PETER BROOK

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
AND INTERVIEW

INTRODUCING:

NEW GUILDDIRECT
SERVICES FOR MEMBERS

PETER BROOK

On the afternoon of September the 6th 2001 at the Pictures Gallery of the Theatre Museum the Guild presented Peter Brook with his Lifetime Achievement Award. In accordance with his wishes, the ceremony was to be a close and modest affair attended by the Directors Guild Council members and a few of Peter's friends and family. To mark the occasion, our Honorary President gave an exclusive interview to director Faynia Williams for ***direct*** magazine readers (see pages 24-28).

Janet Suzman greeted the gathering and read a letter sent by Terry Hands:

"Dear Peter,
I cannot be with you today. I wish I could, if only to be re-inspired by a blue-eyed twinkle or to recall the day when one of my productions was going pear-shaped (yet another) and you suggested giving the actors parachutes."

▲ Peter Brook receives the Directors Guild Lifetime Achievement from David Lan

In his letter Terry Hands illustrated Peter Brook's ability to create entertainment and art at the same time and concluded:

'Thank you Peter for all your work – for giving to so many of our lives a purpose. There is no one like you – there never has been and there never will be."

David Lan, then took the podium to praise Peter's body of work and also the inspiration it has been to everybody.

"An empty space as a starting place for an act of theatre needs to be genuinely empty. When it comes to being filled, this should be with nothing but your – or you and your colleagues – own, individual needs, desires, hunches, improvisations, spontaneities. This is, I think, the much harder lesson that Peter has been teaching all his working life. And it is a hard lesson to learn....

.... Does he need this award?

No doubt he is pleased to receive it or he wouldn't be here. But greater than Peter's need to receive, I would guess, is our need to give, our need as directors to register and record that in this world – where so often compromise is equated with reasonableness, where the mantra is that 'there is no deeper reality than the bottom line' – that a theatre director who, unlike the novelist or the poet, must live and work in public, for a public, and be responsible for large – sometimes astonishingly large – sums of money – that a director can live fully, totally in this world of mammon and under-subsidy and be as much of a 'died in the wool' artist, as 'branded with his or her integrity like a stick of Brighton Rock' as – who? What are the appropriate clichés? As Van Gogh. As Michaelangelo.

It is important for us to have the chance to take a deep breath and acknowledge this – and, for me, this is the real meaning of this little ritual performance in which we are all taking part today."

Peter Brook in his acceptance speech thanked everybody involved and described why this award bares a particular significance.

'There is something behind this that makes me feel a real link with the aim of this body that calls itself a Guild.

GuildDirect...For all your financial needs...

All photograhy by Charles Marriott.

▲▲ David Lan, Sue Parrish and Herbert Wise

▲ Glenda Jackson with DGGB chair Sue Dunderdale and DGGB chief executive Malcolm Moore

▲▲ Peter Brook and friends

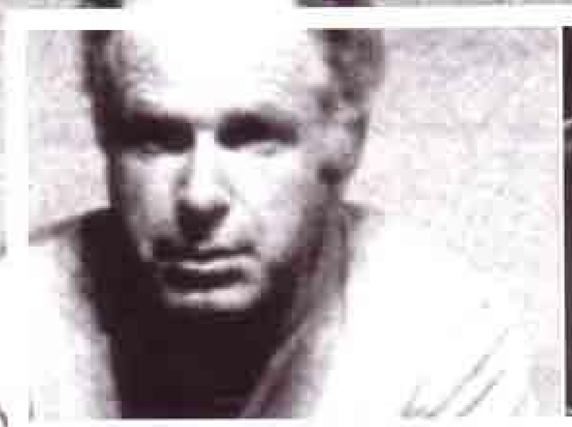
▲ Faynia Williams, Richard Crane and James Aubrey

Because one of the most curious and interesting things about being a director is that one is part of a craft. People each in their own different field with a passion for what they're doing are working together for the quality of the craft itself. It is very strong in film units, it is there in theatre companies. Through being together, working together, the quality of their craft could be enhanced in a way that they couldn't do it if they were just working by themselves. When I was asked to be President, some years ago, I really accepted because of the word Guild. Seeing that there was something that directors were not sharing but could share through their own and the art's benefit by being part of the Guild; my sense of it being not only a Trade Union recognising all of the tremendous historical importance of what Unions achieved, not only fighting for rights in the social aspect of the word but also together being endlessly concerned in the actual quality of what represents that particular thing called directing.

I always come back to something very practical and very concrete. Every time that we had meetings of a large number of directors, one recognises that directing covers so much that there can't be a single way. That everything is possible, every technique, every device, every approach is potentially right, that we are just touching the fringes of what will always been developing and yet, when directors are together, something very real can be shared and exchanged. So, in gratefully accepting this award and hearing all the nice things that have been said to my profound embarrassment, I'll naturally treasure it. Particularly, I am happy with it, as it is just one more step in this direction of directors feeling that they are not in rivalry, they are not in competition but they are part of a chain and part of a process and part of a Guild. So thanks to the Guild and thank you all very much."

A full transcript of David Lan's keynote address and Peter Brook's acceptance speech will be soon available on the website: www.dggb.co.uk

...Specifically designed with directors in mind...



PETER BROOK
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

David Lan, in his witty speech as award presenter, was amazed at the 'unlikely' plays Brook had directed. I saw those productions, almost all of them, skiving off Thursday afternoon school to queue for the 'gods' at the Theatre Royal, Brighton. I suffer from vertigo, and I remember clinging to the balcony rail as I went on the exhilarating roller coaster ride of Venice Preserved, Ring Round the Moon, The Little Hut, and all those others David mentioned. My heart and mind (and stomach!) leapt at the sheer audacity of it all, and the performances of Paul Scofield, John Gielgud, Irene Worth and Pamela Brown became the measure of all things. Then there was the RSC where Vivien Leigh sprouted never-ending red ribbons from her mouth when detongued in Titus Andronicus, my first glimpse of another theatre tradition from the East, and the taste of Europe in films like Moderato Cantabile with Jeanne Moreau, and the event that made the private process in a limited way public, the Theatre of Cruelty season at LAMDA. For me, none of this was 'unlikely', it was the way to keep curious, to keep questioning and to keep the theatre alive and kicking, and the path to the productions that we now acknowledge with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Even those who quail at Brook's current 'guru' status acknowledge that he has always made theatre an absolutely necessary and challenging place for the work of the director. So I relished the chance to talk with him about that work. The following is an edited version of an hour-long interview in which he talked as he rarely does about the craft of directing.

I began by saying that, although he was acknowledged rightly as a master craftsman, what interested me in his work was that I felt he had never lost the sense of being an apprentice.

PB: I think you can't lose this, because a craft has no end. A craft is a ladder. There always has to be another level to everything. Today people are so scared of any scale of values. Here's an example: Take the word 'icon'. This was once a word of great meaning. Today a pretty girl, neither prettier nor better than a hundred thousand others, is suddenly elected by the press to be an icon. You see a word that once had a great fine subtle meaning has now been degraded. And that is a sign of our time. This shows a ladder in the sense of going downwards. But a ladder also means that going upwards is equally possible. So, if one sees that there is a ladder hidden in the word 'icon', one can begin to wonder what really is an icon? Then you realise the coarse has hidden within it something finer. This is the great tradition of all crafts, everything fine can become finer and finer. This is what led to the guilds. In a guild, you start as an apprentice. The first apprentice deals with gross matter. He or she goes beyond that because there is a master calling them to investigate their tools. As they sharpen them and develop their skills they recognise that the next level is just a shell hiding something that is finer still. And in that way there isn't an end to the process.

FW: What are those tools that an apprentice director needs?

PB: Every apprentice director has to work between two extremes. There must be an aim, and an aim has no tools, but a craft is only about tools. An icon painter starts not with Jesus Christ but by finding earth and rubbing. Now what is earth, what are you rubbing in directing? First you have to develop a real living interest in relationships. It means that you see that you and an actor, you and an author, you and words are always in relationships. That demands your developing for yourself better observation, better listening, a finer use of your own instincts and intuitions. Then you see very rapidly that you can only develop this in yourself by helping to develop it in others. A director who is shipwrecked on a desert island, doesn't come back 30 years later infinitely more qualified. The only work possible would have been on imagination. That is very important, but it is only one very limited aspect. The way to develop all those skills is in interrelation. All interrelations are important, above all, the sense of the audience. If you have a total respect for an audience, you see that, in being aware of what holds an audience and what loses them, you develop more and more the awareness that rhythm, space, all the physical sides of theatre are playing on the audience, and it is in this way you develop your tools. The other bridge that has to be made is between what it takes to make an icon in the finest sense, and the equal rightness of the crude incoherent craftsman who comes and says, "Well, to hell with it, all I know is that you need a hammer". That is why all the forms of crude, popular, traditional theatre must never be despised. Recently, I talked to young directors in New York, and the most important thing I had to say to them was "Don't lose sight of the fact that the great Broadway musical directors of 50 years ago sat in the stalls and spent a lot of their time yelling "Faster, get on with it, keep going!". With those crude words they were echoing fundamental principles of the craft. At a recent young directors' workshop at the National Studio I said, "We have been talking about the higher aspects of the art of directing, but 'cut', 'it's too slow', 'speak up', are as fundamental as 'where is the soul', 'where is the heart', 'where is the meaning'?"

FW: You say 'there are no secrets'. We directors generally don't meet each other, don't know what goes on in other people's rehearsal rooms. Can you tell us what goes on in your rehearsal room? You used to say, for instance, that the first meeting was just to be got over and then you start work. Do you still feel that?

PB: Yes. A lot of things that I could talk about as open secrets, say 20 years ago, are now generally accepted. That's not through me, it's just that times have changed. When I started it was unthinkable for a director to get actors on the first day to do exercises. Today there is hardly a production, hardly a director who doesn't start with that. I personally believe in improvising anything that will give actors security. That is the first step of the process, whether it is through games or talk or reading or an outing or doing something unexpected, it doesn't matter. But watch out how easily something becomes a convention, gets degraded. Today games have lost a lot of their value. The very first time

a director said to a lot of terrified actors on the first day, "Now we are going to play a game", this was extraordinary because it was unexpected. Today, the way to really galvanise something new in a group of actors who've come in track suits ready to play a game, is to say, "We now start with a reading of the play". Everything has to be pragmatic and one has constantly to adapt.

When I was officially inaugurated as President of the DGGB, I stressed that what is interesting about this Guild is that it is called a Guild. Anything that makes it possible for directors to meet one another is of utmost importance. Every single time I've had a workshop or even a half day meeting or just sat in a circle with other directors, it's been rewarding, because nine tenths of the time the directors say they have never had a chance to meet one another, when this happens, something of the competitive rivalry, which will always be there, falls away a bit, and directors can look at one another with fellow feeling. This is very important.

FW: When you improvise with an actor how much do they know before about the project if it isn't a standard script?

PB: I don't think for a moment there's any virtue in keeping the actors in the dark. The work we did on the Brain started with Oliver Sack's book. Then we moved to a script. We started in

what was the usual way. Then we found for this particular project it wasn't going to work. So we abandoned it, and, a month later, began again with a smaller group. We started all together going to hospitals and meeting patients and doctors. Obviously with Hamlet one can't start in that way. One has to come very quickly to the words, because they are the starting point and there one is in touch with something everyone shares. I don't think for Hamlet to go on a trip to Elsinore could be useful. I don't think naturalistic present day improvisations, saying the King is like a candidate for the head of the Tory party so let's do an improvisation on Claudius murdering the rival candidate, would be useful either, because the play doesn't operate on that particular psychological naturalistic level. But when we did Woza Albert we started with every day life improvisations. When we did Le Costume we started with music, with South African jazz. Then naturalistic improvisations became of vital importance, to explore the difference between a wife's relationship with her husband in any Western city and how it was in the 50s in a township in South Africa, how different it was. It needed a lot of genuine improvising to make those issues clear and shared by the actors.

FW: Do your lighting and sound people come throughout all your rehearsals?

PB: We've never had specifically a sound person because that's not a specialised part of our work. But for lighting we have Phillipe Vialatte, who was first with us as the theatre electrician. He has a real talent for lighting, and is now there watching from the first rehearsal. He is there as part of the theatre and is doing what I learned when we first went with Paul Scofield to Moscow with Hamlet 50 years ago. When we arrived in the Moscow Art Theatre, our own lighting man spent eight hours preparing about 200 cues. They were all faithfully noted down. Then he said, "Let's run a few cues just to see". He gave cue one and nothing happened. And he gave cue two and nothing happened. And he realised that although they had written down this funny English word 'cue' nobody could understand it. All they knew was that somebody was shouting 'cue' and flashing a light. The Russian electrician just stood there not understanding what the panic was about. So we said, "Well, how do you do it?" They said, "We do not have a lighting man, we do not have an electrician, we have somebody who is all of that, he is there in every rehearsal and there comes a point when he begins to evolve the lighting. In performance he feels it each time – without cues. It made such sense. It seemed to me to be the only way. That's also the way our musician works. This is how Toshi Tsuchitori, our Japanese musician, develops his whole score. I make suggestions obviously and will discuss things with him, but he does this real work by himself, organically, through rehearsals. Gradually in rehearsal I suddenly notice a red light coming on, then going down again and something blue coming up, and then three days later we talk a bit about that and the lighting electrician does something new but he is there watching and working all the time. And the actors aren't in any way surprised to see that at one moment there is a working light - then that light is getting a little darker or a little brighter – and meanwhile Toshi is trying a sound or a new instrument.

FW: Can you talk about your own journey with Hamlet, from Scofield through Qui Est La? to this Hamlet?

PB: When I did it with Paul, the thrill, the triumph was Paul. At that time I had done several what were considered exciting productions. The reason was that I wasn't afraid. I followed convictions and intuitions without any fear. And for this reason I did very well with what in those days were considered unknown Shakespeare plays, like Love's Labours Lost. Then I came to Hamlet. And I was very, very respectful, I read everything, I prepared myself carefully and I remember that Kenneth Tynan, who was very perceptive, wrote a notice which began, "Peter has shown that he can be as dull as the next person if he really has to." And it was true, Paul was marvellous, so were many of the actors, but it was an absolutely academic, dull, totally respectful production – not a word cut. Then I never thought of doing Hamlet again. Every time I saw Hamlet I suffered. I felt that there were great bits, but so many boring bits. I would be counting up the scenes and thinking "Oh, my God, we haven't got to the closet yet", and when the closet was over I would think, "Oh, my God, we've got Ophelia's madness, and when we get through this there's all that long scene between the King and Laertes still to come, and then you've got the graveyard, and then you've got Osric". Then Charles Marowitz, when we did our Theatre of Cruelty season at LAMDA, did something that at the time was very daring and very interesting. In a typically 60s way, we said we know the story anyway - what if we take the plot out. So Charles did a collage. He rearranged the lines in a very free order, voices coming from here and there, words and phrases echoing one another, and it was very beautiful, experimental. After that I didn't think of Hamlet again until we came to do a director's workshop in Vienna with young directors from all

Peter Brook being interviewed by Faynia Williams.

All black and white photos by Laurence Burns.
All colour photos by Charles Marriot.

over Eastern Europe. Looking for a theme that could at once bring all these different directors together I said, supposing we were going to do a production of Hamlet today and there is the Ghost. We can't deny the Ghost. The audience has to be convinced by the fact that there is a Ghost, one can't get round it otherwise there is no play. Yet we know that any of the apparent methods - smoke, green lights, projections, weird sounds, none of those can cut any ice with us anymore. So, how do we approach the Ghost? For the first several days of the workshop everyone explored different suggestions of how to do the Ghost. A couple of years later we did another workshop in the Berliner Ensemble and came once again back to the scene with Hamlet and the Ghost. In fact, a year ago in Toronto I did the same thing and it was quite extraordinary the different forms that were thrown out by this particular experiment. In the meantime, we devised a play, Qui Est La, which came out of our looking for a form that could dramatise the voices of the early directors of the century. And it was the need to have a form that led to the idea of using a fragmentary version of Hamlet. I took Hamlet and cut it down to a series of extracts lasting about an hour. The joy of doing this, just taking odd bits, gave me the courage to wonder whether a genuine potted version may be possible. And there we are. But it's our experiment – the full text is still there, unharmed – and tomorrow someone else will find a different aspect to explore.

FW: That brings me really to what you said about the lack of the English language having a good word for director. Why do you think that is?

PB: I think one has to recognise in terms of craft, that this new craft of ours is very, very young. For the word 'carpenter' or 'stone-maker' or 'jeweller' to come into existence thousands of years had to go by. But for directors, it's been just a hundred years. I think that's why the sense of coming together and sharing experiences is linked to the fact that compared with acting it's so new, that directors haven't even an appropriate name because they are still finding their way. And it's not for nothing that directing can bring to a play or a playwright the best or the very worst. One shudders sometimes to think of what bad directing can do...

FW: But you came up with a wonderful word at a dinner with the film director Ermanno Olmi didn't you?

PB: That was of being a 'distiller'. I think it's a word we can use amongst ourselves but one couldn't put that on a programme. But I came up with another word, 'animator'. One is responsible for seeing that what is there comes to life. So there one is like a midwife, well more than a midwife, because one is also going one step further, trying to stimulate the actual ingredients that make the life flow. In that way one is not only stimulating life, but also taking away barriers that prevent life flowing through naturally – that is 'animating'. 'Distilling' brings us back to what we are talking about in the icon. For life to flow, not in its crudest but in its finest way, then you need filters. There is an energy in everything, but all energies are not of the same quality. There is an energy in highly propelled mud, or like shit that comes out of an orifice, at great speed, but diarrhoea is clearly not the same as breathing. And so the transition is through a simple process that everyone knows - if you want to purify anything, you filter it. And then beyond filtering it you get to the mysterious processes of a distiller, where you are going to need heat, a very precise blending of certain substances and chemicals and temperatures and cooling processes and all that comes into the art of distilling. So put the two together, the animating, which gets the raw process going, it gathers the raw material, the crude fruit of the vine and carries it into the distillery. Then distilling begins.

FW: Do you think you can train directors really?

PB: You can train anyone, but you train them not by telling or showing them what to do, but by giving them opportunities to explore for themselves within certain given conditions. And the given conditions are something that a director can't practice without. We are back to the desert island director. A director has to be put in a position where he or she has to relate to actors, to space, to different spaces, to different time slots – producing something in ten minutes, producing something over a number

of days and weeks, recognising what happens when you are working under tremendous pressure, and when you are working in the great quietness and stillness. Going through all those are ways that a director can be trained, learning by trial and error. An organisation with the means to do it can create conditions in which a director can practice and experiment.

FW: What about institutions that teach directing?

PB: Well I would be very suspicious with anything that's to do with.... you quote two dreaded words, institution and teaching. But obviously a good institution with the right teachers would do much better than a bad institution with bad teachers.

FW: You say somewhere, I think it's about an African storyteller that "I lay down my story so that somebody else can pick it up." For a new, young director picking up that story, in a sentence what would you say, what advice would you give them?

PB: My advice is very, very simple. Everything is possible but you must find your own way. So, if you look at my work and think, 'Ah there is an example, I will start by what he's done', you are bound to go wrong. Because the work that I do today is the result of all the work that I've done through trial and error, in changing times. And what the young director can take from my work is not in the form nor in the result. It's in the fact that I've been going on for so long. This can encourage them to believe that they mustn't give up, that they can go forward, that they can have aims beyond what seems possible, that they don't have to stay with all that other people tell them that they should be doing. Today, it has become a cliché, to praise my work for its simplicity. I've never aimed at simplicity. Simplicity happens when things that once were interesting begin to fall away. But when I started work in the theatre, I saw the work of directors of that time doing Shakespeare, who were highly praised because they were so simple. And I looked at them with horror, because their simplicity was dreary. I saw they were aiming at simplicity only because it was considered morally good to be simple. It was like being clean or not showing off. I was so appalled at the barren drabness in which Shakespeare was being done, and I'd be told it was so good because it was simple – "all done in curtains". And there were these grey curtains and Shakespeare, and they said that's beautiful because it is so simple. And it made me at once react the other way, looking for anything that was elaborate, complicated, rich, startling, anything was better than that dreaded thing called simplicity. Now, it's taken me a long, long while to go through all that, but someone today must go through it from a different starting point, because the world is different. There is always something to be found. But never in imitating a form even if you think the form is absolutely right. Only in asking oneself: "why did this form touch me? What was behind that form? Can it lead me to another form that can capture the same thing in a way that's right for us today?"

FW: But having inspirations.

PB: That yes. One must. That's very, very important. One must constantly be influenced as I was by the mere fact that someone has managed at some time to do something of a certain quality. That makes one know that a certain quality is possible. It comes back to the icon. Today I think that for a young painter it's vital from time to time to go to a museum and look at the amazing quality that was reached at certain periods of history that today is virtually impossible. Just to be reminded of that before you get caught up in people saying that what you do is so wonderful. For us in the theatre it is important to go back to Shakespeare just for that. Come back to Shakespeare, for a moment. Then go back to doing your own thing realising that whatever you do can never be all that good. This sense of perspective is not discouraging, it's an inspiration.

FW: What do you look for in your collaborators, particularly your actors?

PB: First of all, what I always said about Paul Scofield, an actor who will listen to you, let you explain with all your possible means of persuasion something you think is absolutely right, then do the exact opposite and make you realise that this is what you really meant. That's a creative collaboration. But the actor who says, "No, I'll do the opposite because to hell with it, I don't trust you", is a dead loss. That's a bad relationship and you both suffer. You need openness linked with absolute independence.

FW: And what about the future? What are you working on?

PB: God knows. I've always worked a bit like a cook in a big restaurant, where you've got lots and lots of things laid out and you go and look into one cauldron and you look into the other and you see what's coming to the boil. I've got further projects on the Brain, further projects with Africa, because these are things and areas where one can never feel "ah now we've finished". And also we need always to come back to doing things that are unshown, unsung and untalked about like these relationships with directors and with other people. These are part of ongoing work.

FW: You do a lot of work with other nations, other cultures. How have you avoided that thing of taking something somewhere and imposing?

PB: That to me is part of the inevitable but false English hang-up. We've got to try to live down all our European hang-ups and one atrocious colonial history. In the theatre, because one is working with a limited number of people in a limited space and time, there is no material in the whole world that isn't legitimate. Nothing belongs to anyone. If one has an international group one knows that one's making links between cultures is possible. This would be impossible on the scale of Belfast, on the scale of Europe. But with twenty people at the most, this is possible, and the moment that you do that then you see that these things don't belong to anyone. I've heard people say, "Oh, you have taken the Mahabharata, you're exploiting India, oh, you are pinching an African legend". But true themes link people. When we did the Mahabharata, the most interesting thing was that every one of the 20 odd nationalities and the cultural backgrounds involved felt that the story was from their own culture. Its meanings were their meanings. As a result, wherever we went, the audience didn't find it curious that there was somebody from Africa, somebody from Japan expressing an Indian story. They were in tune with the meaning. Some people who could look over Hamlet and say, "What are they doing exploiting our English Hamlet with all these mixed races"? Other people receive an experience that takes them into what I call an essential myth. Who would dare say for a second that this myth belongs only to pure Aryan white people from the region of Stratford-upon-Avon? If you follow this logic even a Jew from Birmingham is an outsider and can't play Shakespeare, let alone a man or a girl from Trinidad...

FW: I liked what you said about things not belonging to anyone in

particular. Beckett himself was very strict about people following his stage directions – Deborah Warner got into trouble for that – how do you feel about this kind of copyright?

PB: Every case is different, including Beckett. There is every reason to observe Beckett to the letter, I did so in Oh, Les Beaux Jours. He wrote with a passionate obsessive exactitude and unlike almost any other writer he actually had an equal mastery of music and image, and gesture, so that he could write his stage indications like a choreographer or a painter, or a musician. Yet, I supported Deborah entirely, she had her own idea and things must change. I think these are stupid quarrels. In exactly the same way, we had a press conference a couple of years ago about the South African season in Paris, and somebody said to me, "Why are you doing these South African plays with an all black cast. In the spirit of the International Center, why not have white actors to play black?" I said, "It's a specific case. We did the Ik with a Japanese actor, an American actor, an American actress, different people playing Africans. The African audience was very touched, and said they recognised their village life through these foreigners. But the specific suffering of South Africa is so recent that it needs a different approach, it needs documentary realism."

I do not feel that today one can do a South African play saying this is so universal that we can already forget about the specifics of apartheid. But in ten years' time, I am sure.... already now Woza Albert has been played by white actors – women for men - so it is just on the borderline, but I think there are specific cases where the suffering is too immediate. Today I read a tremendously virulent article by Sheridan Morley in the Herald Tribune about a play-monologue on Vivien Leigh. And he is appalled by it. He is appalled as somebody who knew her well. He said that the play has come at a moment when there are relatives, there are friends that are still alive and for something that is so ill-documented so false to facts, so much of a caricature, this is appalling. And there, I think, we can see this whole thing of freedom, freedom of speech, protectiveness, must always be re-examined case by case. I am sure he is right about Vivien Leigh, but if the same person were doing something about Mrs Siddons, Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, it would be different. There are legal and moral obligations – and there are exceptions.

FW: Thinking back to Vivien Leigh and Titus Andronicus, Laurence Olivier didn't do warm ups, did he?

PB: No, no one did those days.

FW: But when you have a star in a play as opposed to an ensemble there are people who don't do warm ups. One imagines when they work with you that they somehow all do.

PB: I hate the word 'warm up'. It's really a 'cool down'. When we did the first rehearsal of Oedipus at the National Theatre I had this whole young company and there was also Irene Worth and there was John Gielgud. That was the 60s, when I had already started with the Theatre of Cruelty and I think it was after Marat/Sade, so doing exercises was already a way of life. And the young company were thrilled at the idea of doing all these difficult physical exercises to start with, and there was John sitting down and I hadn't spoken about it or warned him. I said, "Now we'll do an exercise". Then everyone came and tried something difficult, saying a line and doing something else and doing a leap or a somersault at the same time or some physical thing along with it, and one after another they all came through except John. It was a crucial moment because you could feel the whole company waiting tensely. They knew that Olivier wouldn't have joined in. He would have thought 'this is ridiculous nonsense', because Olivier in that way was so very old school in rehearsal, although he was new school as a performer. And there was John, this ancient traditionalist - though in human terms, completely different - sitting there. To everyone's amazement he got up and threw himself into the exercise, and what was so marvellous, with such humility did nothing to disguise the fact that with a stiff embarrassed body he couldn't do it at all. But he wasn't ashamed of showing this. He was just admiring all the young people, seeing them do things that he couldn't do. And they were seeing this icon, this real icon trying his best to enter into their thing. In an instant, a real deep feeling of mutual respect began to flow between him and all these rough, young long-haired actors from a different generation.

FW: What a lovely story to end on. Thank you very much.