



Born in Venice, in 1707, Carlo Goldoni would spend a large part of his life in Paris, where he died in 1793. A bright child, his passion for the theatre was soon apparent, and already at the age of age he was writing up storylines for his own small puppet theatre. Family business would then lead to him travelling to various parts of Italy: Perugia, Rimini, Modena and Milan, and the young Goldoni was often caught up in the military skirmishes that were far from rare at that time.

After an education that saw him pass between various tutors and colleges, the young man would eventually take his degree in Law at Padua University in 1737, and then work as a chancellery clerk, a lawyer and finally as Genoese Consul in Venice. However, none of these professions were particularly attractive to him, and his thoughts were still full of the theatre. He was a voracious reader of works by Italian and foreign playwrights and began to write himself in various different theatrical genres (opera libretti, tragi-comedies, dramas, tragedies, satires, intermezzi, poetry).

As a result of this work he came into contact with the impresarios, playwrights, actors, actresses and actor-managers who made up the contemporary world of theatre, and from 1734 to 1743 he worked for the Grimani family at their San Samuele Theatre. In 1747 he met the theatre manager Gerolamo Medebach and signed a contract with him for the Sant'Angelo Theatre. And thus began his "reformation" of the Italian theatre, with plays that were no longer built around mannered storylines but were veritable works of "modern" theatre, with each part carefully written, line by line. There were no more absurdly complicated plots, no standard jokes and hackneyed scurrility, almost no use of masked characters; Goldoni's plays embodied the modern spirit of the Enlightenment.

The year 1750 would be a very important one in his career, with the playwright taking on the daring challenge of writing a total of 16 new plays in a single season. And – even at the cost of being plunged into deep depression – he managed to perform the task he had set himself, producing such masterpieces as "La Bottega del Caffè" ("The Coffee Shop"), as well as "La famiglia dell'antiquario" ("The Antiquarian's Family"), "Il teatro comico" ("Comic theatre") and "Il Bugiardo" ("The Liar").

Over the next ten years he would write such fundamental works as “Il Campiello”, “La Locandiera” (“The Innkeeper Woman”), “Le Donne Curiose” (“Curious Women”), “La casa nova”, “I Rusteghi” (“The Rustics”), “Sior Todero Brontolon” (“Grumpy Mr. Todero”) and “Baruffe Chiozzotte” (“Squabbles in Chioggia”). In 1762 he moved to Francesco Vendramin’s Theatre of San Luca, writing plays that focused even more exclusively on the nascent world of the bourgeoisie, who were gradually shouldering aside the old and decrepit nobility thanks to their energy, entrepreneurial spirit, cultural awareness and taste for the modern.

Embittered by opposition to his work, Goldoni left Venice after writing a piece which is a sort of farewell to the city, “Una delle ultime sere di Carnovale” (“One of the last nights of Carnival”). He arrived in Paris in 1762, enjoying a short period of activity and success. Thereafter, he divided his time between Paris and Versailles, working on his “Mémoires”, an enjoyable and ironic autobiography written with a sort of refined detachment.

Goldoni’s plays for the stage comprise five tragedies, sixteen tragi-comedies and one hundred and thirty-seven comedies, whilst his works to be set to music comprise two sacred plays, twenty “Intermezzi”, thirteen dramas, forty-nine “Drammi giocosi”, three farces and fifty-seven tableaux.