

## Marat/Sade: Wearisome rather than enlightening

**Marat/Sade**  
Nebulous Rebels at the Multipurpose  
Rumpusroom  
through November 13

review by Murray J. Goodwin

Peter Weiss' play *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean Paul Marat Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (whew) is anything but a pleasant play. Since it is set, as the title so loquaciously describes, in an asylum, we expect to encounter a colourful variety of disturbed and nasty individuals. We also anticipate the kind of conflict that cuts to the bone to

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reveal poignantly the distortions of the human psyche. We do not, however, look for articulate philosophical diatribes, instances of genuine humour, or the spirit of song.

But the inmates of this asylum are themselves staging a play. Somehow they have learned lines, and they have a point to make about the circumstances which brought them to this place (the context is that of post-revolutionary France, the infamous Napoleonic Era, where the

victims of the tide wash up in places like Charenton). However difficult the rehearsal process must have been for these variously deranged characters, the show must go on, despite the dense rhetoric of the script.

Because of the many permutations of traditional theatrical conventions (actors playing inmates being actors playing characters, etc.), Weiss' play represents an immense challenge to any theatre company attempting to mount a production. For this reason the Nebulous Rebels, under the artistic directorship of David Cassel, are to be applauded for their audacity in attacking such an incredibly complex piece of theatre.

Unfortunately, however, here is where the applause begins to wane somewhat as the demands of the play begin to overwhelm the resources of the company.

Yes, Cassel's cold, blood stained and clinical set design proves at least initially effective. But this is to the eventual exclusion of any subtlety of atmosphere to be achieved through a variation of light and shadow. And yes, the incorporation of live music, demanded by the play, is attained, but it lacks descretion so as to overwhelm the actors on the stage.

The choreography tends to be rather sloppy at the best of times, which is visably the result of inattentive direction, and not the dementia of the characters. The transitions between dialogue and song are generally mishandled, leaving the audience confused and straining to hear the content of the lyrics.

Many of the scenes between Jean-Paul Marat (Glen Beck) and Marquis de Sade (Michael Hancock) tend to be more wearisome than enlightening, despite a generally competent performance from Hancock, and perhaps because of a gratingly inaudible one from Beck.

As well, the situation between Charlotte Corday (Amanda Gray) and her erotimaniac counterpart Duperret (James Harbeck) is rendered decidedly asexual in this production. Harbeck managed only an awk-

## 3rd annual ARIA awards show celebrates Alberta talent

by Mike Spindloe

The Alberta Recording Industry Association put on their third annual awards banquet at the Chateau Lacombe Sunday night. Ian Tyson and kd lang were the big winners, walking away with three awards each, in a show that was produced for province-wide and beyond cable television by Shaw Cable. In all, awards were given out in a total of 19 categories, including "Best Recorded Performance in a Category Other Than Country, Folk, Gospel, Pop/Rock or Alternative"(!), but, strangely omitting classical music.

There were few surprises during the awards ceremony, which proceeded on the tightly structured live television schedule and included live performances from the Maru Brothers and Laura Vinson and lip-synchs by Echo Echo and Grace Under Pressure. Co-hosts Clay Hagel (K-97) and Dusty Rhodes (CISN) kept things moving, allowing themselves only brief exchanges of banter with the award presenters. In fact, the brevity and punctuality of the whole affair took almost everyone by surprise.

The dinner, at an exorbitant \$35 a plate, can only be termed a rip-off. The well-heeled punters were treated to half-cooked roast beef sans gravy, limp pseudo-Yorkshire pudding and watered-down French dressing on lettuce and purple cabbage that was supposed to pass for salad. Not only that, but the beans were soggy.

A high point of the evening was Frank Philano's explanation of the methods used by Romanovsky and Company to tabulate votes cast by ARIA members for the awards. Beginning with "Through the magic of arithmetic," he provided the evening's only really humorous moments.

A complete list of winners follows:

Female Recording Artist of the Year, **Mary Lou Sonmor**; Male Recording Artist of the Year, **Ian Tyson**; Group Recording Artist of the Year, **Garry Lee's Showdown**; Performer of the Year, **k.d. lang**; Best Recorded Performance in a Category Other Than Country, Folk, Gospel, Pop/Rock, or Alternative, **Rusty Reed**; Best Music Score of the Year, **Tommy Banks**; Best Independent Commercial Release, **The Sailcats**; Session Player of the Year, **Gerry Dere**; Best Country Artist on Record, **Ian Tyson**; Best Folk Artist on Record, **Lesley Schatz**; Best Pop/Rock Performance on Record, **"Belli to Belli" by Grace Under Pressure**; Best Alternative Music Performance on Record, **"Picture Window" by This Fear**; Best Music Video, **"Crying" by k.d. lang**; Single of the Year, **"Cowboy's Ride" by Ian Tyson**; Instrumental of the Year, **"Night Music" by Dick Damron**; Composer of the Year, **Dennis Charney**; Album of the Year, **"Shadowland" by k.d. lang**; Producer of the Year, **Dan Lowe**; Engineer of the Year, **Michael Molineux**.

ward lack of commitment to the character's ardent obsessions, leaving Gray very little to repond to.

The remaining horde of inmates are left with the unenviable task of responding to the cattle call, effected here with a loud obnoxious belch from the Herald's trumpet. The cast is working very hard to portray the psychological squalor of the asylum, but these poor unfortunates generally seem confused as to whether they are playing actors, inmates or characters at any given time, and their confusion becomes ours. Commendations go to Nick Balevich (the one who acts "entire monologues using only his eyes") for a consistency of effort.

There is a great deal of noise in this production, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But when the rabble begins to undermine the dramatic complexity of the play rather than support it, we as audience experience irritation and not any crucial

sense of being implicated in the social/political issues the play addresses.

The claustrophobic atmosphere of the Multipurpose Rumpusroom parallels quite imposingly the enclosed ambiance of the asylum. If the audience was to be more threatend than it is in this production, the sense of the "no escape" would be quite exhilarating. As it is, we must content ourselves with being merely uncomfortable, and this is a disappointment.

The problem is simply that this production does not go far enough to making us feel, despite an effective ending, the full range of the play's intensity. But it is an intensity that is very demanding, exacting huge strides of emotional and psychological stamina. And, once again, it is to the credit of the Nebulous Rebels to undertake such an ambitious project. You may wish to attend a performance if only to sample Weiss' writing. Just don't expect too much from this production.



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## SYSTEMS ANALYST

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