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David Mamet

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THE ANARCHIST



by **DAVID MAMET**

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David Mamet : The Anarchist before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Anarchist:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A PLAY THAT IS BOTH VERY GOOD AND FRUSTRATINGLY BADBy David KeymerThe Anarchist is very good theater sitting in the middle of a h*ll of a mess. The good is a lot better than the bad so let's concentrate on that first.In The Anarchist, Mamet, a brilliant dramatist who uses theater to

make us think as well as feel, has written a play about the confrontation of two world views. There are two characters. CATHY has been in prison for the last thirty-five years. In the 70s, she and her girlfriend lover executed two policemen during a botched robbery. She's requesting a pardon again, claiming she's already served far longer than other people convicted of similar crimes. More important, she has changed. She's embraced Jesus, done good works in prison, written about her conversion. It's time to stop punishing her, to set her free. ANN is a prison official. This will be her last time to meet with CATHY. She's retiring. But she still holds CATHY's future in her hands: it is upon her recommendation that CATHY will be released or held. Thus begins a seventy-minute dance, ANN and CATHY around each other, because ANN doesn't believe CATHY has changed a bit. She's just gaming the system. What happens is dramatic and brilliant, and shouldn't be spoiled by a review. This play opened on Broadway with a stellar cast: Patti LuPone as Cathy, Debra Winger as Ann. David Mamet directed. It received almost unanimously negative reviews and its closing was announced the next day. After only twenty-three preview performances and seventeen post-opening performances it was dead in the water. Why? Mamet is a distinguished playwright and LuPone and Winger established stars. Most concurred it was the language. It didn't help that Winger was new to Broadway but the root problem was language. The actors sank and drowned in a sea of excess verbiage. Another problem may be that nothing much happens physically on stage. They sit, they talk, a phone rings, they talk some more. There are verbal fireworks but no physical ones. Lastly, at certain points not only is there a lot of language but the dialogue is murky. It reminds me a bit of my reaction when I saw Edward Albee's bomb, *Tiny Alice*, years ago (1965), a play so hard to figure out that its lead, John Gielgud, later said he never knew what was going on in it. Mamet's dialogue isn't that obscure but it's not clean. As several critics noted, Mamet seems to have difficulty writing dialogue for women characters. Men speak elliptically in Mamet's plays (think *American Buffalo*) but the language they talk is forceful. The women in Mamet's plays --certainly Cathy and Ann in this play--speak too much in Big Concepts. As a result, much of the dialogue seems manufactured. Still, at the heart of this messy writing is a good play and a very strong dramatic moment. And the ideas that are talked about are important ones. What do we do when Christian and American ideals of forgiveness are pitted against our need to protect ourselves against violence? How shall we determine the truthfulness of a person who, because of her situation, has reason to deceive and has a past of unrepentant violence? That's a gross reduction of the complexities raised in this thoughtful drama but it gives some hint of how rich -in ideas, not language--this play is. The play needs a Script Doctor but it's got something valuable to offer. Something I'd like to see presented on stage.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Love this! By Patrician Squire Fascinating. Love this! 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Mamet gets it right By Anne De Bourg The Anarchist is a very intelligent play. And unlike most plays that deal with political-moral concepts, it gets the morality right: terrorism is evil. But then, we expect no less of Mamet, the Playwright Who Has Seen The Light.

"The finest American author of his generation." Sunday Mail Nothing is quite what it seems in David Mamet's latest work. With a nod to his mentor, Harold Pinter, Mamet once again employs his signature verbal jousting in this battle of two women over freedom, power, money, religion and the lack thereof. Broadway premiere, under the direction of the playwright, in fall 2012 starring Patti LuPone and Debra Winger. David Mamet is a playwright, director, author, essayist, screenwriter, and film director. His plays include *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Speed-the-Plow*, *American Buffalo*, *A Life in the Theatre*, *Oleanna*, *The Cryptogram*, and *Race*.

"The finest American author of his generation." Sunday Mail (2013-01-17) "Students of Mamet won't want to miss it; I was engaged and compelled throughout. Indeed, *The Anarchist* is a counterweight to the conventional dramatic tropes of family, love and death." - Chris Jones, Chicago Tribune (2013-01-17) About the Author David Mamet is a playwright, director, author, essayist, screenwriter, and film director. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for *Glengarry Glen Ross*, which also received a Tony Award nomination, along with *Speed-the-Plow*. Other plays include *American Buffalo*, *A Life in the Theatre*, *Oleanna*, *The Cryptogram* and *Race*.