

Public Abstract

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Department:Theatre

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Title:PREPARING BIRDS TO FLY: LLOYD RICHARDS AND THE ACTOR

Lloyd Richards (1919-2006) was one of the preeminent theatre practitioners in the United States from the mid-twentieth century through the beginning of the twenty-first. Through his work as Artistic Director of the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Center, Dean of Yale School of Drama, and Artistic Director of Yale Repertory Theatre, Richards made a significant mark on modern American theatre.

Although Richards is recognized for his outstanding work with playwrights and new play development, his work with actors, by comparison, has been overlooked. *Preparing Birds to Fly: Lloyd Richards and the Actor* uses interviews with seven of Richards's former students and collaborators to investigate Richards's actor-training pedagogy and directing practices from the perspectives of actors. Stephen Henderson, Ron Van Lieu, Dean Irby, Rosalyn Coleman, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Michele Shay, and Roger Robinson offer detailed accounts of their work with Richards and evaluate the impact working with him had on their careers and lives. Through cross-case analysis of the case studies created from each participant's interview, the study documents specific practices Richards used that, from the participants' perspectives, made working with him a transformative experience. Additionally, the study analyzes Richards's archival interviews to ascertain his directing philosophy and to compare it with the participants' report of their experiences working with him.

The participants' belief that working with Richards resulted in a deepened sense of artistic integrity, creative self-reliance, and a heightened understanding of theatre as a service to the community has significant implications, and possible application, in directing practices, actor training, and approaches to cultural inclusiveness in classrooms and rehearsal halls.