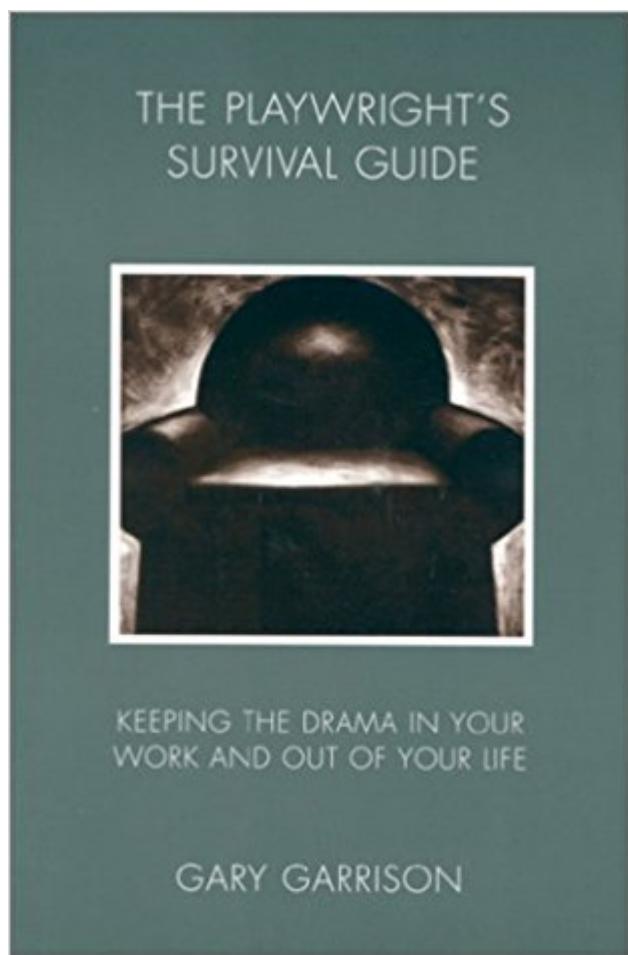


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# Playwright's Survival Guide: Keeping The Drama In Your Work And Out Of Your Life



## **Synopsis**

The Playwright's Survival Guide is written for both aspiring and established writers looking for an emotional, spiritual, or just plain practical connection back to what's important - the writing. It's a "how-to-be" book - with thoughts, stories of inspiration, a few tricks of the trade, a few outlets for venting frustrations, and a reassuring voice that speaks to all the doubts with an "I know. I've been there. This is what you do . . ." Gary Garrison demystifies the playwriting process, speaking honestly, poignantly, and with humor about the lessons he's learned along the way. He explores the issues playwrights face every day, including: inspiration criticism self-doubt relationships with teachers and mentors the art of self-promotion writer's block staying healthy in the art after your fingers are off the keyboard.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Published playwright Garrison, associate chair of the Dramatic Writing Program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, offers an entertaining if somewhat salty personal narrative of life as a professional playwright. Not a "how-to-write-a-play" book, this is instead an insightful look at "how to be a professional playwright." Garrison's experience shows. As he writes, "When I walk into the classroom, I can offer my students my experiences with my agent, my relationships in the industry, the lessons I learned as a writer from the theatre that just produced my play, the process of the actor who helped me discover the weakness in my script, and so on." He offers the same to his readers. Beyond Garrison's witticism is a serious, inspiring look at what it means to be a

professional writer. Recommended for theater and writing collections. ALaura A. Ewald, Murray State Univ. Lib., KY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gary Garrison is a published and produced playwright fearlessly slugging it out in New York City. His plays include Old Soles, Oh Messiah Me, Cherry Reds, An Angel in the Early Bird Special, The Big Fat Naked Truth, and When a Diva Dreams. He is Artistic Director and Division Head of Playwriting for the Goldberg Department of Dramatic Writing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, National Chair of Playwriting for the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival, and the recipient of the 2005 Outstanding Teacher of Playwriting for the Association of Theatre in Higher Education.

Gary Garrison's book is the first in my reading of playwriting books that solely addresses what you must do as a writer in the theatre to keep your heart in your writing and at the same time focus on what it means to be a professional playwright. It is honest, hilarious, uplifting, and it will motivate you to get back to work as a writer. So many books are out there that discuss how to write plays, but there are none that examine the life and business of playwriting. Gary's book opens up this aspect of playwriting with chapters like: "Who needs An Agent?" and "Instruction or Destruction." He offers insights into the play development process: "Who Are All These People and What Are They Doing to My Play?" that most playwriting manuals don't really discuss. As far as I'm concerned, it is going to be a must-read for all my students of playwriting, particularly those who are going out into the world and into the profession. It is a gift from Gary, who is a inspiring teacher of playwriting and a talented theatre professional, directly to you, an aspiring playwright. Personally, after reading this book, I felt like Gary peered into my soul as a working writer, saw all my bad writing habits; my soul-killing, art-crushing, internal censors and switched them off. After several years of reading his hilarious, soul-searching articles in "The Dramatist," the journal of the Dramatists Guild, Inc., it's a pleasure to have his ideas pulled together in an important guide to the profession of the dramatist. Even if you are not a playwright, this book is uplifting, funny, powerful, and a hell of a good read. I highly encourage actors, directors, designers, and theatre technicians to pick up this book, if only to understand what it is like to be a playwright and survive in the profession. Go on and put it in your shopping cart, you'll be glad you did.

Whenever people ask me how to be a playwright, I point them in the direction of this book (which makes me sound more like a veteran than a greenhorn, but that's neither here nor there). Gary

Garrison does a terrific job of laying out the realities of writing plays without making them cliche. It's one thing to hear, "You will have writer's block." Everyone says it, but that doesn't make the experience of writer's block any easier. Garrison takes it one step further when he talks about sitting at home, eating Cheetos with rubber gloves on (don't ask), staring at an empty screen. By providing that context, he makes it real in a way that many of the experts never manage, and this does make it easier to deal with. Garrison manages to apply this treatment to the entire writing process. From writer's block to agents to opening night, he takes the issues that every playwright faces and gives it context, not to mention a healthy dose of wit. At the least, readers learn that they're not the only ones dealing with these problems. Better yet, there's the possibility of finding an answer or three. Best of all, you might get a good laugh at it. I have to admit that the Cheetos image still gives me a giggle.

This book is smart, pragmatic, hilarious, and full of love. Garrison's willingness to bare himself, to use his own successes and frustrations and hard-fought wisdom to instruct and encourage--it adds up to a profound act of generosity. As if a toughened-yet-still-passionate playwright-pal is pushing you to stay focused, to smarten up, and, most important, to pursue your work... What a great gift he's given to his fellow writers!

This book seemed to be really interesting; after I've read it, I feel to have wasted my time. I don't know who could find this work useful; the author writes in a pleasant way, but the content is really poor. If you're a dramatist -and you feel blue- this book can help you; but you'll never find here any practical suggestion - only encouragements.

This is a must-read for anyone who takes their writing seriously and wants to progress past the page and onto the boards. This is the heart and soul of craft and business savvy -- Read it or be left behind, scratching your head and wondering what happened to your promising writing career.

I reviewed this book several days ago under the above title. Why wasn't it included?

What happened to my review? Franklin Ashley

Gary Garrison has finally written a book on playwriting which grabs the heart and touches the soul of what playwrights must do. He tells you writers MUST write what they know then proceeds to

mimic the act with his own personal morality tale. And this is the value of the book: he practices what he preaches page by page. When he announces that: "I'm calling my first playwriting teacher!" you hear the phone dial. You imagine the conversation. (The man may get out of you the best dialogue you've written in years!) He does not lie to you. He laughs in the face of himself. Supplies the golden rules: 1) BEHAVE! 2) WATCH THE BIG LIPS! (How often we need to heed these lessons becomes the moral to his story). But this is the reason the book is so good: like a good theme, it has a very basic universal and philosophical message and our hero, though flawed, offers up honest dialogue. He shares folly: "I don't read books!" But not as in Bucky Bush "I don't read books" (we can assume that mom-bang-the-watermelon-librarian was responsible for some book reading). He loves plays and watching people on the street. He shares delights: "A play reading is like a blind date" He gives us hope and tells us we are special. I have only one word of advice: Get this book. Read it. Buy presents for it. Take it to lunch. If you are a teacher, throw out the unread playwriting textbook and give those future playwrights this valuable instruction manual. If you are a writer, order a copy and you will delight in the bonus of finding a new friend.

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