



# Interview with Peter Brook

Thirty years after his legendary nine-hour version of the *Mahabharata*, Peter Brook has returned to this sacred poem of India - not to make a revival or something nostalgic, but on the contrary, to create, in the spirit of today, a very essential, very intense piece that speaks about our concerns: ***Battlefield***.

“If we have decided to come back to this work now, it is because there was the need to find something relevant for us today. The Indians say – and it could sound a little vain – that everything is contained in the *Mahabharata* and if it is not in the *Mahabharata*, then it does not exist.

This great epic from thousands of years ago has grown over the

years, assimilating the most important cosmic and metaphysical ideas alongside the simplest things from everyday life. The poem describes the war that tears apart a family (the Bharatas) with, on one side five brothers - the Pandavas, and on the other side their cousins - the Kauravas, the hundred sons of the blind king Dritarashtra.

In the end, the Pandavas win, but the poem mentions “ten million dead bodies”, an extraordinary figure for that time. It is a terrifying description - it could be Hiroshima or Syria today. We wanted to speak about what happens after the battle. How will the old blind king, who has lost all his sons and all his allies to be able to cope and assume their responsibility with his victorious nephew? On both sides,

the leaders go through a moment of profound questioning: the ones who say victory is a defeat and the ones who lost admit that they could have prevented that war. In the *Mahabharata* they at least have the strength to ask these questions.

The question is how do they see their opponents in this day and age?

When one watches the news one is angry, disgusted, furious. But in the theatre one can live through all that and leave more confident, braver, believing that one can face up to life. For me, theatre is the possibility to live, for an hour or two, in a space of concentration with the audience, a shared experience so that each may leave nourished by his own thoughts.” - Peter Brook