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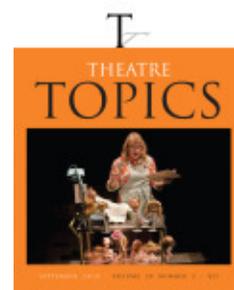
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## **The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition**

Eckard, Bonnie Jean.

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formal development (and devolution) of the genre. Grant, a composer and writer, aptly characterizes his study as “an inquest into what happened to raise an inconsequential entertainment genre to a level of popular art, and then to lower it back again” (7). It will probably frustrate those who do not privilege the “integrated” musical over other, more “inconsequential” forms of musical theatre, but Grant’s supporting evidence is well-chosen to make his case, and in his discussion of musical values, his examples are accessible to the non-musicologist.

Grant opens his inquiry with a discussion of Broadway singing styles—pre- and post-microphone—which resulted in a shift from soaring melody lines to lyric-driven show tunes and a concomitant shift in emphasis from musical values to dramatic ones. Additional chapters examine the waxing and waning importance of the libretto and its influence on the musical score; composers and lyricists’ skillful exploitation of foxtrot rhythms for dramatic means; and the antidramatic nature of “the rock groove.” Of special interest is the chapter focused on the shifting sound of the Broadway musical. Grant makes a strong case for the essential, yet often overlooked, contributions of orchestrators and arrangers to the aesthetic unity of the Broadway musical. He also argues that advances in sound technology—initially meant to enhance the theatrical experience—have gradually disembodied live performance.

The final chapter, on directing and choreography, is likely to provoke the most discussion amongst fans of current musicals. In it, Grant asserts that, as much as any other factor, the ascendance since the 1960s of the director and the choreographer as “conceptual showmen” (277) hastened the artistic decline of the Broadway musical. Rather than reinvigorating the form, as Agnes de Mille and Jerome Robbins had done in the 1940s and 1950s, the willingness of later director / choreographers like Gower Champion to sacrifice dramatic coherence to conceptual unity and showmanship undid the artistic accomplishments of the dramatically integrated musical. In Grant’s judgment, however, guilt is not apportioned equally: Michael Bennett and Hal Prince largely escape indictment; Bob Fosse and Tommy Tune do not.

For those interested in using this text in the classroom, it would have been helpful if the author had documented the specific recordings referenced in the discussion of changing vocal styles. In addition, his consistent denigration of the current Broadway musical—and of rock music as a vehicle for theatrical expression—may turn off students whose interest in musicals was sparked by *Rent* or *Aida*. Even those who agree with his critical assessments—or those with a soft spot for *Hair*—may wish for an occasionally more balanced presentation. Still, *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical* is sure to provoke discussion and would be a worthwhile addition to the syllabi for courses in both musical theatre history and performance.

If *Broadway: The American Musical* and *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical* each reflect the increasing academic rigor in studies of the musical theatre, Ken Bloom and Frank Vlastnik’s *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest*

*Shows of All Time* is a throwback to an earlier tradition of musical theatre history and hagiography. It is a great big, flashy revue of a book, whose entries are certain to fuel numerous Tony Award-party debates. The entries range chronologically from *Babes in Toyland* (1903) to *The Full Monty* (2000). There are thirty-eight entries for the 1950s and 1960s, but only three for the 1990s through the current decade, one more than for 1910 through 1919.

The authors’ stated intent was to “celebrate” not the “best,” but the “greatest” shows, musicals that were “extremely popular and / or groundbreaking in some way” and that “had an undeniable influence on the form” (9). Despite the authors’ rather fuzzy criteria for inclusion, this Theatre Library Association award-winner has many merits, in particular the numerous illustrations, many of which will be unfamiliar to all but the most frequent patrons of musical theatre archives. In addition, while the book attempts no cohesive historical progression or narrative (its organization is alphabetical), the subentries for each show visually highlight the intensely collaborative nature of musical theatre; composers, lyricists, performers (headliners and supporting players), choreographers, directors, orchestrators, and designers all are represented. The material included is highly idiosyncratic, and while it has its limits as a reference work, Bloom and Vlastnik’s *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of All Time* is a well-crafted and attractive volume that effectively communicates the authors’ appreciation of the art of the Broadway musical.

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**The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition.** By Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005; pp. xi + 224. \$16.95 paper.

Distinguished directors Anne Bogart and Tina Landau have authored the long-awaited book on Viewpoints Training and Composition, bringing their vast knowledge and creative ideas for applying these tools to actor training, rehearsal, and new play development. This is a hands-on book for acting teachers and any theatre practitioner interested in exploring Viewpoints and Composition. It will be especially welcomed by theatre artists and teachers who have practiced Viewpoints and want to deepen their understanding.

Mary Overlie initially introduced Anne Bogart to Viewpoints in 1979 when both were teaching at NYU’s Experimental Theatre Wing. Overlie created the initial Viewpoints (Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement, and Story) as principles for her choreography and teaching. Bogart saw the potential for applying this vocabulary to the theatrical stage and began to incorporate Viewpoints into her teaching and directing. In 1987, Landau was introduced to Viewpoints when she and Bogart met while working at the American Repertory Theatre. Over time, six Viewpoints evolved into nine and vocal Viewpoints were introduced. Landau and

Bogart have continued their explorations of Viewpoints and Composition independently, Bogart as director of the SITI Company, and Landau in her work as director, playwright and member of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. In this new book, the authors write collaboratively, sharing their individual experiences while providing the reader with an organized, practical, and inspirational guide to teaching and practicing Viewpoints and Composition.

*The Viewpoints Book* is the first extensive history and philosophical study of Viewpoints and Composition, and the first publication to provide a practical step-by-step guide to enable theatre artists to practice and utilize these techniques. Previously, students of Viewpoints had few written resources. The 1995 documentation of the 19th Annual Classics in Context Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville, celebrating Anne Bogart, featured Landau's definition of Viewpoints and Composition and an explanation of how they might be used in rehearsals. More recent articles have explored working with Viewpoints in the directing process, most notably Joan Herrington's "Directing with the Viewpoints" in *Theatre Topics* 10.2 (2000). But Bogart and Landau's new book will most certainly be seen as the authoritative resource on the use of these key techniques.

The book begins with a history of Viewpoints and Composition, definitions of each, and a brief but comprehensive discussion of traditional American actor training processes. The authors trace the evolution of the Viewpoints from the mid-1960s, specifically in the development of postmodern dance that strove to "liberate choreography from psychology and conventional drama" (4). Bogart and Landau argue that the traditional emphasis on psychological approaches to actor training resulting from the Americanization of the Stanislavski system is effective for television and film but confining for the stage. They argue that Viewpoints and Composition open the way for theatre artists to make choices based on awareness of time and space, not limited to character psychology. Bogart and Landau address the need for ongoing training for the actor, similar to the dancer's barre work or the musician's scales, and maintain that Viewpoints and Composition can provide a daily practice to keep creativity alive and maintain cohesive ensembles. Finally, they argue against the actor's urge to please the director. Viewpoints and Composition challenge the traditional director / actor hierarchy by providing ways to collectively address questions that arise in rehearsals through a collaborative process that gives all the participants ownership in the outcome.

Bogart and Landau then provide a step-by-step practical guide to the Viewpoints. The authors do not demand an absolute adherence to their progression, stressing that Viewpoints is an open process rather than closed methodology. Beginning exercises are specifically designed to help practitioners identify and practice each of the Viewpoints individually. Additional chapters, "Putting the Individual Viewpoints Together," "Group Improvisations," and "Working with Music," deepen the practice and suggest further possibilities of Viewpoints exploration. The chapter "Starting to Speak" introduces the vocal Viewpoints along with exercises using spoken dialogue.

The second half of the book focuses on Composition and guides the reader through practical exercises for its application to the creative process. Composition provides inspiration for creating new work as well as a methodology to explore Source Work for previously written material. Source Work is defined as the original impulse behind the work as well as the work itself. Borrowing from film terminology, the initial starting point for Composition is montage, a way of putting images together incorporating juxtaposition, contrast, rhythm, and story. Participants are encouraged to understand the difference between descriptive and expressive staging and create a living piece of theatre within a limited period of time. The authors are firm believers in giving participants "enough time in the Composition assignment to create something they can own and repeat (so it's not just improv and accident), but not so much time that they can start to think or judge even for an instant" (138).

The book emphasizes the ways that Viewpoints and Composition training can be applied in more traditional theatre settings. Once actors are trained in Viewpoints, the director is able to use the vocabulary as a kind of shorthand to adjust spatial relationships, tempos, relationship to the architecture, etc. Bogart and Landau include practical guidance for using Viewpoints and Composition in rehearsals to build ensemble and discover the physical vocabulary for the play, as well as to stage scenes and transitions.

With *The Viewpoints Book*, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau have removed the mystery surrounding Viewpoints and Composition, and opened the way for practical application of the vocabulary and principles in all aspects of stage performance. By challenging us to create theatrical poetry and metaphors onstage through explorations of time and space, the authors provide practical tools to move the theatre beyond the confines of psychological realism that have dominated the American theatre over the past century.

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**Running Theaters: Best Practices for Leaders and Managers.** By Duncan M. Webb. New York: Allworth P, 2004; pp. xii + 243. \$19.95 paper.

Duncan Webb is a veteran theatre management consultant, whose firm's extensive project list includes business plans and feasibility studies for the Florida Grand Opera, the Omaha Center for Performing Arts, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the City of Chicago. This experience has acquainted Webb with a large number of venue managers in North America, whose collective wisdom figures prominently in his book.

When Webb speaks of theatres, he means the public assembly spaces where events take place. For the purpose of the book, he defines a theatre as a venue "with multiple users, where there is a management organization . . . that activates . . . some combination of rentals, presented events, producing, and community programming" (x). *Running*