

# 'Marat/Sade' drama fascinates

The Actors Alliance Theatre Company production of "Marat/Sade" by Peter Weiss continues at 8:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays and 8:30 p.m. Sundays through April 10 at Lycee International, 30800 Evergreen, Southfield. For reservations call the box office at 642-1326 from noon to 8 p.m. weekdays and until 9 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays.

By Cathie Breidenbach  
special writer

Peter Weiss intended that his play "Marat/Sade" sock you in the gut and at the same time turn your mind inside out.

"Marat/Sade" is brilliant theater. The play fuses thought and action, marriage history to imagination and shapes

## review

the whole with music and mime.

Anyone interested in serious drama will not want to miss the Actors Alliance Theatre Company's excellent production of this bizarre masterpiece. But be forewarned, "Marat/Sade" is not for the gentle of mind or heart.

The play catapults the audience into Charenton Asylum where the inmates, a twitching, howling band of loonies, enact a play written by a fellow inmate, the Marquis de Sade, infamous master of kinky sexual tortures. The play topples cherished traditions, attacks the church, assaults the founda-

tions of government and morality and relentlessly exposes hypocrisy.

"MARAT/SADE" ASKS, what is a human being? "A mad, man animal," one inmate answers, as they re-enact terrors of the French Revolution.

De Sade watches his play from a velvet settee and engages from time to time in philosophical sword play with his main character Marat, who was a leader in the bloody French revolution.

Marat sits on stage nearly naked in his tin bathtub, waiting to be stabbed to death by Charlotte Corday.

This is a play within a play, and a nouveau-riche family from post-revolutionary France joins the modern audience. The family sits in satins and lace in a back row of the theater and watches Marat on stage clamor for revolution in De Sade's play. The ladies' ample bosoms quiver with excitement when there's torture and torment in the play, but when the mob rages against inequality they eat bonbons in smug complacency.

David Fox and his ample companions are wonderful as conspicuous consumers of another era.

IT'S HISTORICAL fact that Marat suffered from a psychosomatic skin disease which was soothed by constant bathing, and that he was murdered in his bathtub by Charlotte Corday. The historical De Sade was, in fact, committed to Charenton Asylum and produced plays which fashionable folk of the time attended.

In reality, Marat and De Sade never met, but Peter Weiss engineers their

confrontation to put De Sade's philosophy of extreme individualism against Marat's activist socialism.

The tormented crazies at the asylum play the "poor who stay poor" and the uncompromising truths of history anchor philosophy to reality. This is not a talky dialectic play. Rather it's a mad-act of activity, a dramatic happening with verse and mime and song.

Director John Urbaniak expertly adapted the play to theater-in-the-round for the Alliance Company.

There are 25 members in the excellent cast. William Paul Unger is a wonderful De Sade — jaded and compassionate at once. Carol Purdon is a lovely, if more refined than usual, Charlotte. M. Lee Burden is good, if not charismatic, as the paranoid inmate who plays Marat.

THE CRAZIES slobber and twitch grotesquely well, but they seem to act insane on cue rather than carry on like animals out of control. Perhaps the immediacy of theater-in-the-round demands that the crazies tone it down, but not so much as to lose the dangerous wildness that deliberately sets the audience on edge.

The music is good and always complements the story. Thanks to John Urbaniak's good directing, the cast moves from drama to song effortlessly without the disruptive pause that signals a "musical number" in some plays. "Marat/Sade" is unsettling innovative theater, and praise goes to the Actors Alliance Theatre Company both for daring to produce it and for doing it so well.



Maggie Morrell (left), M. Lee Burden and Carol Purdon appear in "Marat/Sade," presented by the Actors Alliance Theatre Company.

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Thursday, March 10, 1983 O&E

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