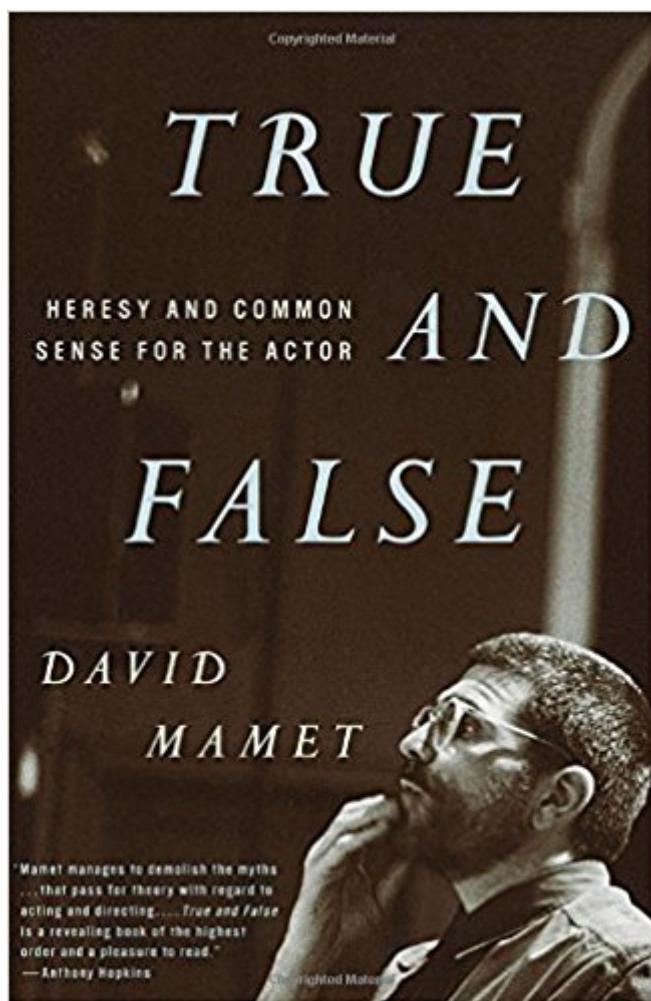


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# True And False: Heresy And Common Sense For The Actor



## Synopsis

One of our most brilliantly iconoclastic playwrights takes on the art of profession of acting with these words: invent nothing, deny nothing, speak up, stand up, stay out of school. Acting schools, "interpretation," "sense memory," "The Method" . . . David Mamet takes a jackhammer to the idols of contemporary acting, while revealing the true heroism and nobility of the craft. He shows actors how to undertake auditions and rehearsals, deal with agents and directors, engage audiences, and stay faithful to the script, while rejecting the temptations that seduce so many of their colleagues. Bracing in its clarity, exhilarating in its common sense, *True and False* is as shocking as it is practical, as witty as it is instructive, and as irreverent as it is inspiring.

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## Customer Reviews

To hell with Stanislavsky. To hell with the Method. "The actor is onstage to communicate the play to the audience," says David Mamet. "That is the beginning and the end of his and her job. To do so the actor needs a strong voice, superb diction, a supple, well-proportioned body and a rudimentary understanding of the play." Anything else--"becoming" one's part, "feeling" the character's emotions--devalues the practice of a noble craft and is useless to the play. "The 'work' you do 'on the script' will make no difference," he cautions. "That work has already been done by a person with a different job title than yours. That person is the author." But *True and False* does not confine itself to the work done on the actual stage. Its brief essays contain sound advice on how an actor might apply himself or herself to the life of the actor: the proper consideration due the audition process,

the selection of parts that one accepts, and so on. Mamet delivers these kernels of wisdom in the taut, no-nonsense prose for which he is justifiably famous, and, ultimately, his core principles are applicable beyond the theater. "Speak up, speak clearly, open yourself out, relax your body, find a simple objective," he instructs. "Practice in these goals is practice in respect for the audience, and without respect for the audience, there is no respect for the theater; there is only self-absorption." Substitute "others" for "the audience" and "life" for "the theater," and could any Taoist say it better? --Ron Hogan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Mamet (e.g., *Glengarry Glen Ross*), considered a foremost contemporary American dramatist by most critics, here offers a bold new approach to acting. Mamet draws on his decades of observing good (and bad) acting to present a slim but intriguing volume of musings. Disdainful of studios, acting schools, and graduate school, he declares, "The classroom will teach you how to obey, and obedience in the theater will get you nowhere." Mamet exhorts actors to show up early, have their lines down cold, and have a single objective for each scene. He contends that overthinking and too much emotional interpretation is not the actor's role. Essential reading for theater collections. ?J. Sara Pault, Coastal Plain Regional Lib., Tifton, Ga. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is life changing. Seriously. I find myself thinking about it, when I'm called upon to just behave in real life. Because acting in real life and acting on stage require basically the same thing: stand in your spot, look the other person in the eye, speak clearly, and let the words move you however they will. "Invent nothing, deny nothing." This is the kind of book to read over and over again. I've often read it before going on stage, for inspiration, or just to get excited about theater in general. This book is a complete education in acting, and is enjoyable to read. For a complete education in Theater, in general, also get Mamet's book entitled *Theatre*, which is written in the same pithy and eloquent style. Both are written like philosophy you can use. Mamet cuts through all the other nonsense, and gives advise that really works.

"True and False" has been the most helpful book I've read in over 40 years of acting, directing, and studying. Period. Take your classes, train your voice, read and practice the well-known teachers of Theater, but Read This Book. It is short, and I recommend that you actors and directors read it once through before each of your next several theatrical projects no matter what your technique is or who

you studied with. I wish this text had been available when I was in college. If read from a director's point of view, this text will help you quickly get to the heart of the matter with your actors no matter what beliefs, or lack of experience, they may bring to rehearsal. Reviewers who have invested their time, money, and their identities in traditional methods and who 'disagree' with Mamet are, of course, going to resist some of the ideas expressed. However, his excellent advice does not invalidate the experience and useful tools you've acquired elsewhere. If you think it does, I recommend you re-read it with an open mind. Keep what works for you and disregard the rest. Reviewing "True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor" like a book meant only to be read is a mistake. It should be reviewed like a carpenter would review a hammer.

An interesting critique of the method school of acting, and wonderful insight into the world of drama. I came to know of Mamet through his infamous letter to the writers of the Unit, and this book carries that same voice and pursuit of drama as the ultimate goal of all in the world of entertainment. He has a very thorough and persuasive perspective on the attitude and approach to acting, from its foundation in theater to the abstract in bringing the unreal to life on stage. The criticism I've read of this, such as Mamet not giving concrete advice towards casting or auditioning sessions, does seem contradictory given the back cover's advertisement of 'how to undertake auditions and rehearsals' but I found this book a treatise on the art and science of the actor's profession and an attitude to take towards the 'business' side of show business. Even for those who remain persuaded by Stanislavsky or the Method should find this an interesting and invigorating dialogue on their profession. Highly recommend to all in, and those fascinated by, the arts and the stage.

Over the years, I have been amazed at how successful David Mamet has been in almost everything he attempts. This is why, when I started reading this book I felt disappointed. It seemed to me that, in the first third of the book, he listed all the things you should NOT do as an actor. Several times I thought about closing the book and throwing it away. But somewhere around that point where I almost gave up on him, Mamet's genius kicked in. It may be heretical to say this, but I believe that one of the stronger aspects of Mamet's art is his ability to cut through the BS and simplify. I believe that a considerable amount of his power as a dramatist comes from this. Concerning playwriting, he said that, in the crafting of a play, you must dispense with any part of it that does not relate to the protagonist's quest. In this book, he again makes us see the power of simplification. He says actors need to forget about the elaborate explanations coming from the "scholars" and just look at the bare bones reality of what acting is. Pretending. He says "This is what I see the actor doing: Invent

nothing, deny nothing. This is the meaning of character." He also says, "The simple performance of a great deed, onstage or off, is called 'heroism'". He says a number of other provocative things and then proves each and every one of them. And these proofs are a strong counter-argument to what many acting teachers and scholars are saying. What he tells the actor to do is practical, real, doable and powerful. That is why I gave it three stars, why I will suggest that any actor who acts in any play I write reads this book, and why I believe this book is nourishment not only for the actor, but for the playwright and for just about anybody else in the theatre who wants to know how great performances can be sculpted from a written text.

Words of experience from a pro. You may agree with all of it, some of it, or none of it.

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