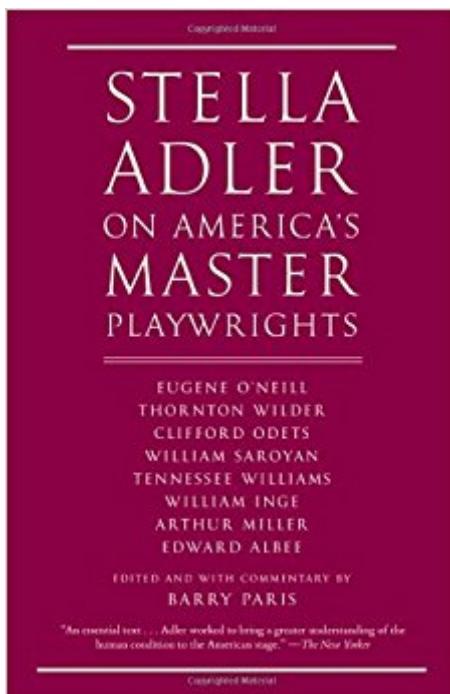


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# Stella Adler On America's Master Playwrights: Eugene O'Neill, Thornton Wilder, Clifford Odets, William Saroyan, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee



## Synopsis

Stella Adler was one of the most influential acting teachers of all time, a legendary force of nature whose generations of students include Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, Anthony Quinn, Diana Ross, Robert De Niro, Warren Beatty, Annette Benning, and Mark Ruffalo. This long-awaited companion to her book on the master European playwrights brings to life America's most revered playwrights, whom she knew, loved, and worked with. Brilliantly edited by Barry Paris, Adler's lectures on the giants of twentieth-century theater feature her indispensable insights into such classic plays as "Long Day's Journey into Night," "The Skin of Our Teeth," "A Streetcar Named Desire," "Come Back, Little Sheba," "The Glass Menagerie," and "Death of a Salesman," while shedding new light on such lesser known gems as Tennessee Williams's "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion" and Arthur Miller's "After the Fall." Illuminating, revelatory, inspiring—this is Stella Adler at her electrifying best.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An essential text . . . Adler worked to bring a greater understanding of the human condition to the American stage." The New Yorker "Intoxicating . . . Paris has done a magnificent job. . . Every sentence is a treasure. . . For actors and actresses this rich material is essential. For those interested in the American theater, it is a must. For cultured people

everywhere, this book belongs in their personal canon. . . . It is about so much more than simply bringing to life the work of major artists; it is really the expression of a way of life, and of looking at art as something larger than life."•Peter Bogdanovich, The New York Times Book Review"Adler's voice pops into life on the pages . . . Fascinating . . . often hilarious. . . . Adler knows these plays the way a master violist knows her instrument. •The Boston Globe"Adler projects to the back of the house. It is indeed the voice of a giant . . . Provides invaluable insights . . . and erupts into sustained verbal fireworks as you've never heard elsewhere. •The New York Times"Passionate, opinionated, and consummately dramatic, Stella Adler's voice and personality come through in every word . . . dense and detailed . . . filled with insight, wit, and fervor . . . a lively and fascinating look into the beliefs and methods of the late teacher, who, twenty years after her death, is still regarded as one of the greatest in the history of American theater. •STAGE Magazine"[The book is] about so much more than simply bringing to life the work of major artists; it is really the expression of a way of life, and of looking at art as something larger than life. . . . Stella had a marvelous way of mixing erudition with down-to-earth realities, show business know-how with a few Yiddishisms, all combined with a vivid sense of what she called a theater of heightened reality. . . . This book brings her voice back quite viscerally. It's Stella talking, taking you on her particular roller-coaster ride through the playwrights and their characters. •Peter Bogdanovich, The New York Times Book Review"We usually go to scholars, dramaturgs, and critics for detailed analyses of the modern American theatre. Well, forget that! Here in this amazing book is Stella Adler in full and insightful bloom, preaching, exhorting, insulting, provoking, and always helping her many acting students. Through character study and scene breakdown within a specific play, she manages to give us a personal tour of the times and lives of the 20th Century's most illustrious playwrights. She knew them, she knew the world they lived in, and she remembers EVERYTHING! A brilliant book. •Andre Bishop, Lincoln Center Theater"Stella was a first-name force of nature . . . There is considerable entertainment in the energy of her assertions . . . And then there is the staggering clarity, the piercing insight and the pure, undeniable genius of her dissection of the plays themselves. •Washington Independent Book Review"Paris has performed a great service by presenting Adler's astute perspectives about these writers, whom she knew and admired. Her views are valuable not only for actors, but for anyone interested in the American theatre and its extraordinary achievements. •Bay Area Reporter

STELLA ADLER began her life on the stage at the age of five in a production that starred her father, the legendary actor of the Yiddish Theatre, Jacob Adler. Stella Adler was one of the co-founders of the revolutionary Group Theatre. In 1934, she met and studied with Konstantin Stanislavski and began to give acting classes for other members of the Group, including Sanford Meisner and Elia Kazan. Adler established the Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting in 1949 and taught at Yale University. BARRY PARIS is the author of biographies of Louise Brooks, Greta Garbo, and Audrey Hepburn, and the editor of *Stella Adler on Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekov* and *Stella Adler on America's Master Playwrights*.

Stella Adler was a force in the American theater, a larger than life actress, acting coach, the only American actress to have studied with Stanislavski, the mentor of Marlon Brando, the wife of Harold Clurman. This book, edited from the transcripts of lectures she gave to students in California, is more than a series of lessons on how to perform the plays of America's greatest playwrights--O'Neill, Miller, Williams, Inge, Odets and Albee--it is also an invaluable history book of a country's ideals and dreams, mistakes and suppressions, and how they found expression through the handful of dramatists who managed somehow to have their voices heard on the commercial stage of Broadway. Adler contends that to gain the American dream of fame and success a writer or an actor must know his or her country's history: when and why these classic plays were written, who were the men who had the courage to speak out, and how they reflected their moment in American time. She encourages her student actors to be big, big as the country, to make the theater a forum for unpleasant truths rather than escapism and mindless entertainment. In the course of these talks, Stella is never too modest to remind you how bright, talented, sexy and irresistible she was; how he knew everyone who was anyone, and what she said to them and they said to her. Those who are not actors will delight in the backstage gossip, and the sense of excitement all those bright young people of her generation felt because they sincerely believed that their voices, their theater, would change the world. Reading the book, you are left with the feeling that once upon a time giants walked, if not the earth, at least on that stretch of New York City where plays were performed and people paid to learn about themselves. Those days may be over. Those who remember them or wish for their return will find no better guide book to America's golden age of theater than this amazing document of a life fully lived.

I have seldom read a book that brought such an equal measure of enjoyment and learning. Ms.

Adler's book provides the equivalent of a college semester of lectures and research on America's master playwrights. But the verve, perception, and personality in the words provide the real joy. She not only presents the essence of the playwrights' works; because she believes that an actor's knowledge of the social and political environment in which the plays take place is the absolute core of good acting, she provides invaluable historical nuggets on each of the eras covered in the plays. Stella Adler proves she is truly one of a kind. Her insights on acting, for this layman on the subject, adds a unique dimension that draws the reader in and keeps him enthralled. The advice of this native Southerner: Want to read one of the best, concise synopses ever written of what the term "Southern culture" really means? Forget W.J. Cash's seminal work, "The Mind of the South." Read Stella Adler's review of Tennessee William's "Summer and Smoke" in this book. Anyone who reads this book will come away a Stella Adler fan, her name high on the list of "people I wish I had known." No wonder a generation of America's leading actors, led by Marlon Brando, virtually worshiped her. She was a national treasure, and the two books preserving her lectures are, too.

This is a perfect follow-up to the first volume on Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov. There was and will never be another Stella Adler. Her voice, in each of these brilliant books, comes through quite strongly. They have changed my thinking in the most wondrous way. She proves that she is simply one of the greatest acting teachers of our time, and unrivaled in terms of script analysis. Barry Paris and Victoria Wilson deserve a lot of praise for putting these together so well. Stella Adler was epic. A force of nature and a powerful teacher. Absolutely thrilling!!!

Stella Adler takes play readers, actors and directors on an inspiring and eye-opening journey of exploration. She examines the words the playwrights use to tell their story, strips them of superficiality by insisting that they be understood in the context of the social order and the uneasy place of individuals in that order. Her warnings that mere recitation of the words, without an understanding of the dynamics underlying the life of the individuals expressing them, deprives the play of the passions that should animate the words. Whether one is an actor or reader, Adler's emphasis on understanding the turbulence behind the words leads to rewarding insights.

Stella Adler's lectures on Script Analysis were legendary. To have these transcriptions is a unique gift, not just to the Acting community, but to artists and thinkers everywhere. Miss Adler's analyses of these American playwrights gives the reader a road into the depth that these plays deserve.

Stella Adler explains her perspective of the best of American theater in the 20th Century. There is more in her explanations of the playwright's vision for his play than was apparent to me. It is somewhat akin to hearing an actor who can articulate the choices he must make to play Shakespeare coherently. It is not on the page, but in the understanding of the time and situation - historical, emotional, familial, societal, etc. Read it. She does a much better job than I ever could. I needed to take breaks from it because some of it is very intense.

I love this book. The NY Times review by Peter Bogdanovich was right on. You can pick up this book and open it anywhere on any of the American Masters she discusses and be totally captivated. She explains the context of the culture these men were writing in and explains their work in a totally clear and compassionate understanding of Americans at that time. This book is amazing for any American Theater lover or for the merely curious about what made O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, et.al so great. A real eye opener, as they say. If you have a library, this book should be in it.

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