

PETER BROOK: TEACHERS' RESOURCE PART TWO



V&A

This teaching resource was
supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund

Background	3
Introduction	4
Aims of the project	5
The Hubs: working methods and feedback	6
Museum objects for inspiration	30
Summary - What did the project achieve?	32
Conclusion – What can schools gain by taking part in projects like this	34
Want to know more? - Get involved	35
Resources	36

In 2014 the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) acquired the archive of influential theatre director Peter Brook, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and a private donor. The vast collection of articles, scripts, photographs, letters and designs has since been catalogued.

The Museum also embarked on an ambitious schools project. Six hubs were formed, each comprising a secondary school or youth theatre, a museum and a performance venue, from a locality within one of six outer-London boroughs. Each hub visited the V&A Archive to explore the Peter Brook collection and chose one of Brook’s productions as a starting point for their own new performance. The groups were also introduced to the V&A’s Theatre and Performance galleries with bespoke guided tours.

Schools were given rich opportunities to explore their local cultural offer and collaborate with arts professionals, by working with a director appointed by the performance venues, and visiting their local museum. Through these partnerships the schools could engage with themes of the plays at a deeper level. The project saw 84 young people working with practitioners from arts venues and museums in over 70 facilitated sessions to create the shows. These were performed at the V&A in April 2016. Three of the shows were also performed in their partner theatre and one in a partner museum.

This resource forms the second part of the Peter Brook Teachers’ Resource. It outlines the various ways of incorporating projects like these into the school day or running them as extra-curricular activities. It highlights useful aspects of practice and records the reflections of the parties involved. The groups explored the archives of the following Brook productions: *King Lear* (1962), *Lord of the Flies* (1963), *Marat/Sade* (1964), *The Tempest* (1968) and *Oedipus* (1968).

The principles described in this resource can help with planning your own projects: using archives and museum collections to inspire performance work and seeking out partnerships with local and national cultural organisations. For further information about working with the V&A and accessing the Theatre and Performance collections, see page 35.

The first part of the Peter Brook Teachers’ Resource provides a theatrical and historical context for six Peter Brook productions – the five listed above, plus *The Mahabharata* (1988). Drawing on material from the Peter Brook collection, the resource provides a summary of each work’s impact at the time it premiered, along with discussion points and activities to help students explore the relevance of the works today. Contextual detail is provided regarding the wider historical landscape in which each play was produced. World developments in politics, science and technology and the arts are referenced, as well as activity by Brook’s peers on the London stage.

The Peter Brook: Teachers’ Resource Part One can be downloaded here

The aims below were first discussed in a HLF mentoring meeting with curators from the V&A’s Theatre and Performance department and staff from the Museum’s Learning Team. They focussed on how the Peter Brook collection could best be used as a springboard for schools’ own performance work. We also wanted to use the project as an opportunity to develop links between cultural providers and encourage artists to think of using archives and collections for their own inspiration. These aims were further developed in consultation with the partners and the outcomes of each performance reflect each hub’s focus.

We said that, as a result of engaging with the project, students will:

- Develop creativity and resilience through collaborative ensemble work
- Have a deeper understanding of where Peter Brook fits within the history of British theatre, and his approach to directing
- Employ a range of skills, techniques and approaches used by Brook
- Develop self-management skills when working in a professional environment
- Engage with heritage materials and develop links with the V&A and local museums and arts venues which they can continue to utilise after the project is completed

We also aimed to:

- Encourage the practitioners to use archives and collections to enhance their own practice
- Strengthen existing relationships between cultural organisations or create new ones where those relationships had not existed before the project
- Develop teachers’ confidence and expertise in drawing on heritage materials as a source of inspiration in the classroom
- Develop teachers’ expertise in using Brook’s techniques and approaches in other relevant lessons

Hub 1: South East London

Performance venue: The Albany (thealbany.org.uk)
Museum: The Horniman Museum (horniman.ac.uk)
School: Sedgehill School (sedgehill-lewisham.co.uk)
Source production: *Oedipus*

Rehearsal Schedule:
An example of a school-based extra-curricular approach

- This hub chose to run 17 weekly sessions, in two hour slots after the school day had ended. It included a visit to the V&A Theatre and Performance galleries and archive, the Horniman Museum, a theatre trip to see Peter Brook’s *Battlefield* at the Young Vic Theatre in London and two full-day research and development days at the Albany theatre.

Advantages of this structure:

- Consistency of rehearsal day and time helped to ensure student attendance; they were used to the rehearsal routine
- Did not have a negative impact on demands of the school timetable and curriculum
- Access to the live play gave the group the opportunity of seeing Brook’s work at first hand and learn more about his practice
- Working in the theatre gave the group the chance to experience real rehearsal conditions

Disadvantages of this structure:

- Demanded extra time from teachers in terms of facilitating visits and being with the group during holiday dates
- Risked momentum of the project slowing over five months. (This was alleviated to some extent by the inclusion of the R&D days at the theatre)

The director’s perspective: Gemma Rowan, appointed by The Albany

Gemma Rowan is co-director of SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS, a performance company for teenagers. They are Associate Artists at The Albany. Rowan has created shows for a range of festivals and venues including The Albany, Battersea Arts Centre, Southbank Centre and Soho Theatre. She has been making performance with teenagers since 2008. Rowan devises shows with interactive encounters, and the ideas, experiences and culture of teenagers at their heart. She is excited by the theatrical possibilities, tensions and risks, which exist between teenage performers and adult audiences.

Start with acknowledging the existing experience of the students before introducing the play:

‘Being asked to create an original performance that responds to Brook’s work and to the museums we’ve visited has meant we haven’t so much started with a play, rather we’ve started with ourselves and the experiences we have that relate to Oedipus.’

Mirror aspects of Brook’s practice in the rehearsal room with the group:

‘It’s been a really interesting process. Reading about Brook (in the Theatre and Performance archives) and his production of Oedipus and then experimenting with ideas in the rehearsal room. The main areas we are drawing on from Brook’s work are the constant drive for exploration and experimentation, and the importance of the performers’ ideas within the process.’

Use selected quotes from reviews of original performances to explore staging and actor/audience relationships (see the Peter Brook: Teachers’ Resource Part One for example quotes):

‘We’ve been influenced by the brilliant range of accounts of Brook’s original production, particularly the way the actors worked as an ensemble, the staging and set design and Brook’s ideas around the importance of the performer-audience relationship. Throughout our show the performers addressed the audience directly and there were moments of gentle interaction. We are seeking an encounter that brings us together to think about the themes of Brook’s Oedipus: fate, destiny, the future.’

What do you feel were the most important outcomes for the students?

‘To try something new, working in new ways with new people. Building confidence and trust in taking risks. Widening their idea of what theatre can be and how it is made. Reinforcing that they are people with ideas. Speaking their own words and communicating ideas they have about the world and having the chance for that to be heard. And, having a good time!’

The Museum’s perspective: The Horniman Museum - Christine Beckton, Schools’ Learning Officer

Start communications between partners as early as possible. Build in time for pre-visits to the Museum before the group visit so that thematic links with the source material can be made:

‘Gemma Rowan [hub director] emailed me some themes to think about and I chose objects I thought could fit in with those themes. She also came to look around the handling collection which helped us come up with ideas. (When the group visited the Museum) we used the large king puppet and some talked about the king in Oedipus.’

Sedgehill School teachers’ perspective - Alexandra Murphy and Zoe Cooper

The group developed their ability to work cooperatively:

‘The methods used by Gemma [hub director] meant that the group bonded more than normal, through games and in-depth discussions. These often related to their own feelings and experiences around the themes of the play. This built trust and a sense of personal ownership of the piece beyond what is usually possible with the limited drama hours within school time. This was so valuable and it especially helped by them being a vertical group (of different ages). Having a Year 13 in the group raised the Year 9 and 10 aspirations. They pushed each other.’

Working with the local theatre has increased access to arts for the group and the wider school community:

‘The Albany were really generous in terms of rehearsal space and staff time and they sorted out the costumes, set and props. So from our point of view that was really positive. They’re very local and obviously linked to what we do. They run a youth theatre and we can now advertise that to our students, so that’s definitely a relationship that has been embedded and has a really good future here. This has, by far, been the highlight of the year for these students and indeed for the department to witness.’

What the students say:

What new skills do you think you have gained from this project?

- Confidence in learning lines
- Confidence on stage and how to work in a chorus
- Choreography
- Patience, organisation and team-work
- Working with other groups and script-writing

What did you enjoy about the project?

- The ideas and being able to make new friends
- Meeting new people and exploring different techniques
- The ideas the people from The Albany had to make our show great
- Devising and creating towards finished product

What were the challenges that you faced during the project?

- Wearing a mask on someone’s shoulders
- Stage fright (not afraid anymore!)
- Rehearsals and juggling my life around it
- Learning many lines and remembering stage directions

Further comments

- Great to work with the different museums and theatres
- I would love to do it all again



Hub 2: South London

Performance venue: Bromley Churchill Theatre (churchilltheatre.co.uk/Online/)
Museum: Museum of Croydon (museumofcroydon.com)
School: Harris Academy, Beckenham (harrisbeckenham.org.uk)
Source production: *Oedipus*

Rehearsal Schedule:
An example of a venue-based extra-curricular approach

- This hub ran some sessions at the school but the bulk of their work was done in an intensive week in March at the Bromley Churchill Theatre. They also visited the Museum of Croydon and the V&A. Their final piece was performed at Bromley Churchill Theatre and the Museum of Croydon before the performance at the V&A.

Advantages of this structure:

- Created a real sense of ensemble in the group
- Allowed time for greater development of character and narrative in response to the source material
- Gave the group an authentic experience of the rehearsal process
- The opportunity to perform at the theatre and museum first gave the group the chance to re-work material in the light of audience feedback, echoing aspects of Brook’s practice

Disadvantages of this structure:

- Dependent on senior school staff allowing the group to be off timetable has implications for other cover staff and curriculum subjects

The director’s perspective: Glenn Tillin, appointed by Bromley Churchill Theatre

Glenn Tillin studied at The BRIT School and trained on the BA Actor-Musicianship course at Rose Bruford College. He also trained with Teatr Piesn Kozla in Poland and studied Commedia dell’arte mask with Paola Cavallin. Tillin co-founded Quarter Too Ensemble. He continued his studies with an MA Theatre for Young Audiences at Rose Bruford College and has worked as a Visiting Practitioner for Colleges and Drama Schools. As an actor, Tillin has worked with the London Bubble, Lost Banditos and Zero Culture theatre companies. He currently works as a freelance practitioner, directing and devising within a number of community settings.

Try out ideas used in the original production and use games to develop group cohesion:

‘Our development process was very much influenced by the approach we learnt that Brook had taken toward his 1968 production of *Oedipus*. In the archive we discovered rehearsal schedules, notes and interviews with actors, which gave us a strong idea of how they had worked. We were particularly interested by the use of games and physical play to create a strong ensemble language.’

Use storytelling as a way of exploring themes of the play and to test group understanding:

‘Brook’s cast also placed a strong focus on group storytelling and discussion in order to reach a collective understanding. This was something we tried to reflect in our process.’

Try mind-mapping to make connections between things that interest the group and which link to the play:

‘Following our research visits to the Museum of Croydon and the V&A, we compiled a giant mind map of the things that had interested us. We discussed parallels between these interests and connections to the original *Oedipus* text and began to develop a story of our own in response.’

Physically storyboard the process:

‘We then embarked on a process of ‘physical storyboarding’ of the story: telling the tale in a sequence of clear tableau gave the ensemble a cohesive understanding of the tale we were telling and provided a kind of blueprint to begin animating and expanding our ideas theatrically.’

Use technology to update original effects:

‘Brook’s company used soundscapes to create atmosphere around the audience. We developed this idea by using a ‘loop station’ and microphone to create background audio for some of our scenes.’

What do you feel were the most important outcomes for the students?

‘Our process saw the students removed from the school setting and empowered as theatre creatives within a theatre for an intensive period. The sense of responsibility and integrity they developed for their work and their attitude towards the process was something noted by their teachers. They also developed healthy attitudes and etiquette for a collaborative, creative process. Hopefully they can anchor these with a historic understanding of Brook’s influence on theatre creation.’

The Museum’s perspective: Museum of Croydon - Johanna Hayward, Interpretation and Learning Officer

Be open to groups having unexpected reactions to collections:

‘Original ideas we discussed included riots and rebellion. Obviously I showed them things about the Croydon riots of 2011 and conflict in a physical sense, as in World War Two – but I found it interesting that they went for ‘conflict’ in a very different way, in terms of someone’s internal conflict, which I hadn’t expected. I’d told them the story [about Georgina Somerset, the first openly intersex person in the UK, born in 1923 in Croydon].

The fact that they hooked on to the Georgina Somerset story did surprise me; I didn’t think it was something they’d link into. I thought they’d use something from our archive session. In fact, they did use a line from the conscientious objectors’

archive in the play: ‘I do not follow the will of Man; I follow the will of God’, which is from the gravestone of Charles John Cobb, a conscientious objector from Croydon.

Use performance projects like this as an opportunity to explore museum spaces in different ways:

‘Using the Croydon Now gallery as a performance space was really exciting. We’ve done plays before, usually on the mezzanine level but for this project we just used that space and had the chairs set out on both sides as a traverse and that worked well in that gallery. It was different to how it was performed in the Churchill, but I think it prepared the group for the performance at the V&A. At the V&A I watched the audience’s faces and their reactions of ‘I wasn’t expecting that!’

The Harris Academy teacher’s perspective: Sarah Cook

Students developed group cohesion over the course of the project:

‘It was really quite impressive how much the course of the project made the students into a cohesive unit. By the end they were working together much more professionally and they are much more supportive of each other now.’

Behaviour improved and the group appreciated the opportunity to see and handle real archive material:

‘We went to the V&A Archive and the Museum of Croydon. I was really pleased with how well-behaved my students were, especially in the archive - they ‘got’ the importance of it. I think the experience was really very useful for them; they were getting to look at things that not everyone gets to see. They enjoyed the Museum of Croydon visit as well – they really liked how interactive the museum was, there were lots of things for them to wander around and interact with.’

What the students say:

What new skills do you think you have gained from this project?

- We learned to speak up louder and use space
- Being confident and not shy
- I can now communicate more effectively with my fellow actors

What did you enjoy about the project?

- Getting to know my peers more
- The group work
- Planning it out

What were the challenges that you faced during the project?

- I faced my fear which was audiences. Now it's not.
- Lack of concentration
- Playing different roles and doing scarier things in front of my friends
- Acting in front of people

Further comments

- I really loved it and would love to do it again



Hub 3: North-east London

Performance venue: Redbridge Drama Centre
(redbridgedramacentre.co.uk/RedbridgeDramaCentre.dll/Home)
Museum: Redbridge Museum
(redbridge.gov.uk/cms/leisure_and_libraries/culture/redbridge_museum.aspx)
School: Mayfield School (mayfieldschool.net)
Source production: *Lord of the Flies*

Rehearsal Schedule:
An example of a school-based extra-curricular approach

- This hub chose to run 17 weekly sessions after the school day had ended. It included a visit to the V&A Theatre and Performance galleries and archive and Redbridge Museum.

Advantages of this structure:

- Consistency of rehearsal day and time helped to ensure student attendance; they were used to the rehearsal routine
- Did not have a negative impact on demands of the school timetable and curriculum

Disadvantages of this structure:

- Demanded extra time from teachers in terms of facilitating visits to the archives and museum
- Risked momentum of the project slowing over five months from December - April. One pupil left the school during the length time of the rehearsals and could not therefore be included in the show

The director’s perspective: Victoria Shulungu, appointed by Redbridge Drama Centre

Victoria Shulungu is a hip hop dancer and is part of the company Far From The Norm. She is interested in opportunities which bring more versatility to her dance career. Whilst her background is hip hop, Far From The Norm allows her to experience many different forms of dance, such as lindy hop and krump. Shulungu has worked on projects with corporations such as Adidas and was a featured dancer in the 2012 Olympic Games.

Use film and other media to explore themes of the original play:

‘We used film as the main reference. Having access to the archives and collections gave a good insight to how the story was created.’

What do you feel were the most important outcomes for the students?

‘The most important outcomes for the children would be letting go and trusting their instincts. Also, to be more confident in their dance ability and looking at how well they could take direction.’

The Museum’s perspective: Redbridge Museum - Sandra Haynes, Museum Education Officer

Take time to see if existing exhibitions or collections can link to the original source material:

‘Jonny Siddall, the Operational Manager of Redbridge Drama Centre, visited Redbridge Museum last year in the collaboration. He was curious about the background relating to An Evacuee’s Story, which forms part of the museum’s World War Two permanent display. The idea of a whole school for boys (Beal Secondary Modern) being evacuated to a camp (Kennylands, near Reading) for the duration of the War seemed to dovetail perfectly with the selected Peter Brook work Lord of the Flies.’

Look for contemporary relevance:

‘We envisaged a modern twist incorporating dance, spoken word, hip-hop, gangs. We were unable to schedule visits until quite late on, so focussed on a post-war phenomenon, the group of society we refer to as ‘teenagers’. One of Redbridge Museum’s past exhibitions explored local teenage life from the 1950s onwards. The research file, oral history extracts, local newspaper archives, entertainment programmes, images, and some clothing were made available to Mayfield students. It was a brilliant opportunity for the museum to share its collection with Key Stage 3 students, their teacher and the partners.’

Mayfield School teacher’s perspective: Steph Smith

Students developed from distinct sub-groups into one working group:

‘When the group members first met there was a significant divide in them. The older students would stick together and the younger ones would be left out. Very quickly, as the process developed, the group bonded amazingly. They would help each other out and spend their own time rehearsing and discussing ideas. At the start the lack of a bond they had showed in their performance work; they would miss cues and talk over each other. Once the final performance came around they were very professional. They conducted themselves as a professional dance crew that not only represented the School, but Victoria as the choreographer, the local community and the V&A Museum.

We loved being a part of the project and the students have made some life-long memories. They still talk about it now and don’t know what to do with all their free time!’

What the students say:

What new skills do you think you have gained from this project?

- I've learned new moves and made new friends
- Facial expressions, movement and power, and to stay confident in a freeze frame
- Confidence, the ability to learn new things such as dance and physical theatre
- I learned how to perform on a stage with an audience
- I was able to work more confidently with my group - this project really helped me work with others

What did you enjoy about the project?

- The thing I most enjoyed was seeing the Museum and performing in such a fantastic place
- That I got to make new friends and that I got to see what it feels like performing in front of an audience
- I enjoyed making friends and adding our own moves to the dance
- We could see artworks in the Museum
- Learning new things and meeting more people
- I enjoyed hanging out with people I usually don't hang out with
- I really enjoyed it when the audience were watching; I felt really confident

What were the challenges that you faced during the project?

- To stay in character, to use facial expressions and to remember the movements
- Learning hard dance moves
- My challenge was dancing together but Victoria taught us not to be scared and to dance as a family
- This was challenging to me because I don't like being filmed or performing in front of such a big audience

Further comments

- It was fun and exciting. It helped me build up my drama/ dance skills. I really enjoyed it
- I was a little bit shy but I loved it
- I really enjoyed performing at the Museum and wish one day we can all come together and do it again



Hub 4: South West London

Performance venue: Rose Theatre, Kingston (rosetheatrekingston.org)
Museum: Kingston Museum (kingston.gov.uk/info/200239/museum_and_history_centre)
Youth group: Rose Youth Theatre w (rosetheatrekingston.org/take-part/young-people)
Source Production: *Marat/Sade*

Rehearsal Schedule: A Youth Theatre approach

- This hub chose to run c. 14 sessions on Sundays of two and a half hours at the Rose Theatre. This included visits to the V&A Theatre and Performance galleries and archive and Kingston Museum. Their piece was first performed at the Rose Theatre in early April before the final performance at the V&A in late April.

Advantages of this structure:

- Youth theatre involvement meant the school curriculum timetabling was unaffected
- Participants tend to be highly-motivated having chosen to be part of the youth theatre
- The group experienced an authentic rehearsal process and contact with a professional writer
- The opportunity to perform at the theatre first gave the group the chance to re-work material in the light of audience feedback, echoing aspects of Brook’s practice
- Gave the theatre the opportunity to broaden their offer to young people

Disadvantages of this structure:

- Potentially weakens the impact on schools’ awareness of, involvement in and recognition of the work of the young people outside of the curriculum
- Participants have to carefully balance the demands of school and personal life

The director’s perspective: Rosie Jones, appointed by Rose Theatre

Rosie Jones trained at RADA and now works as a freelance actor and director. Many of her projects involve working creatively with young people, often in association with councils, schools and theatres. Directing credits include: My Kingdom Is A Horse, A Christmas Carol, Animal Farm, Toad, Sinbad, Stay with Me, Gargantua (Rose Theatre); Much Ado About Nothing (RHS Wisley); Privates in Public (Peterborough Council); A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Blumint Media); Twelfth Night (Reading Rep); Oliver! (Pangbourne Arts). Short Films include: Dad, Unlucky, Girl in the Painting, The Curse of Death’s Glen (Rose Theatre); Privates in Public, Dilemmas (Blumint Media).

Use archives to explore links over time in an artist’s practice; what aspects do they return to and what might this tell us about their artistic focus?

‘It’s always useful to see old production shots and photos and those resources are really rich. Things kept cropping up, like how Brook finished a show, the ‘silence’ the ‘in-between’ moments, engagement with the audience. I share his belief that the audience are key; they are always his main focus, he knows that no performance will be the same and never desires to tell the same story the same way.’

Think about the intended audience and be clear from the start what you want them to experience:

‘The first thing I asked the group was what they wanted their audience to feel and experience. They wanted to show the audience something they hadn’t seen before, they wanted to excite them, they wanted to shock them, they wanted them to change their mind. There was a lot of political stuff too, in terms of the voice of the young not being heard.’

Use improvisation to bring objects and their stories to life:

‘We went to Kingston Museum which was fantastic and Chiara did a great job of making the objects come alive. We needed to try and hone down what material we wanted to use. Our production was *Marat/Sade* so the themes of the play within a play and mental health were very present. It is also about revolution and they were interested in exploring the instability and disillusionment that exists today. We looked at Eadweard Muybridge, police batons and slavery, and used that source material to create improvised sketches.’

The Museum’s perspective: Kingston Museum - Chiara Russo, Learning and Engagement Officer

Offer groups a variety of ‘ways in’ to the material to account for different interests and learning styles:

‘I met with Rosie [hub director] and we established that, although we had a play (*Marat/Sade*) as a starting point, we wanted to keep the process as open as possible. I didn’t know the play beforehand so I read it, to help prepare the session. As the play tackles issues around mental illness - what is ‘normal’ to us and what is not, different viewpoints and openness to diversity and equality - I thought I’d give the group a very brief tour of the Museum, pointing out a few objects that could relate to those issues. In particular, we looked at three main objects. The first was a pair of handcuffs that related to the history of the prison and prisoners; the second was the Kingston Crocodile – which was referenced in the play; the third was the collection of the artist/photographer Eadweard Muybridge. Incidentally, he wasn’t officially affected by a mental condition but that was an aspect of his story that the group turned into the play.’

Be open to interpreting objects and collections in new ways:

‘I was surprised when they were looking at the Muybridge collection. In the Museum he’s usually taught as a pioneer of the moving image and someone who had a scientific approach to photography, learning and discovery. The group were very interested that he changed career after having a coach accident and that his professional life was at risk after he shot his wife’s lover – (that’s one of the things that surprised the group the most.) It was partly out of jealousy and partly to recover his honour. There are documents of the original trial and he was judged by a commission of married men only. He was judged to be ‘not guilty’ because even though he had committed the crime, ‘any other honourable man would have done the same...’

What the students say:

What new skills do you think you have gained from this project?

- Better leadership and ownership of the space
- Increased understanding of mental health. Understanding more about the importance of improvisation
- Learned a lot about Peter Brook
- I learned to explore mental illness and commitment to physicalisation
- Physicality and improvisation
- Teamwork and character work
- Devising and improvising
- Directing and working in a group
- Confidence to perform in a space
- Learned a lot about Peter Brook’s work and also about mental illness
- Ensemble and research skills

What did you enjoy about the project?

- I’ve enjoyed working with a big company; I’ve enjoyed coming out of my comfort zone
- Working on a devised piece as a whole group – we got to create the whole thing in a team and I enjoyed that
- Learning more about the V&A, improving my performance and directing skills
- Researching Peter Brook
- Researching mental illness
- The teamwork and being able to perform at the V&A

- Doing something new and responding to research and stimulus
- Performing at the V&A, being able to have our own input into the devising process

What were the challenges that you faced during the project?

- Filling the space, smooth transitions
- Blocking and staging
- Understanding a character that is very different to me
- Pushing myself physically and emotionally and being brave with my choices at rehearsals
- Being in the moment, layering the character
- Acting sensitively with regards to people who suffer from mental illness
- Finding emotional truth within a character

Further comments

- It was an amazing opportunity to perform at the V&A
- I loved the space we performed in and using the technical facilities
- Loved visiting the archives and performing at the Museum



Hub 5: East London

Performance venue: Theatre Royal, Stratford East (stratfordeast.com)
Museum: William Morris Gallery (wmgallery.org.uk)
Youth group: Theatre Royal, Stratford East Youth Theatre (stratford.com/young-people)
Source production: *King Lear*

Rehearsal Schedule: A Youth Theatre approach

- This hub had c. 19 sessions of around c. two hours each at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East on Mondays after school had ended. This included visits to the V&A Theatre and Performance galleries and archive and the William Morris Gallery. The piece was first shown as a scratch performance at the theatre in March and then again, in a further re-worked version, in April, five days before the performance at the V&A.

Advantages of this structure:

- Youth theatre involvement meant the school curriculum timetabling was unaffected
- Participants tend to be highly-motivated, having chosen to be part of the youth theatre
- The group experienced an authentic rehearsal process
- The opportunity to perform at the theatre on two separate occasions in two different venues gave the group the chance to re-work material in the light of audience feedback, echoing aspects of Brook’s practice
- Confidence in stagecraft, due to the experience in multiple spaces, was increased
- Gave the theatre the opportunity to broaden their offer to young people

Disadvantages of this structure:

- Potentially weakens the impact on schools’ awareness of, involvement in and recognition of the work of the young people outside of the curriculum
- Participants have to balance the demands of school and personal life

The Director’s Perspective: Darnell Shakespeare, appointed by Theatre Royal, Stratford East

Darnell Shakespeare gained a BA (hons) in International Theatre Studies from the University of East London. During the course he spent five months in a school in Chicago, where his journey as a directing facilitator began. On returning to the UK he began working with the Theatre Royal, Stratford East’s Young People’s department. He thrives on working with diverse groups of people and has a desire to enrich BAME theatre through the telling of untold stories from these communities.

Use projects like this as opportunities for staff development:

‘Being involved in the Peter Brook project has allowed me to develop my skills as a director and as a workshop leader immensely. I was thrilled this opportunity came my way, to allow me to showcase my passion for theatre and young people’s work at the same time. The project has taught me, more than anything, how to allow young people to have ownership of their work. Being a part of this project has allowed me to showcase my skills as a directing facilitator and how well I can engage with young people and bring out their best work; so much so that I gained myself another contract at Theatre Royal, Stratford East.’

What do you feel were the most important outcomes for the students?

‘An important outcome from this project was for our young people to understand the importance of shared learning. To be able to make the most of the resources and skills you are given, to take advantage of face-to-face conversations by asking questions that provide you with information that you need and to evaluate and monitor one another’s ideas and work. Another important outcome was to show our young people that the stories, themes and motifs in a Shakespeare

text still have every bit as much relevance in today’s world as they did then. Alongside that, our young people were able to gain an appreciation for the Shakespearian language and find its place in modern-day theatre.’

The Museum’s perspective: William Morris Gallery - Sharon Trotter, Learning and Outreach Officer

Provide young people with high-quality practical activities to support learning:

‘I adapted one of the artist-led workshops that was offered as part of the Bob and Roberta Smith exhibition *Art for All*. These half day workshops for GCSE/BTEC students involved working with artist Della Rees to explore Bob’s work and how he creates campaigning messages in his art – this one specifically about the value of art education. Coincidentally the artist Bob and Roberta arrived for a meeting so was able to meet the young people and answer questions. Della subsequently went to the Theatre Royal, Stratford East and delivered a half-day practical workshop, where the young people developed protest placards on their own chosen themes, but visually influenced by Bob’s style in their use of colour and lettering.’

Invite artists to performances so they can see how their work has influenced the group:

‘I attended the final performance by the group at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, which was very impressive. It started with an outside street protest, very much influenced by the work seen at the gallery and this was much appreciated by Bob & Roberta Smith who also attended.’

What the students say:

What new skills do you think you have gained from this project?

- Acting with more confidence
- Harmony and teamwork
- Doing a play within a play
- Confidence, performing in front of a lot of people
- Communication skills and a lot about Peter Brook
- I learned to trust people around me and be myself
- How to work under pressure

What did you enjoy about the project?

- The rehearsals and performing
- Portraying different kinds of emotions
- Working with other schools
- The team effort
- It was a really good opportunity to perform at the V&A
- Performing on two different stages
- My first time on stage – having the audience react to my character

What were the challenges that you faced during the project?

- Confidence and projecting my voice
- Developing my character
- Remembering to bring equipment
- Learning all of my lines and remembering cues

Further comments

- Doing the performance was fun and being able to do it in the V&A gave me the chance to look around. The V&A is beautiful
- I really enjoyed doing the project on both sites. I wouldn't mind doing it again
- It really went well
- It was a real pleasure to be here



Hub 6: North-west London

Performance venue: Watermans (watermans.org.uk)
Museum: Gunnersbury Park Museum (hounslow.info/arts-culture/historic-houses-museums/gunnersbury-park-museum)
School: Chiswick School (chiswickschool.org)
Source production: *Lord of the Flies*

Rehearsal Schedule:
An example of a school-based curriculum-linked approach

- This hub had c. 11 sessions of approximately two hours during curriculum time. Additional visits took place at Gunnersbury Park Museum and to the V&A Theatre and Performance galleries and archives.

Advantages of this structure:

- Provides links and support to what is being studied in the classroom
- Does not negatively impact on the time needed by the teacher to monitor groups or directly affect other curriculum subjects

Disadvantages of this structure:

- Needs to be carefully planned and mapped so that the experience the students have is complimentary to what is being experienced in other aspects of the curriculum
- Can be perceived as an ‘add-on’ to what is being studied and can put additional pressure onto students, particularly those in exam classes

The Director’s Perspective: Danielle McIlven, appointed by Watermans

Danielle McIlven trained on the MFA in Theatre Directing at Birkbeck. Directing credits include new plays, devised work and adaptations in London, Manchester and Glasgow. She has worked extensively in youth and community theatre, and spent three years in Bosnia where she directed young people in numerous productions, and collaborated with theatre companies throughout the country.

Encourage the group to focus on the importance and value of the process rather than the end product:

‘In both content and concept the archives have informed our process. We used written sources as triggers for discussion and images as starting points to devise. But more generally, the idea of archiving is strongly allied to understanding and reflecting on process - if we archive what we are doing, we are aware of what we are doing, or rather aware that we are ‘doing something’ rather than just looking towards a production. This has been the biggest challenge for me in terms of working with the group - how to engage their interest, investment and ownership in the process of how we are working rather than being consumed with the final piece. I think archives offer the idea that processes are what we are left with, both literally but also internally.’

What do you feel were the most important outcomes for the students?

‘By allowing, engaging with and even challenging the process, students will be more critical about how and why theatre is made. In the same way that Brook’s most profound contribution is perhaps in the need to reject what is ‘dead’, which may at any time be the most visible form of theatre, I hope the most important outcome for the students here is not a selection of concrete tools to rehearse or devise with - many books, manuals and workshops offer that - but a probing, curious and creative criticality about what they see at the theatre, how they make and prepare for plays and their ambitions for future work.’

The Museum’s perspective: Gunnersbury Park Museum - Lisa D’Agostino, Formal Learning Officer

Use drama to explore how objects have significance and can signal status and ownership:

‘We started to look at it from a different point of view; the idea that any object can have the power to influence what you do as a person. We started to talk about objects as ‘actors’ and object agency. We wanted the group to see that whatever object or prop you choose to use, or, indeed, choose not to use, actually influences what you do as an actor, the space you’re working in, the dynamic. They were doing *Lord of the Flies* and there are certain objects in that that are very powerful: the conch shell, Piggie’s glasses. Having possession of them, or not having possession of them, influences your status in the group and what you have the power to do. When I watched the final piece I liked that the objects they used actually changed; something that was usually used for drinking suddenly became a weapon – and I think that came from them really understanding the power of objects.’

What the students say:

What new skills do you think you have gained from this project?

- Patience and staying in character during performance
- How to more confidently convey expression through movement
- Devising our own performance
- Learning how to use physical expression effectively, even with just minimalistic movement
- Patience and being more vocal in regards to contributing my ideas
- The skill of implementing improvisation
- How to show emotion without talking

What did you enjoy about the project?

- Learning new drama skills
- It was an amazing opportunity and I’m so glad Chiswick was chosen
- A unique experience
- Taking part in something and gaining real theatre experience

What were the challenges that you faced during the project?

- I was more of a fan of acting with lines so it was a challenge to act without them
- Adapting to the savagery emotion and showing the relatively quick shift into sadistic behaviour
- Working with others with very different ideas
- Learning to perform without using scripts/stage directions

Further comments

- Thank you for the opportunity, the experience was amazing
- The venue is amazing and very friendly staff
- I liked the theatre we performed in
- Thoroughly enjoyed the project and performance and would love to do it again
- I’ve never done anything like it





Images courtesy of: © Gunnersbury Park Museum, Kingston Museum, Museum of Croydon and Redbridge Museum

Summary - What did the project achieve?
As a result of engaging with the project, we said students would:

- Develop creativity and resilience through collaborative ensemble work

In written feedback, students often commented on how their confidence had improved over the course of the project. Others mentioned increased levels of patience when working in a group. Some were working in ways which were new to them – for example, using improvisation rather than script-based work - and found this challenging but rewarding. ‘Coming out of my comfort zone’ was mentioned on several occasions as a positive result of engaging with the work.

- Have a deeper understanding of where Peter Brook fits within the history of British theatre and his approach to directing

Feedback demonstrates that the groups learned about Brook’s approaches to directing, particularly as it related to their own source text - such as the importance and value of improvisation. Visits to the archives were beneficial in putting Brook into context with his contemporaries.

- Employ a range of skills, techniques and approaches used by Brook

Several of the groups directly referenced the style of their original source material. The ‘mad-house’ setting for the hub 4 piece with Rose Theatre Youth Theatre, called Inside the *Minds of Muybridge*, echoed *Marat/Sade* and its location of the asylum of Charenton, in the original 1964 production. The use of live sound effects by the Harris Academy in hub 2 recalled the sounds used in Brook’s 1968 *Oedipus* with its ‘... hand-drumming, the click of electronic music, pantings, gasps...’ (Peter Lewis, Daily Mail, 20 March 1968.) Many of the groups explored rehearsal techniques employed by Brook, which are recorded within the Peter Brook collection, such as the value of games in warm-ups with actors.

- Develop self-management skills when working in a professional environment

Some students commented that a particular challenge was fitting the project in with school work and other demands on their time. It should be acknowledged that the work for the schools was usually in addition to their curriculum offer and represented a substantial time commitment. Where the work was directly linked to the curriculum, this sometimes proved challenging and other subject and exam demands competed for the attention of the group, teacher and director. However, several students directly thanked the professional teams they had worked with over the course of the project in written feedback and had obviously gained from the real experience of working in theatres, arts venues and museums.

- Engage with heritage materials and develop links with the V&A, local museums and arts venues which they can continue to utilise after the project is completed

All the students engaged with heritage materials, either at the V&A, their local museum or both. Some students referred to the research aspect of the project as a favourite part of the process. This may reflect the unique way that archives – primary materials - can inspire students, particularly when coupled with the support of contemporary artists who were able to guide the groups in their final pieces.

We also aimed to:

- Encourage the practitioners to use archives and collections to enhance their own practice
- Develop teachers’ expertise to make use of some of Brook’s techniques and approaches in other relevant lessons

The hub directors agreed that access to the archives and collections was key to informing their practice, for example in how they planned aspects of rehearsals. Several mentioned how using the Peter Brook collection provided the opportunity to re-visit, sometimes after a considerable number of years, their conceptions of Brook, and to consider how his practice still has relevance to their current work.

- Strengthen existing relationships between cultural organisations or create new ones where those relationships had not existed before the project

None of the partners had worked together in this way before. Most had never worked with either of their hub partners, and all expressed a desire to collaborate in some way in the future. The arts organisations within hub 6 intend to develop a creative teaching resource together, and the museum of hub 2 will continue to offer their galleries as performance spaces. Many of the museums were working with a school age group they have sometimes found difficult to attract, and so welcomed the opportunity to develop their audiences in this way.

- Develop teachers’ confidence and expertise in drawing on heritage materials as a source of inspiration in the classroom

The teachers commented positively on receiving support from archive and museum professionals, in using heritage material. They enjoyed the opportunity to create work with their students in response to historic collections and at least one teacher intends to undertake further projects of this nature. Although the students sometimes found it challenging to respond to the material, the teachers considered this a ‘valuable part of the process.’ The forging of new organisational contacts was helpful for teachers, who could then directly reach the relevant museum colleagues, to gain the information they needed.

Conclusion – What can schools gain from taking part in projects like this?

The Peter Brook Schools’ Project enabled teachers and students to explore how historical material, in the form of archives and museum collections, can inspire and support the development of new performance work; something they may not have previously considered or had the opportunity to experience in this depth.

By working with professional artists, the young people have gained insight into the world of the performing arts, including the discipline involved in creating a production and ideas for possible career paths. The students have seen their work valued, through performing for public audiences in professional-standard venues. They have developed new theatre and performance skills and learned about Peter Brook’s theatre practice and influence.

Schools who took part have been able to offer their students the experience of working on a long-term project and sustaining concentrated effort through practice and rehearsals, over and above what can be provided by their regular school timetable. All schools commented positively on their groups increased ability to work cooperatively together.

Finally, although not specific aims of the project, the students themselves felt strongly that they have gained greater confidence in their abilities, developed their social skills through collaboration and supporting each other’s work and made new friends.

Want to know more? - Get Involved

V&A performance collections workshop –

Focus on the Practitioner

The V&A has developed workshops inspired by the Peter Brook Schools’ Project. *Focus on the Practitioner* invites school groups to explore how artists’ ideas have evolved, through studying original material from the archive, such as press cuttings and articles. An optional element of a performance at the V&A can be included, to give students the opportunity of creating new work in response to their findings.

V&A Schools’ Programme

The V&A offers a wide programme of opportunities for pupils and students from Key Stage 1 to post 16. Options include practical workshops, gallery tours, performances, events and projects in Art, Design and Performance, and cross-curricular areas such as English, History and R.E.
Primary schools: vam.ac.uk/info/primary-schools/
Secondary schools and colleges: vam.ac.uk/info/learn#secondary-schools-and-colleges

V&A events for teachers

The V&A’s practical workshops and evening events for teachers will inspire, inform and provide resources for guided and self-guided tours of the Museum. Bespoke training sessions on how to use the collections as a learning resource are also available.
vam.ac.uk/info/teachers

National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP)

NVAP is a programme of recording live theatre performances across the UK, usually 12–15 per year. School groups can book to view these recordings at the V&A, free of charge.

A list of titles available can be found here:
vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/nvap/

For further information about the schools’ programme:

020 7942 2622
schools@vam.ac.uk

To book:

020 7942 2211
bookings.office@vam.ac.uk

Peter Brook Schools Project blog
vam.ac.uk/blog/author/john-murray

V&A Department of Theatre and Performance

The V&A Department of Theatre and Performance holds over 450 special collections of actors, theatre companies, theatre critics, theatres, directors and designers, including:

- Arts Council of Great Britain Archive
- Temba Theatre Company and Black Theatre Collection Archive
- English Stage Company / Royal Court Theatre Archive
- Unity Theatre Collection
- Sir Ian McKellen Archive
- Contemporary Dance Trust Archive

Core Collections:

- Published materials - histories, criticisms, play texts, periodicals
- Manuscript materials – including promptbooks, annotated copies of play texts
- Information Files — collated information from newspapers, journals, flyers, brochures and other ephemeral sources filed into various categories:
- Production files – files for productions containing programmes, reviews, flyers, etc.; covers productions from the 18th century to present day; filed by location (London or regions), venue and year
- Biographical files – files containing press cuttings about individuals
- Company files – files about theatre and performance companies
- Building files – files about entertainment venues
- Photograph collections
- Design collection
- Audio visual recordings – commercially available recordings relating to Live Performance

Access

- Online catalogue: (Includes the Peter Brook collection) vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/archives-theatre-performance/

Please contact us for information on further collections, which are uncatalogued

The V&A Reading Room, where you can study material from the collections and watch screenings from the NVAP as an individual, is located at Blythe House, Kensington Olympia. Access is by prior appointment, contact: tmenquiries@vam.ac.uk

News and updates

- Follow the Theatre & Performance department on Twitter and Facebook: @V_and_A facebook.com/victoriaandalbertmuseum/

Further V&A resources

- Search the Collections: collections.vam.ac.uk/

- National Art Library catalogue: catalogue.nal.vam.ac.uk/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=

Advanced Keyword Search and limit by **Location: Theatre Museum.**

Further Resources

- SIBMAS – The International Association for Libraries & Museums of the Performing Arts: sibmas.org
- Archives Hub - National gateway to archive collections held in UK universities and colleges: archiveshub.ac.uk/
- Culture Grid – Search archive collections from the UK and Europe: culturegrid.org.uk/about/

A huge thank you to all the partners who participated in the Peter Brook Schools’ Project:

The Albany
Bromley Churchill Theatre
Chiswick School
Gunnersbury Park Museum
Harris Academy, Beckenham
The Horniman Museum
Kingston Museum
Mayfield School
Museum of Croydon
Redbridge Drama Centre
Redbridge Museum
Rose Theatre, Kingston
Rose Youth Theatre
Sedgehill School
Theatre Royal, Stratford East
Theatre Royal, Stratford East Youth Theatre
Watermans
William Morris Gallery

Thanks to John Murray, Peter Brook Schools’ Project co-ordinator.

PETER BROOK: TEACHERS' RESOURCE PART TWO

V&A

