

A
SENSE
OF
DIRECTION

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*Some Observations
on the
Art of Directing*

WILLIAM BALL

Sense of Direction: Some Observations on the Art of Directing

William Ball

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A Sense of Direction represents a life's work at the art and craft of directing. Founder and long-time general director of the acclaimed American Conservatory Theatre, Bill Ball engages his audience in a wide-ranging discussion of the director's process from first reading through opening night. Speaking as a director's director, Ball offers a candid, personal account of his method of working including the choice of a play's essential elements, preproduction homework, casting, and rehearsal techniques. Throughout, his discovering and insights guide the director in building the world of the play and bringing it to life.

Sense of Direction: Some Observations on the Art of Directing Details

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Lyric says

This book offers insight from a very distinguished director about how to deal with actors, crew and the overall production of a play. There are some real lessons to be learned from Mr. Ball, especially in the chapters dealing with rehearsals (specifically in regards to the various types and functions of rehearsals). Perfect book for a young director/ producer/ writer.

John Tangney says

Best management book I've ever read. Oh, and also a great resource if you want to be a great director.

Krista says

Some great information, with practical application. I don't agree with all of it, but that's ok. Some wonderful insight to chew on.

His love of the theatre shines through, and that's a joy.

Christopher says

Bill Ball is the man. Read this and you'll never head into tech without a peanut butter sandwich or clear idea as to what you're about...

Katrina says

Recommended by a friend as a great acting book. I loved William Ball's approach to rehearsal and his section on objectives.

Laurie says

The book I needed to read just now, as I prepare for our most challenging season of plays. My dear friend, mentor, second father gave me this book and I stayed up too late, read it straight through. Marvelously insightful, thought-provoking and encouraging for me as a theater director. Every director, whether of high school students or professionals, should read it.

Matt Slaybaugh says

One of the 3 best books ever written about making theatre. Also, it's the simplest and most practical. It's just a bit of "pie-jaw", as the author says, but it's completely magical and transformational. I have 3 copies and I've read this so many times I pretty much have it memorized.

Rosanna Threakall says

Another book on directing so support my studies. This is really helpful and has a really easy-to-follow structure whilst making the thought of directing invigorating, exciting and creative.

Corrine | says

A read that both experienced, and novice directors can benefit from. I loved that it was mostly focused on theatre, which is a welcome change from all the film-directing books out there.

Sarah says

Easily the best book on directing I've ever read, not so much for its technical advice, but for all its blunt opinions. The writing allows for free rein in thinking over one's assumptions about theatrical direction, and challenges you to question Ball's sense of right and wrong in order to find your own.

Derek says

A decent book with a lot of interesting ideas. I disagree in theory with a number of Ball's ideas on direction but I imagine there is a reason he is writing books on the subject so perhaps his techniques are more functional than I think. This book is entirely geared towards directing for the theater which I did not realize, so it wasn't exactly what I was looking for, but I still found it to be an informative read.

Leilani says

Bill Ball was my mentor's mentor and I have had the benefit of learning some of the principles contained in his book long before I had read it. While it's aimed at theatre direction it's a pretty useful read for anyone in the performing arts and contains some great wisdom about the creative process and what we do as performers. The book specifically helped me to understand who I am and why I do what I do. During my training I transformed as a person in part because of the lessons Bill handed down to my teacher Scott Williams and on eventually seeing written explanations of these things in the book they were reinforced and

explained for me. It's sadly out of print now and a bit more difficult to buy but I do still buy copies semi-regularly to gift to people and try and keep a couple in my stash of books for that purpose. I never lend my personal copy to anyone though. You can prize that out of my cold dead hands.

As far as the practical direction, I don't agree with everything he says, but as someone who has used Bill's passed down ethos of working for a long time I can tell you that what may sound new-agey actually gives the most stunning results and fosters courageous performances and courteous working relationships. Bill Ball understood the subconscious mind, he was a true artist of the theatre and I am hugely proud to carry his incredible legacy forward into my own work and my personal life. His principles taught me not only about theatre and direction but how to be a better person. Whether you choose to implement them or not this is a fascinating read.

Nathan Sims says

This is an excellent book on the nuts and bolts of directing. A great resource to go back to time and again.

Neil says

More like 4.5 stars.

After Frank Hauser's Notes on Directing, this is the best book I have encountered about the director's craft (and there aren't too many books out there that are useful at all.)

Ball is perhaps a bit too black and white on some questions, but for the most part I think his advice is practical, immediately useful, and right on the money. There are too many directors out there who don't think kindly of their actors, but coming from that background, Ball is sympathetic and give very useful advice about how directors can get the most out of their performers. His advice covers every aspect of the audition, rehearsal, technical, and performance process. Best of all, I think his book is written in such a way that the advice would apply at almost all levels of theater, whereas many of the other books I've read really only fit in the world of Broadway or large regionals.

Angelique says

F- yes - this book is awesome, the whole way through. He has so much more helpful info than Ayckbourn. I even learned about playwriting. It's the first book I've read on directing and I feel like it's the only book. He looks at directing in a clear way, he looks at the art of directing, not just the skill or the how-to. I think this book may even change my life and help me be a better and more encouraging and loving person. And he's even funny (Big George and his 'Caesar, kiss my baby'). I've highlighted about 1/2 and look forward to implementing some of these techniques in directing.
