

Media Kit

Directors: From Stage to Screen and Back Again

Susan Beth Lehman

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Media Kit Contents

Press Release.....	1
Author Bio.....	2
Book Summary.....	3
Contents.....	3
Endorsements.....	4
Suggested Interview Topics.....	4
Sample Q&A.....	5
Book Cover Photos.....	6
Author Photo.....	8

Press Release

Susan Beth Lehman’s New Book Provides Insight from Successful Directors

Directors: From Stage to Screen and Back Again is a new book written by Susan Beth Lehman that features interviews from twelve directors that have made the transition between theatre and film during their successful careers.

The list includes Oscar, Emmy and Tony winners who each have their own unique experiences and contributions to share from decades of work on Broadway and in Hollywood.

The focus of the book is on how experience in both mediums influenced the process and approach to directing taken by these individuals during careers that have spanned from directing classical theater, to television and film, to motion capture and animation.

Directors is being published by UK based Intellect Ltd. and distributed in the US by The University of Chicago Press where it is currently available for purchase online in both print and digital editions.

Author Bio

Susan is a screenwriter, actor, and director who is currently an assistant professor of TV/Film at DeSales University in Pennsylvania.

She has won the Austin Film Festival, the Set in Texas Screenplay Award, and the prestigious Horton Foote Excellence in Screenwriting Award. She is a recipient of a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship in Scriptwriting. Her work has also been recognized by the Moondance Film Festival, Cinephile, Best in the West, Writers Digest, and others. She is a member of Philadelphia Playwrights and the Dramatists Guild of America.

In Los Angeles Susan worked as a story editor and ghost writer for horror films. She also created original material as a writer for the Gong Show. As a member of SAG AFTRA and AEA, she acted in film and theatre productions, as well as numerous television shows and commercials.

Soon after completing her graduate studies, she began teaching acting, and has since taught at California State University Northridge, The University of Judaism, and Pasadena Playhouse. She created her own student theatre company, Saturday Matinee Players that produced twenty-three productions in ten years, from which all of the box office proceeds were donated to charity.

She was accredited by the California Bar Association to teach attorneys communication skills through acting. With a therapist, she created "Act Yourself" a workshop for self-development and expression and presented at the National Association of Psycho-dramatists.

Since moving to the Philadelphia area, Susan has continued to work as a teacher and story editor to local screenwriters. She taught at several local colleges and theatres including the Walnut Street Theatre and West Chester University, where she spent over ten years, before joining DeSales University.

Susan holds a BA in theatre and an MFA in acting, both from UCLA.

Book Summary

Despite the increasing popularity of academic filmmaking programs in the United States, some of contemporary America's most exciting film directors have emerged from the theater world.

Directors: From Stage to Screen and Back Again features a series of interviews with directors who did just that, transitioning from work on stage productions to work in television and on full-length features.

Taken together, these interviews demonstrate the myriad ways in which a theater background can engender innovative and stimulating work in film. As unique and idiosyncratic as the personalities they feature, the directors' conversations with Susan Lehman range over a vast field of topics. Each one traces its subject's personal artistic journey and explores how he or she handled the challenge of moving from stage to screen.

Combined with a foreword by Emmy award-winning screenwriter Steve Brown, the directors' collective knowledge and experience will be invaluable to scholars, aspiring filmmakers, theater aficionados, and film enthusiasts.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Preface

Good Story, Well Told

Brief History of the Modern Director

1. Paul Aaron, August 2010
2. Gilbert Cates, October 2010
3. Judy Chaikin, October 2011
4. Lenore Dekoven, August 2010
5. Gordon Hunt, June 2010
6. Neil LaBute, August 2011
7. Rob Marshall, June 2011
8. Jiri Menzel, July 2011
9. Oz Scott, May 2010
10. Matt Shakman, September 2010
11. Jerry Zaks, April 2011
12. Joel Zwick, July 2010

Conclusion

Endorsements

'An informative and entertaining reading experience.' – Flickering Myth, Trevor Hogg

'An inspirational read for every director and every lover of the dramatic arts. The “conversations” give an indispensable insight into the minds of some of the great directors of our time. I learned things that I can't wait to apply to my craft.'

– Sal Romeo, artistic director of Friends and Artists Studio

'A superb introduction to some of the top directors of our time. Susan Lehman's book is a collection of truly engaging dialogues with twelve of today's most successful directors from stage and screen.'

– Guy Gunderson, Emmy award-winning editor

'An enjoyable read for film and theater fans and should be required reading for students. I thoroughly enjoyed it.'

– Richard Ruggiero Ed.D, Professor Emeritus, California State University at Northridge

'A must for every actor – to hear and learn firsthand from a spectacular group of directors sharing their approach to working on and off set, shattering all misconceptions and empowering actors as to what to really expect when the Big Break comes!'

– John Kirby, premier Hollywood acting coach

Suggested Interview Topics

- The evolution of the modern director
- The importance of education for directors
- For Filmmaking – The love of the technology vs. the heart of the story
- The ways that film and theatre can complement each other to inform the director's process
- The accessibility of technology lessening the divide of theatre and film
- Why theatre will never die

Sample Q&A

Q: Where are you from originally and what led you to become an Assistant Professor of TV and Film at DeSales University?

A: I was born in New York City, but raised in Texas and moved to LA when I was a teenager. I started acting at the Alley Theater in Houston when I was 12. I have a BA in theater and an MFA in Acting, both from UCLA. But LA is a company town, so crossing over to film is very natural. After moving to the Philadelphia area some years ago, I started teaching in academia. DeSales kindly recruited me because of what I bring to film from theater.

*Q: What caused you to pursue *Directors: From Stage to Screen and Back Again* as a project?*

A: When I came to DeSales I realized that most of my students had no dramatic literature background or understanding how important a theatre education was to creating great stories on film. They just wanted to play with the toys.

Q: How did you choose the filmmakers who share their experiences in the book?

A: I wanted directors that had very rich histories and are still active in theater. Each director has been successful in a varied form of film making, from the revival of the film musical, to documentary film, to directing for video games. There are Oscar, Emmy and Tony winners, yet after hundreds and hundreds of projects, they are still eager to explore new stories.

Q: A prevailing topic is that theatre necessitates communication with actors while film requires a technical understanding. What is needed to make a director proficient in both?

A: You can work with people who will translate your visual ideas, but you must understand the character and story. You need to learn the language of the actor. There are so many things these directors say that bring home this point. Paul Aaron stresses that a director who wants 30 takes doesn't know what they want. I agree that an indecisive director is just hoping to get lucky. I tell my students that the director is the writer of the action. Not having dialogue does not mean not having story to tell.

Q: Do you see the digital age of filmmaking and "reality" TV causing the theatre to become a lost craft?

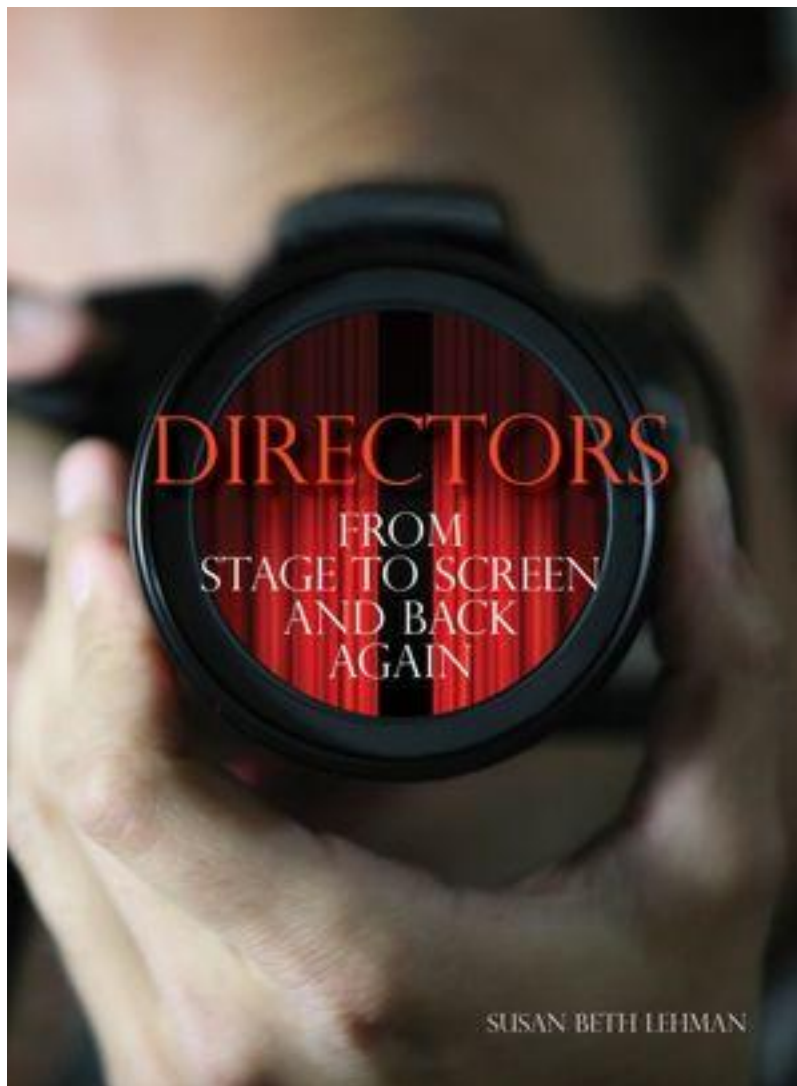
A: One should not replace the other. But, as long as children have imaginations, theater will not die. All you need is an actor, an audience and a place to play. Film is so accessible people can forget the magnificent energy of live theater. As wonderful as film is, as Paul Aaron says, people don't rise to their feet applauding at the end of a film

Q: What do you hope to achieve with your book?

A: Film schools are relatively new to academia, and technology makes beginning filmmaking accessible to so many people. It's easy to skip the steps that lead to passionate and enveloping story telling. I don't want to see films that are technically successful, but emotionally empty.

Book Cover Photos

72dpi & 300dpi





DIRECTORS

FROM
STAGE TO SCREEN
AND BACK
AGAIN

SUSAN BETH LEHMAN

Author Photo

