

CHAPTER 13

The Matrix

The Ingredients Are in the Cauldron

AS THE PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE, THE SIX VIEWPOINTS IS A MATRIX of performed Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement and Story. The performer is immersed within the physical presence of the languages of the SSTEMS. The Matrix laboratory is formed of the physical natural phenomena of the materials. When performance practice evolves, the SSTEMS become available in every moment onstage. This matrix-like perspective evolves from the origin focus on one material at a time. This eventually instills a perceptual nimbleness; simultaneously the performer is aware of:

- the visual impact
- temporal play
- shape options
- kinetics
- their presence
- the audience
- he narrative
- the philosophical roots

The Matrix is the laboratory of the fully functioning observer/participant Rather than approaching performance as the creator/originator, which requires that you distance yourself from creative work, the observer/participant performer stands within the materials allowing them ot direct action as equal partners.

CURRICULUM 11

THE MATRIX

Working in the Matrix we begin to experience that each of the six materials has sub-properties that form complex links. These intersections make it possible to choose at any moment a new direction for your perceptions. In reassembling theater from this subtle and nonhierarchical place, we are working inside a matrix of the subtlest interaction of the parts:

My advanced students and many of my own choreographies have drawn from the interrelationships found in the following:

Space can dialogue with Shape: *dictating the types of shapes and where to place them*

Space can dialogue with Time: *radically changing the awareness of the passage of time*

Space can dialogue with Emotion: *causing elation or fear, expansion or violence*

Space can dialogue with Movement: *suggesting large patters or tiny gestures*

Space can dialogue with Story: *capable of holding history or eradicating it*

Shape can dialogue with Space: *a vase can demand the dimensions of a room it prefers*

Shape can dialogue with Time: *round shapes are slower than angular*

Shape can dialogue with Emotion: *softness, harshness, accepting, rejecting*

Shape can dialogue with Movement: *a shape can dictate kinetic possibilities*

Shape can dialogue with Story: *a stooped spine or foot on point can be the main plot*

To understand this phenomenological study of the nature of the stage and performance, you cannot just read about it. You must actively experience it. The word "matrix" comes from the Latin, which means a situation or surrounding substance within which something else originates, develops, or is contained.

On my route from 530 Canal Street to NYU, I cross several huge roadways—Hudson Street, Seventh Avenue, Sixth Avenue—then I enter SoHo on Spring Street, turn up West Broadway, cross Houston Street into the West Village, cross the park Washington Square, slip inside the door to the Tisch Building and up a flight of steps and I am in the studios about to face hungry students.

The route is like a double pressure zone. I love the emptiness and industrial indifference but there is a kind of unspoken pressure that hovers inside SoHo. People are discovered, we are all under a new kind of scrutiny, scrambling to keep up with our new more public images. The responsibilities that we create and shouldered are turning into other people's business. Reviewers, producers, gallery owners—the public is watching and following.

My memory of the arrival of the Matrix hovers over this route because for the year or more I traveled it, dodging trucks, I was dangerously preoccupied with the problem of how to codify an emerging three-dimensional manifestation of the SSTEMS. Teetering on my bicycle, riding past Richard Nonas's studio and the Wooster Group's Performing Garage, thinking of all the artists around me working so hard, gathering in the strength of their visions, their process, and their outcomes, I prayed that I could find a way to impart my developing philosophy. I thought of drawing it, and tried, but came up with an almost solid black cube from all the lines I drew depicting the SSTEMS interacting with each other. The drawing looked like a Richard Serra but it was not communicating what I needed it to.

There was an isolated auto parts store on Hudson Street. I once went in to look for a valve for my Ford Falcon. At the counter I saw a book with transparent pages that overlaid each other forming pictures of my car's engine. After seeing it I kept obsessing about making a book of transparencies depicting the SSTEMS in all their interrelatedness but finally gave it up and waited in the usual blank space for something

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CURRICULUM 11: *THE MATRIX* (continued)

The following iterations are for you to investigate on your own:

Time can dialogue with Space

Time can dialogue with Shape

Time can dialogue with Emotion

Time can dialogue with Movement

Time can dialogue with Story

Emotion can dialogue with Space

Emotion can dialogue with Shape

Emotion can dialogue with Time

Emotion can dialogue with Movement

Emotion can dialogue with Story

Movement can dialogue with Space

Movement can dialogue with Shape

Movement can dialogue with Time

Movement can dialogue with Emotion

Movement can dialogue with Story

Story can dialogue with Space

Story can dialogue with Shape

Story can dialogue with Time

Story can dialogue with Emotion

Story can dialogue with Movement

to come rescue me. This was 1980 and on March 31, 1999, Hollywood finally rescued me. *The Matrix* premiered in movie theaters across the nation.

As we approach the Matrix of the Six Viewpoints, it would be good to go back to walking. This simple action is such an enduring touchstone for the Viewpoints actor.

ACTOR: Where are we?

THE MATRIX: You are back in the studio, pacing back and forth practicing Walking and Stopping in Space, but now you are also aware of the possibilities contained in the Piano Laboratory and of reifying the existence of all six materials simultaneously. Now as you perform Walking and Stopping you are able to practice the skill of focusing on one, two, or all of the SYSTEMS, and include the audience in your practice. Your resources have expanded in the microscopic, quiet, "turn things upside down and inside out" world of deconstruction.

ACTOR: This sounds a little unstable, technical, undramatic and unemotional.

THE MATRIX: Think of a peculiar pair of glasses. Let's call these the Six Viewpoints glasses. The frames are fitted with six pairs of lenses. Each lens filters out five of the materials and pulls up only the one you want to work with. The lenses are six awarenesses. The performer can flip from lens to lens or combine lenses making more subtle actions. The Viewpoints Matrix extends performing as a suspended mixture of Time, Shape, Space, Movement, Emotion and Story with the ease that Keanu Reeves dodges bullets in the *The Matrix*.

ACTOR: Wow. That is quite a claim.

THE MATRIX: This Viewpoints Matrix process is equal to the Stanislavski Method of sense memory. Sense memory is a method of reaching into the actor's past experience to find a key that will stimulate the desired emotion required by a specific character in a scene. This practice of sense memory is a very sophisticated technique that gave theater a great jolt. More depth, and

more fluid reality was suddenly onstage, pouring off the stage, engaging the audience in a simulation of life. With this technique so much more could be communicated. The art of acting took a giant step forward.

ACTOR: So this Matrix thing is equal to Stanislavski?

THE MATRIX: Equal and very different. The Six Viewpoints Matrix is similar to sense memory in its ability to deliver more diverse action onto the stage. In some ways it too shakes up the status quo, yet comes from a totally different source and perspective. The ability to change lenses, to be performing in Shape and then flip to Story throws the activity of acting and actions into a much more multidimensional field of play.

The performer has six powerful sources of action. In real life we act in these languages subconsciously anyway: you might be talking about how much money is in your bank account; pause fleetingly to fill your mind with the pattern and design of the carpet on the floor of the bank; shift focus to the dress you put on this morning; suddenly stop, as unattended time passes by—then experience a sudden explosion of very physical movement trying to bring your attention back to the moment by waking up your body.

CURRICULUM 12

FLIPPING LENSES

Try it. Are you still walking? Good. Begin walking in a fairly large circle. As you walk, try flipping lenses. Pull up your Shape lens; suddenly you are aware of the position of your arms, the changing of your feet, the carriage of your head. Now switch lenses to Space. Now you are aware of the room, and the circle you are inscribing in the room becomes the focus of your performance. You begin to project this spatial pattern to the audience and then you switch to Time. Is it pedestrian in nature? Is it going to slide into a kind of even march? Is the Time you are in designed to soothe and relax the audience? Here you are beginning to float in six separate realities, choosing one then another, buoyant, flexible, and acutely aware of performing.

This is real life flipping from one lens to another.

Let us take a closer look at a Viewpoints actor: Oh, I see her over there standing in the studio—she is still in her blue jeans; she forgot her sweat pants. She just came from her day job. She may not be able to keep it together to always bring her sweats, but there is this very dressed-down look to her body. Even the ritual clothing for rehearsal is not necessary for her anymore. She has a kind of blank willingness to do—to do anything. Her presence is loose and luminous from the attention and love that she has come to understand is her right.

Through the partialization-like focuses of her movement training, she knows how to share her physical life with other human beings. Some of this ability has come from her studies of Contact Improvisation, and the ever-present rolling on the floor. This was not easy for her to achieve. For a long time she did not like being lifted, supporting others, or rolling on the floor. She felt that her hips were too large,

and she really was not comfortable being touched all over. It took about three years to get this skill together, and as she did, she came to love and understand her body and this made it possible to embrace the SSTEMS. Her body changed from being some foreign, obstinate object to being a system that included a vast performance instrument.

Presence became much easier for her. She discovered, in one session of Walking and Stopping, that she loved communicating with Space and seemed to have a talent for seeing theater from a visual point of view. Each of the Viewpoints practices had its revelations, and now they stick with her no matter what she is attempting to do.

Standing in Space

The Six Viewpoints Theory & Practice

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