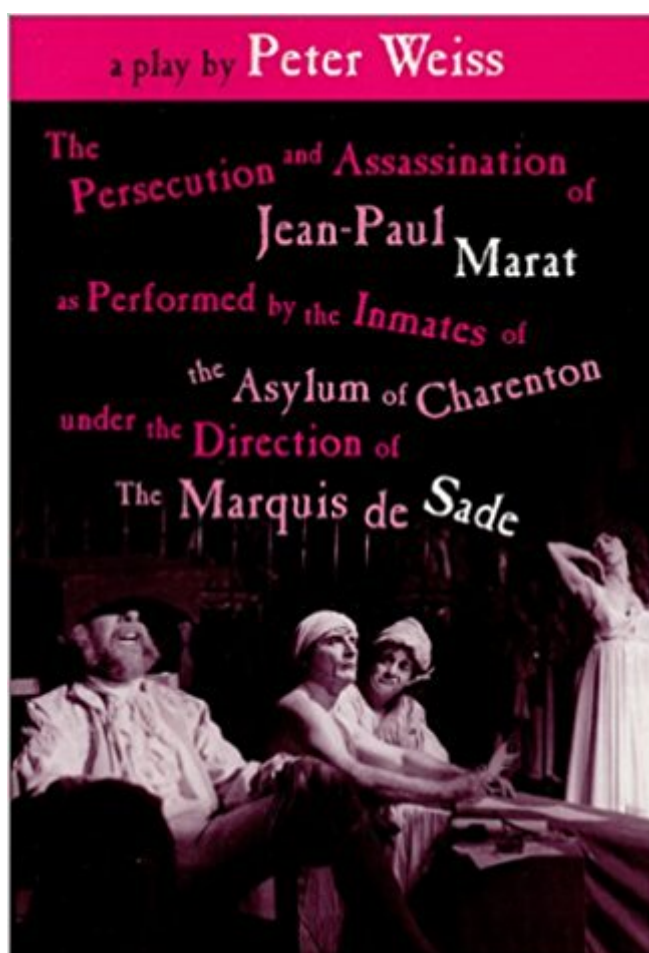


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The Persecution And Assassination Of Jean-Paul Marat As Performed By The Inmates Of The Asylum Of Charenton Under The Direction Of The Marquis De Sade (or Marat Sade)



Synopsis

This extraordinary play, which swept Europe before coming to America, is based on two historical truths: the infamous Marquis de Sade was confined in the lunatic asylum of Charenton, where he staged plays; and the revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat was stabbed in a bathtub by Charlotte Corday at the height of the Terror during the French Revolution. But this play-within-a-play is not historical drama. Its thought is as modern as today's police states and The Bomb; its theatrical impact has everywhere been called a major innovation. It is total theatre: philosophically problematic, visually terrifying. It engages the eye, the ear, and the mind with every imaginable dramatic device, technique, and stage picture, even including song and dance. All the forces and elements possible to the stage are fused in one overwhelming experience. This is theatre such as has rarely been seen before. The play is basically concerned with the problem of revolution. Are the same things true for the masses and for their leaders? And where, in modern times, lie the borderlines of sanity?

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Customer Reviews

"My own admiration for, and pleasure in, Marat/Sade is virtually unqualified. Considered as a text alone, it is both sound and exciting. Weiss has supplied a complex and highly literate text which demands to be responded to. Theatricality and insanity--the two most potent subjects of the contemporary theater--are brilliantly fused." --Susan Sontag

"A truly remarkable play that is just as important for modern audiences as it was when it was first performed. A true milestone in modern theatrics. I will be glad to have my students read this great

translation and adaptation." -- Daniel Inouye, Ouachita Baptist University

Way back in the 1700s, there was one avant-garde theater in Atlanta, located, fittingly enough, in an old warehouse in the downtown area, with the subject name. For me, seeing every play produced there was *de rigueur*, and that is where I first saw this memorable play. I decided to read it this time. In part, and no doubt the current Presidential campaign is serving as a catalyst, it raises that frequent quip: Are the only sane ones inside the asylum? I found that so many of the lines still reverberated across the decades. The play (which has also been made into a movie) is based on the true events that occurred in France in 1793, during the period of the French revolution. As the full title indicates, the play depicts the assassination of one of the leaders and firebrands of the revolution, Jean-Paul Marat, by Charlotte Corday, who was of the Girondist faction within the revolution, and had come from Caen, in Normandy, to do the deed. She acted alone. She knifed him in his bath, where he had to sit for hours due to a debilitating skin condition. She was guillotined four days later. Peter Weiss, the play's author, has the above events portrayed "brilliantly in my opinion" by actors playing the part of the inmates of the insane asylum at Charenton, which used to exist, outside of Paris. In the play, the reenactment of the assassination is directed by the Marquis de Sade (yes, the one whose name now denotes painful sexual acts), who, in real life, spent 13 years incarcerated in Charenton. The play is set in 1808, and nominally at least, the events are well-settled "ancient history," but many of the lines in the play were relevant to the political and social conditions of 1808 as well as 2016. Weiss skillfully uses three different "overall views" of the action, which are woven together, presenting contradictory points of view with delicious irony. There is a "Herald," who omniscience of the action fulfills the same role as the ancient Greek chorus. One of the Herald's quips, appropriate today as it was in 1808: "Work for and trust the powerful few, what's best for them is best for you." "Coulmier" is the asylum's director, a "liberal" barely 5% to the left of center. He states that the play will be good therapy for the inmates but, of course, they are not allowed to say anything too radical, and he is repeatedly rebuking de Sade for including portions that they had agreed to cut. One rebuke: "That's enough. We're living in eighteen hundred and eight and the names which were dragged through the gutter then have been deservedly rehabilitated by the command of the Emperor." And there is the overview of de Sade himself as he tries to direct the action. Marat and de Sade are foils for presenting different points of view on the French revolution (as well as critiquing today's society). One of Marat's laments:

“We invented the Revolution but we don’t know how to run it. Look, everyone wants to keep something from the past| a souvenir of the old regime| this man decides to keep a painting| this one couldn’t part with his shipyard| this one kept his army, and that one keeps his king, and so we stand here and write into the declaration of the rights of man the holy right of property| we stand here more oppressed than when we began and they think that the revolution’s been won. Or later, And you still long to ape them those powered chimpanzees Necker Lafayette Talleyrand. The music is great too, with witty verses. The classic that has reverberated across the decades: And what’s the point of a revolution without general copulation copulation copulation. Yes, “Make love, not war” repackaged. A sentiment for our age too. 5-stars, plus.

Weiss’ play should be in everybody’s “books to read before I die” lists! It is philosophical, intriguing, and taps into true human nature. The question of humanity’s sanity and the the existence of classism is explored. Anyone who reads this, not watches it on youtube, will definitely enjoy the intellect Weiss brings to his characters and their conversations (especially those between Marat and de Sade). The reason why I give it a four star is because the binding isn’t all that great.

I saw the play years ago and later it was made into a film, both were terrific. I was thinking about it the other day and wanted to read it now after all those intervening years. It is still holds up. As far as I am concerned it is a classic work, and theatre at its best.

This is one of the best modern plays out there. Great for entire class and ensemble scenes for actors in training. Also just an excellent read. Peter Weiss does an excellent job of creating layers of characters as he portrays inmates in an insane asylum playing characters in a play, so as an actor you have to play a character who is themselves trying to play a character. High intensity play, fast paced, great for audiences.

Having read this play, which i have meant to do for many years, I viewed the British production from the 1960s on youtube. Incredibly powerful theatre. One cannot understand contemporary modern theatre without reading and viewing this seminal play.

Read it for a drama class. Very weird.

This was the exact copy of this script that I wanted. I was in this play many years ago and wanted a copy of the exact script we had used. For a used book this old, the book was in excellent condition.

For a fuller appreciation of this work, find the filmed version of the play. A timely work very much applicable to life here in the land of the free.

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