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Obama 44. Fratti's 93rd Play... and There's More on the Way

NATASHA LARDERA (April 17, 2012)



Maja, a young and beautiful campaign worker for Obama, is killed. A mystery needs to be solved. The truth is uncovered by a thorough investigation

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Obama 44. Fratti's 93rd Play... and There's More on the Way

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Mario Fratti's world-premiere of his thriller *Obama 44*, a play about the mysterious murder of Maja, a presidential campaign staffer, just ended its run at La MaMa. Fratti, who translated Fellini's screenplay "8 1/2" for the Broadway musical *Nine*, is also the playwright of *Cage*, *Victim*, *E. Duse*, *White Widow - Mafia*, *Che Guevara*, *Pinochet - Chile '73*, *Refrigerators*, *Birthday*, *Academy*, *Seducers*, *Sister*, *Terrorist*, *Loves*, *Iraq-Blindness*, *Porno*, *The Bridge* and *Erotic Adventures In Venice*. This is his third play at **La MaMa**, the first two were *Sister* and *Six Passionate Women*. He is also a journalist and a critic.

Directed by **Wayne Maugans**, the cast features Rob Sedgwick (*Perfect Crime*, *The Devil's Disciple*) in the role of a tyrant brother, Julia Motyka (*What We're Up Against*) in the role of Maja, a passionate Obama fan, Dennis Ostermaier (*Victor/Victoria*) in the role of Bob, an insecure ex boyfriend, Thomas Poarch in the



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role of Mel, an adorable lover and Richard Ugino in the role of the police detective who falls in love with the dead woman's personality. Who kills Maja with silk stockings and why? Is it someone from the Tea party? Or a rebuffed ex lover?

"Obama 44 is a psychological thriller about the murder of the charming, beautiful young woman Maja, who admired and loved the President and worked for his re-election campaign. She is murdered." As mysteries go, the audience is presented with a crime, her strangulation, and then asked to sort through the clues before getting to the final reveal. In the course of the interview performed by the detective, we're treated to flashbacks depicting Maja's past, Bob's first date with her and Mel's infatuation.

"I receive a publication called The Intelligence Report," Mario Fratti explains over the phone, "It is about crimes against democracy. One day I read a story about a young woman in the South, a volunteer for Obama, who was murdered and they did not find the killer. That was the spark and after six or seven months I started to write the thriller."

The "44" in the title has a double meaning, because Barack Obama is indeed this nation's 44th president, a president that Maja simply adores. She says of him, "Obama, our 44th president. What a triumph!" As he hears about her and Obama, the detective not only is fascinated by her but he admits that he too was won over by Obama. In 2008, he didn't vote.

Between Sarah Palin and he didn't see a choice. But three years later, he sees Obama as a good president, someone to vote for.

Mel, is Maja's lover No. 44. He is a gentle man who has risked his life too, a man who supports her and to whom she pours out her ardent admiration for Barack Obama himself. "I admire him so much. I love him. And I love America, for the first time. I'm proud of all Americans. We elected an African-American, showing the world that we are truly democratic. Forty-fourth! And you, my love, deserve that number too...You, you, only you...my adored 44."

Maja is an intriguing character with an endearing allure, with a great sense of humor and a powerful candidness—she never lies, she stopped lying when she was 19. Is truth dangerous? "Yes, it is," Fratti replies, "That is the message. Absolute truth has a price and Maja pays with her life." No matter if she is attractive, authentic, with a vast sexual experience, that excites and disturbs the men of her life. She is just too much to handle, getting ride of her seems the only solution.

"The reaction to the play," Fratti explains "has been mixed but we have been lucky overall. It has been 80% positive and 20% negative. I believe that the polemical tone was due to a racial question. There are many who are against Obama."

The production has scenic design by Tatsuki Nakamura, lighting design by Paul Bartlett, costume design by Peri Grabin and sound design by Ien Denio.



Mario Fratti



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