

# Laurence Olivier Quotes

*Thinking, Theatre, Acting, Actors, Art, Funny, Believe, Life, Beautiful, Heart,  
Sports, Excellence, Intuition, Sex, Kindness, Humorous, Perfection, Eye, Prove  
It, Moments*

Acting is a masochistic form of exhibitionism. It is not quite the occupation of an adult.

~Laurence Olivier

The humility to prepare and the self-confidence to bring it off.

~Laurence Olivier

Don't waste your time striving for perfection; instead, strive for excellence - doing your best.

~Laurence Olivier

Have a very good reason for everything you do.

~Laurence Olivier

If I wasn't an actor, I think I'd have gone mad. You have to have extra voltage, some extra temperament to reach certain heights.

~Laurence Olivier

Surely we have always acted; it is an instinct inherent in all of us. Some of us are better at it than others, but we all do it.

~Laurence Olivier

The art of persuasion. The actor persuades himself, first, and through himself, the audience.

~Laurence Olivier

Striving for perfection is the greatest stopper there is. You'll be afraid you can't achieve it. It's your excuse to yourself for not doing anything. Instead, strive for excellence, doing your best.

~Laurence Olivier

Use your weaknesses; aspire to the strength.

~Laurence Olivier

Shakespeare - The nearest thing in incarnation to the eye of God.

~Laurence Olivier

No matter how well you perform, there's always somebody of intelligent opinion who thinks it's lousy.

~Laurence Olivier

Acting is illusion, as much illusion as magic is - and not so much a matter of being real.

~Laurence Olivier

I don't know what is better than the work that is given to the actor-to teach the human heart the knowledge of itself.

~Laurence Olivier

I believe that in a great city, or even in a small city or a village, a great theater is the outward and visible sign of an inward and probable culture.

~Laurence Olivier

Lead the audience by the nose to the thought.

~Laurence Olivier

What is acting but lying and what is good lying but convincing lying?

~Laurence Olivier

Art is a little bit larger than life - it's an exhalation of life and I think you probably need a little touch of madness.

~Laurence Olivier

I'm rather bored by the subject - meaning me. It's a sort of a yoke, but at times you know, a yoke is a kind of comfort. And it's always there.

~Laurence Olivier

Don't be afraid to be outrageous; the critics will shoot you down anyway.

~Laurence Olivier

Above all, you must remain open and fresh and alive to any new idea.

~Laurence Olivier

Acting is an everlasting search for truth.

~Laurence Olivier

What is the main problem of the actor? It is to keep the audience awake, and not let them go to sleep, then wake up and go home feeling they've wasted their money.

~Laurence Olivier

Living is strife and torment, disappointment and love and sacrifice, golden sunsets and black storms. I said that some time ago, and today I do not think I would add one word.

~Laurence Olivier

We have all, at one time or another, been performers, and many of us still are - politicians, playboys, cardinals and kings.

~Laurence Olivier

Life is enthusiasm, zest.

~Laurence Olivier

We ape, we mimic, we mock. We act.

~Laurence Olivier

Acting, is not a profession for adults.

~Laurence Olivier

Without acting, I cannot breathe.

~Laurence Olivier

I often think that could we creep behind the actor's eyes, we would find an attic of forgotten toys and a copy of the Domesday Book.

~Laurence Olivier

[May 1958, on playing Macbeth at age 30 and age 48] When you're a young man, Macbeth is a character part. When you're older, it's a straight part.

~Laurence Olivier

There is a spirit in us that makes our brass to blare and our cymbals crash-all, of course, supported by the practicalities of trained lung power, throat, heart, guts.

~Laurence Olivier

We used to have actresses trying to become stars; now we have stars trying to become actresses.

~Laurence Olivier

If he was lost for a moment, he would dive straight back into its honey.

~Laurence Olivier

I'd like people to remember me for a diligent expert workman. I think a poet is a workman. I think Shakespeare was a workman. And God's a workman. I don't think there's anything better than a workman.

~Laurence Olivier

Work is life for me, it is the only point of life - and with it there is almost religious belief that service is everything.

~Laurence Olivier

If you're an artist, you've got to prove it.

~Laurence Olivier

You think you're an artist; prove it

~Laurence Olivier

I believe in the theater; I believe in it as the first glamorizer of thought. It restores dramatic dynamics and their relations to life size.

~Laurence Olivier

Autograph-hunting is the most unattractive manifestation of sex-starved curiosity.

~Laurence Olivier

My stage successes have provided me with the greatest moments outside myself, my film successes the best moments, professionally, within myself.

~Laurence Olivier

I am far from sure when I am acting and when I am not or, should I more frankly put it, when I am lying and when I am not. For what is acting but lying and what is good acting but convincing lying?

~Laurence Olivier

Scratch an actor and you'll find an actor.

~Laurence Olivier

I have to act to live.

~Laurence Olivier

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