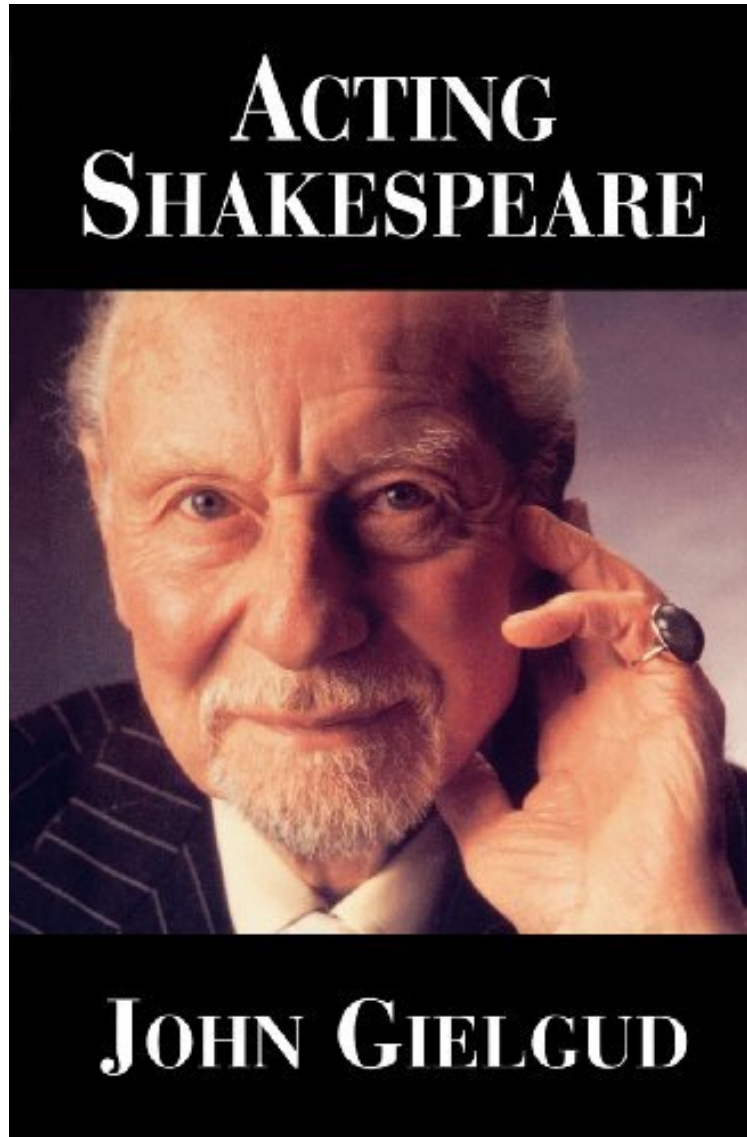


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Acting Shakespeare

John Gielgud

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John Gielgud : Acting Shakespeare before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Acting Shakespeare:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Stage memoir of one of the great Shakespearians of the 20th CenturyBy Craig MattesonGielgud does not discuss Shakespeare in any kind of biographical or historical way. This book is about Gielgud's experiences and thoughts about acting various roles and directing many of the plays over his great career in theater. He not only tells us openly his opinions of his own performances, he also shares fairly unvarnished views about fellow actors and actresses and especially of directors and other behind the stage personnel.

However, these are views about the private person, they are about what they did in bringing Shakespeare's plays to the stage. It is most interesting to read the author's thoughts about his strengths and limitations. He knows the romantic roles such as Romeo were of limited success, but he loved his Richard II and Lear. The occasion of this book seems to be the release of Gielgud's taking the Prospero role in the film "Prospero's Books" and the release of the movie. The actor talks about his work in bringing Shakespeare to film as well as the stage and said that he always wanted to play Prospero on film and shares with us his many failed attempts to make that happen. While he had not seen the finished version of "Prospero's Books" he felt that it would be beautiful to look at. I have never seen the film. The book has many wonderful pictures of Gielgud and his contemporaries in their roles. There are also playbills, photos of directors and others involved in the productions as well. Gielgud also is interesting talking about stagecraft and the stage direction of the different productions, the costumes and how all of it goes into creating a role. Anyone who has ever been involved in a performance of anything knows how much goes into making something appear so effortless on stage. Even the lighting adds a level of sophistication to the drama. The appendices include lists of Gielgud's performances as an actor in the various plays, productions he directed, some notices from critics, some of the casts of productions in which he took part, and some notes he took in a 1946 production of King Lear under the direction of Harley Granville-Barker whom Gielgud admired. A fascinating book and miles upon miles from the mindless publicity minded celebrity books that get tossed off with little thought and less content. This book is interesting, has a great deal to offer anyone interested in Shakespeare and acting in the theater (or on film). 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Insight from someone who's been there

By A Customer
I was expecting more of a how-to book when I bought this but was not at all disappointed. This funny and inspiring book gave some insight into the life, work and thoughts of one of our time's greatest actors. This is an good book for both fans of Shakespeare and of biographies.

(Applause Books). From the London Sunday Telegraph : " Acting Shakespeare is extraordinary. The tone of the voice is unmistakably Sir John's, the atmosphere congenial. We're in the company of our greatest actor, who holds in his hands the last links of a chain of tradition leading to Shakespeare himself ... this book is crucial for anyone who believes that Shakespeare on the stage should be Shakespeare at his greatest ... Gielgud is by turns, wise, witty and wicked, but unfailingly modest."

From Publishers Weekly Now 88, the distinguished British actor here offers random notes on the works of his country's most famous dramatist, whose plays he has been performing for more than 70 years. Gielgud is particularly well known for his interpretations of Richard II, Hamlet, King Lear, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Cassius in *Julius Caesar* and Prospero in *The Tempest* (and in the Peter Greenaway film *Prospero's Books*), all of which he discusses in a light, unpretentious style. His rambling prose tends toward anecdotes and flashes of intriguing insight--Lear should be witty and sly as well as wicked and mad--rather than sustained discussion of the roles' deeper meanings. Miller, coauthor with Gielgud of *An Actor in His Time*, provides an introduction tracing the history of Gielgud's Shakespearean productions and appendices reprinting contemporary reviews, cast lists and notes on King Lear by famed director Harley Granville-Barker. This blatant padding doubles the book's length to a still-meager 192 pages but adds little substance. Nevertheless, the book is a pleasant diversion for ardent theater lovers looking for lightweight reading. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal
In his latest remembrance, a chatty Gielgud (*Backward Glances: Times for Reflection and Distinguished Company*, Limelight Eds., 1990) fills in details about his remarkable 70-year career. He chronicles his greatest triumphs and disappointments and provides tidbits about his famous costars and friends. Gielgud intended to become an architect if he didn't succeed in acting, and his interest in design is evident in a fascinating commentary on Shakespearean settings and costumes. He has a natural, conversational way with his text, but the body of this book is only 90 pages. The rest is comprised of a comprehensive introduction--Gielgud's Shakespearean chronology--as well as approximately 60 pages of most interesting appendices: various criticisms of Gielgud's performances, rehearsal notes from Harley Granville-Barker's production of *King Lear*, and various cast lists of Gielgud's performances. This book will be a delight for those who have followed Gielgud's career or simply love Shakespeare and tales of the stage. In addition, it will be welcomed by any collection where research may be done of 20th-century Shakespearean performances.-Diane H. Albosta, Episcopal H.S. Lib., Alexandria, Va. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.