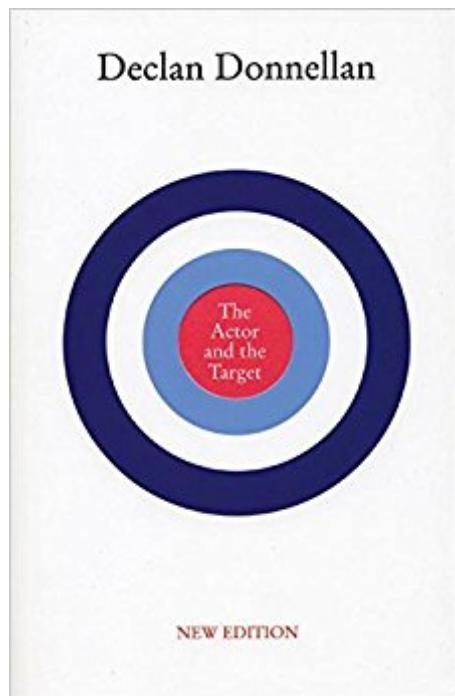


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The Actor And The Target: New Edition



Synopsis

“Acting is a reflex, a mechanism for development and survival. . . . It isn’t
a second nature, it is first nature.” • Declan Donnellan

This immensely popular and ever-practical book on acting takes a scalpel to the heart of actors’ persistent fears, helping them to release their talent on stage. It is straightforward and unpretentious, with a spirit of artistic and personal freedom.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

British theatre director Declan Donnellan is the first Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company Academy and is best known for his work with Cheek by Jowl (including their acclaimed all-male As You Like It) and on Tony Kushner’s Homebody/Kabul. As Associate Director of the National Theatre his productions included Fuenteovejuna, Sweeney Todd and Angels in America.

This book is different. If you are a young actor struggling with understanding playing action, sense memory, substitutions, or if none of these things are part of your process, then don’t buy this book.... YET! Instead look into Uta Hagen’s book, Respect for Acting, or perhaps even Robert Cohen’s book, Acting One. This book assumes that the reader has been trained in modern acting theory, that the actor reading it has understanding of how to play and build a character, and yet still struggles (as we all do) with forms of “block”. The author often uses the phrases/teachings of other acting teachers to point out that it is in fact the framing of some of these “tools” that leads to block. Not that

the other theorist's ideas are incorrect, but rather that each actor needs to frame his/her process differently, and that the "target" dictates more of the game than we often think. Little of this is plainly stated in the book, much of it is implied, and if the reader hasn't the breadth of experience much of the potential firepower in this text may be missed. Each time you read it you will see another layer. It's a fantastic book for any actor trying to re-evaluate, or sharpen his/her process. It is loaded with truth.

This technique in this book is very similar to David Mamet's non-technique. The joy of both is how freeing they are onstage, the text of the play becomes like the net below you and the words and your fellow actors are all together in a high-flying trapeze game. It works even if you don't have any text -- in an improv situation for instance. It's hard to describe, actually, but it makes what could be a dead process come alive every night... and can scare the hell out of everyone around you if they don't understand what is going on. A lot of actors like the old way -- hit your marks, say the word, cock the eyebrow, turn here, pause...curtain. But if you use this technique, and play for the life-or-death stakes that Donnellan and Mamet espouse, well, you'll never be the same again. I highly recommend this book, it is easy to read and understand, but it deals with a highly sophisticated concept that, properly applied, will propel the actor right up off the high bar.

As an actor, if you take the trouble to really assimilate what this author explains, you'll find it's not just obvious but a most invaluable source and thus unquestionably one of the clearest, most ingenious means of "finding yourself" amidst the occasional confusing acting scenes that could have you feeling you're lost. THAT in and of itself qualifies it as a brilliant road map for getting you back on track so you don't stay mired in "not knowing" how to proceed with whatever text you're struggling with. So glad my current acting teacher recommended it but then his own technique could very well be influenced by it. However, I would add that for as insightful and practical as the book is, the occasional digressive musings of the author can make the material dense and a little bit incomprehensible but despite all that do not at all detract from the book's overall greatness. Something in the book particularly resonated. When he stated the uselessness of the actor attempting to answer the classic "Who am I?" question I thought immediately of Daniel Day Lewis who operates in that very manner which at least in part accounts for his being the great actor he is.

Of course I am not a high profile actor. It is my craft though and I seek as many avenues of

improvement as warranted. The Actor and the Target is like a jewel in the sea of stage craft books. It is as stated by others not a book for the casual actor or many professional actors. I have sat in contemplation on many of the threads of exploration. If follows the narrative and practices of traditional methods of acting then turns it on edge to reveal a process of thinking that is new and practical, if you can step aside and improve your craft.

I had so many "Aha" moments while reading this book. Definitely a resource I'll be using again and again. It's chalk full of wonderful and practical exercise, ideas and rehearsal techniques.

This book is really useful when looking to increase your skill in acting. It's an easy-to-understand, down-to-earth guide to some really helpful principles to base your acting on. I am studying acting at college right now, and our teacher is incorporating this book into our classes. Sometimes the author gets a little too dramatic and serious about his opinions on life and humanity, but if you just take what is useful to you from this book it can give you some good insights. I would recommend it.

'Use whatever works and throw the rest away', as they say. Unfortunately, I found this to be a very convoluted theory of the actor's craft - overly dense and hard to decipher. But if it works...

I kept looking at this book and leery about buying another book on the craft of acting. I have been an actor for over 25 years and rarely do I come across material that really makes me re-think the way I can approach acting. This book does just that, and I found myself earmarking, highlighting, and nodding to myself up and down every page. Not a book for the novice, but for anyone who takes the craft seriously, he approaches it with new insights and great wit and humor. Highly, highly, recommended.

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