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By Jennifer Shapira
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A Clockwork Orange



Studio Theatre Secondstage's production of *A Clockwork Orange* is absolutely first-rate. Based on the 1962 novella by Anthony Burgess, this flawlessly cast ensemble tackles this twisted story brilliantly. In fact, it's so disturbing you wince- yet so captivating you can't look away.

Director Mike Chamberlin's production is superb in every aspect. Not only are the actors' overall performances exceptional, but their Cockney accents are dead-on and their costumes are period-perfect. The set, bathed in smoky orange, and swathed in an innovative blend of music- including warped "droog" ring leader Bad Boy Alex's theme song -- Beethoven's Ninth-- is as intoxicating and otherworldly as a quitting smoker's final drag.

Deriving its name from Burgess' take on an old Cockney expression, "a clockwork orange" is part "orang" for human being and part "unusual or out of sorts." But to say that Alex and his fellow hoodlums or "droogs" are at all unusual is a gross understatement. They seek out trouble, "cracking into [people] lovely." After a night on the town, Alex, played to perfection by Scot McKenzie, falls gently asleep to Ludwig Van's strumming violins. One evening, after a few cocktails of milk-and-hallucinogens at the sexy Korova Milkbar, the droogs are poised for an ultra-violent fright-night that includes a graphic gang rape and a botched murder.

It's precisely that murder that lands our "humble narrator" in jail, set up by his droogs. Police officers haul him into a juvenile prison where he is, in time, reformed and deprogrammed of his violent tendencies through endless straightjacketed viewings of explicit films. Suzanne Richard plays the twitching, cackling Dr. Brodsky, responsible for curing Alex, aka prisoner "6655321," with the controversial Ludivico Treatment. After his release, the cured Alex can no longer fight back, instead, he's reduced to pain so overwhelming he's doubled over, left powerless.

Andrew Boyle (Pete), Patrick Bussink (Georgie) and C.L. Hopkins (Dim) are outstanding as Alex's droogs-cum-enemies, and each proves his versatility later in their very different roles when they double as prison cohorts. Steve Lebens is excellent as both the take-no-crap detective Deltoid and later as the prison chaplain humorously enamored with "Little 6655321." James Laster plays the sensitive writer F. Alexander who witnesses Alex's fatal attack on his wife (Richard). Alexandra Page and John Sloane provide moments of bizarre irony as Alex's clueless parents.

Somehow, in this very smart and sick play, there's welcome room for that occasional laugh. Here, performed in Woolly Mammoth's intimate space, it's a production so amazing and so exposed, the vulnerable audience, too, can't help but feel reduced to nakedness.

At the [Studio Theatre Secondstage](#) through March 4, 2001.