



# **The Gentleman Press Agent: Fifty Years in the Theatrical Trenches with Merle Debuskey (Applause Books)**

*Robert Simonson*

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(Applause Books). From his unlikely start as a Jewish All-American and "three-letter man" in segregated Baltimore, Merle Debuskey was for fifty years beginning just after World War II and ending in the mid-'90s New York theater's top publicist, handling more Broadway shows than any press agent in Broadway history. He was Joe Papp's right-hand man for thirty years, and was the first mouthpiece for legendary nonprofits Circle in the Square and Lincoln Center Theater. He was the unseen player who, with Papp, fought Robert Moses, ensuring that Shakespeare in the Park remained free; made sure *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* kept its title; saved Zero Mostel's life; housed red baiters target John Henry Faulk, befriending the blacklisted; manhandled George C. Scott and Mort Saul; and romanced Kim Stanley, all the while puffing on his pipe, banging away at his old manual typewriter, and never seeming to break a sweat. He was Broadway's last gentleman press agent.

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