



Dario Fo

Biography and Political Background

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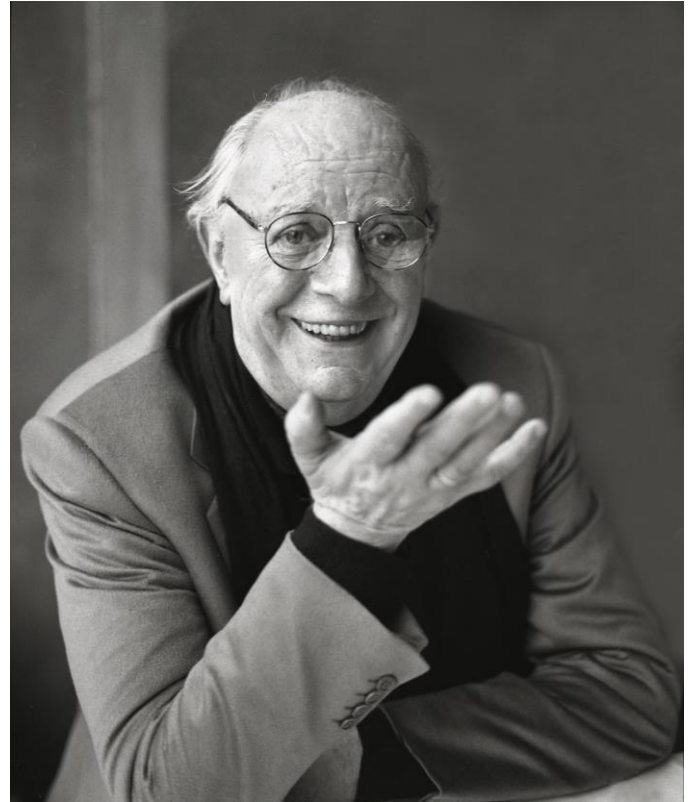
- 1926 Fo is born in San Giano, near the Swiss border.
- 1943–45 Deserts from fascist militia. Helps partisans to smuggle people into Switzerland.
- 1945–52 Moves to Milan and begins to study architecture. Starts to gravitate towards the theatre and performs in amateur shows.
- 1953 Co-writes and performs in his first major theatrical production: A Poke in the Eye.
- 1962 Seven controversial appearances on the television variety show Canzonissima.



- 1968A year dominated by student protests. Fo leaves the commercial theatre, founds New Scene, and performs at branches of ARCI, the communist cultural association.
- 1969 Performs Mistero Buffo for the first time. The year concludes with a 'Hot Autumn' of working-class struggles and the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli dying in police custody.
- 1970 Founds a new theatre company: The Commune. Accidental Death of an Anarchist premières exactly a year after Pinelli's death.
- 1973 Writes People's War in Chile immediately after Pinochet's coup. Fo is briefly arrested.
- 1974 Première of Can't Pay? Won't Pay!



- 1977 Première of Tale of a Tiger.
- 1980 Crushing defeat for FIAT car workers, traditionally Italy's most militant workers. Revival of Can't Pay? Won't Pay!
- 1981 Première of Trumpets and Raspberries.
- 1997 Wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1998 Première of latest play: Free Marino! Marino is Innocent!



Committed to giving the working class a voice.

Continues to enjoy popularity inside and outside Italy.

Became the world's most performed living playwright in 1964.

Had to face persecution by the rich and powerful right wing.

In 1973, his wife Francesca Rame was kidnapped, raped and tortured by



Vatican called Mistero Buffo, “the most blasphemous show ever”.

Reason for popularity - did not sermonize against the rich and the powerful.

He simply laughed at them.

Ridiculed the establishment, the police, politicians and the church.

Never had any strong political affiliations to any party

Did not join the Communist Party of Italy (PCI)



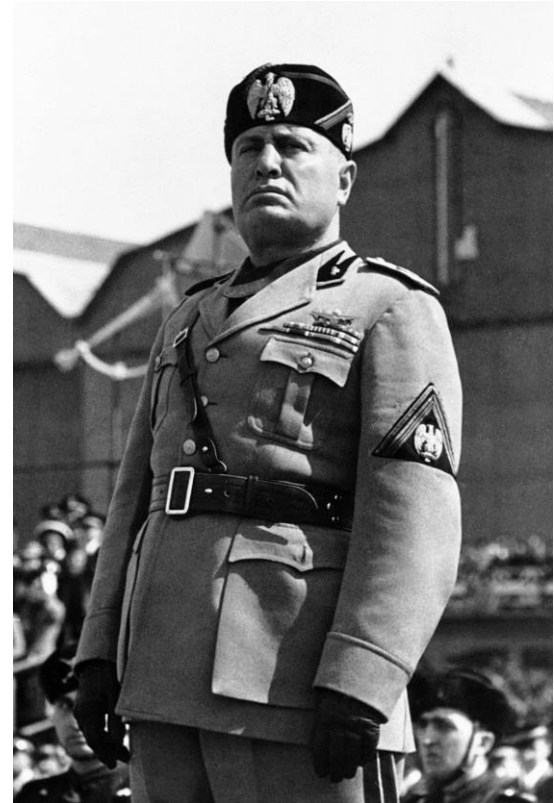
Broke away from commercial theatre

Became a part of independent theatre.

Performed in factories and city squares.

Echoed the mass movements of Italy.

By 1970s the mass movements waned, he
had lack of inspiring material to perform.



Influences:

His maternal grandfather was a travelling greengrocer who entertained his customers with scandalous stories.

Fo imbibed the art of storytelling early on.

Was an adolescent during WWII

Worked in the anti-fascist resistance movement.

Helped allied prisoners and jews escape to Switzerland.

‘We were coming out of total ignorance. We knew nothing so we started to read frenetically anything that fell under our noses ... And then we talked, each of us transmitting to the others an effervescence, an angst, a desire to know and to everything. I almost didn’t sleep at night.’

Marxist Antonio Gramsci who died in prison in 1937.

Prison Notebooks published by PCI in 1947

Gramsci underlined the importance of intellectuals in creating a counter-current of thought to overcome the dominant ideology of the ruling classes.



“Mine has been a revolt, a rebellion, against a hypocritical and deceitful order, which dates back to my experience as a student. As Marx says, ‘The ruling ideas in society are the ideas of the ruling class’, and at that time it was only the ruling class which expressed its culture. Therefore my class, the peasantry, was viewed as being a parasite that lived off that culture and aped some of its products”

