



Stella Adler on Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov

By Stella Adler

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An original member of the famed Group Theater, Stella Adler was one of the most influential artists to come out of the American theater. As a Stanislavsky disciple and founder of her own highly esteemed acting conservatory, the extravagant actress was also an eminent acting teacher, training her students--among them Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, and Robert DeNiro--in the art of script interpretation.

The classic lectures collected here, delivered over a period of forty years, bring to life the plays of the three fathers of modern drama: Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Anton Chekhov. With passionate conviction and shrewd insight, Adler explains how their plays forever changed the world of dramaturgy while offering enduring insights on society, class, culture, and the role of the actor. She explores the struggles of Ibsen's characters to free themselves from societal convention, the mortal conflicts that trap Strindberg's men and women, and the pain of loss and transition lyrically evoked by Chekhov. A majestic volume, **Stella Adler on Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov** allows us to experience the work of these masters "as if to see, hear and feel their genius for the first time." (William H. Gass)

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Cofounder in the 1930s of the Group Theater and best known later as the formidable force behind the Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting, Adler was an articulate, opinionated, intellectually gifted member of the profession, as these talks on Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov attest. Culled from a lifetime of lectures and edited into rough essay form by Barry Paris, they exhaustively examine the major works of those three seminal modern playwrights. They are not academic exercises, for Adler's goal was to show her acting students how to break down those intimidating plays into easily digestible parts, the better to bring them to life onstage. Adler's microscopic dissection of a role like that of Nora in *A Doll's House* is fascinating. Unfortunately, her close, complete reading has a downside in this book--repetitiveness. Furthermore, not even Paris' expertise disguises the fact that these pieces were originally spoken. Digression and repetition may be helpful in a classroom lecture but are not as forceful on the page as a lean, careful essay would be. Sadly, this is all she "wrote." *Jack Helbig*

From Kirkus Reviews

The late acting teachers legendary lectures on script interpretation lose something when transposed to the printed page, though they still make a fine introduction to modern drama and the acting style it requires. Like Moscow Art Theatre director Konstantin Stanislavsky, with whom she studied, and like her fellow members of the Group Theatre, which popularized his revolutionary acting technique in America, Adler (1901-1992) stresses the actors role as servant to the playwright. Ibsen and his successors created a new kind of drama based on middle-class life and speech, she asserts; since what people say isnt necessarily what they mean, actors in these plays must imagine and convey their characters inner lives beneath and beyond the text but always for the purpose of illuminating its themes. Adlers interpretations stick closely to received wisdom: Ibsen depicts the individual struggling for liberation from societys conventions; Strindberg portrays men and women in mortal conflict; Chekhov is the poet of nostalgia and loss. Nonetheless, her specific examples of how an actor can particularize these themes in an individual characters actionse.g., Noras habit of hiding things in *A Dolls House* are fascinating. Its hard to say what exactly film biographer Paris (Garbo, 1995, etc.) did to edit Adlers talks, which, judging by internal references, date from the mid-'70s through the mid-'80s. He provides very few footnotes, and he eliminates neither her repetitions nor her actressy asides for the benefit of her audience (Ill tell you because I want you to love me). More rigorous cutting would have better highlighted Adlers very serious commitment to these plays and to the art of acting. Despite these flaws, Adler is majestic and inspiring as she speaks to us from a bygone age in which the theater was the principal creative home for actors who achieved dignity from their abilities as interpretive artists, not from their celebrity status or their paychecks. -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

"No critic has ever talked about theater . . . with more insight and passion. Earthy and sophisticated, imperious and droll, [Adler] had the gift of making plays written over 100 years earlier seem excitingly modern." --*The Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"Plunges you into the world of theater . . . [and] reveals Stella Adler as a literary and social analyst, Stella Adler as an acting teacher, and Stella Adler as a great personality." --*The New Republic*

"These inspired lectures are evidence that Stella Adler is hands down the greatest acting teacher America has produced. . . . Nobody with a serious interest in the theater can afford to be without this book." --John Guare

"One regrets never having seen [Adler] perform, but reading her on these writers, especially Chekhov, is the next best thing." --*The New York Times*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Chris Barrentine:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Stella Adler on Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov, you could enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

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