

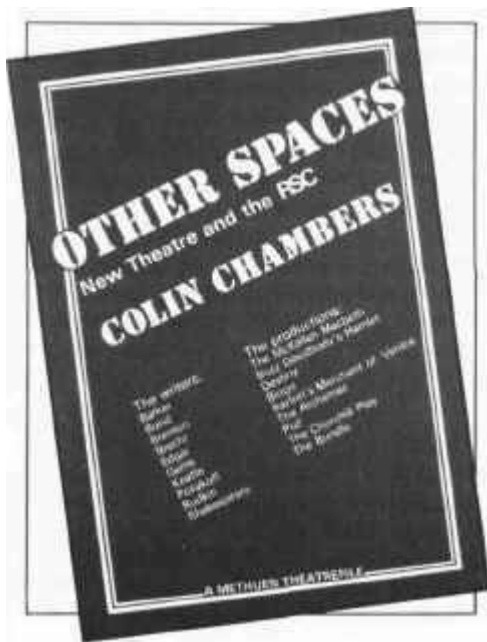


Reviews

OTHER SPACES: NEW THEATRE AND THE RSC

Colin Chambers
Eyre Methuen 1980 £2.20

This book is the second in Eyre Methuen's 'Theatrefile' series; short interim studies of



aspects of contemporary theatre. Originally Colin Chambers wanted to write a book about Buzz Goodbody, Communist, feminist and theatre director who committed suicide in 1975. Almost the whole of her professional life was with the Royal Shakespeare Company, where she carved an important, if contradictory, niche as a bridge between the values of the established classical British theatre, based on Shakespeare, and the political experimental literary theatre of post-1968. In one sense, therefore, part of her history is also the history of the RSC's two studio theatres — The Other Place, founded in Stratford under her direction in 1974, and the Warehouse, founded in London in 1977, two years after her death. Colin Chambers' own perspective is sympathetic to her twin desires to make classical theatre more popular and accessible to new audiences, and to bring radical insight into classical work.

His main thesis is that the 'renewal of the RSC in the 1970s came from its "other spaces"', the two experimental 'children' who helped breathe new artistic and political life into their 'parent' theatres — in unofficial ranking order of precedence the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, the Aldwych, The Other Space and the Warehouse. The order of precedence is both economic and administrative; given the current state of the mixed economy and the careful balance within the theatre industry of public subsidy as against earned income, inevitably the small theatres will be dependent on the priorities of the larger theatres, and artistic values will be forced to take second place to market forces. The 'family' metaphor is also applied to the

internal culture of the RSC, which runs on a benevolent paternalist model within which are allowed limited moments of democracy. In his sketch of the economic and social structure of the RSC, an organisation with over 500 people on its books, Chambers provides a valuable framework for analysis of the relationship between context and cultural content.

He outlines the history of the RSC's desire to cross-fertilise the classical and the modern through Peter Hall's work in the 1960s, and describes in some detail the actual and potential changes in Goodbody's work at The Other Place; she enabled more intense emotional and intellectual work for the company in rehearsals, producing radical interpretations of *Lear* and *Hamlet*, and a different scale of relationship between performers, text and audience in a small space seating under 200. Indirectly she also helped generate the interest in new writing which at its most obviously successful took David Edgar's *Destiny* from production at The Other Space to the Aldwych, and thence onto our TV screens. He also summarises the work at the Warehouse, and mentions the RSC's instigation of visits to Newcastle, which started in 1977.

The changes through the 1970s are clearly charted — moving from 1970 when 'Studio was a dirty word for many in the RSC establishment', to 1980 when radical work on Shakespeare and an active interest in successful 'new' writers are an integral part of the RSC's achievement and reputation. It is a sound and illuminating study which ends self-consciously on an open question — 1980 is another turning point for the RSC, with its

two other spaces threatened by the cuts, and with the planned expansion into a new Barbican site dogged with some uncertainty. Internally the book also raises many issues which its self-defined schematicness leaves open: he refers to the male-dominatedness of both administrative and artistic structures

but does not spell it out fully; he only hints at a possible relationship between the 'family' structure and the political content of the disaffected Warehouse plays via the question of how much power the directors of the 'other' spaces are allowed to have.

The first book in this series, Tony Coult's

study of Edward Bond, has been reprinted in an expanded version. I hope Colin Chambers will also have a chance to expand similarly on his book, since it opens up exciting possibilities for a fresh and comprehensive approach to writing theatre history.

Micheline Wandor

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Other spaces backstage include spaces for crew and performers to prepare or relax before or during a performance. Dressing rooms are where performers dress and get ready for the show. Dressing room mirrors have lights that surround them to simulate the lighting conditions on stage. The green room is a space where performers and crew can eat or relax. The wardrobe also includes other functions such as the wig room and the laundry. There will also be a range of workshops. Most theatres will have some form of technology workshop where lighting, sound and AV equipment owned by the venue is maintained and may be stored. Larger theatres may also have a workshop where props, set and scenery are constructed and maintained. James Naughtie follows the struggle to create a new theatre for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. From April 2011. Show more. In the final episode of his three-part series, James Naughtie speaks with the key players about the problems with the Elisabeth Scott Shakespeare Memorial Theatre built in 1932, the triumphant experiments at The Other Place and The Swan, and - built within the original walls - the brand new theatre with its thrust stage which will open with Michael Boyd's production of Macbeth. in April 2011. Architect Rab Bennetts and current Artistic Director Michael Boyd explain the challenge of creating the new space while the series culminates in an examination of why performing Shakespeare matters to the artistic well-being of the nation. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is a major British theatre company, based in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. The company employs over 1,000 staff and produces around 20 productions a year. The RSC plays regularly in London, Stratford-upon-Avon, and on tour across the UK and internationally. The company's home is in Stratford-upon-Avon, where it has redeveloped its Royal Shakespeare and Swan theatres as part of a £112.8-million "Transformation" project. The theatres re-opened in An edition of Other Spaces (1980). Other spaces. new theatre and the RSC. by Chambers, Colin. 0 Ratings. 0 Want to read. 0 Currently reading. 0 Have read. This edition was published in 1980 by Eyre Methuen in London.