

INTRODUCTION

You don't know me. My guess is you've never heard of Tice Allison, theater actor and one-time resident of California, but at least I'm in good company. When I first started out as an actor, I had never heard of Uta Hagen or Sanford Meisner or Konstantin Stanislavski or Michael Shurtleff or Lee Strasberg.

As the author of *Badass Acting*, I'm not comparing myself to these master thespians and teachers — I'm just saying I didn't know who they were until I discovered their works. Thanks in part to many a good acting lesson pulled from their books, I went from bumbling novice to seasoned professional in a relatively short period of time. It is my hope that you can glean a host of valuable acting tips from *Badass Acting*, even though its author only made his name on theater stages. I'm like most every other actor working on a hometown stage across the globe, an actor recognized on his home turf, but a far cry from famous.

BADASS ACTING

You may not know me, but maybe we have something in common. Just like you — perhaps, like you — I spent many years in professional training; I studied with some of the best acting coaches in the business. My dream was to chart a long career as a working actor, to see my name in the opening credits of many a feature film, to recognize my face on television, a regular on some popular sitcom or TV drama. But I chose a different path, one that avoided the brutality of “making it” in show business. Ultimately, I found my home, my opportunity to perform, my place to practice my art, in the wonderful world of community theater.

Maybe you’re like me, but in a different way. Perhaps you never entertained dreams of becoming a movie star, never devoted years of your life to expensive training. Maybe you just wandered onto an audition stage one day and have been working in theater ever since.

So who am I to be writing a handbook on acting? Who is this Tice Allison? This guy you’ve never heard of before? To start, he’s a pretty damn good actor, if he says so himself. I’ve been nominated for awards and have won awards. I have had strangers walk up to me to tell me how much they enjoyed my work from a play in which they saw me perform. And I’ve got a lot of training and a lot of experience — about thirty years experience at this writing.

With professional-level training tempered with many years spent performing on local stages, I wrote *Badass Acting* with community theater actors in mind. Armed with the confidence of a professional actor, I have a few acting secrets to share. My goal is to divulge everything I've come to know about being a successful actor working on local stages, to offer a treasure trove of tips, tricks and techniques that can hone your acting skills to the highest caliber and lead you to the heights of local celebrity ... and far beyond, if you so choose.

True, I have yet to garner acclaim in movies and television, but my years working in theater have produced a strong resume of acting credits and a taste of local celebrity to go with it. It's not fame in the glitziest sense of the word, but it is sweet recognition, all the same. Local celebrity is intoxicating. Perfect strangers stride up to you and tell you how much they loved you in such-and-such a play.

"There he is!" a guy shouted at me from across the room in a coffee shop one day. "There's the guy we love to hate!" He was referring to the fact I have found a personal niche playing villains and eccentrics. When all the heads in the cafe turned to see who this smiling loud fellow was calling out, I'd be a liar if I said I wasn't mortified ... but the local recognition sure as hell didn't suck! I'm even asked for autographs from time to time. Autographs! Me! Joe Blow Nobody, community stage actor!

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It's never too late to ultimately succeed in the way you had once shaped your dreams, and working in theater is an excellent way — the best way, I would argue — of honing your acting skills in the meantime. Stage actors, in my opinion, make for the best actors in the world. And people get discovered off local stages all the time.

I haven't given up my dream of working in film and television. That's because I do not rate my resume of theater credits as a list of amateur stage accomplishments with little worth. I regard them, rather, as 24-carat gold. I may be a middle-aged man at this juncture in time, but because of my years spent in theater, I am more capable now of stepping into a professional acting career than ever before — more ready than ever I was when I was just a kid — a kid with good training, to be sure, but with hardly a jot of stage experience to his name.

The point is this: even though you've never heard of me, I am confident you will come away from my book, *Badass Acting*, having learned a thing or two — a few inventive acting tricks, a handful of methods for taking command of the stage, a couple cool techniques for memorizing your lines. I am also confident *Badass Acting* will be a beneficial handbook for actors living in urban parts of the country, where community theaters may abound but professional training is not available.

I also wrote this book for people entertaining serious ambitions in film and television. *Badass Acting* is a book about *acting* — and acting is a universal medium; it's the same whether you're on stage or in front of a camera.

Badass Acting is a collection of about eighty short essays, each one covering a specific theme on the subject of acting. The topics in this book span a modest range of tips and techniques and acting secrets, and include a few overlooked applications of performance art. I've endeavored to make it a fun read, accentuated with humor, and have applied catchy titles to the chapters. Also included are many creative concepts which can help lift your status on local stages and launch a serious acting career ahead of the rest.

The examples and techniques I share in *Badass Acting* are pooled from a cross section of the actual stage plays in which I performed. Some of the lessons in *Badass Acting* are bits of shared instruction, things I picked up from my fortunate years of pricey professional training, but much of it is a library of subtle tricks and methods that came to me organically over the years, as I advanced on stage as an actor.

Also, to reiterate, for those intent on one day leaving your home town for the lights of New York City or the glitz of Los Angeles, let me assure you that while the lessons in this book are derived from live theater examples, they can be easily applied to ambitious careers in movies and television. All acting, at it's core, is the same, no matter the venue.

Before I set you loose, I should explain how I've structured the book and how it works. The chapters are laid out in a logical progression in four parts:

IN THE BEGINNING
THE AUDIENCE IS WATCHING
THE KID'S ACTING
GOOD CONDUCT

Essays about the rehearsal process flow naturally into the next section covering performance, after which follows an important section addressing bad acting habits ... no acting book worth its salt would be complete without a few chapters on *this* topic. Following that are some essays concerning proper conduct in community theater. Finally, almost as an appendix entry, I've compiled a list of tips and tricks for memorizing your lines.

I should also point out, this is not a textbook on stage craft. In fact, the reader is presumed to know the core basics of theater: the difference between stage left and stage right, for instance, the difference between upstage and down.

On the stylistic end, I have opted for the grammatical choice of writing in the traditional masculine person, using the words *he*, *him* and *his* to represent all personal pronouns. That duly stated, I have endeavored to use the feminine *she*, *her* and *hers* from time to time, and you'll also note a sampling of the common gender-neutral pronouns *they*, *them* and *theirs*.

In order to best illustrate the lessons in this book with useful examples, I have cited instances of my own performances on stage, most of the time naming the very plays in which I had occasion to engage a particular tip, trick or technique. You might notice I cite some of the same plays over and over again, throughout. Lest you think my actor's resume is sorely lacking, the truth is this cross section of stage plays simply represents my best work, my favorite plays, the shows from which I was able to derive my best personal acting epiphanies — epiphanies I now share with you. Also, except for listing the names of famous actors here and there to shore up a point, I have not cited the names of colleagues or castmates in this book.

I should also note that even though the business of theater broadly includes the production of musicals, and that one can easily adapt the lessons in *Badass Acting* to those concerns, this book focuses exclusively on acting as it pertains to dramas and comedies — in other words, on acting as it relates to stage plays.

I guess I should also confess, I am a horror film fanatic and aficionado of the supernatural, as well as a long-time student of metaphysics. In this book, you will encounter more than a few references to classic horror movies, ghostly phenomena and mental science — all of these citations having some kind of bearing on acting, of course. Finally, I must also confess I am an author saddled with a potty mouth.

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The reader should be forewarned that some of my essays are peppered with mild instances of strong language and the occasional “F-bomb” — but nothing the average middle-schooler hasn’t heard before.

And now, as Dracula said to Renfield, “I bid you welcome . . .”