

Peter Coyote
Zen Buddhist Priest | Writer | Actor
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(457 words)

PETER COYOTE has performed as an actor for some of the world's most distinguished filmmakers, including **Barry Levinson, Roman Polanski, Pedro Almodovar, Steven Spielberg, Martin Ritt, Steven Soderberg, Sidney Pollack** and **Jean Paul Rappeneau**.

Peter was the co-host of the Academy Award show with Billy Crystal in 2020.

He is a double Emmy-Award winning narrator of over 160 documentary films, including Ken Burns acclaimed *The Roosevelts*, for which he received his second Emmy nomination in July 2015. Other Ken Burns documentary films include *National Parks, Prohibition, The West, the Dust Bowl* and *Vietnam, The History of Country Music, Ben Franklin, Ernest Hemingway, The Holocaust* and *America*.

Peter has written five books including a memoir of the 1960s counter-culture called *Sleeping Where I Fall*, (Counterpoint Press) which received universally excellent reviews, appeared on three bestseller lists, was re-released with a new cover and afterword in 2009 and sold five printings in hardback. A chapter from that book, *Carla's Story*, won the 1993/94 Pushcart Prize for Excellence in non-fiction. His second book, *The Rainman's Third Cure: An Irregular Education*, about mentors and the search for wisdom (Counterpoint Press, 2015) reached second on the Marin County bestseller list. His third book, entitled *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Meet the Buddha*, outlines a long-standing series of classes he runs using acting, improvisation and masks to induce temporary ego-free states and is based on Peter's work as a Zen Buddhist student of over 40 years.

In 2011, he was ordained a priest, and in 2015 "transmitted" by his teacher and is now an independent Zen teacher with the authority to ordain priests himself.

From 1975 to 1983 Peter was a member and then Chairman of the California State Arts Council. During his Chairmanship and under his tenure, expenditures on the arts rose from 1 to 16 million dollars annually, created interagency agreements with fourteen Departments of State, and introduced the idea of 'art as creative problem solving.' California then gave artists money for public work, like any other state grant, knowing that if artists could make a living wage for half-time work, they'd make the art for free. This was a revolutionary concept that side-stepped conservative resistance to art funding.

He is and has been engaged in political and social causes since his early teens and his primary concerns are the environment, voting rights and security of elections, and the threat of nuclear weapons and energy production.

Peter has books being readied for production including *Zen in the Vernacular* (Inner Traditions, 2024). He has recently and reluctantly accepted the limits of being 82 and has sold his beloved 1952 Dodge Power Wagon, which he rebuilt from the frame up.