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Dramatic Publishing



PETER WEISS'

**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****

ENGLISH VERSION BY GEOFFREY SKELTON, VERSE ADAPTATION BY ADRIAN MITCHELL



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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**

Cast: 9m, 3w, extras. "Total theatre" is the expression critics have used to describe this unique theatrical event which is designed for production on a nearly bare stage by a large and flexible cast. The Marquis de Sade, when an inmate at the Asylum of Charenton, staged plays that were performed by fellow inmates. With this point of departure, Peter Weiss has created one of the most powerful and exciting plays of the century!

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As Performed by the Inmates
of the Asylum of Charenton
Under the Direction of the
Marquis De Sade**

English version by
GEOFFREY SKELTON

Verse adaptation by
ADRIAN MITCHELL



Dramatic Publishing

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JEAN PAUL MARAT AS PERFORMED BY THE INMATES OF
THE ASYLUM OF CHARENTON UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
THE MARQUIS DE SADE

Published originally under the title of "Die Verfolgung und Ermordung
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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

A Play in Two Acts

For Nine Men, Three Women, Bit Parts and Others

[CHARACTERS]

MARQUIS DE SADE
COULMIER
JEAN-PAUL MARAT
SIMONNE EVRARD
CHARLOTTE CORDAY
DUPERRET
JACQUES ROUX
HERALD
CUCURUCU
POLPOCH
KOKOL
ROSSIGNOL

[BIT PARTS]

MOTHER
FATHER
SCHOOLMASTER
MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE
SCIENTIST
NEWLY RICH
VOLTAIRE
LAVOISIER
SEVERAL PATIENTS

[NON-SPEAKING PARTS/

COULMIER'S WIFE and DAUGHTER
MALE NURSES
PATIENTS
SISTERS
MUSICIANS
CHORUS

PLACE: *The asylum of Charenton.*

TIME: 1808.

NOTES ON CHARACTERS

AND COSTUMES

MARQUIS DE SADE: He is sixty-eight years old, extremely corpulent, with gray hair and smooth complexion. He moves heavily, breathes at times with difficulty, as if asthmatic. His clothing is of good quality, but worn. He is wearing white breeches with bows, a wide-sleeved white shirt with ornamental front and lace cuffs and white buckled shoes.

JEAN-PAUL MARAT: He is in his fiftieth year, and suffering from a skin disease. He is draped in a white cloth and has a white bandage round his temples.

SIMONNE EVRARD: Marat's mistress is of indeterminate age. The player of the role is wearing a hospital uniform, with an apron and a headcloth. Her posture is crooked, her movements odd and constrained. When she has nothing to do, she stands wringing a cloth in her hands. She seizes every opportunity to change Marat's bandage.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY: She is twenty-four years of age. Her clothing consists of a thin white blouse of Empire cut. The blouse does not conceal the bosom, but she wears a flimsy white cloth over it. Her long auburn hair hangs down on the right side of her neck. She wears pink leather boots with high heels, and when she is "on stage" a ribboned hat is tied on her. She is attended throughout by two Sisters, who support her, comb her hair and arrange her clothes. She moves like a somnambulist.

DUPERRET: Duperret is a Girondist Deputy. The player of the role wears, in addition to his hospital shirt, a short waistcoat and the smooth tight trousers of an "Incroyable." His clothing is also white, with

some ornamentation. He is held in the mental home as an erotomaniac, and takes advantage of his role as Corday's lover at every suitable opportunity.

JACQUES ROUX: He is a former priest, a radical Socialist. He wears a white hospital shirt with an overall shaped like a monk's robe. The sleeves of his shirt are tied together in front of him over his hands, and he can move only in the limits of this straitjacket.

THE FOUR SINGERS: Kokol, Bass; Polpoch, Baritone; Cucurucu, Tenor; Rossignol, Soprano. They are part crowd types, part comedians. They have decked out their hospital uniforms with grotesque bits of costume and wear the cap of the Revolution. Rossignol, with her tricolour sash and sabre, represents the figure of Marianne. They have singing voices and perform in mime.

PATIENTS: The patients serve as extras, voices, mimes and chorus. According to need they appear either in their white hospital uniforms or in primitive costumes with strong colour contrasts. Any not required in the play devote themselves to physical exercises. Their presence must set the atmosphere behind the acting area. They make habitual movements, turn in circles, hop, mutter to themselves, wail, scream and so on.

HERALD: He wears a harlequin smock over his hospital shirt. His two-pointed cap is hung with bells and spangles. He is draped with numerous instruments with which he can make a noise as necessary. He holds in his hand a beribboned staff.

FIVE MUSICIANS: They are inmates of the mental home, clad in white. They play harmonium, lute, flute, trumpet and drums.

MALE NURSES: They wear light gray uniforms with long white aprons, which give them the appearance of butchers. They carry batons in the pockets

of their aprons.

SISTERS: They also are dressed in light gray, with long white aprons, starched collars and large white bonnets. They carry rosaries. The Sisters are played by athletic-looking men.

COULMIER: The director of the mental home is elegant in light gray clothing, with coat and top hat. He wears pince-nez and carries a walking stick. He likes to adopt a Napoleonic pose.

COULMIER'S WIFE and DAUGHTER: They form a composite pattern of colour from pale mauve to pearl gray, sprinkled with jewels and glittering silver.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL:

Bathtubs, showers, platforms, benches, massage tables, railing and curtains, dais for Marat's bath, dais for Sade's chair, two tribunals. Marat's bathtub should be equipped with wheels.

PERSONAL:

MARAT: Sheet, bandage, pen and inkwell, papers on board, map of France.

HERALD: Staff, rattle, Pan-flute, whistle, banners bearing dates from 1793 to 1808.

CORDAY: Neck cloth, dagger, letter.

KOKOL: Wreath of leaves, bucket.

COULMIER: Stick (cane).

SIMONNE: Jug.

FOUR SINGERS: Playing cards, dice, bottle.

TWO PATIENTS: Cloth cover (to represent horse), cart.

CUCURUCU: Cross made of broomsticks.

POLPOCH: Rope around neck.

ROSSIGNOL: Beads.

A PATIENT: Clerical collar.

NURSES: Straps (to fasten Roux), batons.

SADE: Whip.

SCHOOLMASTER: Cane.

LAVOISIER: Palm branch.

ACT ONE

The asylum bell rings behind the stage. The curtain rises.

1. ASSEMBLY

The stage shows the bath hall of the asylum. To right and left bathtubs and showers. Against the back wall a many-tiered platform with benches and massage tables. In the middle area of the stage benches are placed for the actors, sisters and male nurses. The walls are covered with white tiles to a height of about ten feet. There are window openings high up in the side walls. There is a metal framework in front of the platform and around the baths at the sides. Curtains are fixed to each side of the framework before the platform and these can be pulled when the patients are to be hidden. Front stage centre there is a circular arena. To the right of it a dais for Marat's bath, to the left a dais for Sade's chair. Left front a raised tribunal for Coulmier and his family. On another tribunal right front the musicians stand ready.

SADE is occupied with last-minute preparations for the entry of the actors. The MALE NURSES are completing a few routine operations of bathing and massage. Patients are sitting or lying on the platform at the back. SADE gives a sign. Through a side door at right back the actors enter, led by COULMIER and his family and escorted by SISTERS

and MALE NURSES. The PATIENTS rise to their feet. The ceremonious procession comes forward. The asylum bell is still tolling. MARAT, wrapped in a white sheet and accompanied by SIMONNE, is led to the bath. CORDAY, sunk into herself, is taken to a bench by two sisters. DUPERRET, ROUX and the FOUR SINGERS take up their positions as COULMIER reaches the stage. The HERALD stands in the middle of the stage. SADE stands near his raised chair. The tolling of the bell ceases. The procession moves toward the acting area. COULMIER enters the acting area. The PATIENTS in the background stand tensely. One of them adopts an eccentric pose, another comes slowly forward with outstretched arms.

FANFARE.

2. PROLOGUE

COULMIER

As Director of the Clinic of Charenton
I would like to welcome you to this salon
To one of our residents a vote
of thanks is due Monsieur de Sade who wrote
and has produced this play for your delectation
and for our patients' rehabilitation
We ask your kindly indulgence for
a cast never on stage before
coming to Charenton But each inmate
I can assure you will try to pull his weight
We're modern enlightened and we don't agree
with locking up patients We prefer therapy
through education and especially art
so that our hospital may play its part
faithfully following according to our lights
the Declaration of Human Rights
I agree with our author Monsieur de Sade

that his play set in our modern bath house won't be
marred
by all these instruments for mental and physical
hygiene

Quite on the contrary they set the scene
For in Monsieur de Sade's play he has tried
to show how Jean-Paul Marat died
and how he waited in his bath before
Charlotte Corday came knocking at his door

3. PREPARATION

HERALD knocks three times with his staff and gives the orchestra a sign. Ceremonious music begins. COULMIER moves to his family. SADE mounts his dais. MARAT is placed in his bath. SIMONNE puts his bandage straight. The SISTERS arrange Corday's costume. The group assumes the pose of a heroic tableau.

4. PRESENTATION

The music stops.

(HERALD knocks three times with his staff.)

HERALD

Already seated in his place
here is Marat observe his face
(Points his staff at MARAT.)
Fifty years old and not yet dead
he wears a bandage around his head
(Points staff at bandage.)
His flesh burns it is yellow as cheese
(Points at his neck.)
because disfigured by a skin disease

And only water cooling every limb

(Points to bath.)

prevents his fever from consuming him

(MARAT takes his pen and begins to write.)

To act this most important role we chose

a lucky paranoid one of those

who've made unprecedented strides since we

introduced them to hydrotherapy

The lady who is acting as his nurse

(Points at SIMONNE. She bends with a jerky movement over MARAT, loosens his bandage and puts on a new one.)

whose touch certainly makes him no worse

is Simonne Evrard not Charlotte Corday

Marat and Evrard united one day

They shared one vision of the just and true

and furthermore they shared her money too

Here's Charlotte Corday waiting for her entry

(Points to CORDAY who smooths her clothes and ties her neckcloth.)

She comes from Caen her family landed gentry

Her dress is pretty shoes chic and you'll note

She readjusts the cloth around her throat

(Points at it. CORDAY adjusts it.)

Historians agree so it's not lewd in us

to say that she's phenomenally pulchritudinous

(She draws herself up.)

Unfortunately the girl who plays the role here

has sleeping sickness also melancholia

Our hope must be for this afflicted soul

(With closed eyes, she inclines her head far backwards.)

that she does not forget her role

(With emphasis, turning to CORDAY.)

Ah here comes Monsieur Duperret

(Indicates DUPERRET.)

with silken hose and fresh toupee
 To the Revolution's murderous insanity
 he brings a touch of high urbanity
 Though as a well-known Girondist
 his name's upon Marat's black list
 he's handsome cheerful full of zest
 and needs more watching than the rest

(DUPERRET approaches CORDAY, pawing her furtively. The HERALD raps him on the hand with his staff. A SISTER pulls back DUPERRET.)

Jailed for taking a radical view
 of anything you can name the former priest Jacques
 Roux

(Indicates ROUX who pushes out his elbows and raises his head.)

Ally of Marat's revolution but
 unfortunately the censor's cut
 most of his rabble-rousing theme
 Our moral guardians found it too extreme

ROUX

Liberty

(Opens his mouth and pushes his elbows out vigorously. COULMIER raises his forefinger threateningly.)

HERALD

Ladies and gentlemen our players
 are drawn from many social layers
 (He waves his staff over the audience
 and the group of actors.)

Our singers for example of these four
 each must be classified as bottom drawer
 But now they've left the alcoholic mists
 of slums and gin cellars our vocalists
 (Points to the FOUR SINGERS.)

Cucurucu Polpoch Kokol
and on the streets no longer Rossignol
(Each named changes his pose with a
studied bow, ROSSIGNOL curtsies.)
Now meet this gentleman from high society
(Points at SADE who turns his back on
the public in a bored way.)
who under the lurid star of notoriety
came to live with us just five years ago
It's to his genius that we owe this show
The former Marquis Monsieur de Sade
whose books were banned his essays barred
while he's been persecuted and reviled
thrown into jail and for some years exiled
The introduction's over now the play
of Jean-Paul Marat can get under way
Tonight the date
is the thirteenth of July eighteen-o-eight
And on this night our cast intend
showing how fifteen years ago night without end
fell on that man that invalid
(Points at MARAT.)
And you are going to see him bleed
(Points at Marat's breast.)
and see this woman after careful thought
(Points at CORDAY.)
take up the dagger and cut him short

[Homage to Marat]

(Music starts. CORDAY is led by the SISTERS from the arena to a bench in the background. SIMONNE seats herself on the edge of the dais behind Marat's bath. SADE goes to his seat and sits down. ROUX and DUPERRET withdraw to a bench. The FOUR SINGERS take

their position for the homage to MARAT.)

5. HOMAGE TO MARAT

KOKOL and POLPOCH

(Recitative.)

Four years after the Revolution
and the old king's execution
four years after remember how
those courtiers took their final bow

CHORUS

(Singing in the background.)

String up every aristocrat
Out with the priests and let them live on their fat

CUCURUCU and ROSSIGNOL

(Recitative.)

Four years after we started fighting
Marat keeps on with his writing
Four years after the Bastille fell
he still recalls the old battle yell

CHORUS

(Singing in the background.)

Down with all of the ruling class
Throw all the generals out on their arse

ROUX

Long live the Revolution
(The FOUR SINGERS and other PATIENTS
form an adoring group around the bath. A
wreath of leaves is held up.)

PATIENT

(In background.)

Marat we won't dig our own bloody graves

PATIENT

(In background.)

Marat we've got to be clothed and fed

PATIENT

(In background.)

Marat we're sick of working like slaves

PATIENT

(In background.)

Marat we've got to have cheaper bread

KOKOL

(Indicating wreath.)

We crown you with these leaves Marat

because of the laurel shortage

The laurels all went to decorate

academics generals and heads of state

And their heads are enormous

(The wreath is placed on Marat's head,
he is lifted from the bath and carried
on the shoulders of two PATIENTS.)

CHORUS

Good old Marat

By your side we'll stand or fall

You're the only one that we can trust at all

(MARAT is carried around the arena.

SIMONNE walks beside him looking up

to him anxiously. The FOUR SINGERS

and the PATIENTS in the procession

carry out studied gestures of homage.)

ROSSIGNOL

(Naively, taking the play seriously.)

Don't scratch your scabs or they'll never get any
better

FOUR SINGERS

Four years he fought and he fought unafraid
sniffing down traitors by traitors betrayed
Marat in the courtroom Marat underground
sometimes the otter and sometimes the hound

Fighting all the gentry and fighting every priest
businessman the bourgeois the military beast
Marat always ready to stifle every scheme
of the sons of the arse-licking dying regime

We've got new generals our leaders are new
They sit and they argue and all that they do
is sell their own colleagues and ride on their backs
and jail them and break them or give them all the
axe

Screaming in language no man understands
of rights that we grabbed with our own bleeding
hands
when we wiped out the bosses and stormed through
the wall
of the prison they told us would outlast us all

[Marat We're Poor]

CHORUS and FOUR SINGERS

Marat we're poor and the poor stay poor
Marat don't make us wait any more
We want our rights and we don't care how
We want our revolution *now*.

(MARAT is ceremoniously placed back
in the bath. The wreath is taken from
his head. SIMONNE busily changes his
bandages and rearranges the cloth about
his shoulders. Music ends. SADE sits
unmoving, looking across the stage with

a mocking expression on his face.)

HERALD

The Revolution came and went
and unrest was replaced by discontent

6. STIFLED UNREST

PATIENT

We've got rights the right to starve

PATIENT

We've got jobs waiting for work

PATIENT

We're all brothers lousy and dirty

PATIENT

We're all free and equal to die like dogs

ROSSIGNOL

And now our lovely new leaders come
they give us banknotes which we're told
are money just as good as gold
but they're only good for wiping your bum
(COULMIER jumps up from his seat.)

ROUX

(In the middle of the stage.)

Who controls the markets
Who locks up the granaries
Who got the loot from the palaces
Who sits tight on the estates
that were going to be divided between the poor
(COULMIER looks around. A SISTER
pulls ROUX back.)

PATIENTS

(In the background, and beating out the rhythm emphatically.)

Who keeps up prisoner

Who locks us in

We're all normal and we want our freedom

CHORUS

Freedom Freedom Freedom

(The unrest grows.)

COULMIER

(Knocking with his stick on the railing.)

Monsieur de Sade

(SADE takes no notice.)

It appears I must act as the voice of reason

What's going to happen when right at the start of
the play

the patients are so disturbed

Please keep your production under control

Times have changed times are different

and these days we should take a subtler view
of old grievances

(The PATIENTS are pushed back by the MALE NURSES. Some SISTERS place themselves in front of the PATIENTS and sing a tranquilizing litany. Midstage, CORDAY, who is sitting slumped down on the bench, is being prepared by the SISTERS for her entrance.)

HERALD

Here sits Marat the people's choice

dreaming and listening to his fever's voice

You see his hand curled round his pen

and the screams from the street are all forgotten

He stares at the map of France eyes marching from