

Relentlessly exciting

'Danton' a gripping, relevant film

By JEFF GROVE
Arts Editor

The Polish authorities should have known better than to allow Andrzej Wajda to film *Danton*, a piercing look at the darkest years of the French Revolution. Parallels between France in 1793 and Poland today abound. Food rationing, domestic spying, censorship and dictatorship are common to both settings. Wajda, who documented the Polish labor movement in *Man of Marble* (1977) and *Man of Iron* (1981), could hardly be counted on to ignore the similarities.

Review

While *Danton*, based on Stanislaw Przybyzewska's play *The Danton Affair*, has not been shown in Poland in the two years since it was made, it has circulated in the West to a deservedly tumultuous acclaim. Wajda's film cannily explores the self-destructive elements of revolutionary movements. What amounts to a political embarrassment to Poland's General Wojciech Jaruzelski emerges as a gripping, relevant historical drama. The film opens in France in 1793, with the French Revolution well-established — so well-established, in fact, that it has already begun to crumble under the weight of its own internal conflicts.

Maximilien Robespierre has consolidated his faction's power, only to face a new threat in the return to Paris of Georges Danton.

Danton's formerly extremist politics have moderated, and he wants to restore peace to France by reconciling the Revolutionary leaders with each other. The power in Danton's ideas is that the people of France support him. From there, the Danton-Robespierre conflict escalates to the point where a tragic outcome is inevitable. While the audience can't help but sympathize with Danton, Wajda himself is in no way partisan. He observes objectively, pointing out Danton's childish nature as quickly as Robespierre's icy bloodletting.

As Danton, Gerard Depardieu, the rage of French cinema and the star of the highly successful *The Return of Martin Guerre*, squarely encapsulates the charisma and boyish charm that win Danton popular favor.

Squaring off with Depardieu in *Danton's* best scenes, vents her frustration by briefly pretending to be a prostitute in public. Paulo, similarly dumped by his lover, becomes Maria's first customer.

But Maria's charade soon becomes reality, and before long the two of them are romping around Paulo's push pad, much in the same manner as Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider in *Last Tango in Paris*.

Maria and Paulo get metaphysical as well as physical, discussing needs, past lovers and philosophies as Maria tries to cheer Paulo's depressed spirits — which isn't easy, because his business acumen (as the manager of a brassiere factory), in addition to a fulfilling love life, has thus far eluded him.

The second film, *Montenegro*, though

Wojciech Pszoniak plays Robespierre as a calculating power-grabber. Pszoniak tempers this, however, with genuine integrity. Robespierre may be a despot, but he is not unscrupulous. As he says, no one — not even Danton — is above the law.

Pszoniak's striking physical resemblance to Gen. Jaruzelski, by the way, has been the subject of critical comment from the first; it could not be unintentional.

The strongest supporting performance comes from Patrice Chereau as the pro-Danton journalist Camille Desmoulines. Chereau, the enfant terrible of the French theatre, makes his film acting debut with alacrity. His Desmoulines has strong convictions but must learn to stand up for them.

In other roles, Anne Alvaro's subtlety enlightens the part of Eleonore Duplay, Robespierre's servant, while Serge Merlin's max-im-spouting Danton disciple is a poignant portrait. Angela Winkler tugs the viewer's emotions with her role as Desmoulines' wife. Boguslaw Linda's portrayal of Robespierre follower Saint Just is top-notch.

All of *Danton's* participants get a solid assist from script-writer Jean-Claude Carriere, who also wrote such films as *Belle de Jour*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *That Obscure Object of Desire* and *The Return of Martin Guerre*.

Just as the inquest in *Martin Guerre* was the high point of that film, Danton's trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal, which he himself founded, provides the climax for *Danton*. Carriere's writing in this scene is deeply felt, giving Depardieu strong material for his grandstanding appeals to the public.

As if the graphic guillotining of Danton, Desmoulines and two others were not wrenching enough a finale, Wajda throws in one final ironic twist.

Throughout the film, Eleonore has been coaching her baby brother as he memorizes the new French constitution. At the moment when Danton is executed, Robespierre lies in bed racked with a fever as the boy proudly but hesitantly recites to Robespierre the now-meaningless code of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Wajda finds no need to show or tell the fact that Robespierre himself was beheaded two months later. The defeated, exhausted expression on Robespierre's face as he pulls his sheet over his head tells all and provides a fitting conclusion to this relentlessly exciting film.

Danton is most impressive, however, because it is not merely a costume drama. In addressing disturbing themes relevant to current politics, the film rises to the level of timelessness.

ArtSchool's 'Sensual' film series to begin March 8

By ED BRACKETT
Staff Writer

Carrboro's ArtSchool will present two films — both foreign, both comedies — in its "Films Most Sensual" series, which begins March 8.

The first of these, *Eu Te Amo (I Love You)*, comes from Brazilian director Arnaldo Jabur and stars that country's hottest sex symbol, Sonia Braga.

Eu Te Amo chronicles the sexcapades of Maria (Braga) and Paulo (Paulo Cesar Pereiro), including their unusual first encounter on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Recently jilted by her lover, Maria

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Gallery seeks works for show

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DEMOCRATIC PRECINCT MEETINGS

Annual meetings of the North Carolina Democratic Party will be held at every polling place across the state on Thursday evening at 8 p.m. Registered democrats will vote on the party platform and resolutions, and elect delegates to County, District and District Conventions. Some campus precincts will organize student precinct committees this year — all students registered to vote in local elections are welcome at Fetzer Gym, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church or UNC General Admin. Bldg.

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AT UNION BOX OFFICE

Jackson wins record 8 Grammys

From Staff and Wire Reports

LOS ANGELES — Michael Jackson waltzed into the record books Tuesday night, picking up an unprecedented eight prizes at the 26th annual National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences awards.

Jackson's major awards included both Record of the Year "Beat It" and Album of the Year "Thriller."

Jackson also won awards for best R&B song and best male R&B vocal (both for "Billie Jean"), best male rock vocal ("Beat It"), best male pop vocal (for the *Thriller* album) and producer of the year, an award Jackson shared with Quincy Jones.

Perhaps the most interesting victory for Jackson was in the category of best children's recording. The award went to *E.T. — The Extra-Terrestrial*, which Jackson narrated. In accepting the award, album producer Quincy Jones said, "I don't think the people who kept this album from coming out," referring to a move by the CBS and Epic record companies which blocked the planned release of *E.T. — The*

Extra-Terrestrial until well after the release of Jackson's mega-hit *Thriller*.

The Police racked up four awards to take secondary honors. "Every Breath You Take" was named Song of the Year, and landed the group a mention as best group pop vocal. The album *Synchronicity* garnered the award for best group rock performance, and lead singer Sting won the award for best rock instrumental performance for his title track for the film *Brimstone & Treacle*.

Pat Benatar was named best female rock vocalist for the fourth year in a row.

Irene Cara's performance of "Flashdance ... What a Feeling" was named best female pop vocal, and George Benson's "Being With You" was cited as best instrumental pop performance.

Confusion arose over the award for best show cast album. Ann Miller and Mickey Rooney served as presenters, and Rooney announced the recording of the score for *Cats* as the winner. But Miller then asked, "Is there anyone from *La Cage aux Folles* here? You won." Master of ceremonies John

Denver later clarified that *Cats* had indeed won.

The Culture Club was named best new artist. In a live speech transmitted by satellite from London, lead singer Boy George said, "Thank you, America. You've got taste, style, and you know a good drag queen when you see one."

In an interesting cross-over, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis won best instrumental solo awards in both the jazz and classical categories.

Conductor Sir Georg Solti picked up four classical awards, giving him a lifetime total of 23 Grammys and ousting previous record-holder Henry Mancini, whose total to date is 20.

Ella Fitzgerald was named best female jazz vocalist for *The Best Is Yet to Come*, and Mel Torme won the award for best male jazz vocalist for *Top Drawer*. The Manhattan Transfer won an award for best duo or group vocal for *Why Not!*

Anne Murray, Lee Greenwood and Alabama won country awards for best female, male and group vocal performance, respectively.

Graduate student art shows on exhibit

By ARLAINE ROCKEY
Staff Writer

The Graduate Student Show now on exhibit in the gallery of the Art Classroom Studio Building is composed of eight pieces, one from each of the first-year graduate students in the UNC department of art's Master of Fine Arts program.

First-year students spend five to seven hours a day working in their own studios.

Besides available electives, they take an art theory course in which they "share ideas and have discussions about where art is going today," said Harriette Diamond, one of the first-year students.

Diamond's piece, titled *Dog #6*, is the highlight of the exhibition. Diamond has created a sculpture of a life-sized "skinny hound dog" out of painted chicken wire. The sculpture captures the viewer's immediate attention with its realism.

One of the other notable pieces in the show is Jay Gibson's untitled line drawing. This piece, done with black ink marker on white paper, sports a broken hanger above two coils of movement shaped like Slinky toys. Framed in silver metal, it is modernist in its simplicity and preciseness.

Just the opposite is true of Jane Robinson-Filer's scrambling in her painting *Spare Me the Gutter*. Brightly colored and cluttered, this oil painting done

on paper screams with trauma and hysterics.

From a blue squawking chicken with skinny, orange bird legs, to a woman's yellow body, green face and fiery orange-red hair to the rooster with an orange-red crown that mimics the woman, the painting is wrought with chaos. There are also a person squeezing the rooster and what looks like a human leg torn off at the knee, as well as a pink devil and a masked face in the background. The justification of all this chaos can only be found in the title.

The example of just these three pieces shows that the Graduate Student Show is diverse in subject matter and in media. The gallery is open daily from noon to 5 p.m.

The second-year graduate students will have their work shown in an upcoming exhibition at the Ackland Art Museum. That show will be on view April 6-23.

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