

# Books Every Actor Should Have on Their Shelf



by Jami Tennille

Recommended books for doses of inspiration, motivation, education and a laugh or two.

### ***The Intent to Live: Achieving Your True Potential as an Actor by Larry Moss***

“I call this book *The Intent to Live* because great actors don’t seem to be acting, they seem to be actually living.” -Larry Moss

You will find case studies, exercises, and insights that enable you to connect personally with a script, develop your character from the inside out, overcome fear and inhibition, and master the technical skills required for success in the theater, television, and movies. Moss’s respect for actors and love of the actor’s craft enliven every page, together with examples from a wealth of plays and films, both current and classic, and vivid appreciations of great performances. Whether you act for a living or simply want a deeper understanding of acting greatness, *The Intent to Live* will move, instruct, and inspire you.

### ***The Art of Acting by Stella Adler***

When Adler died in 1992, the theater lost a great teacher, whose depth of experience alone made her invaluable. Daughter of one of the greats of Yiddish theater, Jacob Adler, she studied with Stanislavski, was a founder of the Group Theater and appeared in many of its seminal productions, married the brilliant critic Harold Clurman (they later divorced), and after the Group Theater folded, founded an acting school that rivaled Lee Strasberg’s. But she never wrote a book about her theories and techniques.

This collection, culled from sound recordings of her at work, at least re-creates the feel of her classes. Editor Kissel deserves great credit for shaping what could have been a chaotic collage of pronouncements into a coherent whole. The book’s 22 lively chapters detail Adler’s techniques for preparing her students for a life on the stage. Theater aficionados will appreciate Adler’s discussion of modern plays and her belief that acting is a rare, privileged profession, and young actors will benefit from the many acting exercises sprinkled throughout the text.

### ***Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen***

“Uta Hagen wanted us never to settle, period, to keep on endlessly exploring, digging deeper, and aiming higher in our scenes, in our plays, in our careers. *Respect for Acting* is not a long book, and with any luck, it will take you the rest of your life to read it.”

—David Hyde Pierce (from the Foreword)

*Respect for Acting* is Hagen’s blueprint for the actor, her design for “enlightened stage acting.” This classic book has helped generations of actors hone their craft, and its advice is as useful now as it was when it was first published. Hagen draws on her own struggle with the techniques of acting as well as her decades of teaching experience to break down the areas in which actors can work and search for realities in themselves that serve the character and the play.

This approach helps actors to be specific in their actions in order to communicate an artistic statement.

Hagen's instructions and examples also guide the aspiring actor through practical problems such as "How do I talk to the audience?" and "How do I stay fresh in a long run?" Uta Hagen's influence endures in many of today's most compelling stage and screen performances. Informative and inspiring, *Respect for Acting* will bring her timeless techniques to actors and audiences for years to come.

### ***The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron***

*The Artist's Way* is the seminal book on the subject of creativity. An international bestseller, millions of readers have found it to be an invaluable guide to living the artist's life. Still as vital today—or perhaps even more so—than it was when it was first published one decade ago, it is a powerfully provocative and inspiring work. In a new introduction to the book, Julia Cameron reflects upon the impact of *The Artist's Way* and describes the work she has done during the last decade and the new insights into the creative process that she has gained.

### ***The Actor's Life: A Survival Guide by Jenna Fischer***

Jenna Fischer's Hollywood journey began at the age of 22 when she moved to Los Angeles from her hometown of St. Louis. With a theater degree in hand, she was determined, she was confident, she was ready to work hard. So, what could go wrong?

Uh, basically everything. The path to being a professional actor was so much more vast and competitive than she'd imagined. It would be eight long years before she landed her iconic role on *The Office*, nearly a decade of frustration, struggle, rejection and doubt.

If only she'd had a handbook for the aspiring actor. Or, better yet, someone to show her the way—an established actor who could educate her about the business, manage her expectations, and reassure her in those moments of despair.

Jenna wants to be that person for you.

With amusing candor and wit, Fischer spells out the nuts and bolts of getting established in the profession, based on her own memorable and hilarious experiences. She tells you how to get the right headshot, what to look for in representation, and the importance of joining forces with other like-minded artists and creating your own work—invaluable advice personally acquired from her many years of struggle. She provides helpful hints on how to be gutsy and take risks, the tricks to good auditioning and callbacks, and how not to fall for certain scams (auditions in a guy's apartment are probably not legit—or at least not for the kind of part you're looking for!).

Her inspiring, helpful guidance feels like a trusted friend who's made the journey, and has now returned to walk beside you, pointing out the pitfalls as you blaze your own path towards the life of a professional actor.

### ***Bossypants by Tina Fey***

Before Liz Lemon, before “Weekend Update,” before “Sarah Palin,” Tina Fey was just a young girl with a dream: a recurring stress dream that she was being chased through a local airport by her middle-school gym teacher. She also had a dream that one day she would be a comedian on TV.

She has seen both these dreams come true.

At last, Tina Fey’s story can be told. From her youthful days as a vicious nerd to her tour of duty on Saturday Night Live; from her passionately halfhearted pursuit of physical beauty to her life as a mother eating things off the floor; from her one-sided college romance to her nearly fatal honeymoon -- from the beginning of this paragraph to this final sentence.

Tina Fey reveals all, and proves what we’ve all suspected: you’re no one until someone calls you bossy.

### ***The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho***

Combining magic, mysticism, wisdom and wonder into an inspiring tale of self-discovery, The Alchemist has become a modern classic, selling millions of copies around the world and transforming the lives of countless readers across generations. Paulo Coelho’s masterpiece tells the mystical story of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy who yearns to travel in search of a worldly treasure. His quest will lead him to riches far different—and far more satisfying—than he ever imagined. Santiago’s journey teaches us about the essential wisdom of listening to our hearts, of recognizing opportunity and learning to read the omens strewn along life’s path, and, most importantly, to follow our dreams.

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