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Peter Brook: A survey of his directorial achievement

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Peter Brook: A Survey of His Directorial Achievement

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Preface

That the director in the theatre today is an essential and significant member of the profession is undoubtedly an understatement. That this is indeed the case is a relatively modern development. According to Helen Krich Chinoy, coeditor of Directors on Directing: "Less than a hundred years ago the director was only an ideal projected by disgruntled critics of the chaotic Victorian theatre."[1] Today that ideal is a reality; however, the specific rôle of the director in the theatre as he exists today is as varied as the personalities of the individuals who call themselves directors. Doubtless just what the director's rôle should or could be is subject for almost endless professional and academic debate.

This study does not presume to resolve any of these theoretical questions nor to postulate any one directing approach at the expense of any other. This study does seek to describe carefully the professional accomplishments of one contemporary director, Peter Brook, in an effort to arrive at a generalized perspective through individual analysis. The first task of this study is to compile a professional biography of Brook's work—to chronicle his achievements. Interestingly enough, although Brook's stature in the profession is widely acknowledged, no comprehensive study to date has attempted to bring together available

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[1]Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (eds.), Directors on Directing (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), 3.

information concerning the scope and content of Brook's career. While no comprehensive study has been undertaken, after careful research it appeared that an extensive body of materials concerned with individual productions as well genre of Brook's work exists in periodical literature. It is from this potpourri of sources that this paper is written.

While the first objective of this study is to chronicle the events of Peter Brook's professional career, the second objective is to separate the genre of his work in the various media and describe and analyze his treatment and philosophy of each area. This study will also examine his rehearsal technique and his work with experimental projects. The body of the paper is divided into six chapters.

Chapter I entitled "Biography" deals with the chronological events of Peter Brook's life to date, emphasizing professional accomplishments often in the light of current theatrical criticism. This chapter seeks to establish a sequence of events and an overview of the myriad experiences undertaken by Mr. Brook.

Chapter II entitled "Brook and the Opera" examines Brook's general attitude concerning the problems of directing for the opera, briefly discusses some of his early works and their critical reception, and then follows him in detail through the process of directing Faust for the Metropolitan Opera from inception to opening night.

In Chapter III Brook's contributions to the film media are described. In an effort to discover the reasons for his limited recognition as a film maker an analysis of his approach to the cinema is undertaken. Entitled "Brook and the Cinema," this chapter examines his methodology in regard to four major films and attempts to draw conclusions as to the reasons for the relative success or failure of each.

Brook's work in experimental theatre is discussed in Chapter IV.

A detailed description of his work with the "Theatre of Cruelty" project in conjunction with the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts Theatre Club in 1963-64 provides a practical indication of new perspectives in his directorial philosophy. Also included in this chapter is an account of Brook's production of Marat/Sade and the subsequent criticism of his achievement.

In an effort to glean some of the elements of Brook's rehearsal technique, Chapter V, using Charles Marowitz's "Lear Log" as a guide, follows Mr. Brook through the process of directing King Lear for the Royal Shakespeare Company. By examining Brook's approach to a specific play general attitudes and directorial techniques are deduced.

Chapter VI, "Conclusions," first of all examines Brook's stated philosophy of the theatre and his projected dreams and ideals for a theatre to come. Secondly, the three periods of Brook's work are delineated and discussed, and the general characteristics of his directing are synthesized.

The methodology of this study includes extensive research in theatrical materials concerned with the plays, films and operas directed by Peter Brook. Heavy reliance is placed on reviews and critical notices as well as interviews with Brook in relation to his productions. After the materials are amassed they are divided into genre groupings and selected accordingly for use in a particular chapter. Chapter VI, for example, is based in great part on articles written by Peter Brook himself. The bibliography of materials includes several television interviews as well as a radio interview.

The most obvious value of a study such as this is its descriptive content. As an historical study also this paper brings together

a barometer of opinion selected from critical reviews concerning Brook's works. Since Peter Brook is still a relatively young man, and there are indications that his career is in many ways just now reaching a solidity and maturity, there is an even greater incentive for research to keep abreast of his professional development. Further studies might include an examination of Brook's unique approach to directing Shakespeare or an examination of his continued work with experimental projects, notably in the film media. With such a formidable background of achievement and such a promising future, Peter Brook is indeed a man of the theatre to be watched.

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CHAPTER I

Biography

The theatre of the 1960's is permeated with a British accent. Not to undermine in any way the accomplishments made by American or Continental theatre enterprise, it would be folly not to admit the wealth of British talent and imagination influencing dramatic activity in this decade. Any discussion of significant achievements in contemporary theatre would probably not go far without mentioning the classic contributors such as Tyrone Guthrie, Laurence Olivier, Paul Scofield, John Gielgud, Michel St. Denis or Alec Guiness; closely following these are the breed of younger British theatre professionals—Harold Pinter, John Arden, Robert Bolt, John Osborn, Peter O'Toole, Albert Finney and Peter Hall.

Among these men who are at the helm in charting theatrical destiny in the twentieth century is a young man of 42, whose record of theatrical growth runs off the ledger. He is Peter Brook. In tracing his life, one cannot fail to see the prodigious earmarks of a man of great energy, imagination and vision.

The "enfant terrible"[1] of directing was born Peter Stephen Paul Brook, on March 21, 1925, in London. His father, Simon Brook, was a manufacturing chemist, and his mother, Ida (Janson) Brook was a scientist.[2]

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[1]This is a recurrent epithet coined by an early critic.

[2]Walter Rigdon (ed.), The Biographical Encyclopaedia & Who's Who of the American Theatre (New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966), 320.

Peter was the second son born to this couple; his older brother, Alexis Brook, became a consulting psychiatrist.[3]

Brook's interest in the theatre is traced to an early age. He recalled an experience that took place the Christmas of his sixth year. His father had given him a toy theatre complete with working lights, curtains and a trap door, and he and Alexis staged the complete Hamlet, with young Peter acting all the parts. "It lasted six hours, but as it was Christmas Day I claimed it as my day, and the family had to sit and watch."[4]

Never again, however, was it necessary for Brook to resort to captive techniques to engage an audience. After grammar schooling in Switzerland and England, Brook filled the years up to 1941 with secondary education at the Westminster School in London and the Gresham School in Norfolk. He is said to have played a French prisoner in Henry V and the First Player in The Beggar's Opera in school productions.[5]

In 1941, following his graduation, Brook delayed his college plans to spend the year with a London film studio where he was employed in script writing and cutting. With this experience behind him he entered Magdelan College, Oxford, in the fall of 1942.[6]

As an undergraduate Brook spent all of the time outside his academic pursuits of English literature and foreign languages experimenting in the theatre and films. According to university authorities Brook found himself ineligible to become a member of the Oxford Uni-

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[3]Charles Moritz (ed.), Current Biography 1961 (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1961), 74.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Eric Johns, "Wonder Boy," Theatre World, XLV, (June, 1949), 35.

[6]Rigdon.

versity Dramatic Society, having been so short a time at the university. To counter this he revived the Oxford University Film Society and set about to direct a film adaptation of Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy at the age of 19.[7]

The film was an experiment in mimeodrama. Brook produced what was in effect a silent film which was coupled with a narration from the book and incidental music.[8] It is significant that this early work placed emphasis on the illustrative and the visual, and can be seen as a foreshadowing of a dominant characteristic in his directing.

This film was not Brook's actual first full length directing experience. In 1943, during a school holiday, he had produced a three-night-stand of Marlowe's The Tragedy of Dr. Faustus at the tiny Torch Theatre off Knightbridge in London. For this endeavor Brook called in an expert on Black magic, Alastair Crowley, to advise him on special effects. Although the production did not create any particular sensation, it was reputed to have been "a remarkable achievement . . . a tour de force."[9]

After receiving his B. A. degree in English literature and foreign languages from Oxford in 1944, Brook went to work with the Crown Film Unit in London where he labored making film shorts and advertising "epics" for various commercial products.[10] Nineteen forty-five and 1946 were important years for this active young director. Early in 1945 the twenty-year-old staged Cocteau's The Infernal Machine at a small neighborhood theatre in London, the Chanticleer, as well as

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[7]Moritz.

[8]"Undergraduate Enterprise," Sight and Sound, XII, (September, 1943), 49.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Moritz.

The Barretts of Wimpole Street at the "Q" Theatre in London. Shortly after this he was engaged by the Entertainments National Service Association to stage a touring production for the British Armed Forces of Shaw's Pygmalion with Mary Grew in the title role.[11]

Brook's first major break occurred when William Armstrong, director of the Liverpool Repertory Theatre, attended a dress rehearsal of Pymalion. Armstrong was so impressed with Brook's talent and imagination that he reported his discovery to Sir Barry Jackson who promptly invited Brook to join the directing staff of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Brook eagerly accepted and during the 1945-46 season directed Man and Superman, King John and The Lady from the Sea at Birmingham.[12]

Sir Barry Jackson was well pleased with the 21-year-old's achievements, and when he went to Stratford-on-Avon he invited Brook to produce Love's Labor's Lost for the 1946 season. The following year international notariety or, in some cases, infamy came Brook's way with his controversial production of Romeo and Juliet at Stratford. Variety applauded his daring and "healthy lack of respect for Shakespearean tradition,"[13] and called the production "color-drenched, vigorous."[14] However, all critics did not share Variety's enthusiasm:

> It is impossible to find any excuse for casting Daphne Slater as Juliet, who may be many things but not under any circumstances a bouncing English Schoolgirl.[15]

or

> His lighting was startling, his crowd scenes exciting, his duels

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[11]Rigdon. [12]Moritz.

[13]Variety, April 16, 1947,3. [14]Ibid.

[15]Sewell Stokes, "Charades by Old Favorites," Theatre Arts, XXXII, (January, 1948), 49.

> scintillating, his incidental music haunting. The only trouble was that he had no interest in either Romeo or Juliet. Quite rightly the critics chastised him, for he was becoming important enough for punishment.[16]

Brook's importance was indeed growing, and on June 4, 1946, he staged a production of Dosteoevsky's Brother's Karamozov adapted from the novel by Alec Guiness (who also acted in the play) at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. That fall the 21-year-old directed the first Jean-Paul Sartre to be given in London, The Vicious Circle (No Exit) at the Arts Theatre. This production also featured Alec Guiness with Beatrix Lehmann and Betty Ann Davies.

> The power of the play was matched by a production which shattered the ordinary theatre-goer looking for a pleasant evening's entertainment in the theatre.[17]

After the success of The Vicious Circle Brook brought forth two more Sartre plays, The Respectful Prostitute and Men Without Shadows on July 17, 1947, again at the Lyric, Hammersmith.[18] Yet the London West End was still to be conquered.

The season of 1948-49 brought Brook to another significant beginning. He was engaged by the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden to become Director of Productions. He staged Boris Godunoff and La Bohème in the fall of 1948, followed by The Marriage of Figaro, The Olympians and Salome in 1949.[19] Brook told a Time reporter that his new Salome "is not a production; it's an hallucination."[20] The designer for this madcap offering was Salvador Dali.

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[16]Beverly Baxter, Gerard Fay and Craddock Munro, "His Production of Dark of the Moon," World Review, III, (May, 1949), 17-18.

[17]Ronald Barker, "Enfant Terrible," Plays and Players, I, (April, 1954), 6.

[18]Rigdon. [19]Ibid.

[20]"Like the North Pole," Time (November 21, 1949), 81.

Brook's West End opportunity came finally in 1949 when H. M. Tennent Ltd., a wealthy British production agency, engaged him to direct Howard Richardson and William Berney's Carolina folk drama, Dark of the Moon. He took on the assignment. The play had its "out-of-town" tryout in Brighton where enthusiasm proved to be at a minimum. From Brighton the management booked the show for a trial at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, before the April 12 opening at the Ambassadors Theatre.[21] Nothing less than immediate success greeted the offering. A London critic gave this account:

> We who attend first nights, watched the unfolding of something which seemed a hodge-podge of 'Tobacco Road,' 'Oklahoma,' 'Macbeth,' and 'Iolanthe.' . . . All I can tell you is that, at the end of the play on the opening night, even the dramatic critics cheered. . . . But the star of the show is Peter Brook who had developed from L' enfant terrible to L' enfant prodigue and is already wondering what worlds are left for him to conquer.[22]

At the age of 24 Brook had an eye to these worlds. Praise and glowing criticism as well as chastisement was often lavished on the man whose imaginative achievements surpassed his youthful visage. A critic for Theatre World summed up the situation in 1949:

> Peter Brook's career goes to show that age has nothing to do with one's success or ability as a producer. It is a flair apparent at the outset, though some benefit will naturally be gained from experience. One who saw Irving, Ellen Terry, Duse, Bernhardt and half-a-dozen other immortals cannot claim to be a good producer simply on the strength of his playgoing experience. Peter Brook, who never saw any of them but is well-read and widely-travelled, will probably offer more attractive entertainment with a dazzlingly original conception of his own. He is the first to pay homage to great figures of the past, but it is useless trying to recapture a glory that belonged to another day. We live in different times and must create our own glory.[23]

The years 1950 and 1951 were nothing less than a flurry of activity for the busy Mr. Brook. He directed Anouilh's Ring Around the

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[21]Baxter, Fay and Munro, 18-19.

[22]Ibid. [23]Johns.

Moon at the Globe Theatre in London which opened January 26, 1950. Shortly following this, in March he staged a controversial production of Measure for Measure starring John Gielgud at Stratford. The Lyric, Hammersmith, saw the opening on August 23, 1950, of his production of The Little Hut which later was exported to the United States. Five productions by Brook had their openings in 1951: The Winter's Tale at the Phoenix in June; A Penny for a Song at the Haymarket Theatre; Figure of Fun at the Aldwych on October 16; Colombe at the New Theatre, London, on December 13; and a production entitled La mort d'un commis voyageur for the Theatre National in Brussels, Belgium. Somehow during this frantic year Brook found time on November 3, 1951, to marry the talented actress, Natasha Parry.[24]

The following year Brook turned to the medium which he considered his "first love, the cinema."[25] He undertook the filming of The Beggar's Opera based on the John Gay work. The film starred Laurence Olivier as Captain Macheath with Stanley Holloway and Dorothy Tutin in supporting roles. This work still stands as Brook's only British film to be made under normal studio conditions. Critics agreed that his direction was appropriate and his work in crowd scenes especially notable;[26] it was not a commercial success, and this may have served to keep Brook shy of this medium for many years to come. The reasons for the failure will be discussed in the chapter entitled "Brook and the Cinema."

With the advent of the Warner Brothers release of The Beggar's Opera in the United States in 1953 Brook took on a period of diverse and concentrated activity. His talent was spread to America. The Little Hut, his great success in England and France, was his first Broadway

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[24]Rigdon. [25]Moritz. [26]Ibid.

offering. The play generally received weak notices, but nearly all reviewers praised Brook's direction.[27]

Also in 1953 Brook staged the coronation play, Venice Preserved, in London at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, opening on May 13.[28] New York secured his talent again on two occasions in 1953: he directed Orson Welles in King Lear for the Ford Foundation's Sunday night television program Omnibus, and he was summoned by Rudolph Bing to stage the Metropolitan Opera season opener Faust.[29]

The production was by no means conventional. Brook and the designer, Rolf Gérard, conceived the opera in a French romantic 19th-century setting, contrary to the time-worn custom of placing it in medieval Germany. They retrieved Mephistopheles from the traditional musty pit and placed him in an elegant setting complete with opera cape and top hat. Not all critics or opera-goers accepted the change with enthusiasm.[30]

Returning to London in 1954 Brook directed two West End productions at the Aldwych: The Dark is Light Enough which opened on April 30 and Both Ends Meet which opened on June 9.[31] However, the United States was again to be host to Mr. Brook, who returned to New York in the fall to stage the new Truman Capote-Harold Arlen musical, House of Flowers. The staging, setting and music were received with high praise

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[27]Rachel W. Coffin, (ed.), New York Theatre Critics Reviews 1953, XIV, (October 12, 1953), 262-264.

[28]Rigdon.

[29]Austin Stevens, "Busy Mr. Brook from Britain," The New York Times, October 4, 1953, II, 3.

[30]Irving Kolodin, "The 'Faust' of Gounod Re-created by Monteux," Saturday Review, (November 28, 1953), 33.

[31]Rigdon.

by the New York critics; however, Capote's book for the production was attacked for questionable taste and lack of humor. The play ran for only five months in New York.[32]

An assignment to produce Anouilh's The Lark in the London West End brought Brook back to England. The play was produced at the Lyric, Hammersmith on May 11, 1955.[33] Brook's production was accounted by Time "the London Fiasco" of the play and was unfavorably compared with the more successful New York production starring Julie Harris.[34] The Lark had been Brook's third Anouilh attempt; earlier he had directed Ring Around the Moon in 1950 and Colombe in 1951.

Failure didn't seem to deter Brook; he rebounded that year to produce two Shakespearean works, both of which sebsequently went on extended tours. Titus Andronicus, starring Laurence Olivier and Vivian Leigh, was the first of these. Not only did Brook stage the production, but he also designed the show and composed the music for it.[35] Kenneth Tynan praised the work:

> Adorned by a vast, ribbed setting (the work of Mr. Brook, designer) and accompanied by an eerie throbbing of musique concrète (the work of Mr. Brook, composer), the play is now ready for the attention of Mr. Brook, director. The result is the finest Shakespearean production since the same director tackled Measure for Measure five years ago.[36]

The same production of Titus Andronicus toured Yugoslavia, Poland and other European countries in 1957.[37]

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[32]Coffin, XV, (December 31, 1954), 189-92. [33]Rigdon.

[34]"A Fiery Particle," Time (November 28, 1955), 76.

[35]Kenneth Tynan, Curtains (New York: Atheneum, 1961), 104.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Moritz, 75.

Following his success with Titus, Brook set out to stage Hamlet with the Stratford Shakespearean Memorial Company. With Paul Scofield in the title role the play was first performed in November of 1955, when the entire company, invited by the Ministry of Culture,[38] flew to Moscow where, for the first time since the 1917 revolution, the Soviet capital played host to an English theatre company. The Moscovites warmly received the play and the players. The 33-year-old Scofield and his company were treated to 16 curtain calls.[39] After this triumph the group returned to England to open the play on home ground at the Phoenix Theatre in London on December 8, 1955.[40]

Brook managed to squeeze into the busy year of 1955 the writing of a television play entitled The Birthday Present. The work was shown on the BBC during that year.[41]

An adaptation of Grahame Greene's novel, The Power and the Glory, and a revival of T. S. Eliot's, The Family Reunion, for London's Phoenix Theatre were to be Brook's next undertaking. He both composed the music and staged The Power and the Glory which opened on April 5, 1956;[42] elaborate sets for the production were designed by Georges Wakhevitch.[43] For The Family Reunion, which opened on June 7, 1956,[44] Brook himself designed the sets.[45] Two other assignments also occupied his time in 1956: The directing of Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge at the Comedy Theatre in London in October, and the staging of Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof in French (La Chatte sur un Toit Brûlant) at the Theatre Antoine in Paris.[46]

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[38]Tynan, 425.

[39]"Hamlet in Moscow," Time (December 12, 1955), 67.

[40]Rigdon. [41]Moritz. [42]Rigdon.

[43]Tynan, 124. [44]Rigdon. [45]Tynan, 133. [46]Rigdon.

Called back to Stratford in 1957 Brook launched upon a year which was to include: A Shakespearean production, The Tempest, starring John Gielgud at Stratford-on-Avon; an opera, Eugen Onegin, at the Metropolitan Opera; an ABC-TV play which he wrote entitled Heaven and Earth; and the European tour of his earlier success, Titus Andronicus.[47]

Brook's Tempest, equated "an impressive production,"[48] was brought to Drury Lane Theatre in London for a seven-week season beginning on December 5, 1957, after its successful opening in August at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Here again Brook exercised his artistic abilities by designing and composing for the production as well as staging it.[49]

The American opera world seemed more willing to accept Brook's staging of Eugen Onegin than previous attempts. A columnist for Musical America prefaced an interview with Brook by this statement:

> Mr. Brook is responsible for the very beautiful staging of "Eugen Onegin" recently in the Metropolitan Opera's repertoire, and for the less felicitious production of "Faust" for the same company a few years back.[50]

Hopping from one country to the next became a real habit for Brook during the years 1958-1960. Starting in Paris he directed Miller's View from the Bridge (Vu Du Pont) at the Theatre Antoine. From there he came to New York to christen the newly refurbished and newly named Lunt-Fontaine Theatre with the May 5, 1958, premiere of Durrenmatt's The Visit, which subsequently played the Royalty Theatre, London,

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[47]Ibid.

[48]Frances Stephens, Theatre World Annual No. 9 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 80.

[49]Ibid.

[50]"Keep 'Em Still," Musical America, LXXIX, (June, 1959), 11.

opening June 23, 1960. A musical, Irma La Douce, was the Brook contribution at the Lyric in London in July of 1959. This production became Britain's export to the United States in 1960 opening on September 29, at the Plymouth Theatre, New York.[51]

The ubiquitous Mr. Brook found time in the fall of 1959 to stage Anouilh's newest offering, The Fighting Cock, at the ANTA Theatre, which opened on December 8 of that year. The distinguished cast included Brook's wife, actress Natasha Parry as well as Rex Harrison.[52]

Besides the transatlantic trade of his productions of The Visit and Irma La Douce, Brook was given two commissions in 1960. The first was directing and designing Genet's Le Balcon at the Gymnase Theatre in Paris. The second was an adventure involving the cinema, a medium in which Brook had not worked for eight years. A liaison between novelist Marguerite Duras, actress Jeanne Moreau (with whom Brook had worked in Paris on Cat on a Hot Tin Roof in 1956) and Brook himself resulted in the filming of Moderato Cantabile, the French entry to the Cannes International Film Festival that year. Although not all critics applauded the work, the film broke record in Paris.[53]

In need of a rest, Brook and his wife left in October of 1960 to travel in Mexico, Chile and Peru.[54] The spring of 1962 occasioned two events which brought pride to the Brook family. The first, in January, was an award naming Moderato Cantabile "Best Film of 1961" in

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[51]Rigdon.

[52]Robert Brustein, Seasons of Discontent (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 103.

[53]Richard de la Mare and Maurice Hatton, "Peter Brook, Film Director," The Guardian (Manchester), November 29, 1962, 6.

[54]Moritz, 76.

the British category by Films and Filming magazine,[55] and the second was the birth of a daughter, Irina, born to Peter and Natasha Brook in Paris on April 5.[56]

Evidently the year away from directing renewed Brook's creative energies because he returned in 1962 to stage and design the most successful production of his career up to this date--the controversial and highly praised King Lear, with Paul Scofield in the title role. The play had its premiere at Stratford-on-Avon on November 6, 1962; five weeks later on December 12 the production moved to the Aldwych Theatre in London.[57] Movement was a characteristic of this King Lear which made two more touring stops before the final curtain rang down in 1964. Brook's remarkable work represented the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Paris in the spring of 1963 at the Theatre de Nations where it won the Prix de la Jeune Critique as well as the Challenge du Theatre des Nations.[58]

In May of 1964 the King Lear company travelled to the United States to have the privilege of being the first dramatic group to perform at the $19.3 million New York State Theatre at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.[59] The achievement was celebrated on two continents. Charles Marowitz, author of The Methods as Means, had been assistant to Brook for the production, and related in a later article

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[55]"Peter Brook: The Year's Best," Films and Filming, VIII, (January, 1962), 7.

[56]Variety, April 11, 1962, 87.

[57]Rigdon.

[58]John Goodwin (ed.), Royal Shakespeare Company 1960-1963 (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1964), 163.

[59]Louis Calta, "Acoustics Scored at State Theatre," The New York Times, May 20, 1964, 36.

that the play had been viewed as " . . . not only a 'hit' and a 'succès d' estime' but an historical event in the English Theatre."[60]

Two plays and a film received Brook's direction in 1963: The Physicists, Sergeant Musgrave's Dance and Lord of the Flies. Durrenmatt's The Physicists was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company on January 9, 1963, at the Aldwych Theatre and subsequently visited Edinburgh, Newcastle and Manchester in May and June. The BBC Third Programme featured a broadcast of this production on October 17 and November 18 of that year.[61] Bernard Levin of the London Daily Mail is quoted as giving this account:

> As the auditorium slowly fills up, we observe that the curtain is up and that there is a corpse lying at the front of the stage, which has presumably been there since the doors were opened. Mr. Peter Brook has been up to his tricks again. . . . But how much more tremendous are Mr. Brook's tricks than those of any other five producers put together.[62]

Brook's production of John Arden's Sergeant Musgrave's Dance opened in Paris at the Athenee Theatre in 1963.

The legitimate stage, however, took a temporary backseat when an interesting film opportunity presented itself in 1963. Sam Speigel, who had acquired the rights to William Golding's novel, Lord of the Flies, engaged Brook to direct the picture, allowing him considerable freedom to improvise and experiment with dialogue and cinematography. The film was shot on an island off Puerto Rico and edited in Paris. The picture became one of Great Britain's two entries to the Cannes Film Festival in 1963.[64] Lord of the Flies is probably Brook's most popularly known film work.

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[60]Charles Marowitz, "Lear Log," Tulane Drama Revue, VIII, (Winter, 1963), 120.

[61]Goodwin, 195. [62]Ibid., 188. [63]Rigdon.

[64]Penelope Houston and Tom Milne, "Interview with Peter Brook," Sight and Sound, XXXII, (Summer, 1963), 108.

Long the champion of the experimental, long the seeker of new means, new methods, new forms of graphic and dramatic expression, Brook, with the aid of Charles Marowitz launched a program in the fall of 1963 that was to sharply influence his future work. This project, backed and fully subsidized by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in conjunction with the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art has come to be known as the "Theatre of Cruelty."[65] Peter Hall, co-director of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (with Brook and Michel St. Denis) emphasized the importance of the undertaking:

> Peter Brook has recently been conducting with the company a programme called "Theatre of Cruelty" which, by taking the teachings of the French theatre visionary Artaud as its starting point, has gone into uncharted methods of expression. Such work in the hands of Brook, a major innovator, can have untold influence.[66]

The project, a long-time dream of Brook's, consisted of an extensive training program for a select group of actors, led by Brook and assisted by Marowitz, which had its first fruits in a private showing of a "Theatre of Cruelty" workshop presented in January, 1964, at the London Academy of Dramatic Arts Theatre Club in London. The showing was intended not as a performance in the usual sense, but simply as a demonstration of work in progress, hopefully of interest to members of the profession, for the most part. The notices were "interesting, up-beat,"[67] but Marowitz felt somehow that although the critics had been warned that the offering was strictly a demonstration, they still reviewed the evening as if it had been a performance.[68]

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[65]Charles Marowitz, "Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty," Tulane Drama Revue, XI, (Winter, 1966), 152.

[66]Goodwin, 47.

[67]Marowitz, "Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty," 165.

[68]Ibid.

Work was begun immediately after this showing on Genet's The Screens. Brook and Marowitz agreed to work on only the first twelve scenes of the prodigious work and bypass the remaining two-and-one-half hours. The work sessions proved highly profitable, but often "threw up more material than we knew what to do with,"[69] according to Marowitz.

The group, now skilled and primed for a more complete challenge, found just that vehicle in Peter Weiss's play The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade, which has come to be known simply as Marat/Sade. A manuscript of the play was first sent to Brook from Germany early in 1964. Brook conferred with Weiss in Berlin and set about immediately to begin a rehearsal period which was to last two months, rather than the usual four weeks.[70] Countless hours of research, experimentation and improvisation culminated in the London opening of the work on August 20, 1964.[71]

The magnitude of Marat/Sade was widely acknowledged in England and its fame leaped the Atlantic as David Merrick engaged the company to bring the production to Broadway for a limited run. The New York premiere on December 27, 1965, was at the Martin Beck Theatre.[72]

The advent of the play in New York charged an explosion of controversy, praise and criticism. Robert Brustein called it "one of

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[69] Ibid., 169.

[70] Irving Drutman, " . . . Was Peter Brook Its Brain?," The New York Times, January 9, 1966, II, 20.

[71] Rigdon.

[72] "The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade," Playbill, III, (January, 1966), 40.

the most spectacular stage events of recent times."[73] A full-page advertisement quoted Whitney Bolton of the Morning Telegraph as saying:

> This is the most bizarre, eruptive, jabbing, jolting, disturbing work on Broadway. You will never again see anything like this play.[74]

John Chapman of the New York Daily News proclaimed:

> The year's most exciting piece of sheer theatricalism. Feverishly exciting, always spectacular.[75]

The excitement predicated over the event insured an extended tour of the production as well as a recording and a film commitment. After a brief hassle with the American Federation of Musicians over the use of British musicians, Brook and the company of 35 players recorded the entire production for Caedmon Records. The album was released late in the spring of 1966.[76]

The film rights were acquired by United Artists, who offered the greatest artistic freedom in filming. Brook and his producer, Lord Birkett, shot the play in a record 18 days at the Pinewood Studios in England.[77] The film had its debut early in 1967 and brought forth a new flood of descriptive superlatives.

In the fall of 1965 Brook tackled another Peter Weiss script for a private showing. He directed Weiss's The Investigation for a

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[73]Robert Brustein, "Embarrassment of Riches," The New Republic (January 22, 1966), 23.

[74]The New York Times, January 9, 1966, II, 2.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Bernard Weinraub, "Recording the 'Marat/Sade' Madness," The New York Times, February 13, 1966, II, 24.

[77]Arthur Knight, "Filming Marat/Sade," Saturday Review (July 30, 1966), 43.

late night reading at the Aldwych Theatre in London on October 20.[78] Also in 1965 Brook and the Royal Shakespeare Company brought forth the highly controversial US. This anti-war play, although based on the principles applied in the production of Marat/Sade, did not achieve the powerful impact of the latter. Marowitz considered it an artistic failure.[79]

In the main, however, working on the diverse phases of researching, preparing, staging, touring, defending, recording and filming Marat/Sade occupied most of Brook's time for almost three years. He was awarded the New York Theatre Critics Prize in June, 1966, for his direction of Marat/Sade.[80] An earlier honor was perhaps even more impressive than the Theatre Critics Prize: On January 1, 1965, he was awarded the title C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) by Her Majesty the Queen for "His progressive work as producer and co-director of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre."[81]

Peter Brook's accomplishments have been prolific and varied. His work in the theatre has covered a truly extensive range of media and literature, and there is much evidence that his career is in many respects just now gathering momentum. New ground has been broken with the success of the "Theatre of Cruelty"-Marat/Sade experiment, and with

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[78]"Royal Shakespeare Company," Tulane Drama Revue, XI, (Winter, 1966), 109.

[79]Charles Marowitz, "Theatre Review," Tulane Drama Revue, XI, (Winter, 1966), 173.

[80]Ian Wright, "Blood letting in the bath house," The Guardian (Manchester), June 28, 1966, 7.

[81]The Times (London), January 1, 1965, 10.

' new cinematic techniques,[82] a new media may even be in Brook's current project (1967) of directing the Royal ompany in a film version of King Lear for CBS-TV[83] will r his enthusiasm for cinematic directing and his expert cing Shakespeare. This formidable project, under Brook's ative administration, is one to be followed with great nyone who is concerned with the direction of new per- the contemporary theatre.

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se involving multiscreens used simultaneously as y the Johnson's Wax Film at the 1964 New York World's Fair.

garet Ronan, "A Sense of Direction . . . with Dangling stic Teacher (March 31, 1967), 21.

CHAPTER II

Brook and the Opera

> I have found that all things in entertainment feed into each other reciprocally. There is a sort of gestation through the seeming contradiction of the different media. One form reacts against the other to the profit of the director.[1]
>
> Peter Brook

Considering Peter Brook's insatiable appetite for dramatic challenges in directing it is not surprising that he should try his hand at opera; however, it is in this area that his accomplishments are probably least known. World opera buffs will surely remember his outlandish and surreal Salome of 1949, in London, and staunch Metropolitan Opera followers may recall his renovation of Faust for the opening in the fall of 1953. Although Brook's work in opera has not been particularly prolific to date (seven operas to his credit), it has at least been highly controversial. This chapter will examine Brook's general feelings about the problems of directing the opera, briefly discuss some of his early works, and then follow him in detail through the process of directing Faust from inception to opening night.

Brook's opera philosophy closely parallels his theatre philosophy: The aim of all opera, he maintains, should be like the aim of the theatre production--to bring all elements into a unity and harmony wherein design, staging and music are part of a whole, stylistically. It is the director's responsibility to see that the production's total effect

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[1]Austin Stevens, "Busy Mr. Brook from Britain," The New York Times, October 4, 1953, II, 3.

preserves the essential qualities of the music. Too often this integration is not present, says Brook:

> The composer is not necessarily writing a theatre work. He concentrates on musical style and flavor, which may then be haphazardly transferred by a designer to the stage picture so that the picture and sound won't necessarily coincide.[2]

One of the great difficulties of the opera "machine" is that the chain of command, with only rare exceptions, gives priority to the conductor over the director or producer. Thus the musical interpretation takes precedence and the unified effect may be lost. Brook comments on this inequity:

> . . . in the opera, whatever his nominal position, the producer is still second to the conductor and, in the place of someone objective to blend the impressions of the ear and those of the eye, one has the domination of the musician, the professional expert, with the inevitable blinkerdom that specialization brings.[3]

Considering his personal penchant for surface effect, Brook becomes irate over the second-seating of the visual, structural aspects of production in opera. He further laments the progress made in scenic art in "the only form of theatre in every part of the world that is genuinely free of commerce, that is dedicated solely to the creation of beautiful things."[4] Occasionally operas are mounted with an eye toward the Gordon Craig principles of simplicity and elegance, but this usually occurs only on those rare instances when producer and conductor actively concur on interpretation, and when staging is given equal weight. However, for most performances, Brook concludes:

> . . . in the great opera houses of the world, cracked and dusty

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[2]John Griffin, "He Directed the New Version," Theatre Arts, XXXVII, (December, 1953), 71.

[3]Peter Brook, "The Influence of Gordon Craig in Theory and Practice," Drama, XXXVII, (Summer, 1955), 34.

[4]Ibid.

> cloths are unrolled and exquisite masterpieces of musical thinking are presented before these blinding horrors: indeed so violently is the one sense being offended whilst the other is being wooed that one would imagine it impossible for any lover of the score not to be continually distracted. Unfortunately, the same people, audience and critics, who (one hopes) would not dream of hanging a Burne-Jones on their living room wall, watch these mauve and orange Tannhausers with complete satisfaction.[5]

Brook's major contentions against the opera extend past scenic considerations into the realm of acting. He believes that the most effective opera acting is a kind of "slow motion," and that even this should be at a premium. Operatic actors tend to have preconceived notions of the interpretation of a role, according to Brook, and are most often unwilling to respond to directoral suggestion.[6] Usually the director is forced to adapt his ideas to the singer's requirements. "When a singer tells me he cannot produce a certain note in a certain position," says Brook, "I have no choice but to take his word for it, as I am not a singer."[7]

The solution to the problem of inhibiting the superfluous movements of over-zealous singers "is to anchor singers down with costumes so heavy and elaborate that they are incapable of moving even if they want to,"[8] says Brook. The real solution, he maintains, lies with the critics; not until they demand that singers be actors as well, and that vocal bravado without appropriateness of gesture and movement is incomplete, will the world of singers acknowledge their total theatrical responsibility to their art.[9]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] "Keep 'Em Still," Musical America, LXXIX, (June, 1959), 11.

[7] Howard Taubman, "The Remaking of an Opera," The New York Times Magazine (November 22, 1953), 32.

[8] Musical America.

[9] Ibid.

The director's responsibility in opera, according to Brook, is first of all to distinguish the prevailing characteristics of the music and then find a way to transmit the mood and intent set by the composer into stage effects. Thus the atmosphere of the music itself, rather than any operatic tradition, should essentially determine a given work's visual presentation.[10] It was this conviction of Brook's that later put him at variance with the critics and the opera purists over certain of his adaptations.

Brook was barely twenty-three years old when he took on the responsible position of Director of Productions at the famed Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in London. During the years 1948-49 he staged Boris Godunoff, La Bohème, The Marriage of Figaro, The Olympians and Salome. Of the young man's authority in this position one critic wrote:

> Five feet four in height, with a soft voice and a shy smile, this twenty-three-year-old youth ordered opera singers about until they nearly collapsed from fatigue. As one tenor said to a large soprano: 'It is like being kicked by a canary.' But he should have added that the canary had a kick like a mule.[11]

There was no conflict between notions of staging and music in Brook's production of La Bohème. Brook claims that there are only two operas that he knows of where stage picture and music are in harmony: La Bohème and Louise. In both of these the decor of the buildings of Paris and the romantic flavor of the music comingle to form a true unity of theme and mood. For Brook's production of La Bohème he resuscitated the very first production of the opera, working from glassplate photos that Puccini himself had taken in 1900. He and the designer agreed to

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[10]Irving Kolodin, "The Met's New 'Faust'," The Saturday Review (November 14, 1953), 32.

[11]Beverly Baxter, Craddock Munro and Gerard Fay, "Comments on Peter Brook's Production of Dark of the Moon," World Review, III, (May, 1949), 18.

use faded colors in the execution of the sets and costumes to correspond with the muted tones of the music.[12] Brook's staging of the Puccini opera was generally very well received as was his rendering of the Arthur Bliss/J. B. Priestly opera, The Olympians, in the fall of 1949.

The Olympians, the story of a troupe of strolling players restored to deity, much to the dismay of their mortal friends, offerred Brook an opportunity to try out some sparkling theatrics. The London Times assessed the production favorably, complaining only of excessive movement in the second act and a lack of movement in the third. The reviewer applauded Brook's use of special effects:

> . . . the plot allowed Mr. Peter Brook to indulge his taste for fireworks on the largest possible scale when Jove hurled his bolt, and the eye was not distracted but cooperated with the ear throughout, which is the final test for good operatic production.[13]

This fireworks display was only a hint, however, of what was to come in Brook's bizarre interpretation of Oscar Wilde's Salome later in 1949.

Having just finished directing an extravagant production of the Carolina folk play, Dark of the Moon, at the Ambassadors Theatre, which had set the critics cheering,[14] Brook was charged by the Royal Opera Company to stage Wilde's sensual work, Salome. The greatest stir was caused over Brook's choice of designer. Time commented on the selection:

> A super-confident, baby-faced wonderboy who likes to shock, Brook had looked for a designer for the Royal Opera House's first Salome of its own since 1936 who could "reflect visually both the cold, fantastic imagery of Wilde's text and the hot eroticism of

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[12]Kolodin, The Saturday Review, 33.

[13]"The Olympians," The Times (London), September 30, 1949, 6.

[14]Baxter, Munro and Fay, 17.

> . . . Strauss's music." In mustached Surrealist Salvador Dali he thought he had found his man.[15]

Some of Dali's initial ideas for the production never were realized--for obvious reasons. One such notion included equipping Salome's brassiere with fireworks that would shoot off sparks at the end of her famous dance; another was to fly a hippopotomus over the stage for atmosphere. Among other suggestions considered impractical was Dali's dream of flooding the stage with blood so that the head of John the Baptist could dramatically float upon it. Dali is quoted as saying, "Those who protest will protest loudly, but those who like it will become delirious."[16] The effect of the "hallucination" was not so astounding as the predictions, according to several reports:

> Last week when Londoners finally got in on the act, some found what remained of Dali's nightmarish designs more distracting and boring than shocking. The frame of the harp that played for Salome's dance was a painted giraffe's neck. Herodias' tent was surmounted by umbrella skeletons which undulatingly opened and shut throughout the performance. John's severed head was a tame affair that looked more like a haggis: Dali's more horrifying head had been axed at the last minute by the censor.[17]

and

> The worst fears aroused by the announcement of Dali's name . . . were fortunately not realized. Apart from some headdresses that threatened decapitation to their wearers, the general effect was properly macabre and the special effects, pomegranates, peacocks, and a pavilion, served to mark the progress of the drama without calling too much attention to themselves.[18]

In spite of the sensationalism of the staging itself the audience was greatly pleased over the virtuoso work of Bulgarian soprano Ljuba Welitch, who responded to eleven rousing curtain calls. It is

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[15]"Like the North Pole," Time (November 21, 1949), 81.

[16]Ibid. [17]Ibid.

[18]"Salome," The Times (London), November 12, 1949, 2.

reported that the cheering turned to boos, however, when director, Peter Brook, came onstage for a shy bow.[19] After that "I left town hastily,"[20] said Brook in retrospect.

After this glorioso exit it was four years until Brook had another chance at staging an opera. The opportunity came when Rudolph Bing made the decision to reinstate Gounod's Faust into the repertory. The work, long a favorite, had been retired some years prior due to the despairing state of the costumes and sets. Bing wrote Brook of his interest in restaging the opera, and coincidentally Brook himself had just become interested in the work. In a letter to Bing, Brook wrote:

> I do not want to do anything in 'Faust' that is drastically experimental or that changes the layout or construction of the work, but at the same time the idea I have of it is certainly not a conventional one. To my mind, 'Faust' on the stage always suffers from the lack of relation between the style of the scenery and costumes and the absolutely characteristic early nineteenth-century idiom of the music.[21]

Further, Brook went on to cite the apparent incongruity of the romanticism inherent in the French libretto to the traditional austere setting. These ideas were enough to incite Bing to invite Brook to New York in March of 1953 to discuss the proposition. The meeting, held during Brook's vacation, confirmed the contract between them. Rolf Gerard was named as designer, and the septigenarian, Pierre Monteux was called upon to abate his thirty-four years absence from the conducting box.[22]

Brook and Gerard went to work in London in June to conceive the production. For three days they listened carefully to the Gounod score

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[19] Time. [20] Stevens.

[21] Taubman, The New York Times Magazine, 15.

[22] Ibid., 32.

and concurred that the only valid style for the production should be that which is true to the spirit of the music, and the music was clearly representative of the early nineteenth-century romantic period. Traditionally productions of Faust had been staged in rather murky, fifteenth-century medieval settings—the Devil portrayed as the archetypal red-horned ogre. Brook saw Mephistophesles rather as a "witty, elegant, top-hatted baron of the time."[23] It was a little surprising that Bing agreed to these proposals in light of the "Bing-Metropolitan Decalogue for Designers: 'Thou shalt not set the stage in the period decreed by the composer.'"[24]

In defense of his choice of setting, Brook cited a comparison between Die Meistersinger and Faust, which are usually set in the same period:

> The heavy, Germanic, virile Meistersinger is completely opposite to the light, elegant, graceful, sophisticated, polished music of Gounod. . . . The great beauties of the score are obscured: the message the ear is receiving is at odds with what the eye sees. It is absurd and comic to see medieval, clodhopping German rustics in Faust's 1830 French waltz.[25]

The sets were designed and models constructed and sent to New York for building. Rehearsals began in mid-October. Brook now faced the monumental job of staging and coordinating the opera. Three weeks prior to the opening on November 16, 1953, Brook began intensive work with the chorus. Under the direction of Kurt Adler, chorus master, the chorus had been primed musically; it was Brook's task to marshall them around the stage. The first meeting was held in a bare room called the "roof stage" high up in the theatre. Brook exhibited the set sketches and

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[23]Ibid., 15.

[24]Irving Kolodin, The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1966 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 536.

[25]Griffin, 90.

explained his concept of their production, and then promptly divided the chorus into groups of soldiers, waiters, etc. Blocking rehearsals began at once.[26]

The afternoon was devoted to rehearsals with the principals. Brook worked spontaneously rather than by any plan, adapting to the needs and liabilities of the individual singers, coaching their movement and expression. His method never included chastising singers for the use of cliché operatic gestures. He did, however, watch and make suggestions of more natural movement or motivational material that often altered the cliché in the long run. The rehearsal period ran for three weeks, six days a week; when Brook was not working with the singers, he was consulting props, costumes, or the set crew. A substantial part of the time was spent blocking the sword fight between Faust and Valentin.[27]

The problems which Brook encountered during this experience were attributed to lack of time and general resistance to direction. The former kept him under constant financial pressure, since any extra rehearsal hours had to be budgeted explicitly and the costs were high. The latter, perhaps, gave him the most difficulty. He concluded that the real enemy to progress in opera is the heavy weight of tradition. Brook gave an example:

> A tall man with a certain kind of figure and walk may have done a role in a world premiere a hundred years ago, and some people seem to think it must always be as he did, even if a short, fat man happens to be singing it in our day.[28]

This rigidity applied not only to the principals but to the chorus as

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[26]Taubman, New York Times Magazine, 32.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid.

well. To illustrate this Brook told of resistance by the chorus to certain movements devised by the ballet master, Zachary Solov, commissioned by Brook for the waltz sequence. After the rehearsal Brook learned that the chorus considered the motions effeminate. Even though he modified the motions somewhat during the next rehearsal, the chorus remained dissatisfied. Instead of making an issue over the situation, Brook simply held his ground and kept quiet. He achieved the effect he wanted.[29]

For the opening night Brook took a seat in the orchestra, instead of staying backstage as is the custom. When he was questioned about this he replied:

> Well, that's the fun of it, watching the show with the public. Sometimes, as one sits there, one finds oneself thinking, with horrifying detachment, how stupidly a scene has been staged. And sometimes a scene goes really well, and one sits back and feels gratified.[30]

Whether Brook was gratified or not over the notices is only conjecture. Some critics hardly felt the $85,000 cited as the cost of the production to be reasonable for what one described as "the poorest set of decor and costumes yet done for the Met by Rolf Gerard."[31] Others still might have considered these costs extravagant for an opening which, in the light of a strike by the orchestra union over salaries two weeks before the first night, almost did not take place.[32]

Brook's new interpretation of the staging was a topic of considerable interest to the critics who reviewed the opening. The con-

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[29] Ibid. [30] Ibid., 32.

[31] Kolodin, Met Opera . . ., 537.

[32] "Faust First," Time (November 23, 1953), 69.

sensus was not in Brook's favor, however. Most reviewers felt that, although one could not a priori condemn the approach, little aesthetic ground was gained by the innovation. Ronald Eyer of Musical America said, "I could find no legitimate purpose, no raison d'etre, for this elaborate modernization, albeit no real harm was done."[33] Lack of unity in design was a major criticism. Olin Downes approved of the attempt, but found the results disconcerting:

> One gets the impression from the procedures of most of the stage directors whom Mr. Bing has engaged to renovate chosen works of music-drama, that they regard opera as a kind of adulterated theatre, a form to which they must apply the methods of the spoken theatre to redeem it from its ways, or else throw up their hands and consider it as an impossible species of musical extravaganza, and treat it as such, regardless of any plausibility or cohesion of dramatic effect. One would judge that the one or the other, or maybe both of these concepts governed the procedure of the apparently puzzled Mr. Brook and the evidently confused Mr. Gerard in their extraordinary concoctim of a "Faust."[34]

On the other hand, Downes heartily applauded Brook's stage movement. He considered the production to have liveliness and fluidity, and a conspicuous absence of stiffness and routine.[35]

Irving Kolodin of The Saturday Review agreed with Downes, but was even more vehement about the settings. He was kind to Brook's staging:

> Brook, it seemed to me, did much that was worthy of high admiration, especially his resourceful management of the crowds in the "Kermesse" and the dueling of Valentin and Faust. His general plan of action struck me as sensitive, respectful of the music and responsive to it, without impulse to call attention to itself.[36]

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[33]Ronald Eyer, Musical America (December 1, 1953), 9.

[34]Olin Downes, "'Faust' in New Dress," The New York Times, November 22, 1953, II, 7.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Irving Kolodin, "The 'Faust' of Gounod Re-created by Monteux," The Saturday Review (November 28, 1953), 33.

But in another article he contended that the settings "put unusual hazards in the path of the personnel.[37] He called the execution of the scenery "clumsy" and "non-illusive."[38]

Evidently whatever stir was created over Brook's updated Faust did not impede the Metropolitan management from inviting the team of Brook and Gerard to stage the 1957 opening production for the opera company. This time the offering was Tchaikovsky's Eugen Onegin. The consultation between Gerard and Brook resulted in an agreement concerning the style which the work should follow. They decided upon the same period in which they had set Faust--nineteenth century romantic. The overriding reasons this time were not musical, although the Tchaikovsky score was indeed romantic music. Brook gave this rationalle:

> When one thinks of Tchaikovsky and Puskin of Russia and the nineteenth century, the word "romantic" springs easily to one's lips; it is a word that seems the opposite of all that one means by "realistic," yet oddly enough the truth is a paradox: it is through their utter realism that the great Russian masterpieces are romantic. Realism is one of strongest traditions in Russian art.[39]

Brook named the classic examples of Tolstoi and Chekov as exemplary of this tradition, and then proceeded to explain how this applied to his current project:

> When Rolf Gerard and I started work on "Onegin," we both agreed that we had no choice: the only legitimate manner in which we could stage this opera was precisely in accordance with this particular Russian tradition. It seemed to us that we needed the very elements that in other operas one so often deplores; we felt that it was through the old fashioned scenes that we could arrive at a climate in which the opera belonged.[40]

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[37]Kolodin, Met. Opera . . . .

[38]Ibid.

[39]Peter Brook, "A Realistic Approach to 'Eugen Onegin'," The New York Times, October 27, 1957, II, 2.

[40]Ibid.

To achieve this detail of faded realism Brook brought in photographs taken of old palaces in Leningrad for the scene painters to copy. His aim was to recreate a cross-section of Russian provincial and town life at a given time in the last century. Brook's work was considerably expedited by the fact that he and conductor, Dimitri Mitropoulos, agreed entirely on the concept.[41]

Brook's return to the essential melodramatic realistic scenery paid off with the critics and the audiences. From the standpoint of staging this particular opera seemed to please the greatest number of people and offend the least number of all of Brook's opera works to date. Howard Taubman's notice is indicative:

> The Met's production, made possible by a gift from Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., wisely accepts Tchaikovsky on his own terms. It has not attempted to magnify "Onegin" into a work filled with vital force. Realizing that the essential intimacy of the work could not be denied, the Met has stressed elements of time and place. It has caught admirably, despite the size of the theatre, the atmosphere of a period piece.
>
> Peter Brook's staging is full of invention and has authentic atmosphere.[42]

Brook's comparative success with Onegin is not necessarily an indication of his growing conformity to the traditions of opera. It is, instead, a rather pleasant accident, that by devious means Brook arrived at an interpretation which pleased the mileau of opera devotees. Rather, one might surmise, that in the light of Brook's iconoclastic tendencies with regard to traditionalism, his future in opera is limited. The traditions of the opera are difficult ground to unsettle effectively, and it is a fairly safe assumption that Brook is not willing to relinquish

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Howard Taubman, "Opera: 'Eugen Onegin'," The New York Times, October 29, 1957, 36.

his notions of free determination in any art form. The restrictives implied by the nature of the task of directing opera seem uncommonly ill-suited to Brook's talents, however extensive they may be. It is a pity that the accepted conventions of operatic form preclude the type of vital rethinking which is Peter Brook's forte.

CHAPTER III

Brook and the Cinema

The legitimate theatrical contributions of Peter Brook form an impressive list. That he is a "major artist"[1] of the theatre in the twentieth century would probably not come under serious debate; his eminence as a film maker, however, is often questioned, and at best his status is dubious. His early training in film making and his avowed preference for the cinematic media, coupled with his creative stature would seem to effect the almost perfect combination of credentials for the film director. It is somewhat incongruous that his credits to date number only four major films, none of which has been counted wholly successful by prevailing artistic standards.

The paradox then includes two major questions: Why has Brook directed so few films, and why have the films that he has directed failed to achieve artistic success? An analysis of Brook's philosophy of the cinema and of his extant works may provide the answers. The films to be considered are: A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy (an undergraduate experiment in 1944); The Beggar's Opera, 1953; Moderato Cantabile, 1960; Lord of the Flies, 1963; and Marat/Sade, 1967.

Brook's approach to making a film closely parallels his stage methodology, with experimentation and improvisation as the keynotes.

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[1]Eric Bentley, "I Hear Olivier Singing," The New Republic (July 30, 1953), 20.

He sees artistic freedom as the sacred covenant of the director, and only with this freedom can Brook's creative energies function at their best. He is a man who works through an idea, testing, revising, watching, reserving final judgment until all possibilities have been exhausted, even holding off in the hope that a more complete solution may appear accidentally. But by its very nature and structure the film media imposes decisions on the director, often before Brook is ready to commit himself. Advance planning, time tables, film allotments, deadlines, union regulations for the myriad technical crews—all inflict certain conditional responsibilities on a day's filming. These pressures tend to hamper if not cripple Brook's modus operandi. On the subject of advance planning, Brook laments:

> . . . no writer in the British cinema has sufficient freedom, and no director has sufficient freedom in relation to his story. You should be able to make a film without a script, off the cuff, with three sheets of paper the way Godard worked. At least you ought in principle to be able to do this, and it's enough for the possibility to be there, open to one man, for it to affect other people.[2]

Although in comparison to other film directors Brook manages often to be allotted considerable liberty, he complains, however, that one freedom is usually allowed only at the expense of another. He cites this dilemma in regard to his last two films:

> When we made Lord of the Flies, the freedom lay in the time allowed. No accountant stood over us with a stopwatch while we shot and reshot scenes. But there I was not allowed to be wasteful with materials, such as film. When I made Marat/Sade, time was the expensive commodity. We were allowed only 17 days to make it—but the freedom here was that I could use all the film I wanted to.[3]

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[2]Penelope Houston and Tom Milne, "Interview with Peter Brook," Sight and Sound, XXXII, (Summer, 1963), 109.

[3]Margaret Ronan, "A Sense of Direction . . . with Dangling Ends," Scholastic Teacher (March 31, 1967), 21.

Aside from the time or film allotment restrictives which are certainly natural occupational difficulties shared by all film directors, Brook feels a particular hardship in the lack of freedom to improvise within the boundaries of time and film footage. Unlike the theatre rehearsal situation wherein a director can experiment, improvise, stop, retrack, skip a scene, try out an outlandish idea, and keep it or discard it as he likes, the economics of the film media generally precludes such methodology and prescribes that ideas must be predetermined to a major extent before each day's shooting. In reference to his chagrin over these conditions Brook gives an example from his first major film:

> . . . when you are dealing with the full machinery of the conventional big film production, as I was with The Beggar's Opera, it's terrifying to find out that all manner of things one has scribbled into the script as local colour, notes one has made as a reader for oneself, possibilities to tryout, have been taken deadly seriously and that months later someone will hold you to them. . . . All this means that you are put in the position of taking conscious, final and responsible decisions at a point where you really shouldn't and can't.[4]

The artistic freedom to experiment, which Brook insists upon, stems from his need to investigate the entire frame of reference of a given moment or idea. His philosophy of the dramatic experience is that it should reflect both inner and outer life, tangential realities and illusions, and even theatrical and surreal qualities whenever necessary. He likes to explore the myriad combinations and permutations of the various expressions of an idea. "My premise is a greedy one: in the theatre and especially in the cinema, I want to capture all possible information,"[5] says Brook. He is suspicious of the self-imposed

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[4]Houston and Milne, 109-110.

[5]Peter Brook, "Finding Shakespeare on Film," Tulane Drama Revue, XI, (Fall, 1966), 119.

consistency in most film making on the grounds that it precludes any option to learn things through trial or experiment that would otherwise remain unknown.[6]

In an experiment at the Stratford-on-Avon studio, Brook set about to determine the validity of the idea that the photographic process is in itself not objective or realistic in that it cannot supply total information. He instructed an actor to devise an elaborate situation for himself and to sit in the center of the room concentrating on the problem while other members of the company questioned him about it. The actor was not allowed to answer or verbalize in any way. All that could be effectively determined by the group was that there was a man going through some complex mental process. The content, of course, could not be established. In this case the actor's situation, that of a married man waiting in a doctor's office to find out if his mistress was pregnant, was in no way communicated. The group understood from this that "what the eye sees is often of no narrative value whatever. . . . that surface appearances are non-communicative."[7]

According to Brook the central problem in film making today is that of finding ways of expressing "denser impressions of reality."[8] For many years the film makers have held the view that realism has to do with photographic reproduction, with the use of authentic rain, rusting beer cans, dirty faces, and narrative story telling. The French have made the greatest strides in introducing addenda which comes closest to the approach to realism advocated by Brook. This has been accomplished, says Brook, by bringing into the direct narrative:

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[6]Ibid. [7]Ibid. [8]Houston and Milne, 113.

> . . . all sorts of other elements--outside references, surreal behaviour, like those odd things in Jules et Jim, bits of theatre and so on, which by breaking through the conventions increase the opportunity for a denser expression of reality.[9]

Of the film directors who employ this technique of producing a heightened realism through interpolation, Brook most admires the work of Jean-Luc Godard. Brook's only criticism of the film maker is that "Godard has not yet accepted the challenge of a really taxing subject."[10] Conversely, Brook himself appears interested only in the most challenging, improbable properties.

His first film, for example, made as an undergraduate at Oxford at age nineteen, was an adaptation of Laurence Sterne's book A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy. The material was considered by many to be untractable, but this didn't deter Brook's search to find a technique which would do justice to Sterne's work. This he found in the mimeodramatic technique employed earlier by Sacha Guitry in Le Roman d'un Tricheur, in which there was no dialogue per se. Brook's sixteen millimeter film became then an experiment in mimeodrama; the sound track was a compilation of incidental music by period composers coupled with a commentary consisting entirely of excerpts from Sterne's book. The majority of the scenes were exteriors and were shot in Oxfordshire on location, while the interiors were filmed in London, where the picture was subsequently shown. Brook employed character-types from the local pubs and streets around Oxford to exact a higher realism than he might obtain by simply using the available actor-types.[11]

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[9] Ibid. [10] Ibid.

[11] "Undergraduate Enterprise," Sight and Sound, XII, (September, 1943), 49.

The use of non-actors as "objects" in a film story is a technique that is characteristic of Brook's work. He likes to employ interesting faces and character-types to provide mood and an authentic realism. He warns, however, that these non-actors are valuable only in the context that is natural to them; trying to make a non-actor express an emotional or intellectual life which is alien to him will only result in a self-consciousness.[12] When examination of Lord of the Flies is made, the difficulties that ensued when Brook failed to follow his own advice will become apparent.

Filled by a kaleidoscope of directing adventures, nine years passed before Brook was offered his first film subject by producer Herbert Wilcox. The film was The Beggar's Opera and was to be made in technicolor starring co-producer Laurence Olivier.

> Though Brook saw the film in terms of a Hogarthian black and white austerity, he seized his chance. He wanted to use an unknown young man called Richard Burton for the lead, but received one of those classic "This man will never make it even as an extra." telegrams from Herbert Wilcox, the producer. Olivier got the part; the two men disagreed basically on how the part should be played, and this incompatibility contributed to the film's financial failure.[13]

The style of the film in a sense parallels Brook's theatrical interests of that period, which were dazzlingly theatrical, broadly visual and often highly colorful. Probably more than any other of Brook's films, The Beggar's Opera communicates a bold playfulness photographically. Brook seemed eager to emphasize the vitality and sensual qualities of eighteenth-century London. It is thought that his treatment of this film may well have later influenced Tony Richardson's Tom Jones, es-

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[12]Houston and Milne, 112.

[13]Richard de la Mare and Maurice Hatton, "Peter Brook Film Director," The Guardian (Manchester), November 29, 1962, 6.

pecially the prison and execution scenes.[14]

This was the first and only film version of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera, although in 1931 the Brecht-Weill Threepenny Opera, based on the Gay material, had been filmed by Pabst.[15] Brook's production featured a wealth of talent: the lyrics and additional dialogue were written by Christopher Frye, the musical arrangement and additional score was by Sir Arthur Bliss, set and costume design by George Wahkevitch, and the cast included Laurence Olivier, Dorothy Tutin and Stanley Holloway. The film was originally a British Lion Studio's Production, but was released and copywrighted in 1953 by Warner Brothers.[16]

Criticism of the film varied considerably, although with rare exceptions, (Newsweek and Catholic World), the critics were unanimous in panning Olivier's singing while most of the cast (Stanley Holloway exempted) had their voices dubbed. This may well have been the conflict over which Brook and Olivier disagreed. Several film critics expressed their disapproval:

> Our old friend Sir Laurence Olivier who has good looks, talent, charm, Vivien Leigh, and world fame, has attempted in "The Beggar's Opera," to sing. Oh, my. He has a tiny voice. It is all his own, of course, and he raises it in thin ballads to "the hussies," to "drink," to "horse," and so on. The film made in Britain, is what our cousins call a crashing bore, and is about as stylized as the late Berry Wall.[17]

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[14]John Russell Taylor, "Peter Brook, or the Limitations of Intelligence," Sight and Sound, XXXVI, (Spring, 1967), 82.

[15]Pauline Kael, I Lost it at the Movies (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1965), 104.

[16]"The Beggar's Opera," Newsweek (September 7, 1953), 87.

[17]Philip Hamburger, The New Yorker (August 29, 1953), 59.

> Olivier's insistence on using his own pleasant but limited vocal resources, while the rest of the cast employed voice doubles of operatic caliber for the singing portions of their roles, was not very prudent.[18]

> Olivier's singing is not only feeble but phony: He slows down the tempo and vainly attempts bel canto where a brisk, semi-musical "acting" would have been not only acceptable but preferable to a good, purely musical rendition. And it is his limitation as an actor which the new film brings sharply to our attention.[19]

Generally, Brook's direction was thought properly germane. His staging was labeled "pungent and imaginative,"[20] his approach--"prodigality tempered by taste and discernment;"[21] and his crowd scenes were said to "fairly burst with vitality."[22] However, the consensus was not in his favor. Most critics and the public attributed little success to the production as a whole. There are several possible reasons for the failure—the first of which is relegated to timing and the fashion in art during that time. The romanticism and versification of Frye, Anouilh and the like was just at the point of becoming passè. The new wave in the theatre in 1953 was focused on Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and the subtle greys of "method acting" and the more sordid realisms. Brook's work at this point appeared frankly dated. Secondly, the appeal of the film was hampered by comparison to the more robust, more popular and basically more well-known Threepenny Opera. The dainty songs of Brook's film gave the spirited theme a watered-down

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[18]Moira Walsh, "Films," America (September 5, 1953), 561.

[19]Bentley.

[20]Alan Dent, "Neither Good Nor Bad," The Illustrated London News, June 27, 1953, 1096.

[21]Arthur Knight, "Sir Laurence's Opus 3," Saturday Review (August 15, 1953) 29.

[22]Philip T. Hartung, "The Screen," The Commonweal (September 11, 1953), 561.

quality. Lastly, the overall impact and unity of purpose of the film was in question.[23] A recent article summed up the dilemma in this way:

> Had it, properly speaking, a film style at all? Many of the individual visual ideas were brilliant and original, but were they ever integrated into a coherent film language; did the film have any overall rhythm? The general opinion seemed to be no. Peter Brook might be a young man with ideas, but he seemed as yet unwilling—or perhaps unable—to discipline them to conventional film form.[24]

The popular failure of The Beggar's Opera, combined with the grave financial losses for which Brook was in effect responsible, very likely accounted for the long hiatus until his next film undertaking. Brook quipped: " . . . when you flop to the tune of half-a-million you have to do penance till the people concerned either forget you or die off."[25] The penance which Brook did took the form of seven years of hyperactivity in the field of legitimate theatre. Continental appearances were frequent, and Brook spent many months in Paris directing such modern works as Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, A View from the Bridge and The Balcony. During one of his French engagements he read Marguerite Duras' novel, Moderato Cantabile. Confident that it was just the property he was looking for as substance for a film, he contacted Duras and Jeanne Moreau.[26]

After the artistic outlines for the production were set, the task of raising the money began. Brook had faith that the backing would come:

> . . . one of the really strange things about business men in France is that they are meaner and tougher than in England—but they can lose their heads when it comes to a sudden belief in the power of the individual to pull through, to a respect for the mystery of the individual.[27]

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[23]Taylor. [24]Ibid. [25]Ibid.
[26]de la Mare and Hatton. [27]Ibid.

After much searching Brook finally found just such a businessman, Raoul Levy, who undertook to back the film solely on the strength of a blind faith in Brook, Duras and Moreau. From their very first meeting Brook insisted that the three of them should have absolute artistic control of the film. They managed to make Levy agree to a written clause in their contract, " . . . a clause almost unheard of anywhere in the world--he (Levy) should have absolutely no say in artistic matters."[28] Brook for the first time had a subject and a situation that was completely within his control.

Brook's style of directing in the theater had passed from his early flamboyant period of extravaganza to a period of somber tones, introspection and often darkness. His choice of Moderato Cantabile fit well into this frame of reference.[29] Also Brook was still interested in the question of the extent to which documentation of externals could reflect inner life. He explains:

> Moderato Cantabile was a personal experiment to discover whether it is possible to photograph an almost invisible reality, whether it is possible in photographing nothing but a surface to get under the surface.[30]

Later Brook compared his reasons for choosing Moderato Cantabile to the interest he had in the substance of Lord of the Flies:

> . . . although they are at opposite poles, they do have something in common which attracted me to them. Deep down, both are rituals: Moderato is a little death ritual; and Lord of the Flies is, I suppose, a little death ritual . . . of another sort. But the only reason I had for wanting to make Moderato, and the only value that could come out of it was such a fine and fragile one that the least jar would have smashed it.[31]

French working conditions and the French attitude toward extemporaneous

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[28]Ibid. [29]Taylor.

[30]Brook, Tulane Drama Revue. [31]Houston and Milne, 112.

cinematic methodology made Brook's approach to the test possible. "I did the film with a script which no self-respecting English producer would have considered for a moment,"[32] says Brook. There was, in effect, no conventional script used. Brook simply went through the book and arbitrarily made notations of the locations he needed and an approximation of the kind of shot (long, close, mid, etc.) to be used. Levy, the producer, was alarmed by these methods, but because of their contractual arrangement, he was unable to force Brook to alter procedures in any way.[33]

The substance of Moderato Cantabile concerns the dissatisfied wife of an industrialist (Jeanne Moreau), and her liaison with a young factory worker (Jean-Paul Belmondo) that never quite reaches the proportions of an affair. They meet often in public at a local cafe and simply talk. Their triste is linked with a recent murder witnessed by both of them.[34] Although there is a basic plot line, much of the action is cerebral and internal. In an effort to capture the inner dialogue, Brook employed what seemed to many a static technique in filming. He set up his cameras often from a single vantage point and simply let them record rather than editorialize on the action. This was held against him by many critics. Of the process itself Brook comments:

> The great criticism of Moderato Cantabile was that I didn't move the camera enough, that I set it up and allowed things to happen in front of it, and it was assumed that I did this because I came from the theatre and didn't know any better. In fact, there was a lot of conscious thinking behind it. The narrative we were trying to capture in that particular film was neither an external one nor entirely an inner one--you can't say that the characters behave as they do because they live by a river in a dull town, but you can't ingnore the way these things relate to them either. So,

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[32] Ibid. [33] Ibid. [34] Taylor.

> having found the landscape and these particular actors, my task seemed to be to set up a camera that didn't comment; to let you watch, as it were, a documentary record of something so intangible that you could feel it was really happening.[35]

In order for this technique of reporting to prove effective, a special kind of acting needed to be taking place in front of the cameras. Brook was enthusiastic over Jeanne Moreau's approach to this challenge. He had worked with her earlier in Paris in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,[36] and indeed felt that she was ideally suited to his purpose. Of her style of acting he stated:

> Jeanne Moreau is for me the ideal contemporary film actress, because she doesn't characterize. She acts in the way Godard films, and with her you are as close as you can be to making a document of an emotion. . . . Jeanne Moreau works like a medium, through her instincts. She gets a hunch about the character and then some part of her watches the improvisation of that and lets it happen, occasionally intervening a bit like a good technician . . . she is guiding the flow of improvisation rather than stating ahead of time what hurdle she wants herself to leap, and the result is that her performance gives you an endless series of tiny surprises.[37]

Brook's entire concept and technique demanded a deeper and more sensitive response not only from the actors but from the audiences as well. This may have accounted for the fact that Moderato Cantabile, like his earlier work did not achieve a general popularity.[38] Penelope Gilliatt wrote in a later article that "Moderato Cantabile calls into question most of our assumptions about narrative form and looks at behaviour almost as though it were an abstract mobile."[39] A British article stated that Moderato Cantabile "often disappointed people with pre-

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[35]Houston and Milne, 112. [36]de la Mare and Hatton.

[37]Houston and Milne, 112.

[38]"Peter Brook: The Year's Best," Films and Filming VIII, (January, 1962), 7.

[39]Penelope Gilliatt, "A Natural Saboteur of Order," Vogue (January 1, 1966), 105.

conceived notions who expected another casual new wave film."[40] The film critic for The London Illustrated News highly praised the work of Moreau and Belmondo, but had these chafing words for Brook:

> . . . Mr. Brook's direction, though highly sensitive, is just a shade too "grey" and monotonous and stays too close to the Diabelli themes on which it is supposed to improvise variations. The point is that Madame's small son is practicing a piano sonatina of Anton Diabelli at the very start, and we hear no other music than this.[41]

Although the film was made and shown in Europe in 1960, for some reason it was not exported to the United States until late in 1963. The American critics were even more severe in their appraisal. In their illimitable manner Time magazine slashed at the work saying "Moderato Cantabile might better have been titled Adagio Funereo; it is much too long, much too lugubriously languid."[42] Newsweek's assessment was equally as harsh:

> The stylishness of Moderato Cantabile was perhaps tolerable and even interesting in 1960 when director Peter Brook turned Marguerite Dura's novel into a film; that same stylishness, today is embarrassing and tedious. The delay in importing the film has been lethal, for the work, like a high fashion gown, has aged ridiculously.[43]

Although Brook claimed that the film succeeded in evoking the response he desired,[44] and although Moreau did win a Cannes prize for her role in Moderato Cantabile, a recent critic, putting Brook's work into perspective, seemed to think that Brook "missed the boat cinematically"[45] with this film. Further, that the film fails in that it falls

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[40]de la Mare and Hatton.

[41]Alan Dent, "Bittersweet and French," The Illustrated London News, July 22, 1961, 146.

[42]"Adagio Funereo," Time (January 17, 1964), 49.

[43]"Last Year's Line," Newsweek (January 20, 1964), 82.

[44]de la Mare and Hatton. [45]Taylor.

between a commitment to either naturalism or stylization.[46]

Three years later William Golding's Lord of the Flies offered an opportunity for Brook to redeem himself as a film maker. The property, up until the time Brook took charge of the operation, had resisted all attempts, including those of Peter Shaffer, at conventional dramatization. Brook, in the wake of his recent triumph with King Lear, had become interested in the works of Artaud and a study of the Theatre of Cruelty. The Golding book, a novel which many critics considered essentially unfilmable, presented a particular challenge to his current interest, plus a chance to retry some of the film techniques that he employed in Moderato Cantabile.

The backing of the project became a difficult problem in itself. The rights to the book were originally purchased by Sir Michael Balcon who sold them to Sam Speigel. Initially Brook contracted with Speigel to direct the picture;[47] however, a scism arose over two salient points—money and methodology. The budget Brook needed was over $500,000 and Speigel thought this too high for the type of film that was planned. Secondly, during the planning period over seven screenplays were written, none of which Brook actually intended to use. Speigel wouldn't consent to filming until an adequate script was settled on.[48] Dissatisfied with the breach of agreement even before filming had begun, Brook pulled out and sought independent backing for the enterprise. He went to Louis Allen who agreed to raise the money by selling shares to individual investors, as Allen had done earlier in financing Shirley Clark's

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[46]Ibid. [47]Houston and Milne, 108.

[48]Ibid., 110.

The Connection. The money, although only half as large a sum as Brook had demanded of Speigel, was given with no stipulations or requirement of completion date. The artistic freedom, if not the unlimited budget, was at least guaranteed. Eventually and inevitably the $240,000 supplied by Allen's backers ran out. In order to finish the film, Brook personally had to borrow money from New York, Paris or wherever his credit stood.[49]

The location of the shooting was set in Puerto Rico,[50] and the cast was composed mainly of British school children. On the subject of child actors Brook responds:

> Some of the children in Lord of the Flies act very well indeed, and no doubt this will help to perpetuate the myth that all children can act. I certainly don't want to take the credit for this. Where I can take the credit, though, is for all the 3,000 children I rejected, because when a child can't act he is worse than any bad professional actor.[51]

With the locale established and the cast secured Brook set about to activate his improvisational methods for the film. As with Moderato Cantabile, no shooting script was used; instead Brook handed out paperback copies of the book to the children to familiarize them with the story.[52] They were asked to improvise not only their lines, but also in many cases their makeup and props.[53]

The technique of shooting the film involved the use of two cameras which worked simultaneously, although from different vantage points. The first camera was used in the routine manner following the

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[49]de la Mare and Hatton. [50]Ibid. [51]Ibid., 112.

[52]Hollis Alpert, "Boys Will Be Boys," The Saturday Review (August 17, 1963), 14.

[53]Jackson Burgess, "Lord of the Flies," Film Quarterly, XVII, (Winter, 1963-64), 32.

shots called by the director. The second cameraman, former Life photographer Gerry Feil, after consultation on the general objectives of a given shot, would work much like a newsreel photographer—scouting around, moving from place to place, catching various aspects of the central action. As much as one-third of these secondary shots were used in the final film edit.[54]

The content of the Golding work is established on two levels—the realistic and the allegorical. Brook's task was to reflect both strata of meaning—the overt manifestations of what happens to a group of civilized boys facing the task of survival on a desert island as well as the implication that these children stand for the animal in mankind.[55] Critics of the film were divergent in their opinion of whether Brook achieved his objectives. One of the critics at the 1963 Cannes Film Festival, where Lord of the Flies was one of the two British entries that year, stated his disapproval:

> Unfortunately Brook's film is dreary to an extent that surprised even the few who, like me, were unimpressed by the book. . . . Brook's solution has been to follow the book as closely as he could—in fact he filmed straight from the book without a script. This would be fine in the hands of one of those rare directors who like Godard, prefer to improvise. Brook is very definitely not one of these, for nowhere does he show himself able to use his camera to maintain the audience's excitement or even interest.[56]

Where criticism was sharp, it was often meted against Brook's improvisational methods. The Saturday Review film critic had this opening remark:

> A heavy blow to the sacrosanct profession of writing screen adaptations of novels has been struck by Peter Brook and Lewis Allen, director and producer respectively of Lord of the Flies. They disre-

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[54]Houston and Milne, 111. [55]Taylor, 84.

[56]Ian Cameron, "Festival at Cannes," The Spectator (May 24, 1963), 671.

> gard the basic premise upon which much of the movie industry has been built: that novels to be made into movies must go through a long and expensive refining process.[57]

Other negative responses included attacks of the children's acting. Brook has never been noted for his ability to handle non-professional actors, and it is likely that this weakness delt a heavy blow to this particular experiment. John Russell Taylor comments on the problem:

> . . . Brook is not the best equipped of directors to direct non-professionals or children. On stage he generally seems to get the best results from very conscious actors, who can be approached by the director through their intelligence . . . Except for the boy who plays Piggy—one of the most noticeable but hardly the most complex of roles in the film—he does not have much success at making his young performers seem natural and at their ease. . . . . Little boys, under the eye of the camera, remain unavoidably little boys; and as Brook directs them . . . decidedly self-conscious little boys at that.[58]

But not all critics thought this aspect a drawback. Several, in fact, attributed the amateur quality of the children a real virtue. Jackson Burgess of Film Reviews felt that "the dialogue (there isn't much) has a slow, stilted, self-consciousness which perfectly embodies the groping moral and social improvisation to which the boys are reduced."[59] Even though Time reported "Flies is flawed in many ways,"[60] it was a fact that many critics and viewers of the work were in many respects devastated and disturbed by the film. If Brook didn't achieve his entire objective, he did succeed in startling audiences as well as provoking a great deal of commentary.

The circumstances of Brook's most recent film came as a climax

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[57]Alpert. [58]Taylor, 84. [59]Burgess.

[60]"Lost Allegory," Time (August 23, 1963), 69.

to an extended period of research, experimentation and performance. Since early in 1963 when his interest was caught by the "Theatre of Cruelty" and works of Artaud, Brook embarked on experiments which led to the full-scale production of the much-celebrated Marat/Sade. The play received international notariety and became the center of extensive controversy and debate literarily as well as theatrically. The particulars of Brook's approach to the play are discussed in Chapter IV; however, this chapter would not be complete without a description of Brook's experience in filming the work.

Brook's original intention was to simply document his production of Marat/Sade by filming it on 16mm; however, the overwhelming success of the play brought forth numerous offers for film contracts. Choosing the offer which allowed the greatest artistic freedom (United Artists), Brook and his producer, Lord Birkett, set about to shoot the play in a record eighteen days. The picture was budgeted at a conservative $500,000,[61] and the Pinewood Studios were chosen as locale.[62]

The entire company of 40 players who had been performing the work for over a year were engaged to enact the film under Brook's direction. Time became the expensive commodity, and through resourcefulness Brook and his lighting director, David Watkin, contrived an all-purpose lighting for their unit set which would eliminate the time-consuming job of constantly readjusting lighting equipment. Their innovation saved innumerable hours during the hectic eighteen days.[63] Since in the past, film records of stage plays had been usually no more than watered-down photographic reproductions, Brook and his company were

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[61]Knight. [62]Wright. [63]Ibid.

intent on avoiding this pitfall. It is reported that Brook and his producer were aiming at "an independent, free standing film—observing the general shape of the play, certainly, but using the special resources of the cinema to burrow deeper and deeper into it."[64] He sought a film technique which could capture a blend of the Brechtian alienation aspects of the play without minimizing the shock values or Artaud-like devices in the production which had been the winning elements of the stage version.

For this he applied his Lord of the Flies simultaneous multi-camera method. While the main shot or straight shot was being called by Brook himself, the other cameras (sometimes hand-held) would rush in, back off or set up an angle at variance with the main shot, picking up auxiliary action or expression.[65] Brook stated that one of their main problems was in attaining a film equivalent of "alienation":

> "The camera can be terribly objective," Brook stated. "It's limited vision tends to make one identify with the characters, to get closer to them than Weiss envisioned or the theatre allows." To counter this, the movie set included a vast grille, like the bars of an animal cage, that ran the width of the stage; repeatedly, the camera retreats behind it to reveal the shadowy spectators, the guests at Charenton, who have assembled to witness de Sade's ghoulish presentation.[66] And, at the end, guests and patients alike join forces, moving deliberately toward the camera, clapping as if they were applauding the audiences gathered to see their movie.[67]

The film was many months in the editing, and was finally released early in 1967. As did the stage version, the film evoked a variety of responses. Some critics considered it a brilliant achievement, other

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[64]Taylor, 80. [65]Knight, "Filming Marat/Sade."

[66]This technique of shooting a scene through bars was used by Brook in The Beggar's Opera as well.

[67]Knight, "Filming Marat/Sade."

critics did not feel that it matched in any way the impact of the original. The film critic for Sight and Sound, an international review of the cinema, summed up the dilemma of the transformation into the film media:

> . . . the production did work in the theatre. It was a magnificent piece of ensemble playing, with each little piece of business, each bit of minutely, clinically close observation of lunatic behaviour, fitted with almost unfailing skill into a complex overall stage picture, to be 'read' like some intricate genre painting, satisfyingly significant and thought-out wherever one looked. This sort of production creates an obvious problem in the cinema . . . It is like a ballet: everything is conceived in terms of a total stage picture, and as soon as you start selecting one thing at the expense of another, the whole shape of the original is changed and perhaps lost altogether.[68]

Whether or not the film reached the heights of the stage version, it is significant to note that Brook and his ensemble dedicated a major effort to the filming, and as one reporter astutely observed: "Few films have been produced with greater seriousness of purpose, or with less commercial compromise."[69]

In answer to the first question posed in this chapter—why has Brook directed so few films—it becomes patently clear that the difficulty lies in the restrictions of the media itself. Although Brook has called the cinema his first love, one can see that the romance is immediately on rocky ground. The absolute freedom that he demands does not exist per se in the commercial film business.

Peter Brook's film career to date can be said to have been an ambitious if not a wholly successful one. The reasons for his failure may be attributed to a number of causes. The most obvious factor seems to be Brook's choice of properties. All five of his films are based on materials that prescribe a maximum of difficulty. It is as if Brook

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[68]Taylor, 80. [69]Knight, "Filming Marat/Sade."

attempts only the most improbable works, and thereby a priori sets the odds against himself. Secondly, it has been said that Brook's orientation is that of a conductor rather than that of a composer.[70] He has clearly shown no interest in script writing or authorship; his forte lies in interpretation and management. Because the film director, much more than the stage director, needs to be in effect a composer or progenitor of the total cinematic effort, Brook is put in a position of "authorship" rather than in an editorial capacity as a film director. This may account for the lack of unity of intent for which he is often criticized. Other possibilities for his unavailing attempts at the cinema include the fact that his films are intensely personal expressions which must be accepted on their own terms or not at all, as well as the sentiment that his films most often reflect his current theatrical interests rather than the prevailing cinematic genre.

Whether or not Brook will learn from his mistakes can only be speculation; it is a fact, however, that his work in films is not finished. In 1967 he accepted an offer to direct his own Royal Shakespeare Company in a film version of the Shakespearean classic, King Lear. This is to be produced for CBS-TV and later released to film houses.[71] There is evidence from Brook's highly successful work with Shakespeare that this film may offer more promise than his earlier works. Also, new technological advances in film-making open up innumerable possibilities for such a man as Brook. He has been particularly elated over the multiscreen process used at the 1964 New York World's Fair for the Johnson's Wax exhibit film directed by

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[70]Taylor, 84. [71]Ronan.

Francis Thompson. "The great advantage of this device," Brook concludes, "is that it breaks into the inner consistency of each frame by opening the range of endless possible permutations."[72] Perhaps this innovation may be just the break-through needed to help "greedy" Mr. Brook "capture all information" as he desires.

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[72]Brook, Tulane Drama Review.

CHAPTER IV

Brook and Experimental Theatre

Improvisation and the "Theatre of Cruelty"

Despite the title of this chapter, this study does not presume to predicate the "Theatre of Cruelty" as an establishment, particularly in light of the fact that Martin Esslin, high scholastic priest of the new wave, "Theatre of the Absurd," "Theatre of Revolt," "Theatre of the Grotesque," etc., would be the first to assert that, aside from some elaborate theorizing by the French visionary Antonin Artaud, there never has been an enterprise which could properly be labeled the "Theatre of Cruelty." Artaud himself did little more than lay the groundwork or philosophy; moreover, it is likelier still, for reasons that will be discussed, that there never will be such an establishment. However, Peter Brook did ally himself to an experimental workshop which he titled "Theatre of Cruelty" (more as a tribute to Artaud, than out of a presumption of creating an Artaudian theatre per se) that had as its inspiration the teachings of Artaud.

Before a delineation of Brook's experiences with this experiment, it is important to examine briefly what is meant by the phrase "Theatre of Cruelty," and, perhaps, even more profitably, what is not meant by it.

When the new breed of European playwrights (Genet, Becket, Ionesco, et al.) began turning out dramas in a new form which more closely paralleled the prevailing fine art genre than the standard dra-

matic one, the critics attached themselves to a few phrases and began bandying about theses on the "Avant-garde" and the "Theatre of the Absurd." When some of the plays employed violence as a tool, the Artaudian phrase was exhumed and "every play in which somebody is murdered, beaten up, raped or tortured"[1] was immediately tagged as an example of the "Theatre of Cruelty." While such a phrase in the vocabulary of a serious theatre director like Brook was more likely to be meaningful, in the hands of the general it most certainly became devalued and misused.

The semantic question over the use of the word "cruelty" is ordinarily the rub. Artaud, or anyone else for that matter with a close understanding of Artaud's philosophy, never meant to imply a necessary correlation between "cruelty" and "violence" in the generally accepted sense of the words. For Artaud, cruelty implied immediacy and intensity of experience, and in proposing a "Theatre of Cruelty" he meant by this a theatrical form which produced in the audience not a passive cathartic response, but essentially an emotional/physical orgasmic response. Occasionally such methods as the use of violence, sadism and the like have been applied in an attempt to achieve Artaud's ends, but it must be emphasized that these procedures are only one means of expression in the search to provoke immediate, subjective experience in the audience. The "cruelty" lies not in the means but in the ends.

Consider the castration scene in Sweet Bird of Youth, the multiple murders in the last act of Hamlet, and the suicide that climaxes Hedda Gabler: while no one would deny the essential violence and horror of

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[1]Martin Esslin, "The Theatre of Cruelty," The New York Times Magazine (March 6, 1966), 22.

these, dare one call them examples of the "Theatre of Cruelty"? Somehow the narrative structure of each of these plays enables the spectator to maintain a distance and detachment that allows him to view these deeds of cruelty without a necessary personal involvement. This wasn't enough for Artaud. Yet he died with the dream of founding a school of theatre that could explore new means of accomplishing these revolutionary ends. To summarize, then, the "Theatre of Cruelty" is not any play which harbors a cruel act, but elements of the "Theatre of Cruelty" may be in any play or production that produces in the audience a vital and instantaneous subjective experience.

That Peter Brook should come to admire the philosophy of Artaud, and his visions, seems only natural in view of Brook's career-long search to find means to intensify the theatrical experience. There is an almost uncommon singular wish which both of these men seem to share: to see the theatre as an instrument which transcends simple cultural manifestations and becomes a life edifying force. Brook had always envisioned a laboratory environment in which he could investigate and analyze certain theories and methodologies that could be applied to theatre practice. This opportunity came in the fall of 1963.

Brook and his cohorts at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre had long been in discussion over the prospect of producing Genet's bizarre and disturbing The Screens, which had been written during the Algerian war, but had yet to be staged. Whether or not the play could be successfully edited and expurgated to pass the censors was a subject for debate, but there was no question that the endeavor would take a specially trained group of actors and an extended rehearsal and training period. Finally Brook persuaded them to allow him to try the experiment. So, with a

total working subsidy from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, and the use of the new London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts experimental theatre, Brook began his venture.[2]

Assisted by Charles Marowitz, Artistic Director of the London-Traverse Company, who had worked earlier with him on the famed Paul Scofield King Lear, Brook's first task was to recruit a company of actors suitable for the project. Marowitz describes their seeming unorthodox audition approach:

> . . . since our main concern was to find actors who were open, adaptable, and ready to rush in where rigid pros fear to tread, it was necessary to devise a completely new audition technique. I decided to do away with those murky soliloquies where a single actor pulsating with suppressed but crippling hysteria gets up and reels off the same speech he has been carting around since drama school. The auditions were collective; anywhere from eight to ten actors working together for at least an hour.[3]

The exercises employed considerable improvisation. In the first of these, the actor was told to perform a two-minute, prepared speech; after he had done this, he was then given a new character and situation and asked to perform the same text within the new context. For example, an actress reading Juliet's balcony speech might be given the challenge of playing Lady Macbeth's castigation of Macbeth with the original lines. Further, they gave the actress a third character and situation (e.g. a businesswoman at a luncheon) and asked her to adapt this to the text. When the latter had been established, key words for each character were given, and the actor was told to switch on cue to each of the situations without disturbing the flow of the original speech.[4]

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Charles Marowitz, "Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty," Tulane Drama Revue, XI, (Winter, 1966), 153.

[4]Ibid.

Other exercises included word and object associations. The word association exercise challenged the actors' imagination in regard to a piece of nonsense text out of which they were told to establish a recognizable character or situation. The object association was a study in mime: given a certain object, (a briefcase, a flashlight, etc.) they were asked to create a mime sequence. When the sequence was well-established, a new prop was given and the actor was obliged to either relate the second object in some way to the first, or develop a new scene.[5]

A company of twelve was selected from the fifty auditionees. They were mostly in their early twenties, with one member over thirty. Plans to begin work immediately were made, and Brook and Marowitz tried to decide how the twelve weeks of training could be most profitably used. There was disagreement over the initial emphasis. Marowitz believed that the whole company should start with a rethinking of elementary Method exercises since, for the most part, the techniques of Stanislavski had been distorted by the English drama schools, and since the vocabulary of the Method was the framework out of which they were going to initiate the new program. Brook, on the other hand, felt that the group was suitably prepared to begin the new work; especially in light of the limited time they had and the large amount of ground to be covered. Marowitz accommodated him.[6] The aim of the project was said to be the exploration of certain acting and stagecraft problems in laboratory conditions without the commercial pressures of performance.[7] The New York Times announced Brook's venture in an article and speculated that the intention of the group was:

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[5]Ibid. [6]Ibid., 154. [7]Ibid., 152.

> . . . to investigate the liberation of pure emotion from the shackles of association that restrain it when it is presented through the theatrical media of dialogue, plot, character and so on.[8]

Indeed, much of the early work of the group was intent on simply opening up the realm of possibilities for expression. Beginning exercises included an intensive exploration of the possibilities afforded by sound. By investigating the full range of a given instrument—a box, a stick, a metal object, etc.—the students were led into an involvement with studies in rhythm, and a redefinition of the term itself. The experiments in sound usage brought them into exercises which tested and explored the range of the human voice.[9] In fact, the group is best known for their innovations with inarticulate cries, groans, moans and the like.

Brook placed particular emphasis on this area, which is understandable, considering his skepticism of the efficacy of the linquistic form as a means of real communication. The adjustment to the use of sub-language or anti-language was, according to Marowitz, the most difficult transition:

> Little by little, we insinuated the idea that the voice could produce sounds other than grammatical combinations of the alphabet, and that the body, set free, could begin to enunciate a language which went beyond text, beyond sub-text, beyond psychological implication and beyond monkey-see-monkey-do facsimiles of social behaviorism. And most important of all, that these sounds and moves could communicate feelings and ideas.[10]

In an exercise devised to develop insights into communication without the standard use of language, Brook gave the actors an improvised situation. They were told to express themselves in a non-verbal manner. Marowitz describes the results:

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[8]B. A. Young, "Brook is Directing Drama Experiment," The New York Times, January 30, 1964, 26.

[9]Marowitz, 155. [10]Ibid.

> At first, all the choices were commonplace. People jumped for joy, fell into weeping, bolted upwards with surprise, stamped with rage. When none of these simple expressions was acceptable, the actors began to realize the nature of the exercise. With all their naturalistic choices dismissed out of hand, they had to go in search of a more stylized means of communication. Eventually, the choices became more imaginative. Sounds were created which had the resonance of wounded animals; of pre-historic creatures being slain by atomic weapons. Movements became stark and unpredictable. Actors began to use the chairs and tables as sculptural objects of functional furniture. Facial expressions, under the pressure of extended sounds, began to resemble Javanese masks and Zen sculpture.[11]

One of the principal objectives of the work was to facilitate a discontinuity of acting. Brook was intent on breaking down the rigidity of the unidimensional approach to playing. There was a legacy of tradition in the principles of building a character, going carefully from one facet to another in arriving at an established characterization, that had to be shaken. This notion derives from Brook's insistence that reality is fragmentary and discontinuous, and his desire to apply this supposition to the theatre.

Another primary objective of the workshop was to create an intense sensitivity among the members of the group to one another.[12] This "group conscience," considered a necessary ingredient in true ensemble playing, is rarely realized. Even in a repertory situation, a prolonged period of togetherness does in no way guarantee a unity; propinquity alone is not the answer. What Brook and Marowitz were seeking was an openness, readiness and awareness on the part of each member of the group which created almost a group rhythm. Contact was the essential thing. That, in effect, great strides were made in this area appeared evident in the particularly brilliant ensemble playing later, seen in Marat/Sade.

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[11] Ibid., 155, 156. [12] Ibid., 159.

Still another area of concern was the relation to the idea of "surface truth" as opposed to the Stanislavski notion of "inner truth." Brook's earlier experiments along this line (cf. Chapter III) proved to his satisfaction that surface appearances are usually non-communicative, and that even the strongest inner feelings are futile without the exterior manifestations. As Marowitz put it: "The Artaudian actor knows that unless . . . feeling has been shaped into a communicative image, it is a passionate letter without postage."[13] Hence most of the training period was devoted to various exercises intended to extend the actor's ability to develop "surface truth." Marowitz goes on to explain this important aspect of their search and the rationale for it:

> Whereas pure feeling can be mawkish or leaden, a pertinent stage-image--a gesture, a movement, a sequence of actions--is a statement in itself which doesn't require the motor-power of feeling in order to register, but when emotionally charged is many times more potent.[14]

Tangential to the actors' drills in transforming feelings into representative actions came an emphasis on adaptability to change. In one of the exercises three actors were each given a sound cue, such as a bell, a buzzer or a gong, and told to respond to its sound. While the first actor initiated a scene, the second would enter and conform, and so on with the third. However, whenever one of them heard his sound cue, he immediately started a new situation as quickly as possible. This process went on for some time with the actors constantly adapting to new sets of circumstances. Marowitz believes that the hallmark of a good actor is his ability to adapt to change.[15]

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[13] Ibid., 161.

[14] Ibid., 161.

[15] Ibid., 163.

There were other exercises which explored various phases of expression, including a session in which graphic expression was the end product. The actors, stimulated to a certain point over an improvised scene, rushed to a huge paint board and expressed themselves with paints. This technique was employed later in The Screens and in a modified way in Marat/Sade (the pouring of paint to symbolize blood).[16]

Rumors of the group's work abounded and interest was high. Besides the opportunity to experiment on their own, one of the main objectives of the enterprise was eventually to try out some of their discoveries in front of an audience, albeit a limited and select one. Peter Hall, co-director with Brook of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, explained this point:

> Experimental seasons are vital because they enable us to take soundings in the times we live in. What was relevant ten years ago is not necessarily so now. And these experiments, unlike our studio work demand a response from an audience. We need to know if we strike. And these must be experiments in the widest sense.[17]

The time had finally come for the first public showing of their work, and in January of 1964, Brook and the company invited audiences to view privately the workshop at the LAMDA theatre. The evening, which they titled "Theatre of Cruelty," was intended not as a performance but as a demonstration of the progress of their work. The London critics were sent special letters inviting them to attend, although not for the purpose of conventionally reviewing the evening as if it were a performance. The workshop featured a potpourri of events that often varied

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[16]Ibid., 165.

[17]Peter Hall, Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company 1960-1963, ed. John Goodwin (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1964), 47.

from night to night over the five-week run. Among the standard offerings that were seen were two short nonsense sketches by Paul Ableman; a three-minute dramatization of Artaud's Spurt of Blood, first in sounds, then as it was written; two collages, The Public Bath and The Guillotine, created by Brook; a mime sketch called The Analysis; John Arden's short play Ars Longa, Vita Brevis; and the Marowitz collage, Hamlet.[18]

Besides the "set" portion of the evening, time was allotted to spontaneous improvisation which assumed various forms from night to night. In almost all cases the audience was actively involved in the improvisation periods. This served, according to Marowitz, not only to keep the actors alert, but also to "break the hypnotic effect of continuous performance."[19]

Although the press and public that attended, and an impressive public at that--Laurence Olivier, Edith Evans, Kenneth Tynan, Harold Pinter, John Osborne, and Christopher Plummer[20] were told not to expect a performance in the usual sense, the critics reviewed the evening in traditional terms. While the notices were on the whole favorable and liberal, they were, nonetheless, conventional reviews--something which Brook and Marowitz had hoped to avoid at this point. It was an even further indication to them of the difficult gap to be bridged in attuning even enlightened audiences to their new, and somewhat dissonant, sound.[21]

Of all the scenes presented, the most controversial was Brook's

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[18]Marowitz, 165-6. [19]Ibid.

[20]Rex Reed, "Loves Batman, Loathes 'Sade'," The New York Times, April 3, 1966, II, 9.

[21]Marowitz, 165.

collage, The Public Bath. In this ritual sequence, which was based on accounts of the Kennedy funeral and the testimonies of Christine Keeler,[22] a mime was presented in which a girl in a raincoat (Glenda Jackson) was arrested, stripped, bathed, and then redressed; after this, the bathtub was raised as a coffin, miraculously transforming her into a representation of Jacqueline Kennedy. Esslin described the accomplishment and its meaning:

> . . . Brook demonstrated that, through a mere rearrangement of figures on the stage a magical effect can actually be produced—the same girl in the same raincoat can be transformed from an object of disgust into one of reverence, a tin bathtub into a coffin, merely by a change of context not only in space but also in time. It was not simply the groupings that changed (although not very much); it was that before the ritual cleansing the girl was by implication unclean and, after it, cleansed and pure.[23]

That the ritual was erotically compelling served to fulfill Artaud's insistence that the audience should be drawn into the action by an immediate physical excitement. Hence, the ritual could be said to be a true rendering of Artaudian principles.

Shortly after the closing of the "Theatre of Cruelty" showings, work was begun on The Screens. The group of eleven was expanded to seventeen to accommodate the new work. The Screens was described by Brook as "a geometric structure in which words and action criss-cross to produce deeper sense."[24] It was found that the entire work was ostensibly unproducable, but that the first twelve scenes contained all of the important elements of the play. Hence, it was agreed that they would produce only the first half of the work. The early rehearsals were spent in a close examination of the script and in discussion.

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[22] Ibid., 166. [23] Esslin, 72.

[24] Joseph Roddy, "Sanity from the Asylum," Look (February 22, 1966), 110.

Soon after, improvised rehearsal exercises were devised and actual work was begun. Because, according to Marowitz, the improvisations often provided more questions and problems than there was time to handle, they were thrown into a more intense concentration on the subtle aspects of the text itself. The central problem became one of conveying with equal weight the poetic as well as the political overtones of the work. To achieve this Brook added to the Artaudian basis some Brechtian techniques to handle the political polemic.[25]

Six weeks of rehearsal still did not account for any total solution of the play. The addition of some rather bizarre costumes, based on Genet's own color suggestions, executed by Sally Jacobs, appeared to enliven the production to a great extent. Although in the final analysis Marowitz felt that no great strides had been made,[26] Martin Esslin gave this glowing account:

> So much became quite clear from the magnificent performance that resulted. It contained some of the greatest moments I personally have ever witnessed in a theater: among them a scene in which an attack by the rebels on a European plantation in Algeria (during which the whole farm is set on fire) was indicated by actors who painted the red flames of the conflagration onto great empty white screens of paper which Brook used as the main scenery in his production. This was a marriage of theatre and action-painting. It generated an almost unbearable excitement as the stage blazed with tongues of flame that could actually be seen growing out of a paroxysm of rage and passion. But that trial production also showed that Genet's play could never make sense to an audience of unprepared theatre-goers, even if by drastic cutting and cleaning up--it could have passed the censorship barrier.[27]

Thus was the group primed and ready after months of exploration and experimentation for a real challenge to their newly-acquired experience. It was at just that moment as Brook was leaving England to come to the United States with the world tour of King Lear that he miraculously

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[25]Marowitz, 168-9. [26]Ibid., 170. [27]Esslin, 72-3.

received a manuscript from Germany by a little-known playwright, Peter Weiss. The play was, of course, The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates at the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade, conveniently shortened to Marat/Sade in popular usage. When Brook reached Berlin, he immediately contacted Weiss. Although the play had received only a moderate reception when it was performed earlier in Germany, Brook felt that without question this was the precise vehicle for the extension of his work.[28]

Negotiations were arranged, and Brook returned to England to integrate the experimental company into the parent company of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. It had been one of Peter Hall's original aims to use the experimental group as a kind of vitamin treatment to be injected into the main company in the hope of creating a greater vitality for all concerned. This opportunity came when the demands of the new script necessitated a much larger company.[29]

Even though the group of seventeen all but disappeared into the 100-member parent company, the influences of the smaller group were paramount in the rehearsals of Marat/Sade. There were some stunning coincidentals between the Weiss play and the earlier work of the group on the "Theatre of Cruelty": the bathtub used in the Christine Keeler sequence of The Public Bath reappeared as Marat's tub; the guillotine imagery in Marat/Sade had been first a part of Brook's collage, The Guillotine; Weiss had been strongly influenced not only by Artaud but

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[28]Irving Drutman, ". . . Was Peter Brook Its Brain?", The New York Times, January 9, 1966, II, 9+.

[29]Marowitz, 172.

by Brecht as well, and this was the basis for the approach to The Screens.[30] Even though one might think that the preparation for the new work seemed more than ample, it is a fact that the rehearsal period for Marat/Sade more than doubled the normal amount of time spent on a play by the company.[31]

Brook's rehearsal approach to this play has been much discussed. It followed at least in part some of the earlier exercises, but went off into new directions as well, to accommodate certain of the specific demands of the script. Although the approach to the play was based on improvisation, Brook did not limit himself to any one methodology. Of this he says:

> I believe the only directing method that can lead to results is a great number of different methods, all of which aim at enabling the actor to contribute more and more, so that rehearsing becomes a living process, not a rational one.[32]

For his own edification, Brook visited insane asylums near London and Paris; he cautioned the cast, however, against similar trips. Instead, he worked with each cast member to establish an expression of insanity based on their own experience. Weeks of rehearsal went by before the company approached the text itself.[33]

During this early period Brook suggested that the group study paintings of Goya, Breughel and Hogarth. Some visited London psychiatrists, and, the entire group read articles on mental illness as well as seeing two films for background material. The films, Regard sur la Folie and Le Maitre-Fous (The Master Nuts), both explored certain aspects of madness; the first depicted an annual fete at a French provincial asylum; the latter, filmed in Nigeria, portrayed a savage ritual

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[31]Drutman. [32]Ibid. [33]Ibid.

that ended in a frenzy and was an excellent commentary on the behavior of a nineteenth-century madman.[34]

The private consultations with Brook by every member of the company were an effort to follow the textual clue offered by de Sade: "In a criminal society/ I dug the criminal out of myself/ so I could understand him and so understand/ the times we live in."[35] Brook's aim was to extend this injunction, whereby the actor by a kind of introspection could "dig the madman out of himself."[36] Susan Williamson, who played Simone Evrard in the production, told a reporter that most of the actors selected a madness near their own idiosyncracies;[37] she, herself, chose a characterization based on a real person that she had known when she worked in a madhouse--a person whose body was twisted, knees bent and eyes crossed.[38] Besides the discussion sessions, Brook explained the other qualifying factors that determined the actors' selections:

> Each actor experimented with a dozen or so characterizations until one was found that served the play's purpose. They had to devise a madness that they could sustain for two-and-one-half hours and that would still be true to the play.[39]

Along with the establishment of the insanity which is the frame of reference within which the play is produced, there were other import-

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[34]Ibid.

[35]Peter Weiss, The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade, Geoffrey Skelton, tr. (New York: Atheneum, 1966), 47.

[36]Drutman.

[37]Bernard Weinraub, "Recording the 'Marat/Sade' Madness," The New York Times, February 13, 1966, II, 24.

[38]Drutman.

[39]Ibid.

ant considerations—not the least of which was the fusion of elements of Brechtian and Artaudian theatre that were inherent in the Weiss script. Rather than being a deficiency of the script, Brook, in the introduction to the published text, related that it is just this dichotomy which gives the work its potential power:

> Weiss not only uses total theatre, that time-honoured notion of getting all the elements of the stage to serve the play. His force is not only in the quantity of instruments he uses; it is above all in the jangle produced by the clash of styles. Everything is put in its place by its neighbor—the serious by the comic, the noble by the popular, the literary by the crude, the intellectual by the physical: the abstraction is vivified by the stage image, the violence illuminated by the cool flow of thought. The strands of meaning of the play pass to and fro through its structure and the result is a very complex form: like in Genet, it is a hall of mirrors or a corridor of echoes—and one must keep looking front and back all the time to reach the author's sense.[40]

To meet the Brechtian demands Brook employed the use of a Herald, who announced the scenes and commented satirically upon the action, as well as a kind of chorus, composed of four clown figures, who initiated songs which provided exposition, social commentary, and historical information. He used also placards and signs, á la Brecht, to comment further, along with a dissonant Weill-like musical score. These devices were meant to constantly wake up the audience and to make them aware of the social, political implications of the piece. In many cases, they needed this release from the Artaudian shocks which comprised the other attack. The Artaudian elements included fits, paroxysms, hallucinations, whippings, executions, knife worship, a naked actor, a copulation ritual, judicious use of inarticulate cries and moans, uncannily frightening costumes and makeup, as well as a brilliant use of sound variations. As Brook so aptly put it:

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[40]Weiss, vi. [41]Ibid.

> . . . everything about this play is designed to crack the spectator on the jaw, then douse him with ice-cold water, then force him to assess intelligently what has happened to him, then give him a kick in the balls, then bring him back to his senses again.[41]

The substance of the discourse within the play is a study in contrasts as well. The idealist Marat, whose cry is révolution and the liberation of the masses, is pitted against the realist, de Sade, whose exaltation is of the individual man who lives by and for the senses. The intellect is set in opposition to the body, the preletariat to the bourgeois, capitalism to socialism, freedom to imprisonment, war to pacifism, sanity to madness, human nature to change, irrational behavior to logical argument, and so on. But apart from Marat/Sade as a play of intellectual ideas, it is perhaps primarily a play of ideas that derive from sensory stimuli.

The great controversy over the work grew out of a debate between those critics who thought the play was mere sensationalism, or theatricalism, and those who gave due credit to Weiss's text. Brook staunchly defended the script in the face of countless attacks. In a Look magazine interview he said:

> The author had an extraordinarily complex and daring vision, and one that was very hard for him to put down on paper. The nearest he could get was the title, which reflects a complex stage machine we had to recapture. And I think that what we do on the stage, for better or worse, is exactly what the author himself was seeing on the stage of his mind, seeing in his vision. This is why I am very jealous of any attempt to divide his work from mine. I feel that any criticism of the production is a criticism of the play and that any praise of the production is a praise of his vision.[42]

When Marat/Sade was imported to Broadway by David Merrick late in December, 1965, the American critics all had the opportunity to give their appraisals. While the volume of criticism and commentary is substance for

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[41] Ibid. [42] Roddy.

a study in itself, two dominant attitudes accounted for the majority of the writing: the view that Marat/Sade was purely a spectacle of theatrics, and the view that there was indeed a great deal more to the production than just fireworks. In a late night Marat/Sade forum held on January 28, 1966 (a month after the play opened in New York) a group of distinguished theatre people, including Peter Brook, Geraldine Lust, Ian Richardson, and Gordon Rogoff gathered to discuss the play. Leslie Fiedler, critic, novelist and University of Buffalo professor, whose opinion of the play was less than enthusiastic, charged that "there is an unsufferable sense of self-righteousness in people who have gathered to love the play."[43]

Among the more serious critics of the play, Harold Clurman, reviewing the work in The Naked Image, gave Brook and the company due credit for their imaginative use of theatrical devices. Clurman particularly lauded the brilliant use of space and sound in the production, but overall was left unmoved by the evening. He called the play an "artful funhouse, a magnificent toy . . . first-class theatrical salesmanship."[44] His basic disagreement appeared to be over the values of the text itself. He called the script trite, and labeled Marat/Sade "a dramatization of of political inconclusiveness or nihilism."[45] His article seemed to attack the play more from a political polemic than a dramatic one. His final words on the subject capsulize his reactions:

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[43]Peter Brook et al, "Marat/Sade Forum," Tulane Drama Revue, XI, (Summer, 1966), 221.

[44]Harold Clurman, The Naked Image (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1966), 121.

[45]Ibid., 121-22.

> The best compliment I can tender Marat/Sade is that it has provoked me to this declaration. And if anyone argues that in approaching the play in this manner I have exceeded the bounds of the "trade," that is, gone beyond the theatre, I must once again affirm that unless theatre and theatre criticism do this they become paltry and inconsequential. "He knows no drama who only drama knows."[46]

Stanley Kaufmann, writing for the New York Times in a Sunday "think piece," had these words for Brook:

> I have not before been a warm admirer of Brook. On the basis of five previous plays and one film, I have thought him a gifted but flashy virtuoso, the kind of director who looks for what he can do to a play. But Weiss seems to have written with dependence on precisely this sort of virtuosity and has provided the right opportunity for Brook's temperament. In this case, the director's flamboyance enriches texture instead of competing with it. The production surges, opens and narrows like the iris of a camera, using its members in mad, stuttering but carefully composed movement.[47]

Other serious critics of the work include Robert Corrigan, Robert Brustein and Susan Sontag. Corrigan had nothing but praise for Brook's achievement. In a brief review he summarized in this way:

> . . . it's what happens underneath, around, and between the lines that has the greatest impact. Brook has choreographed the production so as to achieve a kaleidoscopic series of grotesque friezes which are moved not only by the music but more importantly, by the rhythms and sounds which the actors have created. Marat/Sade is not just an important play, it is a landmark of dramatic production in which the theatre fulfills its seldom realized but unique powers.[48]

Brustein tagged the production "one of the most spectacular stage events of recent times,"[49] and in a lucid essay wrote one of the few reviews which gave real credit to playwright Weiss. Although he was critical of certain deficiencies in the script, Brustein praised Weiss by saying that "he has an uncanny instinct for seizing upon central modern obses-

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[46]Ibid.

[47]Stanley Kaufmann, "The Provocative 'Marat/Sade' . . .," The New York Times, January 9, 1966, II, 3.

[48]Robert Corrigan, "Theatre," Vogue (February 15, 1966), 56.

[49]Robert Brustein, "Embarrassment of Riches," The New Republic (January 22, 1966), 23.

sions and transforming them, through a process of symbolic compression, into visual art."[50] The acknowledged drawbacks of the work, according to Brustein lay in Weiss's inability to fuse his mastery of the Brechtian and Artaudian elements of the work. Nonetheless, Brustein gives Brook full credit for manipulating the staging in a disarming and vitally intense manner. After a delineation of the production devices he concluded:

> All these elements account for an evening that makes us remember why we go to the theatre, and makes us want to return, for this is a play that touches on the borders of our secret being.[51]

After the bulk of the controversy had been expounded, Susan Sontag, in an article printed in the Partisan Review, wrote a compelling essay defending Brook's production and explaining the reasons for the battery of adverse criticism launched against Marat/Sade. Her conclusions may well be applied to an explanation of why Brook's work in general often comes under fire.

Sontag explores three notions which served to impede proper criticism today. The first of these postulates the necessary correlation between theatre and literature; this criterion assumes that theatre is first of all literature and that standards of literary criticism can and should be applied to all dramatic works. This notion further assumes that unless the text can itself stand as a work which conforms to some unity or standard of literary quality that it must fail as a piece of theatre; it is the notion that literally equates dramatic criticism with literary criticism. Obviously, Sontag feels, one cannot, nor should one attempt, to view such a work as Marat/Sade from this vantage point.

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 26-28.

> Without doubt, Marat/Sade is far from being the supreme masterpiece of contemporary dramatic literature, but it is scarcely a second-rate play. . . . It is not the play which is at fault, but narrow expectations about the theatre.[52]

The second notion which Sontag examines concerns the connection between theatre and psychology. Today one must battle with the antiquated notion that "drama consists of the revelation of character, built on the conflict of realistically credible motives."[53] The most interesting modern drama, Sontag contends, goes well beyond psychology and in many cases forsakes narrative consequences entirely. The preoccupation with insanity in art today confirms this desire to go outside of the predictable psychological understanding of man and his world into uncharted realms. The frivolity with which many of these experiments are treated in criticism may well impede their progress.

The third established notion which becomes a hindrance to the understanding and appreciation of Marat/Sade and works of its kind is the connection between theatre and ideas. This criterion asserts a work of art is understood as being "about" something, or concerned with the representation or argument of an "idea." In other words, this notion assumes that the ideas presented in a play have some value or at least an intellectual consistency. Since Marat/Sade is often intellectually puzzling and appears at odds with any one clearcut political, moral, philosophical or even historical viewpoint, many have considered the play weak from an intellectual standpoint.[54]

Sontag explains that critics have charged Marat/Sade with ob-

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[52]Susan Sontag, "Marat/Sade/Artaud," Partisan Review, XXXII, (Spring, 1965), 213.

[53]Ibid., 214.

[54]Ibid., 215-16.

security and intellectual shallowness because of a misunderstanding—"misunderstandings of the connection between the drama and didacticism."[55] She further asserts that Weiss's play cannot be viewed in the same manner that one would view an argument of Arthur Miller's or even Brecht's. The ideas in Weiss's play are only secondarily intellectual or argumentative; they are first of all ideas used as sensory stimuli. And this is the arena in which Peter Brook is the master. The real accomplishment by Brook was his ability to fashion shape, color, sound and texture to produce a true amplification of the text and to use the text as well to provide stunning sensory stimuli.

To summarize Sontag's argument in defense of Marat/Sade, and in a larger sense many contemporary efforts, the problem lies often not in the productions themselves but in a set of provincial attitudes which govern theatre practice and criticism today. The heavy weight of tradition is in great part the villian, coupled with a rigid and limited vision of what the theatre should or could be. Perhaps by an extension of this conclusion we can understand the limited enthusiasm that follows much of Brook's experimental work. Brook is and always has been a director ahead of his time. He is a man who reaches for new forms, new areas of expression in his art; many of his attempts strike a note of dissonance with the times and fashion, and often sadly what cannot be immediately understood in terms of a prevailing set of standards is abused critically, or even worse, neglected or discarded. One can only hope that the volume of men with Brook's measure of vision of the theatre

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[55] Ibid.

will increase and that a true climate can be created wherein these men can work and grow with their dreams. For Peter Brook this climate includes the freedom from commercial and economic pressures that are assured the scientist in his laboratory, but the constant presence of the pressure of artistic challenge. For the theatre to be alive, according to Brook, one must dare and dare completely.

CHAPTER V

Rehearsing *King Lear*

> The work of rehearsals is looking for meaning and then making it meaningful.[1]
>
> Peter Brook

If mounting grand scale opera classics or commanding cinema crews has not brought Peter Brook ostensible notoriety, his feats as a Shakespearean director most certainly have. Rarely has Brook chosen an obvious classic as an undertaking, rather his nine Shakespearean productions include many of the Bard's most difficult works; his first Shakespearean play was the formidable *King John* directed at the age of twenty for the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Between 1946 and 1964 his stagings for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-on-Avon, have included *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, and *King Lear*.

This chapter, in an effort to explore Brook's rehearsal techniques, will follow Peter Brook and Charles Marowitz, his assistant, through rehearsals for *King Lear*, noting attitudes and methodologies and examining certain production problems. The basis for this chapter is Charles Marowitz's production diary of *King Lear*, entitled "Lear Log," which was first printed in *Encore* magazine and later reprinted with a post script for the *Tulane Drama Revue* in 1963. Ordinarily the documentation of a production's rehearsal period is neglected; Marowitz, however,

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[1]Charles Marowitz, "Lear Log," *Tulane Drama Revue*, VIII, (Winter, 1963), 105.

sensing the potential importance of this particular production, took it upon himself to keep a notebook of the proceedings. Rather than being a literal transcription of the day-to-day events, the "Log" brings forth "salient excerpts which reflect the problems and curiosities which emerged during the rehearsal period."[2]

Brook's general approach to directing Shakespeare is Socratic: he questions everything in an effort to discover the way in which a play can most directly relate to contemporary man. He would agree with John Gielgud who has said, "The classics, it seems to me, have to be rediscovered every ten years or so."[3] Brook has implicit faith in the power of Shakespeare to deeply involve a modern audience. In order for this to occur, however, careful interpretation, or in some cases reinterpretation is necessary on the part of the director.

In approaching King Lear in 1962 Brook drew heavily on the scholarly opinions set forth by the Polish critic, Jan Kott. In the "Introduction" to the 1966 edition of Kott's Shakespeare Our Contemporary, Martin Esslin writes:

> Peter Brook's production of King Lear with Paul Scofield in the title role, which is by now generally acknowledged as one of the finest Shakespearean performances within living memory was, so the director himself assures us, inspired by Kott's chapter "'King Lear,' or Endgame" which Brook had read shortly after the French edition of the book appeared in 1962. In that production a play which had been regarded as unactable for many generations came to life with tremendous impact, and as a highly contemporary statement of the human condition. And this because it was presented not as a fairy tale of a particularly stubborn story-book king, but as an image of aging and death, the waning of powers, the slipping away of man's hold on his environment: a great ritual poem on evanescence and mortality, on man's lonliness in a storm-tossed universe.[4]

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[2]Ibid., 103.

[3]Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (eds.), Directors on Directing (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), 405.

[4]Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1966), xxi.

Following Kott's cue Brook's conceptual basis for the play was essentially existential: Brook saw Lear as the epic unfolding of the nature of the absurdity of the human condition. According to Marowitz, the frame of reference out of which the production emerged was always Beckettian. The thematic consideration was seen to be one concerned with sight and blindness. Michel St. Denis, codirector of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, explained how this basis influenced the design of the production:

> Brook's desire to remain faithful to his conception, or rather his intense and precise vision of the work, urged him to conceive every detail, including the incidental music. He was opposed not only to every type of decorative element but to the very idea of a representation of the scene of action or a manner of dressing the actors that might have evoked a specific country or a specific age; an abstract setting was not what he wanted either: Shakespeare is as concrete as life itself. He set about seeking a style, or more precisely an aspect of people and things possessed of a primitive character.[5]

The setting was designed as a vast open space with three huge rectangular sheets of eroding bronze that lowered into place from above and hung freely. These sheets were set in vibration during the storm scene. The furniture was all of natural rough-hewn wood and the costumes were made of heavy textured wool and real leather and were of simple design and proportion. Howard Taubman of The New York Times likened the huge stage to a "vast, empty, heartless earth."[6]

In prerehearsal talks Brook and Marowitz discussed some of the problems of producing King Lear. They agreed that in practical terms a major difficulty was the character transformation of Edgar into Poor Tom of Bedlam after three short scenes. Since this difficulty had already

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[5]Michel St. Denis, "King Lear ad infinitum," World Theatre, XIII, (Summer, 1964), 136.

[6]Howard Taubman, "Theater: 'Lear,' a Team Achievement," The New York Times, May 19, 1964, 43.

proven a fault with most productions of the play, Marowitz concluded that it was attributable to Shakespearean inconsistency; Brook, however, was not willing to accept so pat a pronouncement, believing that the text itself possessed a hard inner consistency and that the fault lay not with Shakespeare, but perhaps with their own inadequate powers of discernment. After two hours of speculation on this problem alone no obvious solution was in sight. The pair parted with a resolve to continue searching for an answer.

On the day of the first reading of the play Brook called the cast together and spoke of the monumental task confronting them. He compared the play to a mountain that had resisted all attempts to be scaled. In the process of trying to climb the mountain, one encountered the scattered bodies of others who had attempted the same feat. "Olivier here, Laughton there; it's frightening,"[7] Brook quipped. For the first session the cast simply did a straight read-through of the play. Brook commented on the virtual uselessness of such a practice, but added that "it does make everyone feel that they have the same work in common and besides, one has to start somewhere."[8] This was the first meeting between the company at large and Paul Scofield who was "struggling with the verse like a man trapped in clinging ivy and trying to writhe his way free,"[9] according to Marowitz. Brook was aware from the outset of Scofield's careful determination to approach the role of Lear in a studied, cautious manner.

The following two days were devoted to textual analysis and discussion. The play was read and reread. Rather than speaking in conven-

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[7]Marowitz, 105. [8]Ibid., 106.

[9]Ibid.

tional terms of plot, character, etc., Brook spent considerable time on the third day suggesting the pattern that King Lear made in space. Brook is ever aware of the visual aspects of production and tends to emphasize these in his directorial approach even in the earliest stages. As for characterization, Marowitz related that Brook dropped "provocative but inconclusive hints about character, saying just enough to force an actor to reappraise his entire conception of a role but not enough to supply him with an alternative."[10]

A discussion arose during the analysis sessions over Lear's reasons at this point in his life for bequeathing his kingdom. When an elementary psychological explanation was offered by Marowitz, Brook replied, "You can't apply psychoanalysis to a character like Lear. He does it because he's that type of man."[11] Scofield suggested that the answer could be found by returning carefully to the text. Brook believes that the critical and necessary insights into a characterization should be found by the actors themselves. Brook spoke of fatigue as a marvelous instrument in the rehearsal process. At the point when the actors are completely exhausted from wrestling with a given problem, quite often the real moment of discovery comes; a plateau is reached, and one suddenly "finds something." Brook considers these moments among the most important and revealing in a rehearsal.

On the next day a rehearsal of scene one was held and the question of verse speaking was the chief topic. In cautioning the actors against the fatal mistake of yielding to the verse-rhythm and producing what was only Shakespearean music, Brook said:

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[10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.

> A line should have no more than one or two stresses. If it is given all the stresses inherent in its rhythm, it becomes metrically correct and dramatically meaningless. In verse which is properly spoken, each character plays his own rhythm—as personal as his own handwriting—but what often happens in Shakespeare is that everyone shares a generalized rhythm that passes impersonally from one to the other.[12]

On the fifth day of rehearsals when one might expect blocking procedures to have been started by the director, Brook's actors were all still moving freely and experimentally. It is part of Brook's methodology to allow experimentation and improvisation for as long as is possible in a rehearsal situation. He has a horror of "setting" things too early and thereby negating alternatives which might occur if possibilities were left open. For Brook there is no such thing as one "right way"; interpretation is achieved by a continual elimination of possibilities or alternatives. Relying heavily on an actor's sense of movement Brook allowed the cast to work on their own, never dictating direction when there was still a possibility that an actor might discover something by himself. Marowitz called Brook's rehearsal approach "relentlessly (and at times, maddeningly) experimental."[13] Brook defended this approach by making an analogy with painting:

> A modern painter begins to work with only an instinct and a vague sense of direction. He puts a splodge of red paint onto his canvas and only after it is on does he decide it might be a good idea to add a little green, to make a vertical line here or a horizontal line there. It's the same with rehearsals. What is achieved determines what is to follow, and you just can't go about things as if you knew all the answers. New answers are constantly presenting themselves, prompting new questions, reversing old solutions, substituting new ones.[14]

This technique of prompting actors to think for themselves extends also into Brook's relationships with the technical staff. Marowitz told the story of Brook's reply to a technician, used to expediant decisions, who

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[12]Ibid., 107. [13]Ibid., 108. [14]Ibid.

offered Brook two alternatives to a particular design problem. When Brook simply said, "I don't know--"[15] the designer suddenly realized that perhaps he, too, didn't know, and returned later with some twenty alternatives instead of the initial two.

During the following week of rehearsals problems with certain actors were approached through improvisation. For example, the actor playing Edmund had a tendency to casualize the verse, while Edgar suffered from an inner stiffness which even enlarged the problem of the physical transformation to Poor Tom. Marowitz devised several situations that included both actors. After the enactment of each, Brook and Marowitz realized that indeed certain things had been accomplished; however, they were not the gains being sought after in the first place. Brook commented on the nature and benefits of improvisation saying that often the above is just the case. Improvisation is beneficial in that it provides supplemental materials and that it often helps an actor find a missing dimension that may well herald the difference between only partial and total characterization. Brook noted also with some dismay the attitude of general resistance to improvisation on the part of many company members. He explained that this was understandable in in light of the fact that such techniques are very often misused and produce disastrous rather than beneficial results in some cases. The most serious consequence of this resistance is not with the aversion to improvisation itself as a tool, but rather a general apathy toward experimentation of any kind. The emphasis of work, as is often the case with a Shakespearean production, appeared to be with verse-speaking

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[15] Ibid.

alone. There was a somewhat persistent feeling that if one could "make the verse work" then proper interpretation would naturally follow. This notion was one which Brook strongly combatted during the rehearsals. An added note concerning improvisation which Brook cited was that improvisation with certain actors, using Scofield as an example, would not only be unnecessary, but also a waste of time. "For him," Brook said, "improvisation would only be a diversion of energy."[16]

As the rehearsals progressed pieces of the set began appearing. The antediluvian metal sheets that had resisted attempts at natural weathering were finally artificially textured and painted to produce the effect of rust and erosion. During one of the rehearsals one of the motors attached to the sheets which enabled them to vibrate during the storm sequence went out of control, and the metal shook loose and fell to the stage just inches from where Brook and his crew were standing. According to Marowitz, this so frightened many of the actors that from then on a real sense of apprehension always accompanied the onset of the storm scene which served to enhance the playing.

In the light of his own conceptual notion of the play Brook found a major problem to be the catharsis that was produced by the tragedy. As it is ordinarily played the audience is left shaken although reassured. Brook was intent on alleviating the act of reassurance which proceeds from the end of Act III in the Blinding Scene when Cornwall's servants give comfort to the wounded Gloucester. Brook cut the lines of commiseration and instead had the servants rudely collide with the

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[16]Ibid., 109.

old man in their haste to leave. Gloucester was seen left standing alone, groping pathetically as the house lights were brought up. The action continued for several seconds in full light. By this device Brook hoped to forcibly bring home the impact of the tragedy. It is a device that Brook had used in other productions as well, notably Marat/Sade and Venice Preserved. The very end of King Lear proved to be a similar problem. Brook decided that as soon as the final lines had been spoken a faint, dull rumbling—as of another and yet more ominous storm to come—should be heard, thus leaving the audience anything but reassured.

With most of the scenes in some kind of working order the first run-through was held on stage. At this point Brook spoke to the cast about the flow of the play and continuity. He reminded the cast that their work to date had been concentrated on structuring individual scenes; it was now time to try to gain a feeling for and an understanding of the whole. He cautioned also against what he called the "Law of Falling Inflections"—explaining that a downward inflection brings the rhythm of a speech to a halt. Brook's manner of speaking to actors during these rehearsals was highly sophisticated. He often spoke in conceptual terms, explaining ideas rather than pointing to ends. Although this method took more time Brook felt that in the long run the gains would be greater. Marowitz gave an example of this technique:

> Instead of conventional shorthand terms like "more pace," "break it up," "faster," "slower," Brook takes the time to describe an overall theory of continuity and structure. Once this is understood, the shorthand terms appear and then have a greater pertinence.[17]

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[17] Ibid., 114-15.

For the first dress rehearsal one week before the opening serious costume problems became apparent. The elegant and extremely expensive real leather costumes all appeared to look like plastic from the house. Also the ornate white furniture was obviously out of style with the massive rust set pieces. Marowitz describes the stage as having "the look of a medieval castle furnished by an up-to-date Swedish department store."[18] Brook retained complete composure during this crisis, resolving only that they should not be rushed into hasty, thoughtless decisions.

While the set and costume problems loomed large, certain other benefits were seen during this dress rehearsal—not the least of which was the great strides made in the characterization of Lear. Paul Scofield's approach to the character of Lear had been careful and methodical and results were often slow in appearing. Brook never pushed Scofield. On one occasion when Marowitz complained of a particularly dull reading by Scofield, Brook explained:

> When Paul finds his reasons he will shift from low gear into high, but anything he is not sure of, he will simply mark out drily as he is doing now. He refuses to throw himself into something he does not feel and cannot answer for.[19]

This reply indicates an important characteristic of Brook as director: he places implicit trust in his actors.

On the day of the opening at Stratford-on-Avon Brook called a morning rehearsal. The cast was told to relax and not strain themselves during the run-through prior to the evening performance. This technique of putting the actors at their ease produced unexpected benefits. In many cases performances were amazingly clarified. Marowitz described

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[18] Ibid., 115. [19] Ibid., 116.

the results:

> Actors who had been belting out the verse since the first readings were suddenly giving scaled-down, unfussingly true performances. Basic relationships, so long obscured during erratic rehearsals, suddenly became crystal clear.[20]

Brook was exceedingly pleased with the effect. A new dimension of simplicity had been added to the production through this exercise. The rehearsal period had in effect ended; from this point the audiences and critics became the judges.

The first performance at Stratford-on-Avon was given on November 6, 1962. In December the production moved to London where it had an extended run at the Aldwych Theatre until the spring of 1963 when King Lear represented the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company in Paris at the Theatre des Nations. In Paris it won the Challenge du Theatre des Nations and the Prix de la Jeune Critique.[21] Following the Paris run, the company of King Lear began a world tour which included most of the capitals of Europe and which ended in the United States. The production had the honor of being the first dramatic group to perform in the New York State Theatre at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, opening on May 18, 1964.[22]

Praise and admiration greeted the production wherever it went. Alan Brien, writing for Theatre Arts, summed up the general response in this way:

> . . . the Royal Shakespeare staged, as its final production of the

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[20]Ibid., 117.

[21]John Goodwin (ed.), Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company 1960-1963 (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1964), 163.

[22]Louis Calta, "Acoustics Scored at State Theatre," The New York Times, May 20, 1964, 36.

> season at Stratford, a King Lear which set the critics cheering. This was generally hailed as the first interpretation of the most complex and difficult of Shakespeare's tragedies which bore the stamp and stigmata of our nuclear age.[23]

In the "Lear Log" postscript Marowitz related that the production created such a stir in London that tickets were even being sold on the black market. Concerning this phenomena, he wrote:

> Everyone I ever knew was asking me to get them seats. Every discussion about the theatre soon became a paean of praise for the production and a probe of how its effects were achieved. All niggles of criticism were quickly swamped in pious praise for this "greatest Lear since Wolfit's"—although nine out of ten of the rhapsodists had never seen Wolfit, and probably never been to another Lear. The show had become not an imaginative, brilliantly-executed, somewhat flawed and erratic Shakespearean production, but a "milestone."[24]

The London critics were almost unanimous in their unlimited praise. Bamber Gascoigne of The Spectator announced, "The real triumph of the evening is undoubtedly Peter Brook's";[25] J. C. Trewin of The Illustrated London News called the production "one of the exciting things of the contemporary theatre,"[26] and Kenneth Tynan, quoted by Goodwin in The Royal Shakespeare Company 1960-1963, paid Brook the following tribute: "This production brings me closer to Lear than I have ever been; from now on, I not only know him but can place him in his harsh and unforgiving world."[27]

Notable American critics, while applauding the splendor of the production values, appeared less ready to accept Mr. Brook's existential

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[23]Alan Brien, "Openings/London," Theatre Arts, XLVII, (January, 1963), 57.

[24]Marowitz, 121.

[25]Bamber Gascoigne, "A Lear of the Head," The Spectator (November 16, 1962), 758.

[26]J. C. Trewin, "Royal and Ancient," The Illustrated London News (November 17, 1962), 804.

[27]Goodwin, 187.

interpretation. Susan Sontag, Robert Brustein and Harold Clurman all had serious reservations concerning the validity of linking the world of Shakespeare with the world of Beckett. Sontag was the most violent opponent. She felt that the play was frankly "marred by over-interpretation and too much thought."[28] Robert Brustein, while giving unqualified praise to the brilliance of the execution of the concept, lamented:

> . . . one comes away from this performance aroused but unsatisfied, having witnessed not the definitive production of the play but rather a fascinating essay on it by a brilliant modern commentor, one which raises new questions without answering the old.[29]

While Harold Clurman commended Brook for creating within our time and texture a Lear for today, he questioned the fact that today's symbols and philosophies of absurdity and nihilism are adequate to express the true nature or totality of such a work as King Lear. He substantiated his case by writing:

> The world of Shakespeare's Lear is so rich in substance that one would be glad to dwell in it; we are rewarded for its agony by the fullness of its matter. Such a world may be full of horror; it is not absurd.[30]

The redeeming and thrilling feature of the production, according to Clurman, is its ability to inspire wonder. In The Naked Image Clurman made this acute analogy:

> Cocteau once asked Sergei Diaghilev, his mentor, what that great impresario expected of him. "Astonish me," Diaghilev answered. Stagecraft cannot find a more brilliant summation. If Peter Brook's Lear could claim no further distinction, it would still be memorable

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[28]Susan Sontag, "Going to the Theater," Partisan Review, XXXI, (Summer, 1964), 398.

[29]Robert Brustein, Seasons of Discontent (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 204.

[30]Harold Clurman, The Naked Image (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1966), 181.

because it astonishes.[31]

To extend this observation, perhaps it is Peter Brook's ability to astonish that is his unique gift as a man of the theater.

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[31]Ibid., 179.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

> Either we restore all the art to a central attitude and necessity, finding an analogy between a gesture made in painting and the theatre and a gesture made by lava in a volcanic explosion, or we must stop painting, babbling, writing, or doing whatever it is we do.[1]
>
> Antonin Artaud

For Peter Brook the theatre is not only a profession, it is his raison d'être. Outspoken, passionate in his beliefs, he has struggled since the age of nineteen to present theatre which is so essential, so compelling, so vital that the dullard audiences might be shaken from their cocktail euphoria to a vision of life and art. Admittedly, not all of his attempts have succeeded; admittedly, his outlandish methods have often missed the mark by miles, but it is significant that he has never ceased in his relentless commitment to innovations which can bring the theatre into a more intimate relationship and necessity with contemporary man. It is as if Brook has always been one step ahead of the mainstream of practice and ideology in the profession. He upholds the Artaudian injunction that the arts, and the theater in particular, must assume a central necessity and importance to the people. "This compulsive relationship with work," Brook states, "is something directors have, actors have, authors have—but audiences lack."[2] Further, he

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[1]Peter Brook, "A Search for a Hunger," Mademoiselle, LIV, (November, 1961), 50.

[2]Ibid., 94.

laments that if all the New York theaters were closed, precious few people would care.[3]

Brook, although a master at framing pointed questions, is not one to jump at obvious solutions. In this search for a means to establish a theater that can be indicative of our time, Brook hesitates to do more than suggest his personal aspirations for meeting this challenge. In the following quotation he expresses his ideals:

> . . . a true experience in the theatre deals with qualities and faces us with concrete realities so thrillingly above our everyday existence that we have to use a word of a different flavor to express them. Because these qualities seem to relate to human functioning at its greatest, because they transcend our normal experience, because they bring us contact with elements that make us more alive rather than less alive, more willing to live rather than less willing to live, more willing to strive rather than less willing to strive, because they seem to draw up rather than down, I am forced to use the gothic word that also suggests a steeple pointing toward the sky.
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> We all know that you can leap to sainthood and mystical knowledge very easily nowadays with certain drugs. But such experience is completely passive. A true experience in the theatre is qualitatively better than one from a drug because it demands an activeness from the audience as well as the stage. Any experience that is more intense than life will make an audience want to come back for more.
>
> I don't know any of the answers, but I know where I want the experiment to begin. I want to see characters behaving out of character, in the lies, inconsistency, and total confusion of daily life. I want to see outer realism as something in endless flux, with barriers and boundaries that come and go, people and situations forming, unforming before my eyes. I want to see identities changing, not as clothes are changed, but as scenes dissolve on a film, as paint drops off a brush. Then I want to see inner realism as another state of movement and flux. I want to sense the energies which, the deeper one goes, become true forces that impel our false identities. I want to sense what truly binds us, what truly separates us. I want to hold a mirror, not up to nature, but up to human nature, and by this I mean that interwoven within-and without world as we understand it in 1961--not as people defined it in 1900. I want to understand this not with my reason, but with the flash of recognition that tells me it is true, because it is also in me.
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> I want to see a flood of people and events that echo my inner battlefield. I want to see behind this desperate and ravishing con-

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[3] Ibid.

> fusion an order, a structure that will relate to my deepest and truest longing for structure and law. I want through this to find the new forms, and through the new forms the new architecture, and through the new architecture the new patterns and the new rituals of the age that is swirling around us.[4]

Part of the burden for this revolution is placed on the critics, part is relegated to the economic structure of the theater and the great part is placed on the professionals themselves. As to the critics' responsibility, Brook feels that too often the critics simply record the events of the theater; most often they have never taken a stand on what they want the theater to be. Brook asserts that the function of the critic is to set up models and establish criteria: He says:

> . . . when critics say they love the theater, they use the word the way I do when I say I love rum and Coca-Cola. Let them just once define, in one sentence, what their ideal theater might be, and then we'd begin to know where we stood when they said a play was good or bad, had succeeded or failed.[5]

Brook exempts Kenneth Tynan, who he feels has made his standards well known. Although one may not agree with the models set, Brook believes that such criticism has true validity, and can only serve to help the theater.[6]

In an essay reprinted from Encore, Brook examines the roots of the economic and social systems which govern the enterprise of the theater today and levels an attack on the absence of true artistic demands made on the theater:

> Why . . . is the theater so bad? . . . Why has no one followed on Brecht's track? Why are our actors lazy and passionless: why do so few of them think theater, dream theater, fight for theater, above all practice theater in the spare time at their disposal? Why is the talent in this country—and the goodwill—frittered away in a mixture of ineffectual grumbling and deep complacency? . . . I think the villain is deeply buried in the system:
> . . . . . .

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[4]Ibid., 50. [5]Ibid., 95. [6]Ibid.

> No one presses the artist to do anything--all they do is to create a climate in which he only too readily will castrate himself.
> . . . . . .
> All of this is because the yardstick is "Full of empty seats." . . . It is maintained honestly and sincerely that a good show should pay its way. . . . And this is wrong. The theater that covers its cost is the true theater with its edge knocked off.[7]

Brook goes on to give examples of the theaters that have made strides, that have grown through experimentation. He cites Stratford-on-Avon, The Berliner Ensemble, The Komische Opera of Berlin, Glyndebourne, and Theatre Workshop. All of these groups have one thing in common as they are completely independent of the pressures of the box office, the critics and the audience. It is not necessary that any of these groups produce a box office hit, or popular success. They are expected, however, to use this freedom to the highest artistic productivity possible. No one withdraws their subsidy if within the limits of their artistic consciences they are producing, even though immediate gains are not always apparent. Brook envisions not the widespread of large national theaters to be the answer, so much as:

> . . . one tiny theater with a hundred seats, even fifty seats, but subsidized to the hilt. . . . This subsidy would then be a total subsidy. It will be run by a director and a new sort of committee. This committee will applaud the director if he announces that he has lost every penny--he is entitled to do this. It will chase him with furies, however, if he has failed to keep his theater alive.[8]

This dream theater which Brook envisioned in 1959, became a reality for him when in 1963 the Royal Shakespeare Company established an experimental theater in conjunction with the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts which was discussed in Chapter IV.[9]

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[7]Peter Brook, "Oh for Empty Seats!" The Encore Reader, Charles Marowitz, ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 68-74.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Charles Marowitz, "Notes on the Theater of Cruelty," Tulane Drama Review, XI, (Winter, 1966), 152.

Brook appears at times almost obsessed with the idea of artistic freedom. His life is an apparent continual search for situations which allow him to develop new theatrical forms; to follow instinctive, revolutionary ideas; to investigate always the relationship of the dramatic expression to the chaos of the twentieth century.

The quest appears to be an ever-present motif throughout Brook's career; however, the manifestations directorially have assumed different forms over the years. His early period, which ran roughly from 1945 until 1953, was characterized by a vitality and sensationalism. The use of striking lighting effects, bold color and dazzling theatricality marked his style. It is likely that the influence of directing grand opera in his early years accounted for this flamboyance. Works in this period include Romeo and Juliet, Ring Around the Moon, A Penny for a Song, Colombe, The Beggar's Opera, and Dark of the Moon. One critic described Dark of the Moon by lauding Brook's luxuriant direction:

> He summoned moonlight, magic and the mystery of night to break down our defenses. He hurled the witches against us with such passionate appeal that, like a Christmas audience at 'Peter Pan' we were almost ready to shout 'Yes' to his question 'Do you believe in witches?'
>
> The culmination of the revival meeting scene is hysterical, sensual and blasphemous, but under Peter Brook's direction it becomes art.[10]

His early spectacles took on a more somber note in his "middle period." From 1953 through 1959 he directed such productions as Venice Preserved, Faust, The Dark is Light Enough, Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and The Visit. Clearly his interest had passed to an emphasis on sobriety and darkness. Often the striking effects of

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[10]Beverly Baxter, Craddock Munro and Gerard Fay, "Comments on Peter Brook's production of Dark of the Moon," World Review, III, (May, 1949), 18.

his earlier period were still present, but the tone of his work had changed. Kenneth Tynan described Brook's production of Venice Preserved as giving one "the eerie sensation of being underground, trapped in a torch-lit vault."[11] He called Brook's Titus Andronicus a "tragedy naked, godless, and unredeemed, a carnival of carnage."[12] The Visit received considerable controversy. Walter Kerr commented on the effects produced by Brook:

> Something of the appalling fascination that seeps through the playhouse is due to director Peter Brook's manipulation of abandoned figures in constantly constricting space. The idle, silky, subtly threatening movement of presumably innocent townsfolk as they halt their man's escape by night, the terror of a line of stubborn backs blocking his every turn, the infinitely slow and quiet encircling that ends in a most discreet murder—all are images of insinuating power.[13]

This period of darkness was a harbinger for a new line of development which was to begin around 1960, and has continued into the present in Brook's work. This most recent period has come under the influence of Jan Kott, Polish critic, the French existentialist playwrights, the theories and works of Bertolt Brecht, and most significantly—Antonin Artaud. Out of this period comes Brook's direction of King Lear, The Physicists, Lord of the Flies, The Theater of Cruelty, Marat/Sade and US. One of the earmarks of this directing approach to these plays, especially Marat/Sade, is the bringing together of two seemingly irreconcilable styles of theater—the "alienation" techniques of Brecht coupled with the shock tactics of Artaud. In regard to this paradox Brook comments:

Brecht's use of 'distance' has long been considered in opposition

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[11]Kenneth Tynan, Curtains (New York: Atheneum, 1961), 51.

[12]Ibid., 103.

[13]Rachel W. Coffin (ed.), New York Theater Critics Reviews, XIX (May 12, 1958), 296.

> to Artaud's conception of theater as immediate and violent subjective experience. I have never believed this to be true. I believe that theatre, like life, is made up of the unbroken conflict between impressions and judgments—illusion and disillusion cohabit painfully and are inseparable.[14]

In an attempt to translate twentieth-century life into thatrical terms Brook is called upon to distinguish those characteristics of modern man that bear reflection. In this analysis the human experience is seen by Brook as an endless flux:

> What are we—you and I? Things enclosed in solid, stolid frames? Rather, we are at any instant a flow of mental pictures that stream from us and superimpose themselves on the outside world, sometimes coinciding with it, sometimes contradicting it. We are all at once voices, thoughts, words, half-words, echoes, memories, impulses. We change purpose from instant to instant. We look our friends straight in the eye, but nine-tenths of us is elsewhere: here and not here, listening with one ear, daydreaming, observing with one eye, changing mood and identity in an endless condition of flux.[15]

This theory or observation of the nature of the human condition, although hardly an innovation philosophically, is the special frame of reference for Brook's approach to the theatre. He has long since broken with an acceptance of the simple narrative solution as the means to realistic drama. In the chaos of the world around us, narrative terms alone cannot provide a complete or a true picture, according to Brook. This belief undoubtedly accounts for "his passion for the density of Shakespeare,"[16] and his particular success in the direction of the Bard's plays. For Brook, Shakespeare's vision of life, with its incongruities, its swirling imagery, its internal and external shifts, is truer today than the majority of contemporary dramatists'.

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[14]Peter Brook, "Introduction," Marat/Sade (New York: Atheneum, 1966), vi.

[15]Brook, Mademoiselle, 95.

[16]Penelope Gilliatt, "A Natural Saboteur of Order," Vogue (January 1, 1966), 103.

The visual arts, including scenic art has progressed with the times; why has acting and direction stagnated at the point of an acceptance of superficial naturalism? This is a question that haunts Peter Brook:

> I'm interested in why the theater today in its search for popular forms ignores the fact that in painting the most popular form in the world today has become abstract. . . . We know that the theater lags behind the other arts because its continual need for immediate success chains it to the slowest members of its audience. But is there nothing in the revolution that took place in painting fifty years ago that applies to our own crisis today?[17]

Many of Brook's questions are unanswerable, yet it is indicative of Brook as director that he is a man who questions everything, and who is loathe to accept pat or obvious answers. His presence at rehearsals is essentially Socratic; he is more likely to prod an actor with a leading question about his character, than to offer an immediate solution. Penelope Gilliatt considers this trait significant:

> I think it may be Peter Brook's passion for asking himself apparently unanswerable questions that gives his work its characteristic flavour: stinging, quizzical, pithy, inquisitive.[18]

Brook's manner of approaching a play is basically intuitive. He He is instinctively against pat psychoanalytic answers to problems of interpretation, and tends to work through a problem until an answer reveals itself in rehearsals.[19] Upon first reading a script, Brook is said to conceive the staging of the play only in broad outlines. He never begins to fill in details until he has a chance to evaluate the

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[17]Peter Brook, "From Zero to the Infinite," The Encore Reader, Charles Marowitz, ed., (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 251.

[18]Gilliatt, 104.

[19]Charles Marowitz, "Lear Log," Tulane Drama Revue, VIII, (Winter, 1963), 107.

special abilities or liabilities of the actors themselves.[20] "He starts," says Gilliatt, "from the beginning. He has a sort of genius for throwing everything into chaos and then working to let the essentials emerge."[21] Brook considers that the work of rehearsals is "looking for meaning and then making it meaningful."[22]

Brook is in many respects a "Renaissance Man." He likes nothing better than to be able to design and score the music for his plays as well as direct them. Kenneth Tynan comments on this attribute:

> His (Craig's) notion that true drama was a one-man responsibility, in which words, direction, décor, lighting and music should all proceed from the same brain, once seemed a fatuous vanity; yet last year Peter Brook, directing Titus Andronicus, undertook all these tasks, save that of writing the play.[23]

Brook's relationship to the actor is a subject often commented upon. The director's role as omniscient is a thing of the past, according to Brook:

> I don't think there is a director left in the world in that old high tradition of shouting from the stalls and telling the actor how to do it. The idea of the actor saying "Mr. Reinhardt, I put myself in your hands," and the director pulling up his riding boots and saying, "you will play this, and you will play it in this way"—all that has gone. And this means, in effect that directors have repeatedly learnt, to their cost, that the result isn't as rich and lively when you impose yourself consciously on an actor, as when by some other means he manages to achieve the effect for himself. The director still eventually imposes himself, as of course he cannot but do, but in another way.[24]

Brook's more subtle method of influencing actors is by a charismatic quality. Marowitz seems to think that Brook's greatest asset is that

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[20]Charles Moritz (ed.), Current Biography 1961 (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1961), 76.

[21]Gilliatt, 104. [22]Marowitz, "Lear Log," 105.

[23]Tynan, 141.

[24]Penelope Houston and Tom Milne, "Interview with Peter Brook," Sight and Sound, XXXII (Summer, 1963), 111.

his personal charm and acknowledged past achievement inspires contributions from actors. The actors' desire to please their mentor often makes them work harder than they would otherwise. To encourage this, Brook makes cunning use of admonition and praise, "cold-bloodedly applying one or the other depending on what effects he thinks he may achieve."[25]

Even though Brook has the ability to inspire confidence from his company, he is not, above all, an actor's director. He works best with actors of exceptional gifts and training such as Paul Scofield, John Gielgud and Laurence Olivier. He needs only to slip a suggestion or a question to these men and most often his meaning is effectively interpreted. Brook expects actors to work on ideas outside of rehearsals; he is not interested in "coaching actors" or building a characterization in the way Elia Kazan might do. In fact, his approach to a play is almost entirely externally oriented. He is most grateful for creative actors, and in most cases, almost always lets them have their own way.[26]

What Brook is interested in, however, is the structural needs of a play. He has uncannily strong visual sense, almost architectural in character. His imaginative use of space and color and sound are indeed trademarks of his work. There was much talk of Brook's use of space in regard to his production of Marat/Sade. Critics generally agreed that his work in this area was brilliant. "His productions are always being admired for their fireworks," says Penelope Gilliatt, "as though it were the supreme dramatic achievement to leave sparks before the eyes, but

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[25]Marowitz, "Theater of Cruelty," 170.

[26]Ibid.

their real property is not that they are dazzling but that they are prodigiously disconcerting."[27]

That Brook "is obsessed with arrangements, with imagery, with the allegro and adagio configurations of the human body in motion,"[28] is an important characteristic; that he has an instinctive feeling for violence, stark effects and thermacabre may be even more significant of his work. In his latter period especially in his direction of King Lear, Marat/Sade, Lord of the Flies and US, violence and starkness predominate.

Brought into an association with violence by an exploration of man's instinctive, sometimes mystical nature, Brook is ever aware of the ritual manifestations that are a part of life. He tends to emphasize these whenever possible. Skeptical that language can express all the complexities of the inner life, he states:

> I believe in the word in classical drama, because the word was its tool. I don't believe in the word much today, because it has outlived its purpose. Words don't communicate, they don't express much, and most of the time they fail abysmally to refine.[29]

Perhaps it is Brook's propensity to minimize the linquistic and literary aspects of the drama that characterize his shortcomings as a director. Marowitz believes that Brook's greatest failing is his inability to explore acting possibilities, and because of this he often resorts to alarming theatricalism as a compensation.[30]

If an emphasis on the alarmingly theatrical is a shortcoming,

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[27]Gilliatt, 103.

[28]Gordon Rogoff, "Richard's Himself Again: Journey to an Actors' Theater," Tulane Drama Revue, XI (Winter, 1966), 37.

[29]Brook, Mademoiselle.

[30]Marowitz, "Theater of Cruelty," Tulane Drama Revue, 170.

it is a pity that so few directors share this failing. Looked at in perspective, Brook's style of directing seems oddly one-sided and incomplete; one can see that his obsession with the formalistic aspects of directing leaves something to be desired. Yet, in an era that still has its feet stuck in the mud of the "Method" misuse, it is a refreshing rarity to find a director who is ever conscious of the theatrical in the theater.

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Patricia Louise Ryan was born in Richmond, Virginia, on December 3, 1942, to Mr. and Mrs. H. Michael Ryan, Jr. She attended grammar schools in Richmond and was graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in the city in 1960. She attended Westhampton College of the University of Richmond where she received the B. A. degree in Philosophy in 1964. As an undergraduate she held the Jacobs and Levy Scholarship for four years and was elected to membership and later presidency of Alpha Psi Omega, national honorary dramatics society. During the summer of 1963 she attended George Washington University where she took courses in Philosophy while doing apprentice work at the Washington Theatre Club. After graduation from Westhampton College she took a semester of post graduate studies in Theatre at Richmond Professional Institute.

In the fall of 1964 Miss Ryan joined the staff of the Dramatics Department at St. Catherine's School in Richmond where she took on the duties of teaching speech and theatre, administering the theatre program, as well as directing over ten productions during her two years at the school. She left the faculty of St. Catherine's to accept a fellowship with the Hilberry Classic Theatre of Wayne State University in the fall of 1966. Miss Ryan is currently a second year member of the Company and is pursuing graduate study in the Speech Department.