

‘Madness’ Manifest: Creativity, Art and the Margins of Mental Health

On January 14, 2008, the Department of Dramatic Arts at Brock University will host an interdisciplinary, one-day symposium on the topic of mental health, ‘madness’ and creativity as part of its mainstage season featuring performances of Caryl Churchill’s *The Skriker* and Peter Weiss’ *Marat/Sade*. The symposium’s aim is to investigate this emergent theme of our mainstage productions from a multiplicity of vantage points by bringing together scholars and practitioners from a variety of disciplines. Of particular interest is the arguably contentious and challenging process of representing ‘madness’ in performance and other forms of artistic expression. Comprised of scholarly papers, panel discussions, workshops, and performances, the symposium will serve as a critical forum to address issues of mental health, an opportunity for outreach, awareness, and an educational resource for students involved in our productions and their audiences. Ultimately, the symposium will explore the creative and productive potentialities to be found in the tensions between ‘insanity’ and ‘sanity,’ ‘madness’ and ‘normalcy’ in the arts and society. The symposium will feature a performance of *The Chant* by the Workman Arts Project, based out of Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, followed by a discussion with the company.

The symposium committee invites proposals for papers and presentations in a variety of formats. Possible topics might include:

- The relationship between creativity and madness
- Architecture and design as related to notions of wellness, recovery or containment, incarceration
- Madness and nature
- The politics of madness
- Conceptualizations and representations of the artist as madman/woman
- “Madness and Civilization”
- Institutional and bureaucratic structures that contain and control ‘madness’
- Artistic explorations of madness/mental illness
- Epistemologies of sanity/insanity
- Mental health and the limits of medical diagnostics.
- Representations of madness in performance, literature, popular culture
- Power and pathology
- Changing historical understandings and perceptions of madness
- Illness as metaphor
- Staging/performing mental illness or madness
- Creative arts therapy for sufferers of mental illness
- Explorations of the creative potentiality of insanity
- Psychoanalytic and psychosociological understandings of madness and creativity
- Papers that address any of the above issues in relation to *Marat/Sade* or *The Skriker* specifically.

Proposals are due November 1, 2007 and should include a 250 word abstract and short bio. Proposals for workshops, roundtables, and praxis sessions that ‘exercise’ topics of interest to the symposium are especially encouraged.

Please send proposals to Natalie Alvarez, Symposium Chair, at: nalvarez@brocku.ca