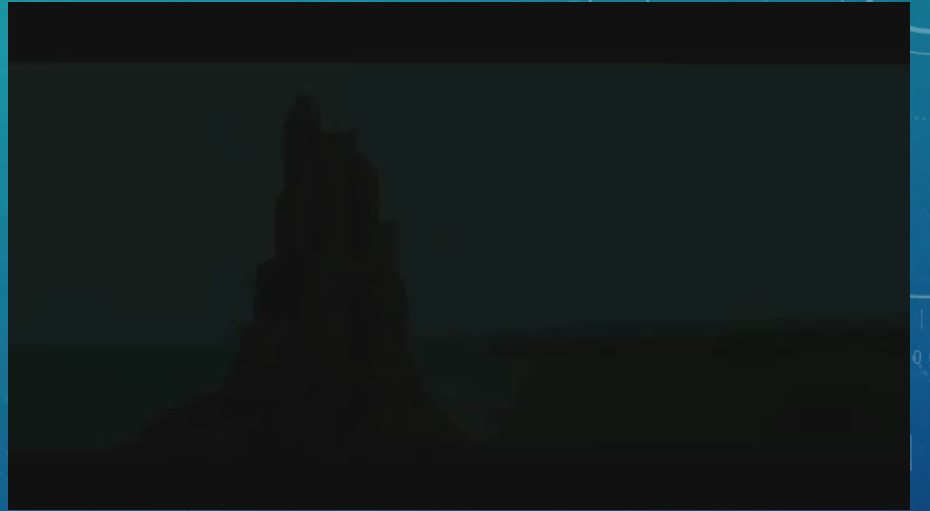
IDEOGRAPH



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Note down important points
about symbols...

IN PAIRS...

- You will be give Act 1, Scene 1 of The Tempest (William Shakespeare)
- Consider how you can use strategies and techniques employed by Taymor in your conceptualisation of the scene.
- Consider:
 - An **ideograph** that represents the story for you – how can this influence the overall design?
 - How can you use **symbolism** in a variety of ways? Set, lighting, costume...
 - Is there the potential of using **masks** and/or **puppets** to help communicate the original ideograph's main message?
- Your aim is to *communicate meaning and have the audience suspend their disbelief.*

The Directorial Process



Ideograph

Director considers the script, the story, the characters, their own interpretation and what meaning they would like to communicate to their audience in this particular production.

When the ideograph is developed it is then applied to all staging, costumes design, set design, props, masks, lighting, promotional material, etc. It is the simple idea that flows through to all facets of the production.



BORN ON THIS DAY
Joan
Crawford



VIDEO
Elizabeth
Taylor



Julie Taymor

Artist, Director, Playwright (1952–)

Director, playwright and designer Julie Taymor was the creative force behind Broadway's *The Lion King*, and is a director of theater, opera and film.

Synopsis

Julie Taymor was born December 15, 1952 in Boston, Massachusetts. The creative force behind numerous productions, including Broadway's smash musical *The Lion King*, Julie Taymor has become a much-admired, innovative director in the worlds of theater and opera. She has also employed her visionary talents to create several feature films, including *Frida* (2002) and *Across the Universe* (2007).

NAME

Julie Taymor

OCCUPATION

Artist, Director, Playwright

BIRTH DATE

December 15, 1952 (age
63)

EDUCATION

Oberlin College

PLACE OF BIRTH

Boston, Massachusetts

ZODIAC SIGN

Sagittarius

Early Theater Life

Director, playwright, puppeteer, designer. Born on December 15, 1952, in Boston, Massachusetts. The creative force behind numerous stunning productions, including Broadway's smash musical *The Lion King*, Julie Taymor has become a much-admired, innovative director in the worlds of theater and opera. She has also employed her visionary talents to create several feature films, including *Frida* (2002) and *Across the Universe* (2007).

Growing up in Newton, Massachusetts, Taymor developed a love of theater at an early age. She enjoyed putting on shows at home and later joined a Boston theater company. Also interested in other cultures, Taymor spent time in India and Sri Lanka when she was 15 as part of an educational program. She then went to Paris to study mime with Jacques LeCoq after finishing high school. This trip was also an introduction to theatrical potential of masks and puppetry, two art forms that would be reappear in her later work.

After graduating from Oberlin College in 1974, Taymor traveled to Asia on a fellowship. She visited Indonesia, Japan, Bali, and Java during her travels and decided to remain abroad after her program ended. In Bali, Taymor established her own theater company, Teatr Loh. She told *Back Stage* that she was impressed by theater's role in society there. "I was very taken with the fact that the theatre productions there were a part of everyday life. . . . You don't do it because . . . you're going to be reviewed in Time magazine, but it's part of what it is to be a living human being."

Returning to the United States in 1980, Taymor continued to pursue a career in the theater. She won the American Theatre Wing's Hewes Design Award for Scenic, Costume, and Puppet Design for her work on *The Haggadah*. For *Juan Darien*, Taymor won the Hewes Award for Concept Puppetry and Masks in 1988. She did not only design the puppets and masks for this production, however. She directed and wrote the book for this musical, which drew its inspiration from a story by Horacio Quiroga. For the music, Taymor had turned to her life partner, composer Elliot Goldenthal. In 1996, a Broadway production of the play earned five Tony Award nominations, including one for Taymor's direction and another for Goldenthal's score.

Success on Broadway

Propelling Taymor's career to new heights, the musical *The Lion King* demonstrated her immense talents in many aspects of the theatrical arts. She helped translate a popular Disney animated film about a lion cub—and on a grander level, about the cycle of life itself—into one of Broadway's greatest spectacles. As with *Juan Darien*, Taymor was deeply involved in much of the design work as well as directing the project. She even contributed lyrics to some of the songs.

All of her hard work paid off. After its fall 1997 debut, the production received a lot of critical attention and netted 11 Tony Award nominations, including two wins for Taymor for Best Director and Costume Designer. The musical featured an interesting fusion of actors and puppets. "You're getting the human and the animal simultaneously. The audience is able to follow the story and the character, but you're also enjoying the art of it," she explained to *Back Stage*. *The Lion King* continues to attract eager audiences today—more than a decade after its premiere.

Film Work

Making a leap to the big screen, Taymor directed her first film, *Titus*, which was released in 1999. It was based on one of William Shakespeare's lesser known plays, *Titus Andronicus*, a violent tale about revenge. Starring Anthony Hopkins, this adaptation by Taymor was praised for its rich, vivid imagery. But some struggled with its dark subject matter.

For her next film, Taymor worked with actress Salma Hayek on the biographical film *Frida* (2002). Hayek starred as the famed Mexican artist Frida Kahlo who battled with chronic pain from a terrible bus accident as well as struggled with her stormy relationship with Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (played by Alfred Molina). In the film, one of Taymor's inventive touches was to have pieces of Kahlo's deeply personal artwork spring to life. She also collaborated with Goldenthal on one of the film's songs, "Burn It Blue," writing the lyrics for it. The song was nominated for an Academy Award. In total, *Frida* earned six Academy Award nominations, including two wins for Best Makeup and Best Original Score by Goldenthal.

In 2007, Taymor took movie audiences on a realistic yet fantastical journey with *Across the Universe*. The film uses the music of the Beatles to help tell the story of two lovers (Evan Rachel Wood and Jim Sturgess) during the 1960s. According to *Variety*, this brilliant spectacle was shot at 70 locations and used "5,000 costumes, 300 dancers, giant puppets, masks, choreographed dance numbers, fanciful sets, CG effects and animation."

Recent Projects

Taymor worked on a musical adaptation of *Spider-Man*, the beloved comic book and feature film hero, which debuted on Broadway in 2011. Bono and The Edge from the legendary rock group U2 wrote the music for the show. Taymor was fired as the director from this costly and elaborate show not long after its start, reportedly for making too many last-minute changes. She then sued the show's producers and both sides eventually settled out of court.

After this stage controversy, Taymor returned to film. She has directed the upcoming film adaptation of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

Article Title

Julie Taymor Biography

Author

Biography.com Editors

Website Name

The Biography.com website

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Julie Taymor as Puppet Artist

by [James M. Brandon](#)

Note: This paper was written for a graduate course in puppetry history and theory, co-taught by [Bradford Clark](#).

Preface

In my study of Julie Taymor, I have attempted to examine her as a puppet artist. This has forced me to leave out much material which many previous scholars have considered as basic to any study of Taymor. Her relationship with Eliot Goldenthal, her work with Joseph Chaiken's "Open Theatre," and her extensive work in non-puppet performances has been omitted, along with much other material. Unlike many other puppet artists, Taymor has a large amount of material published about her, and any study about her suffers from a wealth rather than dearth of information.

With this in mind, I have included a lengthy bibliography consisting of both works cited and consulted. I also wish to here include a brief bibliography of sources which I was unable to attain. It is my hope that these sources will be of use in further studies concerning Taymor. They are specific to the study of Taymor as a puppet artist. The sources are: Berson, Misha. "A Spectacle of Puppet People Pulls Heartstrings." San Francisco Chronicle. 11 Nov. 1990: 21. Kelly, Kevin. "Beyond Miss Piggy: Taymor's Puppets Are Extraordinary." Boston Globe. 7 July 1991: 43. "Puppets, Masks Work Wonders." San Francisco Chronicle. 16 Nov. 1990: 1. Rosenberg, Scott. "Pathos Among Puppets." San Francisco. 18 Nov. 1990: 3.

I have not chosen to include visual reproductions of Taymor's work within the context of this study. Miriam Horn's 1993 article for Smithsonian provides some of the best color reproductions of Taymor's work to date. The videos of **The Tempest** and **Oedipus Rex** also contain good looks at Taymor's work.

I would also like to thank BGSU students Cynthia Gibson and Kristen Koehler, whose previous research helped me greatly in the production of this study. I have purposely tried to avoid re-hashing their research, but it is inevitable that some should overlap. Gibson's paper is an excellent biography of Taymor, and Koehler's provides an insightful discussion of her adaptation of **Oedipus Rex**.

Finally, I should point out that I have purposely avoided using Mel Gussow's excellent 1992 article from the New York Times entitled "The Looking Glass World of Julie Taymor" to any extent. As that article was included among the course packet in the course for which this study was produced, I felt as if I could write this study with the knowledge that this material was common knowledge to my audience. Therefore, references to it are intentionally avoided in all but a few cases.

Introduction

Julie Taymor is a multi-talented theatre artist for whom puppetry is merely one aspect of her art. Nevertheless she is primarily known for her work in the realm of puppets and masks, and there is little doubt that it is this work which has been instrumental in gaining her international recognition as a theatre artist. Although Taymor regularly designs, directs and writes, the focus of this study will be on her work as a puppet artist.

As such, this study will detail the highlights of Taymor's career and development specifically as they relate to her puppet work. Although it is nearly impossible to divorce Taymor's other theatrical endeavors from her puppetry, this study will minimize all other work so as to highlight her profile as puppet artist. Taymor has recently stated that she is moving away from puppets, and this study will attempt to highlight what she has done in the field thus far. It is the hope of the author that Taymor's puppet career will be of particular interest to other puppet artists, theatre practitioners and scholars.

Training and Influences

Julie Taymor was born in 1952 in Newton, a suburb of Boston (Kleinfield B3). Taymor began to experiment in the theatre as early as age eleven. She also began to show signs of her future interest in puppetry and mask representations. Taymor would have her mother make faces at her, which she would attempt to draw. This is still her primary technique today for creating puppet and mask expressions (Horn 63).

After some work with both the Boston Children's Theatre and the Theatre Workshop of Boston, Taymor decided that she wanted to spend some time abroad. At age fifteen, Taymor traveled to Sri Lanka and lived as a foreign exchange student (Horn 64). She then returned to the United States, but was abroad again as soon as she graduated from Newton High School at the age of seventeen. This time she traveled to Paris to study at the prestigious Ecole de Mime with Jaques le Coq (Horn 64). This school has been immensely popular with various puppet artists, and was important in shaping Taymor's theatrical style.

Upon her return to the United States, Taymor enrolled in Oberlin College, where she created her own major in the ritual origins of theatre through the study of folklore and mythology. During her sophomore year at Oberlin, Taymor apprenticed at the Bread and Puppet Theatre. Taymor had first been exposed to this troupe when they came to Boston while she was still very young. Also during her time at Oberlin, Taymor worked with Herbert Blau and Bill Irwin, both noted for their avant-garde staging techniques (Gussow 1992: 52).

After her senior year at Oberlin, Taymor spent a summer in Seattle. Here she studied Javanese shadow puppetry and wood carving at the American Society for Eastern Arts (Burns 50). Her work here enabled her to receive a Watson Fellowship, which allowed her to travel to Eastern Europe, Japan and Indonesia (Reardon 10).

Perhaps the most influential influence on Taymor's puppetry came from her experiences in Indonesia. She says of this time: "I have never seen theatre as potent, powerful, and overwhelmingly theatrical as I have in Indonesia, It's part of the every day fabric of society. . . (Burns 50-51). What was supposed to be a one year stay turned into four. She spent her first two years studying with Javanese playwright Rendra, who encouraged her to branch out and create her own work (Burns 51).

She assented to Rendra's wish, and moved to the small island of Bali. While there, Taymor formed the Teatr Loh, which was an international performing troupe. Taymor co-directed this troupe from 1974-

1978 (Burns 49). The group formed what basically amounted to a commune at one of Bali's most sacred places. They shared knowledge with each other, training in dance, Tai Chi, mime, yoga, improvisation, story telling, mask making and vocal warm-ups (Taymor 65). Taymor returned to the United States in 1979, where she attempted to procure funds to bring the Teatr Loh to the United States. She was unable to do this, but remained in America nevertheless (Burns 51).

Taymor Productions and Their Puppets

Taymor's first major production came with the Teatr Loh. It was financed by the Ford Foundation, and was entitled *Way of Snow*. Based on an Eskimo legend, this production was a "puppet-mask trilogy, which was very well received in Java in 1976 (Burns 51). It was also revived by the Ark Theatre in 1980 (Burns 51). The troupe's next production, entitled *Tirai*, was performed in six different languages with numerous masks and performance traditions.

Taymor's first project in the United States was when she designed the set, costume, puppet and mask concepts for *The Odyssey* at Baltimore's Center Stage (Burns 51). Taymor was then awarded a Maharam Theatre Design award for her work with *The Haggadah* at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1980. This production consisted of a reenactment of the Jewish Passover festival.

Her puppet work in this production consisted, in part, of shadow puppets which enacted the ten plagues (Horn 69). These were enhanced by two-dimensional frogs and locusts that flew about the audience, attached to strings (Horn 69). The audience was seated around a long table. It became somewhat of a shadow puppet theatre in the round, except that it was the audience rather than the players who were surrounded. This project, on which Taymor collaborated with Elizabeth Swados, was produced in three successive seasons at the Festival.

Taymor's next major project was also performed for three successive seasons, this time at the American Repertory Theatre from 1984-1986. She designed costumes, masks and puppets for **The King Stag**, which was directed by Andrei Serban (Burns 51). A bear puppet that she designed for this production was sent to Czechoslovakia as a part of the winning entry to the Prague Quadrennial International design competition (Burns 52).

In 1985, Taymor co-adapted **Liberty's Taken**, which consisted of a 200-page script. This production was based on the life of Deborah Sampson Gannet, who disguised herself as a man in order to fight in the American Revolution (Horn 70). Taymor utilized 150 masks and puppets for this production (Burns 52). She says of that production:

It is . . . extremely earthy, with talking ship's figureheads hobbyhorses that fall apart and get eaten, Punch and Judy, and a brothel that's a 30-foot-tall woman who has copulating shadow puppets in her torso. (Burns 52).

In 1986, Taymor staged a production of William Shakespeare's **The Tempest** at the Theatre for a New Audience in which she utilized both puppet and mask. Taymor's time in Indonesia definitely had an influence on her handling of the storm contained in the beginning of the play. A cut-out of a ship is seen sailing on the horizon. As the tempest hits, a shadow screen drops from the ceiling, and the shadow from this cut-out is projected onto the screen by a hand held light source. The operators move both the light source and the cut-out, and an abstract storm effect is achieved through what basically amounts to a shadow puppet.

Perhaps Taymor's most innovative contribution to the production is her handling of Ariel. She decided to have Ariel represented by a hand-held mask and a costumed hand, which would be manipulated by an operator garbed in all black, much in the same way as a left hand or foot operator of a Japanese

bunraku puppet. She says of this decision:

Ariel is described as a spirit. . . I kept wondering "How do you really get the essence of a spirit?". . . That this [hand], with this face could express all of the human emotions which this spirit has, and yet is not a human. ("Behind the Scenes" Video)

Taymor's decision was made in order to capture the essence of a non-human creature, and this says much for the power of puppetry in her performance. Rather than use a human to portray the spirit, Taymor has opted for the magic of puppetry. She says:

That it [the Ariel mask] is absolutely nothing more than an object, that is brought to life by an actress' talent, by her ability to manipulate it that it has so much humanity through the movement, to me this is sort of the essence of theatre. ("Behind the Scenes" Video)

The mask is also very important in Taymor's production. It is important to note the strong power that the mask has in this performance in terms of control. The actress playing Ariel is masked as a bunraku operator, and Caliban is masked in a "stone" mask (which is Taymor's interpretation of Shakespeare's line: "Here you sty me in this hard rock"). When Caliban decides to revolt against Prospero, he breaks open the mask with a stick, and when Ariel is finally freed by Prospero, the actress removes the mask and reveals her face for the first time. The mask represents enslavement for the spirits, and its removal reveals their inner self. The whole idea can perhaps be looked at as a metaphor for puppetry. Until their freedom, the spirits were little more than puppets to Prospero. Perhaps representative of the "magic" contained within a puppet.

In 1988, the Taymor adapted production of Horacio Quiroga's short story, **Juan Darien** was staged by the Music-Theatre Group in New York (Burns 49). The story is about a jaguar cub nursed to health by a South American villager and is turned into a boy. The performance was composed almost entirely of puppets. Taymor says:

The character of **Juan Darien** appears as a jaguar puppet, a bunraku 12-year-old puppet, and a real boy. . . The real boy is the only flesh and blood in the whole play. All the other characters are sculptures, hand puppets, and shadow puppets. (Burns 49)

Juan Darien was critically successful mainly because of Taymor's fascinating puppet artistry. Mel Gussow writes in his review for the New York Times:

On one level, the show is an interpretive anthology of puppet arts -- monumental mourners reminiscent of Bread and Puppet Theatre parables; beasts that move bunraku-style; tantalizing shadow puppets and. . . an aurora borealis of butterflies. (1988: 24)

Gussow, in his praise of the puppets and the performance says that Taymor has never before fused her art into the "breathtaking intensity" of this production.

Michael Feingold, critic for the Village Voice, heartily agrees with Gussow. After a brief discussion of the power of puppets, Feingold delivers an enthusiastic review of Taymor's production which has only two complaints. The first is that he does not like the moments where masked characters show their faces. He writes that after looking at "larger than life," and "magical creatures" for so long, "ordinary humanity seems a bit of a disappointment" (Feingold 116). He also complains that the production is closing so soon, and berates the fact that "must see" events like this have to operate on a "curtailed" schedule (Feingold 116).

In 1991 Taymor began work on a PBS production of Edgar Allen Poe's short story **Hopfrog**. She renamed it **Fool's Fire** (Kleinfield B3). The production was composed almost entirely of puppets. The only human actors in the production were a pair of dwarves. The story details the revenge of these dwarves against their abusive masters. This production contained some of the largest scale puppets

that Taymor had ever worked on, and she enlisted the help of designer Michael Curry for the project (Malkin 50). The pair went through an extended and extremely technical process to create the large-scale puppets needed for the production. As Taymor works in one of the most primal arts, she still uses the most current technology available to bring her works to life.

Taymor's most popular success to date was her production of Igor Stravinsky's opera, **Oedipus Rex**. She directed this in 1992 for the Saito Kinen Festival in Tokyo. Truly an epic rendition of Stravinsky's work, Taymor again utilized a large number of puppetry techniques. Three-dimensional birds suspended from strings begin the onslaught of puppet and mask usage. Many actors became something like living sculptures, as they were entirely encased in plaster-like costumes.

Taymor's use of masks was also unique. Rather than wear them on their face, the main actors wore "stone" heads on top of their heads. This created particularly exciting moments within the opera. For example, when Oedipus blinded himself, he stabbed the pins into the eyes of the stone mask. This created an interesting stylization of violence upon the stage, in a manner that is not possible for the actor to achieve. The characters are also costumed with large "stone" hands, which regulate all gestures to puppet-like movements.

Oedipus Rex was another critical success for Taymor. Both Leighton Kerner of the Village Voice and Patrick J. Smith of Opera News gave glowing reviews of Taymor's work. Taymor is no stranger to critical praise, and the primary importance of this performance must be seen in the relatively large audience it received. PBS has broadcast Taymor's work on at least three occasions, and this has allowed numerous people to witness her work. Her success is important in that it helps to paint puppetry as an art which is not only for children.

It seems that the future of Taymor's puppet career is not in doubt, although she has, at times, expressed dismay at being pegged as merely a puppeteer. She has plans to direct an opera version of Beowulf, which she has adapted. Her opera is based on John Gardner's re-telling of the myth which is named after the chief protagonist, Grendel (Reardon 10). Even though she has hit a number of financial snags, Taymor predicts that the opera will be up and running by 1997 at the latest (Reardon 10).

Taymor on Puppetry

In this section, I have attempted to let Ms. Taymor do the talking. The section includes statements that she has made on many aspects of puppetry. My comments on her remarks are intended to draw various conclusions regarding her philosophy towards puppetry. It is my hope that this section will paint a revealing portrait of Ms. Taymor's beliefs, and what they mean in the broader context of puppetry.

Although Julie Taymor's artistic influences are fairly obvious in much of her work, she is quick to point out that she is not attempting to reproduce the forms she adapts. She says "I was inspired by Asian theatre forms, but I don't simply mimic them. . . They go through me, and something original comes out" (Reardon 10). "If I appropriate things from other cultures, its in terms of technique," she echoes in a 1992 article (Gussow 1992: 52). This tendency is important, because it shows that her works are not slavish reproductions, but rather vital works of imagination which are infused with ideas from other cultures.

Taymor sometimes is commissioned to build puppets and/or masks for productions with which she is not involved, and does not enjoy this type of work. She says:

"I'll always put the same amount of effort or love into the artwork. But if I'm not

emotionally involved in the show, I do it as a job. The real fun. . . is seeing puppeteers, dancers and singers adding to what I conceived. That's the enjoyment. (Burns 53)

Taymor is always working at a rather torrid pace, and her devotion to excellence enables her to only work on a few projects at a time. She says:

It's very exhausting. . . I can't design a mask and say to someone else, "Just do it." It's partly because I'm a better sculptor than I am a drawer. Considering the amount of time it would take me to draw exactly what I want, I might as well sculpt it. I paint most of it too. It's incredibly time consuming so I end up turning down a lot of jobs I want to do. (Shewey 72)

Taymor might do as few as four shows in ten years, and clearly she strives for quality rather than quantity. This would help to account for the number of productions which receive numerous revivals.

Puppets are not the sum total of Ms. Taymor's work. She works with many other artistic mediums, but she still relishes the freedom that puppets give a director. She says:

I would never do something with just puppets. . . But I like the things puppets allow you to do. I had this puppet Dinah Donewell, and she had this hand puppet named Mr. Pleaser. He was her lap dog who was constantly under her skirt. Now if you did that with actors, people would be off ended. But in this case, so what? It was a puppet with a puppet. (Kleinfield B3)

Taymor's comments are interesting not only because they provide an insight into her artistic aesthetic, but also for their relevance to modern puppetry. Taymor demonstrates how the puppet can achieve things that an actor could not. This recognition is important, the idea that there are things which puppets can do much better than actors.

These ideas are expressed by a puppeteer who has never produced a puppet show for children, but nevertheless lives in a society which has regulated the art form to this group. Taymor sees this as the major problem in America's perception of the puppet. "We have a ways to go in understanding the power of puppetry," she says in referring to her native country (Kleinfield B3). Indeed, Taymor is one of the artists leading the way in instructing Americans about this power.

Yet Taymor does not wish to be looked upon as only a puppet artist. Her career consists of much more than her operating as a "puppeteer," a term which she despises. She says:

Sounds like a mouseketeer. . . . It's an easy peg, but I've never been a puppeteer, I conceive and I write and I design and I direct. And not just puppets. I direct actors, I direct dancers, I direct singers, I direct films. I also direct puppeteers. I'm really a theatre maker, but there's not a word for that. (Reardon 10).

Even as she attempts to dispel the notion that she is merely a puppet artist, the fact is that she is a puppet artist, and a very successful one. While she has many other talents, the work of Julie Taymor can be examined solely in terms of puppetry, which is what this study has attempted.

Summary

The work of Julie Taymor is very imaginative, and this has earned her an international reputation. Not the easiest thing in the world to do, as N. R. Kleinfield writes: "Becoming renowned for puppets is not easy -- finding a new galaxy or making the draw at Wimbledon is easier. . ." (B1). Kleinfield wrote

this in 1991 shortly after Taymor was awarded a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant, which will distribute \$245,000 to her over five years.

Yet Taymor has received international recognition for her puppetry work, and has established herself as one of the imaginative pioneers in the field. As her name becomes more and more commonplace in the discussion of puppetry, it is almost a certainty that she will exert an influence upon future puppet artists. As such, it is useful to study Ms. Taymor's puppetry career.

This study has attempted to highlight Ms. Taymor's work in the field of puppetry. By examining her influences, puppet productions and statements on puppetry, the study has attempted to provide an introductory overview to Taymor's puppet work. It is the hope of the author that other scholars will one day treat this topic with the in-depth study it so richly deserves. Until then, this study can serve as an overview of one of the great puppet performers of the day.

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Julie Taymor

American director, playwright, and costume designer

Written by: Naomi Blumberg |

READ VIEW HISTORY EDIT FEEDBACK

Julie Taymor, (born December 15, 1952, Newton, Massachusetts, U.S.), American stage and film director, playwright, and costume designer known for her inventive use of Asian-inspired masks and puppets. In 1998 she became the first woman to win a **Tony Award** for best director of a musical, for her **Broadway** production of *The Lion King*, derived from the **Disney** animated film of the same name.

Taymor showed an early interest in theatre when she and her sister began putting on productions in their backyard for friends and family. Taymor joined the Boston Children’s Theatre and performed as Hermia in *Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In high school she began attending the experimental theatre workshops given by playwright and theatre educator Julie Portman, in which she learned the art of “living theatre,” creating theatre from ideas or from scratch and using personal experience as the primary inspiration. Finishing high school at age 16, Taymor traveled to **Paris** to attend to Jacques Lecoq’s **mime** school. After one year, Taymor returned to the U.S. and began studies at **Oberlin College**, where she pursued **folklore** and **mythology**. Though not pursuing an academic course in theatre, she auditioned for and was accepted into a newly formed company on campus, **KRAKEN**, led by the experimental director and scholar Herbert Blau. .

With a **Thomas J. Watson** Foundation fellowship (1974), a one-year grant, Taymor left the U.S. to travel and study theatre. Her travels took her to eastern Europe, **Japan**, and finally to **Indonesia**, where she had planned to stay three months but instead stayed for four years. In **Bali**, with funding from a **Ford Foundation** grant, she founded **Teatr Loh**—a group of German, American, French, Sudanese, Javanese, and Balinese puppeteers, musicians, dancers, and actors—and developed her first theatre works, *Way of Snow* and *Tirai*. In 1980 and ’81 Taymor restaged both of those works in New York City. In 1980 she met composer **Elliot Goldenthal**, who became her life partner and artistic collaborator. One of their first projects was the original musical *Liberty’s Taken* (1985), an irreverent retelling of the story of the **American Revolution**. Other early collaborations included a stage adaptation (1986) of *The Transposed Heads: A Legend of India*, by **Thomas Mann**, and *Juan Darién: A Carnival Mass* (1988), based on the short story “Juan Darién,” by the Uruguayan author **Horacio Quiroga**. The latter earned Taymor an **Obie Award** (given for **Off-Broadway** theatre) for best direction. In 1996 she restaged it for Broadway and incorporated her soon-to-become-trademark puppets and masks. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Taymor also directed several plays by Shakespeare, including *The Tempest* (1986), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1988), and *Titus Andronicus* (1994), each of which ran at Theatre for a New Audience, a venue in **Brooklyn** devoted to Shakespeare and classic drama.

In the early 1990s, Taymor began branching out to directing films and staging operas. Her first production of an opera, **Igor Stravinsky’s** opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex*, based on the play by **Sophocles** and conducted by **Seiji Ozawa**, was recorded in 1993. The film of the performance was screened at a few film festivals and aired on television; for the latter it won an **Emmy Award** (1993). She staged **Mozart’s** *The Magic Flute* in Florence in 1993, with conductor **Zubin Mehta**, and the following year she took on **Richard Strauss’s** *Salomé*, conducted by **Valery Gergiev** in **St. Petersburg**. In 1995 she staged **Richard Wagner’s** *The Flying Dutchman*, conducted by **Klaus Weise** for the Los Angeles Opera. Taymor’s first film, *Fool’s Fire*—based on the short story “Hop-Frog” (1849) by **Edgar Allan Poe**—aired on television in 1992 and was screened at the **Sundance Film Festival** later that year.

In 1996 Taymor staged **Carlo Gozzi’s** play *The Green Bird*, in which she experimented with **Bunraku**, a form of Japanese puppet theatre that has the puppeteers in view of the audience but silent and cloaked in black so that their presence recedes into the background. In *The Green Bird* Taymor introduced her own version of Bunraku, which eliminated masks and involved speaking parts for her actor-puppeteers, a model she used again for *The Lion King* (1997).

Julie Taymor
American director, playwright, and costume designer



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December 15, 1952
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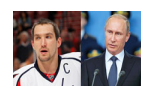
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BRITANNICA QUIZZES



Ovechkin or Putin?

Taymor was considered an unusual choice to design the staging of Disney's *The Lion King* for Broadway, given how dissimilar her aesthetic was to the whimsical and sentimental style of Disney animation. However, she won over the Disney executives with her innovative use of life-size puppets paired with actors. She designed traditional African costumes for the actors and animal masks that rested on their heads, allowing the performers' facial expressions to be visible. For some of her costumes, she created what appeared to be full-body puppets that were worn by the performers. The giraffes, for example, were actors on stilts wearing tall conical masks. In sum, Taymor created more than 100 puppets for the show, which came together into a fantastic spectacle that made *The Lion King* one of the longest-running musicals on Broadway. She won the Tony Award for best costume design in 1998.

Following the critical and financial success of *The Lion King*, Taymor dedicated more of her time to feature films, releasing her first, *Titus*, based on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, in 1999. The score was composed by Goldenthal, and the film starred [Anthony Hopkins](#) and [Jessica Lange](#). Taymor followed up with *Frida* (2002), a visually stunning film about artist [Frida Kahlo](#), portrayed by [Salma Hayek](#). The biopic won [Academy Awards](#) (2003) for best original score and best makeup. Other films directed by Taymor include *Across the Universe* (2007)—a [Vietnam War](#)-era love story set to a soundtrack of [the Beatles](#)—and *The Tempest* (2010), based on the play by Shakespeare and for which she changed the male role of [Prospero](#) to a female Prospera, portrayed by [Helen Mirren](#). Taymor also worked with Goldenthal on two more operas during this period: another staging of *The Magic Flute* for the [Metropolitan Opera](#) in New York City and an original work, *Grendel* (2006), based on the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*.

She next began work on *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*, a Broadway musical that she signed on to direct, with [Bono](#) and the Edge of the band [U2](#) as its composers. The production, nine years in the making, was riddled with problems, and Taymor was fired from her position in March 2011 after reportedly clashing with both her collaborators and the show's producers. The show opened under new direction in June of that year. Though it was reasonably successful, it closed in January 2014 with the dubious distinction of being, at that time, the most expensive Broadway musical ever produced, at a cost of \$75 million.

After a long hiatus, Taymor returned to directing Shakespeare onstage with her 2013 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Theatre for a New Audience. She then helmed a 2015 production of *Grounded*, a one-person show featuring [Anne Hathaway](#) as a fighter pilot, at the Public Theater. Among her many nominations and awards, Taymor received a MacArthur fellowship (1991) and a Guggenheim fellowship for creative arts—drama and performance art (1989). She also won the first Dorothy B. Chandler Performing Arts Award (1989) and a Muse Award from the New York Women in Film & Television (2007).

Naomi Blumberg



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DIRECTOR 2 – Anne Bogart

Anne Bogart has developed the use of Viewpoints in acting, evolving from the original system taken from the world of dance. **Viewpoints** concerns itself with an array of areas concentrating on the performer's relationship with time and space and the manipulation of such relationships in order to alter the conveyed **dramatic meaning**. The Viewpoints are split into three overarching dimensions – time, space and vocals.

Time Viewpoints include tempo, duration, kinaesthetic response and repetition, all of which work with each other to adjust the meaning of movement. For example, a single movement such as the raising of a hand can have different meanings. Adjusting the tempo to slow can create a loving and friendly atmosphere, however, a hyper tempo can suggest anger and a potential slap that is about to occur.

Space, or Spatial Viewpoints concern the way the body moves through the physical area it is in and includes spatial relationship, topography, shape, gesture (expressive and behavioural) and architecture. The adjustment of the body and how it moves and interacts with the space around it communicates important elements of dramatic meaning. Consider topography – the horizontal and vertical path taken to get from point A to point B. If this is a straight line it can suggest much less than if a character takes a longer, more rounded, route to get to their destination.

Vocal Viewpoints relate to the creation and manipulation of the voice in order to communicate clear and purposeful meaning on stage. **Pitch** and **volume** can be adjusted independently to alter the **dynamics** of the sound that is being made and the **timbre** of the voice can be edited by utilising different resonators to alter the final sound. Consider using the nasal cavity to produce the sound as opposed to the sound originating from the chest or abdomen/diaphragm.

Bogart emphasises the need for **soft focus** when working with Viewpoints. The actor should have their peripheral vision at its widest possible focus and not be concentrating on anything in particular. The **togetherness** of the ensemble undertaking the Viewpoints training is essential, highlighted through the repetition of the **“together breath”** at the commencement of each activity within Viewpoints training. When sustaining soft focus, the actor **relinquishes control** of their movement and performance within Viewpoints improvisations to the external influences of the group. This means that there is nothing predetermined about they do, they are performing totally within the “now”. In itself, this can be an extraordinary event to observe! Meaning is created in the moment and is different for each participant. Kinaesthetic response within the time dimension of the Viewpoints encapsulates this concept – it is the “spontaneous physical reaction to an action outside of yourself.” When walking on the grid, for example, the tempo and duration of the walking can be spontaneously impacted by a person walking right towards you from the opposite direction.

A director can benefit very much from undertaking training in Viewpoints, the understanding of the body and how it makes meaning can allow for much clearer and concise direction of actors. Additionally, the director can communicate with designers using their knowledge of Viewpoints also, particularly the spatial Viewpoints. For example, a director can discuss the topography and shape of the set and request that no straight lines be used to create a certain effect and architectural relationship between the performers and the set.

The Viewpoints

Anne Bogart

Time		Space		Vocal	
Tempo	Focus on how fast or slow an action is performed and how this can change the meaning that is communicated to the audience.	Spatial Relationship	What is the relationship with others in space? How is meaning being created through the proxemics of the performers? Why are you close to or far away from another person? All of this creates dramatic meaning that the audience needs to understand.	Pitch	How high or low are you speaking? Why? What's the meaning behind it?
Duration	Focus on the length of time you are in an action for. E.g. – reach out a hand in slow tempo, how long do you stay in it for? What meaning is created?	Topography	What pattern or path do you take around the space? Why do you move in a straight line? What would happen if you moved in circular paths to reach a certain point? Consider the path taken in the three-dimensional grid also – standing straight or curved? What meaning does this make for the viewer?	Dynamic	Adjusting the loudness and pitch and combining the two – what meaning is made? How does the audience understand the intended meaning? What happens if you deliver a word or line with opposite dynamics?
Kinaesthetic Response	Spontaneous physical reaction to an action outside of yourself – your response to something out of your control and how it impacts you.	Shape	What shape does your body make in the space? What significance does this have on the story and the development of your character? How does your shape work with or against the shape of another person?	Timbre	How do you produce the correct sound? Use the physical resonators of the body to manipulate the sound – nasal, from the abdomen, from the throat, etc. How does the meaning change?
Repetition	Repetition of your own action, or the action of multiple other people. The action can be manipulated by adjusting the other viewpoints to alter the meaning being communicated.	Gesture	Expressive Gesture: what mood or emotion are you conveying through your current action and body language? Behavioural Gesture: turn the abstract movement into a recognisable action which is completed with intended emotion and meaning.		
		Architecture	What is your relationship with the physical space? The floor, walls, roof, lighting, objects, etc.		

Viewpoints Training Exercise

GRID WORK

This exercise has pre-defined topography – we all work on the grid – all other Viewpoints are open to manipulation and adjustment based on influences that arise during the improvisation.

- All participants begin upstage in a line, we commence with a “together breath” followed by stillness;
- Participants gradually enter the stage, they will have selected a shape, tempo, etc. to begin with and should allow themselves to be affected by what is happening in the space – their kinaesthetic response to the actions around them;
- Be aware of the spatial relationships and the shape that you are creating – what affects changes to this?
- Adjust tempo from stillness to fast, changing the duration of each change;
- What shapes do you create with the other participants? How do you respond to the actions of the other participants?
- As always, this Viewpoints improvisation should be spontaneous – nothing should be pre-determined and meaning is created in the moment;
- Upon reflection, consider the key moments that made meaning for you as a participant, or as an observer, what made this meaning? How could the meaning be extended into a scene?

Viewpoints Training Exercise

LANE WORK

This exercise is designed to highlight the togetherness required in Viewpoints because the activity restarts unless there is no clear person beginning the activity.

- 5-7 participants stand onstage in a line – they imagine a lane in front of them of about 20 feet in length – they must stay in this lane throughout the activity
- Achieve soft focus and take a together breath
- When they begin to move, the participants may only: walk, run, jump, drop or remain still – combining these they must move to the end of their lane
 - This is not a race – the objective is to only use these moves and get to the end
- All must start together – if there is a clear leader then we restart
- Activity focuses on kinaesthetic response, spatial relationship, repetition, duration and tempo – the topography of the straight line is already predetermined by the lane
- Initially, don't focus on telling a story – just focus on the movement and the different ways you can alter the movements based on the Viewpoints – later on, an audience can be added who can start to see stories developing within the movements of the lane participants

Viewpoints Training Exercise

THE FLOW

This exercise is designed to highlight the fact that “always, when working with Viewpoints, the choices are made intuitively and based on surrounding events.”

- Achieve soft focus
- Together Breath
- Everyone starts to walk around the space, altering their tempo and duration as they feel appropriate
- When you see a small gap between two people, this becomes a “door way” – you must enter through each door way
 - The tempo and duration of direction starts to be controlled by endlessly appearing number of doorways
- Add to this the possibility of any person being able to initiate a “stop” and then a jump in order to then go on with doorways activity
 - This adds another external influence of the movement, the kinaesthetic response to stopping, jumping and starting again
- Add to this the idea that you must be following another person as well as entering the doorways
 - You become much more aware of the other doorways around you that the person you are following is trying to enter
- Repeat activity, this time trying to avoid doorways!

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.¹ 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.² 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.³

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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Theatre History and Literature II

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Anne Bogart: A Study in Innovations and Viewpoints

Every so often, a new way of thinking about the craft of acting and directing will come along that takes the theatre world by storm. For decades, the prevailing school of acting came from the work of Konstantin Stanislavski, whose naturalistic ideas and theories originally called the 'system' were redone and twisted by those who came after him to become a bastardization of his work, known as "the Method." Stanislavski's method was widely considered the standard and last word in acting. However, looking at more contemporary methods and techniques that dared to go against the Stanislavski camp, only one really stands out as a new and innovative way of creating theatre in today's society. Providing another option to the older, Stanislavski-based methods of theatre, Anne Bogart's directing techniques, including viewpoints, have created a new way to create theatre, inspiring future generations of dramatic artists.

Part One: Before Bogart

To understand the full impact of the work of Anne Bogart, it is first necessary to go back and understand what was going on in the world of theatre before her. The main theatre theorist of the time prior to Bogart was Konstantin Stanislavski. Konstantin Stanislavski was a Russian actor and director. As an actor, Stanislavski filled notebooks with his own personal reflection, self evaluation, and critique. This habit eventually became the basis for Stanislavski's system of acting. Though he learned the clichés and tricks of acting, he soon learned from his mentors to "rely on observation and not to copy other actors' performances" (Benedetti 109). Stanislavski

also felt that using emotions in acting was unreliable and fickle at best. Emotions may cause a fantastic performance one night, but the next night, an actor working off of emotions may be only mediocre in a performance. "How can the actor be sure he will feel the right emotion at the right moment in the performance? How is he to assess and analyse what he has observed? How is he to gain control over the process of experiencing?" (Benedetti 120). Emotion cannot be the basis of a performance, but rather the result. The basic principles of Stanislavski's system are as follows: "The actor must understand and make use artistically of the mechanisms of human behavior" and "emotion is the result of an interaction with the world" (Benedetti 120). The artist must have personal preparation to ensure full control over personal resources. The rehearsal method employed Stanislavski's 'system' ensured a completely consistency of performance. An actor had to analyze the play step by step and find the given circumstances as well as study the style, period, and background of the text. It was necessary in the 'system' for the actor to use only his own emotions and experiences. Also, Stanislavski is largely credited with the invention of the fourth wall. Actors were not meant to present to the audience, but often acted in profile or even with their backs to the seats. Much more could be said about Stanislavski's 'system,' breaking it down even further, but Stanislavski, influential though he may be, is not the focus of the paper. However, since Anne Bogart considers herself first and foremost an American director, it is necessary to examine how immensely Stanislavski's 'system' was changed when it came to America.

When Stanislavski's former pupils brought the 'system' to America, it is important to note that Stanislavski had not yet finished his work on the 'system,' and it underwent further revisions and transformations in Russia. As a result, the 'system' that came to the United States was not the full story. It slowly mutated into a bastardized offshoot known as the Method, thanks in

large part to Lee Strasberg of the Actors' Studio. To quote Jean Benedetti, "Strasburg played the major emphasis on the release of emotion and the use of 'emotion memory'. Actors were encouraged to search for the relevant emotion in their own life experience for a particular moment in the play. Many of Strasburg's pupils sought total immersion in the character. Some would seek to experience in real life the emotion they were to perform in the play. Thus if they had to play a scene of exhaustion they would physically exhaust themselves so that they could transfer the experience directly into the performance. This is in direct contradiction to Stanislavski's own teachings. Stanislavski did not believe you could transfer life experiences directly onto the stage. " (Benedetti 147). Strasburg's method was in fact fine for film purposes. Many well known film actors are known Method actors today, including Meryl Streep, Daniel Day Lewis, Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, and Heath Ledger. Click on the following link to see an example of Oscar worthy Method acting in action: [Method Acting in Action](#). However, the Method was not what Stanislavski had intended for stage acting. Strasburg was apparently well aware that his Method differed from the 'system,' but nevertheless, people by and large associated and continue to associate Stanislavski with the Method, even though his system was quite a different thing. Despite it not being what Stanislavski had intended, the Method was still wildly popular in America, and was considered the top acting technique at the time that Anne Bogart was getting started. As Anne Bogart considered herself above all things an "American director," it is important to understand Stanislavski's 'system' and the American offshoot of "the Method." These were the prevailing schools of thought in American directing as Anne Bogart began her meteoric rise in the world of theatre. Bogart's new and different ideas and innovations on directing gave the United States and the rest of the world a much-needed alternative to teaching and directing the Stanislavski 'system' and the American "Method."



Figure 1 - A current picture of Anne Bogart. Taken from <http://siti.grouppsite.com/blog>

Part Two: Anne in the World

From her first exposure to the world of theatre and directing in her early teens, Anne Bogart was hooked. Says Bogart, "When I was fifteen, I was one of those school children put on big yellow buses and taken to Providence, Rhode Island to see Adrian Hall's *Macbeth*. It was life altering, mainly because I didn't understand it. I'd never heard Shakespeare before. I didn't understand what was happening. But when it was over, I was further convinced that this was what I was going to do for the rest of my life. Theatre is not about understanding what's going on. It's about meeting something you don't know" (*Cover* 34). Bogart's style is often seen as fragmented, which is due in large part to growing up in post- World War II United States. As a daughter of a naval officer, much of her early life was spent moving from place to place. In some of her early directing works in New York City, Bogart directed in "New York streets, apartments, and lofts" (*Battle* 20). The different acts of the productions would take place in different locations in the city, or it would be an ongoing work taking place in a different location every week. Looking at the very beginning of Bogart's career, it is obvious right from the start that she is not afraid of breaking tradition in her directing style. "Critic Mel Gussow states, 'She has often been involved in controversy, splitting audiences as well as critics. Depending on the point of view, she is either an innovator or a provocateur assaulting a text'" (*Fliotsos* 75).

Anne Bogart is largely known for taking an established script, for example *Hamlet* or *South Pacific*, and completely changing up what audiences traditionally knew about the text and the performance. "Anne Bogart has never done conventional theatre work. She hasn't worked with a script without altering it greatly. I did *Macbeth* once. I did a little of *Macbeth*. Using

four actors I took the events between Macbeth killing Duncan and finally killing his friend Banquo. I made it a study of how a best friendship can turn into a killing. We used all Shakespearean texts, and it was essentially in order - it's just that there was a lot missing" (Abbe 92). In this way, Bogart's style is very different from Stanislavski's. Stanislavski would take meticulous notes and follow a script to the letter to ensure a consistent, reliable performance. For those in the theatrical world who look for a little more flexibility within a piece, Bogart's directing work is certainly a welcome change to the 'system' and the Method.

Bogart's directing methods are quite different are quite different from what the world associates with Stanislavski, and for good reason on her part. According to Eelka Lampe, "Bogart's affinity for creating "formal work" - making physical expressions equal to verbal expression - is largely due to her discomfort with staging in a Stanislavskian psychological manner. She wonders how any theatre director or spectator today could be interested in psychologically motivated acting for its own sake" (*Battle* 21). Whereas Stanislavski's 'system' meant that the rehearsal process was controlled, Bogart's methods allow for more freedom to interpret for her actors. "Bogart developed a working style that gives big chunks of creative responsibility to her actors. If time allows, Bogart asks her actors to compose their own pieces in relation to the envisioned performance. These semi-improvised building blocks belong to a rehearsal phase Bogart refers to as 'source work', meaning the performers tap their personal and creative forces, allowing them later to fill the formal staging with layers of life" (*Battle* 19).

To better understand Bogart's approach to directing and staging a piece, it is necessary to know what kind of work she puts out there. "Bogart's forte has been to embrace mainstream needs while simultaneously challenging conventional perceptions" (*Battle* 15). She is completely unafraid to do a well-known piece of drama and rework, change, and grow with it to

create something new, different, relevant, and perhaps provocative. Take her productions of *Orestes*, for example, one of her collaborations with Charles L. Mee:

Bogart's *Orestes* was a brilliant and excruciating tapestry of the political and spiritual state of the States. Written largely during the Persian Gulf war, it showed us our reality gone nuts, using Greek myths, *Vogue* magazine, philosophy, court TV, hospitals and asylums, Washington spectacles, pop-astrology - all oscillating around the stage and auditorium. This is the second *mise-en-scene* Bogart has created from Charles L. Mee, Jr.'s writing and demonstrated how Bogart aesthetic of disruption intelligently serves Mee's images of disjointed reality. (*Collaboration* 149)

Bogart's work admittedly might not appeal to or be understood by everyone, but Bogart would rather have her work perhaps not quite be understood by her audiences rather than "dumbing down" a show for the masses. Says Bogart, "Never talk down to the audience. It was immediately clear to me that the experience of theatre was not about us understanding the meaning of the play or the significance of the staging. We were invited into a unique world, an arena that changed everything previously defined" (Dixon 6).

Although Anne Bogart has directed and collaborated all over the world, one of the things she is best known for is creating the Saratoga International Theatre Institute, or the SITI Company, with Tadashi Suzuki. What flourished into a renowned and respected center for theatre started as an idea when Bogart and Suzuki were first introduced in 1988:

In sharing ideas the two artists found that their concerns about the state of the theatre worldwide were excitingly similar. Both believe in a physical approach to the art of acting as theatre's cornerstone, both want to battle the corrupt state of

the arts under capitalism, and both endorse theatre's responsibility in larger cultural and political matters. The dialog continued and their desire to change the function and impact of theatre on a national scale finally inspired them to launch the current project. (*Collaboration* 147)

When the Saratoga International Theatre Institute had its premier season, as Bogart and Suzuki were both directors, they each decided to direct a show and go from there. Suzuki mounted a production of "*Dionysus*, a personal adaptation of Euripedes' *The Bacchae*, sprinkled with *Macbeth* and a radio play by Beckett" (*Collaboration* 149). Bogart's first production was *Orestes*, the collaboration with the words of Charles L. Mee mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Though originally just conceived as a summer intensive program, the SITI company quickly grew and expanded. Now the SITI company, along with the Summer intensive program in Saratoga Springs, now has a year round program based in New York City. The SITI company has three main components. First of all, they are regularly creating new and exciting work. Past productions include *Radio Macbeth*, *Room*, *Short Stories*, and *Seven Deadly Sins*. Click on the following link to see an excerpt from *Radio Macbeth*: [Radio Macbeth Trailer](#). Second, the company is committed to training new artists. There are training programs in both Saratoga Springs and New York City. In addition, the SITI company regularly tours throughout the country, teaching workshops and bringing performances. Finally, the SITI company is committed to international collaboration. The very basis of this can be seen by the collaborative efforts between the two creators. Anne Bogart considers herself first and foremost an American director. Tadashi Suzuki is not. However, their common beliefs concerning theatre have allowed them to come together and produce some true life changing pieces of art. At the SITI

company, Suzuki's intensive, radically physical approach to theatre is taught right alongside Anne Bogart's Viewpoints.

According to Bogart, nothing in the theatre is truly original. The same can be said for Bogart's innovative approach to theatre known as Viewpoints. Bogart adapted her idea from the Viewpoints work of Mary Overlie. Overlie, a choreographer and theatre collaborator, is credited as the inventor of the Six Viewpoints. Overlie's Six Viewpoints are Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement, and Story. Bogart was greatly influenced by the choreographer's work and theories. She adapted Overlie's ideas and ran with them, creating her own wildly popular and innovative Viewpoints work. According to Tina Landau, who worked closely with Bogart in the creation of her Viewpoints work, "The Viewpoints are a philosophy of movement translated into a technique for 1) training performers and 2) creating movement onstage. The Viewpoints are the set of names given to certain basic principles of movement; these names constitute a language for talking about what happens or works on stage. The Viewpoints are points of awareness that a performer or creator has while working" (Dixon 20). In Bogart's work, there were nine original Viewpoints related to Time and Space, with a third Vocal component added later. The Time Viewpoints are Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, and Repetition. Tempo is at what speed an action occurs, such as fast, slow, or medium speed. Duration is how long an action goes on. It can be over quickly or stretch into a long period of time. Kinesthetic response is how an actor responds to and moves off of the movement and actions that are going on around him or her. Repetition is repeating a previous movement, action, sound, etc. The Space Viewpoints are Shape, Gesture, Architecture, Spatial Relationship, and Topography. Shape is the form that the actor's body takes. For example is an actor's body make a shadow full of curves or angles? Gestures concerns motions and gesticulations of the actor, anything from using a

wave to greet someone to flipping another actor the bird. Architecture deals with responding to architectural elements in the space. How does the actor react to the light, the seams on the floor, or the texture of the wall. Spatial relationship concerns how close the actors are to one another. Are two actors so close they are practically touching, or so desperate to stay away that they are on opposite sides of the room? Topography deals with creating a personal map on and in the space. Finally, Bogart later added the Vocal Viewpoints - Pitch, Dynamic, Acceleration/Deceleration, Silence, and Timbre.

According to Bogart, "Young theater artists inherit the following formidable problems as they enter into the American theater arena: Problem 1: The Americanization of the Stanislavsky system. Problem 2: Lack of ongoing actor training. Problem 3: The word "want" and its effect upon rehearsal atmosphere and production" (*Viewpoints* 15-17). Bogart's Viewpoints work provides solutions and alternatives to those problems. Also, Viewpoints work takes out some of the elements of hierarchy between actors and director that for so long has dominated the theatre. Actors and directors, using Viewpoints, now have a common language they can use to collaborate. They become more equal creators in the process of making theatre. The final product comes from a much more free-flowing, organic, and explorative state than the rigidity of Stanislavski's system.

Part Three: Anne Bogart is a director. So what?

So Anne Bogart has had a decades-long career directing plays that are sometimes commercial successes, sometimes controversial, and always different. So what? Why is her work important in the theatre world today?

Since Bogart is a contemporary director still actively working in the theatre, it is most likely that the full impact of her work will not be known until after she is gone. However, even

now it is obvious that the theatre world has been greatly impacted by her presence and innovations over the years. What makes Bogart's work have impact is how accessible she has made her work and methods. For example, one of the most important components of the SITI Company is that the company regularly tours the country. In addition to the Summer program in Saratoga and the full time company in New York City, SITI company members have workshops and residencies in cities and universities across the United States, including NYU, Skidmore College in New York, University of Windsor, and University of Illinois. That means that all over the country, actors and students have the opportunity to work directly with SITI company and learn Bogart's techniques and theories in the world of the theatre. If the actors cannot come to New York or Saratoga Springs to get to the SITI company, the SITI company can come to them.

In addition to the work of the SITI company, Anne has also written several books concerning her methods, including *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, *And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World*, and *The Viewpoints Book*. *A Director Prepares* is a book of essays by Bogart concerning potential challenges in the theatre.

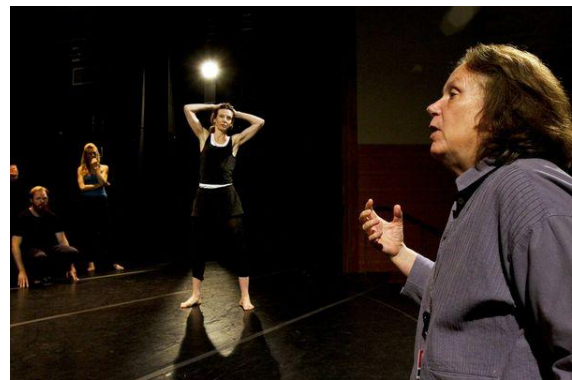


Figure 2 - Anne Bogart directing a scene from *The Trojan Women*. Taken from <http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&gbv=2&biw=1366&bih=643&tbn=isch&tbnid=RcmcGvt52sP5aM:&imgrefurl=http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/08/getty-euripides-trojan-wome>

As a director in theatre I have encountered certain consistent problems that just do not go away. I have found myself repeatedly face to face with issues about violence, memory, terror, eroticism, stereotype, embarrassment, and resistance. Rather than avoiding these problems I have found it fruitful to study them. And

this study has changed the way I approach all my work in the theatre. The problems became allies. This book is an articulation of this study. (*Director 2*).

And Then, You Act can be seen as a follow up to *A Director Prepares*, as it is also a book of essays by Bogart. "Each chapter in this book discusses tools for action - for making the music more intense: context, articulation, intention, attention, magnetism, attitude, content, and time" (*And Then 6*). The title of *The Viewpoints Book*, of course, is rather self-explanatory. As a result, anyone who wishes to learn about her technique and methods as a director can simply pick up one of her books from the local library. Learning directly from Anne Bogart or the SITI company, either from attending the program, working with a touring workshop or master class, or reading a book, is a widely accessible option now. One does not have to hunt for first-hand knowledge of Viewpoints. Since Bogart's work and methods are so accessible, it has made it easy to take them and use them in theatre work.

As a result, Bogart has made herself invaluable to the academic and training world of the actors. Viewpoints work is taking off across universities and training centers around the world. Schools are teaching Viewpoints in classes and workshops everywhere from Elon to Winthrop University. Click the following link to see an example of Viewpoints work in an academic setting: [Elon Viewpoints Demonstration](#). Here at Winthrop University, Viewpoints work is taught in Acting Styles I. It was also recently used in the rehearsal process for *Marisol*, staged at Winthrop University in February 2012. From the point of view of a student in the Styles class as well as an actor in the show, the Viewpoints work done was essential in creating solid ensemble work as well as exploring character and relationships. Viewpoints workshops and classes have also been held at Yale, Ohio State, University of Texas, and Arizona State University, to name just a few of the well-respected institutes of higher learning that understand and appreciate the

importance of Bogart's work. The Dean of CalArt's School of Theatre himself is a proponent of the work of Bogart and SITI. Though it is still quite new in comparison to the Stanislavski 'system' or the Method, the Viewpoints work is very important to the world of theatre, both academic and professional, because it has given actors and directors a language which they can use to discuss movement. "Over the past twenty years, Viewpoints training has ignited the imaginations of choreographers, actors, directors, designers, dramaturgs, and writers. While the Viewpoints are now taught all over the world and used by many theater artists in the rehearsal process, the theory and its application are still relatively new" (*Viewpoints* 6).

In addition to Bogart's work having value in the world of teaching and training in the theatre, Bogart herself is still a valuable asset through her directing work and collaboration. Her



Figure 3 - bobrauschenbergamerica. Taken from <http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&gbv=2&biw=1366&bih=643&tbn=isch&tbnid=vT0evP7K3jaCfM:&imgrefurl=http://www.indypendent.org/2010/05/12/all-world%25E2%2580%2599s-collage-review-bobrauschenbergamerica&docid=G2C>

collaborated works with others have moved theatre forward with an avant-garde look at American life. Take for example *bobrauschenbergamerica*, the pivotal collaboration between Anne Bogart and Charles Mee. The collaboration - Mee's words, Bogart's direction - premiered in Louisville in 2001.

In keeping with the spirit of its namesake, it takes the form of a collage play. It has no plot or narrative through-line, and its eight characters are cardboard archetypes. Over the course of forty-

three short, discontinuous scenes, the play presents a seemingly random series of American events... While its dominant mood is happy-go-lucky, there is also a recognition of what the play calls 'the dark side,' the inclination towards violence,

destruction, and murder that is such an integral part of American culture.

(Cummings 2)

Click on the following link to see an excerpt from the show: [bobrauschenbergamerica](http://bobrauschenbergamerica.com). The collaboration was successful and further propelled the lives and careers of both collaborators.

Another important collaboration is that between Anne Bogart and Michael Dixon. Dixon was an important member of the Actors Theatre of Louisville, spending over fifteen years as Literary Manager before becoming Associate Artistic Director. Actors Theatre of Louisville has closely collaborated with Anne Bogart for many years. SITI group often performs at ATL, performing such pieces as "The Adding Machine." Also, Michael Dixon collaborated to write a book on Bogart and the importance of her Viewpoints work before Anne even wrote one herself. Bogart leaves strong impressions on those with whom she collaborates.

Anne Bogart is relevant today because she is not quietly producing plays or teaching her techniques to a few people in secret. She is a contemporary director actively producing plays and teaching anyone who is willing to learn. She regularly makes a splash, treading the fine line between socially and culturally relevant and bizarre. Her work makes people think, and her theatre methods have spread throughout the United States and beyond. It would not be off the mark to call her the most innovative and game-changing director since Stanislavski. Her methods and work present a refreshing alternative in a theatrical world that sometimes seems consumed with Method acting. In the new world of theatre, Bogart is a relevant and trail-blazing voice to guide a new generation. There is little doubt that Anne Bogart has inspired the next generation of theatre makers, and her influence will continue long after she is gone.

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