

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER 1992

OFFENDING THE AUDIENCE (1966)

by Peter Handke

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~~TOM HAMPTON~~ SIMON THOMAS

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This Reading was developed from workshops led by SIMON THOMAS

"This piece is a prologue. It is not the prologue to another piece but the prologue to what you did, what you are doing, and what you will do. You are the topic. This piece is the prologue to the topic. It is the prologue to your practices and customs. It is the prologue to your actions. It is the prologue to your inactivity. It is the prologue to your lying down, to your sitting, to your standing, to your walking. It is the prologue to the plays and to the seriousness of your life. It is also the prologue to your future visits to the theatre. It is also the prologue to all other prologues. This piece is world theatre."

NOTE ON Offending the Audience

The speak-ins (Sprechstucke) are spectacles without pictures, inasmuch as they give no picture of the world. They point to the world not by way of pictures but by way of words; the words of the speak-ins don't point at the world as something lying outside the words but to the world in the words themselves. The words that make up the speak-ins give no picture of the world but a concept of it. The speak-ins are theatrical inasmuch as they employ natural forms of expression found in reality. They employ only such expressions as are natural in real speech; that is, they employ the speech forms that are uttered orally in real life. The speak-ins employ natural examples of swearing, of self-indictment, of confession, of testimony, of interrogation, of justification, of evasion, of prophecy, of calls for help. Therefore they need a vis-a-vis, at least one person who listens; otherwise, they would not be natural but extorted by the author. It is to that extent that my speak-ins are pieces for the theatre. Ironically, they imitate the gestures of all the given devices natural to the theatre.

The speak-ins have no actions, since every action on stage would only be the picture of another action. The speak-ins confine themselves, by obeying their natural form, to words. They give no pictures, not even pictures in word form, which would only be pictures the author extorted to represent an internal, unexpressed, wordless circumstance and not a natural expression.

Speak-ins are autonomous prologues to the old plays. They do not want to revolutionise, but to make aware.

Peter Handke