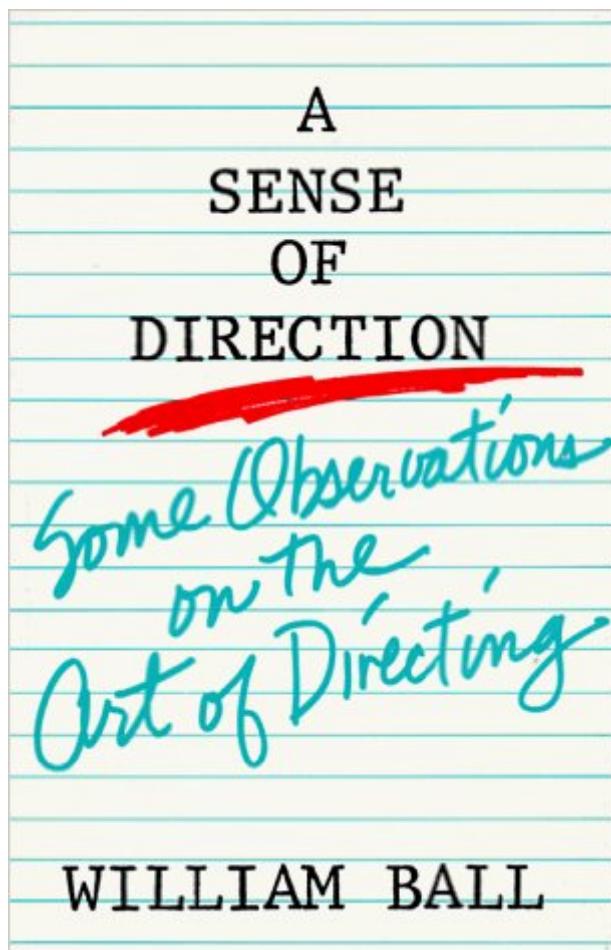


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A Sense Of Direction: Some Observations On The Art Of Directing



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

Paperback: 180 pages

Publisher: Drama Publishers/Quite Specific Media; No Edition Stated edition (October 9, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0896760820

ISBN-13: 978-0896760820

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (32 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #61,982 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Direction & Production #84 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Movies > Direction & Production

Customer Reviews

SENSE OF DIRECTION is a text every director will want to take a look at, even if, years later, some of Ball's advice seems dated (or too expensive—he was not a man to shy away from large budgets and extended rehearsals if he thought them necessary.) In person he could be rather abrasive, to the point of being ridiculous, like Ross Hunter in a caftan. But on the pages of his book, he exhibits a warm, spiritual nature, almost like a priest. Since the days of the Chekhov dynasty, the director has of course assumed near divine proportions in the theater and you get the feeling Ball enjoyed that role, but he is often very courteous towards his actors. He even goes so far as to say that "one of the director's most important qualifications is knowing when NOT to interrupt his actors." He was a professional director and the book covers every contingency from "first reading to opening night." Some of Ball's advice is not going to help you if you are an amateur. He gives the advice that actors, like cattle, can't hold too many ideas in their heads at one time so he urges the director to

come up with a shorthand of small verbs or nouns with which the actor might make himself aware at all times. "Seduce," for example, might be his direction to the actor playing Cleopatra. Sounds elementary, but it works! After all, he was the man who boasted that he discovered Annette Bening. He notes that often, for the first ten minutes of a play, the audience finds itself uncomfortable, with a marked realization of the artificiality of theater. They are sitting in a dark room and watching a bunch of people all lit up pretending to be real. As directors our job is to make those first ten minutes fly by so that the dream can swamp the audience and take them along with us on our journey.

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