



World Theatre Day 2013
Dario Fo's Message

A long time ago, Power resolved the intolerance against *Commedia dell'Arte* actors by chasing them out of the country.

Today, actors and theatre companies have difficulties finding public stages, theatres and spectators, all because of the crisis.

Rulers are, therefore, no longer concerned with problems of control over those who express themselves with irony and sarcasm, since there is no place for actors, nor is there a public to address.

On the contrary, during the Renaissance, in Italy those in power had to make a significant effort in order to hold the *Commedianti* at bay, since these enjoyed a large audience.

It is known that the great exodus of *Commedia dell'Arte* players happened in the century of the counter-Reformation, which decreed the dismantling of all theatre spaces, especially in Rome, where they were accused of offending the holy city. In 1697, Pope Innocent XII, under the pressure of insistent requests from the more conservative side of the bourgeoisie and of the major exponents of the clergy, ordered the demolition of Tordinona Theatre which, according to the moralists, had staged the greatest number of obscene displays.

At the time of the counter-Reformation, cardinal Carlo Borromeo, who was active in the North of Italy, had committed himself to the redemption of the "children of Milan", establishing a clear distinction between art, as the highest form of spiritual education, and theatre, the manifestation of profanity and of vanity. In a letter addressed to his collaborators, which I quote off the cuff, he expresses himself more or less as follows: "Concerned with eradicating the evil weed, we have done our utmost to burn texts containing infamous speeches, to eradicate them from the memory of men, and at the same time to prosecute also those who divulged such texts in print. Evidently, however, while we were asleep, the devil labored with renewed cunning. How far more penetrating to the soul is what the eyes can see, than what can be read off such books! How far more devastating to the minds of adolescents and young girls is the spoken word and the appropriate gesture, than a dead word printed in books. It is therefore urgent to rid our cities of theatre makers, as we do with unwanted souls".

Thus the only solution to the crisis lies in the hope that a great expulsion is organized against us and especially against young people who wish to learn the art of theatre: a new diaspora of *Commedianti*, of theatre makers, who would, from such an imposition, doubtlessly draw unimaginable benefits for the sake of a new representation.