

**50
GREAT SCENES
FOR
STUDENT ACTORS**

Edited by Lewy Olsson

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50 GREAT SCENES FOR STUDENT ACTORS

Edited by Lewy Olfsen



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50 GREAT SCENES FOR STUDENT ACTORS

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Introduction

The student actor's need for good scenes is seemingly endless. In most first-year courses in acting given at the college level, a scene is due for presentation in class every other week. The high-school student electing a course in acting and the student enrolled in an independent acting school or workshop are under only slightly less pressure to prepare a succession of scenes. No sooner has one scene been presented, another must be found. It was to help meet this need for a handy selection of scenes to choose from that this book was prepared.

It should be noted at once that the selection of scenes presented here reflects primarily the editor's own tastes. There are probably as many sets of criteria for evaluating any scene's usefulness as there are teachers of acting. No claims are made, therefore, that the student actor will find every scene here of equal value to him. These scenes are, essentially, the kind that I found useful when I taught acting at the Boston Center for Adult Education, and that earlier I had found useful when I was a drama student at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-

Mellon University). They and their kind have worked for me; it is my belief that they will work for many others.

Every scene in this anthology did have to meet certain objective criteria. Only two-person scenes were acceptable; the practical difficulty of a student's being able to meet with two other students for a sufficient number of rehearsals to prepare the scene adequately precluded use of any three-person scenes. As far as possible, the two roles in a scene had to be fairly and equally divided, so that both actors using the scene could take full advantage of the scene as a learning experience. And the grouping of scenes had to represent a balance of dramatic styles, types, and acting problems. Some scenes lend themselves best to work on truthful talking and listening, some to characterization, some to playing an objective, and so forth.

Out of respect to the playwrights, no scene in this collection has been in any way abridged or edited; even individual idiosyncrasies of spelling and punctuation have been maintained. (Minor cuts in stage business have occasionally been made when their inclusion seemed confusing rather than clarifying.) And though in every case a scene can only be fully understood by a reading of the complete play from which it comes, I have tried to choose only scenes that have a degree of self-contained shape, so that rehearsed and presented out of context they will still make dramatic sense.

A few words are in order about scenes *not* included. Although there is no such thing as a scene that "everybody" knows, I have tried to choose scenes that I suspect are unfamiliar to many stu-

dents, and that are therefore not done to death. Is there anywhere a student actor who needs to be directed to the soda fountain scene from *Our Town*? The recognition scene from *Anastasia*? The Laura-Amanda or Laura-Gentleman Caller scenes from *The Glass Menagerie*? I doubt it.

For the same reason, I have seldom used more than one scene from a given play (there are a few exceptions); because the student is urged to read in its entirety any play from which he intends to present a scene, it is assumed that he will find for himself other good scenes to use. To encourage the student to do this reading, I have often indicated in the notes to a scene that there are other scenes from the same play—or other plays by the same playwright—that will be helpful. (For this reason, women should read at least the introductory notes to the scenes for men, and men the notes to the scenes for women.)

The realities of copyright law also precluded the use of certain scenes. I can only hope that students will find these scenes that I would like to have included through their own reading of world dramatic literature.

The book is divided into three parts: Scenes for One Man and One Woman, Scenes for Two Men, and Scenes for Two Women. Within each of these parts, the scenes are presented in random order—that is, neither chronologically nor in degree of difficulty. It is my hope that students will therefore be compelled to read a number of scenes before making their selection; they will thus be introduced to plays and playwrights that they might not otherwise encounter.

No attempt has been made to tell students how to play a given scene (though I haven't been able to resist dropping an occasional hint about how *not* to play a scene). There is, of course, no "right" way to play a role; and how one approaches a scene for class presentation depends largely upon the acting problem one is dealing with. Remember, though, that these scenes all come from real plays; they were not written as classroom acting exercises. A student ignores the larger context in which the scene is set at his own peril. Again, the best advice is: read the entire play! (All of the plays represented in this collection are currently available in complete published editions, many of them in paperback.)

To one completing work on a manuscript, the sense of obligation and gratitude toward others for their help is enormous. Such debts can only be acknowledged; they cannot be paid. My gratitude, then, to: Dorothy McKittrick, Mary Mapes, and Ellen Krieger, who initiated me into the dark mysteries of Rights and Permissions; Betsy Nordstrom, formerly of Bantam Books, and Gregory Armstrong, still of Bantam Books, for their patience, forbearance, and encouragement; William Saroyan and Alfred Levinson, playwrights represented in this collection, whose correspondence with me about their scenes were highlights of pleasure; Nancy and Bill Dickinson, for courtesies too numerous to list; Ken Olfson, who as an actor gave of his knowledge and as a brother of his understanding. Thanks, thanks, and ever thanks.

Lewy Olfson

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Great Scenes
for
Student Actors

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part 1

Scenes for One Man, One Woman

seen a few simplicity they should not miss
that you will find up they are simple to
perform. They require a lot of skill.

The story is Mary Parker Sweet's, from
Goddard, and Entertainment Palace. you
and Mary are ready at all times unless he
is using the initials for his purpose. This scene
from Act II.

The excellent scene for the first comes
later in the Act between Joe and Mabel, when
they are with the line. I don't suppose
you will find in it will be a better weighing
than the scene.

John is a man of 10 years old.

Mary is what sort?

Joe is the name Mabel Taggart?



part

Scenes for

One Man,

One Woman
