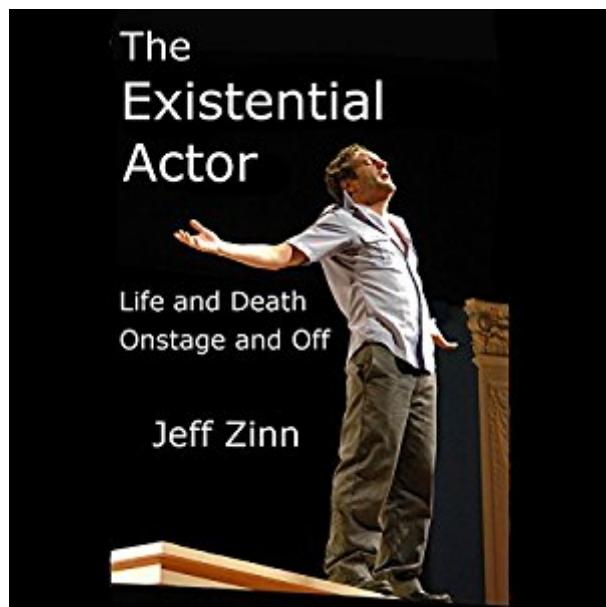


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# The Existential Actor: Life And Death Onstage And Off



## Synopsis

This is a book for the thinking actor, and the finest actors I've known are just that. The best actors bring it all together: body, heart, spirit, and mind. This book is for the actor who thinks about craft and influence, who thinks about the relationship of performance to living, who thinks about doing and what that doing means. Acting is a metaphor, and it's a mirror. A theory of acting, if true, shows us to ourselves. Jeff Zinn knows this. He knows it as an actor, director, teacher, and thinker. His theory of everything is simple and revelatory. (From the foreword by Todd London)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I liked "The Existential Actor" because it gets to the point. There are 4 elements that allow us to get to the meaning of the play or shaping a life: shape, action, transaction and surrender. Each action builds on the last until the character gets or does not the desired outcome. You can use these elements scene by scene until you know where, how, and what goal your character will achieve. The book has a great historical section on theatre through the ages. Aristotle had important things to say about theatre, who knew or remembered. Zinn uses 4 plays to explain his idea. "Death of a Salesman" is one very interesting example. He did not leave out Shakespeare. "Hamlet" is used example of surrender in classical theatre. I hope a lot of people read this book. It is a great tool for structuring your work in theatre. But as the subtitle says, it can give one clues on how to be the star of your life. The subtitle is "Life and Death Onstage and Off".

This book is a thoughtful and beautiful distillation of the meditations by a life long artist. The

existential ideas in this book will occupy your mind for a long time--and I find myself thinking about Zinn's synthesis of our understanding of life, death, culture, and art, long after I shut the book. Beyond these larger themes and questions, however, is a true usefulness. This book will help you approach work in the theatre in a smart and focused way. As a young actor, this book is incredibly valuable as it has given me a way to understand and develop my process and training. I recommend this book to anyone who acts, wonders about acting, or feels themselves acting as they go through their day.

As actors, we can become so overwrought with the "how" of building a character. Even if you have a process you employ, it leaves you wondering if you could have done more. Jeff Zinn's book "The Existential Actor: Life and Death Onstage and Off," gives you a fresh slate to work with. He brilliantly weaves the ideas of Ernest Becker (author of "The Denial of Death,") as well as other great thinkers, and gives us an opportunity to view the character by entering into man's existential dilemma (what causes man to fear death... and then therefore life.) What is the characters *causa sui* (to create meaning beyond its own life?) He lays out four steps to help us dig into this... Shape, Action, Transaction, and Surrender. When I was done reading the book, several performances from my past ran through my mind, wishing I could go back and apply his process to each of them. I know from this point forward, I will have Mr. Zinn's book by my side as I work on my next character, and all the ones I'm fortunate enough to step into in the future.

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