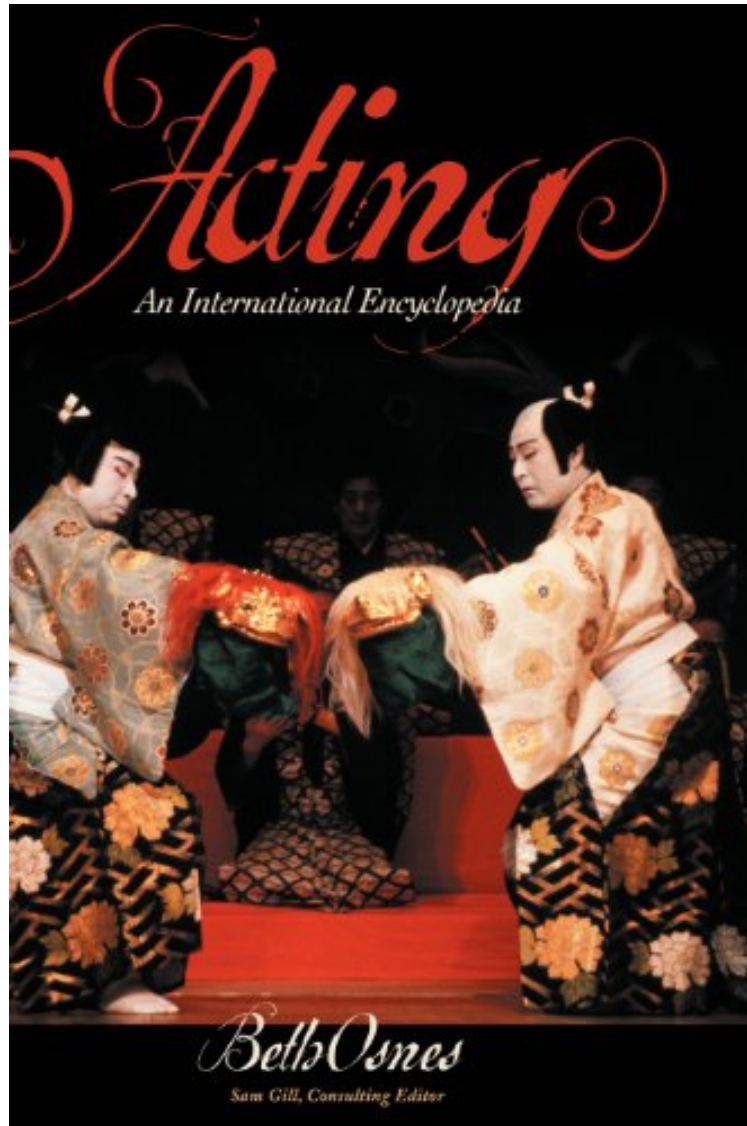


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## Acting: An International Encyclopedia of Traditional Culture

*Mary Beth Osnes*

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**Mary Beth Osnes : Acting: An International Encyclopedia of Traditional Culture** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Acting: An International Encyclopedia of Traditional Culture:

A groundbreaking, cross-cultural reference work exploring the diversity of expression found in rituals, festivals, and

performances, uncovering acting techniques and practices from around the world. AZ entries span every region of the world and cover diverse topics from Ireland's Abbey Theatre to China's Zhang Mu (rod-puppet theater). Beautiful illustrations include masks used in classical Greek dramas, an advertisement for a performance of Punch and Judy, the humorous puppet characters, and photographs of actors, performances, and ceremonies from Monty Python to young Balinese dancers performing the Legong dance.

From Library Journal  
The title of this reference work is a bit misleading. While acting and actors are certainly prominent among the entries, this is an encyclopedia of world theater, with selected entries on the cinema of various cultures. Ranging in length from one sentence to more than a page, the entries are cross-referenced and well documented. Unfortunately, the writing can be murky, and the criteria used for entry selection are not indicated. For example, why include Marilyn Monroe but not Sidney Poitier and African cinema but not Asian cinema? Osnes (theater, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder), who as a Fulbright scholar in Malaysia studied and performed in traditional shadow-puppet theater, does include a wide range of traditional cultural terms not always found in any but the most exhaustive (and expensive) theater references. Still, there is nothing new here for libraries already holding works such as *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre* (LJ 2/95), *The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre* (LJ 4/89), and *An International Dictionary of Theatre Language* (Greenwood, 1985). Small theater collections on a tight budget will, however, find this useful. Laura A. Ewald, Murray State Univ. Lib., KY  
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From Booklist  
Broad in both geographical and temporal scope, this volume's definition of acting includes all forms of public performance rather than the more accepted definition of interpreting written text before an audience. Osnes, a theatrical scholar and practitioner, has gathered a wealth of information from a wide variety of sources. The 370-plus cross-referenced entries are alphabetically arranged. Each concludes with a list of references, which are repeated in the 32-page bibliography at the end of the book. There is no introduction that could have provided the rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of subjects. Entries cover actors (the Barrymores, Sarah Bernhardt, Marlon Brando, John Wayne); playwrights (Jean Cocteau, Athol Fugard, Sophocles); acting companies (Abbey Theatre, Group Theater); conventions and devices (Clown, Deus ex machina); movements (Romanticism, Symbolism); and dramatic forms (Kabuki, Spaghetti Western, Vaudeville). Many entries relate the history of performance in a specific country or region. Puppet theater, the circus, and film and television performance are all included. Most of the coverage is up-to-date, but the entry on Whoopi Goldberg stops at 1992, and Kenneth Branagh's latest listed work is a 1993 film. Overall, this is not the first source of information about the men and women who appear on stage, but it is a very good source for the context of what they do. Recommended for larger libraries, especially those with active theater collections or that serve theater communities. RB  
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About the Author  
Beth Osnes, PhD, is a scholar, teacher, and performer based in Boulder, CO.