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# Theater For Beginners



## Synopsis

"One of the strongest directors out there&#151;an artist committed to making us see the world for what it is." &#151; New Yorker Maxwell "belong[s] to the top tier of avant-garde auteurs in New York." &#151; Jason Zinoman, New York Times"Richard Maxwell looks at the world with X-ray eyes. Watching the plays of this rigorously inventive auteur, we are encouraged to see the plasterboard behind the wallpaper, the skin under the greasepaint and the skulls beneath the skin."-- Ben Brantley, New York TimesWith his ongoing exploration into actor behavior and an ever-innovative body of work, Richard Maxwell has written a study guide to the art of making theater. This illuminating volume provides a deeper understanding of his work, aesthetic philosophy, and process for creating theater.Richard Maxwell is a director and playwright and the artistic director of New York City Players. Maxwell's plays have been commissioned and presented in over 20 countries. He is a Doris Duke Performing Artist. Maxwell has been selected for a Guggenheim Fellowship, two OBIE Awards, a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant, and he was an invited artist in the Whitney Biennial (2012). Maxwell is the recipient of the 2014 Spalding Gray Award.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The writer and director Richard Maxwell is a stylist of the first order, which is to say that the content of what he says is equal to how he says it. When I read or think about a Maxwell text, I don't so much recall any other writer. Rather, I think about visual artists and colors, usually some gradation of gray, and as painted by Agnes Martin: a series of lines and, ultimately, grids that

seduce through a visible splendor that is immediate but not florid. You have to work to meet the work's meaning." - Hilton Als, *New Yorker*"Although rich with sublimated humor and magnified nuance, Maxwell's theater works are noted for their non-emotive acting style coupled with an extreme form of neutrality in direction. Circular conversations, fractured silences, and dead-pan absurdity permeate his works, yet one never suspects lurking parody or satire. Instead, the result is a sophisticated, surprisingly moving rendering of the human condition laid bare." - Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN "Though few of Mr. Maxwell's characters would put it this way, the sense of being 'unwritten and without form' has always seemed to grip them, from the playwright's breakthrough work, *House* (1998), to his everyday Joycean odyssey, *Neutral Hero* (2012). Whether they're cowboys, cops, robbers, medieval knights or garden-variety Americans, the denizens of Planet Maxwell talk in a forthright, emphatic prose that rings hollow in the mouths of its speakers. They say one thing, they say the opposite. And every contradiction is uttered with the same uncertain certainty. Listening to Mr. Maxwell's characters talk, you become aware of how much all conversation is a matter of groping in the dark, no matter how solid and common the words are." - Ben Brantley, *New York Times*"The writer and director Richard Maxwell is a stylist of the first order, which is to say that the content of what he says is equal to how he says it. When I read or think about a Maxwell text, I don't so much recall any other writer. Rather, I think about visual artists and colors, usually some gradation of gray, and as painted by Agnes Martin: a series of lines and, ultimately, grids that seduce through a visible splendor that is immediate but not florid. You have to work to meet the work's meaning." - Hilton Als, *New Yorker*"Although rich with sublimated humor and magnified nuance, Maxwell's theater works are noted for their non-emotive acting style coupled with an extreme form of neutrality in direction. Circular conversations, fractured silences, and dead-pan absurdity permeate his works, yet one never suspects lurking parody or satire. Instead, the result is a sophisticated, surprisingly moving rendering of the human condition laid bare." - Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN "Though few of Mr. Maxwell's characters would put it this way, the sense of being 'unwritten and without form' has always seemed to grip them, from the playwright's breakthrough work, *House* (1998), to his everyday Joycean odyssey, *Neutral Hero* (2012). Whether they're cowboys, cops, robbers, medieval knights or garden-variety Americans, the denizens of Planet Maxwell talk in a forthright, emphatic prose that rings hollow in the mouths of its speakers. They say one thing, they say the opposite. And every contradiction is uttered with the same uncertain certainty. Listening to Mr. Maxwell's characters talk, you become aware of how much all conversation is a matter of groping in the dark, no matter how solid

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RICHARD MAXWELL, born in 1967 (Fargo), Maine East High School (Park Ridge), Studied acting at Illinois State University (Normal), Co-founder of the Cook County Theater Department (Chicago), Artistic Director of New York City Players, Resident Writer at New Dramatists, Recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, Obie Award and Foundation for Contemporary Arts. Plays, 1996-2000 is published by Theatre Communications Group.

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