

# SYDNEY THEATRE CO EDUCATION



**On Cue**

**NO PAY? NO WAY!**

# Table of Contents

About <i>On Cue</i> and STC	2
Curriculum Connections	3
Cast and Creatives	4
A Note from the Director	5
Synopsis	6
Character Analysis	8
Themes and Ideas	11
Style	14
Reference List	16

Compiled by Lisa Mumford.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Lisa Mumford is the Education Projects Officer for the Sydney Theatre Company. You can contact Lisa on [studentlearning@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:studentlearning@sydneytheatre.com.au).

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# About On Cue and STC

## ABOUT ON CUE

STC Ed has a suite of resources located on our website to enrich and strengthen teaching and learning surrounding the plays in the STC season.

Each school show will be accompanied by an On Cue e-publication which will feature essential information for teachers and students, such as curriculum links, information about the playwright, synopsis, character analysis, thematic analysis and suggested learning experiences.

For more in-depth digital resources surrounding productions, please visit the STC Ed page on our website.

Such resources include:

- STC documentaries
- Design sketchbooks

## ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

In 1980, STC's first Artistic Director Richard Wherrett defined STC's mission as to provide "first class theatrical entertainment for the people of Sydney – theatre that is grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun."

Almost 40 years later, that ethos still rings true.

STC offers a diverse program of distinctive theatre of vision and scale at its harbourside home venue, The Wharf; Roslyn Packer Theatre at Walsh Bay; and Sydney Opera House, as its resident theatre company.

STC has a proud heritage as a creative hub and incubator for Australian theatre and theatre makers, developing and producing eclectic Australian works, interpretations of classic repertoire and great international writing. STC strives to create theatre experiences that reflect Sydney's distinctive personality and engage audiences.

Strongly committed to engagement in the community, STC's Education and Communities programs aim to inspire theatre appreciation and participation not only in theatres but also in schools, community halls; wherever people get together. STC offers an innovative School Drama™ program; partners with groups in metropolitan Sydney, regional centres and rural areas; and reaches beyond NSW with touring productions throughout Australia. Through these partnerships and initiatives, STC plays a part in ensuring a creative, forward-thinking and sociable future by engaging with young people, students and teachers.

The theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists have been launched and fostered at STC, including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne, Benedict Andrews and Cate Blanchett.

STC often collaborates with international artists and companies and, in recent years, the company's international profile has grown significantly with productions touring extensively to great acclaim.

STC is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, by its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW.

[sydneytheatre.com.au](http://sydneytheatre.com.au)

# Curriculum Connections



## SUITABLE FOR

Students in Years 10 to 12

## SUBJECTS

Drama Stage 5:

- Dramatic Forms and Performance Styles; Comedy, Farce, Commedia dell'arte, Clowning, Slapstick

Drama Stage 6:

- Improvisation, Playbuilding and Acting
- Elements of Production in Performance

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

# No Pay? No Way!

By Dario Fo

A new adaptation by Marieke Hardy

**GIOVANNI**

Glenn Hazeldine

**DIRECTOR**

Sarah Giles

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Lauren Makin

**LUIGI**

Rahel Romahn

**DESIGNER**

Charles Davis

**STAGE MANAGER**

Todd Eichorn

**ANTONIA**

Helen Thomson

**LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Paul Jackson

**ASSISTANT STAGE  
MANAGER**

Jennifer Parsonage

**SERGEANT/INSPECTOR/  
UNDERTAKER/OLD MAN**

Aaron Tsindos

**COMPOSER & SOUND  
DESIGNER**

Steve Francis

**LIGHTING REALISER**

(Parramatta Season)  
Veronique Benett

**MARGHERITA**

Catherine Vän-Davies

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

Madeleine Humphreys

**LIGHTING SUPERVISOR**

Josh Neufeld

**FIGHT & MOVEMENT  
DIRECTOR**

Tim Dashwood

**FLOOR ELECTRICIAN**

Doug Niebling

**VOICE & TEXT COACH**

Charmian Gradwell

**STAGING SUPERVISOR**

Eric Duffy

**LITERAL TRANSLATOR**

Thomas McPherson

**SOUND SUPERVISOR**

Hayley Forward

**SOUND OPERATOR**

Kevin White

**DRESSER**

Carol Tee

**REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPHER**

Lisa Tomasetti

**PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER**

Prudence Upton

Approx 2 hours 20 minutes (including interval)

No Pay? No Way! was adapted from the original Italian text *Sotto Paga! Non Si Paga!* by Dario Fo and Franca Rame.

This production of *No Pay? No Way!* premiered at the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House on 14 February 2020.

Parramatta season is co-presented with Riverside Theatres, Parramatta.



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



PRODUCTION PATRON

ANITA & LUCA BELGIORNO-NETTIS  
FOUNDATION



# A Note from the Director

Sarah Giles

I think Dario Fo would be very upset to learn that his play, first performed in 1974, has as much relevance to Australia in 2020 as it did to Italy in the 1970s. Maybe he'd be outright disappointed to learn that we're even performing it – surely we'd moved on by now, fixed the old problems and were tackling new problems, better problems.

It makes me think of that great quote from Antonio Gramsci, written from a fascist prison in 1937, “...the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.”

And there are a great many morbid symptoms today. A small symptom of our dying system is my current ongoing dispute with Centrelink, a far greater and pressing symptom is that our country is on fire.

When Fo first performed this play it actually inspired a riot amongst the people of Italy.

“When we began, our story seemed rather impossible, even surreal. We were narrating a story of women in the outer suburbs of Milan who were doing the shopping in a supermarket and found themselves, suddenly, with prices disproportionately higher, not paying at all. Our story was pure fiction.

“Yet two weeks after the play's first performance the very events recounted on stage were taking place in Milan supermarkets. At one of these ‘raided’ supermarkets, 40 demonstrators entered the aisles, two of which gained control of the cash registers and allowed shoppers to pay ‘old’ prices. The police quickly arrived and arrested eleven people. There were more people – about 100 – involved in the almost simultaneous raid on the second supermarket. Demonstrators cut the phone lines and then proceeded to announce their actions over the supermarket public address system. About £13,000 was ‘lost’, and by the time the police arrived the demonstrators had left. Leaflets from a Marxist group were left behind, which justified their action: ‘The goods we took were already ours, just as everything else is ours because we have produced it through our exploitation.’ The leaflet also argued for greater civil disobedience: ‘Let's get organised in working-class areas – rip up the gas, electricity and phone bills. Tear up the rent book. Don't pay for public transport any more! Let's take all we need, let's re-appropriate our lives!’<sup>1</sup>

Fo, one of the very few playwrights to have ever received the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1997, is a writer of farce. His work has more in common with the theatre of Augusto Boal

(a Brazilian theatre visionary who created Theatre of the Oppressed to rehumanise humanity and use theatre as a tool for social change) and Brecht than with the literary writers of English farces like Shaffer and Orton. His theatre is fiercely political and asks its audiences to connect the dots, to think, to question ... it's messy. It's clever. It riles you up and inspires you.

To hope that a work becomes irrelevant seems mean, but in truth I think Fo wouldn't mind. I really hope we're not still performing this play in another 40 years. I hope we have new problems then. Better problems.

P.S. Thank you to Sydney Theatre Company for providing the circumstances in which a mother of two young children can travel interstate, live there for a bit, make some theatre, and still be a parent. Thank you for embracing shorter rehearsal days and allowing weekends to be just that, weekends. And biggest of all, thank you to my mum, without her support and her presence as “Granny” none of this would be possible.

Reference:

1. Quotation taken from literal translation of *Sotto Paga! Non Si Paga!* by Dario Fo.

# Synopsis

## ACT I

The play opens with Antonia returning from the supermarket with a huge load of groceries. She is accompanied by her friend Margherita whom she has run into on the way home and enlisted to help carry the groceries. Margherita is immediately suspicious of how Antonia could afford so much food when it is so expensive at the moment, and after some joking around Antonia admits that she didn't pay for it. She goes on to retell the story of a riot at the supermarket, and the women become concerned that their husbands or the police will find out. There is discussion between the women about being fired, not being able to afford rent and bills, and the cost of living being unaffordable. These references continue throughout the play. Although she doesn't want anything to do with the stolen goods, Margherita ends up with bags of groceries under her coat giving her the appearance of being pregnant. The women must now keep up this façade in an attempt to evade punishment. As this is a farce, the scenario becomes more and more ridiculous until interval.



# Synopsis cont'd

## ACT II

Act II begins with the women returning from the hospital after supposedly going to 'transplant' the baby. They decide to go and hide all the groceries in Antonia's father-in-law's shed as he is old and won't notice them there. After condemning the rioting women at the supermarket and criticising the protesting factory workers, the women's husbands, Giovanni and Luigi, now find themselves involved in an act of theft and protest of their own. After finding out they've been made redundant from their low-paying factory jobs they decide to take bags of flour, rice and sugar that have fallen off the back of a truck during a crash. Meanwhile, the police inspector has returned to Antonia and Giovanni's flat in search of the men and their stolen goods. He finds the women both now 'pregnant' with groceries. After a prolonged farcical exchange, the women think they have killed a police officer by accident and they hide his body in the coat cupboard.

Giovanni and Luigi encounter an undertaker and take a coffin from him to conceal their stolen bags of food. They arrive back at the flat, and while the women are in the bathroom, the men hide the coffin in the coat cupboard as well, but on the other side; the men don't know the police officer is in there and the women don't know the coffin is in there. Everything unravels: the couples find out about each other's misdemeanours, it is revealed they haven't been paying their bills, and they are evicted. The whole neighbourhood is evicted as well and a riot plays out in which capitalism is brought down. The play closes with the actors dropping character and singing 'Bella Ciao', an Italian protest song.



Aaron Tsindos, Glenn Hazeldine, and Rahel Romahn in Sydney Theatre Company's *No Pay? No Way!* © Prudence Upton.



# Character Analysis



## ANTONIA

Antonia is the fast-thinking, fast-talking protagonist of this adaptation. She is the strong female lead who sets up the scenarios which drive the action forward and provide a lot of the humour. Antonia is a housewife, and she pays the bills and manages the household with the small means available to her and her husband Giovanni.

# Character Analysis cont'd



Catherine Van-Davies in Sydney Theatre Company's *No Pay? No Way!*  
© Prudence Upton.

## MARGHERITA

Margherita is Antonia's friend and sidekick of sorts for the situations they find themselves in. She is much more innocent and anxious than Antonia and goes along with her friend to be helpful. She is married to Luigi, she has a low-paying job and like Antonia is struggling to pay their bills.

## GIOVANNI

Giovanni is Antonia's law-abiding husband who strives to do good and work hard. He loves and trusts his wife and believes in earning an honest living. Giovanni is a unionist and a factory worker.



Glenn Hazeldine in Sydney Theatre Company's *No Pay? No Way!* © Prudence Upton.

# Character Analysis cont'd

## LUIGI

Luigi is Margherita's husband. He is not very bright and is easily confused by the behaviour of his wife and Antonia. Although he is also a working class factory worker, Luigi is radical, and encourages Giovanni to be more radical.



Rahel Romahn in Sydney Theatre Company's *No Pay? No Way!* © Prudence Upton.

# Themes and Ideas

## **POLITICAL RESISTANCE, CORRUPTION, AND ECONOMIC CRISIS**

The play was originally written in Italian in 1974, as a protest play during a heavily politicised time in Italy's history, when there were many worker's strikes and mass protests. Referred to as the Years of Lead, the 1970s in Italy were characterised by acts of terrorism committed by both far right and far left extremists. People were taking to the streets to protest corruption within political parties and extreme poverty within the working class.

The reason the characters find themselves in their predicament is because of massive inflation as a result of political corruption, privatisation and the rise of corporate culture. Although capitalism was well established as the mainstream economic system by the 1970s, the means of production continued to narrow, minimising consumer choice and funneling more profit into the hands of fewer and fewer. Dario Fo was a socialist and is critiquing capitalism for

its unfairness and abuse of workers through this play. There are jokes throughout about banks and bankers, reflecting the distrust within the working class of the establishment, especially when it comes to money. This adaptation highlights these jokes and invites the audience to draw contemporary connections to recent events such as the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry.



# Themes and Ideas cont'd

## REBELLION VS LAW AND ORDER

The main characters of the play, Antonia and Margherita, are conflicted between an act of rebellion and being law-abiding citizens. The initial theft which opens the play happens out of necessity and because Antonia is swept up in the mood of the rioting wives at the supermarket. Although she is initially excited by the riot, she is scared of what her law-abiding husband Giovanni will think, and she doesn't want to get caught by the police.

Driven by hunger and poverty, Antonia participates in mass theft as an act of protest at her local supermarket. The housewives who shop for their households can't afford the inflated prices and steal out of desperation. In order to hide this from their husbands and the police, Margherita and her friend Antonia come up with creative ways to conceal their groceries. Otherwise law-abiding citizens, they are forced to steal when prices become so exorbitant that they can't afford to buy food.

Giovanni, Antonia's husband, also tells her of a protest amongst the workers at his factory. These acts of rebellion are increasing as people become more desperate for job and housing security and need to be able to afford basic living expenses. They are standing up to bosses and law enforcement to demand better conditions. The husbands are forced into their own act of theft later in the play, in spite of their otherwise law-abiding natures. Luigi encourages Giovanni by saying 'The system is broken... the only way forward is to dismantle it and start again.' (Hardy, 2020, p. 81)

Law enforcement is represented in this play through the two police characters, both played by Aaron Tsindos. In the original production, these characters were played by Dario Fo himself. These two characters are deliberately superficial and both act as caricatures of two types of police officers; one ambivalent about his role in enforcing laws and empathetic to the plight of the people he is supposed to be investigating, and the other hard line and punitive. They are both ineffective and being used here by Fo and Hardy as an opportunity to criticise the establishment.

The play ultimately ends with hope and faith in the power of protest. The characters rebel and riot and as a result they successfully bring down the economic system oppressing them. While this hopeful and imaginative ending is perhaps not realistic, it gives the audience the chance to consider an alternative, more equitable world.

# Themes and Ideas cont'd



## FEMINISM AND GENDER RELATIONS

In this new adaptation, the female characters very much 'own' the story. Marieke Hardy has deliberately centred the characters of Antonia and Margherita and made their husbands secondary in order to shed light on their experiences and to make this a feminist adaptation. The central conceit of the play, that Margherita is pregnant, relies on the male characters having no knowledge of how female bodies work, but also no mind to ask. Although this is a function of patriarchy, here it is turned on its head and used to give women power. Around the time the play was originally written the contraceptive pill was becoming widely available, which was controversial, especially in a Catholic country like Italy, and here the humour plays into the anxieties of the time. There are also many feminist jokes with contemporary resonance, including references to the #metoo movement and the need to believe women when they accuse men of harassment and assault. It also happens that the women have the best jokes!

## FARCE AND SLAPSTICK

In this play, jokes and situations that start out small or innocuous become more and more elaborate and exaggerated, rendering them more unbelievable and funnier with each new detail. These absurd or ridiculous scenarios characterise farcical humour. One moment of farce from the play is when Margherita's pregnancy seems it couldn't be anymore unbelievable, but it becomes Antonia's pregnancy making the situation even more ludicrous. There are many more examples of farce throughout the play. Slapstick refers to a kind of humour that uses exaggerated physical comedy, often involving characters getting physically hurt. Doors are shut in people's faces, people trip over, or are hit by each other for trivial reasons.

## POLITICAL SATIRE

The play satirises the political issues of the original 1970s context, but it also has a strong contemporary resonance and draws links to the current political climate. Some of the jokes make reference to the recent #metoo movement as well as current political figures. Satire is most powerful when it has relevance to the audience and when it borders on the taboo. The familiar is reflected on stage but is made fun of in order to expose and criticise the injustices in our current political climate, as well as the original 1970s Italian context.



Helen Thomson, Catherine Van-Davies, Glenn Hazeldine, and Aaron Tsindos in Sydney Theatre Company's *No Pay? No Way!*  
© Prudence Upton.

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