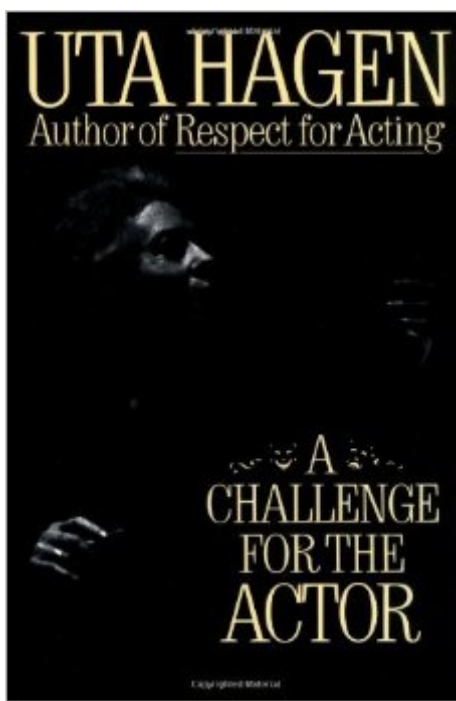


The book was found

# A Challenge For The Actor



## Synopsis

Theoretically, the actor ought to be more sound in mind and body than other people, since he learns to understand the psychological problems of human beings when putting his own passions, his loves, fears, and rages to work in the service of the characters he plays. He will learn to face himself, to hide nothing from himself -- and to do so takes an insatiable curiosity about the human condition. from the Prologue Uta Hagen, one of the world's most renowned stage actresses, has also taught acting for more than forty years at the HB Studio in New York. Her first book, *Respect for Acting*, published in 1973, is still in print and has sold more than 150,000 copies. In her new book, *A Challenge for the Actor*, she greatly expands her thinking about acting in a work that brings the full flowering of her artistry, both as an actor and as a teacher. She raises the issue of the actor's goals and examines the specifics of the actor's techniques. She goes on to consider the actor's relationship to the physical and psychological senses. There is a brilliantly conceived section on the animation of the body and mind, of listening and talking, and the concept of expectation. But perhaps the most useful sections in this book are the exercises that Uta Hagen has created and elaborated to help the actor learn his craft. The exercises deal with developing the actor's physical destination in a role; making changes in the self serviceable in the creation of a character; recreating physical sensations; bringing the outdoors on stage; finding occupation while waiting; talking to oneself and the audience; and employing historical imagination. The scope and range of Uta Hagen here is extraordinary. Her years of acting and teaching have made her as finely seasoned an artist as the theatre has produced.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although the synopsis found above suggests this book is entirely new, looking at it as a second edition to her first acting book, *RESPECT FOR ACTING*, is probably more accurate. It is still full of the tangible practice techniques an actor needs, but it has been updated with additional sections her previous book didn't include. *RESPECT FOR ACTING* was separated into three parts: One-The Actor; Two-The Object Exercises; and Three-The Play and the Role. In *A CHALLENGE FOR THE ACTOR* there are four parts: One-The Actor; Two-The Human Techniques; Three-The Exercises; and Four-The Role. Hagen doesn't simply rehash what she wrote in her first book; she's refined her techniques and expanded them. The two of her books used in conjunction might be the only reference books an actor needs on the craft of acting. First rate writing from one of the most revered and respected actresses to ever take the stage.

My own acting teacher, who has herself been a student of Ms. Hagen's, has suggested that Ms. Hagen actually prefers that students of acting refer to this book rather than her previous one ('*Respect for Acting*'), because in it, not only does she expand on the ideas presented in the earlier work, but she also actually revises some of the ideas she presented in the first book.

After having read *Respect for Acting*, I had discovered that Ms Hagen had written another book. Immediately I went out and bought it. While I found it every bit as fascinating as the first I must say a lot of it repeats from the first book. Even some of the wording is the same. That said, it is still a wonderful read. Her ideas are more concise, her craft more honed, and her expansion well worth the cover price. I especially liked the first chapter where she discusses *The Actor's World*. Here she goes into a bit of history we all would be better off to know, and she tells a little more about herself. When she talks about the McCarthy hearings, and in particular her radio speech afterwards, I was moved to tears. Her words on Edwin Booth have sparked my interest in him and the "Golden Era of the Actor." Uta has done it again. Now if only I could meet her.

I read Uta Hagen's earlier book, "*Respect for Acting*," years ago, and made the mistake of thinking that it wasn't really necessary to read this later book. "*A Challenge for the Actor*" goes light-years beyond its predecessor. It's a thorough, and incredibly specific handbook to the life's work of one of the greatest teachers of modern acting. She starts by drawing a razor-sharp line between "formalistic" acting (relying on external technique to convey a pre-determined performance for the audience), and "realistic" acting (using imagination to make-believe that you are the character,

trusting that your actions will then lead to an appropriate external form). Uta makes no bones about which approach she subscribes to (realistic), and she then spends the rest of the book teaching you how to do just that--complete with exercises to make each principle concrete. It's all communicated with acute wisdom and intelligence, along with the experience of someone who became one of the greatest stage actors of a generation. Nobody can learn how to act from a book alone (as she voices herself in this masterpiece), but, accompanied by experience (be it working in a classroom environment, or simply doing her exercises on your own), this book can be a trusted and valuable ally.

Don't you just love those books that you buy for a single niche purpose, but instead literally take over your life for a time? This is one of those books. I am a stage actor in Charleston, looking for work and practicing the techniques I already know, when I stumble upon this. Now, hands down, the best book for acting you could ever look for would be Stella Adler: The Art of Acting, but I choose to read books with heathen techniques in them just to see what a good teacher sees as a good actor. Anyways, I picked up this book to better my work ethic and see things a little more clearly as an actor. Lo and behold, I found myself with many sleepless nights WRITING. I hadn't written anything for leisure since I moved to Charleston, but now, my God, I wake up and wonder what can I do? I read poetry for the first time in my life and try, time and time again to do better work than the work I did before. I recommend this book to any and everyone. It's a book that working a creative office should own.

I order several books on acting techniques, and this one is the best yet. Stanislavsky's books are important but not as well organised or current. Sanford Meinsner's is great but not as detailed or thorough and doesn't cover as many topics/areas in learning the techniques. The lessons and exercises in this book are clear and useful. Uta is a good teacher and is so very generous to share her knowledge. You will get great results combining this book with Buddhism or wisdom from Eastern meditation techniques. They are all about being more intuitive, following the heart, responding to life moment to moment. I highly recommend it!

This is one of the best books out there for learning acting, and Uta is the person to teach it to you. I was fortunate enough to study under Howard Fine in Los Angeles, and this is his key literature. There are lessons that you can follow, and her style of teaching is easy to follow any will get anyone interested in acting on their way. A must read!

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