

The Playwright's Guidebook: An Insightful Primer on the Art of Dramatic Writing

By Stuart Spencer

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An accessible, contemporary guide to the art of dramatic writing

During the ten years that Stuart Spencer has taught playwriting, he has struggled to find an effective playwriting handbook for his courses. Although most of the currently popular handbooks have good ideas in them, they all suffer from the same problems: they're poorly organized; are composed mostly of quirky, idiosyncratic advice on how specific playwrights have gone about writing their own work; and are full of abstract theorizing on the nature of art. As a result, they fail to offer any concrete information on how to construct a well-written play or any useful guidelines and exercises. Moreover, few of these books are actually written by working playwrights. Out of frustration, Spencer wrote his own book. The result, *The Playwright's Guidebook*, is a clear, concise, and engaging handbook. Spencer addresses the important principles of structure, includes insightful writing exercises that build upon one another, explores the creative process, and troubleshoots recurrent problems that playwrights actually face.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
A practical compendium based on author Stuart Spencer's experience crafting plays (Resident Alien; The Rothko Room; etc.) and teaching at Sarah Lawrence College, The Playwright's Guidebook offers counsel on issues like structure, conflict, character and problem-solving. This contemporary guide fills the gaps left open by many books, supplying organized and realistic advice for would-be playwrights. As Spencer says, "A play is more wrought than written. A playwright constructs a play as a wheelwright once constructed a wheel: a general shape is laid out, and then hammered, bent, nailed, reshaped, hammered again and again, until finally a functionaly and artful product has emerged."

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From Library Journal
Spencer has written many plays (Resident Alien is his most recent) and has taught playwriting at Sarah Lawrence College for the last ten years. Frustrated by not being able to find a playwriting handbook that addressed key issues and also included useful exercises, he decided to better his craft by writing his own how-to. The result is this succinct but insightful manual. In Part 1, Spencer lays out the "rules" of playwriting with the caveat that they are not written in stone but still need to be studied and understood, especially by new writers. Part 2 covers the creative process, describing how to define an idea and use gut instincts to write what you need to say. Part 3 deals with problems and tips on how and when to rewrite (e.g., how to create "cut lines" files). Finally, Part 4 is loaded with advice on what to read and how to write cover letters and contact literary agents. Well structured and easy to read and use, this book will be helpful to aspiring playwrights. Public and academic libraries should consider adding it to their collections. Lisa J. Cihlar, Monroe P.L., WI
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Review

"Stuart Spencer's meticulous handbook does something I had thought was almost impossible: it describes, clarifies and analyzes the mysterious process of building a play. And moreover, he does so with the grace and respect of a first-rate teacher for the intelligence and potential of his students. There is no ideology, no formula for instant success here. Just the distilled experience of a real practitioner generous enough to share, and reliable enough to be trusted."
—Jon Robin Baitz, author of *Ten Unknowns and Substance of Fire*

"Stuart Spencer's The Playwright's Guidebook is indispensable. Clearly and thoroughly, Mr. Spencer—a playwright himself—leads all playwrights (not only the beginner) through the travails of creation and the jungle of production. He is to be congratulated."
—Edward Albee

"Eureka! A clearly written, well-structured, intelligent how-to book about playwrighting. Like the good teacher and good writer that he is, Stuart Spencer guides rather than browbeats. Should be next to the laptop of any aspiring, or working, playwright."
—Warren Leight, author of *Side Man*

"If you want to be a playwright, here's your bible."
—David Lindsay-Abaire, author of *Fuddy Meers* and *Wonder of the World*

"At last! A straight-from-the-shoulder approach to playwrighting that finally blows the dust off much of the mystique surrounding this craft. Stuart Spencer writes with wit, insight, clarity, brilliant first-hand knowledge, and yes, finally, offers genuine help! Refreshing and beautifully organized, this book is long overdue."
—Jack O'Brien, Artistic Director, The Globe Theatres, San Diego

"A sensible, lucid, thorough and tremendously helpful journey into the always mysterious realities of playwrighting."
—Romulus Linney, author of *The Sorrows of Frederick*, *Holy Ghosts*, and *Tennessee*

"Mr. Spencer's guidebook is full of solid, straightforward advice in a conversational voice that takes the mystery out of how plays are wrought, not written."
—Michael Weller, author of *Moon Children* and *Loose Ends*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stephan Stephens:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be change about what going on or data even knowledge to make these keep up with the era that is certainly always change and make progress. Some of you maybe will certainly update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to an individual is you don't know which you should start with. This The Playwright's Guidebook: An Insightful Primer on the Art of Dramatic Writing is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Lorraine Stark:

The guide untitled The Playwright's Guidebook: An Insightful Primer on the Art of Dramatic Writing is the book that recommended to you to see. You can see the quality of the e-book content that will be shown to an individual. The language that writer use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The author was did a lot of research when write the book, to ensure the information that they share to you is absolutely accurate. You also will get the e-book of The Playwright's Guidebook: An Insightful Primer on the Art of Dramatic Writing from the publisher to make you more enjoy free time.

George Bash:

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Kenneth Rogers:

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