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Sent: Friday, April 20, 2012 10:40 PM
To: Jeevacation@gmail.com
Subject: [From: Caroline Lang] Rich simplicity from Peter Brook

Caroline Lang spotted this on the guardian.co.uk site and thought you should see it.

Note from Caroline Lang:

About The Playstation I saw this evening. Will play I believe again sometime in May in London

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2001/jan/26/theatre.artsfeatures1>

Rich simplicity from Peter Brook

Le Costume
Young Vic, London

Michael Billington
Friday January 26 2001
The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2001/jan/26/theatre.artsfeatures1>

"Cultivate simplicity," was Lamb's advice to Coleridge. It's also a good precept for a director. Over the years Peter Brook has taken it so to heart that his focus now is on the tale rather than the teller. Yet behind the resonant strangeness of this South African fable, jointly presented by the Young Vic and the London international festival of theatre, you sense Brook's controlling intelligence.

The Suit, by South African writer Can Themba, was first dramatised for the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, by Mothobi Mutloatse and Barney Simon, and it is this version that is now played in French with English surtitles.

Set in the teeming township of Sophiatown in the 1950s, it tells of a young married couple, Philemon and Matilda. One day Philemon is told that his wife is having an affair. He catches her in flagrante and scares off her lover, who leaves behind his suit. Matilda's punishment is to be ever reminded of the suit, which sits with the pair at suppertime, is taken for Sunday walks and is fatally deployed by Philemon as a humiliating symbol of his wife's sin.

Themba's tale has the spiky potency of a story from the Decameron: it deals with lust, penitence and a tragic failure of forgiveness. Its theatrical power also stems from its vivid evocation of time and place. Sophiatown itself - erased by the brutal apparatchiks of apartheid in 1955 - is as much the protagonist as the suit. It emerges as a place of hardship where privacy is at a premium - hence the knowledge of Matilda's adultery. But it also comes across paradoxically as a source of energy: of gossip, music, dreams and drinking in the ubiquitous shebeens.

The wonder of Brook's production is that it conveys all this with minimal resources. It is staged on a riotously coloured patterned carpet with a pair of coat-racks used as windows, wardrobes, doors and bus-shelters. But Brook, reminding us that Matilda is a frustrated singer, also evokes the extrovert ebullience of township life through music - everything from Miriam Makeba to Ella Fitzgerald. Even with only four actors, he is able to conjure up a bustling party.

Brook's finest touch is unselfconsciously to embrace the audience. When Tanya Moodie's marvellous Matilda joins a community club she turns to individual spectators as if they were her personal benefactors. And the hauntingly lean Sotigui Kouyate addresses us directly in his opening sketch of Sophiatown.

The pain of the story comes across strongly both in Moodie's aching desire for forgiveness and in Hubert Kounde's intransigent severity as her husband. The moment when he finally grasps her lifeless hand packs an Othello-like punch. Without ever straining for effect, Brook's lustrous production affirms the unending richness of theatrical simplicity.

• Until February 3. Box office: 020-7928 6363. Then at Warwick Arts Centre (024-7652 4524), February 6-9. A version of this review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper.

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