

Antonin Artaud
Theatre of Cruelty

Antonin Artaud

1896-1948

- French writer, actor, costume designer
- a part of the surrealist movement
- called for experimentation in theatre
- developed ideas of Theatre of Cruelty

Theatre and Its Double

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No More Masterpieces

- If people are out of the habit of going to the theater, if we have all finally come to think of theater as an inferior art, a means of popular distraction, and to use it as an outlet for our worst instincts, it is because we have learned too well what the theater has been, namely, falsehood and illusion. It is because we have been accustomed for four hundred years, that is since the Renaissance, to a purely descriptive and narrative theater-storytelling psychology; it is because every possible ingenuity has been exerted in bringing to life on the stage plausible but detached beings, with the spectacle on one side, the public on the other – and because the public is no longer shown anything but the mirror of itself. ~ Artaud

No More Masterpieces

- Psychology, which works relentlessly to reduce the unknown to the known, to the quotidian and the ordinary, is the cause of the theater's abasement and its fearful loss of energy, which seems to me to have reached its lowest point. And I think both the theater and we ourselves have had enough of psychology.
- Stories about money, worry over money, social careerism, the pangs of love unspoiled by altruism, sexuality sugarcoated with an eroticism that has lost its mystery have nothing to do with the theater, even if they do belong to psychology. These torments, seductions, and lusts before which we are nothing but Peeping Toms gratifying our cravings, tend to go bad, and their rot turns to revolution: we must take this into account. ~ Artaud

Theatre and Cruelty

- Like the plague, theatre is a powerful appeal through illustration to those powers which return the mind to the origins of its inner struggles. And we clearly sense Ford's passionate example is only a symbol for a much greater and absolutely fundamental task. ~Artaud

Theatre and Cruelty

- Theatre..... It unravels conflicts, liberates powers, releases potential and if these and the powers are dark, this is not the fault of the plague or theatre, but life. ~Artaud

About Artaud and The Theatre of Cruelty

by Poppy Bullard

- Antonin Artaud is the father of cruelty – the gut-wrenching, spine-squirming discomfort that only a direct confrontation with physical reality can produce.
- His ideas about the Theatre of Cruelty redefined the limits to which an audience could be pushed, and the horrors to which they could be subjected.
- This sinister genre has had a varied performance history, ranging from pieces such as *The Cenci*, written by Artaud, which features the death and execution of an entire family, to far more contemporary subjects who use the theory to create an alternative take on existing texts.

About Artaud and The Theatre of Cruelty

by Poppy Bullard

- The Theatre of Cruelty is not bent on fostering public sadism or masochism, instead the cruel aspect of the theatrical discipline concentrates on dissolving the image of theatre as synonymous with fiction.
- Artaud's own brand of surrealism attempts to shatter the illusion of theatrical falseness, and focus on creating reality within the theatre. But this is not reality as we know it. Artaud's reality is one that comes from within; the inescapable inner-workings of the human mind and relationships that are usually hidden and suppressed by outer appearances.
- The confrontational style aims to shock, unsettle and disturb the audience by juxtaposing jarring images of fiction and reality, often using distorted or warped human figures.

The Theater of Cruelty has been created in order to restore to the theater a passionate and convulsive conception of life, and it is in this sense of violent rigor and extreme condensation of scenic elements that the cruelty on which it is based must be understood.

This cruelty, which will be bloody when necessary but not systematically so, can thus be identified with a kind of severe moral purity which is not afraid to pay life the price it must be paid.

–Artaud

from The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)

Peter Brook

and the influence of Artaud

Peter Brook- background

- English Director, Producer
- born 1925
- introduced the avant garde to England (Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Cocteau)
- became well-known for presenting Shakespeare with “innovative” twist
- influenced and explored “tenets” of Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty
- produced Genet’s The Balcony in Paris in 1960
- one of the most influential directors and “thinkers” about theatre in the 20th century

***The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat
as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of
Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade***

or ***Marat/Sade***

by Peter Weiss

- influenced by Brecht and Artaud- Weiss wrote the play in German (1963)
- a play within a play- set - July 13, 1808 in the “famous” Charenton Asylum
- the play within the play is directed by the inmate the Marquis de Sade- the play takes place during the French Revolution (1793)- culminates with the assassination of Jean Paul Marat

The Death of Marat by Jacques-Louis David (1793)



Martin Beck
Theatre

PLAYBILL

the magazine for theatregoers

THE PERSECUTION AND ASSASSINATION
OF MARAT AS PERFORMED BY THE INMATES
OF THE ASYLUM OF CHARENTON UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF THE MARQUIS DE SADE



form, structure, production history

- play has music and songs comment on the ideas in the play- the themes, etc.
- uses Artaudian techniques
- Brook directed the London production (1964) and directed the Broadway production (1965-6)
- won Tony- best play, best director, best actor, best costume design (1966)

<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/video/peter-brook-in-conversation>

Marat/Sade
by Peter Weiss
directed by Peter Brook
(1967)

<https://youtu.be/RJc4I6pivqg>