

PETER BROOK THE TIGHTROPE

83 minutes / English & French w. English Subtitles / Digital (DCP & BluRay) / 2013 / Documentary



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“How does one make theatre real? It is so easy to fall into tragedy or comedy. What is important above all is to be on this strict razor’s edge of the tightrope...”

- Peter Brook

Synopsis:

Peter Brook is one of the world’s most respected and revolutionary directors of contemporary theatre. To help his actors achieve extraordinary performances, he has a special exercise, called “the Tightrope,” which evolved over decades of experimentation and practice into a process of transformation that makes theatre real and new for actor and audience alike. In this quietly eloquent and unique film, director Simon Brook -- Peter’s son -- reveals how the Tightrope works its dramatic alchemy.

Now, for the first time in forty years, he’s agreed to raise the curtain and reveal how the Tightrope works its dramatic alchemy on his actors.

Filmed in total immersion with five hidden cameras, *The Tightrope* plunges us into the intimate aspects of Brook working with his troupe of actors and musicians. Without disturbing the truth of the moment, the film reveals the magic inherent to the creative process, taking us beyond the intimacy of a workshop and into a philosophical and soulful experience. This unique and deeply personal film takes us beyond the intimacy of a workshop, into a philosophical experience, on a tightrope...

Director’s Statement:

When my father Peter Brook finally agreed to let me film what goes on during the rehearsal period with his actors, the first questions I asked myself were: “How can I capture this intangible creative process? And how can I share that indefinable magical moment when theatre becomes alive and real?”

My intentions were clear:

To make a film that could take us in total immersion through a process that lasts several weeks in under ninety minutes, without compromising the integrity of the performance, and concentration only on the process, not on an end result. And especially, to go about it in a way that would be neither boring nor predictable, going beyond the static and dull tradition of “filmed theatre.”

The starting point was to create a workshop environment in which the actors and musicians taking part would all feel safe. Safe to try things. Safe to take risks. Safe to fail...

The next step was to devise a hidden multi-camera setup that would not only allow the actors and Peter Brook to forget that they were being filmed, but also allow us to be in the immediacy of the moment, ultimately bringing the viewer into the heart of the process and sharing the theatrical experience.

Simon Brook- Director's Biography:

Simon Brook was born in London and was educated in Paris and London. He started working as a runner at Pinewood at the age of twelve on various film productions.

After training for a year as an actor at the London Drama Center, he moved to Paris where he worked as a Company Manager for the European tours of Pina Bausch, the Dave Brubeck Quartet, and the Murray Louis Dance Company. He then spent a few years in New York and Los Angeles, working on Jim Jarmusch's film *Down By Law*, music videos with Academy Award winning director Zbigniew Rybczinsky and on Philip Kaufman's *Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

He established Black Cat Productions in New York, producing TV drama, music videos and shorts. In 1988m he was associate producer on the movie *Religion, INC* starring Sandra Bullock. Since his return to France, he has been directing documentaries and drama, including the J.G. Ballard story *Minus One*, and *Alice* by Saki, released theatrically on 90 screens with Volker Schlöndorff's *The Ogre*.

His many films include 20 short films about children in Caucasus, a documentary on the Amazon River for France 2, a documentary about the Karo tribe of Ethiopia for Canal+ and the documentary *Brook* by Brook, coproduced by the Dardenne brothers. He also made a film on Alexandria in the time of Cleopatra for Discovery and a musical documentary in the Amazon, *Jungle Magic*, for the BBC and ARTE. In 2006, he directed *The True Legend of the Eiffel Tower* a ninety minute docudrama for Canal+ and France 3 (with record ratings and the highest audience appreciation, beating *The March of the Penguins*).

In 2008 he directed the documentary *Generation 68*, a humorous offbeat look at the 1968 uprisings, commented upon 40 years later by Dennis Hopper, Milos Forman, Mary Quant, Vaclav Havel, Jean-Claude Carrière, Ed Ruscha...

More recently he produced and directed *Annie Nightingale: Bird on the Wireless*, a one-hour primetime musical documentary with Paul McCartney and Mick Jones (of the Clash) for the BBC. Simon just completed a 90-minute documentary *Indian Summer*, a medical road movie about Ayurvedia medicine.

Peter Brook:

Born in London in 1925, Peter Brook studied at Oxford and launched himself into stage directing for the first time at age 17. During the course of his career, he has distinguished himself in a multiplicity of genres: theater, opera, cinema and writing. For the theater he has staged numerous texts by Shakespeare for the Royal Shakespeare Company. In 1971 in Paris, he founded with Micheline Rozan, the International Center for Theatre Research (CIRT) and took over the direction of the Bouffes du Nord in 1974, where he stayed until 2010. His productions are notable for their iconoclastic aspects and their international scope. He also directs operas and has written several books. Among his most recent works are: *A Magic Flute*, a free adaptation of Mozart's opera for which he received the *Moliere Award* in 2011. Also on world tour in 2012 and 2013, a revival of *The Suit*.

This autumn will also see the release of his 1968 anti-war film *Tell Me Lies*, in a new version stunningly restored by the Technicolor Foundation and the Fondation Groupama Gan. The film will be distributed theatrically starting in France on October 10th 2012 followed by a worldwide release in 2013.

Awards:

- Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play *Marat/Sade*, 1966
- Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1971
- Freiherr von Stein Foundation Shakespeare Award, 1973
- Grand Prix Dominique, 1975
- Brigadier Prize, 1975, *Timon of Athens*
- Society of West End Theatre Award, 1983
- Emmy Award, 1984, *La tragédie de Carmen*
- Prix Italia, 1984
- International Emmy Award, 1990, *The Mahabharata*
- Praemium Imperiale, 1997
- Dan David prize, 2005
- The Ibsen Award, 2008
- Critics' Circle Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts 2008

Honors:

- Commander of the Order of the British Empire, 1965
- Honorary DLitt, University of Birmingham, 1990
- Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, 1991
- Honorary DLitt, University of Strathclyde, 1990
- Honorary DLitt, University of Oxford, 1994
- Officier de l'Ordre de la Légion d'honneur (France), 1995
- Companion of Honour, 1998
- Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur (France), 2013

"As an actor I have found Peter Brook to have an extraordinarily concentrated and penetrating understanding of the emotional and practical requirements demanded by the needs of authors and actors." –Paul Scofield, actor

"Peter Brook has been an inspiration and a challenge to all of us who work in the theatre. He's a giant. He's one of the greatest innovators in the last half of the twentieth century."-Andre Gregory, director

"It is only a slight exaggeration to say that, before Peter Brook came along (with apologies to Tyrone Guthrie, who helped), a Shakespeare play in the British theatre meant men in tights declaiming under a proscenium arch amid naturalistic stage sets. Mr Brook changed all that. He showed that Shakespeare could be performed in modern dress, in a white box, or with almost no props at all. All this undogmatic rethinking happened so long ago now, much of it at Stratford in the 1950s, that theatre audiences these days, growing up to see innovation as the norm, tend to take his revolution for granted. Yet Mr Brook's achievements - which bear comparison with those of Wieland Wagner in the opera house - have always gone far beyond Shakespeare and England. In his hot youth he worked with Salvador Dali at Covent Garden, then won the admiration of Binkie Beaumont for his West End musicals. Since 1974 Mr Brook has been based in the inimitable Bouffes du Nord theatre a few blocks from the Gare du Nord in Paris. Here in his atmospheric theatrical laboratory he has rethought operas like Carmen and made plays out of the Mahabharata, Shakespeare's sonnets, the life of the African sufi Tierno Bokar, and the letters of Anton Chekhov and his wife. No theatre director is more international. None roots his breaking of the rules in a more thorough grounding in the rules he wants to break. Now 83, Mr Brook says he will graciously slip slowly from the stage. At the magical Bouffes, indeed, there is no need of a curtain at all."

-“In Praise of Peter Brook,” The Guardian Editorial Staff

Featuring:

Yoshi Oida: Japanese Actor

Hayley Carmichael: English Actress

Marcello Magni: Italian Actor

Jos Houben: Belgian Actor

Adbou Ouologuem: Malian Actor

Shantala Shivalingappa: Indian Actress and Dancer

Lydia Wilson: English Actress

Emily Wilson: American Actress

Micha Lescot: French Actor

Khalifa Natour: Palestinian Actor

Caesar Sarachu: Spanish Actor

Toshi Tsuchitori: Japanese Composer & Musician

Franck Krawczyk: French Composer & Musician

Marie-Helene Estienne: Artistic Collaboration

Crew:

Director: Simon Brook

Authors: Peter Brook & Simon Brook

Director of Photography: Alexis Kavyrchine

Camera Operators: Laurent Coltelloni, Philippe Dorelli, Raphael O'Byrne, Marina Tadie

Colorist: Lionel Kopp

Sound: Philippe Avril, Cecile Coutelier, Romain Drogoul

Production Design Consultant: Benoit Barough

Art Direction: Yann Dury, Antoine Champerne

Editing: Josie Miljevic, Barbara Bossuet

Sound Editor: Agnes Ravez

Sound Mixer: Theiry Delor

Production: Brook Productions

Producers: Simon Brook, Ermanno Olmi, Luigi Musini, Jean-Pierre Eklou Attisso

Coproducers: Cinemaundici (Italy) & ARTE France (France)

In association with: International Center for Theatre Research (CIRT)

SCREEN DAILY

The Tightrope: A Theatrical Adventure With Peter Brook

5 September, 2012 | By Lisa Nesselson

Dir: Simon Brook. France-Italy. 2012. 86mins

While sweeping statements are a risky proposition, it's difficult to imagine any living actor who wouldn't want to see Simon Brook's compact and inspiring doc *The Tightrope*. Deploying seven hidden cameras as the director's 87-year-old father Peter Brook works with a group of seasoned actors from varied cultural backgrounds, the film provides a precious glimpse of the senior Brook's nifty, time-tested exercises for getting at the truth of theatrical performance, one hard-earned moment at a time.

With a keen eye for immersion and immediacy, Simon Brook and his editors have whittled down two weeks of rehearsals into a seamless, up-close-and-personal parcel that unspools like a breezy masterclass.

After its Venice premiere Out of Competition, this playful (literally!) venture is set for theatrical release in Italy and should enjoy a sprightly television career wherever the creative process is welcome.

The title refers to an exercise in which the actor walks an imaginary tightrope stretched from one end of the rehearsal space to the other. The challenge is to navigate the ever-so-narrow string with such conviction that the audience believes a flat stretch of carpet is an unforgiving highwire. Thanks to Peter Brook's astute and playfully prodding evaluations, the exercise does wonders for focus, concentration and captivating physical schtick.

Englishman Brook has been based in France for over 4 decades. In addition to his innovative stagings for theater and opera, his film directing includes *Lord Of The Flies*, *Marat/Sade*, *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, *The Mahabharata* and 1968's recently restored anti-Vietnam picture *Tell Me Lies*. *The Tightrope*, recorded over a span of two weeks in Paris, would already be touching and instructive if it were "only" a rare filmed record of a modern master at work. But there are moments here, captured for posterity, in which the title exercise leads to an absolutely convincing ah-ha! of emotion, despite the absence of scenery and costumes.

Brook's hand-picked actors and several acoustic musicians are alert, agile, palpably creative (as are the five camera operators) and unafraid to fail. When everything clicks, it really feels as if *You Are There*, witnessing the powerful difference between adequate and astonishingly good performance.

With a keen eye for immersion and immediacy, Simon Brook and his editors have whittled down two weeks of rehearsals into a seamless, up-close-and-personal parcel that unspools like a breezy masterclass. (Everyone's clothes were washed each night for continuity.)

Peter Brook, seated in a chair observing the troupe with what seems to be a permanent glint in his eyes, doesn't speak all that much. But what he has to say - about the way the now-forgotten hourglass was once a physical reminder of the passing of time, of how insects and birds easily operate with a "shared mind" that humans find almost unattainable, how in all languages you "play" a role - is frequently wise and memorable. Colour grading by Lionel Kopp is top notch.

<http://www.laurelzuckerman.com/2013/07/simon-brook-on-the-documentary-the-tightrope-an-in-depth-exploration-of-peter-brooks-methods-.html>

Simon Brook on "The Tightrope" an immersion into the creative process of director Peter Brook

Interview by Dominique Godrèche

Simon Brook's documentary, "The Tightrope" ("Sur un fil") reveals, for the first time ever, the experimental - and confidential - rehearsal methods of the legendary theatre director Peter Brook, Simon's father.

Shot with five hidden cameras, this film offers a unique in-depth look at Peter Brook's theatrical and philosophical approach. At the age of 87, Peter Brook finally agreed to discuss the fundamentals of his work during a ten day workshop set up especially for the making of "The Tightrope".

Simon Brook talks with Dominique Godrèche

Dominique Godrèche: Is the idea of this movie related to your previous documentary, "Brook by Brook," an intimate portrait of your father?

Simon Brook: Yes...After having realized "Brook by Brook", I thought it would be interesting to do more about his work, and spoke to Peter about it. But he refused the rehearsals to be filmed; after a few years, and a lot of refusals, he said, "let's shoot one day, with a few actors, practicing the tightrope!" So one year later, we had forty people, five cameras, and a set. But he was actually thinking of a 15 mn film!

The film focuses on the exercise of "the tightrope", a theatrical practice consisting in keeping one's direction, basically a lesson on how to keep one's balance: an issue that can also be applied to life?

Absolutely. People often see theater as a reflection of life: the tightrope demands the actors to be totally alive, with a clear destination, living in the present, but heading to the future without falling.

So much like life: as human beings, we have to walk as we can.

Why did you, among all the exercises Peter Brook teaches, choose that one?

Well, this extremely difficult exercise involves the actor not to fall, and to remain present in the moment: so it does not allow any room for error. And you can see if someone is boring, or unbelievable: thus it explains what it means to practice theater. I also chose it for its visual quality, as it allows the audience to participate in the unfolding of the exercise. It is an immersive experience.

***The Tightrope*, fundamentally, is a matter of life and death, as you have to find a balance not to fall, but it also allows the evaluation of an actor, through the intensity of his presence: is that a conception**

of theatre similar to Antonin Artaud's vision, "*le Theatre de la Cruauté*",* an approach to acting as a total and dramatic involvement, commitment?

Yes: good theatre is a shared experience where the audience is changed. But then, making a film about it is not very interesting. Thus the challenge was: how can I make an immersive film, where you are not just watching an actor jumping around, but allowing the spectator to experience what an actor really goes through?

So, was this rehearsal work secret until today?

It was not, as such, "a secret", but it did happen behind closed doors, as the presence of people would affect the outcome of what Peter is doing: that is why it had never been seen before.

Did you experience any specific difficulties during the shooting?

It has been a very difficult film, bringing actors, musicians from all over the world, to create this atmosphere, with five hidden cameras. The logistics were complex, the real difficulty being the fact that the film is based on improvisation. So when the partners would ask: "*what is the film about?*" I would just answer, "improvisation"... And for the making of the film, the cameramen had to keep a high level of concentration, as no one knew what was going to happen, like in the tightrope practice: nothing is done a second time, or rearranged.

The "*Tightrope*" is a condensate of your father's teaching. How did he react to the movie?

He was very happy with it, as it expresses his approach of theater, and life. And then, he is also happy, because when people ask him, "*What goes on during the rehearsals?*" He can now answer: "*watch the movie!*"

<http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2013/04/11/peter-brook-spieghero-il-teatro-ai-ragazzi.html>



Peter Brook's theater will explain to the children of the Valley

ROME Among the excellences of the theater who have been around the world, surrounded by a few more to that 'aura' cult 'that surrounds the "masters", Peter Brook can claim the gift of surprise, being found in the streets and stories unusual even now that 88 years ago and could happily live on their laurels. Tireless, was thrilled to 'experience the Teatro Valle in Rome occupied, and decided, with the collaboration of Funaro of Pistoia, Andres Neumann and in conjunction with the new tour of the hit Italian A Magic Flute (tonight and tomorrow at the Teatro Ristori Verona, 16 and 17 at the Teatro was Pontedera), to present right at the Valley tomorrow, The Tightrope disturbing the film's son, Simon Brook, preceded (at 20) to be a conversation with Conchita De Gregorio and Isabella Imperiali. "I have sympathy for those young people - says the teacher on the phone from Paris, where he lives - are showing that even in extreme situations something can be done. For example, to prevent a historic theater is closed. Although this is only the first step to start with if you want to understand what it means to do theater. " To do "theater" speaks to The Tightrope, co-produced by Ermanno Olmi and Luigi Musini, presented out of competition at the last Venice Film Festival, unique document because it shows with clarity what has never been seen. For the first time, in fact, the British director has opened the door to a rehearsal with his actors, calling for the 'occasion even some members of the "historical" of his company, as the great Yoshi Oida, showing that very delicate, meticulous balance between alienation and emotion, truth and fiction is that the work of the 'actor. And for Brook Theatre. "It can be done in less than all, of the scenes, the music, the decorations, what is essential is the 'actor. The life of 'actor, "he says. What is the "life of the 'actor', that very special power that comes from the truth of his presence in the scene, the film tells the story, showing the exercises and secrets of how to reach the famous " Tightrope ". "It's a tightrope that I consider a good example to say what is the life of an actor. It is the tightrope walker to find that the 'balance walking on the wire must be able to see the point of arrival and at the same time what c 'is on the sides. Must swing without losing sight of the goal. We would do so frantic, anxious, or we would stop, falling right and left. A little 'as it happens to you, in Italian politics, "joked Brook in Paris in his theater ever, the Bouffes du Nord, is already working on a new show. Theme: the brain. "It's a job I'm doing with a pool of employees. I am interested in exploring the brain to figure out who is the 'man in his millions of forms. Strange? Why? What is more classic theme if not the 'human being and his behavior? ". © ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

[ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ITALIAN, ERRORS MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN TRANSLATION]

EL PAÍS

Peter Brook: The octogenarian tightrope

"How does a real theater? It's so easy to fall in tragedy or comedy ... What is important is to be on the razor's edge ... loose rope itself. " These words of Peter Brook , one of the most prestigious and groundbreaking directors of modern theater. A creative universe reflected in *Tightrope* (*The tightrope walker*), film directed by his son Simon Brook, a fascinating immersion classes one of the great masters of theater. After passing through the Venice Film Festival, the film opens today at the Cinematheque Slaughterhouse (Madrid), which this month not only will host several activities performing arts Fringe Festival Madrid, but his own film program will also feature theater, dance and circus as protagonists.

But now the question is: "How does a real theater? It's so easy to fall in tragedy or comedy ... What is important is to be on the razor's edge ... loose rope itself. " And the answer is Peter Brook's challenge practicing *tightrope* in their training of actors, a process of transformation that makes the Theatre Royal, both the public and the actor himself. For the first time in forty years, Brook has agreed that the cameras filmed how *tightrope* alchemical causes its effect on the actors. For two weeks, Simon, son of Brooklyn, saw a group of actors and musicians in their exploration of the secrets of the theater. The documentary has eleven players ten nationalities (repeat only two English) from United States to Mali, via Japan and Palestine, including the Spanish Sarachu Caesar, who worked with Peter Brook is *Eleven And Twelve* and *Fragments* , Beckett. As in his day were also disciples, collaborators and actors Brook Spanish actors Antonio Gil and Sergio Peris-Mencheta.

Filmed in total immersion, with five hidden cameras (quite exceptional and unique circumstances for a documentary) *The tightrope walkertakes* us into the intimate aspects of the work of Brook and his company, without altering the truth of the moment and so revealing surprisingly visible magic inherent to the creative process. *Tightrope* is key to the philosophy and life of Peter Brook and anyone who shares remains the same ... This film, unique and deeply personal, leads beyond the intimacy of a workshop produces an almost philosophical experience and always on a tightrope.

"When my father finally agreed to let me shoot what happens with the actors during the test period, the first thing he asked me was ' how can I capture this intangible creative process?, And how can I show that indefinable magic moment when the theater ? it becomes alive and real "says Brook Simon, whose intentions to make this project were unambiguous: make a film of less than 90 minutes I could fully immerse ourselves in the process lasting several weeks, without compromising the integrity of the action and focusing only on the process, not the end result. "And above all, do not prove so boring or predictable, going beyond static and boring tradition of filmed theater," said the London-born director (hometown of his father) and educated in this city and in Paris (Peter Brook where you live).

The starting point for this film was to create a workshop environment in which actors and musicians who participate feel safe. "Insurance things to try. Safe to take risks. Insurance against failure ... "says Simon Brook who stated that his next step was to design a configuration with multiple hidden cameras not only allow the actors and Peter Brook forget they were being filmed. "And also," he adds, "we are allowed to be in the immediacy of the moment, and ultimately lead the viewer into the heart of the process and to share with him the theatrical experience."

Released in the official section of the Venice Festival, this French-Italian co-production is a unique opportunity to enter the universe of this fundamental principal in the recent history of world theater. The film opens in Spain on the big screen at the Cinematheque Slaughterhouse today on 11 (you will pass on 12, 19, 25 and 26 July), but also can access your viewing from today through CANAL + Xtra (11, 13, 21 and 29 July).

The festival also will screen *Comedians, with the sun in the suitcase*, which traces the history of one of the most important theater companies in Spain, the program brings *The Vice Seventh Tour of China*, a documentary that follows the steps of Ballet Lausanne the East, and the Association of Documentary Film scheduled *Tightrope*, a film that takes us into the life of a family living for his passion: the circus.

[ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN SPANISH, ERRORS MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN TRANSLATION]

Télérama^{fr}

"Peter Brook, on a Wire", the enchanted kin

TV | What's happening upstream of a show? Simon Brook, son of Peter, lift the corner of the curtain by inviting us to observe the actors at work.

If dogs are not cats, it happens that theater people have a root that indifferent boards. This is the case of Simon Brook, son of director Peter Brook and actress Natasha Parry, who has not inherited the dramatic fiber as his sister Irina.

"In my youth, especially the theater seemed like a funny activity, an extension of children's games that allowed to travel to Africa and India, where I accompanied my father two summers in a row before discovering, amazed, the Mahabharata, overnight in Avignon. Theater, it may be that ... But when it's bad, it is so painful to me that evening slide! "

Preferring the screen to the stage, Simon Brook once loved to use his super-8 camera by enclosing it in a plastic bag and turning in his bathtub war movies underwater. Since then he has made all sorts of documentaries mounting archives around May 68, a docudrama about the history of the Eiffel Tower, discovery programs ... and a beautiful portrait of his father (1) man discrete if any, after which he got the idea to film the rehearsals of one of his shows.

"He told me that it would be very boring. If we want to account for the development of a staging, it must comply with the time, but who would watch a documentary of ten to twelve weeks? If you condense the time, it no longer makes sense. Documentary serials there are tried, beginning with a cast and ending on applause, curtain falls ... and so what? One day my father told me: "There is an exercise called the tightrope, in which the actors walk on an imaginary thread, you could shoot to give an idea of what to do theater true. But it will give you just a sequence of ten minutes ... ""

A year and a half later, the director invests the former veterinary center slaughterhouses Paris to shoot *Peter Brook, on a wire*, feature around the various improvisation exercises honed by his father for half a century the secluded and more goals. To account without disturbing the course of these workshops, the production meets between the months of April and May 2012, a dozen actors from around the world in a setting bathed in shadows, with five hidden cameras with their cameramen in cabins.

"If we had turned a single camera, a classic documentary, we have spent our time rebuilding experience mounting, combining footage shot at different times. The embodiment in principle possible to respect

the multicamera real within each time sequence. As a sports broadcast, which supports the viewer's attention because it plunges inside the event. "

Concealing the crew, Simon Brook was moved, so to speak, in wildlife filmmaker. *"At one time it was thought that the shooting was committed enough to leave a cameraman, bring on the shelf and enter some stuff in the shoulder. It was a disaster: the actors could not help playing the actors, and I quickly returned the cameraman in her little box. "*

Upon arrival, the success of *Peter Brook, on a wire* holds equally natural to see what gives continuity to the effect induced by the technical device. Enhanced by mounting the film, which mask the spread of its location on a ten-day flow, reducing the time of the workshop brookien the duration of a night. *"Every night, a dresser wash clothes each of actors to deliver them the next day. What I call making false to produce true. "* As in the theater, in fact.

[ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN FRENCH, ERRORS MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN TRANSLATION]