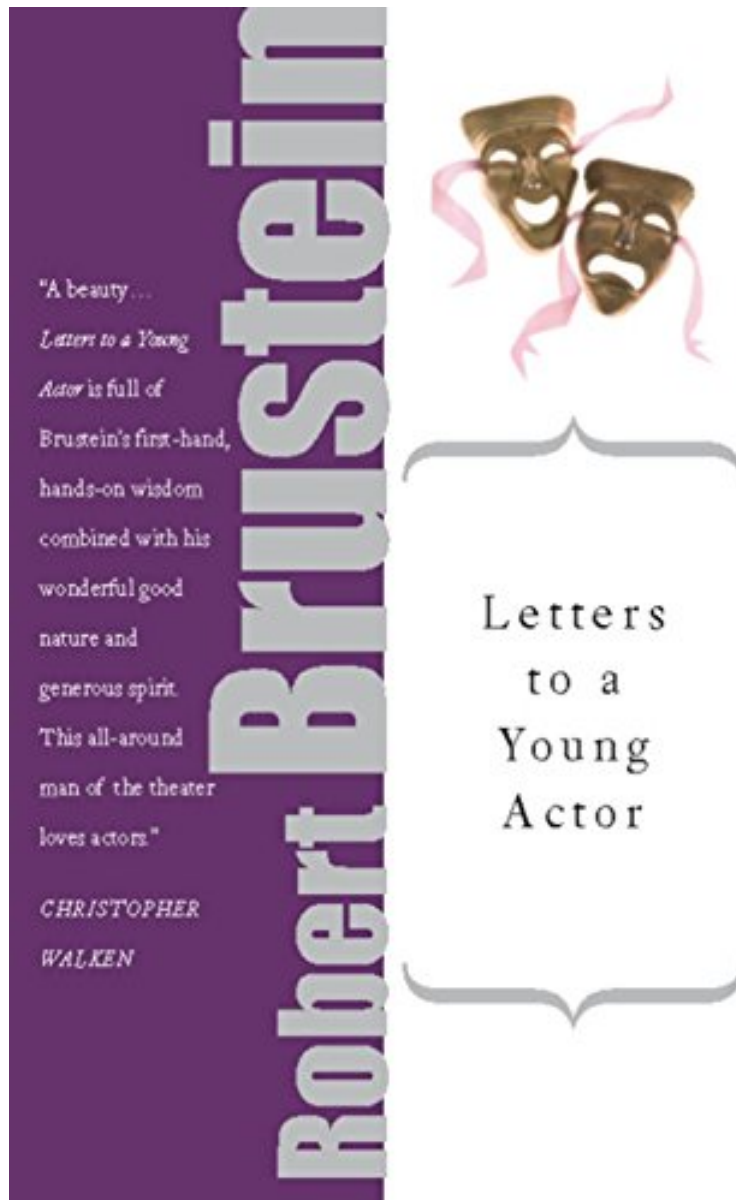


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Letters to a Young Actor

Robert Brustein

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Robert Brustein : Letters to a Young Actor before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Letters to a Young Actor:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Delightful Peek into Another WorldBy CamberI have no experience in the acting world, nor any such aspirations, but I've always been fascinated with it. Perhaps this is because I value what actors do, but I imagine that I could never myself be a good actor, so my sense of wonder and appreciation are all the greater. I therefore read this book in the hope of getting a thorough peek into the acting world --

including a sense of the real highs and lows of the actor's life -- and that's exactly what I got. Not only did I gain insight, but Brustein also serves as the kind of tour guide who makes the experience a delight. This book should be informative and enjoyable for anyone interested in acting. Given the popularity of movies, I imagine that includes a lot of people! The book does have many references to specific people, performances, etc. which won't mean much to people outside the acting world, but those parts can be read through quickly without losing continuity. Highly recommended for both aspiring (or active) actors, and for others who simply want to broaden their horizons by learning about a unique art form.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Sentimental Journey By D. Trent

This book seems hopelessly outdated. It reads like reminiscences about "my life in theater and how good theater has been to me." If you're a fan of Brustein (I am), well and good, but as far as practical knowledge, there is nothing here that the tyro won't glean from working in the field for a year or so. As a general view of "what theater is like" it is pretty good, though Brustein avoids much discussion of some of the pitfalls. Just today the New York Times profiles a theater artist who, more than a decade after graduating, still can't come close to making ends meet: "She's never missed a loan payment, but there's no end in sight: She borrowed nearly \$75,000 to attend the American Repertory Theater Institute, or A.R.T. Institute, at Harvard and still owes about \$54,000." He touches briefly on some of the "predators" who offer acting-improvement services, but having seen, in the decade since publication, expose acute; in Chicago alone of practices at Profiles Theater and Dead Writers Theater recently, you realize the problem is a lot more ingrained and prevalent than Brustein reports; but he wouldn't know about that. He writes from a vantage point of extreme privilege - inescapably - but you can't help feel, that some of the absurd behaviors he recounts of "master directors" and "auteurs" really arise from boorishness and not artistic necessity or idiosyncrasy. The old canard about theater artists and actors expressing "vulnerability" has really been done to death. It may have been a revelation to Brustein all those years ago; but today we need theater artists who show strength. The epilogue is worth quoting: "I leave you with this, my dear young friend. I only hope you enjoy your life in the theatre as much as I have enjoyed mine. And I pray you never lose faith in the value of your calling. You have chosen to create when so many others are dedicated to destruction. With half the world devoted to death, you remain devoted to life." A sentimental foray into Brustein's past, rich with anecdotes, may not be the thing his target audience will find useful. The conceit of "Letters to a Young Actor" is hardly developed in earnest, but serves as a framing device for those anecdotes and reminiscences.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Brustein's advice is universal By Suzanne H. Rodgers

I bought this as a gift for a young friend who wants to be an actor. I decided to read it first and found it delightful and insightful. The lessons he provides are for actors, but they apply equally to any choice of a profession, in my opinion. As the author points out, though, acting is the one profession where you rely totally on yourself, so you expose your ego to scrutiny that can be very painful. After reading the book, I want to be sure my friend's parents will read it too, so they can support him in his dream.

The founder and director of the Yale Repertory Theater, as well as Harvard's American Repertory Theater, and a drama critic for more than thirty years, Robert Brustein is a living legend in theatrical circles. *Letters to a Young Actor* not only inspires the multitudes of struggling dramatists out pounding the pavement, but also reinvigorates the very state of the art of acting itself.

From Publishers Weekly

This smart, no-nonsense primer-cum-directive on the art and science of acting comes stocked with information and peppered with anecdotes that will inspire the ambitious actor, despite the daunting nature of Brustein's curricula. Brustein, founder and director of the Yale Repertory Theatre and Harvard's American Repertory Theatre, is no lightweight, and this book may come as a shock to those who think acting is something innate and easy. Drawing on his 40-plus years of experience as an actor, director and dramaturge, Brustein explores what makes a good actor. Talent is essential, but insight, knowledge, reading, researching and a host of other explorations of both the human psyche and the history of literature and theater are necessary for an actor to have the range of some of Brustein's former students (Meryl Streep, Sigourney Weaver and Christopher Walken among them). Get a good liberal arts education, Brustein tells aspiring actors. Get a job to pay the rent and student loans while auditioning. Make numerous friends-these friendships will turn into jobs later in life. Most important, maintain a balance between performing and a personal life and remember that the best actors are all, at core, character actors. This is a sharp, accessible but far from simplistic Cliffs Notes on being an actor. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist

Brustein has long maintained parallel careers as college professor, theater critic, and founder-director of Yale Repertory Theatre and the American Repertory Theater. That richness of experience informs this rich, gracefully written book in the Art of Mentoring series. Brustein covers all aspects of an emerging actor's life, from the "actor's calling" to getting a strong liberal education (to gain insights about oneself and the world that can be drawn upon onstage, not just to learn something else to fall back on) to strategies for finding work and staying employed. The book's title is misleading, however, for Brustein's advice is useful to performers of any age at any stage of their career. Indeed, it may fascinate and enlighten anyone interested in theater. What other book reviews various schools of acting; discusses the "exemplary careers" of prominent

contemporary actors; details the roles of directors, audiences, critics, and designers in an actor's work life; and shows how those roles interplay to create contemporary theater? The subtitle of this ambitious, informative book is truer than its series-conforming title. Jack Helbig Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved About the Author An Ivy League-pedigreed teacher, actor, director, playwright, critic, and lifelong supporter of the theater, Robert Brustein has taught countless current stage and screen superstars, supervised well over 200 theatrical productions. His thirteen books used as texts for theater classes the world over.