



The Theatre of Carlo Goldoni

By Simon Thomas

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In 2011, the National Theatre in London produced a version of *The Servant of Two Masters* under the title *One Man, Two Guvnors*. It became a smash hit on both sides of the Atlantic and introduced a whole new audience to the work of Carlo Goldoni. Goldoni (1707-1793) was one of the most prolific playwrights who ever lived, having written over 250 works during a career of nearly 50 years. He's best-known outside Italy for some of his earliest comedies, including *The Servant of Two Masters* and *The Venetian Twins*, farces based on the traditions of commedia dell'arte but we have to look to his mature works for the truly Goldonian comedy. There's a wealth of subtlety and insight in these beautifully constructed and astutely observed studies of everyday life in 18th Century Italy and this book seeks to introduce them to a wider English-speaking public. The introduction gives a background to the playwright's life and career, and is followed by an analysis of 12 of his plays from different periods in his life. The focus is on the comedies, rather than his unsuccessful tragedies or the many opera libretti he wrote. Goldoni's comedies are varied in style and feel, developing from scenarios derived from the commedia dell'arte, through transitional attempts to create original characters and situations, to the late plays which are masterpieces of naturalistic theatre. The plays studied are: *The Servant of Two Masters*, *The Venetian Twins*, *The Comic Theatre*, *The Mistress of the Inn*, *The War*, *The Campiello*, *The Villeggiatura Trilogy*, *The Chioggian Squabbles*, *The Fan* and *The Beneficent Boor*. Each is looked at in terms of characters, plot, language and their place in Goldoni's theatrical development. An interpretation of what he was trying to achieve and how the plays can succeed on the stage is given for each of the plays. This is a book for the general reader and anyone who has an interest in Goldoni or the history of theatre.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Simon Thomas is an experienced writer on theatre and opera based in London. He regularly reviews and contributes features to a number of publications and has studied Goldoni's life and works for over 30 years. His translation of one of Goldoni's plays, with the title The Game of Chess, is also available. He believes in writing accessibly and intelligently for a general reader, rather than for the specialist or academic. He was Opera Editor for Whatsonstage.com, the UK's leading theatre website, from 2009 to 2011.

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