

# DUO!

THE BEST SCENES  
FOR TWO FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

EDITED BY  
JOYCE E. HENRY  
REBECCA DUNN JAROFF  
BOB SHUMAN

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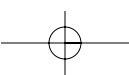
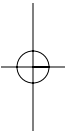
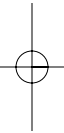
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## EDITORS' NOTE

The scenes contained in this volume are presented exactly as written by the playwrights, with no internal deletions. Our introductions to each follow the headings "Characters," "Scene," and "Time"; the playwrights' stage directions are contained in parentheses. If any two-character scene is interrupted by a third character, some external business, or an event which would be difficult to reproduce in a classroom or audition situation, we have enclosed the section in brackets as a suggested cut.

Some scenes may be longer than are called for in your situation. Although the material may provide important clues to your motivation and background, you may need to cut some in the interest of time. As appropriate, mention to the audience that the scene is abridged.



## FOREWORD

BY VIVIAN MATALON

As a director and teacher, I know how valuable a book of scenes from plays can be. In my opinion a scene book is an essential tool for any performer or student of acting. It provides a wealth of choices to challenge your technical skills and emotional range, and it may spark your interest in a contemporary playwright or two. The scenes in *DUO!* were drawn from plays written since the year 2000, and they are varied in content and approach. Some are comic, some dramatic. They offer characters of different ages and ethnicities. Some make statements about current issues; some develop complex characters and conflicts; and some suggest the fabric of the future American theatre. You will find scenes written by well-known playwrights, and others by playwrights who are unknown and unsung—yet. But none is so hackneyed that the listener/teacher/director will be thinking, “Oh God, not that scene again!” Above all, make every effort humanly possible to read the entire play before committing yourself to a scene. Buy the script, borrow it, read it quietly in a corner of the Drama Book Shop or Barnes & Noble, but read the whole script! Only then can you make informed choices about your character and the scene in which he or she appears. Select your scene carefully. If you are a beginning acting student, it may be hard for you to know what characters are “right” for you. Do not give yourself too difficult a challenge each time you approach a scene. Of course you want to stretch yourself and try to face a few acting problems, but give yourself the possibility of solving them. A six-foot-two male should not attempt to play Toulouse Lautrec (Toulouse Lautrec is not included in this volume, although Vincent van Gogh is).

I once angered a student by saying that a 300-pound female would not be cast as Blanche Dubois and should probably not try the role. She argued that a director should look beyond stereotypes. And she was right, to an extent. A 300-pound Blanche would bring an unusual dimension to the role. (Blanche Dubois is not included in this volume, but Vivien Leigh is.) The student would have done much better to focus her talent on the wonderful character role of Eunice. So be realistic: choose a character that offers challenges, not obstacles.

Scene work can be so much more rewarding than struggling with an acting exercise. In a scene you have a partner; you have to consider the choices he or she makes and react to them. “Learn to work off the other fellow,” was one of Sanford Meisner’s sage pieces of advice. I deplore the current emphasis on acting exercises, notably Meisner’s “Repetition exercise” in which partners repeat the same phrase over and over to each other. It is, one must remember, an actor’s ability to interpret a text that brings audiences to plays and not his or her skill at repeating such inanities as, “Your eyes are blue,” or recalling the day the family dog died. And incidentally, Meisner, whom I was fortunate enough to know well, and with whom I studied for seven years, devised the Repetition exercise very late in his career, and many of his most eminent former students were never exposed to it. He intended that it be used for beginning students only and, even then, for no more than six weeks before going to work on a text.

The play’s the thing! So choose a scene that excites you, that you feel passionate about, that stimulates your imagination, that takes you beyond yourself and the “Your eyes are blue” syndrome. And have fun with it. As Meisner once said, “Don’t bring that dreary thing you call your life on the stage.”

## VIVIAN MATALON

A graduate of the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre, Vivian Matalon has earned a distinguished reputation as a director on Broadway, in London’s West End, and in regional theatres throughout America, Great Britain, and Canada. His Broadway productions include the Tony Award–winning *Morning’s at Seven* with Teresa Wright and Maureen O’Sullivan; *After the Rain*; *Noël Coward in Two Key*, with Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy; *Brigadoon*; *The Tap Dance Kid*, for which he received a Tony nomination; and Stephen Temperley’s *Souvenir*.

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AND A WOMAN**

