

Watching rehearsals at the Bouffes du Nord

Gregory Mosher: In one of those bizarre circumstances I found myself with several other young directors in Paris in 1975. Brook had just moved into this beautiful old theater on the north side of Paris in an African neighborhood called the Bouffes du Nord where he still is. It was in very rough shape then. And for four days I just watched the company work. Most of my friends went off to the Louvre and other museums, but I just stayed and watched these improvisations which took place, sometimes in nonsense languages and sometimes in French. And they were very simple, just "There's a cardboard box, what can we do with that cardboard box?" Now these were people who were capable of playing *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and handling the most complicated text and wearing the most elegant costumes with authority, but there they were trying to figure out how that . . . how they could make an act of theater out of a box. And they did that for years, and often played to schoolchildren as a test of whether they were able to communicate dramatic ideas.