

*The Nine Laboratories of the Bridge*

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News of a Difference  
*Noticing Difference in Increasing  
Levels of Subtlety*

Deconstruction  
*Investigating Theater by Separating  
the Components of Its Structure*

The Horizontal  
*Nonhierarchical Composition*

Postmodernism  
*The Philosophical Foundation*

Reification  
*A Reflection on Creativity,  
Communication, and Language*

The Piano  
*The Interface between Artist and Audience*

The Matrix  
*The Ingredients Are in the Cauldron*

Doing the Unnecessary  
*The SSTEMS Dissolve*

The Original Anarchist  
*A New and Very Old Idea*

## INTRODUCTION

### The Bridge

THE BRIDGE, CONTAINING NINE LABORATORIES, PRESENTS THE ORIGINS of the Viewpoints' approach to art. These laboratories focus attention on philosophical concepts that are used to disintegrate and then reintegrate performance. In order to explain this approach, I have extended the noun *particle* into a verb, *particalization*: to break down into the smallest level. This act of particalization makes deconstruction and reintegration possible. Using the act of particalization as an interrogation technique, each of the materials of performance are established as being of the same importance as the artist. I believe that the process of particalization allows for helpful insights and a unique sense of physical integration with the materials that is not found in traditional performance training.

The Bridge forms a sort of double helix with the six materials by initiating discussions that reach beyond simply identifying the material structure of performance. These nine laboratories begin by tracing the origins of the Six Viewpoints and progress to a conclusion that draws a circle around the entire study.

The Bridge:

- discusses the process and results of microscopic examination
- examines the philosophies that continue to influence performer and audience interactions
- reviews the accumulated effects of the Viewpoints' interrogation of the materials

## CHAPTER 7

# News of a Difference Laboratory

### *Noticing Difference in Increasing Levels of Subtlety*

THIS LABORATORY CONTAINS THE ORIGINAL SOURCE OF THE SIX VIEWPOINTS nonhierarchical process. In *News of a Difference*, performers, directors and choreographers are introduced to the details that surround them on a microscopic level. This laboratory suggests a way to communicate with the physical existence of theater as we might experience a landscape, as though performance were a part of nature. The concept of the philosophy and practice of *News of a Difference* expands awareness through a physical interrogation that collects minuscule, seemingly useless, details.

Each practice of the SSTEMS, found in the *Six Viewpoints Practice Manual* at the conclusion of this book, should be approached with the philosophy of *News of a Difference* (NOD).

CURRICULUM 1

*INTRODUCTION*

Students should understand that News of a Difference contains a guide for their practice. Repeated practices in Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement and Story should be monitored to make sure that the materials are being interrogated on a highly detailed level. NOD advocates abstaining from making "theater" in order to support the subtle nuances of the SSTEMS languages. If the SSTEMS practices are completed too quickly, important Viewpoints foundational training will be missed. If the foundations instilled in the laboratory of News of a Difference are not mastered, nonhierarchical dialogue can easily slip back into traditional hierarchical creator/originator usage.

The Six Viewpoints' News of a Difference laboratory has more in common with oriental philosophy than with Western concepts of creativity. The concept of News of a Difference entered my creative practice with my journey into Transcendental Meditation. In the 1960s a wave of interest in Eastern meditation was just reaching U.S. soil. I remember Allen Ginsberg around 1965, recently returned from India, walking into the Fillmore West ballroom in San Francisco where all the big bands, The Grateful Dead, The Jefferson Airplane, etc., played. He was there to announce that he would lead a meditation at the end of the evening if anyone wanted to stay. I stayed. A few years later, in 1967, I learned that people were starting to do a technique known as TM. The purpose of this meditation was to refine your conscious awareness. It was said that it was not a religion, there was no dogma attached, you got your <sup>id</sup> mantra and you were good to go.

About four years into meditating I began to apply this philosophy to my art process. I began to slow down and look more deeply into experiences and perceptions in dance classes and in choreography. In 1969 I discovered SoHo and moved there to work

among a group of people who were engaged as artists in subtle deconstruction. I see these events as a wave of discovery in many iterations: a fascination with paying attention to details, contemplation as a viable end, intention as product, as art itself.

News of a Difference is an old TM term meaning noticing difference on finer and finer levels of the structure you are investigating. For me, this process manifested itself in a conceptual/philosophical way and unveiled a new, nonhierarchical approach to creating theater and dance.

This discovery of nonhierarchical structure led to transforming both the artists' and the audiences' roles into being dual observers/participants. In this definition the performers and audience are immersed in a purposefully structured environment which generates a particular perceptual stimulus. "Reading" the art becomes about one's own perceptions being challenged to evolve. There is a nonhierarchical presentation of the materials (the SSTEMS), challenging the artist and audience to read what is traditionally almost invisible.

*"American landscape painting in the nineteenth century . . . reveals a struggle with light and space that eventually set it apart from a contemporary European tradition of pastoral landscapes framed by trees, the world viewed from a carriage window. American painters meant to locate an actual spiritual presence in the North American landscape. . . The atmosphere of these paintings is silent and contemplative. They suggest a private rather than a public encounter with the land. Several critics . . . have described as well a peculiar "loss of ego" in the paintings. The artist disappears. The authority of the work lies, instead with the land. And the light in them is like a creature, a living, integral part of the scene. The landscape is numinous, imposing, real . . ."*

BARRY LOPEZ, *Arctic Dreams*

Perhaps this evolution toward "loss of ego" has been slowly overtaking American artists since we first landed on this continent. Certainly Montana seems to have been the grounding influence in my fascination with TM and minimalism.

News of a Difference requires a particular type of technical preparation. The performers' physical, mental, emotional, vocal, and visual training must be geared

## CURRICULUM 2

*news of a difference*

News of a Difference is represented in the physical movement training methods I recommend. The physical training I teach is designed to cultivate attention to the finest level of perception and dialogue with the body. Performers should learn to communicate with great detail and practicality on a skeletal and muscular level—the muscle in the back of the knee, proximal extension, the function of the spine—training awareness from the tail bone to the cranium. Bring the pubic bone into relationship with the ileum. I categorize this type of training as “pre-movement” or foundational training. As performers acquire this degree of attention to their bodies, they become able to automatically develop a focus that contains a “News of a Difference” level of attention.

toward contemplation and awareness. In NOD, individuals must be given the chance to rely upon their own interior senses with little or no outside command or externally generated enthusiasm. To engage in this practice, you must take several actions:

Isolate and then focus on a subject: open your perceptions to every detail of it without a filter.

Give yourself permission to spend as much time as the subject demands of you; return to the subject again and again; allow what you see to change.

I made this level of attention manifest in the solo *Small Dance*. Taking a normal choreography, I removed the Space from a dance and performed only the remaining shifts of weight. The philosophy in *Small Dance* was to bring a dance to the audience that exposes them to News of a Difference. This solo makes its impact when the audience realizes their ability to perceive movement on a microscopic level.

Another example of the use of News of a Difference as a microscopic tool was applied to a collaboration with theater director Joanne Akalaitis in *Dressed like an Egg*. Akalaitis wanted the actors to communicate onstage in code. In looking at the possibilities I finally choose to approach the problem through the view of audience's perceptions. I thought that the real issue would be manipulating the audiences' focus rather than inventing a complicated coded system between the performers. The atmosphere of a code needed to be established by playing between what is seen and unseen by the audience. I cannot recall now whether it was I or Joanne who requested that the curtain be lowered so the audience sees only the feet of the performers. This I hoped would make the audience start to try to deduce what was happening. Putting the audience in the mind of code breaking, I had the actors tapping their feet and walking in patterns on the floor. There never was a real code, just the atmosphere of one. Causing the audience to participate in NOD by refusing to fully disclose what was going on onstage seemed amazingly effective. In this iteration, minute details brought great tension to the opening scene.