

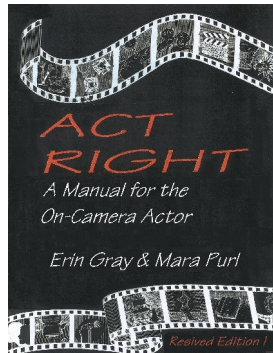
READING LIST

Act Right: A Manual for the On-Camera Actor

Revised Edition

by Erin Gray & Mara Purl

From a pair of seasoned actors—Erin Gray (best known as Buck Rogers' girlfriend on the late '70s TV show) and Mara Purl (best known for her *Milford-Haven* radio soap opera)—comes a book that they proclaim is “everything you need to know that they didn't teach you in acting class.” It begins with a personal preface or an essay of sorts, from both actors recalling their arduous auditioning days, rough times before their big breaks, and their naivete in the business. These components commonly associated with those beginning in the industry, prompted the two to write a book.



Act Right: A Manual for the On-Camera Actor is designed to help you behave correctly from Day One of your career as a professional actor, according to the authors. The focus is on technical and professional information. Initial chapters “wax philosophical” while the remaining chapters are more practical. Gray and Purl do not purport to have the ever-illusory “formula or lock-step track” for getting into and succeeding in the business, but they do offer their own views and advice that has helped them over the years on their own journeys. According to the authors, success comes from learning to cultivate both sides of yourself—the artist and the business. By the same token they recommend the reader think of it as a balancing act between “your subjective and your objective sense of life.”

The mostly philosophical beginning chapters cover such topics as “the artist, the business person, ethics, practice awareness, change and changes, setting goals and establishing mission statement, talent & fame, and visualization.” Write the authors, “Without stating our own philosophical or religious views, we would just like to share our belief that as artists, we have the transparencies for, or transmitters of, higher truths. Indeed, art is its purest form is a truth-telling method that transmits clearly and universally through all ages and cultures.” For the average green actor, inviting them to “go deep into yourself; give yourself tasks and exercises to help you dig deep enough to come up with something meaningful; learning to honor and nurture yourself; finding ways to re-synch ourselves with the forces of nature and the internal timing of revelation,” may be a bit overwhelming.

However, the very Oprah-like insights are tempered with personal anecdotes from Gray and Purl scattered throughout, which are fairly encouraging.

In the remaining chapters the authors' attention shifts to the more practical aspects of the business. Topics typically found in other acting books, naturally, are covered in Gray and Purl's: schools and classes, reading, credits, workshops and theatre groups, pictures and resumes, video reels, website. The highlights of the text are the informative on-camera tips and tidbits—that is, if you're a new-to-town type of actor. Those who are not familiar with on-set etiquette, lingo, and rules and regulations will get a very hands-on sense from two actors with plenty of experience. As an acting-career advice book, *Act Right* seems about average, yet its philosophically charged introductory chapters and random blurbs from famous industry personalities sprinkled throughout are a rather nice change of pace.

—Lori Talley

Haven Books, 2001, \$29.95\

BACKSTAGE

THE ACTOR'S RESOURCE

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