

THE PLAYERS' ADVICE TO HAMLET

Hamlet is a characteristic intellectual more inclined to lecture actors about their craft than listen to them, a precursor of Enlightenment figures like Diderot and Lessing. This book is a quest for the voice of early professional actors, drawing on English, French and other European sources to distinguish the methods of professionals from the theories of intellectual amateurs. David Wiles challenges the orthodoxy that all serious discussion of acting began with Stanislavski, and outlines the comprehensive but fluid classical system of acting that was for some 300 years its predecessor. He reveals pre-modern acting as a branch of rhetoric, which took from antiquity a vocabulary for conversations about the relationship of mind and body, inside and outside, voice and movement. Wiles demonstrates that Roman rhetoric provided the bones of both a resilient theatrical system and a physical art that retains its relevance for the post-Stanislavskian performer.

DAVID WILES is Emeritus Professor of Drama at the University of Exeter. A British theatre historian, he specializes in classical and early modern theatre and has spent his career in departments of drama, where his teaching has always engaged with practice. His research interests include performance space and time, mask, acting and citizenship. This is his eighth book for Cambridge University Press.

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TO HAMLET

*The Rhetorical Acting Method from the Renaissance
to the Enlightenment*

DAVID WILES

University of Exeter



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The focus of this book on process rather than product, on how actors work rather than on performance events, derives from a career spent working in departments of drama/theatre where the pedagogy is framed around teaching students to be theatre-makers. Conversations with colleagues at Royal Holloway University of London and at the University of Exeter were a constant stimulus, forcing me to reflect on how theatre practitioners today require us to ask different questions of the past, and in turn how the past speaks to the present. Testing ideas in the studio, and engaging with the creative responses of students, has been an integral part of my research process. Seminars in university locations that include

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