

## **Columbia University Arts Initiative**

**Gregory Mosher:** The Arts Initiative has these central ideas to it, these pillars. One of them is to enliven the arts on campus. Another is to create an active two-way street between the campus and the culture. Another is to connect art with other fields of study, other fields of knowledge. And the final is to do extraordinary work that might not otherwise be done. And *Tierno* does all of those things. It energizes the arts on campus through its excellence and through its subject matter. It clearly creates a contact with an arts group outside the campus, outside of America, and extends it halfway around the world—arguably the greatest theater company in the world. And this whole question of other fields of knowledge is very important. So Columbia's not putting on a show here. Columbia's invited Brook's company here to the campus for a month to see a play, but also to explore all the issues in the play. So we've begun discussions with faculty in religion, philosophy, history, French—because the play's being performed in French with titles—African studies, SIPA, African American history, law. And that's thrilling. Brook was here for about ten days in December and met with many of these faculty members, and I can't tell you how energized he was by that meeting with these people in all of these other disciplines. And he said to them at this meeting, "You know, the theater's just a mechanism for transmitting human experience and ideas. Some people are very interested in the mechanism. I'm one of those people, it's what I do for a living. But most people aren't interested in the mechanism, anymore than they're interested in the oil that's on the canvas, or the material out of which the artwork is constructed, or what key a certain symphony is in."

They're interested in the emotional reaction to the piece of sculpture, and to a degree the intellectual content." Certainly that's more true when you have language. So this is a great exploration for us to see what this is like. To the best of my knowledge this has not been attempted before, certainly with a company of this level at a major university in America before. And like so much of what's going on at the Arts Initiative it's an adventure and an exploration.