

PETER BROOK: TEACHERS' RESOURCE



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One word runs through everything to do with theatre. It's challenging and unexpected. It is – 'Play'. We play a comedy and we play a tragedy – there's a story; it's a play. We play with our bodies, our feelings, our intelligence, our angers, our loves, our common-sense. So what's the difference between what goes on every day and theatre? Playing is fun, playing is always enjoyable, playing even the worst of stories is always a pleasure – it is a very special sport. In each sport, it's one or two of our faculties, our muscles, our strengths that are called upon. Theatre is a super sport which calls on everything. We can't start with this; it is what we develop bit by bit when we play. We prick the bubble of pretentiousness with our humour; we go on an endless journey of discovery of ourselves, of what life is all about. Alone, on a desert island, to relieve the solitude we can sing, or tap rhythms on a coconut shell. But we can't act plays. Play has no meaning if it isn't shared. Without the watcher, playing is meaningless. When there are spectators, then in all its forms, in every culture, theatre has always been irresistible.

Peter Brook, January 2015

When future generations come to write the history of Britain's cultural heritage in the twentieth century, they will note the emergence of a key, and distinctive figure in the performing arts: the director. And they will not hesitate to name the most influential of all theatre directors: Peter Brook.

– Professor Sir Jonathan Bate,
Shakespeare scholar and Provost of Worcester College, Oxford

Peter Brook has collaborated with artists from around the world for over seven decades. He began his professional career in the 1940s with lavish productions of plays and operas on conventional proscenium arch stages. He moved into the forefront of experimentation with bold and controversial new forms of theatre in the 1960s and, after basing himself in Paris in 1971, explored large-scale epic productions of culturally diverse works such as *The Mahabharata* which toured the world to non-traditional theatre spaces. Increasingly inspired by the practices of non-Western theatre and thought, he has produced and directed films, composed music, designed sets and costumes and has written extensive articles and books about performance.

Brook's career demonstrates his artistic desire to enrich the theatrical experience for performers and audience through constant experimentation. Yet of all the practitioners, he remains the least comfortable with defining an underlying theory about his work: 'I don't like grand terms such as "artistic vision" because I don't believe I have one' (interview with Michael Billington in the *Guardian*, June 2005). For Brook, every project is a fresh opportunity to find new interests and relevance. This sense of renewal is an

important concept for students to understand and practise in their own work.

The aim of this resource is to encourage Key Stage 5 students to discover why Brook and his collaborators approached particular plays and themes when they did and to consider how these could be relevant today. Brook responded to his times; each of the productions explored in this resource was inspired in some way by contemporary events. Students should be encouraged to consider how an awareness of global politics can inform a deeper understanding of plays.

The **Peter Brook: Teachers' Resource** consists of two sections. This first part, aimed at the teacher, provides a theatrical and historical context for six Peter Brook productions. It provides a structure for teachers to further their students' work.

The summary notes in this section are a digest of material taken from the **Peter Brook collection** (PBC). This is the archive of Peter Brook's original press cuttings, scripts, letters and drafts of articles which have been acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), thanks to funding from a private donor and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The notes are supported by information from the Theatre and Performance Collections at the V&A.

The forthcoming second section will be a collection of case studies documenting work inspired by the Peter Brook collection and his legacy. The work will be undertaken by six museums, arts and theatre venues and schools as part of an HLF project taking place between September 2015 and June 2016.

Each production study consists of:

- A summary of how the work was received
- A suggested list of questions and topics for students to discuss and research

Contextual material is included at the end of this section, providing:

- A brief backdrop of contemporary politics, technology and culture
- The background of contemporary theatre and film, referring to plays and practitioners students may wish to research further. The theatre content is taken from *Plays and Players*. This was a monthly publication and round-up of interviews from theatre critics, practitioners and reviews. It ran throughout the period covered by Brook's work and provides a contemporary view of the theatre world in which he worked.



King Lear

By William Shakespeare. Production date: 1962. Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) at Stratford-upon-Avon

Why was this production important?

'Lay him to rest, the royal Lear with whom generations of star actors have made us familiar' wrote Kenneth Tynan when he saw Peter Brook's production. With long-time collaborator Paul Scofield in the title role, critics have called *King Lear* the highlight of Brook's early career. In *Theatre Arts*, Alan Brien wrote that Scofield had 'achieved what had seemed impossible – the creation of a contemporary out of a symbol ... it remains the first to speak direct to a modern audience.'

It is this modern quality of the characterisation of Lear and the contemporary resonances found in the themes of the play that are worth noting, as well as the austere setting and costumes. In a year which saw the alarming possibility of a wide-scale nuclear war with the Cuban Crisis, the image of Lear as an all-too-flawed man, rather than a superhuman figure, was a reminder of the frailty of both personal and international relationships.

Harold Hobson, in the *Sunday Times* on 11 November 1962, stated:

Now I have seen Lears, with wildly tossing hair and primeval faces, looking as if they were at home in Stonehenge, to whom madness seems only a natural expression of their personalities ... But Mr. Scofield's is so strong, so normal, so healthily weather-beaten that the vision of madness starts both compassion and terror; it is like an intimation of death on a sunny morning.'

He saw too an explicit contemporary echo in the play, 'The meek shall inherit the earth only if an earth is left to them to inherit. Another Cuba will not end in a general handshake.'

Bernard Levin, writing in the *Daily Mail* on 7 November 1962 said, 'I have never seen the scenes of Lear's knights and his daughters' servants, for instance, so richly and realistically done, and this filling in of the detail – all the more impressive for the bareness of the stage – rules throughout.'

This focus on background characters also impressed W. A. Darlington in the *Daily Telegraph* (9 November 1962), 'He [Lear] and his knights are such rowdy and unruly guests in Goneril's castle that for once we have a stab of sympathy with her when she turns them out.'

Other critics saw and referred to the influence of Bertolt Brecht in the production but co-director Charles Marowitz and Brook both cited Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. Kenneth Tynan noted the 'Flat white setting, combining Brecht and Oriental theatre, against which ponderous abstract objects dangle.'

Irving Wardle saw too a non-Western influence:

It seizes on 'King Lear' as Shakespeare's most Eastern play; the link it establishes between poverty and spiritual progress is much closer to Buddhism than Christianity – and [the] production underlines this in décor and costume (both reminiscent of the Chinese theatre) and in the impersonality of much of the acting. (Plays and Players, January 1963)

The violence and cruelty in Brook's version of the play are mentioned by more than one critic. He made small but significant changes; kindly servants don't lead the blinded Lear offstage and Edmund doesn't repent his actions. This focus on violence and madness would be further explored in *Lord of the Flies*, *Marat/Sade* and other work by Brook in the 1960s.

The production was made into a film in 1971.

Suggested ideas for students to research and discuss:

Thinking of a classic play you know well, how might you make mythical characters accessible to a contemporary audience, without losing their heroic qualities?

How could you re-focus attention on background details and characters? How might you need to adapt the piece?

(Project work) If you are studying the practitioner Brecht, research Brook's productions further and discuss which aspects seem to be inspired by Brecht.

(Project work) Explore the influence of non-Western performance style on other practitioners you know.

Discuss what makes an austere setting and what it may communicate to an audience.

How might you adapt aspects of a classic play or story to suit the mood of the time or to comment on the time?

ⓧ Gloucester, well pickled with wine, dozes in front of the fire. Edmund pauses by his father's astrological charts and studies them with mock concern.
Edmund: ~~Oh these eclipses do portend these divisions...~~
He sings a few tragic notes
Edgar turns to him
Edgar: ~~How now? What serious contemplation are you in?~~
Edmund:

FEATURES - THIS WEEK

BOATING ON SUNDAY

Last Sunday, a group went boating. We stopped at the small island off Vieques and went around it. I was fishing with a few others and for bait I used a whole live sardine. I don't know what the fish was but it took my fish, hook, line, and sinker! You should have seen that one that got away.

It was raining most of the time and was not too pleasant. No one caught any fish. If it was not raining it would have been very pleasant. I think I might go again next Sunday.

- Nicholas Hammond

SOME REFLECTIONS ON CAMP

As I am the only one born from Puerto Rican parents and due to the lack of the English language, I have a difficult time adjusting myself to the group. But now I feel more at home and I get along well with everybody.

I believe this is a great bunch of boys although sometimes some get a little nasty with me. They should take in consideration that my native language is Spanish and most of the time I don't understand my friends.

The only thing I did not like was when I had to take my pants off in the film but later I realize that I had to do it and I did it.

- Rene Sanfiorenzo, Jr.

CAMPFIRE ON SATURDAY

Last Saturday night we at camp had a fire. We roasted marshmallows and had Sodas. I quote one of the counsellors when he says that "it was a bore". This is his personal opinion, however. The fire lasted one hour, and in that time several children trod on some mildly hot coals, in fact they were hardly warm, but even then there was some crying. The marshmallows were really delicious and soda does taste better outdoors. The fire concluded at nine o'clock with bed-time.

- Malcolm Rodker

FRENCHMAN'S POOL

One of the reasons why I like Frenchman's Pool better than the beaches is because the water is clear, has no salt, and I can open my eyes under the water. I can judge what depth I want. I also like the funny diving board which I can dive off. The ladder comes in handy. The light underneath the diving board in the pool looks very beautiful at night and I think we should swim at Frenchman's more often since we have this privilege available.

The Beaches are also fun except I prefer Frenchman's swimming pool by far. I am glad that we can swim here even though it is seldom.

- Antony McCall-Judson

Lord of the Flies

Screenplay after novel by William Golding. Release date: 1963

Why was this film important?

Lord of the Flies spent a long period in pre-production. The script had gone through many rewrites before filming began. A review in the *New Statesman* mentions that seven screenplays had been produced before the final version. In a letter to Lewis Allen (the film's producer) on 25 March 1960, Brook wrote 'Once "Irma" is on in New York towards the end of September, I have kept myself rigorously free of any commitment whatsoever for the sole purpose of doing "Lord of the Flies" which is the thing I care about most of all.'

The PBC contains references to the film spanning a three-year period. A note dated 15 October 1961, and presumed to be by Brook, ironically summarised the challenges of the film's production. It included 'negotiation with parents' (who were, reputedly, given an edited copy of the novel), 'bush fire' and 'trouble with American Marines', who often ruined shots by flying over the area where the crew were filming.

Moira Walsh in the *America National Catholic Weekly Review* (5 October 1963) wondered why the novel was so popular with the young. 'Today's young people are pessimistic. They envision themselves as victims of the failures and betrayals of the adult world, as were the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. They are not at all shocked or surprised at contemplating the ease with which man's baser impulses gain the ascendancy.'

There was particular praise for Brook's direction of what was mainly a cast of amateur actors. There is an almost documentary feel to the film. Rather than learning and rehearsing lines, much of the movement and dialogue was improvised, with Brook outlining the action and story of the scene just before filming: 'Pushing is what Peter Brook's direction never does ... He doesn't push: rather he is taken over ... his film seems to me almost uncannily faithful to the book. There is the same surface realism, there is the same unaffected recording of the boys' behaviour: no stylish tricks' (Isabel Quigley, the *Spectator*, 31 July 1964).

In keeping with the nature of the themes of the novel, Brook encouraged the boys to bond. They produced a weekly magazine called *The Vieques Variety*, containing articles and jokey references to their time on the island of Vieques. Whether knowingly or not, real life events sometimes mirrored those of the novel. In one of the magazine articles

headed 'SOME REFLECTIONS ON CAMP', Rene Sanfiorenzo Jr wrote 'I believe this is a great bunch of boys although sometimes some get a little nasty with me. They should take in consideration that my native language is Spanish and most of the time I don't understand my friends.' Another piece written about a visit by the daughters of some of the crew was entitled 'Minority Report'.

There is the uncomfortable sense of reading about the adventures of a clique and in-jokes abound. This was in keeping with the tone of the novel and encouraged by Brook. One of the boys, Christopher Harris, reported, 'The moment that surprised me most was when Mr. Brook said we could dive into the sea with our clothes on, rub our costumes in the sand and throw mangoes at each other and last but not least we could tear our shirts to pieces.' On the last evening of filming, the boys symbolically wrecked their camp.

The film remains a disturbing examination of how mob violence escalates and of how group mentality can be swayed by the loudest, if not necessarily the wisest, voices.

Suggested ideas for students to research and discuss:

Discuss why working with an amateur cast might have had advantages.

(Project work) Watch the film. What elements give it a documentary feel and how does this add to the film's impact?

(Project work) Compare and contrast Brook's 1963 film with the 1990 version directed by Harry Hook. Discuss what you think are the main differences and similarities in the portrayal of themes and characterisation.

How relevant do you think the themes of the piece are to young people today?

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 (Marat/Sade)

By Peter Weiss. Production date: 1964. Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) at the Aldwych Theatre

Why was this production important?

What happens is this: we are taken into the asylum to witness one of the therapeutic theatrical performances which de Sade produced under the free-minded, long pre-Freudian supervision of De Coulmier who ran the Charenton Bedlam. The play deals with the stabbing to death of Marat, in his bath, by Charlotte Corday. It is a bloodbath, violently attacking the emotions and sensibilities of any audience. It will send Aunt Edna round the bend but cannot fail to conquer anyone who has the slightest trace of compassion in him.

—Gerard Fay, in the *Guardian*, 21 August 1964

Violence is the natural artistic language of the times ... It's our reality, there's no way round it.

—Peter Brook, interview in the *Daily Mail*, 26 August 1964

British theatre was still four years away from the abolition of censorship so it is little wonder that Brook's 1964 production of Peter Weiss' play caused controversy. In part, Brook's focus was an extension of the practical research work he had carried out at LAMDA in his Theatre of Cruelty season earlier in the year. A glance through the headlines of newspaper articles in the PBC and in the V&A's Theatre and Performance collections gives an immediate flavour of the response to the play and the circumstances around it: 'Talking to the MAN in the MIDDLE of the 'dirty' theatre row', 'West End Theatre Storm Grows' and 'Let Them Fire Me, says Hall [Peter Hall, the Artistic Director of the RSC]'.

The choice of plays for the RSC's London season attracted criticism from within the governing body of the RSC itself. Referring to what became known in the press as 'dirty plays' (which included Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*, David Rudkin's *Afore Night Come* and Weiss' *Marat/Sade*), Emile Littler, President of the Society of West End Theatre Managers and a member of the executive council of the RSC, attacked the season in the *Daily Telegraph* on 25 August 1964: 'These plays do not belong, or should not, to the Royal Shakespeare. They are entirely out of keeping with our public image and with having the Queen as our patron.' Referring specifically to the play *Afore Night Come* he said, 'Any tape-recorder in a tough men's factory canteen could pick up the sort of dialogue which the public have to pay to listen to.' In a later article the writer reported of Littler that, 'He was not just attacking the Royal Shakespeare season.

He was attacking plays of a similar nature in the West End, including Entertaining Mr. Sloane.'

In response to this, the play's producer Michael Codron resigned his post from the executive council of the Society of West End Theatre Managers. On 26 August 1964 the *Daily Mail* quoted Peter Cadbury, the chairman of Keith Prowse ticket agency: 'I am worried about the people who write to me and say they have seen such a play and will not go to the theatre again for some time.'

While these views seem old-fashioned today, it is worth noting Peter Hall's comment at the end of the *Daily Telegraph* article quoted above, that 'as part of this year's Shakespeare celebrations, we wanted to do a season of absolutely modern drama.' 1964 was the 400th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare and there was a greater focus on the RSC than in previous years. There was also a wider debate around the role of Shakespeare and the work of the Royal Shakespeare Company: was the playwright a cosy cultural tourist-icon, frozen in time or a playwright whose work contained relevant themes and questions about power and violence? Was the role of the company only to produce audience-friendly 'living history' versions of the plays?

Directors such as Brook and Peter Hall believed Shakespeare could set a challenge to contemporary writers to create plays as thrilling and immediate to modern theatre audiences as Shakespeare's plays were to his. Hence the focus on a new and challenging piece by Peter Weiss. In an interview in the *Daily Mail* on 26 August, Brook said, 'I prefer the notion of disturbance, which leaves you in a greater state of inquiry' and claimed this was what Shakespeare did, 'it was the proper function of the Royal Shakespeare Company to attempt it now.'

David Rudkin, writer of *Afore Night Come*, wrote a highly supportive letter to Brook decrying the attitude of some sections of the press. Not all the critics or, indeed, the public, were negative. Writing in the *Daily Mail* of 27 August, Barrie J. Wood of Byfleet wrote, 'Surely a man with 40 years' theatrical experience [Littler] cannot be so unaware of the pulse of the new theatre-going public? ... We look to Mr. Hall, Mr. Brook and Mr. Codron for our lead in pursuing plays that capture the real "edge of experience."'

What was the contemporary relevance of a play set in a mad house in the early 19th century? Writing in the *Daily Mail*, under the title 'One of the most amazing plays I've ever seen,' Bernard Levin noted, 'There are unmistakable references throughout the play to the concentration camps (the whole stage at times is hideously reminiscent of them) and to the Bomb.' Memories of the end of the Second World War were still fresh in the mind of a 1964 audience, many of whom had probably fought in the conflict; 'the Bomb' and its sense of imminent threat would have immediate relevance.

Levin also noted that Brook had been influenced by the 'total theatre' approach of French playwright and theatre director Antonin Artaud, and thought the results positively Wagnerian:

Its breadth, its totality, its breathtakingly rapid and varied use of every imaginable technique, dramatic device, stage picture, form of movement, speech and song, make it as close as this imperfect world is ever likely to get to the gesamtkunstwerk of which Richard Wagner dreamed, in which every element, every force that theatre could provide would fuse in one overwhelming experience.

It is this overt theatricality that is worth noting. After 20 years of theatre experience, Brook's production was the culmination of a recently-found awareness of Artaud, combined with a use of improvisation techniques which pushed performers to the limits of their mental endurance (as seen with *Lord of the Flies*) and a form of scene-cutting reminiscent of film and television.

The play-within-a-play structure of *Marat/Sade* was particularly striking: 'when the audience applaud from the auditorium, the company respond ominously with a slow hand-clap' (Eric Shorter, the *Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1964). 'There is a brilliant hotch-potch of stage styles. Violence is uppermost in the production's attempts to shock us in the Artaud manner. The best effects are the mass executions complete with buckets of blue and red blood'.

Sally Jacobs' stark set of the institution's bath-house shocks you ... There is no curtain so the scene has time to work on you till the stage fills with the living dead wearing what could be second-hand grave clothes ... Every ingredient in Peter Brook's direction accumulates to horrify, startle, bewilder and make

you wonder how sound your own mind is ... On stage there is a marvellous use of cavities in the floor as punishment cells, sewers, graves, guillotine pits and hell itself.

—George Begley in *Queen*, 23 September 1964

The play was adapted and released as a film in 1967.

Suggested ideas for students to research and discuss:

(Project work) Research and share the Theatre of Cruelty ideas developed by Antonin Artaud and discuss their relevance today.

Discuss what you understand by the term 'total theatre'.

How might combining theatrical devices and techniques challenge audience perceptions?

Discuss how symbolic, multi-function setting and scenery can be effective.

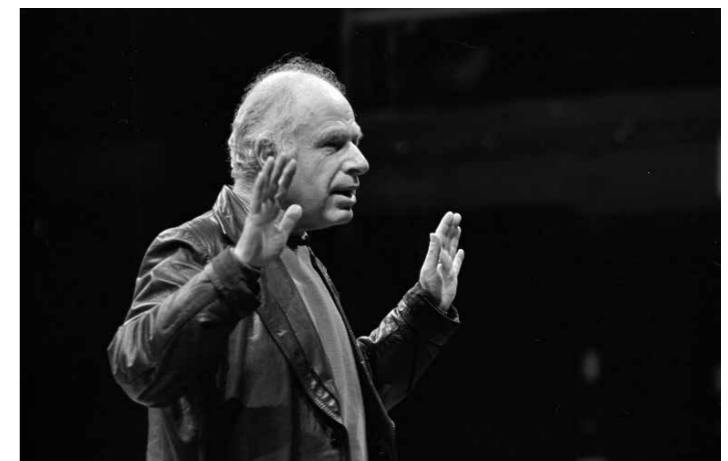


Photo by Douglas H. Jefferey. © V&A.

Oedipus

By Seneca, adapted by Ted Hughes. Production date: 1968. A production for the National Theatre at The Old Vic Theatre

Why was this production important?

Brook's production of *Oedipus* provides a rich source of interest for students of performance, particularly his ability to find contemporary resonances in an ancient story, the performances of the main actors, the rehearsal methods coupled with striking visual design and the text adaptation itself by Ted Hughes.

Contemporary press cuttings reveal that the critics were expecting another explosive piece from Brook. On 20 March 1968, Peter Lewis in the *Daily Mail* wrote, 'As might be expected, it has no resemblance to anybody else's theatrical work in England, and it's a waste of time (thank God) applying the normal standards.' He goes on to describe the setting, which has echoes of *King Lear* from six years earlier:

Brook's own setting is nothing but dull metallic plates, with a revolving metal cube in the middle of the stage, with Richard Ornbo's brilliant lighting playing on it. The actors, in anonymous black, are stationed not only on stage but all round the theatre, gallery, circle and stalls. Their voices provide the sound - a bee-like drone, hand-drumming, the clicks of electronic music, pantings, gasps and indescribable hissing noises that travel round the circle in a circle. It is hypnotism. Surrender to it and you become a brother to primitive man.

The black-clad performer is now a cliché of theatre but it is important to remember that in 1968 this was a startling treatment of a classical play. No historical costumes helped to signal a distant past to the audience; the setting was unsettlingly modern or even futuristic. Members of the Chorus were unusually, even threateningly, placed not in their expected position on the stage but in and around the audience itself.

The PBC contains a series of letters written by Ted Hughes that demonstrate the close attention paid to the development of the text. As with *Lord of The Flies*, the script had already been through a number of incarnations before Hughes agreed to work on it. In a letter dated 5 December 1967, Hughes reported sending a copy of an early translation of the play by another writer to Brook along with his suggested version. He makes it clear that he was happy to adjust the style of the piece in any direction Brook thought appropriate.

Unusually, rather than handing over a completed translation to the director and company, Hughes worked on the text until comparatively late into the rehearsal process. Letters reveal he worked particularly hard on the emphasis of words in the last verse lines of the play for lead actor John Gielgud. He also focused on how actors could deliver transitions between words.

Colin Blakely, who played Creon in the production, famously recorded his memories of the ten weeks of rehearsals:

The first day of rehearsal concluded with a group discussion ... more emphasis seemed to be placed on the drawing of modern day parallels ... The script (still to be written) was going to moderate the Greek mythology to an extent that made the play a 20th Century and perhaps very personal involvement.

Much of the early rehearsal process involved exercises and games that built trust and interdependency between the cast. These included tennis, squash and mock fighting to encourage anticipation of action and reaction. Sounds and rhythm were also analysed for many hours. Tai chi exercises, improvisation and 'explorations of happening' were instigated one day a week. It is worth noting that these ran 'using a group of actors who didn't possess the usual inhibitions about this type of work', a comment that indicates the novelty of such an approach for some actors at the time.

The stage itself was introduced in week three of the rehearsals. The cast listened to BBC recordings of tribal chants from around the world and the group were particularly inspired by those with hard consonant sounds. Emphasis was placed on communicating the essence of scenes without language, only sound, before the script was introduced:

A text describing the sacking of Troy was read ... Although this passage contained many horrific images it was almost impossible to make it effective when read aloud. It was therefore necessary to find a concentrated image which would express the horror more effectively. This was firstly attempted by creating a situation stripped to its barest essentials, and then merely one sound, vocal or otherwise, which expressed the maximum amount of horror.

"OEDIPUS"

MONDAY 8th Jan.:

- A.M. Group 1.
- 1) "To be or not to be, that is the question"
 - a) sitting
 - b) standing
 - 2) Sustained silence developing into loud humming
 - 3) "Oedipus" - a brief outline - followed by a discussion involving the subjects of FATE, Tragedy, Sin and the difference in attitudes in Ancient Grecian and present day.
- P.M. Group 2.
- 1) "To be or not to be..."
 - a) sitting
 - b) "By fate are we driven, yield ye to fate"
 - b) "Let me weave destiny to my own will"
 - 3) Discussion on "Oedipus" etc. as A.M.

TUESDAY 9th Jan.:

- A.M. Group 1.
- 1) Tennis in 4's and pairs
 - 2) Squash
 - 3) Mock fighting in pairs
 - a) sound and movement - slow and fast
 - b) sound only from 'aggressor', sound and movement from 'receiver'
 - 4) a) imitation of sound produced by 1 member of group seated in centre of circle - others facing outwards
 - b) supplement of sound
 - 5) Sustained silence developing into loud humming
 - 6) a) "By fate are we driven, yield ye to fate".
 - b) "Let me weave destiny to my own will".
- P.M. Group 2.
- 1) Tennis in 4's and pairs
 - 2) Squash
 - 3) In theatre - experimentation of voices around auditorium using Seneca's text.

WEDNESDAY 10th Jan.:

- A.M. Group 1.
- 1) Tennis
 - 2) Squash
 - 3) Mock fighting
 - 4) Communication through sounds produced by each member with 2 objects
 - 5) Reading of Seneca's Latin text
- P.M.:
- 1) Reading and discussion of Ted Hughes' adaptation and the play in general with Irene Worth and Sir John Gielgud.

THURSDAY 11th Jan.:

- A.M.:
- 1) Preparatory exercises
 - 2) Mock fighting
 - 3) Imitation of movement in pairs
 - 4) Imitation of sound and movement in group
 - 5) Individual building of characterisations
 - 6) Imitation of each person's 'character'

TUESDAY 16th Jan.:

- A.M.:
- 1) Preparatory exercises
 - 2) Mock fighting
 - a) blows
 - b) free invention
 - 3) 'Feeling' an idea, not presenting it
 - a) eagle in various moods and using all and separate parts of body - i) friendly ii) aggressive
 - 4) Reading a verse in English while trying to retain rhetorical rhythm of Latin verse reading

- P.M.:
- 1) Preparatory exercises
 - 2) Building up of figure using facial mask as starting point. Each person finding 2 figures and playing scene between them.
 - 3) 'Feeling' the idea
 - a) Member of large cat family
 - b) presenting image to a rhythm but not a realistic imitation of situations in 3's
 - 4) Reading of verse in English as A.M.

WEDNESDAY 17th Jan.:

- A.M.:
- 1) Preparatory exercises
 - 2) Movement in front of 'mirror' - in pairs
 - 3) 'The Plague'
 - 4) Discussion on question of Fate

- P.M.: Volpone Group
- 1) Tennis
 - 2) Squash
 - 3) "To be or not to be.."
 - 4) Passing of idea by sound and movement in single group
 - 5) "Oedipus" outline and discussion

THURSDAY 18th Jan.:

- A.M.:
- 1) Preparatory exercises
 - 2) Reaction through movement - palm to palm
 - 3) Verbal expression of anger through 16 lines of Latin text, then 8 and 4.
 - a) individually
 - b) in pairs
 - c) as a group - 2 lines each then 1 line

- P.M.:
- 4) Reading of English text "Invasion of Troy" purpose being to read it mechanically while still conveying meaning
 - a) individually on stage
 - b) behind facial mask
 - c) behind mask as monkeys reporting to 'Monkey King' in comical vein

FRIDAY 19th Jan.:

- A.M.: Volpone Group
- 1) Preparatory exercises
 - 2) Mirror reflection exercises in pairs
 - 3) Imitation of sound and movement in pairs

The script was introduced to the company in the fourth week and much of the intensive work took place within groups responding to the main characters' long speeches and chorus work. The set itself went through a number of changes. In week six, 'A mock up of the large box set was set up in the rehearsal and its final dimensions decided upon, the main consideration being its size in relation to the rest of the set. A large flat covered in several different shades of gold paper was used to choose the correct colour for the costumes.' In the final weeks, 'The second production weekend provided a few surprises which resulted in the entire set having to be stripped and re-covered'.

In a November 1968 interview in the *Drama Review* Blakely stated:

Peter Brook is exploring the ugly. He tried to oppose the Viet Nam war with an ugly play about it (US) ... He's interested in violence, why violence erupts, what makes people do what they do in this violent age. Whether the theatre is the best place to do this, I don't know... Violence comes out of people, like the little fellow on the bus. Brook is saying you've got to watch that little fellow.

Brook kept letters from members of the public who saw *Oedipus*. At least one of the writers thought it one of the greatest productions in the history of European theatre, referring to Brook as a genius. Brook was attempting, and in part succeeding, to produce theatre that challenged audiences about how a classical play could be staged, in the heart of the mainstream theatre world.

1968 saw the publication of *The Empty Space*, Brook's first study on the development of modern performance. Although he was to produce *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1970 with the RSC, by 1971 Brook would establish himself in Paris and continue to explore performance in non-traditional venues with international artists predominately outside the UK.

Suggested ideas for students to research and discuss:

Discuss how close collaboration with the writer might affect the success of a production.

Consider the Theatre of Cruelty of *Marat/Sade* and the

Theatre of Ritual of *Oedipus*. What might be the differences and similarities between the two?

What effect might stylised, non-historical costume and set have on an audience?

How might a non-traditional actor/audience relationship affect the impact on the show?

Discuss how a choral element in performance, sound and rhythm might be used to communicate emotion.

(Project work) Divide up into groups and read chapters of Brook's *The Empty Space*. Which elements would you say are still relevant today?

The Tempest

By William Shakespeare. Production date: 1968. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) at the Round House

Why was this production important?

The Tempest was one of the most experimental productions staged by Brook in England. 1968 was a year of mass student riots and political unrest which inevitably influenced popular culture. It was the year the Rolling Stones released 'Street Fighting Man' and The Beatles recorded and released 'Revolution 9', an eight-and-a-half minute collage of disturbing abstract sound, snippets from film and television programmes, overheard conversations and music. It would not have sounded out of place if used as a tape-looped backdrop to *The Tempest*, in which 'The players sweep like a tidal wave across the floor, hurl themselves on it, roll about, whimper, chant liturgically and gesture as if they had come home from seeing the Marat/Sade.' (Harold Hobson, the *Sunday Times*, 21 July 1968). It was performed against 'a circular dance floor, littered with long, low Japanese tables and steel scaffoldings such as workmen use when painting the front of a house'.

The fervour of the time had already affected the production process. Exploratory work on the piece had begun in Paris at the invitation of Jean-Louis Barrault, French actor, mime artist and director, with a group of performers from Théâtre des Nations. The levels of disturbance on the streets of Paris were enough to cause the work to be halted and the company hastily transferred to London.

The production may also be seen as a logical culmination of Brook's work in the 1960s. A press cutting from an unnamed newspaper of 24 April 1968 in the PBC quoted Brook:

Members of the RSC who took part in our experiments at the LAMDA Theatre, in The Marat/Sade and in US, will be joined by actors from Mr. Reeves' London production of Dingo, members of the Living Theatre, and French actors... Our aim is to present our work in progress before interested professionals – since the essence of our work will be the relations between actor and spectator as we go along; it will not necessarily be a finished product. Theatrical forms so far tried out have been too crude and simplified and based on inadequate experience.

The production split the opinion of the critics. In the *Daily Telegraph* on 20 July 1968 Eric Shorter sounded, frankly, bemused:

Mr. Brook's company, which brings together players and directors from Britain, the United States, France and Japan uses the deliberately untheatrical arena of the Round House to see what springs from a deeply introspective free-style approach to Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and some stuff from Calderon. In rehearsal clothes, they prance, crawl, jump and jubilate round and about a maze of mobile scaffolding with occasional reference, verbal and visual, to Shakespeare's poem.

In a telling final line he stated, 'Criticism is impossible in theatrical terms since theatrical form as we know it is not used.'

Harold Hobson was more forgiving: 'He is analysing it [The Tempest] into its component parts, its magic, its confusion, its treatment of bondage, its hopelessness, and he is trying out methods of expressing these in isolation.' However, even he found confusion in the way actors and audience members were encouraged to intermingle in a shared space of scaffolding that both had to negotiate throughout the action: 'Some of the audience climb up these steel tubes, balance on them laterally, and thus get in the way of the actors when they too, in pursuit of some fancy of Mr Brook's, feel the spirit of mountaineering rise within them.'

Suggested ideas for students to research and discuss:

Discuss why working with artists from around the world might be beneficial for a production.

How might experimentation with form and approach to a classic text affect an audience's view of the play?

Discuss the idea of practitioners having a willingness to risk failure. What might this mean in theatre terms and why might it be useful?

How might a fluid actor/audience relationship add to the atmosphere of the play?

(Project work) Divide up into groups and read chapters of Brook's *The Empty Space*. Which elements would you say are still relevant today?

THE STAGE

'The Tempest'—moving into a brave new world at Chichester

by R. B. MARRIOTT

PROSPERO'S isle, in blazing white and shining light, like a place suspended between the Old World and the New on the great stage at Chichester Festival Theatre, throbs with elemental sounds as it gradually becomes a link with another place, a brave new place with hopeful mortals in it who are determined to be fine, worthy men upon the earth. This dominating force and atmosphere of David Jones's new production of "The Tempest" makes it one of the most outstanding events since this theatre opened. But there are many other things to make the production memorable.

Ariel and Caliban are more than usually apparent as aspects of Prospero's nature, a soaring, freedom-loving man who is yet in chains and of man in his baseness. And Prospero himself appears in a fresh way in a splendid performance by John Clements. He is valiant, in the sense of realising he has to summon even greater courage to face a new life than to destroy his old. He is manly, in the sense of struggling with all his spirit and mind to become not only a human being but one whose experience in the depths has started a rare humanising process.

Ariel is no longer a pretty creature; he is a scarred spirit, struggling, like his master, to be

free. He is given a finely moving interpretation by Richard Kane, who conveys the profound longing of the creature as well as his secret, magical knowledge. Caliban, completing this absorbing trio, shows us glimpses of the mysterious workings in his soul that have enabled him to comprehend something of the qualities to be found in his masters, even if they are only stirring rudimentarily in himself. Clive Revill is a frightening, sometimes awesome, sometimes pathetic Caliban, but his playing makes the character boldly and brilliantly a whole being.

POWER

The story and the drama, the philosophy and the poetry of "The Tempest" are defined and realised with remarkable insight and power by Mr. Jones, who has also assured that every character is clearly and firmly created. The horrors in the comedy of Trinculo and Stephano are subtly allied to the baser aspects of Caliban, while at the same time having the natural wit of the fellows, who are invested by Gordon Gostelow and Michael Aldridge with personalities, an aura, far removed from the familiar broad clownishness.

As the play grandly unfolds, one sees how magnificently the resources of Chichester Festival Theatre have been deployed, par-

ticularly in the lighting by Mick Hughes. But the music of Jannis Markopoulos is also important; there is a charmingly serious-thinking Miranda by Maureen O'Brien; and performances in keeping with the mood of the production, even if they are on a lesser scale, by Hubert Gregg, David Nettheim, Mark Ward, Carl Bernard and Mark Kingston.

CAST

Revival of play by William Shakespeare. Presented at Chichester Festival Theatre on July 16. Designed by Ralph Koltai; lighting by Mick Hughes; music by Jannis Markopoulos; music conducted by Evdoros Demetriou; dances arranged by Molly Kenny; stage manager, Andrew Laird.

| | |
|--|--|
| Master of a ship | John Hart Dyke |
| Boatswain | Charles Rea |
| Alonso, King of Naples | Carl Bernard |
| Antonio | Hubert Gregg |
| Gonzalo | David Nettheim |
| Sebastian | Mark Kingston |
| Miranda | Maureen O'Brien |
| Prospero | John Clements |
| Ariel | Richard Kane |
| Caliban | Clive Revill |
| Ferdinand | Simon Ward |
| Adrian | George Camiller |
| Francisco | Michael Burrell |
| Trinculo | Gordon Gostelow |
| Stephano | Michael Aldridge |
| Iris | Vivienne Ross |
| Ceres | Ann Kennedy |
| Juno | Peggy Marshall |
| Mariners, Nymphs, Reapers, and other Spirits | Barbara Berkery, Emma Cochrane, Richard Cornish, John Hart Dyke, Gail Esler, Arnold Lee, Auston Low, Sandy Macdonald, Fitzgerald Mitchell, Christopher Morley, Audrey Murray, Robert Selbie. |

Directed by David Jones.

...and a 'Tempest' for the actors

AN Open Presentation evolved in the theatre laboratory founded early this year in Paris by Jean-Louis Barrault and Peter Brook, and now operating in London under the protection of the Royal Shakespeare Company, was seen at the Round House, Chalk Farm, on July 17. In this theatre which is not a theatre but is as exciting in atmosphere as any theatre could be, the production was concerned with "The Tempest," used as a means of the players finding themselves, trying to realise their potentialities, testing their talents, getting to know each other in fear as well as in friendly collaboration. The audience was not an audience, or at least not intended to be: it was an aspect of the experiment being

carried out in the arena, and at one point was deliberately drawn into the proceedings.

Extracts of "The Tempest" were taken for experimental use, reduced to nothing, built up again, torn down, re-created, cast away, hauled back, made to shine when so needed, twisted to fit what the player, or a set of players, had in mind, irrespective of what Shakespeare may have had in his.

Movements and voices, private and shared thought, speculation, taking a chance, discovering: the work of the players, covering only a little over an hour, revealed a great deal of acting processes, and also a great deal about "The Tempest". The questions asked by the players of themselves and, directly, of their large gathering number of collaborators, flew as swiftly and as thickly as the fine feathers plucked from the play. What is a theatre? What is a play? What is an actor? What is a spec-

tator? What is the relation between them all? What conditions serve this relationship best? They endeavoured to find answers.

Peter Brook's company, for he presides over the experiment, and last week sat there attentively and silently throughout, has in many aspects the firm stamp of his direction, despite the freedom of it all. In certain groupings, in the isolation of an expressive gesture, in rhythms and inventive patterns, the Brook imagination and prodigious technical resourcefulness bring a valuable and absorbing additional interest to the presentation.

Indeed, the evening was altogether an exhilarating and fascinating experience. One hopes there will be many more Open Presentations. In a year, in two years, yet another question might actually be answered: To what important things can this experimental group lead the changing theatre of the Western world?

R.B.M.

The Mahabharata

Translated by Peter Brook from the French translation by Jean-Claude Carrière of the Sanskrit original. Production date: 1988 UK performances. Centre International de Creations Theatrales at the Old Transport Museum, Glasgow

Why was this production important?

This epic Indian tale, the world’s oldest poem, had fascinated Brook since around 1975. At 15 times the length of the Bible it offered considerable challenges to condense; in performance, the show ran for nine hours. When it was staged in Scotland as a warm-up to Glasgow’s celebration of European City of Culture in 1990 the show was generally well-received.

Before reaching Scotland the show had toured to various natural and adapted spaces in Paris, Athens, Perth, Adelaide, Frankfurt, Madrid, Barcelona, Zurich, Copenhagen, Tokyo and, controversially, New York. In the latter, the empty and dilapidated BAM Majestic theatre was given a multi-million dollar refurbishment to make it suitable for the nature of the play. Some critics felt that the expensive refurbishment left it looking more of a wreck than before. They felt it was a pastiche of Brook’s own Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris. He had discovered this empty and decaying theatre in the 1970s and taken it over, making few changes to its appearance as he felt its raw quality suited his productions.

The show’s UK venue was also a cause of wrangling. Various London sites had been earmarked as possible hosts and funding sources had been debated, including a substantial contribution from the London Docklands Development Corporation, when schedule changes halted the plans. It was only after Robert Palmer, director of the 1987 Glasgow Festival, had seen the show and lobbied hard for Scottish funding that a UK venue was found at all.

The Mahabharata had originally premiered at the Avignon Festival in 1985. In a talk with Hugh Willbourn in the October 1985 edition of *Plays and Players*, Peter Brook highlighted that it was the contemporary relevance of the work that sustained him through ten years of preparatory research:

Contemporary issues are clearly confronted, most glaringly the arms race. Both sides of the conflict are obsessed with obtaining the Ultimate Weapon ... the descriptions of ultimate war are in exactly the same terms as the descriptions of Hiroshima, of Bhopal, and the way that nuclear war is described ... neither Jean-Claude Carrière nor

myself have stretched or pushed that parallel. It is there. If you read the original it is terrifyingly there.

Many themes that remain relevant were noted by the critics. Joyce McMillan in the *Guardian* on 19 April 1988 wrote, ‘The poem is also pre-occupied with ideas about parenthood and family, about the mysterious god-given origins of mankind, about the evil that results “when one prefers one’s own children to the children of others”.’

It was the collaborative involvement of an international company of artists that captured the imagination of audience and critics alike. Michael Coveney, writing in the *Financial Times* on 19 April 1988, said the first performance in Glasgow was greeted with:

a tumultuous standing ovation the like of which I have not witnessed before in a British theatre. And this was the point. We were not really in a British theatre ... A sense of the world enacting its own story is most powerfully enforced by the internationalism of Brook’s company ... The warring tribes of cousins, the Pandavas and the Kuaravas, go in search of sacred weapons, instruments of obliteration in ages both religious and nuclear. India has both The Mahabharata and the bomb.

Coveney also noted, ‘a renewed delight in theatre for its own sake. The costumes are magnificent, never consciously “ethnic”, beautiful in every scene.’ The set took advantage of what the space itself suggested: ‘Footholds have been stapled into the brick partition of the wall specially constructed for this performance, and actors take vantage points or battle. A river traverses the upstage area, shut off by a great looming burnished orange wall behind. A downstage pool is a location of both death and respite.’

In the *Independent* on 19 April 1988 Peter Kemp outlined the seeming ease with which effects were produced:

Conches blare in jubilation or defiance, trumpets bray, bells tinkle, huge gongs resound and rattles hiss, starkly gorgeous visual images are conjured up: a single wheel becomes a battle chariot; two bamboo staves, adroitly handled, simulate a bow and arrow; a cradled armful of fabric fleetingly – and movingly – takes the form of a baby.

Here we see the deceptive simplicity of design and use of props, much copied by theatre companies since, that invite an audience to actively engage their imagination. Somewhat grudgingly, Robert Gore-Langton wrote in the June edition of *Plays and Players* that the play ‘contains moments of theatrical greatness – but at this length so it should ... It seems an authorless, mythological cartoon: a vast and noisy caravan of stories.’ He did, however, note its ‘nuclear parallel’ and ‘pioneering internationalism.’ Michael Coveney ended his review with praise: ‘This is a great and unforgettable theatrical experience not least because the latest leg of Brook’s journey has taken him full circle to a re-evaluation of how we might present heroic theatre.’

The PBC contains a moving letter written by Ted Hughes to Peter Brook, after witnessing a performance of *The Mahabharata*. In it he explored why his work with Brook differed from other theatrical collaborations. He came to the conclusion that the best results came only by working with a group of artists, trying things out in reality. Attempting to replicate this in solitude, in one’s head, seemed fruitless. The group created the work, not the individual writer, director, actor or designer. Self-deprecatingly, he wrote that he felt sure that Brook was fully aware of these facts.

Suggested ideas for students to research and discuss:

Discuss what might define a universal story? What elements might it have to contain to qualify as one?

How can a space help to determine performance style?

What clues might spaces offer a director or performer about their best use?

Discuss how the symbolic use of props, costumes and lighting can help stimulate the imagination of an audience and enrich their experience of a performance.

Summary

The plays and film explored in this resource represent Peter Brook’s experience of performance over 25 years.

They demonstrate a clear development in terms of **staging**. Each play rejected naturalistic design in favour of austere sets and the imaginative use of a few props. Essential themes of the production were often presented through key objects, such as the buckets of paint for ‘royal blood’ in *Marat/Sade*.

King Lear, *Marat/Sade*, *Oedipus* and *The Tempest* show how Brook experimented with **theatrical form**, placing audience and performer in unusual relationships to each other, testing what language could communicate and manipulating the structure of the play itself.

Each production was a unique **collaboration**, always acknowledged by Brook, with performers such as Paul Scofield and John Gielgud, designers such as Sally Jacobs and writers like Ted Hughes. These relationships were often sustained over many years and proved invaluable to the development of all the artists.

Finally, the productions indicate how Brook and his associates **responded to contemporary issues**, such as the Cold War, the Vietnam War or the Arms Race of the 1980s.

Students should be encouraged to explore further the contribution that Peter Brook has made to theatre today. As this resource shows, the work was not always well-received. Some productions have aged better than others but his ideas and approach still influence artists today. The forthcoming second part of this resource will explore his legacy in more detail and outline how it informed the creation of six new one-act plays produced by London schools, theatres and museums.

King Lear 1962

Contextual Material

NOTE: The political snapshots in these timelines are dominated by America, as events there had direct relevance to many of Brook's productions. They also reflect his interest in the Soviet Union, stemming from family origins in Latvia. Students should be encouraged to research alternatives, such as what may have been happening in their local area at the time of the productions. Students could also prepare timelines and histories of different genres of performance such as dance and theatre from other countries.

Historical Background

Politics

The year was dominated by a rapid deterioration in the relationship between the former Soviet Union and the USA. The Soviet Union had signed a trade pact at the start of the year with Cuba, leading to the suspension of Cuba from the Organisation of American States and a banning of imports and exports. The Soviet Union agreed to send arms to Cuba in September and, a month later, an American U-2 spy plane photographed Soviet nuclear weapons being installed there. A 12-day stand-off ensued between the USA and the Soviet Union threatening the world with a nuclear war that was only avoided by a secret deal between the two.

Science, Technology and Space

The 1960s saw rapid advances in space technology. John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth in February. Telstar, the world's first commercial communications satellite was launched in July. US President Kennedy asserted that the Americans would put a man on the moon before the end of the decade, a promise that would be fulfilled in July 1969.

Arts and Entertainment

1962 saw a number of debuts by young performers and it could be argued the so-called Swinging 60s* originated in this year. The Rolling Stones made their debut at London's Marquee Club in July and The Beatles released their first single 'Love Me Do' in October. Bob Dylan released his debut album in the USA. World famous ballet dancers Margot

Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev first performed together. Nureyev was something of a coup for the Western art world, having defected from Russia in June 1961. Andy Warhol exhibited his artwork *Campbell's Soup Tins* in Los Angeles bringing the ideas of Pop Art to a wider public. The first James Bond film *Dr. No* opened in the UK in October. The BBC television satire programme *That Was the Week that Was* aired in November. This show launched the careers of David Frost and Peter Cook and reflected the general public's growing dissatisfaction with established political figures and the elder statesmen of Conservative-led Britain.

* 'Swinging London' was first used as a phrase in a *Time* magazine cover article in April 1966.

Theatre Background

Source: *Plays and Players* in the Theatre and Performance Collections

1962

January: *Plays and Players* contained the script to Arnold Wesker's *The Kitchen*. Set in a 1950s West End kitchen, the play explored the relationships between a group of under-paid and over-worked staff drawn from across Europe to work. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opened at the Royal Court. It was the first Shakespeare venture by the English Stage Company, directed by Tony Richardson, with a young cast including Rita Tushingham in her first Shakespearean role.

April: *Chips with Everything* by Arnold Wesker premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London. It explored the lives of recruits at an army training camp, exposing the class system of the time. Compulsory National Service in England had only started to be phased out in 1957 and so was a recent memory for its audience. The play was reviewed in July by Peter Roberts: 'This is a play that nobody remotely interested in the best in modern drama can afford to miss.'

May: In a review of a revival of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the Aldwych Theatre, Peter Roberts wrote: 'Brecht's theory of alienation has become almost a commonplace and has not only influenced most of our most interesting new young dramatists but has even been successfully absorbed into the commercial field making possible the run of a play like "A Man for All Seasons" in the West End.' Six years after Brecht's death, his influence was now widely felt in mainstream theatre.

June/July: The magazine contained the script for Ann Jellicoe's *The Knack*. This was a risqué play for the time, exploring the lives of young Londoners and their romantic successes, or otherwise, with the opposite sex.

August: This edition had articles devoted to Shakespeare and reviewed *The Tempest* at the Old Vic with Alastair Sim as Prospero 'not so much a tempest as a storm in a tea cup' (Caryl Brahms).

September: A focus on stage censorship and its history, featuring banned plays by George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. Articles about censorship appear frequently in *Plays and Players* from the 1960s and indicate the growing frustration it provoked in artists and (some) of the public as the decade progressed.

October: A focus on the work and influence of Brecht.

November: This edition contained the script of Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*. In the play, the central character Winnie, buried up to her waist in sand at the start, stoically maintains how wonderful life is to her partially hidden husband, Willie.

December: Peter Brook was interviewed by Peter Roberts during rehearsals for *King Lear* at Stratford-upon-Avon.

1963

January: Irving Wardle reviewed *King Lear*: 'Where this production succeeds all the way is in the Goneril and Regan households.'

Lord of the Flies 1963

Historical Background

Politics

The Vietnam War and Civil Rights dominated the year in the USA. Martin Luther King, a leading African-American Civil Rights campaigner, delivered his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech during the March on Washington in August, in front of about 250,000 people. In November, US President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Two days later, his assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was also killed on live television. The new President Lyndon B. Johnson vowed to continue to support South Vietnam, militarily and economically. Harold Wilson became the leader of the opposition Labour Party in the UK. Harold Macmillan (Conservative Party) became the Prime Minister in October. 70,000 people marched to London from Aldermaston to demonstrate against nuclear weapons.

Science, Technology and Space:

In June Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space. The first geostationary satellite Syncom 2 was launched by NASA in July. AT&T launched the first push-button telephone. Video instant replay was first used by CBS television in December.

Arts and Entertainment:

The Beatles released their first album *Please Please Me* in March and Bob Dylan released his second album *The Free Wheelin’ Bob Dylan*. The Beatles’ second album *With The Beatles* was released on the day of Kennedy’s assassination. The BBC TV show *Doctor Who* first aired the following night.

Film Background

February: Saw the release of *How the West Was Won*. Directed by John Houston, it was one of the last epic Westerns to be made by MGM studios at a budget of around \$15 million. By comparison, Brook made *Lord of the Flies* with \$250,000. *Summer Holiday* was released in the UK with pop star Cliff Richard in the lead role and was the second most successful UK film of the year. *This Sporting Life* directed by Lindsay Anderson and starring Richard Harris was a more dour film, based on a David Storey novel about a troubled rugby player. Set in Wakefield, Yorkshire, the film is

a good example of the ‘gritty realism’ that influenced British cinema and theatre at the time.

March: Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds* had its US release. One of Hitchcock’s most famous films, the reason why the birds attack humans is not explained. It may serve as a metaphor for fear felt about the ever-present nuclear threat at the time.

June: *Cleopatra* was released in the USA, a production now famous for bringing Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor together and for its eye-watering budget. It would equate today to about \$340 million and nearly bankrupted Twentieth Century Fox. In contrast in the UK, the low-budget film *Carry On Cabby* was also released. *The Great Escape* had its world premiere, a classic Hollywood war film that reflected the 1960s fascination with the Second World War. In the UK this was seen in films (*How I Won the War*, 1967), on stage (*Chips with Everything*, 1962) and even in television comedy (*Dad’s Army*, from 1968.)

July: Brook’s *Lord of the Flies* was released in the UK (August in the USA). *Doctor in Distress* was also released, a companion to the *Carry On* film series in spirit and tone. It starred Dirk Bogarde as senior doctor Simon Sparrow and charted his romantic entanglements with an aspiring actress. It was one of the most popular films of the year.

August: *Jason and the Argonauts* had its UK release, featuring astonishing stop-motion animation for the time by Ray Harryhausen. Loosely inspired by Greek myths, it remains a classic film of the fantasy genre.

October: Saw the UK release of *From Russia with Love*. The second of the James Bond series of films, it was reputedly chosen as the follow-up to *Dr No* because President Kennedy had named the original 1957 story by Ian Fleming one of his all-time favourite novels. A classic Cold War thriller, it chimed with the West’s fear of Soviet Russia.

November: *The Servant* had its UK release, scripted by the playwright Harold Pinter and starring James Fox and Dirk Bogarde. The film explored the British class system, a favourite theme of the time, through the shifting relationship between a domestic servant and his master. Pinter was nominated for a BAFTA award for Best Screenplay in 1964 (won by fellow playwright John Osborne for *Tom Jones*).

December: *Billy Liar* was released in the USA. Another film of a successful gritty novel, written by Keith Waterhouse, it starred Tom Courtenay and Julie Christie. In the title role, Courtenay retreats into a fantasy world as an escape from his humdrum reality.

Theatre Background From Plays and Players in the Theatre and Performance Collections:

January: A ‘Credits and discredits for 1962’ section in the magazine opened with another dig at censorship: ‘Glad to see you go: Lord Scarbrough, retiring Lord Chamberlain. Sorry to see you arrive: Lord Cobbold, the new Lord Chamberlain.’ It also contained an article on *The Faces of Scofield* by Clive Barnes. Brook was cited as the director who had had the greatest impact on Paul Scofield’s career. Interestingly it also mentioned that an early Brook production of *Romeo and Juliet* (1947) ‘tried to treat the text as if it were living theatre’ indicating that Brook had long had a desire to bring a freshness to the Classics.

February: The magazine included a review by Peter Roberts of *King Lear*, ‘In this production, King Lear is not a melodrama that is made to work dramatically, but a drama that is made convincing psychologically.’ Clive Barnes reviewed *Down the Sink* dismissing it as ‘documentary tourism ... the phrase “kitchen-sink drama” has undoubtedly embedded itself in our dramatic nomenclature’, presumably not always in a positive way.

March: Featured an article on the 29-year-old Peter O’ Toole who was to play the titular lead in Brecht’s *Baal*. (O’ Toole had catapulted to international fame the year before with the release of the film *Lawrence of Arabia*.) The Foreign Office were reported as not allowing the Berliner Ensemble to visit London in May 1963 to express disapproval of the East German regime’s construction of the Berlin Wall. The RSC’s *King Lear* had planned to tour there as a form of cultural exchange.

May: An article by John Russell Taylor on *Half a Sixpence* decried Tommy Steele’s transformation from ‘a rough, energetic, natural performer’ into ‘a synthetic sort of Albert-Chevalier, chirpy-Cockney-sparrow persona which looked phony right from the start – no real Cockney has been like that since about 1905, if he was even then’. *Oh*

What a Lovely War was reviewed by Malcolm Rutherford: “‘Men good, officers bad” is a comment on the performances quite as much as the author sees it. For the scenes with the men are realistic, those with the officers satirical, and the division is a disappointing one. Realism and satire in this production are very far apart.’

August: The first night review of *On the Town*, ‘A musically not very distinguished show’ (J. R. Taylor).

September: Featured a piece on the forthcoming productions of Brecht’s *Schweik in the Second World War*. Note the biggest commercial hits of the day were both adaptations: *A Severed Head* (from an Iris Murdoch novel) and the musical *Pickwick* (based on Charles Dickens’ novel *Pickwick Papers*), which starred Harry Secombe.

October: Martin Esslin felt that Brecht’s qualities as a playwright were still only partially understood. In a review of *Schweyk* (note the different spelling to that in the article of the previous month) he wrote ‘It totally omits to characterise the difference between the language of the Czechs, which in Brecht’s original is the most delicious Bohemian dialect, and that of the Germans. As a result, it’s everyman for himself – everybody provides his own regional dialect flavour, home made’.

November: Summarised the long-delayed opening of the National Theatre at the Old Vic. The National Theatre on the South Bank in London was not to open until 1976.

December: *A Funny Thing happened on the Way to the Forum* was reviewed: ‘The best musical to be seen in London in years’ (Clive Barnes).

Marat/Sade 1964

Historical Background

Politics:

Opposition to the War in Vietnam increased. The first large-scale march against the war took place in May with about 1,000 protesters in New York and 700 in San Francisco. Protests also took place in Boston, Seattle and Madison, Wisconsin. 12 men publicly burned their draft cards. In July President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, abolishing racial segregation in the USA. In August the Philadelphia Race Riots left 340 injured and 774 arrested. 800 students were arrested at the University of California in Berkeley while protesting against the university board's punishment of anti-war campaigners. In October Soviet leader Khrushchev was deposed and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin. The UK general election in October brought the Labour Party into power on a wave of optimism.

Science, Technology and Space:

The Soviet Union launched two scientific satellites in 1964. The US launched Gemini 1 in April, the first unmanned test of the two-man spacecraft. Gemini was used to perfect manoeuvres needed for the Apollo space mission which landed on the moon 5 years later. In May the first computer language BASIC was produced (Beginners' All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code.) In August Intelsat, the world's first commercial satellite, began to transmit. It still exists as a company today, providing communication services to 99% of the world's populated regions.

Arts and Entertainment:

In February The Beatles flew to America and played to around 73 million viewers on the Ed Sullivan TV show, which heralded the 'British invasion' of the American charts. (By April, they would hold the top five places in the US singles chart.) In the same month, The Rolling Stones released their eponymous first album. In April the BBC launched BBC2 in the UK. The nation now had three TV channels to watch: BBC1, BBC 2 and the commercial station ITV. The Beatles released the film and album *A Hard Day's Night* in July. The James Bond film *Goldfinger* was released in September and The Who performed their first gig and guitar-smashing finale at the Railway Hotel in Middlesex. In October The Kinks released their first album and the film of *My Fair Lady*

also opened. Dr Robert Moog demonstrated a prototype Moog synthesiser. In an echo of what was happening in the UK censorship struggles, the US comedian Lenny Bruce was sentenced to four months in prison, concluding a six-month obscenity trail.

Theatre Background From *Plays and Players* in the Theatre and Performance Collections:

1964

February: Included an interview with Peter Brook about the experimental work he was undertaking at LAMDA.

April: This was the World Theatre Season edition and contained an interview with playwright Peter Shaffer by John Russell Taylor. Outlining his forthcoming play *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* he summarised, 'The play is an attempt to define the concept of God: a nice little theme for any play to tackle!' Charles Marowitz reviewed *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee and J. R. Taylor reviewed *The Bacchae*, referring to it as 'a prime piece of Theatre of Cruelty from 400 BC', indicating that Brook's experiments with the ideas of Artaud were being noted and talked about.

May: An edition focused on Shakespeare. Peter Hall also contributed 'Towards a Theatre of Ritual' which chimed with many of the thoughts and ideas of Brook.

July: Opened with a piece on Brecht by Martin Esslin: 'His relevance lies in his being a great playwright and a great poet: only first-rate translations and first-rate productions can drive that fact home.' It also carried a review of the first of Joe Orton's plays to be staged, *Entertaining Mr Sloane* at the New Arts. 'The evening was a distastefully impressive one' wrote Frank Cox.

September: Contained further debate about censorship from Tom Osborn over the RSC's production of Roger Vitrac's *Victor* at the Aldwych Theatre. First directed by Antonin Artaud, the play was a rarely-performed surrealist piece from 1928 with its central character, Victor, a horribly precocious child who exposes adult hypocrisies of those around him.

October: Contained the script of Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*. It told of the conquest of Peru by the Spanish

and the clash of faith between Christianity and worshippers of the son of the Sun God Atahualpa.

1965

February: Contained the second *Plays and Players* awards for theatre: 10 out of the 12 critics featured awarded *Marat/Sade* the Best Production award of 1964. Felix Penelope Gilliatt also nominated Glenda Jackson as Best Actress in the play and Best Set award to Sally Jacobs. Clive Barker wrote, 'Marat/Sade inspired Peter Brook to great invention and his handling of horror in madness was so accurate that the embarrassing ribaldry often induced by Grand Guignol was never near'. B. A. Young Wardle wrote, with faint praise, 'Peter Brook's version of the Marat/Sade is the one production that has ever convinced me that a director can do great work with a second-rate text.'

Oedipus 1968

NOTE: Both *Oedipus* and *The Tempest* were produced in 1968. The timeline for *Oedipus* represents a more US-focused summary of events and is an alternative to the timeline for *The Tempest*.

Historical Background

Politics:

1968 was a year of unrest in the USA and across Europe. Vietnam was the first war to be televised on a daily basis to viewers, and public opinion was growing against it. Civil Rights protest and unrest also continued. In February there were protests at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and North Carolina. Sit-ins were held at Howard University where students demanded a more Afrocentric curriculum and an end to fighting in Vietnam. On 4 April Martin Luther King was shot dead in Memphis. 7 days later, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968. On 5 June Presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Los Angeles.

In Europe there was further unrest against the Soviet Union. In March there were student protests in Poland. In May there were riots in Paris against the leadership of President Charles de Gaulle. In August the Prague Spring of political liberation ended and Warsaw troops invaded Czechoslovakia. On 5 October Police attacked Civil Rights demonstrators in Derry, Northern Ireland, marking the official beginning of ‘The Troubles.’

Science, Technology and Space:

Apollo 6 was launched in April, the last unmanned test flight of the Saturn V launch vehicle. The first European heart transplant took place in the same month. The company Intel was founded in July. Apollo 7 was launched in October, the first manned Apollo mission. On 9 December the computer mouse was demonstrated in San Francisco. On 24 December the crew of Apollo 8 orbited and witnessed the far side of the moon and the whole of the earth for the first time in mankind’s history.

Arts and Entertainment:

Several films of the year had a space and time-travel theme, such as *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Planet of the Apes* and

Barbarella. In June *Rosemary’s Baby* was released with the film version of musical *Oliver* later in the year. In October the band Led Zeppelin made their first live appearance at the University of Surrey. In November The Beatles released *The Beatles*, more popularly known as the *White Album*, and the Rolling Stones released *Beggars Banquet*.

Theatre background From *Plays and Players* in the Theatre and Performance Collections:

NOTE: This content focuses on the more experimental productions that were staged at the time of *Oedipus*.

1968

January: Michael Billington reviewed *Fanghorn* by David Pinner who had written of his own play that he was trying to “‘ridicule the basic ideas that have dominated the theatre during the last five years – sadism, sex and sacrilege.” I wish I could say he had succeeded ... Is he thinking perhaps of the Theatre of Cruelty? ... that was manifested only in a tiny handful of productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company.’

March: Contained a piece on Judi Dench ‘The Star of Cabaret.’ This first West End version of the show had opened in February at the Palace Theatre with Dench playing the main role of Sally Bowles. The first professional production of *Zigger-Zagger* by Peter Terson opened, commissioned by Michael Croft for the National Youth Theatre at the Aldwych.

April: Brook’s *Oedipus* with John Gielgud in the title role opened at the Old Vic (for the National Theatre) and Brook was interviewed.

May: Contained a feature on *Oedipus*, see notes above.

August: Review of *The Real Inspector Hound* by Tom Stoppard at the Criterion with Ronnie Barker and Richard Briers. The play was an early one-act play of Stoppard’s and was a parody of the kind of mystery-dramas that had been so popular in the theatre some years before.

September: Contained the script to *Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Edward Bond. The play was a satire about the British Empire.

NOTE: On 26 September 1968, stage censorship in the UK was abolished.

October: *Hair*, which opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre the day after the abolition of stage censorship, was reviewed by Charles Marowitz. It had a strong anti-Vietnam message. ‘It is the cohesion of a dozen contemporary trends, the most dominant of which are hip culture, drug enthusiasms, the Cage concepts of Indeterminancy and the Marcusian theory of protest.’ This edition also contained a review of Brook’s book *The Empty Space*.

1969

January 1969: 16 London theatre critics voted for the best of 1968: Harold Hobson voted for *Oedipus* as Best Production, as did Peter Lewis of the *Daily Mail*, David Nathan of the *Sun*, Milton Shulman of the *London Evening Standard* and J. C. Trewin of the *Illustrated London News*.

The Tempest 1968

NOTE: Both *Oedipus* and *The Tempest* were produced in 1968. The timeline for *The Tempest* represents a more UK focused summary of events and is an alternative to the timeline for *Oedipus*.

Politics:

1968 saw echoes in the UK of the racial tension that was present in the USA. In February, 96 Indians and Pakistanis arrived in Britain from Kenya in response to repressive immigration rules. In an infamous speech delivered in April by Conservative MP Enoch Powell to an audience in Birmingham, he spoke of the impact of the impending Race Relations Act ending that: ‘When I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman I seem to see “the river Tiber foaming with much blood.”’ Although sacked from his post, in October he declared again his fear that ‘immigrants may change the nature of England.’ The Race Relations Act was published in November and made it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to people in Britain because of their ethnic background.

An April opinion poll put the Labour government 20 points behind the Conservative Party in popularity some four years after the election of Harold Wilson in 1964. The Conservatives, led by Ted Heath, were to have a surprise win at the next general election in 1970. This was the first UK election in which 18 year olds could vote. Prior to this, voters had to be aged 21 or over.

Arts and Entertainment:

Debuts of the year included the first BBC screening of *Gardeners’ World* on BBC 1, and *Dad’s Army* also aired its first episode in July. The musical *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat*, written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, was premiered in March by students from the Colet Court Preparatory School in Hammersmith. The first Isle of Wight Festival took place in August with Jefferson Airplane as the headline act. In November, the Kinks released an album wilfully at odds with the revolutionary mood of 1968. Its title song ‘The Village Green Preservation Society’ included such lyrics as: ‘We are the Skyscraper Condemnation Affiliate/ God save tudor houses, antique tables and billiards’.

Theatre Background From *Plays and Players* in the Theatre and Performance Collections:

NOTE: This content focuses on the more populist productions that were staged at the time of *The Tempest*.

January: This edition reported that the top two longest-running shows on 1 January 1968 were *The Mousetrap* and *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (they retained these positions for the entire year, the latter only dropping its place in June 1969). *The Mousetrap* is the longest-running play in the world, opening in 1952 and still playing today. *The Black and White Minstrel Show* reminds us that the traditional world of Variety was still playing alongside the experimental theatre world of Brook and his contemporaries, and was hugely popular with audiences. It was also a successful television show until its format, which included white performers in black-face make-up, was axed in 1978.

February: Contained a review of *The Four Musketeers!* at Drury Lane theatre starring Kenneth Connor and Harry Secombe. Frank Marcus described Secombe having, ‘the forlorn aspect of a child’s beach ball drifting out to sea ... PS A couple of usherettes, who sat in front of me, enjoyed it no end.’

April: Charles Marowitz reviewed *You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown* which played at the Fortune Theatre: ‘This is a show born from, bred by and beamed out to Square America. A kind of self-addressed valentine confirming the bedrock values of the simple, homespun Norman Rockwell-glamorised American life.’

May: Reported that Sammy Davis Jr would be making a ‘long awaited appearance’ at the Palladium in the musical *Golden Boy*.

June: Irene Handl was noted as returning to the West End that month in *My Giddy Aunt* by Ray Cooney and John Chapman. Handl was a character actress, famous for playing ‘feisty cockney-types’ and for appearing on the radio partnering Arthur Askey and Tony Hancock.

July: American musicals were hugely popular in the West End theatres of the day. This edition contained a review of new American musical *I do! I do!* at the Lyric Theatre. ‘One of the most unctuous New York offerings for some time’ was how Helen Dawson described it.

NOTE: On 26 September 1968, stage censorship in the UK was abolished.

September: The effects of the abolition of censorship were being felt; *The Nudist Campers Grow and Grow* at the Ambiance Theatre, Queensway, was reviewed this month. The two main performers, who, at the end of the show, are nearly totally unclothed, ‘invited the audience to join them – and when a few actually did (planted it seemed to me), they immediately put on nightdresses for comfort and protection against the disappointments of complete liberation’ (Peter Ansorge).

November: New play and casting news stated that Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall had written a new comedy *Whoop’s-a-Daisy* and that Donald Sinden was to direct *The Upper Crust* later in the month.

December: News of the month included the return of Tommy Steele to the London stage in *A Servant of Two Masters*, Danny La Rue’s first appearance in a West End pantomime, and that ‘Work on the National Theatre building site on the South Bank at Waterloo will begin next summer. The Royal Fine Art Commission has stated its approval of Denys Lasdun’s latest designs for the theatre which they have described as of outstanding merit.’

The Mahabharata 1988

Historical Background

Politics:

The Soviet Union began a programme of economic restructuring under President Gorbachev. The first demonstration against the socialist government in Czechoslovakia took place in Bratislava in March. The Singing Revolution began in Estonia in June: spontaneous mass night-time singing demonstrations against the Soviets. In September 300,000 people demonstrated for independence. US President Ronald Reagan visited the Soviet Union in May and addressed 600 Moscow State University students. The Soviet Army began withdrawing from Afghanistan in May. Al-Qaeda was formed by Osama bin Laden in August. George Bush (Senior) became the new President of the United States in November. The Iran-Iraq War ended with an estimated one million dead.

In the UK, The Liberal Democrat Party was formed in March with Paddy Ashdown appointed leader in July. Three unarmed members of the IRA were killed by the British Army in Gibraltar, with bloody reprisals. The UK government banned interviews with IRA members; the BBC used the voices of professional actors to get around the ban.

Science, Technology and Space:

Microsoft released Windows version 2:1 in May. In June, NASA informed the US Senate that man-made global warming of the planet had begun. In September, NASA resumed Space Shuttle flights. These had been put on hold after the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in January 1986, when all on board were killed moments after the launch. In November, the Soviet Union launched the first and last flight of its own shuttle Buran. The first computer virus, the Morris Worm, was released in November.

Arts and Entertainment:

The musical *The Phantom of the Opera* opened on Broadway in January. 1988 saw debut albums by Underworld, All About Eve, Tracy Chapman, The House of Love and Kylie Minogue. There was a 70th birthday celebration concert for Nelson Mandela held in Wembley Stadium in June. Film releases included *Rain Man*, *Beetlejuice*, *Die Hard*, *The Last Emperor*, *A Fish Called Wanda* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Theatre Background From *Plays and Players* in the Theatre and Performance Collections:

January: Opened with an interview with Jonathan Miller: ‘There are no sacred empty spaces in the theatre, as Brook supposes ... I deeply repudiate what I believe to be a romantic primitivism in Brook these days, the idea that there are these deep primal Jungian myths which can be reactivated on the stage.’

February: Mentioned the opening of Brook’s *The Cherry Orchard*. Plays reviewed included *Speculators* by Tony Marchant. The critic Robert Gore-Langton commented, ‘It’s odd that to date this should be only the second play about the City.’ *Serious Money* by Caryl Churchill had premiered at the Royal Court Theatre just the year before and he summarised the focus of *Speculators* as, ‘Late Eighties “sexy-greedy” is commented upon throughout. The markets are venal places – all high-tech, damp gussets and false confidence’.

March: Contained a review of *Shirley Valentine* by Willy Russell, directed by Simon Callow: ‘One of the warmest, funniest and most celebratory portraits to have been seen on the London stage for a long time’ (Claire Armitstead).

April: Reviewed the first new Tom Stoppard play for six years, *Hapgood* at the Aldwych: ‘Hapgood may well be a masterpiece, but for the short term may prove just a shade too clever for its own good’ (Robert Gore-Langton).

June: Robert Gore-Langton reviewed *The Mahabharata*. This edition also contained an interview with the outgoing Director of the National Theatre, Peter Hall. He summed up his mood at the time: ‘Thatcherism believes that anything that is subsidised is unnecessary, suspect, probably full of bad wicked practices and needs the keen cut of competition in order to do its work.’

July: Contained an article about the recent interest in reviving Restoration plays: ‘One reason, it’s said, is that the plays are themselves very serious about money – their uncompassionate cynicism in tune with the “new realism” of the times’ (Simon Trussler).

August: The state of Black Theatre was reviewed by Farrukh Dhondy: ‘Blacks are not yet, in TV or stage drama, in positions from which they can extend patronage tempered with some judgement. Our patrons, in their desperation to be “right-on”, their pathetic unfamiliarity with the milieu they wish to patronise prevent the debate from progressing.’

November/December: Contained reviews of *The Secret Rapture* by David Hare: ‘Any play that questions Britain’s slide into the Thatcherist Tendency is to be welcomed ... but the darts of *The Secret Rapture* won’t for one moment ruffle the coiffure of Thatcher, Currie or their male counterparts.’

