

## THEATER BEAT

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# Accidental Death of an Anarchist **BEST BET**

Recommended

## An inventive adaptation of Fo



The sad thing about playful cubs is that all too soon they become venerable old lions, so fearful and majestic that they are approached with caution.

Italian playwright Dario Fo, winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize for literature, certainly numbers among the lions of the modern theater. Fo ascended to fame decades ago with his distinctive mix of leftist polemics and commedia dell'arte. But there's a clear danger for present-day interpreters, who may be so overawed by Fo's reputation that they forego his righteous radicalism in favor of reverential exegesis.

Fortunately, director Diana Wyenn and her cheeky actor-compatriots, who are presenting Fo's "Accidental Death of an Anarchist" at the Unknown Theater in Hollywood, take the opposite tack. Don't expect anything remotely stuffy here. In fact, don't expect to see Fo's play, at least not in its familiar form. Guided by Gillian Hanna's translation and Brenda Varda's contemporary script revisions, Wyenn and company deliver an inventive, loose adaptation that bristles with contemporary references.

Based on an Italian police scandal, Fo's famous 1970 farce about a brutal police interrogation gone fatally awry and its resulting cover-up seems more topical than ever.

That's the serious issue at the heart of the romp, and it's ferreted out with inspired inanity by this Monty Python-esque cast, which includes Taras Los, Richard Hilton, Stephen Simon, Adam Edgar, Alla Poberesky and Chris Covics, who also designed the production's depressingly institutionalized office set. The show eventually loses steam in topical ranting too generalized to be cogent. Still, this "Anarchist" captures the impertinence and brio of Fo at his rambunctious best.

— Kathleen Foley

*"Accidental Death of an Anarchist," Unknown Theater, 1110 N. Seward St., Hollywood. 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, 6 p.m. Sundays. Ends March 15. \$18 to \$24. (323) 466-7781. Running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes.*