


(Read free) The Crafty Art of Playmaking

## The Crafty Art of Playmaking

*Alan Ayckbourn*

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# ALAN AYCKBOURN THE CRAFTY ART of PLAYMAKING



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**Alan Ayckbourn : The Crafty Art of Playmaking** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Crafty Art of Playmaking:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Must Own for Playwrights and a create companion bookBy Bexlyn WrightSir Alan Ayckbourn has written and produced over seventy plays, more than 40 which have been performed in the West End and ten on Broadway. This gives the British writer of *Relatively Speaking* and *The Norman Conquests* an edge over all of the other playwriting books, not only because he is so prolific, but because he approaches this book

as a writer who spends more than half of his time directing and has vast production experience with his plays and others. Ayckbourn wrote his first play at the age of ten and has lived around theatre since he was seventeen, giving him a lifetime of hands-on knowledge that is valuable and makes for a fun and informative reading experience. With his vast knowledge of theatre, Ayckbourn's approach in *The Crafty Art of Playwriting* isn't just for the writer; he explains everything by dividing half of the book into writing advice, the other half into everything else involving a play, from directing, casting and design to the rehearsal process and how to deal with producers. The result is that this book isn't just about playwriting but about the entire process from creating a play to previews and press night during a production. Throughout the book, which is written with a slightly humorous style, Ayckbourn gives advice though what he calls his "obvious rules" such as: "Obvious Rule No. 2: Never start a play without an idea," "Obvious Rule # 16: Never include a character with no real function," and, "Obvious Rule # 46: Never cast a celebrity." Ayckbourn also stresses in "Obvious Rule # 22: You can never know too much about your characters before you start," which he follows by mentioning that he takes about a year of thinking and planning before he writes a word of dialogue (this is a bit long for me, but every writer is different). The organization and style is very clear, practical and to the point, and after a brief discussion on comedy versus drama, he gets to the point: "Obvious Rule # 3: If you don't have the initial inspiration, put down the pen, put the pencil back into the jar, switch off the computer and go dig the garden instead." Guiding a writer that does have an idea, Ayckbourn covers the essentials but does so with very handy tips and practical advice rather than spending time creating charts and lists of the elements of a play; there are in-depth discussions about plot or rising action, simply advice on what you should consider for character and why you need to do this. He appeals to common sense rather than requirements, knowing that if all that he discusses are applied, the requirements will fall into place. While this is not a great "How-to" book for beginners, those that have read the standard guides will find this a VERY handy companion book in a playwriting class or for their collection. 15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps the best book ever about playwriting and directing

By krebsman  
There are dozens of books out there on playwriting and about half that number on directing. Unfortunately for us, neither Shakespeare, Chekhov nor Ibsen wrote books on how to write a play. As a result, virtually all the authors of books about playwriting are academics who have never written a commercially produced play. One has to question the value of such people's advice when dealing with the practical realities of the professional theatre. Sir Alan Ayckbourn has changed all that. He is the author/director of (at this writing) a whopping 69 plays, a substantial portion of which have been critical and/or commercial successes on London's West End and New York's Broadway as well as being translated into numerous languages and produced throughout the world. The first part of the book is about the craft of playwriting. Ayckbourn gives his advice in a straightforward series of "obvious rules." First he states the "obvious rule" and then illustrates it with an example, usually drawn from his own work. Some of my favorites were, "Obvious Rule No. 2: Never start a play without an idea." "Obvious Rule of No. 16: Never include a character with no real function." "Obvious Rule Number 14: At least 50 percent of your play is going to be visual." "Obvious Rule No. 22: You can never know too much about your characters before you start." Ayckbourn says that he takes about a year of thinking and planning before he actually writes a word of dialogue. I found this section of the book extremely valuable. Any playwright or would-be playwright would profit from reading it. To my surprise, I found the second part of the book, which deals with direction, even more valuable than the first part. Aside from Harold Clurman's *ON DIRECTING*, I cannot think of another book about directing that has been written by a successful director. Clurman's book is very good about reading a script and analyzing it and giving an overall view of how rehearsals are conducted. Most books on directing provide this information. But what sets Ayckbourn's book apart is that he talks mostly about dealing with actors. To the best of my knowledge, no one has written about this aspect. He tells how to handle fragile egos, how to deal with rivalries, how to state your criticism and the appropriate times to deal with certain issues. He also gives good advice on conducting auditions and what personality traits to look for when casting. Advice like this has long been needed. The book provides valuable information, but what makes it truly brilliant is the charming way it is written. I found it delightful from start to finish, not to mention inspirational. I cannot recommend this book highly enough to any theatre professional, not just writers and directors, but actors, designers and technicians as well. Five stars plus.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very good and practical book on playwriting

By R. MAY  
This is one of the best books on playwriting I have read. Much better than the set texts for the Oxford online course I took. Much more practical, and less of the inane and often arguable theoretical advice in others. Ayckbourn has a pleasant writing style and actually does something to encourage creativity.

For the first time, Alan Ayckbourn shares all of his tricks of the playwright's trade. From helpful hints on writing to tips on directing, the book provides a complete primer for the newcomer and a refresher for the more experienced. Written in Ayckbourn's signature style that combines humor, seriousness, and heady air of theatrical sophistication that Noel Coward would envy, *The Crafty Art of Playmaking* is a must-have for aspiring playwrights and students of drama.

From Publishers Weekly  
The author of 64 plays, Ayckbourn has garnered international acclaim as a writer-director and

remains one of the most widely performed living playwrights. Now he throws a spotlight on his stagecraft secrets and insights in this slim but valuable handbook on how to write and direct plays. It's designed to chronologically carry readers from a play's inspiration and creation to auditions, read-throughs, rehearsals, previews and press night. Ayckbourn covers "obvious rules" such as "Never start a play without an idea" and "The best comedy springs from the utterly serious" and explicates his dicta with brief, occasionally humorous essays. For instance, his rule that "People in general are reluctant to reveal themselves" cues a three-page explanation: "We are most of us by nature secretive creatures... In making characters reveal themselves they must be given a cause, a motive. The classic, slight corny one is to get them drunk. Otherwise, they probably open up through desperation, or anger, or deliberately to hurt each other." The pages on directors and directing cover such areas as casting, lighting, costume and sound design, choreographers, tech rehearsals and dealing with producers and stars. In addition to inserting amusing anecdotes, Ayckbourn also shares relevant passages from his own plays, including *Relatively Speaking*, *Just Between Ourselves*, *Taking Steps* and *Season's Greetings*. Rather than taking an academic approach, Ayckbourn's stylish writing conveys a feeling that readers have been invited into a near-empty auditorium to witness a private rehearsal. This book, a polished gem of theater lore, concludes with an appendix listing Ayckbourn's plays. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. "...a practical and disciplined look...After 44 years at his profession, Ayckbourn knows what he's talking about."--Lloyd Rose, *Washington Post Book World* "...amusing, thought-provoking, and helpful in turn...his experiences are well worth the price of the book."--Susan L. Peters, *Library Journal* "...an entrancing read-no matter what part you play in playmaking."--Dany Margolies, *Back Stage* "...a polished gem of theater lore..."--Publishers Weekly Annex"*The New York Times* on Alan Ayckbourn's recent *House and Garden*: As ingeniously constructed a work as the contemporary theater has to offer... *House and Garden* does justice not only to Mr. Ayckbourn's miraculous engineering but to his lightly astringent, not quite farcical humor as well."-- *The New York Times*