

# TRAINING

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## Learn from the experts

Four hefty paperbacks reached Training HQ this month, each one on a different subject, but all offering information-based training likely to be useful to performing arts students, scholars, practitioners and/or teachers, writes **Susan Elkin**

**T**he *Swords of Shakespeare* by JD Martinez is an illustrated guide to stage combat in 15 of Shakespeare's plays. The author begins with general comments about the principles of staging fights, how you train for them and how you keep everyone safe before moving on to the details of specific fights in the text and what the audience had to see to support what's on the page.

Each move is explained via a simple but clear small cartoon drawing. The layout and format of this book is a bit quaint and old fashioned with its double column on each page, but it contains a lot of helpful advice and it is very practical. Martinez is fight master emeritus of the Society of American Fight Directors.

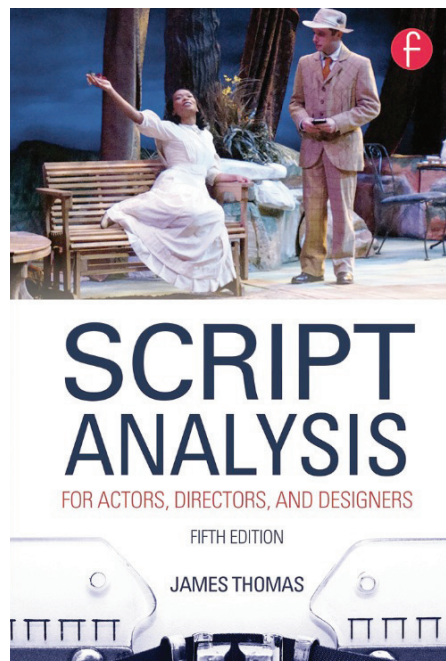
Also from the US comes the book

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**The point of *Acts of Gaiety* is to reclaim female gay theatre as something happy, upbeat and positive**

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*Acts of Gaiety* by Sara Warner. The point of this academic tome is to reclaim female (mostly) gay theatre as something happy, upbeat and positive, rather than focusing on mourning and melancholia. Warner's contention is that, in the past, female homosexuals have been required to renounce pleasure if they wished to be taken seriously. So this book is



a detailed, often wordy – but interesting and worth persevering with – examination of the values which have informed theatre relating to LGBT people and issues in recent decades and how attitudes have changed. Each chapter is, in effect, a stand alone essay and the section in chapter five about The Five Lesbian Brothers' Oedipus at Palm Springs is probably the best thing in the whole book. I bet Warner's classes at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, where she is associate professor of performing and media arts, are quite something.

If you want to develop your skills in close reading of text in order to work out how it should be staged then try the new (fifth) edition of *Script Analysis for Directors, Actors and Designers* by James Thomas. With detailed reference to 20 exemplar plays ranging from Oedipus Rex and Tartuffe to Top Girls and Angels in America, Thomas – who teaches at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, leads the reader through the concepts of action, background, structure, character, idea, dialogue, mood and character – among many other dimensions. The idea is you learn the skills and can then apply them to any play you need to work on as you progress towards performance. Every drama school student should have this on their reading list.

And finally, compiled by two teachers at Leeds Metropolitan University, I have the new – third – edition of *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader* edited by Teresa Brayshaw



and Noel Witts. The book covers all aspects of the performing arts including dance, music theatre and live art, as well as drama, and consists of interviews with – plus essays and extracts by – practitioners including Brecht, Artaud, Boal, Grotowski and Lecoq. In each case the reader gets full background and biographical notes.

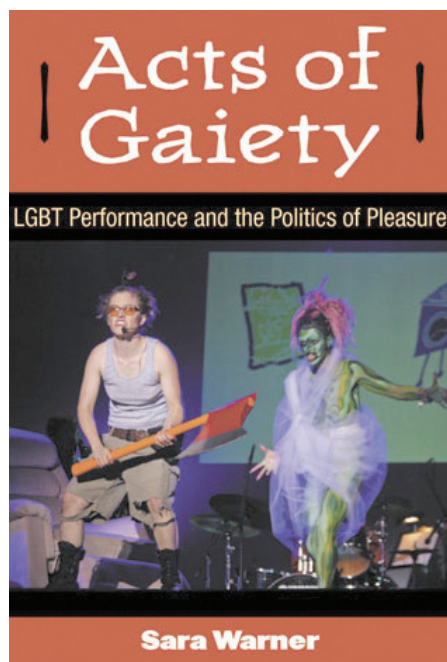
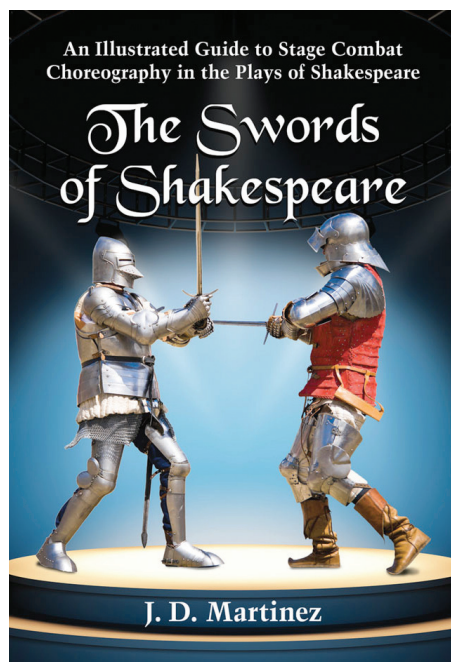
This seems to be an ideal book to dip into to sample the thoughts and ideas of some pivotally influential people before deciding which of them you wish to research in more depth. For that reason, it would work well in the early stages of professional training when students may be meeting some of these names for the first time. It is also a useful opportunity to look at the wider performing arts discipline beyond theatre – the book includes contributions by Merce Cunningham and Bill Viola among many others.

- *The Swords of Shakespeare – An Illustrated Guide to Stage Combat Choreography in the Plays of Shakespeare* by JD Martinez, MacFarland, ISBN: 9780786476091, RRP: £21.50

- *Acts of Gaiety* by Sara Warner, University of Michigan Press, ISBN: 9780472035670, RRP: £18.49).

- *Script Analysis for Directors, Actors and Designers (fifth edition)* by James Thomas, Focal Press, ISBN: 9780415663250, RRP: £21.99.

- *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader (third edition)* edited by Teresa Brayshaw and Noel Witts, Routledge, ISBN: 9780415696654, RRP: £31.99



### Online column

“How long can the traditional, leisurely, three-year drama school course last in the economic climate? I know, before all you exasperated principals reach for your keyboards in fury, that when the students are with you they work very hard. But what about those weeks when the students are not with you?...”  
**Susan Elkin**, education and training editor. See her column at [www.thestage.co.uk/columns/education-training/](http://www.thestage.co.uk/columns/education-training/)

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