

Threads of Time: Recollections

Peter Brook

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“Threads of Time” and “Recollections” are surely too modest a title and subtitle for this remarkable memoir. Part quest, part odyssey, part spiritual self-exploration, the book is always more than a record of events. Fueled by an unflagging enthusiasm for new directorial challenges in theater, opera and film, Brook delights in drawing out the deepest insights of actors, collaborators and colleagues. Added to his own far-sighted perceptions of interpretive possibilities, these insights helped shape and illuminate often pioneering and always memorable productions in all branches of performance art. Much to the reader’s reward, Brook describes the genesis and achievement of productions ranging from his *Sentimental Journey* (filmed in 1943 when he was 18) to his ambitious productions of the Sufi classic, *The Conference of the Birds*, and the great Indian epic, *The Mahabharata*.

Brook recounts a lifelong concern to explore the mysterious springs of creativity and the forces of fulfilling self-realization — hence, his interest in Gurdjieff’s circle and teachings and his film of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. His vision of theater is bracingly ambitious; it is no less than an alchemical laboratory that liberates emotions and responses that audiences did not know lay within them.

His capacity for meeting remarkable men and women also is striking; his Latvian parentage seems to have provided him with immunity from the reserve and restraint that locks so many Anglo-Saxons into modest silence. As a result, his memoir offers an unrivaled gallery of great actors, directors and designers with whom Brook often collaborated. Any student of theater will learn much from Brook’s analyses of these collaborations; any student of life will learn just how much cost, courage and commitment it takes to realize a vision. Exuberant and fast-moving, this memoir urges us all to break out and reach out — and convincingly insists that intensity of shared purpose is the strongest guarantor of real reward.

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