

BRITISH PREMIÈRE

# A COMMON WOMAN

## TUTTA CASA LETTO E CHIESA

**A Selection of One Woman Plays**  
by Dario Fo and Franca Rame  
New Translations by Gillian Hanna  
**13th October – 29th October 1988**

The Woman	Gillian Hanna
Director	Sharon Miller
Designer	Andrea Montag
Lighting Designer	Jeff Harrison
Sound	Trevor Dunford
Company Manager	Alison Fowler
Stage Manager	Gillian Waite
Deputy Stage Manager	Debbie Lee Pinching
Assistant Stage Manager	Maddy Grant

### THE PLAYS

- 1. Bless Me Father For I Have Sinned**  
A church in Dublin  
Set in the early Seventies – in the aftermath of Flower Power and amongst the first stirrings of the Women's Liberation Movement


### INTERVAL

- 2. The Rape**  
The play is set anywhere, anytime, it could happen to any woman.
- 3. Coming Home**  
A foggy evening on a London housing estate – 1988.

Director of the Crucible Theatre **Clare Venables**  
Administrator **Geoffrey Rowe**

Please do not smoke or use cameras or recorders in the auditorium and please remember that coughing and the bleeping of digital watches can spoil the performance for other members of the audience.

**SHEFFIELD COUNCIL**  
Working for a better City

Rotherham 



**BARNLSLEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

Arts Council Funded 

## 20th Century Milestones for Women

- 1903:** The Women's Social and Political Union. (National Suffrage movement formed by the Pankhursts)
- 1907:** The Qualifications of Women Act enabled women to stand for county and borough councils.
- 1910:** First woman chartered accountant and first woman banker.
- 1918:** The Representation of the People Act. All men over 21 could vote, and for the first time, some women could vote. They had to be over 30, and a householder or the wife of a local government elector.
- The Maternal and Child Welfare Act enabled local authorities to provide a wide range of services, including health visitors, infant welfare centre and day nurseries.
- 1919:** The Sex Disqualification Removal Act made it unlawful to bar women from public office or civil or judicial posts.
- Nancy Astor became the first woman MP to take her seat in the House of Commons.
- 1923:** The Matrimonial Causes Act made the grounds for divorce the same for men as for women.
- 1928:** The Equal Franchise Act ('Flappers Vote') gave all women over 21 the vote.
- 1929:** First woman Cabinet Minister – Margaret Bondfield.
- 1930:** Welfare Centres allowed to give birth control advice to married women.
- 1942:** The TUC pledged itself to the principle of equal pay (first debated in 1888).
- 1945:** The Family Allowance Act began a state system of child benefits to be paid directly to mothers.
- 1947:** The University of Cambridge finally agreed to award full degrees to women.
- 1964:** The Married Woman's Property Act enabled a divorced wife to keep half of anything she saved from any allowance given by her husband.
- 1967:** The Abortion Act made abortion easier.
- 1970:** The Equal Pay Act stipulated equal pay for men and women doing the same job.
- 1974:** Contraceptives free for all women on the NHS.
- 1975:** The first woman leader of a political party in Britain – Margaret Thatcher.
- The Sex Discrimination Act banned sex discrimination in employment, education and advertising.
- The Employment Protection Act made it unlawful to dismiss a woman because she was pregnant and established the right to maternity pay, as well as the right to return to her job within 29 weeks of giving birth.
- 1976:** The Domestic Violence Act attempted to increase the Courts' protection of battered wives.
- 1979:** The first woman Prime Minister in Britain – Margaret Thatcher.
- 1981:** The first woman Leader of the House of Lords – Baroness Young.
- 1987:** Forty-one women MPs, the highest number ever, but still only 6% of the total.

The plays you are about to see are the result of the collaboration between two remarkable figures of the Italian theatre – Franca Rame and her husband, Dario Fo. Both are outstanding actors working within the Italian popular tradition. As performers and writers both have made important, direct interventions in Italian politics at times when such interventions were dangerous. It was because of her political stance that Franca Rame was kidnapped by a Fascist gang and raped; that experience lies behind her monologue entitled *The Rape*.

The hallmark of the work of Rame and Fo, which includes highly successful plays and farces, is a constant tension between the seriousness of the topic and the comic treatment of it on stage. The plays about the lot of women in our society are no exception to this rule. They are marked by the same subversive mixture of the deeply serious and the extravagantly comic. Rame and Fo believe that when an audience laughs their minds are open for a moment and new ideas, new ways of seeing things can be implanted. Comedy is a powerful weapon – one that makes politics in the normal sense of sexual politics accessible to wide audiences.

Clearly the plays are conceived of and written as performance vehicles, originally for Franca Rame. But her contribution to the texts and the ideas they incorporate is also important. In performance Franca Rame shapes and alters the texts, cutting them, testing them, incorporating criticisms, adapting them to the audience and the changing political situation. She does not – nor does Fo – think of a theatrical text as being defined, closed off, fixed. It is something flexible and living.

Stuart Hood.  
October 1988.



A SUPER  
WOMAN'S  
DAY.....



GILLIAN HANNA



Gillian's first professional appearance was as Mrs Sullen in THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM at The Gate Theatre, Dublin. After working in Dublin she went to the Everyman Theatre, Liverpool, for three seasons appearing as Dol Common in THE ALCHEMIST, Grusha in THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE, Bessie Braddock in THE BRADDOCKS TIME and Toad in TOAD OF TOAD HALL. She has also spent two seasons at Newcastle University Theatre in productions such as THE GRACE DARLING STORY, as Grace Darling, and SIR GAWAINE AND THE GREEN KNIGHT as Morgan Le Fay. She then joined 7:84 for their first production TREES IN THE WIND, written and directed by John McGrath. After several productions with the company, and also the Belt and Braces Roadshow, Gillian became a founder member of Monstrous Regiment, the feminist co-operative theatre company, for which she has worked extensively for 12 years; many of these shows have visited the Crucible Studio (eg. SCUM, KISS & KILL, SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER and most recently WAVING). Recent work outside Monstrous Regiment includes, Mrs Lovett in Stephen Sondheim's musical SWEENEY TODD at the Half Moon Theatre, London, THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA by Lorca (Lyric Hammersmith, Globe, London), Stephen Bill's CURTAINS (Hampstead), WUTHERING HEIGHTS at the Crucible and a new film THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE to be released later in the year. She has recently appeared in ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL for BBC TV. Gillian also translates plays from French and

Italian — SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER, Dacia Maraini's DIALOGUE BETWEEN A PROSTITUTE AND ONE OF HER CLIENTS — for Monstrous Regiment and ELIZABETH by Dario Fo for the Half Moon Theatre. She is currently working on a volume of Dario Fo and Franca Rame's one woman plays to be published by Methuen, one of which has been filmed for BBC'S SCREEN TWO, starring Lynn Redgrave. The three plays that make up A COMMON WOMAN are from that volume.

SHARON MILLER — Director

Sharon read English and Drama at Bristol University graduating in 1977. She spent the next three years acting in various touring productions and at London Fringe Theatres. In 1981 she joined the BBC Childrens Department as a researcher and went on to direct, produce and write over 100 programmes including PLAYSCHOOL, TAKE HART and various new drama series. Sharon left the BBC to become a free lance drama director and during the last two years has directed CASUALTY for the BBC, a comedy series for Central TV and has just completed four episodes of THE BILL for Thames TV. In January of this year she directed the BBC Screenplay A WOMAN ALONE by Dario Fo and Franca Rame, translated by Gillian Hanna and starring Lynn Redgrave which was screened in July.

ANDREA MONTAG — Designer

Andrea trained at the English National Opera Design School in 1970/71 and then spent the next two years as a Designer at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter. Since then she has worked at the Birmingham Rep, The Welsh National Opera, Newcastle Playhouse, The Liverpool Everyman, Leicester Haymarket, The R.S.C. and extensively in London. Recent productions include Willy Russell's BLOOD BROTHERS in Aalborg, Denmark, Genet's DEATHWATCH and BANGED UP by Tunde Ikoli, both for Foco Novo, THE BLACK JACOBINS at Riverside Studios, SCRAPE OFF THE BLACK by Tunde Ikoli and PROJECT for The Chicago Free Street Theatre, both at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, ROMEO AND JULIET for Temba Theatre Company and OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR at Leicester Haymarket. Andrea designed ELIZABETH, ALMOST BY CHANCE A WOMAN by Dario Fo at the Half Moon Theatre also translated by Gillian Hanna.



"This is what comes of marrying a career woman."

Punch. 1950.