

ten years, they collaborated extensively, experimented theatrically, and gradually expanded Overlie's Six Viewpoints to both nine Physical Viewpoints (Spatial Relationship, Kinesthetic Response, Shape, Gesture, Repetition, Architecture, Tempo, Duration and Topography) and Vocal Viewpoints (Pitch, Dynamic, Acceleration/Deceleration, Silence and Timbre).

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. The questions arise frequently: What exactly *is* Viewpoints? What exactly *is* Composition?

CHAPTER 2

VIEWPOINTS AND COMPOSITION: WHAT ARE THEY?

Viewpoints, Composition: What do these terms mean? The following definitions reflect *our* understanding and use of them. Even in the context of the work of such pioneers as Mary Overlie and Aileen Passloff, it is impossible to say where these ideas actually originated, because they are timeless and belong to the natural principles of movement, time and space. Over the years, we have simply articulated a set of names for things that already exist, things that we do naturally and have always done, with greater or lesser degrees of consciousness and emphasis.

VIEWPOINTS

- Viewpoints is a philosophy translated into a technique for (1) training performers; (2) building ensemble; and (3) creating movement for the stage.

- Viewpoints is a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space; these names constitute a language for talking about what happens onstage.
- Viewpoints is points of awareness that a performer or creator makes use of while working.

We work with nine Physical Viewpoints, within Viewpoints of Time and Viewpoints of Space. The bulk of this book focuses on the Physical Viewpoints, though Vocal Viewpoints, which we developed later, are addressed in Chapter 9. The Vocal Viewpoints are specifically related to sound as opposed to movement. Physical and Vocal Viewpoints overlap each other and constantly change in relative value, depending on the artist or teacher and/or the style of the production. The Physical Viewpoints are:

Viewpoints of Time

TEMPO

The rate of speed at which a movement occurs; how fast or slow something happens onstage.

DURATION

How long a movement or sequence of movements continues. Duration, in terms of Viewpoints work, specifically relates to how long a group of people working together stay inside a certain section of movement before it changes.

KINESTHETIC RESPONSE

A spontaneous reaction to motion which occurs outside you; the timing in which you respond to the external events of movement or sound; the impulsive movement that occurs from a stimulation of the senses. An example: someone claps in front of your eyes and you blink in response; or someone slams a door and you impulsively stand up from your chair.

REPETITION

The repeating of something onstage. Repetition includes (1) *Internal Repetition* (repeating a movement within your own body); (2) *External Repetition* (repeating the shape, tempo, gesture, etc., of something outside your own body).

Viewpoints of Space

SHAPE

The contour or outline the body (or bodies) makes in space. All Shape can be broken down into either (1) *lines*; (2) *curves*; (3) a *combination* of lines and curves.

Therefore, in Viewpoints training we create shapes that are round, shapes that are angular, shapes that are a mixture of these two.

In addition, Shape can either be (1) *stationary*; (2) *moving* through space.

Lastly, Shape can be made in one of three forms: (1) the body in space; (2) the body in relationship to architecture making a shape; (3) the body in relationship to other bodies making a shape.

GESTURE

A movement involving a part or parts of the body; Gesture is Shape with a beginning, middle and end. Gestures can be made with the hands, the arms, the legs, the head, the mouth, the eyes, the feet, the stomach, or any other part or combination of parts that can be isolated. Gesture is broken down into:

1. **BEHAVIORAL GESTURE.** Belongs to the concrete, physical world of human behavior as we observe it in our everyday reality. It is the kind of gesture you see in the supermarket or on the subway: scratching, pointing, waving, sniffing, bowing, saluting. A Behavioral Gesture can give information

about character, time period, physical health, circumstance, weather, clothes, etc. It is usually defined by a person's character or the time and place in which they live. It can also have a thought or intention behind it. A Behavioral Gesture can be further broken down and worked on in terms of *Private Gesture* and *Public Gesture*, distinguishing between actions performed in solitude and those performed with awareness of or proximity to others.

2. **EXPRESSIVE GESTURE.** Expresses an inner state, an emotion, a desire, an idea or a value. It is abstract and symbolic rather than representational. It is universal and timeless and is not something you would normally see someone do in the supermarket or subway. For instance, an Expressive Gesture might be expressive of, or stand for, such emotions as "joy," "grief" or "anger." Or it might express the inner essence of Hamlet as a given actor feels him. Or, in a production of Chekhov, you might create and work with Expressive Gestures *of* or *for* "time," "memory" or "Moscow."

ARCHITECTURE

The physical environment in which you are working and how awareness of it affects movement. How many times have we seen productions where there is a lavish, intricate set covering the stage and yet the actors remain down center, hardly exploring or using the surrounding architecture? In working on Architecture as a Viewpoint, we learn to dance with the space, to be in dialogue with a room, to let movement (especially Shape and Gesture) evolve out of our surroundings. Architecture is broken down into:

1. **SOLID MASS.** Walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, windows, doors, etc.
2. **TEXTURE.** Whether the solid mass is wood or metal or fabric will change the kind of movement we create in relationship to it.
3. **LIGHT.** The sources of light in the room, the shadows we make in relationship to these sources, etc.

4. **COLOR.** Creating movement off of colors in the space, e.g., how one red chair among many black ones would affect our choreography in relation to that chair.
5. **SOUND.** Sound created by and from the architecture, e.g., the sound of feet on the floor, the creak of a door, etc.

Additionally, in working with Architecture, we create *spatial metaphors*, giving form to such feelings as I'm "up against the wall," "caught between the cracks," "trapped," "lost in space," "on the threshold," "high as a kite," etc.

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP

The distance between things onstage, especially (1) one body to another; (2) one body (or bodies) to a group of bodies; (3) the body to the architecture.

What is the full range of possible distances between things onstage? What kinds of groupings allow us to see a stage picture more clearly? Which groupings suggest an event or emotion, express a dynamic? In both real life and onstage, we tend to position ourselves at a polite two- or three-foot distance from someone we are talking to. When we become aware of the expressive possibilities of Spatial Relationship onstage, we begin working with less polite but more dynamic distances of extreme proximity or extreme separation.

TOPOGRAPHY

The *landscape*, the *floor pattern*, the *design* we create in movement through space. In defining a landscape, for instance, we might decide that the downstage area has great density, is difficult to move through, while the upstage area has less density and therefore involves more fluidity and faster tempos. To understand floor pattern, imagine that the bottoms of your feet are painted red; as you move through the space, the picture that evolves on the floor is the floor pattern that emerges over time. In addition, staging or designing for performance always involves choices

about the *size* and *shape* of the space we work in. For example, we might choose to work in a narrow three-foot strip all the way downstage or in a giant triangular shape that covers the whole floor, etc.

COMPOSITION

- Composition is a method for creating new work.
- Composition is the practice of selecting and arranging the separate components of theatrical language into a cohesive work of art for the stage. It is the same technique that any choreographer, painter, writer, composer or filmmaker uses in their corresponding disciplines. In theater, it is *writing on your feet*, with others, in space and time, using the language of theater.
- Composition is a method for generating, defining and developing the theater vocabulary that will be used for any given piece. In Composition, we make pieces so that we can point to them and say: "That worked," and ask: "Why?" so that we can then articulate which ideas, moments, images, etc., we will include in our production.
- Composition is a method for revealing to ourselves our hidden thoughts and feelings about the material. Because we usually make Compositions in rehearsal in a compressed period of time, we have no time to think. Composition provides a structure for working from our impulses and intuition. As Pablo Picasso once said, making art is "another way of keeping a diary."
- Composition is an assignment given to an ensemble so that it can create short, specific theater pieces addressing a particular aspect of the work. We use Composition during rehearsal to engage the collaborators in the process of generating their own work around a source. The assignment will usually include an overall intention or structure as well as a substantial list of ingredients which must be included in the piece. This list is the raw material of the theater

language we'll speak in the piece, either principles that are useful for staging (symmetry versus asymmetry, use of scale and perspective, juxtaposition, etc.) or the ingredients that belong specifically to the Play-World we are working on (objects, textures, colors, sounds, actions, etc.) These ingredients are to a Composition what single words are to a paragraph or essay. The creator makes meaning through their arrangement.

- Composition is a method for being in dialogue with other art forms, as it borrows from and reflects the other arts. In Composition work, we study and use principles from other disciplines translated for the stage. For example, borrowing from music, we might ask what the rhythm of a moment is, or how to interact based on a fugue structure, or how a coda functions and whether or not we should add one. Or we'll think about film: "How do we stage a close-up? An establishing shot? A montage?" And we'll ask: "What is the equivalent in the theater?" In applying Compositional principles from other disciplines to the theater, we push the envelope of theatrical possibility and challenge ourselves to create new forms.
- Composition is to the creator (whether director, writer, performer, designer, etc.) what Viewpoints is to the actor: a method for practicing the art.

Feedforward and feedback.

This preliminary session introduced two poles of experience and energy that need to be calibrated and sharpened: *feedforward* and *feedback*.

Feedforward is an outgoing energy that anticipates the necessity for action. Playing volleyball, for example, demands an intense use of *feedforward* as the ball whizzes around the space.

Feedback is the information and sensation that one receives as the result of an action. Whereas, in a sporting event, the energy of *feedforward* is predominantly what the onlookers connect to, in a theater event it is also the energy of *feedback* that engages us. As a viewer in a sports arena, we will most likely be interested in the anticipation of the next action. As a viewer in the theater, not only are we caught up in that suspense but additionally, and even more powerfully, we invest in the event through our empathy with the actors' experience. Through our identification with this experience, the theater becomes a place of acute aliveness to both the drama of what *has* happened and to what *will* happen next.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCING THE INDIVIDUAL VIEWPOINTS

The individual Viewpoints should be introduced separately, with most, if not all, of the participant's attention on the specifically named Viewpoint.

You'll find overlaps and connections between the separate Viewpoints. An especially open group of participants will often jump ahead or add on even before you've introduced the next Viewpoint. This happens naturally, of course, because Viewpoints is already in the body. Slowing the process down and forcing the group to maintain conscious focus during the beginning stages produces greater range and finesse later on. If too many Viewpoints are layered on too quickly no single one can ever be explored with enough depth.

As each Viewpoint is individually introduced, information accumulates. First, we isolate awareness of that particular Viewpoint, then add another to it. Each Viewpoint is, in turn, dealt with on its own terms, then added to what has already been investigated.

Learning the individual Viewpoints is like learning to juggle. First there is only one ball in the air, then a second is added, then a third, a fourth, and so on—how many balls can you keep in the air before they all drop? When introducing the individual Viewpoints, pay attention to when the balls start to drop. You might discover that a group of participants needs to practice a particular Viewpoint over time before it is able to add another without completely losing awareness of the first.

At the same time, it is most effective to introduce most, if not all, Viewpoints in a single session. Rather than getting stuck on any one Viewpoint, allow the first session to be messy and confusing and exhilarating and overwhelming. Go back to the basics of the individual Viewpoints in the first several sessions after the group has gleaned an overall sense of how Viewpoints works.

TEMPO

Tempo is a good Viewpoint with which to begin when introducing Viewpoints individually.

In working on Tempo the focus is not on *what* the action is but on *how fast or slow* the action is performed: awareness of *speed*. To work on Tempo in isolation, you can choose almost any action (extending an arm, waving to someone, turning your head) and experiment with performing it in different tempos.

EXERCISE 1: TEMPO, THE BASICS

1. Choose one action, with a clear beginning and end.
2. Repeat it several times, making sure the form is exact and repeatable.
3. Perform the action in a medium tempo.
4. Perform the action in a fast tempo.
5. Perform the action in a slow tempo.

Be aware of how the action of changing tempos alters the meaning of the physical action. For example, I am sitting at a table and I reach my right hand out about a foot across the table. (Most actions, when initially performed without thought or context, will occur in a *medium* tempo. So let's say this is the tempo at which I extend my hand.) I then perform the same action *fast*. Then *slow*. What verbs are implied by performing the same action at different speeds? The *medium* perhaps implies "to touch" or "to retrieve," whereas the *fast* action is maybe "to grab" or "to protect," and the *slow* maybe "to seduce" or "to sneak." Similarly, the *fast* tempo makes me feel desperate, the *slow* makes me feel scared, and the *medium* makes me feel . . . well, nothing at all. This is one of the gifts of Viewpoints: by applying each Viewpoint, especially in its extremes, we *invite* something to happen.

As with all the Viewpoints, Tempo can be practiced both for its own sake (to increase awareness and range of Tempo) or as a tool to increase overall expressivity or jump-start a moment or scene. It's like someone who lifts weights in the gym—he might increase the weight simply for the sake of it, or he might increase the weight so that he can lift heavier objects at home or work. A performer might practice faster and faster tempos so that when s/he is onstage s/he can call on that tempo with more consciousness and ease.

EXERCISE 2: SWITCHES OF TEMPO

This exercise will help increase the individual's awareness of the *extremes* of Tempo, in which s/he might not ordinarily operate. It will expand range and develop the individual's ability to shift in and out of extreme tempos instantly and unexpectedly.

1. Have the group stand in a circle (this is Topography, a Viewpoint of Space). Each person should be an arm's length apart from the person on either side (this is Spatial Relationship, another Viewpoint of Space). Make sure the group is in *soft focus*. Perhaps do some simple movement exercises

in unison (lifting an arm together, leaning, etc.) to focus concentration.

2. The group should lean gently from one foot to the other. At this point, assuming you have done a unison group warm-up, allow the group to let go of unison focus and concentrate solely on the individual body and their own sense of Tempo. Each person should shift her/his weight from foot to foot in her/his own time now.
3. With an awareness of both Viewpoints (Shape and Tempo), gradually begin to increase both: a knee begins to bend, then lift that same leg so that a walking motion is created, then shift from foot to foot, leg to leg, getting faster until you find yourself in a nice, comfortable, *medium* tempo, jogging in place. Maintain *soft focus*. Keep breathing. Through your *soft focus*, know exactly where you are in the room, on the floor, and in relationship to those around you. Spot yourself. The tendency while running in place in a circle will be for the group to constantly move in and close down the circle. Staying in *soft focus*, find physical landmarks in the space to help you remain in a fixed place. Call this your *medium* tempo. It's what feels *in the middle* (comfortable) for you. Remember it by observing how it makes you feel, breathe, see. You will return to it.

Note: Very often as you begin work in *soft focus* and are addressing the group, certain individuals will look at you as soon as you begin speaking—the lure of language is powerful. Remind the group, or individuals, of *soft focus* as often as necessary.

4. Explain to the group that you will be adding tempos to both sides of the *medium* tempo, gradually increasing the ends of the spectrum. When you clap your hands, the group should shift into a tempo called *slow*. Then, on the next clap, switch back to *medium*. With the next clap, add a *fast* tempo. Then clap again, and back to *medium*: *soft focus*, breathe, maintain the circle.
5. Now add two more tempos to the *slow* side of the spectrum. Call them *very slow* and *the slowest you can go and still call it*

movement. With claps, switch unexpectedly to different tempos, in different orders, and stay in those tempos for varying lengths of time (this is Duration, a Viewpoint of Time). Then add two more tempos on the *fast* side of the spectrum: *very fast* and *hyper-speed*. *Hyper-speed* should be pushed so that people are running in place as fast—but as light—as they can.

When working in *fast* tempos, balance on the inside by maintaining a sense of calm, quiet, *slow*. This is similar to the emphasis placed on control and ease when performing fight choreography. Each action contains itself and *its opposite*. Practice running *fast on the outside* and *slow on the inside*. Then switch to *slow on the outside* and *fast on the inside*. When you decrease the tempo, do not let the energy decrease.

EXERCISE 3: TEMPO ON A GRID

1. The group runs in a *medium* jog. On a hand clap, they turn to their right and run in a circle. They are now traveling through space instead of running in place. Maintain a constant distance between bodies. With *soft focus*, be aware of the entire group, the entire circle, become aware that the circle is a Topography.
2. With the next hand clap, the group switches out of the circle to work on a new Topography—a *grid*. Imagine a series of straight lines, crisscrossing each other at ninety-degree angles on the ground, like a giant piece of graph paper on the floor. The angles correspond to the walls of the room, eliminating all curves and diagonals. With this next hand clap, the group now moves anywhere along the lines of this imagined grid on the floor. They do not need to stay together in a group; individuals are free to explore the grid in any direction.
3. Keep your focus on Tempo—how fast you are going. Continuing to work on the grid and in *soft focus*, begin to add *switches* of tempo at your own will. Individuals are now

working on their own, simply moving along the grid in various patterns and at various tempos. Notice if there are tempos you stay away from or resist—then add them! Include *hyper-speed* and *the slowest you can go and still call it movement*. Notice when you get bored. What do you have to do to surprise yourself? As you continue working on the grid with switches of tempo, it is useful to add awareness of another Viewpoint: Duration.

DURATION

Tempo asks you to be aware of *how fast* you perform an action; Duration asks you to be aware of *how long* you stay in that action and/or tempo. In reaching your hand out in a *very slow* tempo you might choose to stay in it for three seconds or ten. Or, following one of Pinter's stage-direction pauses, how do you know when to speak the next line or let the silence sit another three beats? Practicing Duration increases the performer's ability to sense how long is long enough to make something happen on-stage and, conversely, how long is too long so that something starts to die.

In introducing Duration, it is helpful to choose one action that remains constant (in this case, moving on a grid), used in conjunction with switches of tempo, so that the individual does not need to concentrate on *what s/he* is doing, only on *how long*.

EXERCISE 4: DURATION AND TEMPO ON THE GRID

Now that the group has been working on the grid with switches of tempo, ask the participants to become aware of patterns that are emerging. Not only which tempos they tend to rely on or ignore, but also how often they are switching tempos. Note aloud to the group that almost everyone is probably switching her/his tempo regularly, rhythmically, and in short bursts. This is a standard, fall-back position when it comes to Duration.

As with all the individual Viewpoints, we tend to live in a *medium* area with Duration, a gray zone, in which things last a comfortable, average, seemingly coherent amount of time. We tend to shy away from things that last *very long*, or change very quickly, i.e., *very short*.

With this in mind, work on the grid, continuing with changes of tempo, but putting ninety percent of your focus on Duration now. Stay in tempos longer than feels comfortable, or shorter. As you move on the grid now, you are experimenting not only with how fast you go but how long you stay in each speed.

Be aware of a kind of Morse code that you are creating over time—longer dashes, shorter dots. Interest yourself. Surprise yourself. Meaning is created over time by how different durations are combined with each other: Looooooooooooong-short-short-short! Medium-medium-medium-medium-short-medium.

To expand on the above:

1. After adding changes of tempo and duration, add *changes of direction* on the grid. Now people can move forward, backward or sideways.
2. Add *changes of levels*, so that the grid in the mind's eye is not two-dimensional on the floor, but three-dimensional in space. Now people can travel on tiptoe, as high as possible, or in a crawl or slither, as low as possible. Make sure that focus stays on Tempo and Duration and that, in adding awareness of vertical space and different ways of traveling, people do not become engaged in playing with Shape.
3. Add *stops* and *starts*.
4. For a time, forget everything but *top speed* and *stillness*. Those are the only two choices. Devour space with no fear. See through your back. Keep the inside and outside energy balancing each other, so that you work with a sense of inner calm and slowness when you are traveling at hyper-speed, and a sense of inner momentum when you are traveling slowly.
5. You, as group leader, will be able tell if someone has predetermined where they are going to stop or when they are

going to start. Point this out. Say: "I can see where you're going to stop because you've already decided." Keep reminding them to surprise themselves.

KINESTHETIC RESPONSE

EXERCISE 5: INTRODUCING KINESTHETIC RESPONSE ON THE GRID

Continuing to work with *stops* and *starts* on the grid, start to shift the bulk of your focus away from Tempo and Duration and toward Kinesthetic Response. Kinesthetic Response is your spontaneous physical reaction to movement outside yourself. Put your focus on other bodies in the space, and let your stops and starts be determined by *them*. Let the decision to move or be still be made by when others affect you, when they pass you, start around you, stop around you, etc. In focusing on Kinesthetic Response, you are now working on *when* you move rather than *how fast* (Tempo) or *how long* (Duration).

A crucial moment in Viewpoints training.

Until this moment, individuals have been playing with Tempo and Duration in their own way on the grid. This is the moment when we introduce the imperative of relinquishing choice (at least for the moment). It is no longer for you to choose what is right or wrong, good or bad—but to *use everything*. If someone runs by you—use it! If the group suddenly shifts into slow motion—use it! Let everything change you. Although this is one of the most difficult stages of the process, it can also be the most freeing. This is the moment when you take the onus off the individual to "be interesting," to "be inventive," to "come up with stuff." If the individual is open, listens with her/his whole body, sees the world through *soft focus*, s/he need only receive and react.

This is Kinesthetic Response (a Viewpoint of Time): the immediate, uncensored response to an external event around you.

REPETITION

EXERCISE 6: INTRODUCING REPETITION ON THE GRID

Next, focus on Repetition. Let when you move (Kinesthetic Response), how you move (Tempo) and for how long you move (Duration) be determined by Repetition.

1. Let go of thinking about Tempo, Duration and Kinesthetic Response. Concentrate on Repetition. All your movement now should be determined by repeating someone else, either their path, their direction, their speed, their stops and starts, etc. Follow someone, shadow her/him. Don't get caught with one person. Constantly switch to a new person as s/he comes into your field of play.
2. Practice repeating off someone far away from you as well as someone near you.
3. Now repeat off two people instead of just one. Work with repetition of one person's *floor pattern* and another person's tempo.
4. Make use of your *awareness* of Repetition over time, so that you can now recycle and incorporate movement that occurred earlier in the exercise. Let yourself be carried away, thrown around the grid, bounced between other bodies, repeating *everything* that you see and hear, with your *soft focus* and by listening through your back, so that you are using movement that is occurring on all sides of you, not just in front.

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP

EXERCISE 7: INTRODUCING SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP ON THE GRID

1. The group moves on the grid, relaxing attention, letting instinct carry them, rather than being guided by one particular Viewpoint. Allow this to go on for a minute or two, or until the group is moving freely and naturally, without imposing ideas on their movement patterns. Clap your hands to have the group stop, to hold in stillness.
2. Ask the participants to notice the space between themselves and others. The distance between bodies. This is Spatial Relationship. Ask them to notice how even all the space is (which it will more or less be at this point in the training).

As we've noted before while introducing other Viewpoints, we tend to operate in a space which is very middle-of-the-road, without extremes, with great safety and comfort. In Spatial Relationship this translates to a consistency of distance between bodies, usually two to five feet. This is the distance from others in which we spend most of our lives. It's the distance we have while chatting, when shaking hands, when eating a meal. We tend to keep this cushion of space as protection, and when we start to increase or decrease this space, we start to create dynamic, event, *relationship*.

3. With your next clap, the group begins moving on the grid again, at ninety-degree angles—this time working with an acute awareness of the space. Let them know that this time they should let themselves make decisions about when and where to go based only on where other people are. They should work in the extremes of going either *close to* or *far away from* others. Try to work spontaneously. Change as other people change around you.
4. Stop the group again with a clap. Notice how the spatial relationships in the group have changed: they are more interesting, more noticeable, more potent. Something begins to occur in space when we pay attention to it.

5. After introducing individual Viewpoints on the grid, you can do exercises that combine Viewpoints or ingredients in various ways while working on the grid:

- Work on the grid with only *hyper-speed* or *stillness*. Run with no fear. Run with abandon. Run with trust.
- Work on the grid with *level* and Spatial Relationship.
- Work on the grid with only *hyper-speed* or *stillness*, incorporating levels and Spatial Relationship, etc.

You can give structure in any combination that you assess is most challenging or helpful for the particular group.

TOPOGRAPHY

Transition from the Grid: Introducing Topography

1. **BASIC PATTERNS.** Introduce Topography by pointing out that the grid is itself a topography, that the group already has been working with Topography. Now change the image of the grid into a series of circles. Work on curves and swirls. Change from circles to zigzags or diagonals.

While working on the grid you may have introduced *levels*—asking the group to imagine the grid as not just two-dimensional (the floor only), but three-dimensional, going up and into the room as an imaginary structure. With this image in mind, the group can explore *height* and *depth* on the grid, working in a topography which is a multidimensional landscape rather than solely a floor pattern.

2. **PAINTING ON THE FLOOR.** Let the grid dissolve below your feet, and in its place imagine a new topography of your own creation. (At this point, each individual needs to let go of the group focus and turn to a solo focus.) Imagine that the soles of your feet have red paint on them, and you are now

painting the floor. Create various topographies by *painting* on the floor. Work in constantly shifting combinations of circles and zigzags and straight lines.

3. **SIZE OF CANVAS.** Return to one basic floor pattern for a moment. Maintain this exact pattern while changing the *size* of it. If you've been working with small circles, expand them to take up the whole room; if you've been traversing across the entire floor, use the same floor pattern to work in miniature on a single corner, etc.
4. **SHAPE OF CANVAS.** Next, add an awareness of *shape* of playing space. If you are working in a corner, actually define it on the floor for yourself with an invisible boundary. Work inside of a square. Or work inside of a circle in the center of the room. Or work inside of an oblong on the farthest downstage edge of the playing space (we often refer to this extreme downstage area as *in one*, a term derived from vaudeville). You are now working with *pattern* itself, *size* of pattern and *shape* of playing space.

As you work with *shape* of playing space, *size* of playing space and *pattern within* playing space, change one but maintain the other two. For instance, if you are working with zigzags, do so within a small square. Now change floor pattern to become circles within the circle. Now maintain the pattern (i.e., the circles), but change the shape of the playing space, i.e., making circles within a triangle. Now change the size of the playing space by enlarging the triangle to reach into three corners of the room.

In the beginning it is often necessary, when working on Topography, for the group to maintain a ten-percent awareness on Tempo. The natural inclination of any group will be to work on Topography in a *fast* but *easy* tempo (just as we will discover later that it is natural to at first work on Shape in a *slow* tempo). By working on Topography in a *very fast* or *slow* tempo, new patterns will emerge.

If you need to take a break, you could do it at this stage in the process, before introducing the Viewpoints of Shape, Gesture and Architecture. Make sure that you do not take too long a break

before finishing the introduction of all the Viewpoints and putting them together in either Open Viewpoints or Lane Work (both of which are described in detail in the following chapter). A two- or five-minute refresher (allowing people to use the bathroom or get a drink of water) is fine, but a fifteen-minute break, allowing time to cool down and/or revert to being in one's head, is not. It is very useful in the first sessions of Viewpoints training to *push* the group—to lead them into a state of heightened and demanding physicality and mental concentration.

SHAPE

EXERCISE 8: INTRODUCING SHAPE, THE BASICS

1. **LINES.** Everyone stands alone somewhere in the space, focusing on her/his body, beginning in a neutral, relaxed position (*soft focus*). Become aware that your body is already making a shape, i.e., an outline against space, a silhouette. Get a clear sense of this shape as if against an expanse of sky, or a cyclorama. Remaining in your spot, begin to create new shapes by moving parts of your body, concentrating first on shapes which are *linear* or *angular*. (In painting it is common practice to deconstruct and understand form as a combination of lines and curves.) Make only shapes which include angle, lines, hard edges. Use parts of your body other than just arms and legs: use your elbow, knee, tongue. Continue awareness on *legibility*, i.e., how easy the shape is to *read* from the outside.
2. **CURVES.** Now take the shapes you are making and translate them into shapes which are *curved* or *circular*. Every shape should now be comprised only of rounded lines and edges. Note the different feeling that is evoked for you by curves instead of angles.
3. **COMBINATION.** Combine lines and curves in your body by isolating different body parts and having one in a straight line and another in a gentle curve. Experiment with different

GESTURE

In working on Gesture we will be investigating two categories: Behavioral and Expressive. Behavioral Gestures are those that belong to everyday life, that are part of human behavior as we know and observe it. These are things that people actually do in real life: ways of moving, walking, communicating. Expressive Gestures are those that belong to the interior rather than the exterior world (of behavior); they express feeling or meaning which is not otherwise directly manifest. One could say that Behavioral Gestures are *prosaic* and Expressive Gestures are *poetic*.

EXERCISE 9: EXPRESSIVE GESTURE

1. **STARTING.** If you are transitioning from the introduction of Shape, it is best to work on Expressive Gesture first. Begin by simply encouraging the group to think of what they are doing no longer as Shape but as Expressive Gesture. What will shift is that we are now working with (1) something *behind* the movement (a feeling, thought, idea); and (2) a beginning, middle and end to the movement.
2. **EXPRESSING EMOTIONS.** Express something with your gesture. Express a feeling. Make a gesture that expresses a feeling of *joy*. Make a gesture that expresses a feeling of *anger*. Make a gesture that expresses a feeling of *fear*. Make a gesture that expresses a feeling of *sadness*. Move through space with that gesture. Repeat it. Refine it. Let it evolve.
3. **EXPRESSING IDEAS.** Now work on gestures that express an idea. For instance, express the idea of *freedom* in a movement. Express the concept of *justice*. Now do the same for *war*, *balance*, *chaos*, *the cosmos*.

It's useful to ask the group to note those parts of the body they tend to rely on, and those they ignore. All nine Viewpoints can serve as a personal litmus test, a method for gauging where the individual's strengths and weaknesses lie, what habits are repeated and what territory is unexplored.

combinations. Create contrast and juxtaposition and tension in your various shapes.

4. **FLUIDITY AND SPONTANEITY.** Note how you are making a shape, stopping, then starting a new one. Try to keep the movement fluid, so one shape leads to the next, so the process is of one shape *evolving* into another. Let the shape itself lead you, rather than you leading the shape. Next, add changes of tempo and note how different tempos lead to different kinds of shapes. Let the varying tempos kick you into spontaneity; working at a faster tempo will give you less time to predetermine.
5. **TRAVELING.** Shape can be either stationary or moving. Take the exact shape you are in and begin moving through the space with it, allowing the shape itself to dictate a new, probably unusual, way of traversing space. As you cross the room, allow the shape to evolve. Find new shapes that you can travel in/with.
6. **OTHERS.** Shape can be created solo or with others. As you travel around the space in Shape, allow contact with other shapes (people in this case). Allow your shapes to merge and shift so that you are now creating *one* shape from two bodies or three bodies.

At this point, the usual tendency for a group while working on Shape is to turn the shapes inward, becoming a single amorphous blob of slithering bodies. The group will most likely end up on the floor, entangled in each other in an imprecise mass, without legible definition. You will need to point this out, ask them to note it. Encourage them to work with one or two others, making strong, graphic shapes that turn out instead of in.

7. **TRAVELING WITH OTHERS.** Take the shape you are in with your partner(s) and travel. As you go, allow it to change. As you meet others, disengage from your original shape partner(s) and find yourself in new shapes with new partner(s). Practice *finding yourself* somewhere, in some position, in some shape, without planning it. Allow things to happen. Open up to surprise encounters.

4. **USING YOUR WHOLE BODY.** Include the parts of your body that you're not used to working with—include all parts of your body. Work from the feet to the head; make an Expressive Gesture first with your toes, then your heels, then your whole foot, then your ankles, etc.

EXERCISE 10: BEHAVIORAL GESTURE

1. **STARTING.** Take whatever gesture you are in and let it evolve from an Expressive one to a Behavioral one. This means taking something relatively abstract, which you would not normally see someone do, and transforming it into something relatively concrete, which you might likely see someone do on the street, in the home, at the office.

It is important that as the group is led through generating a mass and variety of gestures in the following steps, that they are pushed to do so quickly, without premeditation or judgment. Undoubtedly, what will emerge from this initial pool of gestures will be full of cliché and stereotype. This is not only okay, it is encouraged. It's important that we begin with exactly who we are, what we think, what we preconceive, rather than some notion we have of who we *should* be and how we *should* think. Once again, if we work spontaneously and honestly, Viewpoints training is an invitation to see ourselves, a gateway to greater consciousness.

2. **BODY AND HEALTH.** Create gestures that give information about a person's body and physical health. These include wounds, scars, disabilities; responses to/expressions of health and illness, such as a sneeze, yawn, buoyant walk, rolling of the neck, etc.; and reactions to weather, such as shivering, a wipe of sweat, fanning oneself, buttoning up, putting a hand out to feel rain or snow, etc.
3. **TIME PERIOD AND CULTURES.** Make gestures that belong to a specific period or culture, for instance, gestures that are Elizabethan or Jacobean; gestures that are of the 1920s, the 1950s or 1960s; gestures that are only of "now"; or gestures

that are specific to French, Italian or German cultures. See if specific periods evoke specific tempos, shapes, uses of architecture. For instance, when working on gestures of the 1920s, you might notice how the group moves quickly, in staccato bursts, employs shapes that are more angular than round, etc. Ask the group to note these emerging patterns.

This is an important way in which Viewpoints training can lead directly into the rehearsal process, either when working on an extant text or in generating an original piece. It is the *point-and-name* method for creating a vocabulary for the specific piece (see Chapter 10, Viewpoints in Rehearsal). By *pointing to* and *naming* patterns that emerge from a given theme or subject, you begin to define a specific physical vocabulary for your production according to its specific themes and subject.

4. **IDIOSYNCRASIES.** Make gestures that tell of a person's eccentricities, quirks, and/or habits: a twitch, a way of scratching, cocking the head, curling the lips, a nose scrunch, a foot tap, an odd bend of the elbow.
5. **GENRE.** Make gestures that belong to specific genres, for instance:
- What are gestures that belong to film noir?
 - What are gestures that belong to the Western?
 - What are gestures that belong to slapstick, quiz shows, nineteenth century melodrama, commedia dell'arte, and so on?
6. **CONNOTATION.** Make a series of gestures that *say* something, that have thought and/or intention behind them. For example, in terms of *intention*, make a gesture that fulfills your *intention* of seducing someone or hurting someone; work on "to entertain" or "to warn" or "to quiet."
- For gestures that have *thought or words* behind them, express the words through Gesture. For example, say the following through Gesture: "Hello," "Screw you," "What's up?" "Come here," "Enough!" etc. Make more gestures.

Communicate. If you allow the group to communicate in a direct fashion with one another through Gesture, remind them of *soft focus* so that the exchange happens through Gesture and without eye contact.

As a variation, and to increase specificity, you can work in greater depth on one or two phrases, playing with degree and relationship. For instance, make a gesture for: "Hello," then repeat this as if to someone you know well, then as if to someone you've never met before. Make new gestures for: "Nice to meet you." Make a gesture that says: "Hiya!" more than just: "Hello." Then, through Gesture, continue with variations of: "Hail," "Welcome," "Greetings!" "Hey there," "S'up?"

7. USING YOUR WHOLE BODY. Use more parts of your body to generate Behavioral Gestures. Use smaller parts: a finger, a toe, an eyebrow, the corner of your lip.

ARCHITECTURE

EXERCISE II: INTRODUCING ARCHITECTURE

1. THE FLOOR BENEATH YOUR FEET. Shift your awareness to the architecture which is *already* there, with which you are *already* working (albeit probably unconsciously). We always, in some way large or small, position ourselves in relation to mass: to walls, objects we sit in or stand near or far from, posts we lean on, tables we rest on, space we center ourselves in or find the corners of, etc.

Notice your feet on the ground. Is there any pattern or tape on the floor? Notice the walls and how near or far they are from you. How is the light coming into the room? What is the texture of the wood your hand is on? Become acutely aware of exactly where you are and let this architecture inform your movement. Dance with the room. Let it tell you what to do, where to go, how to move. Let the

room determine your shapes, your gestures, your tempos, your topographies.

2. SOLID MASS. Let different solid masses within the space give you movement. Dance off the shape of a chair. Walk along the wall. Climb the ledge. Lean on the pole.
3. TEXTURE. Focus not on the mass and weight and structure of an element, but on its texture—not what it is, but of what it is *made*. If you are working with a mask, become aware of whether it is cloth or metal or wood, whether it is hot or cold—let that inform your tempo, your *size*, etc. Move around the room letting your dance change according to what materials you touch.
4. LIGHT. Dance off the light in the room. Work off the pattern of light fixtures or where the window is. Work with or against light. Move in or out of it. Make shadows.
5. COLOR. Dance off color in the room. Maybe you move to and from spots of red in the room, or your movement is inspired by the color of the clothes that others are wearing. Perhaps red becomes a motif and suggests a story or a theme. At any event, you are practicing sensitivity to patterns of color that are normally overlooked.
6. OBJECTS. Dance with smaller objects or props in the space. Find objects that move, that can travel across the room with you or that open and close: a chair, broom, book, clothing rack, paint can. Move with that object. Develop a relationship with it. Let it taunt you, challenge you, give you an obstacle. Play with it. Turn it into something else. See it and exploit it for its raw qualities rather than its functional ones.
7. INCLUDING OTHERS. Let in the objects that people around you are using—join them. Do not get attached to your own activity to the exclusion of what actually passes in front of your path. Move on to another event in the room . . . and another.
8. THE WHOLE SPACE. At this point the group will most likely still be working within the implicit perimeters of their *playing area*. Encourage them to let in the whole space, not just

a polite and preconceived notion of what is or is not *stage space*. Tell them to break the fourth wall. Go behind the tables. Use the risers, the garbage can, the door to the hallway. See and include the entirety of the room within which you are working—not just where there is light or empty floor.

9. DISTANT ARCHITECTURE. Shift your focus so that you are no longer working exclusively off the architecture under your feet or in your hand, but also the architecture that is far away, across the room. Dance off the opposite door. Be in dialogue with a distant object.

ENDING THE FIRST BIG SESSION

Gradually reintroduce Viewpoints. You should remind the participants that they are now working with all the Viewpoints: Architecture, Shape, Gesture, Topography, Kinesthetic Response, Repetition, Spatial Relationship, Tempo and Duration. Allow the group to work in Open Viewpoints while occasionally reminding them of the individual Viewpoints they seem to be unaware of. Your coaching can help kick them into a new alive place. Let them work with all the Viewpoints, using the whole space, for ten to fifteen minutes. Then stop them. Ask them to hold where they are, to breathe, be aware of the energy around them, be aware of the Viewpoints, their own Spatial Relationship and Shape, etc. Tell them: “Close your eyes. Become aware of all that you sense through smell, sound, energy.” Make them recognize how naturally dominant the eyes are, and how much more information there is to take in when they no longer rely on vision. And tell them to *relax*.

Additional Exercises for Focusing on Individual Viewpoints

There are many ways to introduce the individual Viewpoints. Another sequence we have often used is: (1) Spatial Relationship, (2) add Kinesthetic Response, (3) add Tempo, (4) add Duration.

EXERCISE 1: ALTERNATIVE FOR INTRODUCING SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP IN OPEN SPACE

Spatial Relationship is a good Viewpoint to start with on the second or third day of training, or to begin a review session. It simply focuses the individual's attention immediately on the group, on experiencing herself/himself as part of a larger whole. You can start work on Spatial Relationship in an easy, laid-back fashion simply by asking the group to begin moving around the space (with whatever energy they bring in that day). Start where you are, with what you have, become aware of what is happening around you and let that carry you. Remove all pressure to invent or entertain.

EXERCISE 2: FIRST FOCUS—EXTREME DISTANCES

The group moves around the space in any tempo, including *starts* and *stops* (as always, in *soft focus*). Put focus on Spatial Relationship. Notice when you start to feel something happen. Work with more extreme spatial relationships. Go radically close to someone: touch them, hear their breathing, smell them. Then work with someone far away from you: feel the tension, increase it, make the space more taut. In this exercise the only goal is to maintain *extreme* proximity or distance, to live in this state of aliveness, to be sensitive to when it dies and nothing is happening, and start the motor of occurrence again simply by moving closer or farther away from another body.

EXERCISE 3: LINES AND CLUSTERS

Imagine yourself as pinpricks of light, as dots on a Lite Brite set, forming distinct constellations and patterns. Form and dissolve and reform. Make clusters, lines, swirls. If the group at this point is working without strong definition of patterns, encourage them to focus solely on creating lines together, and holding in that particular spatial relationship until everyone is still and they can all feel the spatial relationship. Then ask one person to begin moving,

to go anywhere and stop, and others to instantly work off that by moving to a new position, which creates a new line with a new length or diagonal, etc., off the person you asked to move first. You can practice the same thing when creating clusters.

EXERCISE 4: NUMBERS

Continue working on Spatial Relationship by focusing on dynamics created through numbers. Let's say the group has twelve members in it. Ask them to work one against eleven, to move in the space with an awareness of Spatial Relationship but at all times being in a formation of eleven individuals in contrast to one individual (this might mean the eleven go to one side of the room and the one to the other, or it might mean that the eleven form a circle around the one, etc.). You can change the numbers to, for example, six against six, or six pairs of two.

EXERCISE 5: FLOOR PATTERN—EXPRESSING CHARACTER

Think of someone in your life who has a strong stamp, either a strong effect on you or an especially colorful personality. Express her/his *character* in a floor pattern. Is this someone who is very directed and moves in straight lines, or is this someone who is "all over the place" and makes a Jackson Pollock on the floor, or is this someone who likes to take up space, or is this someone who hides in the outskirts? Choose another person and work on expressing her/him, her/his essence as you sense it, in a floor pattern. Choose another. Make sure the three people are clearly differentiated.

EXERCISE 6: FLOOR PATTERN—LIFE STORY

Express the story of your life through a topography. Create a floor pattern which has a journey (a clear beginning, middle and end), and with switches inside of it that correspond to *chapters* of your

life: Does your life begin in a small way or a big way? Are your early years linear or circular? Is there a period during which you simply *stop*? Do you go back and repeat patterns? Is there a time during which you shoot unexpectedly ahead? Is there even a clear direction, a goal—or is the path meandering?

Alternative. Have an individual show her/his story. You can then ask members of the group who were watching to tell the story as they perceived it. There is no right or wrong here—it's not a guessing game, but an opportunity to note what was legible, expressive, moving.

Alternative. Have an individual do her/his story while speaking from inside of it, in first-person present tense. S/he does not need to *act*, force events or explain anything. S/he should simply verbalize a stream-of-consciousness, to herself/himself (but loud enough for all to hear), which is anything and everything that comes up with or about that particular *chapter* of life *as s/he is experiencing it*. For example, "I'm so small . . . I'm running around here in this circle because I don't know what anyone wants of me . . . Mommy tells me this . . . Daddy tells me that . . . circle, circle, more circle . . . What?! I'm stopping, I'm stopped—something's changing—look there's a way out . . . I follow it. What is it? A line—I can walk it, I'm going to school now, I know what I'm doing. I can read, I read a lot, I read on this line—whoa! another circle—I'm confused again . . ."

This exercise works well for a group that is just getting to know each other; it offers a way of looking at and discussing a single Viewpoint, but also demands courage on the part of its volunteers and a personalizing of Viewpoints training so that the group immediately learns the emotional, rather than the theoretical, power of the work at hand.

EXERCISE 7: TOPOGRAPHY—AND THE GROUP

Work on creating individual Topography. Add awareness of Tempo and Duration. After some time, add awareness of Repetition (this will lead the group back into a state of working as one again).

Allow individual topographies to change based on what others are giving. Allow topographies to emerge from several (or many) people working as one. Add Kinesthetic Response, so that *when* topographies (direction, pattern, etc.) shift, it is based on something that occurs from the outside (another group or individual).

EXERCISE 8: SHAPE—THE RIVER

Stand in a circle. One person runs into the center of the circle and makes and holds a shape. Another person runs into the center of the circle and adds a shape to the first shape, making a new shape out of both. Add a third person, a fourth, etc., until the whole group has run in and contributed to one overall shape. Choose two or three people to remain in the center and ask everyone else to step out and observe the shape created by those who are left. (The people you choose to keep in the center should, of course, be in a shape which is strong, clear, dynamic and useful.) Have the outside group look at the center shape together, observe it, point out what is strong about the shape.

Note *opposition* if and when it occurs; note Repetition if and when it occurs; note that powerful shapes often have an *out* for every *in*. (Shape, or more specifically the Shape of sculptural form, is "quite simply the art of depression and protuberance," wrote the sculptor Auguste Rodin.)

Then, break those two or three center people, return everyone one by one into the circle, and *repeat*.

EXERCISE 9: SHAPE—TAG SHAPE

Stand in a circle. One person runs in to the center of the circle and makes a shape. A second person runs in and adds to it. As the third person runs in, the first person comes out of the center. As the fourth person runs in, the second person comes out; as the fifth runs in, the third comes out, etc. There should always be a shape in the center, comprised of two bodies—no more, no less.

This exercise encourages the group to make shapes without thinking about it. The most important thing is to keep the flow and momentum going, to establish a rhythm within the group.

EXERCISE 10: SHAPE—THE JOURNEY

Soft focus. Become a vessel for Shape. Begin traveling with Shape, concentrating on the tension and constant interplay between *extension* and *contraction*: open and close, out and in. Let Shape take you on a journey. As you travel, allow others to affect your journey. Respond, in Shape, to Shape. Make choices based on other people's shapes, their patterns of expansion and contraction, and let their shapes lead you on a journey. Let them take you over, let them give you direction, guide you around the space.

EXERCISE 11: ARCHITECTURE

Gather the group in the center of the room. Ask them to look around and see the room as a stage set, to find a specific piece of architecture that inspires movement. Then ask for one volunteer to run to her/his selected *set* and perform a repeated action with (or off of) it. Ask another person to run and join. Let the two develop their movement in the given setting. Bring them back to the group. Ask for another volunteer. Repeat.

In this exercise it is important that you steer the group away from the literal and the obvious. They should be encouraged to move without knowing why, to perform action without knowing what it is.

This is a good example of Viewpoints training as the practice of *imagination* and *spontaneity*. When we know what a door is and what it can do, we limit both ourselves and the possibility of the door. When we are open to its *size* and *texture* and *shape*, a door can become anything, and everything. The gift of Viewpoints training is allowing us to see old things in new ways—to wake up the sleeping form—to experience the room as if for the

first time, to find surprising and new possibility in ourselves, our environment and our art.

OBSERVATIONS

To do the “not-to-do,” or, “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.”

One of the problems that often arises in early Viewpoints training is the fact that while all the work is designed to get the participants out of their heads, you are introducing ideas and instructions that require thought. They are listening to your words, it is impossible *not* to think, it's like saying: “Do not imagine pink elephants,” or, “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” Acknowledge this dilemma with the group. It is natural and unavoidable. You practice Viewpoints to become more conscious. But in the beginning, you will feel *self-conscious*. Later, with practice and perseverance, this self-consciousness dissolves into a kind of hyper-consciousness—a constant state of heightened awareness that is achieved without effort or thought. It simply becomes part of who you are and how you perceive the world.

The Gray Zone: “wenn schon, dann schon.”

Use the early Viewpoints training to exit the Gray Zone, where things are expected, safe, comfortable, middle-of-the-road. Enter the state of mind which the Germans refer to as “wenn schon, dann schon,” an expression that translates literally to: “When already, then already,” but is commonly used to mean: “If then, then then,” or, “If you do it, *do it*.” Do it all the way. Live in the extreme. By pushing ourselves into the furthest reaches of Tempo and Distance and Shape, for instance, we become more

comfortable with these extremes and are therefore more likely to call on them when needed in our work: the expressive range of the artist is widened. Once again, the training is about opening up possibility and providing you with more choice.

Eventually you will return to an area of nuance and subtlety, but by then the “gray” will be chosen and shaped by you, as opposed to it being a necessary fallback position springing from fear. For today, live in the black-and-white; be definite, clear, bold, radical.

The litmus test—Viewpoints as a mirror.

The Individual Viewpoints provide a litmus test for the individual performer: they serve as a checklist for assessing abilities and limitations. Encourage the group to pay attention to their individual leanings and avoidances, to parts of the body that are hurt or hidden, to fallback positions and unconscious patterns.

In beginning Viewpoints work, one cannot avoid seeing oneself. Individuals become hyper-aware of all sorts of things, from how much they stand outside of themselves to how delayed their reaction time is to how much they hate the length of their arms or the bounce of their walk. The mirror becomes so big and horrifying. But keep reminding the group that the way *around* is actually *through*. Self-consciousness is a kind of prison, consciousness is freedom.

Practice what you preach.

The most essential quality in teaching Viewpoints is being open to what actually occurs in the group rather than what you had hoped would occur. Viewpoints training needs practice on the part of the instructor/leader/director as well as the participants. The only times we've witnessed Viewpoints “failing” is when the

instructor has had a set and rigid way of teaching, a prescribed plan for the session. Teaching Viewpoints requires extreme awareness on the part of the instructor. Remain open to the particular obstacles and dynamics that arise within your group: adjust your plan, stay on a single Viewpoint longer if necessary, skip another if it's beneficial in the present moment, watch with an eagle eye and lead the group according to what happens *in the moment*—if they take the session somewhere unexpected, go with it.

The practicing of Viewpoints by the performers and the teaching of Viewpoints by the leader demand openness. The scenario is the same as with actors entering a scene: know what you want, enter, and be prepared to adjust to what you are given. Let go of all preconceived ideas and be where you are. Listen. Receive. Respond. *Use it.*

Tina's experience.

I went to teach a three-week session at the Steppenwolf summer school. I had just closed a production (*Bells Are Ringing*), flown in on an early morning plane, and was in no mood to teach. I arrived only to discover that we had been booked into a different space than the one in which I had taught the previous summer. The new space was the Steppenwolf Garage, currently being used for a production, and the Viewpoints class was relegated to what had become a lobby of sorts: a thin sliver of space defined by black hanging velours with paintings displayed on them. I turned to the administrator and complained: "You can't do Viewpoints in here. You should know better! There's no room to move, and we'll have to watch out for the paintings, which is the antithesis of freedom and abandon! I can't work in here." He went out to see if he could find another space. In the meantime, I sat down with the students, begrudgingly introduced myself, and asked them how their first day of school was the day before. They told me that it was good except they sat around and talked too much. Between the talking yesterday and the cold in the air on this

morning, they couldn't wait to get up and move. Oh no! I thought for a moment, then told them how I was about to cancel the session—and just talk—but that would be against everything I wanted to share with them about the value of Viewpoints. I told them that for me, above all else, Viewpoints is about learning to work with what you are given: obstacle as opportunity. I took a deep breath, and got us up on our feet to begin training.

I finished with this group after three weeks. In the last three weeks of their nine-week summer session, they again practiced Viewpoints but with another teacher (an actress in Chicago with whom I had worked on three productions and whom I recommended to continue the training). I returned to Chicago to watch a final class, which included "presentations" in front of an audience. The group was well into Open Viewpoints (see Chapter 6) when the teacher began adding key words, themes, directives. She had said earlier that the session was dedicated to: "flying, freedom, play." The group was in the middle of developing an amazing sequence of danger and imbalance, when she said: "The theme is *flying*." Now sometimes it is wonderful to intentionally switch gears in a radical fashion, to purposely slam into the opposite, however, in this case, it was clear that the teacher had this preconceived "theme" in mind, that it was a goal she was planning to demonstrate to the small invited audience. It had nothing to do with the experience the group was deep inside of, and as a result, they found it impossible to switch. I sat for about fifteen minutes listening to the instructor continue to call out words that would steer the group in the direction she wanted. All the time, unpredictable and profound moments were happening in front of her, yet she missed them as she continued to force the experience.