



DIRECTOR'S BRIEF

Low Pay Don't Pay! — 2026 Production

Director: Larry Waller

Company: Blackwood Players

Production Style: In-the-Round / Pop-Up / Physical Farce / Commedia-Inspired

Cast Size: 16 Actors (Rotating Leads)

Audience Capacity: 60 – 80 (intimate, immersive configuration)

1. ARTISTIC VISION

This production reimagines Dario Fo's *Can't Pay? Won't Pay!* as a fast, funny, political, community-driven piece of popular theatre that speaks directly to a 2026 Australian audience experiencing the pressures of rising costs, economic strain, and social inequity.

While the play is set in Italy, our version is modern South Australia, and although comic and chaotic, it remains anchored in real human struggle. The humour emerges from truthful desperation, not caricature.

This is a show about people trying to survive — and laughing in order not to cry.

2. WHY THIS PLAY NOW?

The cost-of-living crisis, rising grocery prices, out-of-reach housing, and the widening gap between wages and basic needs echo the world Fo wrote about. Our production draws explicit connections between the characters' struggles and contemporary Australia.

The show asks:

When society squeezes people to breaking point, what counts as rebellion? Who is "breaking the law" and who is breaking the people?

We answer with comedy.

3. PERFORMANCE STYLE



Primary Influences:

- Commedia dell'Arte — stock character energies, big physical choices, rhythm, mischief.
- Physical Farce — speed, precision, misdirection, chase sequences, escalating chaos.
- Popular Theatre — direct address, visible mechanics, no pretence, community-first.
- Bouffon & Clowning — mocking power, celebrating survival.
- Contemporary Australian Realism — moments of sincerity amidst the madness.
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The guiding principle:

Play the truth and let the truth become absurd.

If the actors "play for laughs," we lose the political edge.

If they play sincerely, the laughs double.

4. STAGING CONCEPT — "THE PEOPLE'S CUBE" (In-the-Round)

Audience sits in four pods, approx. 15 seats each.

The space is divided into four playing zones:

- North: Supermarket Riot Zone
 - East: Antonia & Giovanni's Flat
 - South: Margherita & Luigi's Flat
 - West: Police/Bureaucracy/Street
- The centre becomes the arena for:

- chases
- collapses
- fake pregnancies
- food spills
- crowd scenes
- rolling trucks
- confrontations

Everything is mobile. Everything transforms. Nothing is hidden.

The audience is inside the story, not watching from a safe distance.

5. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

✓ Set

- Pop-up, portable, cheap, DIY aesthetic.
- Four rolling “trucks” made of painted pallets representing locations.
- Minimal furniture, maximum transformation.
- Oversized props used sparingly but strategically (giant grocery box, huge bill, oversized police clipboard, etc.).

✓ Costume

- Contemporary South Australian working-class aesthetic.
- Subtle Commedia silhouettes built into modern outfits.
- Removable/quick-change elements for ensemble roles.

✓ Lighting

- Four corner LED stands + floor cans.
- Cool white (supermarket), warm (homes), red (panic), handheld torch (police).
- Simple, clear, affordable.

✓ Sound

Australian indie playlist driving pace between scenes.

Transition cues are short, cheeky, energising.

Diegetic supermarket sounds add texture.

Diagonal and circular sound cues heighten farce.

6. ACTING STYLE & REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS

◇ Actors must commit fully to:

- Big physical choices
- Quick emotional shifts
- Clear Commedia-based archetypes
- Precision in farce sequences
- Bold vocal rhythms
- Direct audience relationship

◇ Key Rehearsal Tools:

- Laban Effort Profiles (mapped for each character)
- Lazzi development sessions
- Chase choreography
- Prop precision work
- In-the-round blocking awareness
- Commedia & clowning exercises
- Speed runs & rhythm drills

◇ Tone of Performance:

High energy.

High honesty.

High stakes.

High fun.

7. CAST STRUCTURE — 10 ACTORS (ROTATING LEADS)

We are operating a two-team rotating system.

Team A Lead Performances

Shows 1, 2, 5, 6

Team B Lead Performances

Shows 3, 4, 7, 8

Two ensemble actors anchor the show and cover any principal roles as required.

Why:

- Ensures sustainability
 - Maintains freshness across eight shows
 - Supports illness/absence
 - Allows actors to learn both lead and ensemble craft
 - Mirrors Fo's anti-elitist, ensemble-driven philosophy
- All leads must maintain consistent character energy, physicality, and rhythm across both teams.

8. CREW & PRODUCTION TEAM EXPECTATIONS

✂ Stage Management

- Must manage fast, visible transitions.
- Cue sequences like choreography.
- Oversee prop safety and oversized items.
- Ensure consistent marking of blocking for in-the-round traffic.

💡 Tech Operations

- Simple, clear cueing.
- Pre-show / transition / finale playlists operate as beatsetting mechanisms.

🎨 Design Team

- Think light, mobile, transformable.
- No realism; instead, theatrical metaphor.
- All materials reflect economic struggle (pallets, crates, tape, cheap signage).

👁 Front of House

- Set up as part of the world (supermarket signs, PA announcements).
- Audience should feel immersed from entry.

9. KEY SCENES THAT DEFINE THE STYLE

(Briefed from summary

Scrape can pay wont pay

and our staging)

1. The Supermarket Riot
 - Fast, chaotic, ensemble-driven.
 - Trucks + actors create a living supermarket.
2. Fake Pregnancy Sequence
 - Physical comedy centrepiece.
 - Uses oversized items + rolling props.
3. Hiding the Food from Giovanni
 - Farce of timing, misdirection, lies.
4. Police Raid & Bureaucratic Absurdity
 - Big Commedia archetypes: Inspector as buffoon.
5. Union Worker Body Routine
 - Clowning + dead-weight choreography.
6. Final Uprising & Rebel Parade
 - High-energy, inclusive, ensemble-driven.

- Musical payoff (Aussie indie finale cue).

10. DIRECTOR'S INTENT FOR THE CAST

★ We are not mocking poverty.

We are mocking the systems that create hardship.

★ We play truthfully.

The comedy emerges from survival, not silliness.

★ We celebrate the community.

This is a people's show — actors, audience, crew share the same space.

★ We embrace the mess.

Chaos is part of the story — but executed with precision.

★ We keep it alive.

Actors remain responsive to audience reactions, laughter, and energy shifts.

11. DIRECTOR'S INTENT FOR MANAGEMENT

The production requires:

- A rehearsal room with space for 360° movement
- Access to a hall or studio for in-the-round staging
- Portable lighting rigs
- Access to pallets, crates, and paint
- A capable stage manager to coordinate transitions
- Support for rotating-cast schedules

What this production offers the company:

- A bold, modern, community-friendly show
- High visibility in the local arts scene
- A production with strong political and social relevance
- A cast experience grounded in skill-building (farce, Commedia, physical theatre)
- A visually striking, stylistically innovative staging

12. DIRECTOR'S FINAL NOTE

We are making a show that is:

fun, furious, human, hopeful, messy in the right ways, and fiercely connected to the world outside the theatre.

This is theatre that meets the community where they are.

This is theatre that laughs at power and celebrates survival.

This is theatre that Dario Fo would recognise — and grin at.

I cannot wait to make this with you all.