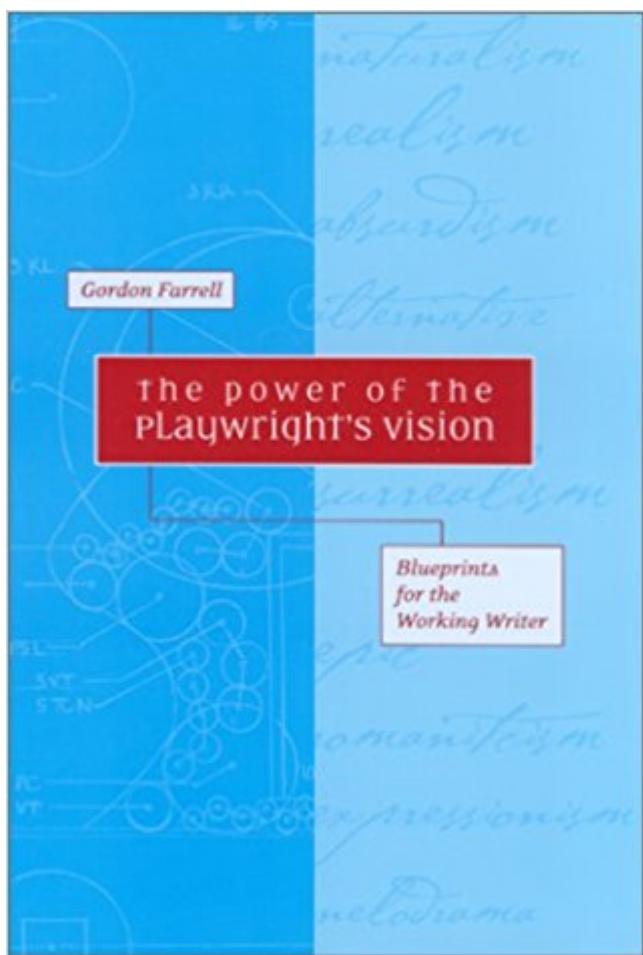


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# The Power Of The Playwright's Vision: Blueprints For The Working Writer



## **Synopsis**

Every playwright has his or her own vision of life - and seeks to express that vision on stage. Over the past two hundred years, the world's greatest dramatists have been constructing models, or blueprints of their visions, to make sure that what is in their hearts gets put on stage. This book distills that genius and innovation into a practical manual. In a clear and easily understood way, Gordon Farrell makes available the most potent and effective structures ever devised by the world's most important dramatists. Playwrights like Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekov, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, Lillian Hellman, Bertolt Brecht, Jean Paul Sartre, Harold Pinter, and Jean Cocteau all developed powerful new writing tools that empowered them to capture their personal vision of the world on stage. The Power of the Playwright's Vision describes not only what these techniques are, but also how they can be put to use, enabling today's working playwrights to bring the power of their own personal vision to life in the theatre.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Gordon Farrell has been teaching playwriting at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts since 1991. He also teaches theatre history, playwriting, and script analysis at Marymount Manhattan College in New York City, and has been appointed six times as a Visiting Lecturer at Yale University. He began his work in the theatre as a director, producer, and theatre administrator in the San Francisco Bay area. From 1983 to 1986, he studied at the Yale School of Drama, where

he earned an MFA in playwriting. His plays have been produced in New York City, Buffalo, New Haven, and San Francisco, and he has written screenplays for Universal Pictures, MGM, and Warner Brothers. He is currently finishing a new full-length drama and developing a feature film with an independent New York film company.

I have taken Professor Farrell's classes at NYU. This book distills his class teaching in a readable if sometimes repetitive way and will ultimately be useful to more than just practicing playwrights. Anyone studying how plays are made will find his Yale Drama School-influenced method quite informative. Farrell's basic thesis is that playwrights communicate their philosophical visions of the world through their plays. Not exactly ground-breaking. But neither is Aristotle when he says plays must have a beginning, middle and end. Farrel is not entirely artsy, either. If a play fails to capture an audience, he says, it has failed. So, how to go about capturing an audience with your vision? Farrell gives the blueprints of successful plays and dramatic genres and provides commentary on their uses in communicating certain basic ideas like: One person can change the world. One person can't change the world. Only groups of people can change the world. Things change, but for the worse, and people can't stop this deterioration. He talks a lot of isms (Naturalism, Realism, Expressionism...) but keeps them extremely distinct, one of the advantages of how he teaches his classes. He also keeps you excited and engaged, even if it requires prose that resembles the patter of an infomercial. For those who can't make it to NYU or Yale to study drama, this is a highly-readable version of the basic curriculum and a good companion to play anthologies like *THEATRE ALIVE!* by Norman A. Bert. Some will take exception to Farrell's simplifications and omissions. In my opinion, what *THE POWER OF THE PLAYWRIGHT'S VISION* loses in simplification, it makes up for in inspiration.

As a university theatre instructor, I feel that Gordon Farrell's "The Power of the Playwright's Vision: Blueprints for the Working Writer" is highly valuable not only to students of playwriting, but also to students who are just beginning to study dramatic literature. Farrell offers various tools by which the student can intelligently approach plays written in a variety of modern styles. Among the playwriting styles that Farrell renders accessible to even the most inexperienced student are surrealism and expressionism. Farrell also illuminates some of the differences between realism and naturalism--a muddy point that baffles many students. The historical background sections that are strategically placed AFTER the description of each playwriting style allows the student to perceive the manner in which social developments have influenced the art of playwriting. As a text that connects artistic

style with history, Farrell's book offers students the knowledge and terminology necessary to begin a meaningful discussion about drama in the modern era. University instructors should consider assigning "The Power of the Playwright's Vision" in their Introduction to Theatre courses, as well as their playwriting courses.

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I studied with Gordon Farrell as a graduate student at NYU's Dept. of Dramatic Writing. His lectures on classical drama and dramatic analysis were astounding. I'm not kidding; everyone in the class wrote notes like crazy. We'd never heard anything like it, esp. not applied to stage and screenwriting. Now that I am teaching dramatic writing myself at Austin Community College, I still draw upon what I learned about dramatic structures from Gordon to teach my own classes. His book, *The Power of the Playwright's Vision*, is the clearest analysis of the structures used in writing drama I have read. Not only is this invaluable knowledge for playwrights, but it also builds a foundation for screenwriting as well. If you think you know everything there is to know about structure, read this book and really get a grasp of it from a new angle. I only wish the book had been longer and gone into Gordon's analysis of classic drama and how to apply that to writing today for the stage and screen. Maybe that will be part II. I hope so. My notes from his classes are too messy to read, so I eagerly await his next book!

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