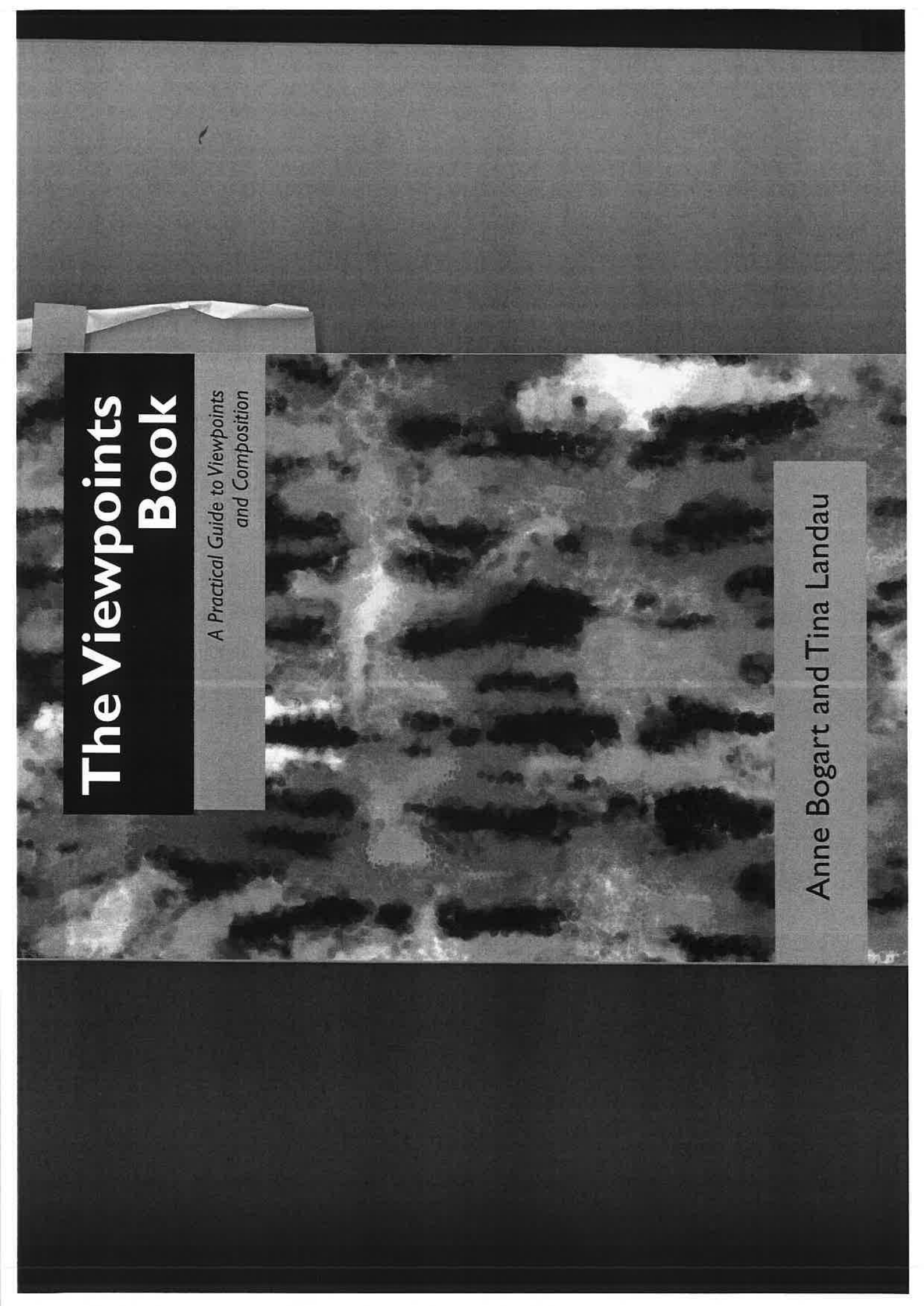




The Viewpoints Book

*A Practical Guide to Viewpoints
and Composition*

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau

Music for Advanced Viewpoints

Add music which is erratic, unpredictable, extreme, attention-getting:

Ludwig van Beethoven
Heiner Goebbels
György Ligeti
Gustav Mahler
Einstürzende Neubauten
Arnold Schoenberg
Igor Stravinsky
Anton Webern
John Zorn

CHAPTER 9

STARTING TO SPEAK

As elements accumulate in the process of Viewpoints training, there comes the moment for the human voice. Vocal Viewpoints addresses sound in the same way that the Physical Viewpoints addresses movement, i.e., by increasing an awareness of pure sound separate from psychological or linguistic meaning. Rather than hearing only what a certain word connotes, we start to address how it sounds and how the sound itself contains information and expressivity. Additionally, habit and fear too often engender a narrow range in an actor's physical and vocal exploration. Vocal Viewpoints highlights the limitations of one's vocal range and subsequently encourages more radical and dynamic vocal choices.

Vocal Viewpoints generates an adventurous attitude to the voice's potential through freedom, control and responsiveness. As an actor-training tool, the introduction of these *points of view* can be invaluable in cultivating vocal virtuosity. During the rehearsal of a play, the time set aside for Vocal Viewpoints

training offers a chance to deal with the play's text nonpsychologically, which, in turn, opens up rich new possibilities within scene work. Changing vocality can alter meaning and impact.

The Vocal Viewpoints are slightly different than the Physical Viewpoints (for instance, we do not work with Topography). When working on the Vocal Viewpoints, we use: Tempo, Duration, Repetition, Kinesthetic Response, Shape, Gesture, Architecture, Pitch, Dynamic, Acceleration/Deceleration, Timbre and Silence. These Viewpoints should be introduced one at a time. Developing with each individually will lead to a remarkable awareness of the potential of the vocal instrument, for both the speaker and the listener.

INTRODUCING THE INDIVIDUAL VOCAL VIEWPOINTS

Starting Solo

Each participant works alone at first, choosing a place in the room where s/he can most effectively concentrate on her/his own voice and sound. Ask each person to make up a three-syllable word of gibberish, e.g., "ka-bing-zong," "yip-eeed-oh," etc.

EXERCISE 1: PITCH

1. Start at your lowest possible pitch, intoning your three-syllable gibberish word, and continue repeating it, with each repetition rising a notch in pitch. The exercise is complete when you are vocalizing your word at the highest possible (and safe) pitch in your range.
2. Work individually, experimenting with switching pitch on each syllable of your word. For instance, try low/low/high or very high/very high/medium low, etc. Try creating as many combinations as possible.

Note: This exercise heightens awareness of our traditionally limited pitch range, and strengthens ability to expand that range. The same holds true for the exercises that follow in terms of expanding the performers' dynamic range, temporal range, etc.

EXERCISE 2: DYNAMIC

1. Starting at your most quiet volume (barely audible), speak your gibberish word, and continue repeating it, with each repetition increasing a notch in volume. The exercise is complete when you are vocalizing your word at the loudest (but still safe) possible volume.
2. Now experiment with switching dynamic, or volume, on each syllable of the word, e.g., loud/barely audible/medium or quiet/loud/quiet, etc.

EXERCISE 3: TEMPO AND DURATION

Repeat the same form as above except in terms of Tempo, moving from the slowest possible speed to the fastest. Then switch tempo/duration on each syllable.

EXERCISE 4: TIMBRE

Experiment with your gibberish word using different physical resonators to produce the sound, e.g., nasal, from your abdomen, your throat, etc. Mix and match as above.

EXERCISE 5: SHAPE

1. Ask the participants to take their three-syllable gibberish word and, still working individually, adjust the vowels and consonants as necessary to produce a word which is made

of *round* shapes. What sounds feel *round*? Why? Which are clearly not? Now change the syllables into a gibberish word which is *linear* or *jagged* in its component shapes.

2. Mix and match as above.
3. Think of and say aloud to yourself recognizable words from the English language (or any other language) which are specifically *round*, *soft* or *fluid* in shape, or specifically *sharp*, *spiky* or *percussive*.

EXERCISE 6: GESTURE

Just as in Physical Viewpoints, Vocal Viewpoints can be either Expressive or Behavioral. We learn to make *Vocal Gestures*, which are sounds with a beginning, middle and end, unlike words which have specific linguistic definitions.

Expressive. Each individual produces a series of Expressive Vocal Gestures on their own. These are sounds that are not of everyday behavior but, rather, express in a more abstract way a state of being, an emotion or an idea.

For example, what is a Vocal Gesture that expresses grief? (Make sure to distinguish between a Behavioral Vocal Gesture for grief, which might be the sound of a sob or a wail, and an Expressive one, which might be an elongated high "eeeeeeeeeeeee" followed by a deep low "oh . . . oooooh.") What is a Vocal Gesture that expresses Freedom? Terror? What about a Vocal Gesture that expresses the idea of Balance? Or Justice? Or Home?

Behavioral. Just as with Physical Viewpoints, Behavioral Vocal Gestures are of everyday observed life, whether public or private, and give concrete information regarding a person's time, place, condition or character, as well as express specific meaning or intention.

1. Produce a series of Behavioral Vocal Gestures which people around you are making every day on the street, bus or subway, etc. These might include clearing the throat, swallowing, exhaling, sniffing, etc.

2. Produce a series of Behavioral Vocal Gestures that give information about the weather (teeth chattering) or a person's health (coughing) or their age (wheezing).
3. Produce a series of Behavioral Vocal Gestures that express or give information about a person's personality or demeanor, for example, grinding teeth, constant clucking or light whistling.
4. Produce a series of Behavioral Vocal Gestures that have a thought or intention behind them but do not use words. For example, a loud, purposeful clearing of the throat: "eh-hem," a "tsk-tsk" reprimand, a moan expressing pleasure.

EXERCISE 7: ARCHITECTURE

Returning to the three-syllable gibberish word, use it repeatedly, and in different volumes, to explore the physical space in which you are working. This is exactly what a sound technician or a singer does when standing onstage, clapping her/his hands to listen for how *live* or *dead* the room is. Explore corners, walls, their varying textures and materials, distance, objects, etc.

Continuing in Groups

EXERCISE 8: REPETITION

1. The group sits in a circle. Two people go into the center of the circle. Person A is the leader and Person B is the repeater. Using a three-syllable gibberish word, Person A generates a series of sounds using pitch, dynamic, tempo and duration in an Expressive fashion. Person B repeats exactly.
2. Same as above, except Person B switches one Viewpoint while repeating the others exactly. Start with repeating pitch (high to low) but changing dynamic (quiet to loud). For example, if A's word is "X-Y-Z" and s/he says it: X (high and quiet), Y (high and quiet), Z (low and loud); B might

repeat the pitch but change the dynamic by uttering: X (high and loud), Y (high and loud), Z (low and quiet). Continue playing with this until the person following is able to respond spontaneously and playfully.

3. Same as above, except Person B does exact repetition on dynamic, and switches choice of pitch. This exercise can continue or be refined with any combination of Vocal Viewpoints (i.e., repeat pitch and dynamic but switch tempo, etc.).
4. Reverse roles, with B now generating and A repeating.

EXERCISE 9: KINESTHETIC RESPONSE, SILENCE AND ONWARD . . .

Four people sit in the center of a circle with their eyes closed. Each chooses a word, either gibberish or not, as per the leader's discretion. The leader also may give one word or phrase with which the whole group works. By excluding the option of variety in words, and by wholly focusing on the stimuli provided by others, each individual concentrates not on *what* sound s/he produces but on *when*. The *timing* is determined by responding kinesthetically to the sounds of the others.

Note: This exercise closely parallels Lane Work in Physical Viewpoints in that there is a limited vocabulary (the chosen word or phrase), a small group of participants and, therefore, an opportunity to practice a true surrender of control in favor of simple, direct reaction to the external action, in this case sound. Just as *stillness* functions in Physical Viewpoints, so does silence function here. The participants might need to be reminded to include and trust the silences in a proactive, creative fashion rather than a passive one. Silence becomes less an inactive period of waiting than an Expressive field of sound all its own.

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For the performers
whose bodies and imaginations
carry this work forward