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Eastenders Repertory Company

In association with the Eureka Theatre Company
presents

FO/FAUX!: We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!

by Dario Fo (tr. Ron Jenkins)

& Premieres of Short Works Inspired by Fo.

We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay! Directed by Artistic Director Susan E. Evans

New Works Directed by Amy Kilgard and Meredith Weiss Friedman

March 5 – March 21, 2010, Wednesdays – Sundays

Eureka Theatre (215 Jackson Street, San Francisco)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FO/FAUX!

Opens March 5, 2010

(San Francisco, CA – January 20, 2010) **Eastenders Repertory Company** opens Spring Season 2010 with ***FO/FAUX!: We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!*** by **Dario Fo (translated by Ron Jenkins)** and others, and ***Premieres of Short Works Inspired by Fo.*** Directed by Eastenders Artistic Director Susan E. Evans (*We Won't Pay!*) and Amy Kilgard and Meredith Weiss Friedman (new works), the production features David Ballog, Beatrice Basso, Craig Dickerson, John Hutchinson, Lindsey B. Jones, Matt Weimer, and ensemble. ***FO/FAUX!*** opens in previews on March 5, 2010, and runs for 14 performances through March 21 at the Eureka Theatre, 215 Jackson Street in San Francisco.

Master of the political farce, “the people's jester,” Nobel laureate Dario Fo’s internationally acclaimed controversial political satires target capitalism, imperialism and governmental corruption. His characters engage in perpetual, frequently comic, sometimes subversive, struggles to free themselves from social and political oppressions. With today’s streaming headlines of furloughs, layoffs, homelessness, school tuition hikes and escalating

prices, the time seems ripe to refresh the Bay Area with Dario Fo's very particular theatrical activism, and to challenge a new crop of dramatists with his genius.

We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay! (*Non si paga! Non si paga!*) premiered on October 3, 1974, in Milan's Palazzina Liberty, an empty fruit and vegetable market Fo had rented a few months before. The play was performed by Fo's theatre company, *La Commune*, directed by Fo and starred Fo as Giovanni and his wife, Franca Rame, as Antonia.

By mid-1974 Italy was in a major recession. OPEC's decision to jack up oil prices hit Italy particularly hard as oil constituted 75% of the country's energy needs. Inflation had climbed to 20%. Workers rebelled by engaging in "autoriduzione" (self-reduction) tactics, including factory slowdowns, reductions of output, and refusals to pay higher prices for gas, electricity, food and transportation. This was the climate in which Fo created *We Won't Pay!*, a marvelously anarchic story of a couple of working-class housewives pretending to be pregnant to conceal goods 'liberated' from a the local supermarket in protest of the outrageous prices. At the core of this topical farce are the serious themes of hunger for food, for dignity and for justice.

Fo's collaged texts draw upon many styles and sources -- the ancient forms of the Roman Saturnalia and the comic playwrights, Plautus and Terence, the *giullare* performers of medieval Europe, Commedia Dell-Arte, the *fabulatori* (Italian storytellers) of his youth spent in the lake region in Lombardy, and, always, from current events. Just as Fo developed his unique voice as a writer for the stage, in Act II of Eastenders' **FO/FAUX!** our new writers will exploit a master playwright to develop their unique voices. This is our third go-round of using a master playwright to inspire burgeoning local theatre writers - previous outings have included *Tenn in 2002!* (Tennessee Williams, 2002) and *Pinteresque* (Harold Pinter, 2006). As part of its ongoing commitment of mentorship, ERC's Playwright-in-Residence Charles E. Polly is working with company members Isaiah Dufort, Jennifer Daly and Jeff Thompson and up-and-coming Berkeley playwright Gene Mocsy and San Jose playwright Scott Munson to create short pieces inspired by *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!*, to explore Fo's unusual blend of traditional forms and revolutionary politics.

We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay! is here presented in a fresh Americanized translation by Ron Jenkins.* (*Rights pending.) Jenkins' translation premiered at the American Repertory Theatre in 1999 starring Marisa Tomei , and it's a perfect wacky blend of commedia and the *Honeymooners*, with all the classic farce elements of mistaken identity, physical slapstick, dead bodies falling out of cupboards, and stock characters thrown into the mix.

We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay! is directed by Susan E. Evans. Act II of **Fo/Faux!** is directed by Amy Kilgard and Meredith Weiss Friedman. We are presenting **FO/ FAUX!** in repertory so that audiences may enjoy skilled performers in a variety of roles. Eastenders company members will also be directing the new pieces.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY: Antonia joins a crowd of other working class housewives in “liberating” some items from the local grocery store, then talks her friend Margherita into hiding the stolen goods from her factory worker husband Giovanni (a law-abiding communist) and his buddy, Luigi, Margherita’s husband, by pretending to be pregnant. Things spin absurdly and hilariously out of control as the quick-witted women dodge their hotheaded spouses, the local police and even a gullible state trooper.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT:

Dario Fo ... emulates the jesters of the Middles Ages in scourging authority and upholding the dignity of the downtrodden ... With a blend of laughter and gravity he opens our eyes to abuses and injustices in society and also the wider historical perspectives in which they can be placed.

--Citation of the Swedish Academy awarding Fo the 1997 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Dario Fo (1926 -) playwright, actor, storyteller, director, satirist, artist, activist, was born in a small town on the shores of Lake Maggiore in Northern Italy. After training as an architect, Fo began working in theatre as radio monologist, and met his wife, actress Franca Rame, in 1951 while they were performing in the same show. The couple has since been long-time partners and collaborators. In 1968 Fo and Rame joined a surging movement of students, workers and revolutionary groups and began performing a new kind of political theatre to working class audiences in non-conventional theatres. Fo and Rame’s controversial farces tackle ideologies of the government and the church. Through the years they have been censored, personally attacked, arrested, imprisoned and charged with everything from obscenity to blasphemy to subversion.

Fo is the author of more than 25 full-length and one-act plays, including *Archangels Don't Play Pinball*, *Mistero Buffo*, *Accidental Death of An Anarchist*, *About Face*, and *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* The dramatist's plays have been staged in over 30 countries. (Fo was refused a visa to enter the United States during the early 1980s under the McClaren Act; when he was finally granted entry, at his appearance performing for the American Repertory Theatre he thanked Ronald Reagan for the publicity that had been generated by keeping him out of the U.S.)

One could arguably say that the presence of Dario Fo and Franca Rame (his wife and collaborator) is stronger in the San Francisco Bay Area than anywhere else in the United States. The Eureka Theatre had an especially strong connection with the couple, producing four of their works in the late 1980s; other Bay Area Fo productions include *We Can't Pay! We Won't Pay!* by the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1979, *The Pope and The Witch* by the American Conservatory Theatre in 1992, and *Fo Fest*, organized by the San Francisco Italian Institute of

Culture in 1998, involving local directors Joan Holden and Tony Taccone. Eastenders also shares a personal history with the playwright, having included two of Fo's one-acts in our 2000 and 2001 Festivals.

ABOUT THE COMPANY: The mission of **Eastenders Repertory Company** is to provide a collaborative, mentoring environment for theatre artists to produce both original and established works in repertory and to develop educational programs in theatre arts. ERC is dedicated to providing a stimulating environment for theatre artists and high-quality, affordable and accessible theatre for the Bay Area community. Past Eastenders productions include *PRIDE OPEN*, *100 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE*, *Frozen* by Bryony Lavery, *3 VANĚK PLAYS: Audience, Unveiling, and Protest* by Václav Havel, *FEAR AND MISERY OF THE THIRD REICH* by Bertolt Brecht, *PINTERESQUE* (Harold Pinter's *The Lover* and original short pieces inspired by that one-act), our prior six annual one-act festivals (*100 YEARS OF SEX-ACTS*, *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF POLITICAL THEATRE*, *EIGHT X TENN*, *106 YEARS OF COMEDY*, *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF EURO-ONE-ACTS* and *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ONE-ACTS*), the spring 2005 world premieres of Charles E. Polly's *A Knight's Escape* and Scott Munson's *WWJD?*, *Three Hotels* by Jon Robin Baitz, the local premieres of *Wonder of the World* by David Lindsay-Abaire and *[sic]* by Melissa James Gibson, and *TENN in 2002!* (Williams' *The Long Goodbye* and new short works inspired by that one-act); the world premiere of Founding Artistic Director Charles E. Polly's *THE TWYLA TRILOGY* (*Twyla's Boy*, *Twyla's Story* and *June Bug Music*); Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*; and the Bay Area premiere of Tennessee Williams' *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*.

CALENDAR LISTINGS

WHO: Eastenders Repertory Company *presented in association with the Eureka Theatre Company*

WHAT: “*FO/FAUX!: We Won’t Pay! We Won’t Pay!* by Dario Fo (translated by Ron Jenkins) and Others, and *Premieres of Short Works Inspired by Fo*”.
We Won’t Pay! We Won’t Pay! Directed by Artistic Director Susan E. Evans;
New works Directed by Amy Kilgard and Meredith Weiss Friedman
Cast: David Ballog, Beatrice Basso, Craig Dickerson, John Hutchinson, Lindsey B. Jones, Matt Weimer, and ensemble (TBA)

DATES: Friday, March 5 Preview @ 8:00 p.m.
Saturday March 6: OPENING GALA
THROUGH March 21

SHOWTIMES: Plays Wed-Sat evenings @ 8:00 p.m.; Sunday evening, March 14 @ 7:00 p.m.
Sunday matinees March 7, 14 and 21 @ 2:00 p.m.
CLOSES: March 21

VENUE: Eureka Theatre Company (215 Jackson Street, San Francisco, CA)

TICKETS: \$20 general admission.
\$25 Opening Night Gala
\$15 tickets available for students/seniors and members of KQED, KTEH, and
TBA.
Group rates available.

BOX OFFICE: (510) 568-4118 AND 415-683-0403 and brownpapertickets.com

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