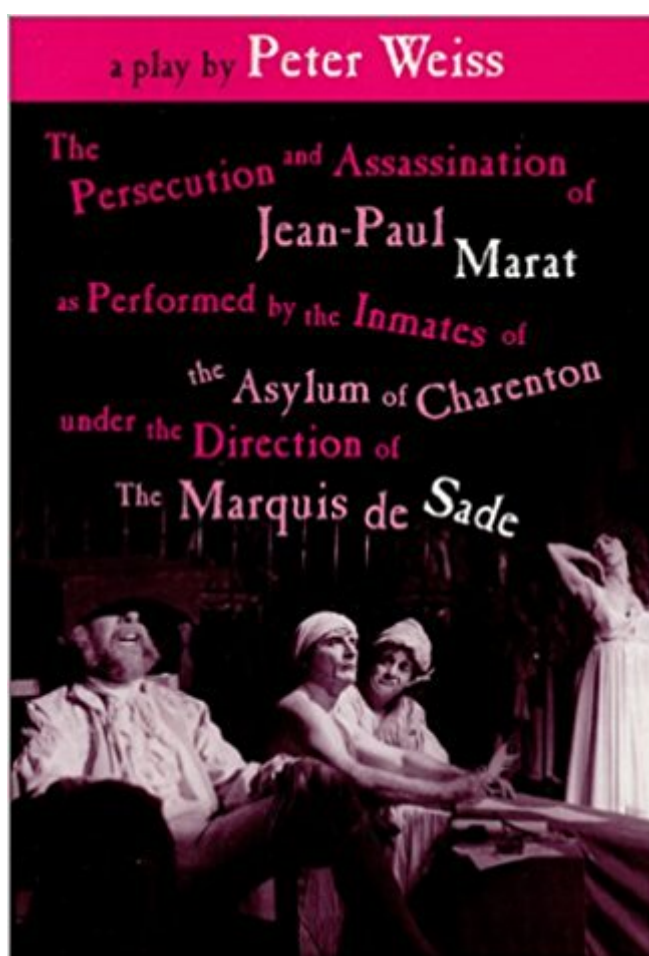


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The Persecution And Assassination Of Jean-Paul Marat As Performed By The Inmates Of The Asylum Of Charenton Under The Direction Of The Marquis De Sade (or Marat Sade)



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

Way back in the 1970s, 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.

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