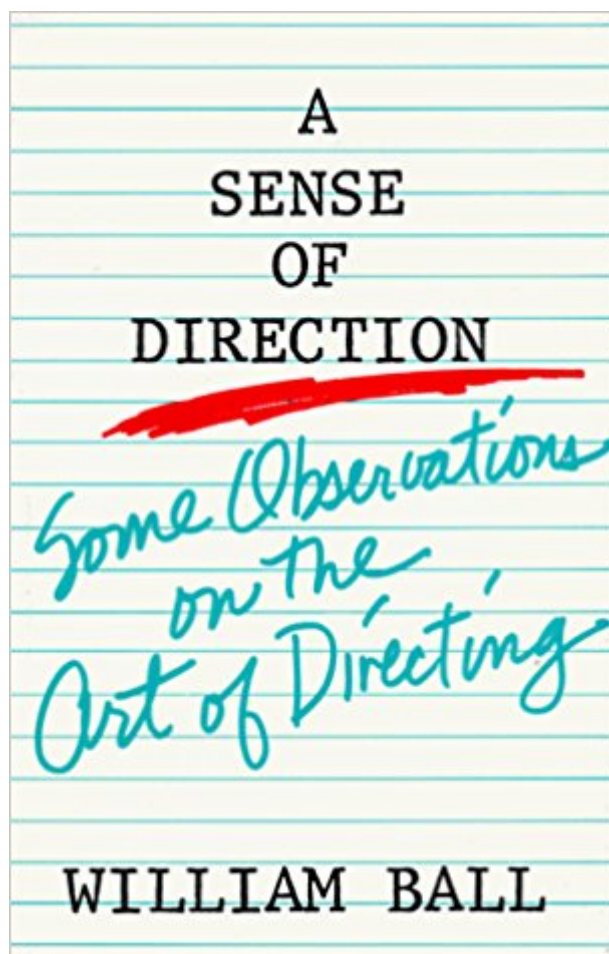


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# A Sense Of Direction: Some Observations On The Art Of Directing



## Synopsis

A Sense of Direction represents a life's work at the art and craft of directing. Founder and long-time general director of the acclaimed American Conservatory Theatre, Bill Ball engages his audience in a wide-ranging discussion of the director's process from first reading through opening night. Speaking as a director's director, Ball offers a candid, personal account of his method of working including the choice of a play's essential elements, preproduction homework, casting, and rehearsal techniques. Throughout, his discovering and insights guide the director in building the world of the play and bringing it to life.

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## Customer Reviews

William Ball (1931-1991) founded San Francisco's renowned American Conservatory Theatre (ACT) in 1965 and was its general director for many years. Beginning in the theatre as a designer, he turned to acting and appeared with regional companies and Shakespeare festivals across the country. He made his New York directorial debut with an Off Broadway production of Chekhov's *Ivanov* which won the Obie and Vernon Rice Drama Desk Awards for 1958. He subsequently directed at Houston's Alley Theatre; San Francisco's Actor's Workshop; Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage; San Diego's Old Globe Theatre; and staged several New York City Opera productions. His 1959 Off Broadway production of *Under Milk Wood* won both the Lola D'Annunzio and the Outer Circle Critics Awards, and in 1962 his *Six Characters in Search of an Author* proved another multiple award winner and had an extended New York run. After directing at Canada's Stratford Festival, Ball returned to New York to write the libretto, with composer Lee Hoiby for an opera,

Natalya Petrovna, based on *A Month in the Country*. In 1964 he directed *Tartuffe* and *Homage to Shakespeare* at Lincoln Center and then traveled to London to recreate his staging of *Six Characters*. Ball has been the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship, a Ford Foundation directorial grant, and an NBC RCA director's fellowship. Of his many productions for A.C.T., three were also directed for PBS television, including *The Taming of the Shrew*, for which he was nominated by the Television Critics Circle as best director of the year. In June 1979, Mr. Ball accepted the Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award voted to A.C.T. for its outstanding work in repertory performance and advanced theatre training. In the same year, Carnegie Mellon University presented him with an honorary degree as Doctor of Fine Arts. He was active as a teacher and director in ACT's training program.

I purchased this book as a requirement for a theatre class, and was -at first-a bit put off by the approach. I jokingly told my professor that the author obviously drank the "hippie-Koolaid." Lots of stuff about "[sharing your inner truth and light]", etc. :) That being said, this book is really outstanding. There is a lot of extremely practical, solid advice in there to benefit anyone learning about directing or hoping to direct a performance. A pleasant surprise and absolutely worth the purchase.

This book was recommended to me by one of my mentors who is a fantastic director. This is a really great book for anyone new to directing stage plays or is already a director of the stage. Very clear, concise and helpful. A fantastic guide, very interesting and easy to read, it's so interesting you'll want to read the entire book in one sitting. Prepare to highlight and mark on all the pages as you learn great bits of information.

This book is an amazing gift for any director or actor in your life. I gained so much valuable information from this book, both as an established actor, and a hopeful director.

Bell lays down his teaching style and philosophy in a clearly understandable manner. His directing method is one in which the director provides an environment of respect for the actor opposed to animosity, very similar to Sidney Lumet's philosophy in *"Making Movies"* which is film centric instead of theater centric as Bell's book is. Good study and reference book for actors, directors, and directing actors.

Mr. William Ball, the former artistic director and founder of The American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, boils down almost forty years of teaching, acting and directing experience into possibly the most effective, educational and practical document about directing. I shudder to use the word text book as that term implies dry academia- an approach which leads to the death of the theatre- but really this book is indispensable to any theatre director. Ball lays out in a logical, simple and jargon free manner the nuts and bolts of building a balanced right and left brained community which has complete and utter access to the creative impulse. Everything in Ball's book is transferable, practical (sorry about using that term again but it is true) and impeccably rendered. For any theatre director, I strongly suggest purchasing this book as the foundation of any library. Five out of five stars.

An insightful book of practical and theoretical/philosophical nature from a highly-experienced Broadway Director who knows the ins and out and true nature of Directing professional theatre. A must if you want to seriously Direct.

Purchased for recent College graduate daughter-aspiring playwright.

I bought a copy of this book for myself and also one for my daughter who is about to embark on a Masters Degree in Directing and Theatre Studies. She is also currently directing a production for the Wellington Fringe Festival (NZ), and is finding William Ball's book fits her needs perfectly. She is raving about it, and is already putting his methods into practise. I am also loving the book, as it teaches me not only about directing but also about acting - what a practical, down-to-earth book! Fantastic!

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