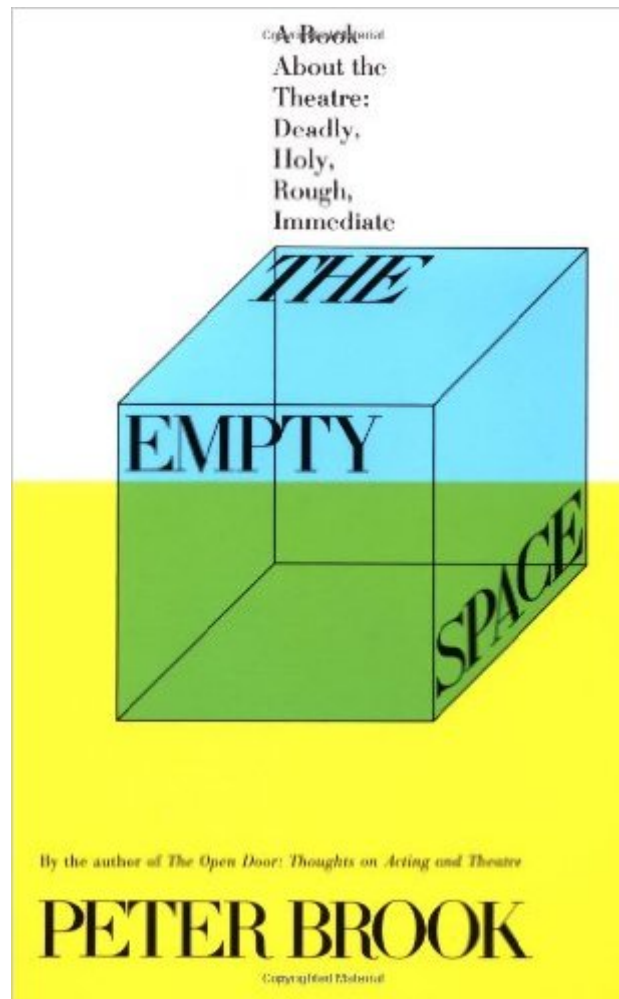


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The Empty Space: A Book About The Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate



Synopsis

From director and cofounder of the Royal Shakespeare Company Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* is a timeless analysis of theatre from the most influential stage director of the twentieth century. As relevant as when it was first published in 1968, groundbreaking director and cofounder of the Royal Shakespeare Company Peter Brook draws on a life in love with the stage to explore the issues facing a theatrical performance of any scale. He describes important developments in theatre from the last century, as well as smaller scale events, from productions by Stanislavsky to the rise of Method Acting, from Brecht's revolutionary alienation technique to the free form happenings of the 1960s, and from the different styles of such great Shakespearean actors as John Gielgud and Paul Scofield to a joyous impromptu performance in the burnt-out shell of the Hamburg Opera just after the war. Passionate, unconventional, and fascinating, this book shows how theatre defies rules, builds and shatters illusions, and creates lasting memories for its audiences.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Building upon the earlier work of Aristotle, Brecht, Artaud and others, Brook confronts the living organism of the theatre on four levels: Deadly, Holy, Rough and Immediate. In each level, Brook makes the case that the theatre is not only a necessary component to the human creature, but a being that despite its constant wounds and ills, manages to bounce up from the death bed and find a way to survive. Interestingly when Brook was writing (1968) there were many cynical critics who complained that the theatre was dying in the wake of television and film. Brook confronts the issue

that theatre attendance was reaching all time lows. Today, over thirty years later, it is daunting to consider that there are even more distractions (the internet, home video, etc.) and attendance is even lower still. Yet despite these imposing knives thrusting into the communal body that is the Theatre, the world's oldest art form manages to forge ahead, survive and, the rare cases, thrive all the while maintaining its cultural importance. Brook believes the theatre is unique in that it requires a community of artists and audiences alike to exist. That very sense of humanity and awe is what allows it to flourish in many instances. Brook's writing is admittedly erudite and sometimes pretentious. And perhaps when one takes the positions that he does, such lofty language and posings may indeed be impossible. I hate to say it, but Brook's book may be hard going for the theatre lay person- God knows I'm aware of how elitist that sounds, but I think it is true. Because of his thick verbiage, it may take a couple of stabs for the reader to unlock Brook's fevered soapboxing. But the journey is well worth the price. This is a book of theatre theory and therefore it may appear quite barren of practical solutions.

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