

# The empty space by peter brook flashcard



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Having read *The Empty Space* by Peter Brook. I will be discussing all that I have learnt about the different form of theatre he discusses. He tries to categories theatre into four different types of theatre. These categories are; The Deadly Theatre, The Holy Theatre, The Rough Theatre and finally, The Immediate Theatre. The first category I shall be discussing is The Deadly Theatre. Firstly The Deadly Theatre, this is the form of theatre we see most often. As theatre audience are falling around the world and this is because it fails to entertain. However the author does appreciate that occasionally there are new movements with good writers.

The author goes on to compare theatre as a whore. He believes that its art is dirty and robs your money and doesn't deliver the entertainment required to warrant an expensive admittance. Mr Brooks makes the statement that there is no true theatre joy as The Deadly Theatre is not only found in the commercial West End or Broadway but also is making its way into Opera and even Shakespeare. This is because Brooks makes the very true statement that even though universally we find these Shakespearean productions marvellous to look at with their grand sets, costumes and are drawn to the theatre because a popular actor maybe in it.

However if we were to sit through the production the majority would be truly bored as it isn't anything different from previous Shakespeare production of the same play or different plays. He goes on to say that is what people associate with as culture and the culture of British Theatre. Therefore we as an audience are attracted to dull boring plays. Brooks goes on to say that audiences go to theatre to discover something that is better than life and as

they most commonly see theatre that goes against this notion sadly they have been cheated.

Furthermore Brooks goes on to describe two ways a classic can be performed. Firstly grand productions, where the actors are noble looking, use a special voice and manner. The other is a halfhearted attempt of something which really could be a lot better should they have developed the ideas further. This attempt wants to show the audience a more realistic outlook on the story. The script is in limbo as it has been updated but the original classic has resisted the changes and the new script is really understandable. Therefore the actor doesn't truly understand what he is saying and therefore his performance is weak.

Brooks goes on to make the very interesting statement that "printed words can tell us what was written on paper. But not how it was once brought to life" this is up to the actor and if he/she doesn't understand what is written they therefore can't bring it to life. Brooks goes on to discuss Shakespeare further and says the most common piece of advice given to actors performing Shakespeare is "Play what is written" however words are words that is simple nothing more nothing less. The words aren't been performed nor is it the way we say them in a grand voice but it is the expression used to say them.

Anyone could speak Received Pronunciation and recite Shakespeare and this is what we often see. Brooks goes on to say that people are concerned with "nailing" down the meaning of the word and getting sidetracked with stage directions rather than focusing on the script as really that is all that is

needed. Sadly in these plays we label character with archetypes and what we get is over the top pantomime. Brooks goes on to say that when he hears a director letting a play speak itself he says he is concerned as this is the hardest thing to do.

Because if you want a play to speak, it may not make a sound so therefore is you want a play to be heard you also have to make sound conjure from it. This needs deliberate actions and expressions from the actors. It needs to be simple however if you make a play simple you could be quite negative and give the audience simple answers. The next notion I shall be looking at is the idea of The Holy Theatre is the opposite of The Deadly Theatre. The Holy Theatre is what we want from theatre. If we were to make a list of what we expect and want from different versions of theatre The Holy Theatre would tick all the boxes.

This type of theatre was in its prime in the late 40's when theatre was at its peak and has dwindled ever since and people would rather remember the plays and remake them, and have similar story to Shakespeare plays. In The Holy Theatre we see the grand auditoriums with the red curtain and we are children again. This is because we are reminded of our childhoods and the first theatres we saw tended to be the stage in the school with its red curtain, the lights etc when we see this at the theatre we are children again. With The Holy Theatre we are reminded on what it was that made theatre so attractive to what and us its draw was and is.

However has been lost in recent years. The Holy Theatre is the opposite of everything in the Deadly Theatre which is why it is frustrating as we see

Shakespeare been done so well and made to look so easily done well. Yet more often we are made to see halfhearted rubbish and grand production that have lost any real sense in acting because audiences apparently what grand productions. By making the production grand in costume and venue all the ensemble are doing it building a shell of house and not gutting it with floors and rooms, a rather pointless task and worthless experiment.

With The Holy Theatre we expected a certain criteria, which the theatre must adhere to. The actor searches to get a reaction from the audience and the audience it looking for this. If this hasn't worked then the actor has failed, as has the piece of theatre. It has failed to meet the criteria. Brook explains and discusses the two climaxes in theatre. The usage of silence in the theatre and that silence can be a good tool and a powerful one at that. He says we are like robots we see something good and we “mechanically” clap this is known as the celebration climax.

We see it is good from what we see. Yet it good be so much more and the fact that we are clap because we feel that we should do. We don't reflect on what we see. We don't digest it. Should we be seen not to clap it would be interrupted that we haven't enjoyed the experienced nor doesn't it warrant a symbol of appreciation. Brook goes on to say that more than ever we crave for an experience, which is different. He uses the examples of jazz and classical music artist getting a more mainstream audience as an example.

Brooks says that if we were to recognise how far what we assume is to be holy theatre has drifted from what the holy theatre should be we have discarded the notion that the fine theatre of the 1940's should ever return.

Within the Holy Theatre Brook explains the idea of been “ shown” by an actor and the interesting debate on the function of the spectator. He says a spectator is either there or not. By that he means with the actor, appreciating the theatre and understanding it and the “ not” is quite simply lost and bored with it all. He says an actor’s work isn’t for an audience it is only for them.

Only they are truly engaging the theatre and the “ partner” – the audience- must be forgotten yet still constantly be kept in mind. Brook quotes the theories of Artaud and says that for Artaud this is a signal through flames. Yet this would imply that a sharing experience once contact is made. In Artaud search of the holy theatre he wanted and absolute theatre Brook then explores the Theatre of Absurd and the search of naturalism and truth with in it. Brooks say the absurd does not seek the unreal for its own sake; it has used the unreal to make explorations for the audience.

This is because the Absurd sensed the absence of the truth in our everyday exchanges and the presence of the truth in far-fetched situation i. e. should a tiger walk into our front room we don’t ignore it and continue with what we are doing but we engage with it and react to it accordingly. Now I shall be looking at the idea of The Rough Theatre. It is always the popular theatre which saves the day and through the ages this has taken various forms and all have one thing in common and that it they all have a degree of roughness to them.

All this could be a back garden, an auditorium, an arena, an empty room, a street, all these – if a piece of drama is taking place on it- is classed as a

theatre. The rough theatre is the exploration of the magical of theatre. It doesn't matter where the piece of theatre is viewed. A grand hall maybe a magnificent structure but will have no life yet a village hall is a bustling meeting place which is loved by all and this is the magical of the theatre. Unlike theatre architecture there is a relationship between conscious, articulate design and good function for example a well-designed hospital is more effective than a higgledy-piggledy one.

The science of the art of theatre building the secret lies in finding what stirs the relationship with people. An architect of a theatre should go in with the mindset of a set designer. This is the base of the rough theatre it is close to the people. This could be puppetry, theatre in the round. This type of theatre has an absence of style which features heavily in the holy theatre. Style needs leisure whereas assembling in rough conditions would be a weapon and is like a revolution – a dramatic change in away in which something is done or thoughts on an issue.

In the rough theatre a bang on the floor with a stick could be a knock on the day or a shot from the gun. This is a popular theatre which is freed of unity of style actually speaks a very sophisticated and stylish language. A popular audience would have will have no difficulty in accepting the inconsistencies of accent, dress etc. Yet they are able to follow the story and unaware that standards and rules have been broken. Peter Brook then goes on to discuss the relationship of the alienation effect and the happening effect. He discusses that they are similar yet opposite.

The happening is there to break through all the barriers set up by our reason whereas alienation is to shock us into bringing our best reasoning into a play. Alienation works in many ways, an action on stage will appear to us real if convincing and we objectively take it as the truth. A girl walks on stage crying holding her face, we use our intuition to come to the conclusion that she has been hurt and we feel sorry for her. Yet should she come on stage followed by a clown we laugh and notice the clown should he succeed in doing so? Therefore his mockery abolishes our first reaction with a complete opposite.

The happening is the reality a likely situation a form of naturalism whereas the alienation is an extreme something which we go looking for when we view theatre. Finally I shall be exploring the ideas of the Immediate Theatre. To begin with Brook compares the theatre to a magnifying glass. It is a small world. He goes on to say that the sense of community was once the village you lived in, then it was a street in the city now they community has evolved into an open minded global community. This has happened through time yet the theatre community stays the same.

The cast of Twelfth Night is the same as it was when it was first performed back in Elizabethan times as it is now. Yes I accept that different versions of the play may differ but the essence is the same, the story is the same.

Theatre essentially narrows life down. In life you don't have one aim or goal you have a series of aims i. e. career, family, house, good health etc. but in the theatre there is one aim and that is the conclusion to the play, musical etc. Even in the making process we have clear aims first rehearsal right the way through to opening night. It is clear-cut.



Yet theatre as an art form offers society a simple life, an escape from the “real world” and a look at fictional life’s of fictional people and somehow relate to them. In society generally there is isn’t the need for art forms. They aren’t even a luxury. We could survive perfectly well without art galleries and theatre we would miss them and as a society function just as well without them. Brook goes on to discuss the difference between what is global argued as the death of the theatre – the cinema- and the theatre and what is actually different between the two. First he says as an art form cinema is marvellous.

A big screen, elaborate sets, impressive buildings in which to view the cinema. Yet everything we see is been set out. There is no need for an imagination. We sit there watch the film and even if we don’t understand fully we absorb what is happening and take it for granted. In the cinema we see the past whereas in the theatre we see the present and this makes it more real and yet more disturbing and this could be a reason why theatre audiences globally are dwindling. Essentially the immediate is now. Now I didn’t fully understand Peter Brooks’s theories. Found some of his points interesting and thought provoking.

Particularly the point he makes that actors act for themselves and audiences are only passive and isn’t truly engaging in the drama. I also found his opening line to be a very interesting statement to make – “ I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all needed for an act of theatre to be engaging” basically what I believe what brook is trying to explain is that in the theatre we ask the same questions we do if we were to

observe society from a coffee shop or park bench and watch people. We would ask why is he walking quickly?

What is their relationship like? Why are they behaving like that? Why aren't they doing that? All these questions get asked on stage when something happens, when an actor does a certain movement or says a word in a manner we ask these questions. I don't think that theatre is an escape from the real world only a tool to see what it could be as none of us truly know. Back to the opening sentences we are all theatre. Should I walk across a road and a car comes the driver stops. He has engaged me and should we strip Brooks theories down to the bones this could be class as an engaging piece of theatre.