

# BEST QUOTES ON THEATER

When you step from the wings onto the stage you go from total blackness to a blinding hot glare. After a moment you adjust, but there is that moment like being inside lightning.

—Meg Howrey

Oh, those wonder-filled evenings when acting enables me for a short moment to have more life.

--Liv Ullmann

Every now and then, when you're on stage, you hear the best sound a player can hear. It's a sound you can't get in movies or in television. It is the sound of a wonderful, deep silence that means you've hit them where they live.

--Shelley Winters

Good actors are good because of the things they can tell us without talking. When they are talking, they are the servants of the dramatist. It is what they can show the audience when they are not talking that reveals the fine actor.

--Cedric Hardwicke

All theories of what a good play is, or how a good play should be written, are futile. A good play is a play which when acted upon the boards makes an audience interested and pleased. A play that fails in this is a bad play.

--Maurice Baring

Flint must be an extremely wealthy town; I see that each of you bought two or three seats.

--Victor Borge, playing  
to a half-filled  
house in Flint,  
Michigan

One of my chief regrets during my years in the theater is that I couldn't sit in the audience and watch me.

--John Barrymore

You can't automate in the arts. Since the sixteenth century there has been no change in the number of people necessary to produce *Hamlet*.

--William T. Wylie

It had been drilled into us that when an audience pays to see a performance, it is entitled to the best performance you can give. Nothing in your personal life must interfere, neither fatigue, illness, nor anxiety—not even joy.

--Lillian Gish

I can never remember being afraid of an audience. If the audience could do better, they'd be up here on stage and I'd be out there watching them.

--Ethel Merman

I thought drama was when the actors cried. But drama is when the audience cries.

--Frank Capra

When you perform...you are out of yourself—larger and more potent, more beautiful. You are for minutes heroic. This is power. This glory on earth. And it is yours, nightly.

--Agnes de Mille

Follow the wisdom of the great actor, James Cagney: you hit your mark, you look the other guy in the eye, and you tell the truth.

--Larry Merchant

I still get bouts of performance anxiety, but that's a good thing—you'd be dead if you didn't.

—Jacki Weaver

I'm not a heroine, I just play heroines. Also psychotics, vamps, orphans, hookers, housewives, and on one memorable occasion a singing rutabaga. It was never my ambition to utilize my extensive dramatic training by playing a musical vegetable. However, as my agent is so fond of pointing out, there are more actors in New York than there are people in most other cities. Translation: Beggars can't be choosers.

—Laura Resnick

With the collapse of vaudeville new talent has no place to stink.

--George Burns

I have done this—made the sad prince laugh. Made his grieving parents smile. None but me. Think you only kings have power? Stand on a stage and hold the hearts of men in your hands. Make them laugh with a gesture, cry with a word. Make them love you. And you will know what power is.

—Jennifer Donnelly

I've never agreed with the conventional wisdom that 'actors are great liars.' If more people understood the acting process, the goals of good actors, the conventional wisdom would be 'actors are terrible liars,' because only bad actors lie on the job. The good ones hate fakery and avoid manufactured emotion at all costs. Any script is enough of a lie anyway. (What experience does any actor have with flying a spacecraft? Killing someone?) What's called for, what actors are hired for, is to bring reality to the arbitrary.

—Rob Lowe

When a show ends, for a few days, my body sizzles with leftover energy, like a tree in the wake of a lightning strike.

—S. M. Stevens

The difference between a theatre with and without an audience is enormous. There is a palpable, critical energy created by the presence of the audience.

—Andy Goldsworthy

She sat in her chair, eyes closed. She liked to be the last one to leave. She despised crowds, and their opinions as they left a performance, or worse, discussed the wait for the bathroom or where do you want to eat. It spoiled her mood. She was still in that other world, she would stay there as long as she possibly could, the parallel channels twining and tunneling through her cortex like coral.

—Janet Fitch

I soon realized that one of the most important things to find while working in theater was someone to giggle with. To find someone to giggle with I place just below finding someone to flirt with and just above the ability to knit. Those are the only three things to do while waiting to go on. Oh, and crosswords of course, if you can bear them. Anything else breaks the spell.

—Elaine Dundy

A farmer's work in many ways is like setting a stage. In theater, stage managers lay out furniture and props, set up lights, and clean to get a set ready for actors to take over and create a show. Farmers plow, fertilize, set up irrigation systems and fences, and otherwise prep the stage of their farms for the real actors—the sun and the life within the seeds and animals—to create the show.

—Ben Hartman

You always feel in the theater as if the rest of your life has stopped.

—Lindsay Duncan

And the funny, impish magic of a wrap party is that everyone still has scraps of their characters hanging off them like Salome's veils, fluttering, fading, but not quite finished tangling the tongue and tripping the feet. You're not in Wonderland anymore, but you positively reek of rabbit.

—Catherynne M. Valente

If you're going to spend a hundred bucks or more to go to the theater, something should happen to you. Maybe somebody should be asking some questions about your values or the way you think about things. And maybe you should come out of the theater (with) something having happened to you. Maybe you should be changing or thinking about changing. But if you just go there and the only thing you worry about is where you left the damn car, then you've wasted your hundred bucks.

—Edward Albee

Asked why actors do what they do Olivier responded: 'Look at me, look at me, look at me!'

—Laurence Olivier

In 1904, when *Peter Pan* began playing in London, the children were so enthralled by the flying hero of Never-Never Land that they took his words literally: if they believed strongly enough, then they would be able to fly.

J. M. Barrie, the imaginative creator of *Peter Pan*, began hearing from distraught parents whose children had injured themselves attempting to fly. He could have issued a statement or written a disclaimer for parents bringing their children to the play. Instead, he incorporated a slight change into Peter's formula for flying. His solution was effective, imaginative, and long-lasting. His solution perfectly fit the situation and even improved on what originally existed—the ideal way to solve a problem. From then on, in order to fly, the children in the story needed to be sprinkled with the dust of Tinker Bell, a pixie.

—*Front Line Supervisor's  
Bulletin*

Playwriting is less akin to being a novelist or poet than it is to authoring cookbooks. A script is a set of detailed instructions, which other people execute to make the final product. It's a 'recipe,' if you'll forgive the cloying metaphor, for a three-dimensional event. Its chef is the director, and the cast, design team and crew make up the ingredients. That's why most playwrights don't consider a new work truly 'finished' until it has weathered at least one full production. Martha Stewart wouldn't release a cake recipe without baking it first.

—Doug Wright

It's the most unglamorous glamour business in the world.

—Minnie Pearl

All I really wanted to do back then was rehearsal. I was in it for the process, and I really resented having to go out and do a performance for an audience, because the process stopped; it had to freeze and be the same every night. It wasn't as interesting.

—Barbara Harris

I'm always conscious of the fact that I am part of a profession that is 80% permanently unemployed. So, to be working in any sense is to be privileged.

--Derek Jacobi

Although one may fail to find happiness in theatrical life, one never wishes to give it up after having once tasted its fruits. To enter the School of the Imperial Ballet is to enter a convent whence frivolity is banned, and where merciless discipline reigns.

--Anna Pavlova

Being on Broadway is the modern equivalent of being a monk. I sleep a lot, eat a lot, and rest a lot.

--Hugh Jackman

There is the danger of over preparation, of loss of spontaneity; over rehearsal is the most terrible thing you can imagine.

--Terence Fisher

Comedy comes from pathos and conflict and unhappiness. It's not funny when people get along.

--Brad Garrett

I do not want actors and actresses to understand my plays. That is not necessary. If they will only pronounce the correct sounds, I can guarantee the results.

--George Bernard Shaw

Part of the reason most people love show business is that it provides a family. The negative side is that it provides this bonding over and over, then destroys it over and over, as each cast or crew assembles and disassembles, so that over the years one loses many more friends than one keeps.

--William A. Henry, III

In entertainment your last job may be your *last* job.

--Jackie Gleason

Acting is standing up naked and turning around very slowly.

--Rosalind Russell

The terrible thing about acting in the theater is that you have to do it at night.

--Katharine Hepburn

In show business you're a fruit picker. You go where the work is.

--Orson Welles

Training to be an actor is like going to school to learn to be tall.

--Robert Mitchum

The playwright has a responsibility to the audience. I'm asking people to hire a babysitter, get dressed, find the car keys, find a place to park, pay money—more than it costs to go see a movie. When they get there, I should have something to say that's worth all their trouble.

--August Wilson

Acting is happy agony.

—Jean-Paul Sartre

A novelist may lose his readers for a few pages; a playwright never dares lose his audience for a minute.

--Terence Rattigan

Just know your lines and don't bump into the furniture.

--Noël Coward

Actors spend years and years being treated like dirt. They're constantly in a state of debasement, making the rounds of casting directors and having to look happy and great. I made the rounds for years, but I wasn't good at it. But then nobody is. You need a very strong stomach. You need a sense of the business as a whole, so that you don't get lacerated every time somebody tells you you're lousy. You need strength, and no matter how strong you get, you always need to get stronger.

--Maureen Stapleton

(Actors) They are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time.

—William Shakespeare

Acting can work a peculiar magic on the actor. From my own experience, I know that it can cure you—at least for the length of a performance—of a whole variety of ailments. Migraine headaches, miserable colds, or toothaches will suddenly disappear as you're up there going through your paces.

--Barbara Harris

Reading a novel, we are content with a narrative that prolongs, by a thousand artful ruses, the gratifying of our expectations....In the theatre, we must be more or less abruptly taken by the throat and given a good shaking.

--Brendan Gill

As for the public, its problem is usually one of staying awake. And its criterion after many disappointments in the theatre is titillation rather than stimulation. The public gets accustomed to thinking it has been satisfied when it hasn't been bored.

--John Gassner

From the beginning of time to the present moment, playwrights have written for audiences whom they either knew firsthand or envisioned exactly. Theatre is a public art; if it ignores its public, it ceases to exist....The level of sophistication, of learning, of taste; the hopes, and desires, and fears; the predilections, possibilities, and practices of those 'out front' have always been of primary concern in theatre. That the playwright and all theatre workers are people of their own time, conditioned by their particular world, goes without saying. But the influence of the audience on theatrical forms and modes is directly a traceable and potent influence.

--Vera Mowry Roberts

The theatre is the key to the secrets of the soul of a people. Why? Because such activities as politics, industry, and science make up the conscious life of a people, but the theatre is its subconscious mind. Into that magic box the playwright, the actors, and the directors project their dreams, desires, complexes, and fears. Against these the audience projects its own fears and dreams. A play is a gigantic psychoanalysis. The stage is the couch and the actors the psychoanalysts who bring our conflicts out into the open, allowing us to get rid of them. From this point of view the theatre takes on its maximum value in times of anxiety like ours. The theatre that helps its audience to experience the freedom that comes with emotional catharsis is the superior theatre.

--Felix Marti-Ibanez

Acting is not being emotional, but being able to express emotion.

--Kate Reid

Very few people go to the doctor when they have a cold, they go to the theatre instead.

--W. Boyd Gatewood

From the time of Sophocles or before, people have wanted stories—adventures. A Shakespearian drama was considered a failure if it didn't have a few murders or suicides in it, and at the end, the more corpses strewn about the stage, the better.

--Roger Garis

The unencumbered stage encourages the truth operative in everyone. The less seen, the more heard. The eye is the enemy in real drama.

--Thornton Wilder

The actor should make you forget the existence of author and director, and even forget the actor.

--Paul Scofield

Let (the audience) see you are afraid of it, and it will snap at you; face it boldly, and it will eat out of your hand.

--George Arliss

Acting is the most immediate art of all. The audience is either caught up entirely or not; it's now or nothing.

--Michael Redgrave

It is more important to deserve the applause of people than to obtain it.

--E. C. McKenzie

Drama—what literature does at night.

--George Jean Nathan

Behind the curtain's mystic fold  
The glowing future lies unrolled.

--Bret Harte

Acting is suffering.

--T. S. Eliot

In the creative process there is the father, the author of the play; the mother, the actor pregnant with the part; and the child, the role to be born.

--Konstantin Stanislavski



All the world doth practise stage playing.

--Montaigne

Acting is the lowest of the arts, if it is an art at all.

--George Moore

Generally speaking, the American theater is the aspirin of the middle classes.

--Wolcott Gibbs

The anomalous fact is that the theater, so called, can flourish in barbarism, but that any *drama* worth speaking of can develop but in the air of civilization.

--Henry James

The play's the thing.

—William Shakespeare

The program is nearly over! I can feel the audience is still with me—but if I run faster I can shake them off.

--Bob Hope

In Heaven there can be no drama, for the life of drama is change. A situation is incipiently dramatic if it is on the point of change and we feel: 'This cannot go on; something must happen.' It is fully dramatic when we feel: 'Something is happening that is changing everything for those concerned.' And the drama has been completed when we reach a situation where we feel: 'Something has happened; everything is now different.'

--Helen Gardner

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.

--William Shakespeare

The purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

--William Shakespeare

In a play, certainly, the subject is of more importance than in any other work of art. Infelicity, triviality, vagueness of subject, may be outweighed in a poem, a novel, or a picture, by charm of manner, by ingenuity of execution; but in a drama the subject is of the essence of the work—it is the work. If it is feeble, the work can have no force; if it is shapeless, the work must be amorphous.

--Henry James

Opening night is the night before the play is ready to open.

--George Jean Nathan

An actor is a sculptor who carves in snow.

--Edwin Booth

If you want something from an audience, you give blood to their fantasies.

--Marlon Brando

To 'method' actors: Speak clearly, don't bump into people, and if you must have motivation think of your pay packet on Friday.

--Sir Noel Coward

Have patience with the jealousies and petulances of actors, for their hour is their eternity.

--Richard Garnett

The person who wants to make it has to sweat. There are no short cuts. And you've got to have the guts to be hated.

--Bette Davis

You need three things in the theater—the play, the actors and the audience, and each must give something.

--Kenneth Haigh

I sweat. If anything comes easy to me, I mistrust it.

--Lilli Palmer

From the point of view of the playwrights, then, the essence of tragedy, or even of a serious play, is the spiritual awakening, or regeneration, of his hero.

--Maxwell Anderson

True tragedy may be defined as a dramatic work in which the outward failure of the principal personage is compensated for by the dignity and greatness of his character.

--Joseph Wood Krutch

Many plays, certainly mine, are like blank cheques. The actors and directors put their own signatures on them.

--Thornton Wilder

Acting consists of the ability to keep an audience from coughing.

—Benjamin Franklin

It takes twenty years to make an overnight success.

--Eddie Cantor

Every actor in his heart believes everything bad that's printed about him.

--Orson Welles

If a farmer fills his barn with grain, he gets mice; if he leaves it empty, he gets actors.

--Bill Vaughan

I don't see why people want new plays all the time. What would happen to concerts if people wanted new music all the time?

--Clive Barnes

Father Time is the make-up man responsible for the physical changes that determine the parts the average actor is to play.

--Fred Allen

We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents.

--Eric Hoffer

To be dramatic, characters must speak for themselves; and it is the playwright's job to extract the language out of the characters rather than impose it on them. Nor is complexity of character essential, so long as we believe that communication between the characters is taking place. In the end, drama is concerned only with human relationships, with what men do to each other.

--Robert W. Corrigan

To many people dramatic criticism must seem like an attempt to tattoo soap bubbles.

--John Mason Brown

To be able to write a play, for performance in a theater, a man must be sensitive, imaginative, naive, gullible, passionate; he must be something of an imbecile, something of a poet, something of a liar, something of a damn fool. He must be a chaser of wild geese, as well as of wild ducks. He must be prepared to make a public spectacle of himself. He must be independent and brave, and sure of himself and of the importance of his work; because if he isn't he will never survive the scorching blasts of derision that will probably greet his first efforts.

--Robert E. Sherwood

Well-written literary drama in itself is not sufficient to insure a long run; brilliant acting cannot salvage a mediocre play; neither can a strong plot overshadow inferior performances. Stage settings and costumes in themselves are not sufficient to sustain audience interest for an entire evening, but when the physical properties, a superb cast, and a strong drama are all combined, they make not only excellent drama but also popular theater.

--Abe Laufe

The reason good dialogue is seldom found in plays is merely that it is hard to write, for it requires not only the knowledge of what interests or excites, but such a feeling for character as brings misery to the dramatist's heart when his creations speak as they should not speak—ashes to his mouth when they say things for the sake of saying them—disgust when they are 'smart.'

--John Galsworthy

Both actors and playwrights express themselves in an art of conflict and action. The dramatist originates the plot, the action, and the character. The actor aims to give the play a final form in action and to communicate the intent of the author. The author gives birth to characters and plot; the actor breathes aesthetic life into both and stands the printed character on its 'feet.'

--Philip Weissman

Whenever the playwright is less interested in character as such than he is in idea, pattern, event, whenever he is less interested in internal action than he is in external, stock characters can serve his purpose. Stereotype, then, is not only a legitimate but also an extremely important device of characterization in the theater.

--Gerald Weales

Our dramatists, whatever their conception of the world and however outrageously provocative they may be, view life as a contest of dramatic forces to be resolved according to an attitude of mind.

--Frederick Lumley

Theatre has always seemed to me more real than books or film. One goes to the cinema either alone or with someone, and a film is shown. It was made two years ago, a year ago, a month ago; it does not matter. It is there, once and for all. It has another substance, another reality than that of the audience watching it. It is brought in a tin, and it can be seen in an empty room. But an empty house in a theatre is embarrassing. The audience in a theatre is different from one in a cinema. Theatre is very much like a cafe. Spectators play a part as well as the actors. And it is a somewhat different performance every time it is given.

--Jan Kott

Even the best directors cannot be certain of anything until after the first night. At rehearsals, things are different. A performance proves itself only when an audience is present.

--Jan Kott

I write plays as a chair-maker makes chairs. Chairs are made to be sat in and plays are made to be played to give actors work and the public entertainment. But aside from practical purposes a play, like a chair, may be designed with artistry. Styles in plays change as they do in furniture.

--Jean Anouilh

All the plays that have ever been written, from Ancient Greece to the present day, have never really been anything but thrillers. Drama has always been realistic and there has always been a detective about. Every play is an investigation brought to a successful conclusion. There is a riddle and it is satisfied in the final scene.

--Eugene Ionesco

The living stage is trying to make the most of the unique characteristic that sets it apart from movies and TV: the audience and the play are physically present *together* in the theater, *living*. Instead of pretending that an invisible fourth wall separates the two, the theater...(pulls) down not only the invisible wall but the other three walls of the setting as well, binding the play and the audience into a single intense unit of experience within the four walls of the playhouse.

--Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

All artists have one quality that is priceless—eternal childhood.

--Rod Steiger

The good playgoer is, for the length of *his* performance, like a novelist: he is an interpreter, a provider, filler-in, reader-creator of motives, an active, strenuous comprehensive intelligence.

--Benjamin DeMott

The peculiar characteristic of the playwright's making, the thing that differentiates it from other writing, is that his...*improvisation* has to take into account not only vocal and visual instruments—the actors—but also the particular place around which or in front of which he can gather his audience to hear and watch the story—the stage. He is a rare artist because what he puts down on paper, at its most demanding level, is really not writing at all in the usual literary sense—that is, writing intended for consumption by one person at a time—but is the making of a thing that involves *actors* and *objects* set out in a specific way for seeing and hearing *by a group*.

--Francis Hodge

Plays do not imitate the apparently random actions of life. Rather...plays are carefully shaped to feature a central conflict. Exposition, complication, crisis, denouement refer...to stages in the treatment of this conflict. Yet, we must not let the metaphor of conflict mislead us into supposing that dramatic action is primarily physical movement. The conflict it occasions involves the collision of ideas or creeds as often as it does brute force.

--Stanley Johnson,  
Judah Bierman,  
and James Hart

Those of us who produce plays are of necessity forced to concern ourselves with selling them to the public, and with patching up the play and polishing the performance for this purpose. It is a main reason for the hack playwriting to which even intelligent playwrights in America are reduced while the show is being readied for the crucial Broadway opening. The problem of getting the play into proper shape is one of trying to outguess and gratify the public rather than of expressing a viewpoint.

--John Gassner

I'm always aware of the danger of being an artist—of making art *all* of life instead of an important part of life.

--Rod Steiger

The novel is a past reported in the present. On the stage it is always now. This confers upon the action an increased vitality which the novelist longs in vain to incorporate into his work.

This condition in the theatre brings with it another important element:

In the theatre we are not aware of the intervening storyteller. The speeches arise from the characters in an apparently pure spontaneity.

*A play is what takes place.*

*A novel is what one person tells us took place.*

A play visibly represents pure existing. A novel is what one mind, claiming omniscience, asserts to have existed.

--Thornton Wilder

It is the task of the dramatist so to co-ordinate his play, through the selection of episodes and speeches, that though he is himself not visible, his point of view and his governing intention will impose themselves on the spectator's attention, not as dogmatic assertion or motto, but as self-evident truth and inevitable deduction.

--Thornton Wilder

A dramatist is one who believes that the pure event, an action involving human beings, is more arresting than any comment that can be made upon it. On the stage it is always now; the personages are standing on that razor-edge, between the past and the future, which is the essential character of conscious being; the words are arising to their lips in immediate spontaneity.

--Thornton Wilder

All plays are social comment. Even plays fashioned as escapist entertainment are a comment on the view that society has of itself and of its needs. Some playwrights are conscious social critics, intentional social critics...some do it more intuitively.

--Edward Albee

The audience cannot be fooled. The old statement, 'I don't think the audience noticed it,' is a falsehood. The audience notices everything—every hit and every error.

--Joshua Logan

An audience must be made to care early about the people in a play. The problems must be made to matter, to make a difference to the audience, and the problems should be made desperate. Mildness is not a virtue in the theatre.

--Joshua Logan

The theatre is a highly *conventional* medium; that is, it depends on a *convening*, a coming together of audience and play, a kind of tacit agreement, a bargain struck between players and play-watchers which runs something like: 'I know,' the spectator says, 'that what you're doing is illusory, is essentially make-believe. But I also know that you're trying to use the illusion and make-believe to make me conscious of some dimension of my life I have missed myself. So...I will *accept the lie*, the premise on which you're operating, the fiction. If you agree to sustain and be utterly true and consistent to the kind of myth you plan to weave up there, I agree to *suspend my disbelief*—and we'll get along fine.'

--Joseph Golden

Dialogue is the living element of the play, the medium in which the truth of the characters, the interest of action, the importance of the theme, the ability of the character or characters to join theme to action are determined.

--Lionel Abel

Drama is a unique form of expression in that it employs living actors to tell its story....The dramatist is not dealing with a setting verbally described but three-dimensionally realized, with action that actually occurs in time and space, with dialogue which is spoken by human voices for the human ear.

--Alan S. Downer

For an audience to lose its heart, the playwright must keep his head.

--Walter Kerr

The (theater critic) whose reaction to a play is contained in such ejaculations as 'electrifying,' 'inspired,' 'a thunderbolt,' 'a mighty work,' 'a dismal bore,' may in each instance be right, but his being right does not by itself make him a critic. For these epithets only indicate effects: pleasure or displeasure. The true critic is concerned with causes, with the composition of human, social, formal substances which have produced the effect.

--Harold Clurman

A play should give you something to think about. When I see a play and understand it the first time, then I know it can't be much good.

--T. S. Eliot



Dance is the only art of which we ourselves are the stuff of which it is made.

--Ted Shawn

Dance is life at its most glorious moment.

--Pearl Lang

Dance is of all things the most concentrated expression of happiness and everyone needs to find happiness, to search for an ideal escape.

--Violette Verdy

An actor must lead a life full of interest, beauty, variety, excitement and enlightenment. He must be aware not only of what is going on in the large cities, but also in all outlying parts of the country, in villages, factories, plants and in the great world centers of culture....What actors need is a limitless horizon.

--Constantin

Sergeyevich

Stanislavsky

It's the way to get over a deep inferiority complex, being onstage; you become another person and shed your own frightened personality.

--Shirley Booth

I think it's because I get an audience involved, personally involved in a song--because I'm involved myself. It's not something I do deliberately; I can't help myself. If the song is a lament at the loss of love, I get an ache in my gut, I feel the loss myself, and I cry out the loneliness, the hurt and the pain that I feel.

--Frank Sinatra

Acting is just a matter of observation, imitation and communication. That's what it's all about.

--George C. Scott

A comedian has to gain more than just a laughing action. The audience must laugh with him. The comedian that just has you laugh at him very seldom becomes a great comedian. The audience has to root for him. The audience has to sympathize with him. The audience must work for him. Of course, the comedian has to be funny, too.

--Harold Lloyd

I like to think of the art of acting as an immediate reward and an immediate death. The greater the moment on the stage, the longer the mourning.

--Rod Steiger

I think the young actor who really wants to act will find a way—there's no advice you can really offer except to keep at it and seize every opportunity that comes along.

--Sir John Gielgud

Working in films is a lazy man's existence compared to working in the theatre where, if you're a star, there is a terrible responsibility. You have to be always on top. You can't let down for a moment, or everybody lets down without knowing that he is doing it.

--Ethel Barrymore

Only a true actor with a deep-seated compulsion is going to stick out the struggle that goes with being in the theater. It's brutal, it's worse than a Marine bootcamp, and they drop out by the thousands. But they have also been enriched by the experience they've had.

--Helen Hayes

Acting deals with very delicate emotions. It is not putting up a mask. Each time an actor acts he does not hide; he exposes himself.

--Jeanne Moreau

There's life for an actor in the characters he plays. Being another character is more interesting than being yourself. It's great pleasure to me....It's such a beautiful physical escape. I enjoy the transformation of personality.

--Sir John Gielgud

Despite the pettiness, the egomania, and the persecution complexes of stagefolk, they are more amusing, more generous, and more stimulating than any other professional group.

--Richard Haney

In every actor you'll find something of the missionary--the feeling that he must get his message across to everybody.

--Julie Harris

What the actor does has a very short life, no overwhelming importance; and compared to most of the other arts I think we are of little significance.

--Hume Cronyn

We can telegraph and telephone and wire pictures across the ocean; we can fly over it. But the way to the human being next to us is still as far as the stars. The actor takes us on this way.

--Max Reinhardt

You've got to find in an actor a man who will not be too proud to scavenge the tiniest little bit of human circumstance; observe it, find it, use it some time or other.

--Sir Laurence Olivier

Just as the painter who merely sets down the image of an apple that looks like one is not an artist, so the actor who merely 'imitates' the surface impression that we might gather from a perusal of the play's text—an actor who does not create a life beyond what was there before he assumed his role belies the art of the theatrical.

--Harold Clurman

Actresses will happen in the best-regulated families.

--Oliver Herford

Women who play dominating parts become unhappy in their private lives. Women tend, more than men, to become the part.

--Sir John Gielgud

Why is it that women of the stage are generally more alluring than women in private life? Because they have about them the plaything air.

--George Jean Nathan

I used to sneak off to the theater as a child....I sat there in the dark and watched all these people in the light on the stage. I got so excited. I thought that I was not destined to be in the dark; my vocation was to be in the light, to live in that extraordinary dimension and escape that darkness that most people have to live in.

--Jeanne Moreau

Beauty is not all-important as an asset...I cannot for the moment recall a single great actress who is a beauty. At least not in the popularly accepted idea of what constitutes beauty.

--Laurette Taylor

I wish I had a beautiful face. For a woman of the theater, it is a wondrous possession. A beautiful woman can climb so easily. An unattractive one has to work doubly hard to offset her lack of facial charm.

--Judith Anderson

The applause of a single human being is of great consequence.

--Samuel Johnson

It is best in the theatre to act with confidence no matter how little right you have to it.

--Lillian Hellman

If you give everything to acting, you are embroiled in a constant fight for a bigger part, a better part. There is no time to live. You get old and you still want to be young. That is not life. A woman is a fool if she does not learn this.

--Simone Signoret

I feel that classic ballet with its rigid discipline is a very, very narrow medium—it doesn't have a wide or deep range of expressiveness. It can be very beautiful, I enjoy seeing it, but I think of it as decorative and relatively superficial, among the art forms.

--Denise Levertov

I have rarely seen modern dance that seemed to reach the kind of depth and subtlety and have the range of language arts or music.

--Denise Levertov

Dancing is the loftiest, the most moving, the most beautiful of the arts because it is no mere translation or abstraction from life; it is life itself.

--Havelock Ellis

All there is to be said for work as opposed to dancing is that it is so much easier.

--Heywood Brown

It is only in the dance that one gives thorough employment to this body of ours, this minister of beauty....In sport we divide our homage; in dancing we worship but one god.

--Joseph W. Beach

All that the comedian has to show for his years of work and aggravation is the echo of forgotten laughter.

--Fred Allen

One can dare anything in the theatre, and it is the place where one dares the least.

--Eugene Ionesco

All tragedies are finished by a death,  
All comedies are ended by a marriage.

—Lord Byron

Comedy appeals to the collective mind of the audience and this grows fatigued;  
while farce appeals to a more robust organ, their collective belly.

--W. Somerset Maugham

Actors should be overheard, not listened to, and the audience is fifty percent of the  
performance.

--Shirley Booth

For an actress to be a success she must have the face of Venus, the brains of Minerva,  
the grace of Terpsichore, the memory of Macaulay, the figure of Juno, and the  
hide of a rhinoceros.

--Ethel Barrymore

Players, Sir! I look on them as no better than creatures set upon tables and joint  
stools to make faces and produce laughter, like dancing dogs.

--Samuel Johnson

I divide all productions into two categories: those I like and those I don't like. I have  
no other criterion.

--Anton Chekhov

Sometimes we go to a play and after the curtain has been up five minutes we have a  
sense of being able to settle back in the arms of the playwright. Instinctively we  
know that the playwright knows his business.

--Anton Chekhov

I can't really work in the theater of the absurd. I can work in fantasy—in romantic  
fantasy—and I can work in very far-out plays. But I could never just make a joke  
out of human existence.

--Tennessee Williams

The Russian dramatist is one who, walking through a cemetery, does not see the  
flowers on the graves. The American dramatist...does not see the graves under the  
flowers.

--George Jean Nathan

I don't think the playwright has much right to expect anything from an audience, except possibly to give the play its attention for five minutes. Then he has to earn it. Certainly, I don't think he has a right to expect them to find anything subtle.

--Howard Lindsay

Each production is also a new creation since it takes place in a different space with a different cast. And each performance has a different audience.

--JoAnne Fox

From the very applause and glad approval of the people any talent can catch the flame.

--Ovid

Dancing, the child of Music and of Love.

--Sir John Davies

The most important thing in acting is honesty. Once you've learned to fake that, you're in.

--Samuel Goldwin

The drama is the book of the people.

—John Wilmot

The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken.

--Thomas B. Macaulay

What can be hoped of an art which must necessarily depend on the favour of the public--of such a public, at least, as ours? Good work may, does sometimes, succeed. But never with the degree of success that befalls twaddle and vulgarity unrelieved. Twaddle and vulgarity will always have the upper hand.

--Max Beerbohm

Playing Shakespeare is very tiring. You never get to sit down, unless you're a King.

--Josephine Hull

Comedy is the last refuge of the nonconformist mind.

--Gilbert Seldes

Players and painted stage took all my love,  
And not those things that they were emblems of.

--William Butler Yeats

Thus every fine talent is as fleeting as a flash of lightning, soon to be buried by  
night in a gloomy grave.

--J. C. F. van Schiller

A talent forms itself in isolation, a character in the stream of the world.

--J. W. Van Goethe

You can pick out actors by the glazed look that comes to their eyes when the conver-  
sation wanders away from themselves.

—Michael Wilding

Our type of creativeness is the conception and birth of a new being—the person in  
the part. It is a natural act similar to the birth of a human being.

--Konstantin Stanislavski

I write plays as a chair maker makes chairs. Chairs are made to be sat on and plays  
are made to be played, to provide actors with work and the public with entertain-  
ment.

--Jean Anouilh

Talent, I say, is what an actor needs. And talent is faith in oneself, one's own pow-  
ers.

--Maxim Gorky

In my plays I want to look at life—at the commonplace of existence—as if we had  
just turned a corner and run into it for the first time.

--Christopher Fry

The stage-play is a trial, not a deed of violence. The soul is opened, like the combi-  
nation of a safe, by means of a word. You don't require an acetylene torch.

--Jean Giraudoux

One's roused by this, another finds that fit:  
Each loves the play for what he brings to it.

--Johann Wolfgang  
von Goethe

In New York people don't go to the theatre—they go to see hits.

--Louis Jourdan

We do not go (to the theatre), like our ancestors, to escape from the pressure of reality, so much as to confirm our experience of it

--Charles Lamb

Words can be deceitful, but pantomime necessarily is simple, clear and direct.

--Marcel Marceau

If the audience never understands the plot, it can be counted on to be attentive to the very end.

--Benedetto Marcello

The inclination to digress is human. But the dramatist must avoid it even more strenuously than the saint must avoid sin, for while sin may be venial, digression is mortal.

--W. Somerset Maugham

The drama is make-believe. It does not deal with truth but with effect.

--W. Somerset Maugham

The theater, when all is said and done, is not life in miniature, but life enormously magnified, life hideously exaggerated.

--H. L. Mencken

I see the playwright as a lay preacher peddling the ideas of his time in popular form.

--August Strindberg

A talent for drama is not a talent for writing, but is an ability to articulate human relationships.

--Gore Vidal

Some mystery should be left in the revelation of character in a play, just as a great deal of mystery is always left in the revelation of character in life, even in one's own character to himself.

--Tennessee Williams



Actors are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream; and the height of their ambition is to be beside themselves. They wear the livery of other men's fortunes: their very thoughts are not their own.

--William Hazlitt

An actor should take lessons from the painter and the sculptor. Not only should he make attitude his study, but he should highly develop his mind by an assiduous study of the best writers, ancient and modern, which will enable him not only to understand his parts, but to communicate a nobler coloring to his manners and mien.

--Johann Wolfgang  
von Goethe

There is no strong performance without a little fanaticism in the performer.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

We live in what is, but we find 1,000 ways not to face it. Great theatre strengthens our faculty to face it.

--Thornton Wilder

It is dangerous to let the public behind the scenes. They are easily disillusioned and then they are angry with you, for it was the illusion they loved.

--W. Somerset Maugham

I see the playwright as a lay preacher peddling the ideas of his time in popular form.

--August Strindberg

On stage I make love to twenty-five thousand people; then I go home alone.

--Janis Joplin

Theatre is simply what cannot be expressed by any other means; a complexity of words, movements, gestures that convey a vision of the world inexpressible in any other way.

--Eugene Ionesco

Drama is life with the dull bits cut out.

--Alfred Hitchcock

When actors begin to think, it is time for a change. They are not fitted for it.

--Stephen Leacock

When the audience knows you know better, it's satire, but when they think you can't do any better, it's corn.

--Spike Jones

This is why actors act: the feeling. It's instantaneous and all-encompassing. You get a message that you're approved of completely. You own yourself and you own the stage, and the people are yours as well.

--Ned Wynn

I'd sit in my dreary digs on Dearborn Street on a cold, snowy night, eating my TV dinner, and thinking, 'Oh God, everybody in the world who does not have to go to the club and do a show—three a night—they're so lucky. They can sit in the a bathtub with a lot of warm water in it, read all evening, watch television. Whatever they do during the day, they don't have to go to this goddam club tonight.' And I'd dress and drag myself over there and sit in the dressing room and wait for the introduction and go on, and the show would start to go well and gradually I'd get so exhilarated that I'd think, 'Gee, this is a great way to make a living, and I was crazy earlier. Nobody has this much fun. I feel sorry for people who don't do this.'

--Dick Cavett

Comedy is serious business.

--George Bernard Shaw

I don't sit around for days trying to Methodize my way into a part. I read what's in the script and then I go out there and deliver my lines.

--John Wayne

I don't call myself an actor. I'm a *reactor*. I listen to what the other guy is saying, and I re-act to it. That's the John Wayne method.

--John Wayne

Theater is at its finest when it is an elucidator of social consciousness, a recorder of the mores of its time, a historian of the future, an armory against despair and darkness, and a temple in the ascent of Man.

--George Bernard Shaw

In show business there are two kinds of people: the successful ones and the ethical ones.

--Charles Feldman

There is nothing as beautiful as a waiting dark theater; it is a night without a star.  
--Clifford Odets

Drama—what literature does at night.  
--George Jean Nathan

In all ages the drama, through its portrayal of the acting and suffering spirit of man, has been more closely allied than any other art to his deeper thoughts concerning his nature and his destiny.  
--Ludwig Lewisohn

Like hungry guests, a sitting audience looks:  
Plays are like suppers: poets are the cooks.  
The founder's you: the table is this place:  
The carvers we: the prologue is the grace.  
Each act, a course; each scene, a different dish.  
—George Farquhar

The stage but echoes back the public voice;  
The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give,  
For we that live to please, must please to live.  
--Samuel Johnson

In other things the knowing artist may  
Judge better than the people; but a play,  
(Made for delight, and for no other use)  
If you approve it not, has no excuse.  
--Edmund Waller

The structure of a play is always the story of how the birds came home to roost.  
--Arthur Miller

A play ought to be a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.  
--John Dryden

Theater is whatever people will buy tickets to see.  
--Unknown

The central idea of the drama is that you can escape from your own problems by watching somebody else's.

--Unknown

The play was a great success, but the audience was a failure.

--Oscar Wilde after a  
disastrous opening  
night

A play ought to be a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.

--John Dryden

There is no such thing as a great talent without great willpower.

--Honoré de Balzac

Amateurs hope. Professionals work.

--Garson Kanin

All actors are cattle.

-Alfred Hitchcock

In the silence of night I have often wished for just a few words of love from one man, rather than the applause of thousands of people.

--Judy Garland

An encore is like putting an artificial limb on a living body.

--Keith Jarrett

It's hard to start out as an entertainer and end up as a person.

--Joan Baez

The most important thing about acting is honesty. And if you can fake that you've got it made.

--George Burns

Talent is absolute luck....People worship talent and it's so ridiculous. Talent is something you're born with.

--Woody Allen

We rely upon the poets, the philosophers, and the playwrights to articulate what most of us can only feel, in joy or sorrow. They illuminate the thoughts for which we only grope; they give us the strength and balm we cannot find in ourselves. Whenever I feel my courage wavering I rush to them. They give me the wisdom of acceptance, the will and resilience to push on.

--Helen Hayes

Anyone can remember lines, but it takes an artist to come on the set and not know her lines and give the performance she (Marilyn Monroe) did.

--Billy Wilder

The idea that acting is quintessentially 'feminine' carries with it a barely perceptible sneer, a suggestion that it is not the noblest or most dignified of professions. Acting is role-playing, role-playing is lying, and lying is a woman's game.

--Molly Haskell

An actor is something less than a man, while an actress is something more than a woman.

--Richard Burton

What the American public wants in the theater is a tragedy with a happy ending.

--William D. Howells

There is a mode in plays as well as clothes.

--John Dryden

Glorious bouquets and storms of applause....These are the trimmings which every artist naturally enjoys. But to move an audience in such a role, to hear in the applause that unmistakable note which breaks through good theatre manners and comes from the heart, is to feel that you have won through to life itself. Such pleasure does not vanish with the fall of the curtain, but becomes part of one's own life.

--Alicia Markova

In the short span of his lifetime an actor must learn all there is to know, experience all there is to experience, or approach that state as closely as possible....To grasp the full significance of life is the actor's duty; to interpret it his problem; and to express it his dedication.

--James Dean

Can you imagine being wonderfully overpaid for dressing up and playing games?

--David Niven

If you're a writer or a painter, you write or paint whenever you want to. But we have to do this task at a precise moment. At three minutes past eight, the curtain goes up, and you've got to pretend to believe, because no one else will believe you unless you believe it yourself. A great deal of our work is simply making ourselves dream. That is the task. At three minutes past eight, you must dream.

--Sir Ralph Richardson

It seems to me that the thing that makes the theatre worthwhile is the fact that it attracts so many people with ideas who are constantly trying to share them with the public. Real art is illumination. It gives a man an idea he never had before or lights up ideas that were formless or only lurking in the shadows of his mind. It adds stature to life.

--Brooks Atkinson

Acting is fundamentally a childish thing to pursue. Quitting acting—that is the mark of maturity.

--Marlon Brando

It is a woman's job to sense the hungers in men and to satisfy them without, at the same time, giving so much of herself that men become bored with her. It is the same with acting. Each man or woman should be able to find in the actress the thing he or she most desires and still be left with the promise that they will find something new and exciting every time they see her again.

--Marlene Dietrich

Poor darling glamorous stars everywhere, their lives are so lonely and wretched and frustrated. Nothing but applause, flowers, Rolls-Royces, expensive hotel suites, constant adulation. It's too pathetic and wrings the heart.

--Noel Coward

Acting is not an important job in the scheme of things. Plumbing is.

--Spencer Tracy

Acting is controlled schizophrenia.

--Celeste Holm

Nobody would be in this business if he were normal.

--Vincent Price

Show me a great actor and I'll show you a lousy husband. Show me a great actress, and you've seen the devil.

--W. C. Fields

I think I love and reverence all arts equally only putting my own just above the others; because in it I recognize the union and culmination of my own. To me it seems as if when God conceived the world, that was Poetry; He formed it, and that was Sculpture; He colored it, and that was Painting; He peopled it with living beings, and that was the grand, divine, eternal Drama.

--Charlotte Cushman

It takes great passion and great energy to do anything creative, especially in the theater. You have to care so much that you can't sleep, you can't eat, you can't talk to people. It's just got to be right. You can't do it without that passion.

--Agnes De Mille

The subjective actress thinks of clothes only as they apply to her; the objective actress thinks of them only as they affect others, as a tool for the job.

--Edith Head

There are two kinds of directors in the theater. Those who think they are God and those who are certain of it.

--Rhetta Hughes

My dear boy, forget about the motivation. Just say the lines and don't trip over the furniture.

--Noel Coward

Success in show business depends on your ability to make and keep friends.

--Sophie Tucker

Drama is action, sir, and not confounded philosophy.

--Luigi Pirandello

Plays, gentlemen, are to their authors what children are to woman: they cost more pain than they give pleasure.

--Beaumarchais

There is as much difference between the stage and the film as between a piano and a violin. Normally you can't become a virtuoso in both.

--Ethel Barrymore

Definition of tragedy: A hero destroyed by the excess of his virtues....It is the business of the tragic poet to give audiences the pleasure which arises from pity and terror.

--Aristotle

A tragic situation exists precisely when virtue does *not* triumph but when it is still felt that man is nobler than the forces which destroy him.

--George Orwell

An actor must be regarded as an actor and he must be given the opportunity to prove that he can play any role, whether it's part of his background or not. Unfortunately, many of the people in casting and producing and directing see actors only as types. So the actor must constantly fight the limitations others want to put on him.

--Raúl Julia

I think it takes a certain masochism to stay in this industry, having to put on a ton of makeup and eyelashes and the big clothes and go out there and say 'Yessir, yessir, yessir.' Despite the glamour and fun, actors are really low men on the totem pole and aren't really treated all that wonderfully well. So my advice to any young people who ask me is to be producers, directors, writers, not performers.

--Lonette McKee

I never much enjoyed going to plays . . . The unreality of painted people standing on a platform saying things they've said to each other for months is more than I can overlook.

--John Updike

In the theater words have to prove themselves immediately, by solid laughter which unites an audience, or by that attentive silence when even the most bronchial listeners forget to cough, which is the greatest compliment that can be paid to the writer.

--John Mortimer

It seems to me that the thing that makes the theater worthwhile is the fact that it attracts so many people with ideas who are constantly trying to share them with the public. Real art is illumination. It gives a man an idea he never had before or lights up ideas that were formless or only lurking in the shadows of his mind. It adds stature to life.

--Brooks Atkinson



An actor's success has the life expectancy of a small boy about to look into a gas tank with a lighted match.

--Fred Allen

Many an actor who plays a millionaire when the curtain goes up, borrows ten dollars when the curtain goes down.

--Unknown

We used to have actresses trying to become stars; now we have stars trying to become actresses.

--Laurence Olivier

A young girl goes into a play, becomes a success. She is boosted to the skies. We even learn what toothpaste she uses. Then in about another week, somebody else turns up. The first girl is forgotten. Even the toothpaste is forgotten.

--Ellen Terry

I got all the schooling any actress needs. That is, I learned to write well enough to sign contracts.

--Hermione Gingold

For an actress to succeed, she must have the face of a Venus, the brains of a Minerva, the grace of Terpsichore, the memory of a Macaulay, the figure of Juno, and the hide of a rhinoceros.

--Ethel Barrymore

I go to the theatre to be entertained...I don't want to see plays about rape, sodomy and drug addiction...I can get all that at home.

--Peter Cook

In show business, it's the box office that counts, not the applause.

--Unknown

The theater is a great equalizer: it's the only place where the poor can look down on the rich.

--Will Rogers

You risk your life in this business every six months or you die.

--Elia Kazan

The prima donna's dressing room is the one nearest the exit.

--Thelma Votipka

A show is like having a climax. It's like having an incredible, natural climax. And then suddenly it's all finished, and you don't know what to do next.

--Rod Stewart

In the theater you work very, very hard right up to the curtain, here we go, bang, and adrenaline does the rest. In the movies the curtain never goes up. It's like a loose rubber band—no tension.

--Vera Zorina

There is something about seeing *real people* on a stage that makes a bad play more intimately, more personally offensive than any other art form.

--Anatole Broyard

In Broadway jargon, any play that's not a hit is a flop.

--Paul Gardner

At one time I thought he wanted to be an actor. He had certain qualifications, including no money and a total lack of responsibility.

--Hedda Hopper

I found out that acting was hell. You spend all your time trying to do what they put people in asylums for.

--Jane Fonda

The question actors most often get asked is how they can bear saying the same things over and over again night after night, but God knows the answer to *that* is, don't we all *anyway*; might as well get paid for it.

--Elaine Dundy

Other artists—poets, painters, sculptors, musicians—produce something which lives after them and enshrines their memories in positive evidences of their divine mission; but we,—we strut and fret our hour upon the stage, and then the curtain falls and all is darkness and silence.

--Charlotte Cushman

Laughter is much more important than applause. Applause is almost a duty. Laughter is a reward.

--Carol Channing

Without discipline and detachment, an actor is an emotional slob, spilling his insides out. This abandonment is having an unfortunate vogue. It is tasteless, formless, absurd. Without containment there is no art. All this vomiting and wheezing and bursting at the seams is no more great acting than the convulsions of raving maniacs.

--Bette Davis

Five stages in the life of an actor....1. Who's Mary Astor? 2. Get me Mary Astor. 3. Get me a Mary Astor type. 4. Get me a young Mary Astor. 5. Who's Mary Astor?

--Mary Astor

Applause is nothing compared with laughter. Anyone can clap hands, and the mind be miles away. A laugh comes right from the center. No wonder comedians love their audiences.

--Jessamyn West

Your audience gives you everything you need. They tell you. There is no director who can direct you like an audience.

--Fanny Brice

The theater audience is the ultimate teacher instructing the actor on the degree to which he has executed both the author's and the director's intent.

--Joan Fontaine

At last it was over, and the theater rang and rang with the grateful applause of the released.

--Edith Wharton

You can make an audience see nearly anything, if you yourself believe in it.

--Mary Renault

Talent is like electricity. We don't understand electricity. We use it.

--Maya Angelou

No sane man will dance.

--Cicero

The Italians don't care so much for the theater—because after all, what they see on the stage is so much better done at home!

--Ingrid Bergman

I haven't read many of those books about acting. I think instinctively, and even the first time I read a script I know exactly how the woman is. That is why I turn down many things I don't understand. I must understand the character completely; I mean, there must be something inside me that is that person, and then immediately I feel it. It is more a feeling than a technique.

--Ingrid Bergman

My view of actors is that they're people who say words. They're salesmen: They sell characters, plot lines and jokes.

--William Shatner

Accomplishments are quickly forgotten; one's greatest achievement, reputation, is especially fleeting. An actor's critical standing is only as good as his most recent reviews; his employability is only as secure as the box office results of his last venture.

--William A. Henry, III

Inside every artist are two people, the one who thinks and expresses great ideas and the one who snores and peruses the grocery bills. One figure is unique and remote. The other is commonplace and approachable. For performing artists, whose success usually depends on mass appeal, there must always be a delicate balancing act in the display of these two personalities. The performer must seem ordinary enough to serve as a surrogate for the average man or woman. And he must seem extraordinary enough to justify garnering all that money, all that attention, all that fantasy-laden admiration as he cavorts in a pool of light amid the darkness.

--William A. Henry, III

Loneliness is particularly wretched to the actor because there is no audience to witness his misery.

--Jackie Gleason

A hit show is like a concentration camp with music.

--Jackie Gleason

The secret of long life in show business is to know how to lay an egg gracefully.

--Jackie Gleason

An actor should never marry, not even another actor. You're too involved with yourself, and your work is too demanding, to give the necessary amount of attention to another human being. Inevitably that person feels left out. And becomes unhappy. We must never make people unhappy. Life's too short for that.

--Katharine Hepburn

All great dramatic art, tragic or comic, achieves this kind of heightened reality. It is plainly not the literal truth but it seems more true than the literal truth. It portrays incidents that are implausible, if not impossible, but it invests them with an emotional urgency and candor that make them seem expressive of fundamental human nature. Even the most realistic writing for the stage (or the screen, small or large) is never precisely true to life. It is, inevitably, compressed in time frame and intensified in emotional richness. It is more articulate than real life, and also more explicit, more self-revealing. In effect, the aspiration of dramatic literature is to make audiences see an absolute equivalence between the metaphor of art and the reality of life. This is, first and foremost, an attainment of writers. But it is also the highest calling of actors.

--William A. Henry, III

We participate in tragedy. At comedy we only look.

--Aldous Huxley

One can play comedy, two are required for melodrama, but a tragedy demands three.

--Elbert Hubbard

The test of a real comedian is whether you laugh at him before he opens his mouth.

--George Jean Nathan

The most difficult character in comedy is that of the fool, and he must be no simpleton that plays that part.

--Miguel De Cervantes

I found early in my career what some actors take years to discover—that it is the audience that does the directing. It gives you your rhythm, your timing and your beat. You have to see what you do through the response of your public.

--Fanny Brice

Show business is constantly changing and to stay with it, you have to change with it....Something new is what counted with audiences.

--Sophie Tucker

If it's a good script I'll do it. And if it's a bad script, and they pay me enough, I'll do it.

--George Burns

Look—look at the comet in the sky! Some pieces of its tail have dropped down over the roaring Forties. Tonight's the opening night of the *Follies*, and ticket speculators are asking—and getting—seventy-five dollars a seat.

High-powered imported cars, broughams, hansom cabs in one grand crush. The foyer seethes in a cauldron of excitement. Backstage is vibrating like an enormous dynamo. Everyone is drunk with the spirit of the moment!...

Electricians adjust lights. The girls are grouped in the flies.

The orchestra bursts into the overture,. The curtain rises. Here they come, the girls all walking like a salute, and another deluxe edition of the *Follies* is in circulation.

--Fanny Brice

I've seen more excitement at the opening of an umbrella.

--Earl Wilson

When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So what the hell, leap.

--Cynthia Heimel

An actor's popularity is fleeting. His success has the life expectancy of a small boy who is about to look into a gas tank with a lighted match.

--Fred Allen

What sculptors do is represent the essence of gesture. What is important in mime is attitude.

--Marcel Marceau

Actors are one family over the entire world.

--Eleanor Roosevelt

Make them laugh, make them cry, and hack to laughter. What do people go to the theatre for? An emotional exercise. I am a servant of the people. I have never forgotten that.

--Mary Pickford

Stardom can be a gilded slavery.

--Helen Hayes

If you really want to help the American theater, don't be an actress, *dahling*. Be an audience.

--Tallulah Bankhead

Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability.

--Roy L. Smith

Pretending to be other people helped bring me out of my shell and shed my inhibitions.

--Michael Musto

Flops are part of life's menu, and I'm never a girl to miss out on a course.

--Rosalind Russell

Struggle always comes before success. For most artists, when they have arrived at what the public and critics term success...all the pain and struggle—all the strife and anxiety that preceded—is forgotten.

--Jascha Heifetz

A good actor must never be in love with anyone but himself.

--Jean Anouilh

An actor is as great as his or her imagination.

--Unknown

The actor who lets the dust accumulate on his Ibsen, his Shakespeare, and his *Bible*, but pours greedily over every little column of theatrical news, is a lost soul.

--Minnie Maddern Fiske

Good actors I've worked with all started out making faces in a mirror, and you keep making faces all your life.

--Bette Davis

People often become actresses because of something they dislike about themselves: They pretend they are someone else.

--Bette Davis

The only reason anyone goes to Broadway is because they can't get work in the movies.

--Bette Davis

Wave after wave of love flooded the stage and washed over me, the beginning of the one great durable romance of my life.

--Bette Davis

Without wonder and insight, acting is just a trade. With it, it becomes creation.

--Bette Davis

Comedy is exaggerated realism. It can be stretched to the almost ludicrous, but it must always be believable.

--Paul Lynde

Learning lines is on my mind until I do know them. I'll read the paper or paint the house to keep from starting to memorize. I've never found an easy way.

--Paul Lynde

Unlike visual art, music, and dance, theatre is the only art form which focusses on the symbolic representation of the human behavior in action.

--*American Alliance for  
Theatre and  
Education*

Of all the art forms, theatre is the most human because its purpose and mode of expression allow it to closely approximate daily life. As a mirror of the human condition, theatre provokes recognition and identification and inspires reflection about life.

--*American Alliance for  
Theatre and  
Education*

Because theatre is an amalgam of all the arts, it has unusual power to inform and teach as it entertains. While 'playing' with their fears, hopes, dreams, and aspirations, drama allows students to make meaning that enhances the possibility of their knowing and living successfully with one another. Paradoxically, theatre thus provides us with the means of escaping from life in order to confront it.

--*American Alliance for  
Theatre and  
Education*

I think basically an actor is a salesman.

--Paul Lynde



For those who have experienced a drama/theatre education, its purpose goes beyond mere 'entertainment.' Just as students learn letters and words in order to read, not necessarily to become novelists, but to read print materials with critical awareness; so too, students learn drama to read theatre, not necessarily to become theatre artists, but to read human behavior throughout their daily lives with personal and aesthetic awareness.

--*American Alliance for  
Theatre and  
Education*

It is dangerous to let the public behind the scenes. They are easily disillusioned and then they are angry with you, for it was the illusion they loved.

--W. Somerset Maugham

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you fall into an open sewer and die.

--Mel Brooks

An actor shouldn't undergo psychoanalysis, because there are a lot of things you're better off not knowing.

--Paul Lynde

Talent hits a target no one else can hit; Genius hits a target no one else can see.

--Arthur Schopenhauer

Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth.

--Oscar Wilde

I don't care if people think I am an overactor, as long as they enjoy what I do. People who think that would call Van Gogh an overpainter.

--Jim Carrey

Now there are very few rules to improv, but one of the things I was taught early on is that you are not the most important person in the scene—everybody else is. And if everybody else is more important than you are, you will naturally pay attention to them and serve them. No one is leading.... You cannot win in improv.

--Stephen Colbert

There is an applause superior to that of the multitudes: one's own

--Elizabeth Elton Smith

Hidden talent counts for nothing.

—Nero

It's really a childlike pleasure...a kid's dream. I think you have to keep that, marvel at it. To be with a little dog, to be able to dance, to be in incredible theaters. That's where the imagination is.

--Jean Dujardin

Every aspect of the character has to be bigger than me. For example, let's say I'm playing anger. My anger has limits; my character's anger has to go beyond my limits. You have to stretch yourself beyond the everyday, beyond the suburban, and offer audiences something heroic and magnificent. It's not enough to be cute.

--Ben Kinglsey

If we were all doing what we should be doing as grownups, we'd be working in an office. We're all still kids playing make-believe.

--George Clooney

A script can only create nests in which magic may settle.

--Emeric Pressburger

On the one hand, writing can be solitary work. But the other part requires engagement with other artists. I write lines for actors to speak, or scenes that will inspire designers or makeup artists.

--John Logan

I always say about acting: the audience doesn't come to see you, they come to see themselves. So if you're able to give them an experience where they feel: 'Oh, my gosh, that's me, that's my story, they know me!' then you've done your job.

--Julianne Moore

[On Julie Harris] Her voice was like rainfall. Her eyes connected directly to and channeled the depths of her powerful and tender heart. Her talent, a gift from God.

— Alec Baldwin

When you're an artist you have to have that selfishness to be alone and create great things to your satisfaction.

--Robert DeNiro

Actors are known for making asses of ourselves, but that's not necessarily a mistake. That's a choice.

--James Earl Jones

The very idea of being an aerialist is very significantly connected to getting out there on the stage. You're at risk, and you have the appropriate feelings connected with that type of thing.

--Al Pacino

Acting is a way of taking you away from your own sick ego. It's about getting back to being free of yourself.

--Al Pacino

Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.

--Stephen King

A celebrity is a person who works hard all his life to become known, then wears dark glasses to avoid being recognized.

--Fred Allen

Only those who are capable of silliness can be called truly intelligent.

--Christopher Isherwood

Fame means millions of people have the wrong idea of who you are.

--Erica Jong

Acting is an imperfectible craft for which the effort at rendering a character, not the finished result or the applause, is not only the challenge but the reward.

Acting is always an adventure, and a struggle, and a quest to find the truth.

It's wanting to do it right, that's where the fear comes in, but who can say what's right? We're very delicate creatures, aren't we?

--Julie Harris

My mother used to say to me, 'But you're so *dramatic*.' Yes, I'd say, that's what I'm supposed to be. *Life* is dramatic, all the time, much more than on stage.

--Julie Harris

Have no skill set other than being a needy extrovert.

--Ty Burrell

My nephew Justin is an actor, and he didn't get a lot of encouragement. Everyone needs encouragement. I think you need someone to say, at some stage, particularly someone not in your family, 'I read you' or 'I saw you on stage'—whatever it is. 'Good going. You've got it.'

--Paul Theroux

Actors fall into this trap if they missed being loved for who they really were and not for what they could do - sing, dance, joke about - then they take that as love.

--Gene Wilder

An actor must interpret life, and in order to do so must be willing to accept all the experiences life has to offer. In fact, he must seek out more of life than life puts at his feet.

--James Dean

An actor who is good at comedy can also be very good at drama, but not necessarily vice versa.

--Desi Arnaz

Theatre: the making of it, the consumption of it, at its best has an aspect of the ambulance chase. It's walking the precipice of an imminent disaster, the crash, the missteps, the cock-up, the collapse. That energy and secret hope in the audience has to be harnessed ... Anything live, and truly 'alive' will contain seeds of danger.

--Cate Blanchett

People who call themselves actors and can't ever get work; they do need to get another profession.

--Estelle Parsons

When I was thinking about *The Lion King*, I said, we have to do what theater does best. What theater does best is to be abstract and not to do literal reality.

--Julie Taymor

Talent is an accident of genes - and a responsibility.

--Alan Rickman

The theatre is the involuntary reflex of the ideas of the crowd.

--Sarah Bernhardt

I don't believe in dying. It's been done. I'm working on a new exit. Besides, I can't die now - I'm booked.

—George Burns

Yes, there is plenty of hard work for them in addition to that which they do when they appear, smiling and happy, when the curtain goes up. Giving a performance is the least of their worries.

--Florenz Ziegfeld

When I attack a role, be it TV, film or stage, the first thing I say is, I don't want to know anything. If it's good I don't want to hear it; if it's bad I don't want to hear it. The only thing either thing can do is distract me. I like to stay focused.

--Cicely Tyson

I found the stage a very safe place to be. Everything is predictable when you're in a play. Because of the chaos in my life, I loved the certainty—and the opportunity to become somebody else and not myself.

--Patrick Stewart

Desperation is the perfume of the young actor. It's so satisfying to have gotten rid of it. If you keep smelling it, it can drive you crazy. In this business a lot of people go nuts, go eccentric, even end up dead from it. Not my plan.

--Uma Thurman

I don't believe in astrology. The only stars I can blame for my failures are those that walk about the stage.

--Noel Coward

There's nothing like spending an evening with an audience every night.

--John Lithgow

Acting touches nerves you have absolutely no control over.

--Alan Rickman

That the work involved, the willingness to take chances, the commitment, the opportunity to get on stage and make people happy, was more important than becoming famous, or even what I was dancing.

--Suzanne Farrell

I first wanted to be an actress after seeing a play—not a movie.

—Kim Cattrall

An entertainer should in his public performance keep himself out of any controversy, political or otherwise.

--Kate Smith

Acting is really scary, but it's also challenging, fun, hard work. There's always an element of improvisation with every actor, even when something is really scripted.

--Michael Pitt

The office of drama is to exercise, possibly to exhaust, human emotions. The purpose of comedy is to tickle those emotions into an expression of light relief; of tragedy, to wound them and bring the relief of tears. Disgust and terror are the other points of the compass.

--Laurence Olivier

Self-consciousness is the enemy of all art, be it acting, writing, painting or living itself, which is the greatest art of all. Creativity, at heart, is the essence of man's being.

—Ray Bradbury

Of all the things I do, acting is the thing that grabs most, but there's another level on which it strikes me as being a little silly. In the end you're dressing up and deciding to be somebody.

—Jane Asher

Actually, the real work is between the jobs, all the work you do to get the next job. Once you get the next job, that's when the dream kicks in.

—Rachel Melvin

Unless the theatre can ennoble you, make you a better person, you should flee from it.

—Konstantin  
Stanislavisky

Timing and arrogance are decisive factors in the successful use of talent.

—Marya Mannes

I don't think anybody can be told how to act. I think you can give advice. But you have to find your own way through it.

—Judi Dench

Applause is the spur of noble minds, the end and aim of weak ones.

—Edmund Burke

Acting is like going to the gym. You have to keep yourself in shape and concentrate on your core.

—Anthony Rapp

The best actors instinctively feel out what the other actors need, and they just accommodate it.

—Christopher Nolan

I think theatre is by far the most rewarding experience for an actor. You get 4 weeks to rehearse your character and then at 7:30 pm you start acting and nobody stops you, acting with your entire soul.

—Christopher Eccleston

Most of the people who act and sing do so for their own pleasure and that of their friends and family.

—Kate Smith

You can have a bad day, but as soon as you set foot on that stage it's joyous.

—Glenn Tipton

I am acquainted with no immaterial sensuality so delightful as good acting.

—Lord Byron

Without wonder and insight, acting is just a trade. With it, it becomes creation.

—Bette Davis

I hate acting when I see it. I don't want to feel it, I don't want to see it, I want to be taken away with the story - I don't want the actor's ego in front of me.

—Rutger Hauer

I got all the schooling any actress needs. That is, I learned to write enough to sign a contract.

—Hermione Gingold

It's not that I wanted to be an actor; it's that I didn't want to be a dancer! I was trained in traditional Chinese dance, and after working so hard it seemed unfair to just disappear into a group.

—Ziyi Zhang

Sondheim is the Shakespeare of the musical theater world.

—Mandy Patinkin

I loved acting when I was doing it, but getting the jobs. I didn't understand because I'd never had to do it. That was a difficult lesson for me. It was very humbling and very bizarre.

—Mariel Hemingway

Anyone who has that weird volition to become an actor probably has a weird volition to do lots of other creative things - to write, to play music, to paint, to cook.

—Minnie Driver

When it's no longer fun, move on. We have a multitude of ways to express ourselves and so there is simply no excuse to be unhappy and to complain. I used to get mad when I nailed an audition but didn't get the part. While I was busy complaining, I could have been writing or filming something. Negative emotions of any kind are simply inexcusable because you can always move on to something else. Finally, say 'no' to projects you don't feel good about. Only do things that mean something to you. There are a lot of unhappy people who are at the top and a lot of overwhelmingly happy people at what society calls 'the bottom.' In my opinion, the happy people have it right.

—Lisa Barber

Believe me, it jabs you. When you're on the side of buses and New York loves you, you love to go out there every night. It's like a race. Curtain opens, out you go, and New York is yours.

—Angela Lansbury

There's no business like show business.

—Irving Berlin

The key element in tragedy is that heroes and heroines are destroyed by that which appears to be their greatest strength.

—Robert Shea

I love the stage, I love the process of acting in theatre, but unfortunately, it doesn't pay the bills.

—Kabir Bedi



I don't have a director. The audience directs me.

—Hal Holbrook

For English actors, there's always the stage: at any given time there's going to be somebody, somewhere, putting on Shakespeare—or Chekhov or Ibsen or Strindberg or Osborne or Stoppard—and even if it means hauling your weary carcass out to some godforsaken provincial repertory theater, it's a chance to *act*. It nourishes the soul. American actors have fewer opportunities (and incentives) to explore the classical repertory when they're young, which is when the experience would do them the most good.

—Terrence Rafferty

Acting is play, a game of let's-pretend. It starts with a child imagining himself as somebody else, trying on different roles, making faces in the mirror. When one or more other kids are present, impromptu scenarios are cooked up and parts are assigned, with the goal, always, of bringing into being something that would not otherwise have existed in the ordinary run of life—something more colorful, more vivid, something thrilling. It's a keen and peculiar pleasure, and one that, in the livelier young minds, can grow into a desire to keep organizing the world that way, understanding by pretending. If they're driven enough to try to do this for a living—to become actors, and dedicate themselves to searching for truth in make-believe characters—they have to find a way to retain at least a portion of their original delight in the let's-pretend game.

—Terrence Rafferty

For an actor, the joy of slipping into a bad guy's skin can be intense, a satisfaction like no other. When Richard III is doing his devious worst, or when music-hall performer Archie Rice is displaying the gloomiest depths of his grubby soul in *The Entertainer*, the gleam in Olivier's eye is blinding. Brando gets that rapt look, too, when he's taunting defenseless Blanche DuBois in *Streetcar*, or whipping his horse in frustration in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967). And God knows De Niro's got it as the seething, paranoid Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* (1976), posing in front of a mirror and rehearsing what he'll say, and do, to his legions of enemies.

—Terrence Rafferty

There's something about doing theatre in London - it sinks a little bit deeper into your soul as an actor. It's something about the tradition of theatre, about performing on the West End stage.

—Christian Slater

The basic essential of a great actor is that he loves himself in acting.

—Jessamyn West

I am acquainted with no immaterial sensuality so delightful as good acting.

—Lord Byron

No opera plot can be sensible, for people do not sing when they are feeling sensible.

—W. H. Auden

Drama assumes an order. If only so that it might have—by disrupting that order—a way of surprising.

—Vaclav Havel

As an actor, you want to keep your demons to some extent, but you also have to exorcise them so you can use them instead of them using you.

—Skeet Ulrich

Coughing in the theater is not a respiratory ailment. It is a criticism.

—Alan Jay Lerner

The artist never entirely knows. We guess. We may be wrong, but we take leap after leap in the dark.

—Agnes de Mille

Acting gave me the opportunity to do outrageous things. It allowed me to be sad, happy, angry and lustful even if it was just vicariously.

—Joan Allen

Boxing is just show business with blood.

—Bruno Frank

When you go to meetings or auditions and you fail to prepare, prepare to fail. It is simple but true.

—Paula Abdul

They say 6 million people see you when you act in a film; it may only be 600 in a play. But the effect on the 600 may be truer and more lasting.

—Cyril Cusack

You have to love the characters you play, even if no one else does.

—Glenn Close

I think all actors - they'll hate me for saying this - but we are babies. We like to be loved, and we'll do anything if we're loved.

—Anjelica Huston

Acting is a nice childish profession - pretending you're someone else and, at the same time, selling yourself.

—Katharine Hepburn

Actors search for rejection. If they don't get it, they reject themselves.

—Charlie Chaplin

Anything that loosens you up and makes you freer is good, because that's what acting and performing is all about - being free. It gives you a better connection to the audience.

—Brett Somers

Acting provides the fulfillment of never being fulfilled. You're never as good as you'd like to be. So there's always something to hope for.

—Washington Irving

The theater experience, the performance, elicits laughter, tears, the full range of emotions. It validates that I empathize, I relate, I feel, I live.

—Dan L. Miller

An actor without techies (stagehands) is a naked person moaning in the dark. A techie without actors is a person with marketable skills.

—Unknown

The out-of-work actor wears out more than shoe leather. The very sensibilities that make him an artist are shattered by the disregard he is shown as a human being.

—Bette Davis

What do I love about opera? Its glorious music, high drama and gorgeous voices. An operatic voice is like no other. I was a super once—an extra—in *Die Fledermaus*, and was seated within three feet of Plácido Domingo. I had never heard a voice of that beauty so close up. It felt as if an electric shock were running through me.

—Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Fame, like the river, is narrowest where it is bred, and broadest afar off.

—William Davenant

I think Mozart's operas *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* are the two most perfect ever written. The music is magical. The sextet in *The Marriage* is the most hilarious piece in all of opera. And *Don Giovanni* has the most seductive duet, 'Là ci darem la mano,' sung when the Don attempts to seduce Zerlina.

—Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Dance changes the world by changing the heart.

—Francisco Gella

It's a scary thing going into the workforce with a \$50,000 debt and you've been trained as a classical theatre actor. There's always a depression in the theatre.

—Frances McDormand

Enduring comedy is grounded in both surprise and recognition, and that recognition requires that comedy arise from the real world.

—Frank Lidz

You have a little bit of feeling for everyone you play.

—Robert Duvall

As far as dramas are concerned, it's considered *passe* for playwrights to turn out anything the average person can understand.

—Ethel Merman

I've never done anything for money. My first love is things of limited commercial appeal. I could be happy doing Shakespeare for the rest of my life.

—Karen Allen

You start acting in spite of your neuroses, not because of them.

—Frank Langella

An agent is a person who is sore because an actor gets 90% of what they make.

—Elton John

But that's one of the nice things about doing a stage show, if something doesn't work out, you have the luxury of working on it over time.

—Bea Arthur

Script for an actor is like a bible. You carry it with you, you read it over and over, you go to your passages.

—Cameron Diaz

Working on a film, you don't get time to develop rivalries, but the theatre is like a little village, and the differences between me, Lionel and Georgia grew.

—Ron Moody

Audiences are always better pleased with a smart retort, some joke or epigram, than with any amount of reasoning.

—Charlotte Perkins  
Gilman

The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and actress, not to the audience.

—Walt Whitman

In Europe, people in the arts are considered part of the intelligentsia; they are considered part of the elite.

—Ron Silver

Most actors really love it, that's what they want to do. They burn to do it. And so they'll read a script and think, that's an interesting part. And because they love acting, that blinds them to the fact that the rest of it is pretentious nonsense, which it very often is.

—Hugh Grant

I know what I have given you. I do not know what you have received.

—Antonio Porchia

I have friends that are much better actors than I am that had to quit the business because they couldn't survive the auditions or the rejections, or people just didn't realize how good they were.

—Robert Englund

Great drama offers the audience a special kind of repose which allows contemplation.

—Tennessee Williams

Acting is like moving furniture upstairs backwards.

—Phil Hoffman

The more they applaud, the bigger your salary will be.

—Anna Held

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget temperance that may give it smoothness.

--William Shakespeare

Once the curtain is raised, the actor ceases to belong to himself. He belongs to his character, to his author, to his public. He must do the impossible to identify himself with the first, not to betray the second, and not to disappoint the third.

—Sarah Bernhardt

Acting is the most brotherly and sisterly profession in the world.

—Cyril Cusack

Asking a working writer what he thinks about critics is like asking a lamppost what it feels about dogs.

--Christopher Hampton

No matter how well you perform there's always somebody of intelligent opinion who thinks it's lousy.

--Laurence Olivier

My native habitat is the theatre. I toil not, neither do I spin. I am a critic and a commentator. I am essential to the theatre—as ants to a picnic, as the boll weevil to a cotton field.

--Joseph L. Mankiewicz

A good review from the critics is just another stay of execution.

--Dustin Hoffman

If Attila the Hun were alive today, he'd be a dramatic critic.

--Edward Albee

A dramatic critic is a man who leaves no turn unstoned.

—George Bernard  
Shaw

If I wasn't in the theater, I would be a hermit.

—Richard Foreman

Shakespeare teaches us that the music of language matters. What you have to say is important, but if you want it to have impact, how you say it makes all the difference. There are only three original plots in all of Shakespeare's plays, but his distillation of human experience into lyrical verse and prose is why his work endures. 'The play's the thing,' but it's crafted from the 'words, words, words.'

--Christopher Moore

The dumbing down of the country reflects itself on Broadway. The shows get dumber, and the public gets used to them.

—Stephen Sondheim

I don't think anyone starts doing creative work because they're serving humanity. They want to get laid; they want to get money; they want to get attention.

—Richard Gere

When I was in college, all the pretty women were in the theatre, so I auditioned for a play.

—Judd Nelson

Music, dance, painting, and theater are keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment. Children should be handed these keys at an early age. Yet, according to the *Council of Chief State School Officers*, boards of education in only 13 states specified the arts within formal statements of educational goals....A study by George Hardiman and Andra Johnson in *Art Education* found that elementary schools commit only 4 percent of their school week to art instruction, with only a quarter of that provided by trained art teachers. An elementary school that treats the arts as the province of a few gifted children, or views them only as recreation and entertainment, is a school that needs an infusion of soul. Children's imaginations yearn for the chance to transcend the ordinary, to hear and see what they have not heard and seen.

—William J. Bennett

I'm not suggesting that the play is without fault; all of my plays are imperfect, I'm rather happy to say-it leaves me something to do.

—Edward Albee

The audience is the best judge of anything. They cannot be lied to. Truth brings them closer. A moment that lags - they're gonna cough.

—Barbra Streisand

(Because) it is the intellect which dominates schooling...the specifically soul making subjects—literature, drama, music, the visual arts—are progressively ‘de-souled’ as the child progresses through school.

—Dr. Bernie Neville

The arts are called liberal, because they enable those who practise them to live in freedom.

--Tirso de Molina

The curriculum of the school should give the student access to the important cultural tools available through which intelligence can be expanded. Among the most important of these tools are the arts.

--Elliot Eisner

At early previews, the theater gossips are there, wishing you ill every night. They don't grant you any slack. Agents are in from Hollywood. Your friends are there. People who are going to spread the word-of-mouth. If something doesn't work, everyone will know.

—Peter Stone

In musical theater you have to be very big and very animated, while film and television are more toned down.

—Kevin Richardson

I don't believe you can really be creative and do your work if you don't doubt yourself at least once a day.

—Sandra Bernhard

Culture is the habit of being pleased with the best and knowing why.

--Henry Van Dyke

Watching Italian opera, all those male sopranos screeching, stupid fat couples rolling their eyes about. That's not love, it's just rubbish.

—Peter Shaffer

Where talent is a dwarf, self-esteem is a giant.

—John Petit-Senn

The atmosphere of the theater is my oxygen.

—Placido Domingo



I like to grow as an actor, and you can do that by playing parts that are unfamiliar to you and uncomfortable.

—David Schwimmer

What matters poverty? What matters anything to him who is enamoured of our art? Does he not carry in himself every joy and every beauty?

—Sarah Bernhardt

When I went to drama school, I knew I was at least as talented as other students, but because I was a black man and I wasn't pretty, I knew I would have to work my butt off to be the best that I would be, and to be noticed.

—Lance Reddick

What we had were parents who were on stage all the time in their manner, their gestures. My mother would bang into things and apologize to the furniture. My father would flick an ash off a jacket in a way that commanded everyone's attention. Without being conscious of it, they were theatrical people and they taught that to us.

—Shirley MacLaine

Actors in any capacity, artists of any stripe, are inspired by their curiosity, by their desire to explore all quarters of life, in light and in dark, and reflect what they find in their work. Artists instinctively want to reflect humanity, their own and each other's, in all its intermittent virtue and vitality, frailty and fallibility.

--Tom Hiddleston

Theatres are curious places, magician's trick-boxes where the golden memories of dramatic triumphs linger like nostalgic ghosts, and where the unexplainable, the fantastic, the tragic, the comic and the absurd are routine occurrences on and off the stage. Murders, mayhem, political intrigue, lucrative business, secret assignments, and of course, dinner.

—E. A. Bucchianeri

I think on-stage nudity is disgusting, shameful and damaging to all things American. But if I were 22 with a great body, it would be artistic, tasteful, patriotic, and a progressive religious experience.

—Shelley Winters

Acting is the most minor of gifts and not a very high-class way to earn a living. After all, Shirley Temple could do it at the age of four.

—Katharine Hepburn

## **THIS IS FOR US**

This is for us who sing, write, dance, act, study, run and love  
and this is for doing it even if no one will ever know  
because the beauty is in the act of doing it.

Not what it can lead to.

This is for the times I lose myself while writing, singing, playing  
and no one is around and they will never know

but I will forever remember

and that shines brighter than any praise or fame or glory I will ever have,

and this is for you who write or play or read or sing

by yourself with the light off and door closed

when the world is asleep and the stars are aligned

and maybe no one will ever hear it

or read your words

or know your thoughts

but it doesn't make it less glorious.

It makes it ethereal. Mysterious.

Infinite.

For it belongs to you and whatever God or spirit you believe in

and only you can decide how much it meant

and means

and will forever mean

and other people will experience it too

through you.

Through your spirit. Through the way you talk.

Through the way you walk and love and laugh and care

and I never meant to write this long

but what I want to say is:

Don't try to present your art by making other people read or hear or see or touch it;  
make them feel it. Wear your art like your heart on your sleeve and keep it alive by  
making people feel a little better. Feel a little lighter. Create art in order for your-  
self to become yourself

and let your very existence be your song, your poem, your story.

Let your very identity be your book.

Let the way people say your name sound like the sweetest melody.

So go create. Take photographs in the wood, run alone in the rain and sing your  
heart out high up on a mountain  
where no one will ever hear

and your very existence will be the most hypnotising scar.  
Make your life be your art  
and you will never be forgotten.

—Charlotte Eriksson

I have only one rule in acting--trust the director, and give him heart and soul.

—Ava Gardner

We can see the film stars of yesterday in yesterday's films, hear the voices of poets and singers on a record, keep the plays of dead dramatists upon our bookshelves, but the actor who holds his audience captive for one brief moment upon a lighted stage vanishes forever when the curtain falls.

—Daphne du Maurier

Once in a while I experience an emotion onstage that is so gut-wrenching, so heart-stopping, that I could weep with gratitude and joy. The feeling catches and magnifies so rapidly that it threatens to engulf me.

—Julie Andrews  
Edwards

Fresh from a costume fitting, where I had been posing in front of the mirror assuming what I thought was a strong position - arms folded, butch-looking...you know - I met with the woman in charge of Holloway police station. She gave me the most invaluable advice: never let them see you cry, and never cross your arms. When I asked why, she said 'because it is a defensive action and therefore weak.'

—Helen Mirren

Directing teenage actors is like juggling jars of nitro-glycerine: exhilarating and dangerous.

—Stephen King

Acting is not about dressing up. Acting is about stripping bare. The whole essence of learning lines is to forget them so you can make them sound like you thought of them that instant.

—Glenda Jackson

It's a big spooky place when you're in it alone. It's like you can hear all the whispers of all the voices of all the actors who ever played here. Kind of creepy. Like a church can be creepy when it's empty.

—Benjamin R. Smith

There are moments on stage when everything comes together. Then the kid in the front row coughs.

—Connie Brockway

What I learned as a young actor is that no matter how many times you've played a role, every single performance is an excavation, a rehearsal in front of an audience, where you play, dig, explore, and unleash your spontaneity to bring a fresh vitality to the character and an unpredictable magic to every moment.

—Rainn Wilson

When most dullards hear the words 'the theater,' they envision a twelve-screen multiplex where disaster porn entertains the culturally witless for 90 minutes at a time. Pfaugh. The word 'theater' has grandeur. Power. Back to its ancient Grecian origins, it means 'the seeing place.' A stage upon which actors and actresses use fiction to show us truths.

—Mark Waid

You are the actor. Your body brings in something, call it presence, and it happens by degrees. Arms, chest, haunches and thighs, calves and feet. The body, firing synapses, in between and in the gray matter. On and off. The billions of cells, the body mechanisms, the busy regulating, the adjusting, the retinas contracting and expanding, body secreting, beating, moving, breathing and pulsing. Your being registers here. Swallow. Inhale. Open mouth to press air out to touch the flesh in the throat to make sound.

You are the actor. A thing of flesh and feeling. Perfect because you aren't.

—Richard Maxwell

The way I learn to do things is by imagining that I can. I remember wanting to do a twist and a half off the diving board when I was 13. I was afraid, so I imagined it happening and then went and did it. That is what we do as actors. We imagine it, and then it happens.

—Meryl Streep

The first time I was onstage...I was like, 'Ohhh, this feels good. This is better than being pretty.'

—Jessi Klein

There are no small parts, only small actors.

—Constantin  
Stanislavski

Actors are just beautiful puppets.

—Rainbow Rowell

Acting is in everything but the words.

—Stella Adler

You have to understand your best. Your best isn't Barrymore's best or Olivier's best or my best, but your own. Every person has his norm. And in that norm every person is a star. Olivier could stand on his head and still not be you. Only you can be you. What a privilege! Nobody can reach what you can if you do it. So do it. We need your best, your voice, your body. We don't need for you to imitate anybody, because that would be second best. And second best is no better than your worst.

—Stella Adler

No actor is a success unless he feels inside himself, as long as he lives, that he is good.

—Stella Adler

The actor must be full of passion. If he's too cool he's better off as the manager of a company, not someone who appears on the stage.

—Stella Adler

If you can't take both sides, it means you can only play yourself.

—Stella Adler

Emotions aren't doable. Actions are doable, and if you do them correctly, they prompt the feelings.

—Stella Adler

Acting can be the healthiest profession in the world, because it allows you to do things you can't do in real life. It allows you to understand more than just what life provides you.

—Stella Adler

By taking elements you observe in life, you can develop qualities in your acting life that you don't ordinarily call upon in your personal life.

—Stella Adler

It's good to learn early that every show is a family---complete with dysfunctional relationships, tough love, and plenty of occasion for forgiveness...

—Kristin Chenoweth

I like this other world, this forgetting of myself. The actor works in order to escape, not to find himself. You become an actor by leaving yourself, and then you have to keep acting. How tragic!

—Sylvia Kristel

I think acting is revealing to people what it means to be human.

—Nick Enright

‘Character actor’ is a technical term denoting a clever stage performer who cannot act, and therefore makes an elaborate study of the disguises and stage tricks by which acting can be grotesquely simulated.

—George Bernard Shaw

By Real Acting I mean ‘an imitation of human behavior that is both emotionally natural and mechanically precise enough as to elicit tears or laughter from humans.’

—Tina Fey

It’s about that applause I want to speak to you. I want you to remember that when you’ve done a little dance or a song or sketch, the applause which you get is not only because you yourself have done your best, but because each of those men is seeing in you someone he loves at home, and because of you is able to forget for a little while the unhappiness of not being in his home, and in some cases the great tragedy of not knowing what has happened to the children in his family.

—Noel Streatfeild

The best author is a dead author, because he’s out of your way and you own the play. Take what he has given you and use it for what you need.

—Stella Adler

The theatre is an attack on mankind carried on by magic: to victimize an audience every night, to make them laugh and cry and suffer and miss their trains. Of course actors regard audiences as enemies, to be deceived, drugged, incarcerated, stupefied. This is partly because the audience is also a court against which there is no appeal.

—Iris Murdoch

If there is a streak of ham anywhere in an actor, Shakespeare will bring it out.

—Robert Benchley

'The thing is,' (Rufus) Stone said, 'that if you don't believe that you are an old man, or a woman, or a tramp, then how can you expect anyone else to believe you? Looking the part is just the surface; being the part is the true disguise.'

—Andy Lane

My basic profession is as an actor, and I have learnt much about life through working as an actor. Working as an actor is really a spiritual profession, since it means to create life on the stage. It means to play a role totally, while at the same time you know deep down inside yourself that you are not the role that you are playing. Working as an actor gave me early a spiritual discipline, which taught me a lot about awareness and meditation. Life is also about learning to play different roles, and learning to change between different roles with the same easiness that you change shirt.

—Swami Dhyan Giten

Art, especially the stage, is an area where it is impossible to walk without stumbling. There are in store for you many unsuccessful days and whole unsuccessful seasons: there will be great misunderstandings and deep disappointments... you must be prepared for all this, expect it and nevertheless, stubbornly, fanatically follow your own way.

—Anton Chekhov

There we were - demented children mincing about in clothes that no one ever wore, speaking as no man ever spoke, swearing love in wigs and rhymed couplets, killing each other with wooden swords, hollow protestations of faith hurled after empty promises of vengeance - and every gesture, every pose, vanishing into the thin unpopulated air. We ransomed our dignity to the clouds, and the uncomprehending birds listened. Don't you see?! We're actors - we're the opposite of people!

—Tom Stoppard

If you're suddenly doing something you don't want to do for four years, just so you've got something to fall back on, by the time you come out you don't have that 16-year-old drive any more and you'll spend your life doing something you never wanted to do in the first place.

—Ewan McGregor

The American actor is very lucky... Because so little is asked of him.

—Sanford Meisner

Everyone puts them on a pedestal, but we shouldn't. Acting is a service industry, as much as waiting tables. An actor works for us, not the other way around.

—Danika Stone

I am without any doubt whatever a NON-actor. For a start, the gushing pretension of would-be actors puts me off. Ergo ego. I watch them preening in front of the rehearsal mirrors in the drama hall. Just waiting for applause. All they want is to be liked. Plus admired, adored, idolized, flattered, etc. And they're more like groupy than glue. If they're on their own for more than five minutes they get withdrawal symptoms and go walkabout, looking for kindred lost souls to coagulate with.

—Aidan Chambers

You face an audience and prepare to speak. Fear will be there, if you're alive. There is, of course, no shortage of feeling up there. It is an extreme act, unusual, testing you in unparalleled ways. It speaks to the core of who you are, and why you do what you do. These challenges, they exist in life and become acute on stage.

—Richard Maxwell

I don't like any shows very much, if you want to know the truth. They're not as bad as movies, but they're certainly nothing to rave about. In the first place, I hate actors. They never act like people. They just think they do. Some of the good ones do, in a very slight way, but not in a way that's fun to watch. And if any actor's really good, you can always tell he knows he's good, and that spoils it. [...] They didn't act like people and they didn't act like actors. It's hard to explain. They acted more like they knew they were celebrities and all. I mean they were good, but they were too good. When one of them got finished making a speech, the other one said something very fast right after it. It was supposed to be like people really talking and interrupting each other and all. The trouble was, it was too much like people talking and interrupting each other. If you do something t-o-o good, then, after a while, if you don't watch it, you start showing off. And then you're not as good any more.

—J. D. Salinger

They'd lived their lives on tightropes, never knowing where the next paycheck was coming from or if one was coming at all, their personal lives a mishmash of backstage affairs and dressing room brawls endured for the brief heady adrenaline rush brought by the orchestra's overture and glare of white lights.

—Michael Callahan

Every actor is somewhat mad, or else he'd be a plumber or a bookkeeper or a salesman.

—Bela Lugosi

Actors: We have to remind ourselves that it's not about 'getting it right.' There is no 'right.' Your courage to bare your soul is what's right.

—Gregor Collins



Movies will make you famous; Television will make you rich; But theatre will make you good.

—Terrence Mann

The stage is a magic circle where only the most real things happen, a neutral territory outside the jurisdiction of Fate where stars may be crossed with impunity. A truer and more real place does not exist in all the universe.

—P. S. Baber

If you want more people to come to the theatre, don't put the prices at £50. You have to make theatre inclusive, and at the moment the prices are exclusive. Putting TV stars in plays just to get people in is wrong. You have to have the right people in the right parts. Stunt casting and being gimmicky does the theatre a great disservice. You have to lure people by getting them excited about a theatrical experience.

—Catherine Tate

The Director's Role: You are the obstetrician. You are not the parent of this child we call the play. You are present at its birth for clinical reasons, like a doctor or midwife. Your job most of the time is simply to do no harm.

When something does go wrong, however, your awareness that something is awry--and your clinical intervention to correct it--can determine whether the child will thrive or suffer, live or die.

—Frank Hauser

Theater of Cruelty means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And, on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up our personal anatomies, or, like Assyrian emperors, sending parcels of human ears, noses, or neatly detached nostrils through the mail, but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all.

—Antonin Artaud

I long for the simplicity of theatre. I want lessons learned, comeuppances delivered, people sorted out, all before your bladder gets distractingly full. That's what I want. What I know is what we all know, whether we'll admit it or not: every attempt to impose the roundness of a well-made play on reality produces a disaster. Life just isn't so, nor will it be made so.

—John M. Ford

‘This was our last night. We only had one curtain call, Bree. And I thought they were going to give us a standing ovation, but no-o-o-. Do you know why half the audience stood up?’

‘To get a head start on the traffic,’ Bree said.

‘To get a head start on the traffic,’ Antonia agreed in indignation. ‘I mean, here we are, dancing and singing our little guts out, and all those folks want to do is get to bed early. I ask you, whatever happened to common courtesy? Whatever happened to decent manners? Doesn’t anyone care about craft anymore? And on top of that, it’s not even nice.’

—Mary Stanton

The beauty of theatre was that it was a moving, changing art form—only those who watch the same performance night in after night out see the real naturalistic drama at work—the small changes, adjustments, changes in articulation or intonation, the addition of a cough or hiccup, a longer pause rife with more (or less) meaning, the character’s movement across the stage a step slower, a step closer to the audience, the change of a word here and there, an overall change in mood and tone, the actors becoming (or not) the characters more fully, blending in with them, losing themselves in the lines, in the characterizations, in a drama that is simultaneously unfolding and becoming more and more verisimilitudinous as time marches on. This is the real narrative—while the character changes on stage in an instant, the play changes slowly, unnoticeably (unnoticeable to those closest to it perhaps), like the face of a man in his thirties, like his beliefs about life, his motives, all slowly as if duplicating itself day by day, filling itself and becoming more and more itself, the rehearsal of Self, the dress rehearsal of Self, the performance of Self, the extended performance of Self, the encore...—it appears to be the same show, played over and over again with the same details to different crowds, and yet something happens. Something changes. It is not the same show.

—John M. Keller

The intoxication with the theatre, with its limelight, costumes, and masks, and with its passions and conflicts, accords well with the adolescence of a man who was to act his role with an intense sense of the dramatic, and of whose life it might indeed be said that its very shape had the power and pattern of classical tragedy.

—Isaac Deutscher

Don’t act. Be.

—April Henry

I like the ephemeral thing about theatre, every performance is like a ghost—it’s there and then it’s gone.

—Maggie Smith

Theatre is a concentrate of life as normal. Theatre is a purified version of real life, an extraction, an essence of human behaviour that is stranger and more tragic and more perfect than everything that is ordinary about me and you.

—Eleanor Catton

The Theatre of the Absurd, in the sense that it is truly the contemporary theatre, facing as it does man's condition as it is, is the Realistic theatre of our time; and that the supposed Realistic theatre—the term used here to mean most of what is done on Broadway—in the sense that it panders to the public need for self-congratulation and reassurance and presents a false picture of ourselves to ourselves is ... really and truly The Theatre of the Absurd.

—Edward Albee

When you're in a show, all through rehearsals Tech Week hovers out there like a magical holy grail. In reality, Tech Week is always a train wreck of missed cues, forgotten lines, malfunctioning set pieces and short tempers.

—S. M. Stevens

Backstage was chaos distilled into a very small space.

—William Alexander

To enter a theatre for a performance is to be inducted into a magical space, to be ushered into the sacred arena of the imagination.

—Simon Callow

The theatre is a place where one has time for the problems of people to whom one would show the door if they came to one's office for a job.

—Tennessee Williams

I think the same way about theatre, you go out there and you are creating a world for a moment that can actually have a real impact on people, present some kind of story that gives you something to think about when you walk away, feeling enriched - if it works out well.

—Jeffrey Jones

In theatre, the main objective is to make the art happy, not the audience! If you have to choose between the audience and the art, always choose the second! You must know that the audience will constantly pull you down; resist it and fly at the heights like an eagle!

—Mehmet Murat ildan

This feeling of power, it's happiness to sit in a cottage by the Danube among six women who think I'm semi-idiot, and to know that in Paris, the headquarters of intelligence, 500 people are sitting dead-quiet in the auditorium and are foolish enough to expose their brains to my powers of suggestion. Some revolt! But many will go away with my spores in their gray matter. They will go home pregnant with the seed of my soul, and they will breed my brood.

—August Strindberg

The theatre is a tragic place, full of endings and partings and heartbreak. You dedicate yourself passionately to something, to a project, to people, to a family, you think of nothing else for weeks and months, then suddenly it's over, it's perpetual destruction, perpetual divorce, perpetual adieu. It's like *éternel retour*, it's a koan. It's like falling in love and being smashed over and over again.

'You do, then fall in love.'

Only with fictions, I love players, but actors are so ephemeral. And then there's waiting for the perfect part, and being offered it the day after you've committed yourself to something utterly rotten. The remorse, and the envy and the jealousy. An old actor told me if I wanted to stay in the trade I had better kill off envy and jealousy at the start.

—Iris Murdoch

Many in the audience consider leaving.

If anyone leaves, let them leave.

The theatre is not a prison.

If anyone coughs, cough also.

The Theatre is not a sickbed.

We minister to the audience.

We revere the pains of the audience.

—Lem Doolittle

All theatre, by virtue of its being a cultural construct and therefore ideologically inscribed, is political.

—Mark S. Weinberg

I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.

—Oscar Wilde

[Waiting for Godot] has achieved a theoretical impossibility—a play in which nothing happens, that yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. What's more, since the second act is a subtly different reprise of the first, he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice.

—Vivian Mercier

I cannot conceive any work of art as having a separate existence from life itself.

—Antonin Artaud

Words are sacred. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones, in the right order, you can nudge the world a little.

—Tom Stoppard

The theater is the only institution in the world which has been dying for four thousand years and has never succumbed. It requires tough and devoted people to keep it alive.

—John Steinbeck

I wish the stage were as narrow as the wire of a tightrope dancer so that no incompetent would dare step upon it.

—Johann Wolfgang von  
Goethe

On those nights, the words were for me alone. They came up unbidden from my heart. They spilled over my tongue and spilled out my mouth. And because of them, I, who was nothing and nobody, was a prince of Denmark, a maid of Verona, a queen of Egypt. I was a sour misanthrope, a beetling hypocrite, a conjurer's daughter, a mad and murderous king.

—Jennifer Donnelly

Then everyone leaves, and you are left, each night, to your own devices with a crowd of interesting people - most of whom you don't know - sitting in the dark.

—Anna Deavere Smith

Something in me was responding now as the audience responded, not in fear, but in some human way, to the magic of that fragile painted set, the mystery of the lighted world there.

—Anne Rice

The theater is a communal event, like church. The playwright constructs a mass to be performed for a lot of people. She writes a prayer, which is really just the longings of one heart.

—Marsha Norman

If you have a rifle, hanging on the wall in the first act, it should fire in the last act.

—Konstantin  
Stanislavsky

Did I tell you what happened at the play? We were at the back of the theatre, standing there in the dark, when all of a sudden I feel one of 'em tug at my sleeve, whispers, 'Trudy look!' I said, 'Yeah, goosebumps. You definitely got goosebumps. You like the play that much?' They said it wasn't the play that gave 'em goosebumps, it was the audience!

I'd forgot to tell them to watch the play; they'd been watching the audience! Yeah, to see a group of people sitting together in the dark, laughing and crying at the same things...well that just knocked 'em out! They said, 'Trudy, the play was soup, the audience, art.'

—Jane Wagner

I'd forgotten how arrogant people are in the theater, I'm agreeing to starve for a year and he seems to think I should be pleased to have the part.

—Timberlake  
Wertebaker

A few moments after he found himself on the stage amid the garish gas and the dim scenery, acting before the innumerable faces of the void. It surprised him to see that the play which he had known at rehearsals for a disjointed lifeless thing had suddenly assumed a life of its own. It seemed now to play itself, he and his fellow actors aiding it with their parts. When the curtain fell on the last scene he heard the void filled with applause and, through a rift in a side scene, saw the simple body before which he had acted magically deformed, the void of faces breaking at all points and falling asunder into busy groups.

—James Joyce

The general conception that all actors are born exhibitionists is far from the truth. They are quite the opposite. They are shy, frightened people in hiding from themselves- people who have found a way of concealing their secret by footlights, make up and the parts they play. Their own self rejection is what has made most of them actors.

—Moss Hart

And it's a preference, a long-held preference, what you might call a 'habit of mind'—putting words into other people's mouths. And those people are played by people whose profession is to pretend to be other people. For which purpose, they adopt gestures, voices, intonations, even sexual attitudes not their own. On stage, they affect to be ravished and amused by someone whom they will, afterwards, run a mile to avoid having dinner with.

—David Hare

The good die young—but not always. The wicked prevail—but not consistently. I am confused by life, and I feel safe within the confines of the theatre.

—Helen Hayes

Theater is the crucible where we can create the dynamics of life without suffering the flames of their combustion.

—Tom Althouse

An ad for cigars appears in 100,000 newspapers; sales of that brand increase by 3% for a short time thereafter. A new play receives a viciously negative review in a theatrical journal that prints 500 copies; the playwright shoots himself. Who's the better writer?

—Jason Lutes

I was truly happy. But my state was not that of any ordinary satisfaction. It was a joy which stemmed directly from creative, artistic achievement.

—Konstantin  
Stanislavski

When teachers participate in a literary experience with a professionally presented children's play, they are offering their students a text quite different from anything that they will experience within their classrooms. Within this literary experience, teachers join as equals with their students, and each, as audience members within the darkened space of the performance, create their own poems to hold within themselves or share with others.

—James Hugh Comey

Two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. We've never quite made peace with that in the theater.

—Set Designer Robin  
Wagner

'I've never liked the term 'actor'.' Barron spoke slowly, joining hands with the cast members to his left and right. The rest of them formed a circle, also holding hands, and he continued. 'Seriously now, is anyone here 'acting'? Is anyone here pretending?'

'Me, I'm a theater director. One hundred percent, all the time. I'm not pretending, or acting, or trying to fool anyone. This is what I do, and I give it my all—just like you. I look around me, and I don't see a single phony. I see people who give their hearts, their minds, and their very lives to being serious performers on the stage. In the last weeks I've watched every one of you give up the easy life to come here and bust a gut to make this show a reality.

'That's why I call you performers. Not actors—performers. Because when it's time to prepare, you work out every nuance of a role. When it's time to step in front of the crowd, you reach out and pull them in with both hands. When it's time to say your lines, you deliver them with skill and meaning. That's performance. And there's nothing phony about that. There's nothing pretend about that. There's no acting that will take the place of that.

'And so that's my wish for you tonight: Have a great performance. You've done the work, you're ready, and now it's time to show off. Have fun out there, gang. Perform.' [Jerome Barron's opening night pep talk to the cast of *Death Troupe*.]

—Vincent H. O'Neil

Of course we all come to the theatre with baggage. The baggage of our daily lives, the baggage of our problems, the baggage of our tragedies, the baggage of being tired. It doesn't matter what age you are. But if our hearts get opened and released -- well that is what theatre can do, and does sometimes, and everyone is thankful when that happens.

—Vanessa Redgrave

The most effective moments in the theatre are those that appeal to basic and commonplace emotions--love of woman, love of home, love of country, love of right, anger, jealousy, revenge, ambition, lust, and treachery.

—Clayton Hamilton

When you come into the theater, you have to be willing to say, 'We're all here to undergo a communion, to find out what the hell is going on in this world.' If you're not willing to say that, what you get is entertainment instead of art, and poor entertainment at that.

—David Mamet

It is a hopeless endeavour to attract people to a theatre unless they can be first brought to believe that they will never get in.

—Charles Dickens



I personally would like to bring a tortoise onto the stage, turn it into a racehorse, then into a hat, a song, a dragoon and a fountain of water. One can dare anything in the theatre and it is the place where one dares the least.

—Eugene Ionesco

From the start it has been the theatre's business to entertain people ... it needs no other passport than fun.

—Bertolt Brecht

Drama lies in extreme exaggeration of the feelings, an exaggeration that dislocates flat everyday reality.

—Eugene Ionesco

The 'theater' is much the most difficult kind of writing for me, the most naked kind, you're so entirely restricted.... I find myself stuck with these characters who are either sitting or standing, and they've either got to walk out of a door, or come in through a door, and that's about all they can do.

—Harold Pinter

The condition of the theater is always an accurate measure of the cultural health of a nation. A play always exists in the present tense (if it is a valuable one), and its music -- its special noise -- is always contemporary. The most valuable function of the theater as an art form is to tell us who we are, and the health of the theater is determined by how much of that we want to know.

—Edward Albee

With a play, when the curtain goes up and people are in garbage cans, I know I may admire the idea cerebrally, but it won't mean as much to me. I've seen Beckett, along with many lesser avant-gardists, and many contemporary plays, and I can say yes, that's clever and deep but I don't really care. But when I watch Chekhov or O'Neill--where it's men and women in human, classic crises--that I like.

—Woody Allen

I mean there's a certain finality about a movie, when it's done it's done -- that raised eyebrow in that moment will always be that raised eyebrow. Whereas a play only lives as a blueprint for a performance on any given night. There's a reason you can eat popcorn and watch a movie and you can't do that in the theatre. Theatre you have to lean in, you have to tune your ear to the stage and participate.

—Tracy Letts

No theater could sanely flourish until there was an umbilical connection between what was happening on the stage and what was happening in the world.

—Kenneth Tynan

I have never regarded any theater as much more than the conclusion to a dinner or the prelude to a supper.

—Max Beerbohm

The stage is a concrete physical place which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak. I say that this concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech, has first to satisfy the senses, that there is a poetry of the senses as there is a poetry of language, and that this concrete physical language to which I refer is truly theatrical only to the degree that the thoughts it expresses are beyond the reach of the spoken language. These thoughts are what words cannot express and which, far more than words, would find their ideal expression in the concrete physical language of the stage. It consists of everything that occupies the stage, everything that can be manifested and expressed materially on a stage and that is addressed first of all to the senses instead of being addressed primarily to the mind as is the language of words...creating beneath language a subterranean current of impressions, correspondences, and analogies. This poetry of language, poetry in space will be resolved precisely in the domain which does not belong strictly to words...Means of expression utilizable on the stage, such as music, dance, plastic art, pantomime, mimicry, gesticulation, intonation, architecture, lighting, and scenery...The physical possibilities of the stage offers, in order to substitute, for fixed forms of art, living and intimidating forms by which the sense of old ceremonial magic can find a new reality in the theater; to the degree that they yield to what might be called the physical temptation of the stage. Each of these means has its own intrinsic poetry.

—Antonin Artaud

Drama is based on the Mistake. I think someone is my friend when he really is my enemy, that I am free to marry a woman when in fact she is my mother, that this person is a chambermaid when it is a young nobleman in disguise, that this well-dressed young man is rich when he is really a penniless adventurer, or that if I do this such and such a result will follow when in fact it results in something very different. All good drama has two movements, first the making of the mistake, then the discovery that it was a mistake.

—W. H. Auden

It's one of the tragic ironies of the theatre that only one man in it can count on steady work -- the night watchman.

—Tallulah Bankhead

For the theatre one needs long arms; it is better to have them too long than too short. An artiste with short arms can never, never make a fine gesture. The truth, the absolute truth, is that the chief beauty for the theatre consists in fine bodily proportions.

—Sarah Bernhardt

Theatergoing is a communal act; movie going a solitary one.

—Robert Brustein

The novel is more of a whisper, whereas the stage is a shout.

—Robert Holman

I want to give the audience a hint of a scene. No more than that. Give them too much and they won't contribute anything themselves. Give them just a suggestion and you get them working with you. That's what gives the theater meaning: when it becomes a social act.

—Orson Welles

Once, a few years earlier, Jules had gone to see a play at Ash's theater, and afterward, during the 'talkback,' when the audience asked questions of the playwright and of Ash, who'd directed the production, a woman stood up and said, 'This one is for Ms. Wolf. My daughter wants to be a director too. She's applying to graduate school in directing, but I know very well that there are no jobs, and that she's probably only going to have her dreams dashed. Shouldn't I encourage her to do something else, to find some other field she can get into before too much time goes by?' And Ash had said to that mother, 'Well, if she's thinking about going into directing, she has to really, really want it. That's the first thing. Because if she doesn't, then there's no point in putting herself through all of this, because it's incredibly hard and dispiriting. But if she does really, really want it, and if she seems to have a talent for it, then I think you should tell her, 'That's wonderful.' Because the truth is, the world will probably whittle your daughter down. But a mother never should.

—Meg Wolitzer

People see a *Macbeth* film. They imagine they have seen *Macbeth*, and don't want to see it again; so when your Mr. Hackett or somebody comes round to act the play, he finds the house empty. That is what has happened to dozens of good plays whose authors have allowed them to be filmed. It shall not happen to mine if I can help it.

—George Bernard Shaw

A play is fiction—and fiction is fact distorted into truth.

--Edward Albee

A novel is a static thing that one moves through; a play is a dynamic thing that moves past one.

--Kenneth Tynan

Shakespeare has done more for woman than all the other dramatists of the world.

--Robert G. Ingersoll

Shakespeare tells the same stories over and over in so many guises that it takes a long time before you notice.

--Howard Nemerov

I've been teaching Shakespeare for more than 25 years, and it's still astonishing to me how seamlessly Shakespeare combines the extraordinary and the ordinary at so many levels—from scenes that mix sublime pathos with obscene jokes to passages in which epic grandiloquence or rhapsodic lyricism progresses hand in hand with the most conversational diction.

--Yu Jin Ko

Shakespeare very rarely makes the least attempt to surprise by his catastrophes. They are felt to be inevitable, though the precise way in which they will be brought about is not, of course, foreseen.

—Andrew C. Bradley

If you're cast right you can actually just let yourself go because all your gestures will be right, all your intonations will be right because you just somewhere understand who this person is.

—Susan Sullivan

When the entire audience goes silent. All the conversations and rustlings stop, and everyone, at about the same time, falls into quiet anticipation for what is about to happen. This is called the hush over the crowd, but really it's the moment when the crowd itself first forms. The 200 unique people with different thoughts and ideas now become one single entity, joining together for the first time to give their unified attention to the front of the room.

And the strange part is that the audience gives control over to the unknown. They have not seen the movie before. They haven't heard the lecture or seen the play. It's an act of respect and an act of hope—and it's amazing.

--Scott Berkun

I like working on stage because there's something very immediate about it, that interaction with an audience where you immediately hear their reaction, or feel them, whether they're with you.

—Saffron Burrows

The study of acting is not the practice of being fake. It's learning how to become more expressive as yourself and applying that to life on stage and off. All communicators benefit from learning about theater.

--Scott Berkun

Your fear of looking stupid is holding you back!

—Shannon Luxford

An actor's a guy who if you ain't talkin' about him, ain't listening.

—Marlon Brando

Television, the scorned stepchild of drama, may well be the basic theater of our century.

--Paddy Chayefsky

If you have to say something, if you have to encourage for one second a prospective acting student—he should not go in to acting.

—Dabney Coleman

One problem with the marvelous technology that is emerging to empower our minds and science is that it so often neglects music, art, poetry and drama—that is, the spiritual. Our problems are not just scientific and intellectual. We can know what must be done and how to do it...and still not do it.

--Parker Rossman

The trouble is not that there is violence in television. There is violence in *Oedipus*, too, and *Lear* and *Hedda Gabler*. The trouble is that in television the violence is only violence. What speaks in the great tragedies speaks through the Word, speaks to the imagination, speaks for the understanding of human life—its misery—its wonder. But in television the Word is void and the violence is there as violence—like raw sewage in a river.

--Archibald MacLeish

An amateur rehearses until he gets it right, but a professional rehearses until he can't get it wrong.

—Peter Crossley

A symphony is a stage play with the parts written for instruments instead of for actors.

--Colin Wilson

Learning to perform on stage is really learning to live comfortably with fear.

--Isaac Stern

The theatre became my religion, and I wanted to serve it.

—Helen Mirren

Being in front of all these people staring at you and it helps you to dig down and become more emotional and get lost in it as you're feeding on people's energy.

—Fred Durst

To have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive.

—Matthew Arnold

Artistic temperament is the disease that afflicts amateurs.

—Gilbert K. Chesterton

The human soul needs actual beauty more than bread.

--David Herbert  
Lawrence

Women do about all the reading and play-going that is done in America; at least they are responsible for most of the play-going, since men mostly 'go along' under their influence. They keep up most of our music, they maintain most of our painting and sculpture, they are the mainstay of our churches, our educational, cultural, and social institutions, they are the arbiters of taste and style for both sexes and in all particulars.

--Henry A. Beers

An artist lives more passionately, more deeply, with more seeking for life and truth and beauty than any man in the world.

--Charlie Chaplin

The only area where women have achieved equal status is in the profession of acting, and that is because there they are a necessity.

--William Bayer

Everything great in the world comes from neurotics. They alone have founded our religions and composed our masterpieces. Never will the world know all it owes to them nor all they have suffered to enrich us. We enjoy lovely music, beautiful paintings, a thousand intellectual delicacies, but we have no idea of their cost, to those who invented them, in sleepless nights, tears, spasmodic laughter, rashes, asthma, epilepsies, and the fear of death, which is worse than all the rest.

--Marcel Proust

Artists should follow their own visions and create whatever they want. That is because it is precisely the variety of those unique visions of the human condition that gives art its true value. While the world knows and loves the dramas of Shakespeare and still recites his sonnets, only historians of the Elizabethan period can remember the names of the politicians who were his contemporaries. The moral of this story is clear. The value of great art will outlive the political controversies of the moment.

--Playthell Benjamin

The arts are a highway into the soul of the people.

--Arthur Miller

No one begins a career in dance dwelling on thoughts of how difficult, painful and short it might be. But the truth is, dance demands discipline, sacrifice and suffering. Our bodies are the stuff of which this art is made, our dreams and desires given physical form. In dance there is nowhere to hide. The delicate work of revealing ourselves is undertaken with great courage and care....it also takes love, lots of love. And if you don't love dance, don't do it. It's just too hard. And yet, so often when we witness wonderful dance, they make it look so easy....Every time we set foot on stage we risk disappointment and disaster but also elation and transcendence.

—Donna Feore

For an actor, you're rejected eight or ten times a day. All you've got to sell is yourself. You're not selling products, they're not turning down a car, they're turning you down. Most people can't handle that. Most people are essentially not set up that way.

—Barry Corbin

The only line that's wrong in Shakespeare is 'holding a mirror up to nature.' You hold a magnifying glass up to nature. As an actor you just enlarge it enough so that your audience can identify with the situation. If it were a mirror, we would have no art.

—Montgomery Clift

The practice mirror is to be used for the correction of faults, not for a love affair, and the figure you watch should not become your dearest friend.

--Agnes de Mille

You know, the objective of all of the acting classes really was for you to show how you feel, and not to be clever and not to show all the tricks you could do. A lot of people came there with some experience and a lot of times they would bring whatever tricks they had, to be entertaining to the classes. The teachers wanted to strip all those away, and say, 'No, could you be emotionally honest onstage?' The first stage of emotional honesty, or at least the resistance to being emotionally honest, is to be angry. When anger doesn't work, you try crying. But those are all just defense mechanisms to shut off how you actually feel about everything. We all build these sort of walls to keep ourselves from showing our true emotions, because they can be seen as weaknesses.

—Stephen Colbert

The mere mechanical technique of acting can be taught, but the spirit that is to give life to lifeless forms must be born in a man. No dramatic college can teach its pupils to think or to feel. It is Nature who makes our artists for us, though it may be Art who taught them their right mode of expression.

—Oscar Wilde

The theatre was created to tell people the truth about life and the social situation.

—Stella Adler

The ability to lie persuasively is one of the greatest gifts a woman can possess in this life. Some critics, principally men, will argue that deception in women is inherently evil; but having spent the last fifteen years of my life in the theater, I can attest that lying not only is sometimes expedient but can save one's career.

—Amanda DeWees

I know two kinds of audiences only—one coughing, and one not coughing.

—Artur Schnabel

It's important as an actor to learn...what it means to be a small fish in a big pond.

—Anthony Michael Hall



95% of school administrators believe that theatre experiences improve students' overall academic skills.

—2012 *EdTA-Utah State University Survey of Theatre Education Programs in U.S. High Schools*

Imagination! Imagination! I put it first years ago, when I was asked what qualities I thought necessary for success on the stage.

—Ellen Terry

There was a magic to the circus like nothing else. One day, there's an empty field, the next day the magic has come to town. Then, the day after that, the magic has vanished.

—Gary Payne

I used to be under the impression that in some kind of wanky, bullshit way, acting was like therapy: you get in and grapple with and exorcise all those demons inside of you. I don't believe that anymore. It's like a snow shaker. You shake the thing up, but it can't escape the glass. It can't get out. And it will settle until the next time you shake it up.

—Gary Oldman

People come along and impose their own stuff on plays, and it shows.

—Judd Hirsch

To me an audition is 30 crazed people in a room waiting to be axed.

—Kathie Lee Gifford

Acting is constant exploration.

—Paul Guilfoyle

An audience is never wrong. An individual member of it may be an imbecile, but a thousand imbeciles together in the dark—that is critical genius.

—Billy Wilder

I'm the end of the line; absurd and appalling as it may seem, serious New York theater has died in my lifetime.

—Arthur Miller

If you're in a company, you're dancing from 9 a.m. till 7 in the evening, and then you go home and get in a hot tub and get some Epsom salts and try to get your body goin' again. There's no social life, no anything.

—Neve Campbell

Dance is bigger than the physical body. When you extend your arm, it doesn't stop at the end of your fingers, because you're dancing bigger than that; you're dancing spirit.

—Judith Jamison

Twelve to 15 years of acting school, and I am being a bird.

—Joe Pantoliano

No star is a heroine to her makeup artist.

—Richard Corliss

I do think that, for instance, we've been very lucky to have theatrical careers and be associated with Shakespeare which sometimes gives you a kind of bogus kudos.

—Kenneth Branagh

## **MOST EXCELLENT THOUGHTS ON PLAYING SHAKESPEARE**

1. Remember, it's a play, not reality.
2. Obey the metre.
3. Start scenes.
4. Earn a pause.
5. Don't separate.
6. Drive through the speech.
7. Antithesis pauses, up at the ends of lines.
8. Economy, simplicity, and negotiate with humor.
9. You don't have to carry the message; the play does it for you.
10. Trust the play and your casting.

—Dame Judi Dench

I've put in as many as 40 weeks a year on stage. It is lonely and restricted, as all artistic life must necessarily be.

—Lillie Langtry

I used to go with my parents and loved it, I was in school plays, and I started reading plays before I started reading novels. I'll defend it to the hilt. When theatre is good, it is fabulous.

—Patrick Marber

'Dying is easy. Comedy is hard.'

Maybe you've heard that one before. Nobody's quite sure who first said it, but all stand-up comics vouch for its veracity. Live comedy is difficult, dangerous work. Comics 'kill' when they succeed and 'die' when they don't. It's life and death up on that stage all by yourself.

—Robert Love

Personally speaking there's only so long you can go from film to film to film. There's an inspiration an actor gets from the stage.

—Jude Law

The theatre is supremely fitted to say: 'Behold! These things are.' Yet most dramatists employ it to say: 'This moral truth can be learned from beholding this action.'

—Thornton Wilder

The most important thing for acting is to listen to the person you're dealing with.

—Ivan Reitman

The performances you have in your head are always much better than the performances on stage.

—Maggie Smith

I don't know what is better than the work that is given to the actor—to teach the human heart the knowledge of itself.

—Laurence Olivier

Theater really when you think about it contains everything. It can contain film. Film can't contain theater. Music. Dance. Painting. Acting. It's the whole deal. And it's the most ancient. It goes back to the Druids. It was way pre-Christ. It's the form that I feel most at home in, because of that, because of its ability to usurp everything.

—Sam Shepard

Actors without stagehands are naked people standing in the dark trying to emote, and stagehands without actors are at the bar.

—Unknown

Acting is a very limited form of expression, and those who take it seriously are very limited people. I take it seriously.

—Judy Holliday

An actress who has the gift of swaying the emotions of an audience, of compelling tribute of tears, or of moving the public to joyous merriment, cannot always be satisfied to set aside her whole career, in the work that she loves, simply because she is married.

—Billie Burke

The best way to make your audience laugh is to start laughing yourself.

—Oliver Goldsmith

Acting is like a Halloween mask that you put on.

—River Phoenix

I don't get it. I just don't get it. If Art is supposed to imitate Life, why do they want all the actors to be thin? There are fat people in the world. Shouldn't there be a few of us actors to represent them?

—Camryn Manheim

Any actress who appears in public without being well-groomed is digging her own grave.

—Joan Crawford

Plays should start later and finish earlier.

—David Mamet

You think about it, having a great time at the theater defies logic in many ways. We enter a space where we're surrounded by strangers. We're bombarded with unusual actions and images, and understanding them can depend on deciphering a wordless language of symbols.

Once meaning sets in, we risk displaying emotional reactions in public, which in other situations might lead to feelings of shame.

Yet, on a good night, at least, when we're at a live performance we somehow overcome our inhibitions to laugh more, cry more and generally enjoy yourselves more than when we're watching a show at home.

The experience may absorb us so much that we even lose ourselves and feel connected to something larger.

—Sarah L. Kaufman

A narrative conveys information from one person's brain to another's in an effective way.

We can learn vicariously through another's experience from a safe space, without really being involved, which is why storytelling is so powerful. We embark on a journey constructed by someone else and, as we see in 'Swan Lake,' we can empathize with what the characters go through without suffering the full force of fresh heartbreak.

'Swan Lake' tells a rather straightforward story of good vs. evil. It centers on Princess Odette, who has been put under a spell and must live a double life as a swan by day, woman by night, until she finds true love.

Prince Siegfried pledges himself to her, but he breaks his vow when a seductive villainess named Odile, also known as the 'Black Swan,' fools him into betraying Odette.

The ballet ends in tragedy—and paradoxically, we like that. Research shows we tend to empathize more with characters in sad stories, and this may trigger hormones related to consoling and bonding.

—Sarah L. Kaufman

When you go to the ballet— or any other show—you're entering into a highly controlled experience. If everything works as planned, all the elements contribute to a kind of shared consciousness.

In effect, your billions of brain cells are interacting with billions of other brain cells, busily making the microscopic connections that yoke together the brains of those present with an almost inescapable force.

This happens from the moment we automatically tune ourselves to the audience. Soon we're vicariously feeling and making meaning out of the actions on stage, watching a story unfold that connects us with the performers, responding to the magnetism of specific visual cues, experiencing heightened emotions as music and movement entwine and even bonding with those around us.

It's just as artists— choreographers, directors, playwrights, composers, performers—intended. And this magical transformation starts within the architecture of one brain. Yours.

—Sarah L. Kaufman

Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way.

—Edward de Bono

Security has no place in the life of an actress.

—Claire Bloom

Those who decide to use leisure as a means of mental development, who love good music, good books, good pictures, good plays, good company, good conversation—what are they? They are the happiest people in the world.

--William Lyon Phelps

I remember certain people in the audience laughing and I wanted to ask: 'What are you laughing at? This isn't funny.' Now I realize that laughter can come from insecurity. They don't know how they should be feeling.

—Jim Dale

It [the circus] was my obsession. I loved odd things: the smells, the sawdust, the dirtiness, the fact that it was in a tent. It was a magical world. I wanted to be a troubadour like that.

—Elizabeth Streb

Ballet is completely unnatural to the body, just being turned-out... it's not the way your body is supposed to function, so you actually train your body to be a different structure than you were born with.

—Neve Campbell

What is acting but the study of human behavior?

—Amy Smart

I cannot go to the Opera, because I have forsworn all expense which does not end in pleasing me.

—Charles Townshend

Age to me means nothing. I can't get old—I'm working. I was old when I was twenty-one and out of work. As long as you're working, you stay young. When I'm in front of an audience, all that love and vitality sweeps over me and I forget my age.

—George Burns

Actors don't retire—they get retired.

—Christopher Walken

The actor depends wholly on himself. He gives his performance in what, to him, seems the most effective manner.

—Bela Lugosi

There is an audience for every play; it's just that sometimes it can't wait long enough to find it.

—Shirley Booth

Acting isn't a singular profession, it is a collaborate profession.

—Edie McClurg

The more prepared I am, the more I'll be in control, less nervous, less stressed and more focused.

—Marilu Henner

I think the composer and production staff of an opera have a real responsibility to use visual elements of all kinds to make clear to the American audience, at any rate, exactly what is going on.

—John Eaton

You get to act for a living. You're fortunate. So act like it.

—Jeremy London

Literature, although it stands apart by reason of the great destiny and general use of its medium in the affairs of men, is yet an art like other arts. Of these we may distinguish two great classes: those arts, like sculpture, painting, acting, which are representative, or as used to be said very clumsily, imitative; and those, like architecture, music, and the dance, which are self-sufficient, and merely presentative.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

The curious fact is that biology tells us nothing about desire. And, when you think about it, culture—novels, movies, opera, and quite a lot of painting—is about desire, how we manage desire, how we suffer from it, and how it brings us joy when we get things right. A story without desire—and that means without the insistence of desire—will be empty, dry, and more or less aimless. That is one reason we read novels, to see how people fall into awkward moral situations and then try to extricate themselves. This is why there is so much anguish in the world: frustrated desire is every bit as miserable as poverty, because desire is no respecter of one's position in life: everyone goes through it.

--Peter Watson

Poetry, Shakespeare and opera, are like mumps and should be caught when young. In the unhappy event that there is a postponement to mature years, the results may be devastating.

--Dimitris Mita

My father said, If you want to do acting, you have to be successful, which is a silly thing to say.

—Diane Cilento

If you're successful, acting is about as soft a job as anybody could ever wish for. But if you're unsuccessful it's worse than having a skin disease.

—Marlon Brando

Theater is a reflection of society. It shows the world its issues and makes people aware of how to fix them. Theater not only tell stories of the past, but shows us how to shape the future.

—Madison McAllister

Theater teaches you how to work with people. Someone once told me, 'The most important person on the stage is the person next to you.' Although I didn't understand it at the time, I now know exactly what was being said to me. Everyone assumes actors only care about standing center stage in the spotlight, but let me tell you that is only true some of the time. No one can act alone. Every scene in the show involves having to connect with your partner(s) on stage. Furthermore, pretty much every song is about someone else or something else other than yourself. Being part of the cast teaches teamwork just like sports do. No one understands the word family quite like a theater kid. The amount of time spent together in rehearsals never fails to lead to the best friendships—there's nothing more bonding than staying at school until 10:45 p.m. running the show or going through what seems like 100 light cues.

—Madison McAllister

Theatre humbles you. There is something so vulnerable about performing—you stand in front of hundreds or thousands of people saying 'this is me. This is my talent. This is my heart.' Performers reveal their true selves every single time they step on stage, no doubt aware that they are going to receive countless critiques. There's nothing worse than an egotistical performer thinking they have nothing left to fix...If that were the case with everyone, there would be no need for directors who shape us into the best performers we can be. Performing in a show teaches a person how to take criticism and apply it. It teaches them to be humble and accept judgment gracefully. It also teaches them to know their own self-worth and be confident in whatever they bring to the stage.

—Madison McAllister



People automatically assume that if they take a theater class they'll become associated with the term 'theater geek' (which let me say, I proudly attribute to myself). Some people know they might love the arts but their parents force them to play sports or join the engineering club. Maybe they're just too scared to take a chance or go against whatever seems to be the most popular thing to do. If more people had access to a theater class, I believe our world might just be a little more open-minded, and a little bit happier. Theatre is truly magical, and I hope that someday, everyone will have the opportunity to experience it.

—Madison McAllister

Learning how to act involves sharing thoughts and ideas, giving and receiving a lot of constructive feedback, and supporting your fellow actors as you work to make each other better in a safe and supportive environment because theater is truly one of those things where it is one for all and all for one. If one actor is down or not as good as the others the whole show goes down. Caring for each of your fellow colleagues and their performance as equally as we care for ourselves is not something that is common in our everyday life, it's rather the other way round; trying to excel whilst keeping others down. Trusting your troupe is another lesson theater teaches its people. If you don't put trust in your scene mates, you're just a school kid standing on a raised platform.

—Sara Seif Solaiman

Drama is a moment of intense life...an activity of the souls of the characters.

—William Butler Yeats

The school play allows students of varying abilities to be involved creatively in a major extracurricular activity whose success is dependent upon its enlisting the talents of actors, musicians, dancers, directors and (in some cases) writers, as well as those of students competent in electricity, carpentry, painting, printing, sewing and a host of other skills. Probably the school drama provides an outlet for a more diverse group of students than any other school activity. The student who is weak academically can work side-by-side—and on an equal footing—with the student who is academically talented. The non-reader can be as fully involved as the speed reader. The shy, retiring artist can contribute significantly without ever being exposed to that direct contact with an audience which he might find threatening; yet, by making his contribution well, he might be moving several steps toward building the kind of self-confidence which will eventually make him less shy and retiring.

—R. Baird Shuman

A nation which does not help and does not encourage its theater is, if not dead, dying; just as the theater which does not feel the social pulse, the historical pulse, the drama of its people, and catch the genuine color of its landscape and of its spirit, with laughter or with tears, has no right to call itself a theater, but an amusement hall, or a place for doing that dreadful thing known as 'killing time'.

—Federico Garcia Lorca

Art has been said to imitate reality. Probably no form of art captures the essence of reality more nearly than drama in all its aspects. Acting, writing, stagecraft, reading, moving, singing, speaking, dancing, critiquing: these are all major parts of dramatic activity. Drama is discovery in the best sense, but it is also invention. It is complicated and sophisticated even in its simplest forms, yet it is accessible to people of all persuasions and abilities. If our schools would heed the current cry to return to the basics, probably drama is the area to which they might most legitimately return, for within drama are to be found the most enduring fundamentals of human society and endeavor.

—R. Baird Shuman

Drama in the classroom can provide action; experimentation; exploration of character, motive, and text. Because it provides expanded contexts for language learning in a cooperative social setting, drama in the classroom offers educational benefits in every area of current concern:

- builds skills in reading and oral and written language
- increases student motivation
- improves group interaction by using formats of group work and cooperative learning and avoids pitfall of these formats by showcasing each individual's contribution to the group effort
- individualizes instruction, allowing of remediation or enrichment through choice of materials.
- utilizes classroom texts and materials for scriptwriting
- uses performance-based assessment rather than test-based grading
- involves students in decision-making
- encourages creativity
- develops critical thinking and analytic skills in study of character and script
- encourages understanding and tolerance of differences by having students assume a variety of roles and listen to a variety of voices
- involves parents as audience for performance.

—Eleanor Albert

Drama activities can be used with great success in science, social studies, geography, math, and foreign language classes or in interdisciplinary or integrated classes. These activities provide a focus for integration of language skills with other subjects while broadening and enhancing the learning in all the disciplines:

- Monologues using historical documents, letters, journals, or excerpts from autobiographies reveal the human element in work in science math, or history.
- Creative drama scenarios encourage exploration of the complex contexts of scientific discoveries or political decisions.
- Improvisation provides a means to speculate about possible solutions to current concerns, to practice foreign language vocabulary, and to encourage creative problem-solving.
- Stories on Stage scripts dramatize scenes from young adult literature dealing with issues related to study in many disciplines (ecology, health, technology, world cultures).
- Tableaux show shapes in math, events in history, idioms or phrases in foreign language.
- Role-playing conveys the multiple perspectives involved in political or social decision-making. Interview ‘famous people,’ or involve proponents of a cause in a face-to-face meeting with opponents.

—Eleanor Albert

Flies purify the air, and plays—the morals.

—Anton Chekhov

Why do drama/theatre? Unlike visual art, music, and dance, theatre is the only art form which focusses on the symbolic representation of human behavior in action. Drama/theatre engages the whole student in physical, mental, emotional, social, and aesthetic ways. Of all the art forms, theatre is the most human because its purpose and mode of expression allow it to closely approximate daily life. As a mirror of the human condition, theatre provokes recognition and identification and inspires reflection about life. At its best, theatre permits students to transcend immediate school reality and to acknowledge their kinship with the human family. Because theatre is an amalgam of all the arts, it has unusual power to inform and teach as it entertains. While ‘playing’ with their fears, hopes, dreams, and aspirations, drama allows students to make meaning that enhances the possibility of their knowing and living successfully with one another. Paradoxically, theatre thus provides us with the means of escaping from life in order to confront it.

—*American Alliance for  
Theatre and  
Education*

DRAMA refers to the study of the art form through an improvisational process-centered form of theatre in which participants are guided by a teacher to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experience. In root form, drama is the process of taking on the role of the other—understanding, feeling, expressing, and experiencing multiple perspectives of characters created by the players themselves or suggested by various characters in all forms of literature. The primary purpose of drama in the classroom is to develop the whole student and to facilitate learning by the participants rather than to train actors or to create a performance for an audience. At the elementary level especially, the primary emphasis is on personal and social development, creative expression, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills inherent in dramatic conflict. The essence of this definition is known variously as creative drama, improvisation, and developmental drama.

THEATRE refers to the study of the art form through performance-centered activities involving an audience. Theatre is the product of the dramatic process. After building on the vocabulary and human tools of drama at earlier grade levels, secondary school students now learn the technical crafts of their critical thinking skills through the study of acting techniques, scene stagecraft, playwriting, play production, and theatre attendance.

—*Kansas State  
Department of  
Education*

Drama/theatre is basic to education as an essential and integral part of a school curriculum. This art form provides students with intellectual resources (e.g. solving human problems from multiple points of view) and develops within students a capacity for creative, emotional expression. Drama/theatre contributes a richness to the quality of our lives by its representation of the human condition.

—Lee Droegemueller

In addition to providing students with opportunities to experience cultural diversity, theatre education enables them to develop self-confidence and to improve their communication skills—two invaluable qualities for the twenty-first century.

—Timothy Dyer

The measure and mirror of every great age—classical Greece, medieval Europe, Elizabethan England, neoclassical France and mid-twentieth century America—are shaped and recorded by its theatre. We owe our own age no less, and the place to start is in the secondary school.

—David Ball

Of the arts, theatre is perhaps the most encompassing, for it not only embraces both the visual and performing arts, but also develops the capacity for a critical engagement with a literary text. Its great potential is as an essential link to an interdisciplinary approach to teaching.

—Graham Down

Theatre is a metaphoric representation of human behavior. A collaborative artistic expression, to which some of the world's greatest artists have contributed, theatre has traditionally served society by depicting individuals engaged in the full range of experience. Because it explores the idea of 'I am human, therefore nothing human is alien to me,' theatre encourages us to share intellectually and emotionally, to explore universal concerns, and to renew the spirit.

Theatre arts is an integral part of the academic curriculum which uniquely integrates major aspects of other fields of study into its own. Systematic and continued theatre experiences in education provide learners with opportunities to master basic skills, to inquire and discover, to create, and to explore values. While some students demonstrate special talent and should be assisted in preparing for professional theatre and related careers, all students are entitled to share in theatre experiences which encourage them to develop their internal and external resources, to explore their creative potential, to investigate the social and historical context in which they live, and to expand their critical acumen.

—*Texas Education  
Agency*

Rooted in the universal need for expressive communication, theatre imitates and symbolizes human action in order to explore thought, feeling, and behavior. Of all the art forms, theatre is the most human because its alignment of purpose and mode of expression allow it to closely approximate daily life.

The components of theatre are text, actors, director, designers, technicians, and audience—present in differing degrees according to intention, nature, and setting of the theatrical endeavor. Each is influenced by time, place, culture, and personal individuality.

As a mirror of the human condition, theatre provokes recognition and identification and inspires reflection. At its best, theatre permits us to transcend immediate reality and to acknowledge our kinship with the human family.

—*Texas Education  
Agency*

Theatre is not a game. A good theatre program should teach honesty. It should teach students to ask, How do I own this part? How do I make it real?....In a good theatre program, students demonstrate such outcomes as creative thinking; teamwork; the ability to produce, direct, and act in a stage production, as well as to write dramatic scripts; a knowledge of the conventions of theatre—both on and off stage—along with the ability to recognize good theatre; and an understanding of the subtle tonalities of a character, with the ability to communicate this to an audience. Theatre is a marvelous tool for teaching and learning, and the embodiment of the work ethic. All the things that people say they want in the work community, students can learn in theatre.

—Mike Auer

Need I point out that dramatic literature—with its unique demands upon the reader to infer, to interpret, and to imaginatively flesh out the bones of a script—should be a vital part of...a [school] program? What is closer to experience than a play which is, by its very nature, a selection of life's most vivid and eventual moments? And what can speak more directly to the emotions than a form which communicates not only verbally but visually and aurally as well?

—Dorothy E. Matthews

Ancient Greeks considered plays as part of a religious festival, an annual community affair where people of all ages assembled to see enactments of legends with which they were already familiar. Theater to them meant a form of ritual: the plays hammered home the necessity for men to live lives of moderation, avoiding excess pride lest they offend the gods. The acting area itself, an outside circle or dancing place, reminded the audience of the seriousness of the drama, for in its center was an altar to the gods and within its circumference a stately chorus chanted odes counseling prudence and humility. How different is the idea of a theater revealed in Elizabethan drama! Plays were presented for commercial profit by professional acting companies, so the tastes and desires for the theater-goer were naturally catered to. A love of physical action, an exuberant patriotism, a sense of humor, and a taste for the spectacular and grotesque—witches, ghosts, insanity, blood, and gore—the fact that the audiences attended the theater primarily to be entertained certainly can account for the multilevel appeal in Shakespeare.

—Dorothy E. Matthews

Many differences between Greek and Shakespearean plays can also be seen if one considers the physical theater. Actors in the time of Sophocles performed in an outdoor area that could be most aptly compared to a modern football field. In order to be seen by spectators sitting in the top rows, the players had to wear padded costumes and elevated shoes; in order to be heard they spoke through crude amplifiers constructed within their large cumbersome masks. Is it any wonder the script does not call for rollicking stage action? Since speeches were often not audible to everyone, they were often accompanied by pantomimic gestures and choreographed reactions on the part of an ever-responsive chorus. Certainly one would not expect the dialogue in a Greek play to be subtle or fast-moving. On the other hand, the Shakespearean actor was physically close to his observers, who almost surrounded him in a small intimate theater. This proximity offered Elizabethan playwrights good opportunity to communicate with the audience through familiar asides, facial expressions, and soliloquies. The fairly large apron stage projecting into the seating area allowed much freedom of movement for actors, who could stage battles, fence, or engage in any kind of horseplay the dramatist might care to devise. A Shakespearean script reflects the flexibility that the Elizabethan theater, with its many unlocalized acting areas, provided.

—Dorothy E. Matthews

Theater of War: an innovative public health project that presents readings of ancient Greek plays, including Sophocles' *Ajax*, as a catalyst for town hall discussions about the challenges faced by service men and women, veterans, their families, caregivers and communities.

—Bryan Doerries

Through tragedy, the great Athenian poets were not articulating a pessimistic or fatalistic view of human experience; nor were they bent on filling audiences with despair. Instead, they were giving voice to timeless human experiences—of suffering and grief—that, when viewed by a large audience that had shared those experiences, fostered compassion, understanding and a deeply felt interconnection. Through tragedy, the Greeks faced the darkness of human existence as a community.

—Bryan Doerries

It has been suggested that ancient Greek drama was a form of storytelling, communal therapy and ritual reintegration for combat veterans by combat veterans. Sophocles himself was a general. The audiences for whom these plays were performed were undoubtedly composed of citizen-soldiers. Also, the performers themselves were most likely veterans or cadets.

Seen through this lens, ancient Greek drama appears to have been an elaborate ritual aimed at helping combat veterans return to civilian life after deployments during a century that saw 80 years of war. Plays like Sophocles' *Ajax* read like a textbook description of wounded warriors, struggling under the weight of psychological and physical injuries to maintain their dignity, identity and honor.

—Bryan Doerries

There is a story told of the famous Russian director Stanislavski, the father or the grandfather of what is now called method acting. According to the story, Stanislavski was telling his pupils how to bring on tears. 'You learn all about the character,' he said. 'Where character was born, where character's parents were born. You learn what character thinks, how character eats, when character sleeps, what character dreams, the way character makes love. You think and you concentrate and you study character and you know character and then—you are character. So when it is time for character to cry, you cry.'

'But, professor,' a student interrupted, 'suppose I do all these things and still, when I'm out on stage, the tears won't come.'

'In that case,' Stanislavski said, 'you pull a hair in your nose.'

—Mickey Rooney

A writer can write, a painter can paint, a composer can compose by himself. But an actor cannot work individually. He needs a script, a stage, a performing crew, a group of technicians and, if he has a normal ego, encouragement.

—Mickey Rooney

Dinner theater is anti-culture.

—John Simon

Sasha Guitry, long-time favorite of the Paris theater, had a father, Lucien, who was equally famous in his day. Lucien, among other things, was noted for the perfection of his make up for various of his starring roles. For example, he had a photo of Pasteur pasted on his mirror and, while visitors gaped, he would make up for the role, looking so exactly like the photo when he was finished that no one could detect any difference whatever. Nor was there any. What the wily Guitry had done was to make himself up first as Pasteur, then have himself photographed—then substitute the result on his mirror in place of the original!

—Bennett Cerf



Ruth Gordon once described a new play [to George Kaufman]. ‘There’s no scenery at all,’ she explained. ‘In the first scene, I’m on the left side of the stage, and the audience has to imagine I’m eating dinner in a crowded restaurant. Then in Scene Two I run over to the right side of the stage and the audience imagines I’m home in my own drawing room.’ ‘And the second night’ nodded Kaufman, ‘you have to imagine there’s an audience out front.’

—Bennett Cerf

He [George S. Kaufman] keeps a close check on his productions, lest the actors let down, as they do so frequently in the long-run successes. Late in the run of *Of Thee I Sing* he sent a wire to one of the stars, William Gaxton, which read, ‘Am watching show from rear of orchestra. Wish you were with me.’

—Bennett Cerf

In another hit, the leading actor began to change his part to suit himself. Kaufman [George S.] brought him back to scratch with a note that began, ‘Your performance grows more scintillating every evening. Sorry I can’t say the same about the the lines.’

—Bennett Cerf

He [George S. Kaufman] has done the best work he could on every occasion; he is master of the destructive jest; he has made the wisecrack part of our language; he has given something distinctive, compact in form, dynamic in tempo, to American drama.

—Brooks Atkinson

George Kaufman is one of the few important figures in the theater who have resisted the blandishments of Hollywood. Except for the briefest of intervals, he has declined fantastic offers from picture studios, in order to stay in the legitimate theater, where he belongs. He has helped keep the American drama on its course when it was floundering desperately

—Bennett Cerf

In my experience it’s not essential to get on with the person that you’re acting opposite.

—Hugh Dancy

If you’ve ever been around a group of actors, you’ve noticed, no doubt, that they can talk of nothing else under the sun but acting. It’s exactly the same way with baseball players. Your heart must be in your work.

—Christy Mathewson

The famed Greek dramatist's [Aeschylus] (c. 525-456 B.C.) tragic trilogy is thought to have reframed the Trojan War as a reckoning with contemporary Athenian democracy. An estimated total of more than 80 of his works are lost to history. Seven plays survive.

—Duncan Barile

So much of being an actor isn't so great—the auditioning, the rejection, the financial insecurity.

—Douglas Wood

Know when your time is over. It's the only advice I have. Hell, I knew twenty-five years ago it wasn't going to last. Sooner or later, the demand won't be there, and you better get ready for it. I know actresses who go ape if they're not invited to a party. What the hell is that? I am content. Happiness is within yourself. Get ready for the dream to fade. So I'm no longer in demand, but so what? I see no reason to go into a decline or hit the bottle or sink into a melancholy depression. I've had my time and it was lovely. And I'm very grateful for it. But now I move over and make room for somebody else....What the hell. Whatever I had, it worked, didn't it?

--Barbara Stanwyck

High school students engaged in actor training develop a higher level of empathy, heightened understanding of what others are thinking and feeling, and are better able to control their own positive and negative emotions

—*Mind, Brain and  
Education*  
(2011)

Only 15% of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge. The other 85% comes from well-developed soft-skills, things like the ability to listen, artistic sense, nonverbal communication, enthusiasm, and storytelling. Isn't this the focus of our work in theater?

—Patricia Raun

It's so easy to lose faith and become lost in all of the politics of the world. That's why we need the arts. To sublimate our frustration and anger into something beautiful. Freud called sublimation a virtuous defence mechanism because it is in the arts that we can find our humanity.

--Kamand Kojouri

The pit of a theatre is the one place where the tears of virtuous and wicked men alike are mingled.

—Denis Diderot

I knew exactly when the fever had struck. I had been reading *Hamlet* in an English class at school. Everyone else stumbled, puzzling over the strange words. Then it had been my turn, and the language had suddenly woken in me, so that my heart and lungs and tongue and throat were on fire. Later, I understood that this was why people spoke of Shakespeare as a god. At the time, I felt like weeping. Somebody had released me from dumbness, from utter isolation. I knew that I could live inside these words, that they would give me a shape, a shell.

--Amanda Craig

In theatre, you have the power to bring voice to those who have been marginalized, discriminated against, left out, overlooked, or silenced.

—Dr. Monique M. Chism

### **THEATRE IS A REAL MAJOR. WITH READING AND ESSAYS AND CLASSES.**

I say that because a lot of people sign up to be theatre majors because they thought it would be all fun and games. It's not. Restoration Comedies are not funny. You will have to read a lot of Shakespeare.

Also being a theatre major means you are constantly in a state of learning. Even after graduation actors continue to take acting lessons, tech majors go to seminars and workshops, it really never ends. Some students even go forward and eventually get an MFA. Technology and technique are both constantly changing, and if we want to stay relevant in the field, we have to keep refining our skills. If structured education is not for you, theatre is not the way to escape it.

—Michaela Bulkley

Perfectionists by nature have a fear of failure and disorganization.

Theatre is disorganized, and you fail more time that you don't. You audition hundreds of times to get one role. You design six different sets to have the director like the first one the best. Production meetings normally include arguments and bad coffee. If you're expecting Pinterest, you're in the wrong major.

There are ways around it, as I am a perfectionist myself. Yes you did put diffusions in every single light on stage and the director changed his mind, but think of the workout you get from climbing all those ladders again! Sometimes you have to cry in the bathroom and move on, and make sure you don't take it personally. I enjoy stage management and producing, because then I do get to use those cute charts I found on Pinterest, and I still get to be in theatre.

—Michaela Bulkley

Theatre is the world's largest group project. You have to work together and you have to pull your weight. If you hate group projects, don't be a theatre major. You will [also] not be famous overnight. Even 'Hamilton' took years and years of work.

Also if you are in theatre because you want to be famous, you're not in theatre for the right reason. Theatre is about the love of the art and the love of storytelling. Being in theatre because you want to be famous is like doing volunteer work just to put it on your resume. It's fake. Theatre is when people are most authentic and vulnerable, and being fake will not get you very far.

—Michaela Bulkley

## **WHY TEACH THEATRE IN OUR SCHOOLS?**

Theatre is a SCIENCE.

Theatre is MATHEMATICAL.

Theatre is a FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

Theatre is HISTORY.

Theatre is PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

Theatre is LANGUAGE ARTS.

Theatre is BUSINESS.

Theatre is TECHNOLOGY.

Theatre is ECONOMICS.

Theatre is taught in schools

Not because you are expected to major in theatre,

Not because you are expected to perform all through life,

Not so you can relax,

Not so you can have fun,

But

So you will recognize BEAUTY,

So you will be SENSITIVE,

So you will be closer to an INFINITE BEYOND THIS WORLD,

So you will have more LOVE,

More COMPASSION,

More GENTLENESS,

More GOOD,

In short,

More LIFE.

Of what value will it be to make a prosperous living unless you know how to live?

That is why theatre is taught in our schools.

—*Quincy Community  
Theatre*

Theatre skills can and will be used throughout students' lives, whether they take to the stage or not. Someday a student may become a successful star of stage and screen, but more likely, the classroom is filled with young people who will become active, informed, and empathetic audience members.

They may use their improvisation skills to handle problems on a job or provide positive service to a challenging customer. They may make presentations to a board of directors or need to give an announcement in front of a large group of people. OR, someday, they may read and tell tales to their own children, using animated voices and sound effects to enliven the stories.

—*Quincy Community  
Theatre*

## **25 SPECIAL ADVANTAGES THE THEATRE MAJOR HAS**

Here's a list of twenty-five skills, traits, and qualities of personality that are usually well-developed in individuals who complete four years of undergraduate theatre study.

Take special note of them. They are more extensive and important than perhaps you recognize.

As you think about them, consider how many of these advantages are unique to theatre majors—and that you have far more advantages than majors in most other disciplines.

### **Oral Communication Skills**

Many students find that theatre helps them develop the confidence that's essential to speaking clearly, lucidly, and thoughtfully.

Acting onstage teaches you how to be comfortable speaking in front of large audiences, and some of your theatre classes will give you additional experience talking to groups. Furthermore, your work on crews has taught you that clear, precise, and well-organized oral communications are best. Oral communication skills are so important to some employers that they often send management trainees to special workshops. You already have an advantage.

### **Creative Problem Solving Abilities**

Most people expect theatre students to exhibit creativity in such areas as acting, design, playwrighting or directing, and many companies do recruit creative thinkers. But employers are not always aware that theatre experience also helps you learn creative problem-solving techniques that are applicable to many jobs. Tell them!

For one example, tech theatre work—building scenery, hanging lights, making props, running the show, and so on—is a particularly good way to learn how to think on your feet, to identify problems, evaluate a range of possible solutions, and figure out what to do.

The same is true of almost every aspect of theatre. Directing. Design. Acting. Playwriting. Management. And more.

The point here is that your creative ability, what you've learned about using creative processes to solve problems, can be directly applicable to virtually any job you may have.

Most major companies believe that a creative problem-solver will become a good employee. That's you.

### **More than 'get it done'**

But theatre students learn that just 'getting it done' isn't enough. Not at all. It goes beyond that. You learn to do it correctly. In theatre we learn that merely "getting the show on the boards" is pure bush league and totally unacceptable. Whatever your theatrical job--tech, performing, research, management—it has to be done right. You learn to take pride in doing things at your very best level. Of course an employer will value that trait.

### **Motivation and Commitment**

Being involved in theatre productions and classes demands commitment and motivation. These are qualities that college theatre faculty members and, in some measure, you and your fellow students, probably already possess. By example, we teach each other that success comes to those who are committed to the task at hand. Few other disciplines you study will so strongly help you develop motivation and commitment.

Many theatre students learn to transfer that attribute from theatre to other activities such as classes and jobs. For employers, that positive attitude is essential.

### **Willingness to Work Cooperatively**

Your work in theatre companies teaches you how to work effectively with different types of people—often very different types!

Theatre demands that participants work together cooperatively for the production to success; there is no room for 'we' versus 'they' behavior; the 'star' diva is a thing of the past. Your colleagues will usually let you know when you violate the team spirit of a production.

In theatre, it's important that each individual supports the others involved. Employers will be pleased to know that you understand how to be a team player.

### **The Ability to Work Independently**

In theatre, you're often assigned tasks that you must complete without supervision. Crew chiefs. Directing. Putting together this flat, finding that prop, working out characterization outside of rehearsals. It's left up to you to figure out how best to achieve the goal. The ability to work independently is a trait employers look for in their workers.

### **Time-budgeting Skills**

When you're a student, being involved in theatre forces you to learn how to budget your time. You need to schedule your days very carefully if you want to keep up your grades while you're busy with rehearsals, work calls, and the other demands that theatre makes on your time. Good time management skills are enormously important to employers.

### **Initiative**

Personnel managers call people who approach work with initiative and enterprise 'self-starters,' people who do what needs to be done without waiting to be asked, without needing to be told.

The complexities of a theatrical production demand individuals who are willing to voluntarily undertake any task that needs to be done in order for the production to succeed. In theatre, we're all self-starters. We learn how to take initiative, to move a project from initial concept to finality—and to do it well.

### **Promptness and Respect for Deadlines**

Tardiness is never acceptable in theatre because it shows a lack of self-discipline, and more importantly, a lack of consideration for others. Being late for a rehearsal or a work call or failing to finish an assigned task on time damages a production and adversely affects the work of many other people. Theatre demands that you learn to arrive on time and meet scheduled deadlines.

That's a job-skill. Employers appreciate workers who are on time and do their work as scheduled.

### **Acceptance of Rules**

In theatre you work within the structure of a set of procedures and rules that deal with everything from shop safety to behavior at auditions, rehearsals and work

calls. You learn that you must be a 'good follower.' Theatre teaches you the importance of rules, a concept that's valued in any organization.

### **The Ability to Learn Quickly—AND Correctly**

Theatre students, whether they're memorizing lines or learning the technical aspects of a production, must have the ability to absorb a vast quantity of material quickly—and accurately. Your work in college theatre will show that you have the ability to grasp complex matters in a short period of time, a highly-valued trait to employers.

Note that part of this ability is another significant trait: knowing how to listen. If you don't listen, you're likely to make some major error that will damage the production. Listening is a skill for any job and an employer will respect your ability to listen and comprehend.

### **Respect for Colleagues**

In theatre you discover that a successful production requires contributions from everybody who's involved. Mutual respect is essential. Working on a production teaches us to respect and trust the abilities and talents of our colleagues. A prospective employer will appreciate the fact that you have learned the importance of respecting your co-workers.

### **Respect for Authority**

Only one person can be in charge of any given portion of a production. The director. The shop foreman. The tech director. The designer. Theatre teaches you to willingly accept and respect authority. That's a trait employers look for in their workers.

### **Adaptability and Flexibility**

Theatre students must be adaptable and flexible. You need to be willing to try new ideas, accept new challenges, and have the ability to adapt to constantly changing situations and conditions. In one production you may be a member of the prop crew; in the next perhaps you're in charge of makeup, publicity or the box office; in a third production you might have a leading role.

A worker who is versatile and flexible is highly valued to most employers; both traits prove that you are able and willing to learn new things.

### **The Ability to Work Under Pressure**

Theatre work often demands long hours. There's pressure—often, as you know well, a lot of pressure. It's important that everyone involved with a production be able to maintain a cooperative and enthusiastic attitude under pressure. The ability to remain poised under such tensions is an asset that will help you cope with stress in other parts of your life, including your job.



### **A Healthy Self-Image**

To work in theatre, you must know who you are and how to project your individuality. But at the same time, it's important to recognize the need to make yourself secondary to the importance of a production. This is a tricky balance that, although difficult to accomplish, is a valuable trait that employers treasure.

### **Acceptance of Disappointment—And Ability to Bounce Back**

Theatre people learn to deal with dashed hopes and rejection on a regular basis. Who hasn't failed to get a role he or she really wanted or a coveted spot on a tech crew? You learn to accept that kind of disappointment and move on. You try again. Employers need workers who are resilient enough to bounce back from this kind of frustration.

### **Self-Discipline**

Theatre demands that you learn how to control your life. More than other students, you are forced to make choices between keeping up with responsibilities and doing things you'd rather do. You learn to govern yourself. An employer will respect that ability.

### **A Goal-Oriented Approach to Work**

Many aspects of theatre involve setting and achieving specific goals. In employer's terms, you've learned to be task-oriented and capable of finding practical ways to achieve goals.

### **Concentration**

Busy theatre students, involved in a production or other theatre projects while also taking a heavy academic load, must learn to concentrate if they are to succeed. Acting classes in particular stress concentration, and once you have learned that skill as an actor, it can be transferred to other activities.

### **Dedication**

As you work in theatre you learn to dedicate your very being—to doing your best to create a successful production. There is dedication to that show...to your home theatre...to theatre as an art.

Many theatre students discover that committing oneself to a given task is deeply rewarding. Employers respect workers who have learned the value of dedication.

### **A Willingness to Accept Responsibility**

Theatre students sometimes have an opportunity that is seldom given to students in other disciplines—the chance to take on sole responsibility for a special project. Being a production stage manager...a designer...a crew chief...a director. Students

with other majors seldom have anything even close to these lessons. You can expect employers to value this unusual ability.

### **Leadership Skills**

As a theatre student, you have many opportunities to assume leadership roles. You may, for example, assist a director or designer and lead other volunteers, serve as a crew chief, or even design or direct a production yourself. In the nurturing environment of theatre, faculty help you learn from mistakes so you become a better leader. Leadership training like this can open the possibility for comparable opportunities in a company that hires you. Can you think of any other major that offers this opportunity?

### **Self-Confidence**

Theatre training teaches you confidence in yourself. Your accomplishments in theatre show you that you can handle a variety of jobs, pressures, difficulties and responsibilities. You develop a 'Yes, I can!' attitude. Of course an employer will treasure that.

### **Enjoyment—'This is Fun!'**

You've discovered already that theatre people mystify civilians when we say we're having fun. Non-theatre folk shake their heads when we tell them that, and they ask how it is possible to have 'fun' in a job that keeps us working night after night, sometimes until after midnight, doing something that calls for a grinding rehearsal or work schedule day after day after day, that makes us miss going to a movie or a concert. 'That's fun?'

Yes. It is. We've learned how to find enjoyment in what we do. That's a valuable attribute.

We can adapt that to other jobs, find ways to enjoy other activities. That positive attitude will mean a great deal to any employer.

—Dr. Louis E. Catron

The Russian people give a high status to the arts....In the U.K., politicians will be photographed going to a football match or possibly a film, but they wouldn't be photographed going to an opera or a ballet or even a play. The idea of the intellectual in Britain is a strange one; it's seen as a pejorative. 'Too clever for your own good,' 'smart aleck,' that sort of thing. I admire how in Europe and Eastern Europe, parents want children to aspire to the intelligentsia.

—Armando Iannucci

This week we sat down with our daughter and asked her what her goals were. The wisenheimer replied, 'to sit behind a desk and be bored the rest of my life?' Then, with a sly smile, she said, 'to perform.'

To perform. Not necessarily go to college.

We told her, as long as we're not in debt, we can help her further her career. If she goes to college, we won't be able to help her after graduation, so we made this offer instead—what if we continued her performance education—dance, voice and acting classes—and let her audition? We would pay for her to travel to auditions in major cities in the northeast. If, after a year or two, she wants to continue to audition—great. I'm pretty sure none of this will come close to \$20,000/year.

Through this approach, we can help establish a foundation for her performance career until she finds a survival job that will allow her to do it herself—no student loans required. If she decides that audition life is not for her, she can then decide on her next step—perhaps going to local community college.

All of this becomes possible when we don't have massive debt hanging over our heads.

—Kym and Eric Meyer

There are just two types of jobs: 'professional work' that requires special training in law school, medical school, architecture school, and so forth, and 'trait-oriented work,' for which employers seek workers with special traits, such as communications skills, imagination, reasoning ability, and sound judgement. Theatre training can be valuable preparation for many of the innumerable careers that fall in the second category.

—John Munschauer

If you give an audience a chance they will do half your acting for you.

—William Hazlitt

Acting always appealed to me a lot because it's risk taking. And it's something I don't do naturally. I mean when I'm standing backstage and that curtain is about to open I say, 'Why would you do this to yourself? Are you really that much of an idiot to just expose yourself to a thousand people?' And then the curtain opens and, if it goes all right, you don't remember opening night—there's too much adrenaline.

Actors are risk takers. And they're taking the risks for their own sanity.

—Nick Nolte

Art is the close scrutiny of reality and therefore I put on the stage only those things that I know happen in our society.

—Edward Bond

American radio is the reverse of the Shakespearean stage. In Shakespeare's time the world's greatest dramas were acted with the most primitive technical arrangements; on the American air the world's most primitive writing is performed under perfect technical conditions.

—George Mikes

On some level acting is the art of pretend and you have to have a highly cultivated sense of imagination. You have to be able to see things that aren't there no matter what aspect of acting, whether it's green screen, whether it's on stage, whether it's anything else, whether you're working on the radio.

--Stephen Lang

I think radio plays are my favourite medium, as they make the listener work and create and contribute in a way that TV and film can never do, and they have an immediacy that written prose often lacks.

--Neil Gaiman

People talk about the difference between radio acting, TV acting and stage acting, but I think it's all the same. For instance, when I played Vultan in 'Flash Gordon,' I put as much energy into it as I would with 'King Lear'—it's all part of the same thing.

--Brian Blessed

The theater has been called the pulse of the people.

--Abigail Adams

So long as there is one pretty girl left on the stage, the professional undertakers may hold up their burial of the theater.

—George Jean Nathan

You can trust a Neil Simon script. Every dot. Every dash; that pause means something. He takes all the jokes out, practically.

—Hector Elizondo

A Degree in Musical Theater. You may not be able to solve a math problem. But you will know how to solve a problem like Maria.

—Internet Meme

Of the girls in the *Folies Bergere*] They have such gay behinds—but such sad faces!

—Georges Clemenceau

Laurence Olivier, who returned in triumph to Broadway to co-star with his beautiful wife, Vivian Leigh, in Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* and Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (the dual bill was referred to by the trade as *Two on the Nile*), is one of the most charming and versatile actors alive. He's equally at home in stark tragedy, drawing-room comedy, or knockabout clowning in a benefit performance with Danny Kaye.

He learned his profession the hard way, touring the hinterlands of Britain and Wales with an obscure group, playing in houses so ill-equipped that most changes had to be made in public washrooms. His fame in America dates back to the time Samuel Goldwyn persuaded him to play the lead in the memorable screen version of *Wuthering Heights*.

—Bennett Cerf

Carl Sandburg was persuaded to attend the dress rehearsal of a very serious play by a very serious young dramatist, but unfortunately slept through a greater part of the performance. The outraged dramatist chided him later, 'How could you sleep when you knew how much I wanted your opinion?' Sandburg reminded him, 'Young man, sleep is an opinion.'

—Bennett Cerf

Somerset Maugham gravely informed the students in a drama course at London University: 'A sure formula for success is to write first a tragedy in five acts. Put it away in a drawer for six months, then change it into a comedy in three acts. Forget it for another year. Then reduce it to a curtain raiser. That done, rush right out and marry a rich American.'

—Bennett Cerf

Jules Leventhal, who managed road company productions of great Broadway hits, was famed for his honesty, his accent, and his frugality. Once he sent out a troupe to play Nugent and Thurber's *The Male Animal*, one seen of which called for a football coach to hand a professor a cigar. When Leventhal scanned the expense sheet for the first week, he rebelled at the item, 'Cigars, eighty cents,' and ordered, 'From now on, when the coach offers that cigar, have the professor answer, 'No, thanks, I don't smoke.'

—Bennett Cerf

Miriam Hopkins made her debut as one of the 'Eight Little Notes' who served as the chorus of the *First Music Box Review*. On the out-of-town tryouts an aging soprano was penciled in for a leading role, and sought to impress Ms. Hopkins. 'I'll have you know,' she declared, 'that I insured my voice for \$50,000.' 'That's wonderful,' said Miss Hopkins. 'What did you do with the money?'

—Bennett Cerf

When an author has determined to be dissatisfied and depressed, there is nothing in the world that can make him change his mind. Take the case of the late George M. Cohan as an example. The last years of his life were embittered by the thought that the parade had passed him by, and that lines and devices for which people had cheered him in happier days were now regarded as ‘corny’ and obvious. A succession of failures sharpened his resentment. Then came, Ah, Wilderness! and a chance to star in a sure-fire hit. Cohan appeared in another author’s play for the first time in years. The first-night audience gave him an ovation, and the critics sang his praises to the sky.

Was Cohan happy? He was not! When a friend said, ‘Well, George, this is something again, isn’t it?’ Cohan shook his head dejectedly and grumbled, ‘Imagine my reciting lines by Eugene O’Neill! Why, he ought to be on the stage reciting lines by me!’

—Bennett Cerf

[Oscar] Serlin was casting a new play and wanted a fresh, unknown beauty for the leading ingénue part. He was impressed with the reading of a youngster whose only previous professional experience was a couple of walk-on extra roles in pictures a year before. She hadn’t had a job in months and was tearfully grateful when she heard that Serlin would seriously consider her for a big part on Broadway. ‘Oh, I will, I will,’ she promised happily.

The next morning he offered her a run-of-the play contract. Her reaction was not exactly what he had expected, however. Evidently she had been talking things over with a friend from Hollywood. ‘I don’t think I can sign this,’ she told Serlin. ‘For heavens sake, why?’ he asked. ‘Suppose the show is a smash hit and runs for two years,’ she explained. ‘I’d be stuck in it!’

—Bennett Cerf

*Beyond the Horizon*, of course, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1920 (O’Neill won it again in 1922 with *Anna Christie* and in 1928 with *Strange Interlude*), but before it was produced, several managers shied away from it. One, George Tyler, wouldn’t even read it. ‘Plays by actor’s sons never are any good he told O’Neill. After the opening performance, James O’Neill asked his son, ‘Are you trying to send the audience home to commit suicide?’ Once its success has been established, however, Eugene O’Neill’s position was secured. Every producer courted him, and his father asserted proudly, ‘I always knew he had it in him.’

—Bennett Cerf

On stage, an actor who fully embraces the role of a colicky newborn, tottering around on their hands and knees, is far funnier than the actor who half-asses it because they’re too self-conscious.

—Jorjeana Marie

[Eugene] O'Neill's primary interest in the theater is neither money, fame, nor the approval of Broadway critics and playgoers. He writes plays because he cannot help it. They burn in his mind, and he pours them out on paper, regardless of their commercial appeal or their length. He never has written a play with any particular star in mind—in fact, he prefers to work with co-operatively obscure players. 'They try to play the character I have created,' he says, 'not to make my character fit their own personalities.' He refuses flatly to make cuts in his scripts unless he himself thinks they are indicated. When a player in *The Iceman Cometh* complained that one of his speeches was too long, and threatened to cut it on the opening night, O'Neill warned him grimly, 'Leave out one line, and the curtain will never go up for a second performance.'

—Bennett Cerf

At the tryouts of *Oh, Wilderness!* the curtain fell so late that the stagehands demanded overtime. George M. Cohan, the star, furthermore, was introducing new business and mannerisms to prolong matters further at every performance. Everybody connected with the Theatre Guild endeavored in vain to persuade [Eugene] O'Neill to wield his blue pencil. Finally, Russell Crouse, publicity representative at the time, volunteered to try. O'Neil liked Crouse and let him make his plea without interruption. 'I'll think about what you said,' he promised. The next morning he phoned Crouse and said, 'You'll be happy to learn I've cut out 15 minutes.' Crouse scarcely could believe his ears. 'When? How?' He sputtered. 'I'll be right over to get the changes!' 'There aren't any changes in the text,' O'Neill assured him, 'but you know, we've been playing this thing in 4 acts. I've decided to cut out the third intermission.'

—Bennett Cerf

You have to come in and be that character when you walk into the room. That's what one of my first acting teachers taught me. You know, don't go in there being Jennifer and then expect to flip and change, because they're not going to have that imagination.

—Jennifer Lopez

Originating as a 16th-century Italian theater form called *commedia dell'arte*, today improv has been referred to as 'writing on your feet.'

—Jorjeana Marie

An actor works with their soul and their thought.

—Monica Bellucci

The audience only cares about three questions:

- 1) Who wants what from whom?
- 2) What happens if they don't get it?
- 3) Why now?

—David Mamet

To see him act is like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning.

—Samuel Taylor  
Coleridge

Sometimes you can have the smallest role in the smallest production and still have a big impact.

—Neil Patrick Harris

Whether we like it or not, we live in a world that is constantly changing. Whether you work for a corporation or are a professional clown, creativity is an asset in any work environment. Creativity allows you to be innovative, spontaneous, imaginative, original and inventive. Yes, some people are born with creativity oozing out of them, but creativity is a skill that can be developed.

Improv allows children (and adults) to play, to let loose and tap into their creative side. Playing, for most children, comes naturally, but after a certain age we lose our ability to play. Improvisation allows us to discover or rediscover our creative side, encouraging us to create characters and scenarios that come from our imagination. The corporate world has realized the huge benefit and skill building potential of improvising. In order to increase employee creativity, a growing trend in the business world is hiring professional actors to run improvisation workshops with employees. If our children are well-versed in the ways of improv they will be ahead of their peers and thrive in any career they choose.

—Lisa Phillips

Pet me, touch me, love me—that's what I get when I perform. That's when I'm really getting what I want.

—Connie Stevens

IMAGINATION—the seed of all genius.

—Dan L. Miller

An actor lives in the land of imagination.

—Derek Jacobi



Thespian Problem #591—Being so used to projecting your voice onstage that you do it in normal conversation.

—*thespianproblems.tumblr.com*

Virtually all of the ‘tough guys’ you see on TV and movies were theater majors in college.

—Internet Meme

Naturalism is a kind of realism: it puts the real world on stage in the most intricately detailed way possible. (Think of August Strindberg insisting on a working stove and running water for the kitchen sets of *Miss Julie*, for example.) But naturalism’s most important features derive from its debt to science and medicine: it insists that both biology and environment determine the behaviors of its characters. In naturalistic drama, setting is itself a character, a way for us to study the impacts of environment on human behaviors, relationships, choices—and futures. (Anton Chekov, one of the most powerful naturalist playwrights of this era, was a doctor himself.) A naturalist set is just a familiar looking room or set of rooms, then; it is a laboratory environment, in which actors play characters with complex pathologies, full of the stress and pain and joy and fear of negotiating familiar-looking environments that somehow also feel uncanny, unsettled, shifting—not quite familiar at all.

—Kim Solga

A Theatrical Contract—If one of them tells beyond the Salary and the amount of weeks you are to work, why, you might just as well light a cigarette with it. More words ain’t good for anything in the world only to bring on more argument.

—Will Rogers

*The Music Man* is one of those rare shows that offers a redemptive resolution for every last character in it, and that redemption is reflected in the songs they sing. It may have taken Meredith Wilson six years and more than thirty drafts to finish *The Music Man*, but that’s why it still shimmers so brightly today. By deciding to tell us what it was like in Iowa in 1912, he can still let us know what it’s like in our own hometown in 2018.

And if you need more proof, consider this: *The Music Man*’s climactic love song, ‘Till There Was You,’ is the only number from a Broadway show that the Beatles ever recorded.

The defense rests.

—Richard Ouzounian

The term classic is often used to describe shows that have been around a while and have enjoyed successful runs on stages from Broadway to high school gyms. Sometimes there's a movie to fill the void between revivals. Something about these shows keeps drawing us back again and again.

In the case of *The Music Man*, it's one thing. One voice. Meredith Wilson's voice. He cast a clear but loving eye on his own history and wrote the book, music and lyrics for *The Music Man*....

That he was so masterful in every discipline is remarkable; that he was so determined to be honest is astounding. The portrait of his people is unflinching but generous. Oh sure, they're stubborn, but survival isn't easy here in Iowa in 1912 America. And it isn't easy now. 2018 presents us all with challenges that demand reflection, introspection and honest appraisal. But we want to believe there is hope, hope for humanity and the redemptive power of love.

Wilson puts real people and real love before us, imperfections in tact.

—Donna Feore

Richard O'Brien's lasting genius is that he only ever wanted his *Rocky Horror Show* to be 'a bit of fun.' And this simple notion has resonated with generations of fans. Tens of millions, in fact. There's got to be something in it. And there is. It's love and compassion and childhood dreams of rock stardom! I'm all about communities, and the community of Rocky is dangerous, sexy and otherworldly (really), but it has a lot to teach us about acceptance and yielding. And I mean yielding to the discovery of ourselves, our true selves, however messy that might be, all the while trusting that we're surrounded by love as we go farther towards discovering who we are. We all need help and encouragement on this journey, and I believe that wild, passionate and brilliantly performed rock 'n' roll can help us do that. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from.

—Donna Feore

The *Midnight Frolic* was the start of all this Midnight and late style of entertainment. That has since degenerated into a drunken orgy of off-colored songs, and close-formation dancing. It was the first midnight show. It started right on the stroke of twelve, it could have 50 or 75 people in the cast, bigger than all the modern day shows given at regular hours. It had the most beautiful girls of any show Ziegfeld ever put on, for the beautiful ones wouldn't work at a matinee for they never got up that early.

—Will Rogers

I have met most of you [men] as I come out of the stage door of the *Follies* every night. I want to tell you that any of you that are capitalized under a million dollars needent hang around there. Our Girls may not know their Latin and Greek but they certainly know their Dunn and Bradstreet.

—Will Rogers

I am to go into Ziegfeld's new *Follies* and I have no Act. So I thought I will run down to Washington and get some material. Most people and Actors appearing on the stage have some Writer to write their material, or they reproduce some Book or old masterpiece, but I don't do that; Congress is good enough for me.

Why should I go and pay some famous Author, or even myself, sit down all day trying to dope out something funny to say on the Stage! No Sir, I have found that there is nothing as funny as things that have happened, and that people know that have happened. So I just have them mail me every day the *Congressional Record*. Is it to me what the Police Gazette used to be to the fellow who was waiting for a Hair Cut, it is a life saver.

—Will Rogers

For Elizabethans, theater was a full-body experience....examples of just how playwrights did this: fireworks hissing and shooting across the stage, fake blood, fake body parts, disguises, paint on the walls and on the actors' faces, the smell of blood and death, and worse. All of it designed to create wonder and sensation by appealing to every part of the body.

—Michael Witmore

The real release is getting on stage. Once we're up there doing it, it's sheer fun and joy. Some long-distance stamina, of course, is needed. And the only way I can sustain the impetus over the long tours we do is by feeding off the energy that we get back from an audience. That's my fuel. All I've got is this burning energy, especially when I've got a guitar in my hands. I get an incredible raging glee when they get out of their seats. Yeah, come on, let it go. Give me some energy and I'll give you back double. It's almost like some enormous dynamo or generator. It's indescribable. I start to rely on it; I use their energy to keep myself going. If the place was empty, I wouldn't be able to do it....We couldn't do that without their energy, we just wouldn't even dream of it. And they make us want to give our best. We'll go for things we don't have to. It happens every night we go on....My whole physical being goes up a couple of notches. 'Ladies and gentlemen, The Rolling Stones.' I've heard that for forty-odd years, but the minute I'm out there and hit that first note, whatever it is, it's like I was driving a Datsun and suddenly it's a Ferrari....It's like sitting on top of a rocket.

—Keith Richards

Once a youth has success in a major theatrical production, that child has contracted theater fever and is wedded to the theater until beaten down by theatrical life or until death.

—Dan L. Miller

Nerves provide me with energy... It's when I don't have them, when I feel at ease, that's when I get worried.

—Mike Nichols

Wow, this is so great. Snow in New York, isn't it romantic?  
Only if you love empty theaters.

--Neil Simon

I am most alive and most fulfilled sitting alone in a room, hoping that those words forming on paper in the Smith Corona will be the first perfect play ever written in a single draft.

--Neil Simon

I don't want to restrict the life of a play to a particular production. The original actors might leave after the first six months, and I want the play to last 30 or 40 years. You write for the character, not the actor on the stage.

--Neil Simon

An artist carries on throughout his life a mysterious, uninterrupted conversation with his public.

—Maurice Chevalier

## **THEATRE KID LIFE**

Me: I can't. I have auditions

Me: I can't. I have callbacks.

Me: I can't. I have rehearsal.

Me: I can't. It's tech week.

Me: I can't. It's hell week.

Me: I can't. It's opening night.

Me: I can't. It's my last performance.

Me: I can't. I have a cast party.

Me: I can't. I have auditions...

—TheatreNerds.com

It was a limited engagement. When they stop coming, I limit the engagement.  
--Neil Simon

Involvement in the arts engages kids in their community, improves self-esteem, reclaims at-risk youth, and builds the creative skills that are required of a 21st century workforce.

—Gavin Newsom

The creative urge is the demon that will not accept anything second rate.  
—Agnes de Mille

Until you're ready to look foolish, you'll never have the possibility of being great.  
—Cher

I didn't go to acting school, but I've been observing my fellow man for 66 years now, and I would think that's the best school there is.  
—Wilford Brimley

When people pay to see you live, they connect with you on a much deeper level than people who just buy your records.  
—Sandra Bernhard

Acting is behaving truthfully under imaginary circumstances.  
—Sanford Meisner

I never consciously said, 'I want to be an actor.' It sounds stupid, but it's kind of like being a painter or something. You don't say, 'From today on I'm going to be a painter.' It's not something conscious—you've just been painting pictures all your life.

—Franka Potente

There's a certain arrogance to an actor who will look at a script and feel like, because the words are simple, maybe they can paraphrase it and make it better.  
—Mary Steenburgen

The Greeks already understood that there was more interest in portraying an unusual character than a usual character—that is the purpose of films and theatre.  
—Isabelle Huppert

The true purpose of arts education is not necessarily to create more professional dancers or artists. [It's] to create more complete human beings who are critical thinkers, who have curious minds, who can lead productive lives.

—Kelly Pollock

Before *A Chorus Line* dancers were hired basically to look pretty; rarely did a dancer have a sort of speaking part in a show. They had no identity or unique traits. This show gave dancers a face, and an identity.

—Mitzi Hamilton  
(Original  
Broadway Cast  
Member)

I think any actor would agree that you can't replace theater. It's immediate. You have the energy of the crowd and every single night it's different.

—Austin Peck

Understanding the historical and social context of your character is vital to creating a playground for your imagination. For instance, if you're playing Nora in 'A Doll's House,' your biggest fear isn't going to be credit card fraud—it's going to be based in her experience in 1870s Norway. Researching the when and where of the script will bring the world alive, informing the behavior of your character. Why does Stanley act the way he does in 'A Streetcar Named Desire'? You might decide it has something to do with the heat, the tiny apartment, and the resonance of the words 'ape' and 'Polack' that Blanche uses to label him.

—Laurence Cook

Acting isn't free therapy, it's imaginative engagement for the entertainment of others. Even if you're playing the worst person in the world, however you build that character, remember to make them something you can step in and out of and enjoy.

—Laurence Cook

Times have changed, quickly, and the jobs are going to the actors who are bold and surprising, not safe and expected. Don't show them what they already know; the casting person knows that they are casting a nurse, lawyer, mother, or best friend. Show them what they don't know: how interesting the role can be in the hands of an actor who is willing and able to explore all four corners of their emotional mapping and enliven the role in a way that no one else can. Show them the exciting, original person they've been looking for all day long!

—Craig Wallace

What is art but a way of seeing?

—Saul Bellow

You audition.

We sign-up.

You develop a character.

We clothe it, give it a face, and style its hair.

You dream within the world of the show.

We build the world and bring it to life.

You move the audience with your words.

We transport them to another place.

You live in the spotlight.

We turn on the spotlight.

You live out loud of the world to see.

We live in the shadows.

Your creative spirit runs wild with ideas.

We bring order to the chaos.

You share magic with the audience.

We are masters of magic.

You are the show.

We run the show.

WE ARE TECH!

—High School Playbill  
Insert

When you're starting out, be kind to yourself, because you're going to make a ton of mistakes early on. That's part of what I've learned in improv. The best improvisers get onstage and just start doing something. You discover what the next thing is.

—Dave Collins

Our world of 'make believe' is sad. Scores of comedians are not funny, hundreds of 'America's most beautiful girls' are not gay. Our benefactor has passed away. He picked us from all walks of life, he let us into what little fame we achieved. He remained our friend regardless of our usefulness to him as an entertainer. He brought beauty into the entertainment world. The profession of acting must be necessary, for it exists in every race, and every language. And to have been the master amusement provider of our generation, surely a life's work was accomplished. And he left something on earth that hundreds of us will treasure till our curtain falls and that was a 'badge,' a badge which we were proud, and never ashamed of, and wanting the world to read the lettering on it 'I worked for Ziegfeld.'

So good-bye Flo, save a spot for me, for you will put on a show up there someday that will knock their eye out.

—Will Rogers  
[July 24, 1932]

Art is not a metonym for truth telling. All art is a form of a falsifying; otherwise why would anyone need art to tell us what we already know? Art makes us stand back and see what lies outside the four corners of a canvas, it makes us look inside ourselves and realize the sublime truth that previously eluded us. Art makes us realize what already lies within ourselves waiting for the resolute seeker to discover. Art frequently concentrates on the blemishes of nature. When one sees nature disfigured, it reveals both sides of the same notion

—Kilroy J. Oldster

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So good-bye Flo, save a spot for me, for you will put on a show up there some day that will knock their eye out.

—Will Rogers  
(July 24, 1932)

Don't act it; feel it!

—D. W. Griffith



Gosh that vaudeville, how we miss it. No class of entertainment has ever approached it for real entertainment. The variety, the worlds various collection of talents, the years of practice, to attain perfection in acts of skill.

—Will Rogers (1934)

The stage is...a heart breaking racket but they don't sit and tell you about it. Their heads are always up. They keep neat, they hide a lot with a great smile.

—Will Rogers

What's a nine-letter word that's another term for actors? 'Thespians.' Thespians are named after Thespis, a Greek actor of the sixth century B.C.

—Roger Matile

Study all the things that you don't want to go into in theatre. Study lighting. Do all the things. For my theatre major, I did makeup, I ran lights, I did sound design, I sewed costumes, and that stuff comes in incredibly handy when you work with other people. Theatre is all about collaboration, so you have to actually understand a bit of the job your collaborators are doing, so that you can speak to them fluently. And then the other thing is take, like, whatever you're interested in—I promise it will come in handy....Do what you're passionate about.

—Lin-Manuel Miranda

Field trips to live theater enhance literary knowledge, tolerance, and empathy among students, according to a study. The research team found that reading and watching movies of *Hamlet* and *A Christmas Carol* could not account for the increase in knowledge experienced by students who attended live performances of the plays.

—*University of Arkansas  
Department of  
Education Reform*

I do feel that on the stage it's quite literally every man for himself. I don't think anyone wants to help you particularly...you have to look after yourself. And I think that particular loneliness, solitude, that idea of carrying on in your own private room is not..unique to actors...I have it perhaps more than most. When I go out there, onstage, I'm battling the world—I have to beat the world. I have to be the best, as far as I can make it.

—Richard Burton

In the theater, which is essentially a writer's medium, directors are relatively unimportant. They're not much more than jumped-up stage mangers [who] should show you the place on the stage where you will be best seen. Then, assuredly leave the rest up to you.

—Richard Burton

If by any chance a playwright wishes to express a political opinion or a moral opinion or a philosophy, he must be a good enough craftsman to do it with so much spice of entertainment in it that the public get the message without being aware of it.

—Noël Coward

The first (if not necessarily the prime) function of a novelist, of ANY artist, is to entertain. If the poem, painting, play or novel does not immediately engage one's surface interest, then it has failed. Whatever else it may or may not be, art is also entertainment. Bad art fails to entertain. Good art does something in addition.

—Brigid Brophy

There's an old rule of theater that goes, 'If there's a gun on the mantel in Act I, it must go off in Act III.'

—Stephen King

Data from *The College Board* show that in 2015, students who took four years of arts and music classes while in high school (only 18 percent of test-takers) scored an average of 92 points higher on their SATs than students who took only one-half year or less (16 percent of test takers). Scores of 1077 vs. 985, respectively.

—americansforthearts.org

The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life.

—William Faulkner

I believe that people's nervous systems are more open to emotion in the theater with their fellow human beings. When a play is going well, the audience breathes as one. They stop breathing. They breathe together because they're getting this from other live people. And that doesn't happen watching Netflix. You talk during it. The phone rings. People are in the theater for one reason: to hear this story and meet the people in it. That's a human need. If you want to change minds, write a great editorial for the Op-Ed page. But if you want to get people to feel differently, reach them through the theater.

—Terrence McNally

Much serious drama is now confined to the margins of American theater, where it is seen only by actors, aspiring actors, playwrights, and a few diehard fans.

—Dana Gioia (1991)

Since the 1980s, arts education has declined disproportionately for certain groups. Black students, and students whose parents have less than a high school diploma, have experienced a 50% and 77% decline in school-based exposure to the arts, while white students and those with college-educated parents have experienced virtually no decrease.

This shameful discrepancy is yet another example of the educational injustice that pervades our system. All children deserve a well-rounded education that inspires and engages them and introduces them to the delights of theater, music, and visual arts. Yet too often, poor children attend schools where their educational experience is reduced to a colorless line up of low-level math and rudimentary literacy.

One reason for this is that low-income children often enter school behind in math and literacy skills. Educators want to ensure their students can catch up, and thus dedicate more time to basic math and reading skills and less time for art and field trips. It is true that students who start school behind benefit from extended, high-quality instruction in math and literacy, but the flip side of this is also true: spending less time on other subjects can actually have a damaging effect on learning.

Too few educators understand that broad and robust background knowledge—built through a rich, comprehensive curriculum that includes study of and exposure to the arts, both in and out of school—is actually vital to helping children become great readers, writers, and thinkers. Furthermore, the engagement that stems from in-school opportunities to discover and pursue co-curricular passions and talents spills over to academic classes.

—Eva Moskowitz (2019)

The critic John Ruskin said, ‘Shakespeare has no heroes—he has only heroines.’ A striking number of those heroines refuse to obey rules. At least 10 defy their fathers, bucking betrothals they don’t like to find their own paths to love. Eight disguise themselves as men, outwitting patriarchal controls—more gender-swapping than can be found in the work of any previous English playwright. Six lead armies. The prevailing view, however, has been that no women in Renaissance England wrote for the theater, because that was against the rules. Religious verse and translation were deemed suitable female literary pursuits; ‘closet dramas,’ meant only for private reading, were acceptable. The stage was off-limits. Yet scholars have lately established that women were involved in the business of acting companies as patrons, shareholders, suppliers of costumes, and gatherers of entrance fees. What’s more, 80 percent of the plays printed in the 1580s were written anonymously, and that number didn’t fall below 50 percent until the early 1600s.

—Elizabeth Winkler

Shakespeare's life is remarkably well documented, by the standards of the period—yet no records from his lifetime identify him unequivocally as a writer. The more than 70 documents that exist show him as an actor, a shareholder in a theater company, a moneylender, and a property investor. They show that he dodged taxes, was fined for hoarding grain during a shortage, pursued petty lawsuits, and was subject to a restraining order. The profile is remarkably coherent, adding up to a mercenary impresario of the Renaissance entertainment industry. What's missing is any sign that he wrote.

—Elizabeth Winkler

No one should ever think that dance and music and theater are a luxury...because for so many of our students, they are truly necessities. They're the reason these kids show up [to school].

—Michelle Obama

Poetry teachers especially at the high school and undergraduate levels, should spend less time on analysis and more on performance. Poetry needs to be liberated from literary criticism. Poems should be memorized, recited, and performed. The sheer joy of the art must be emphasized. The pleasure of performance is what first attracts children to poetry, the sensual excitement of speaking and hearing the words of the poem. Performance was also the teaching technique that kept poetry vital for centuries. Maybe it also holds the key to poetry's future.

—Mark Edmundson

Whenever you take on playing a villain, he has to cease to be a villain to you. If you judge this man by his time, he's doing very little wrong.

—Colin Firth

The greatest thing that playwriting offers is that I get to watch people enjoy my work. As a writer, you get instant reactions. The first time I had a play produced in front of an audience, that first laugh was the greatest feeling I'd ever had in my life. I get to see everything come together, and I learn from the actors what the play is about. You find things in a play when it's interpreted by a great actor or director that you intended, but you didn't realize you had intended.

—Jerry Slaff

The greatest dialogue, plot, scenery, and all that in the world are nothing without good actors. A good actor can turn mediocre work into fantastic work, and vice versa.

—Jerry Slaff

In those off-times, I have gotten very insecure and felt that I couldn't get a job, and was dropped from record labels, and had to go on many auditions that I didn't get. Having a career that goes up and down has made me really appreciate when I do have success. I know the real deal—the day where nobody is calling you and you feel like crap.

—Idina Menzel

The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.

— Sylvia Plath

[Claudia] Quesada, 31, who immigrated to the U.S. with members of her family in 2003, is preparing for a role in 'A Xmas Cuento Remix,' a modern-day take on 'A Christmas Carol'....And although she's aware that her accent may be the cause of missed acting opportunities, she's staying positive. She said that thinking about how her accent is going to come across in auditions puts limits on her and her economic possibilities. 'I'm aware that it could be an obstacle, but for me, being an immigrant, I embrace who I am,' she said. 'I spent half my life in Cuba. You either love me for who I am or you don't'

—Darcel Rockett

Rodgers and Hammersteins' whole damn catalog—all are political works that tell the truth....Consider *The Sound of Music*. It isn't just about climbing mountains and fording streams. Look beyond the adorable von Trapp children: It's about the looming existential threat of Nazism. No longer relevant? A GIF of Captain von Trapp tearing up a Nazi flag is something we see 10 times a day on Twitter, because all sorts of Nazis are out there again in 2019. As last spring's searing Broadway revival of *Oklahoma!* revealed, lying underneath Hammerstein's elephant-eye high corn and chirping birds is a lawless society becoming itself, bending its rules and procedures based on who is considered part of the community (Curly) and who is marginalized (poor Jud...seriously, poor Jud). Or consider your parents' favorite, *South Pacific*. At its center, our hero, Nellie Forbush, must confront her own internalized racism when she learns that the new love of her life has biracial children from a previous marriage. Let your parents know if they forgot: Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals form the spine of Broadway's 'golden age,' and they also deeply engage with the politics of their era.

—Lin-Manuel Miranda

Arts education isn't something we add on after we've achieved other priorities, like raising test scores and getting kids into college. It's actually critical for achieving those priorities in the first place.

—Michelle Obama

What artists can do is bring stories to the table that are unshakably true—the sort of stories that, once you’ve heard them, won’t let you return to what you thought before....At the end of the day, our job as artists is to tell the truth as we see it. If telling the truth is an inherently political act, so be it. Times may change and politics may change, but if we do our best to tell the truth as specifically as possible, time will reveal those truths and reverberate beyond the era in which we created them. We keep revisiting Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* because ruthless political ambition does not belong to any particular era. We keep listening to Public Enemy because systemic racism continues to rain tragedy on communities of color. We read Orwell’s *1984* and shiver at its diagnosis of double-think, which we see coming out of the White House at this moment. And we listen to Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *South Pacific*, as Lieutenant Cable sings about racism, ‘You’ve got to be carefully taught.’ It’s all art. It’s all political.

—Lin-Manuel Miranda

Improv is a tool that enables you to be open. To be inquisitive. To be comfortable with ambiguity and not having the whole answer right away, but eventually being able to make brave choices.

—Megan Redfearn

For me, acting is not hard work. I read a part until I know the text so well that I can be very relaxed. Some people like to do hundreds of takes. I belong to the Clint Eastwood school: Just get on with it.

—Anthony Hopkins

What then is the difference between film and theatre? Or should one not rather ask: what are the differences? Let us be content with the reply that the screen has two dimensions and the stage three, that the screen presents photographs and the stage living actors. All the subtler differences stem from these. The camera can show us all sorts of things--from close-ups of insects to panoramas of prairies--which the stage cannot even suggest, and it can move from one to another with much more dexterity than any conceivable stage. The stage, on the other hand, can be revealed in the unsurpassable beauty of three-dimensional shapes, and the stage actor establishes between himself and his audience a contact real as electricity.

—Eric Bentley

The dramatist of today who can’t ‘get’ his audience in the first 15 minutes after the rise of the curtain on Act I, very seldom has a play that will atone for a weak opening scene as the play swings into the second or third act.

—Arthur Leeds

[Michael] Sheehan's own stutter improved, but didn't fully go away, when he took up speech and debate in high school. This eventually led him to the theater, which is a common, if surprising, place where some stutterers find that they're able to speak with relative ease. Taking on a character, another voice, the theory goes, relies on a different neural pathway from the one used in conversation. Many successful actors have battled stutters—Samuel L. Jackson, Bruce Willis, Emily Blunt, James Earl Jones. In 2014, Jones, whose muscular baritone is the bedrock of one of the most quoted lines in film history, told NPR that he doesn't use the word cured to describe his apparent fluency. 'I just work with it,' he said.

—John Hendrickson

Go into the arts. I'm not kidding. The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.

—Kurt Vonnegut

When Arnold M. Ludwig, an adjunct psychiatry professor at Brown University, examined the lives of more than 1,000 eminent people—including Frida Kahlo, Jean-Paul Sartre, and John Lennon—for his book *The Price of Greatness*, he found that creative types, such as artists and writers, were more likely than, say, business people to be considered 'odd or peculiar' as children, and more likely than public officials or soldiers to be considered 'different' as adults.

—Olga Khazan