

Michael Black's first experience of theatre was playing the lead part in a school production of [Molière's](#) *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in 1979. A year later he went to York University to study Literature and History, and during his three years as an undergraduate acted in nine plays, including the lead in a production of John Vanbrugh's *The Provok'd Wife*, and also the part of Astrov in Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, which remains Michael's favourite acting role to this day. At York Michael studied for the *Politics And The Novel* Special Paper, which introduced him to Emile Zola's *Germinal*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers And Children*, and Lev Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. Michael also studied for the course *French 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literature*; Gérard de Nerval, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine and Charles Baudelaire in poetry, together with the novels of Honoré de Balzac, Stendhal (Henri Beyle) and Gustav Flaubert. Subsequently, Michael read Alexandre Dumas *père* on his own initiative. He also studied the *English Romantics*, particularly William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley, and the impact on them of the French revolution. For History, Michael studied the *South African Government And Race Relations* Special Paper, and, reading the literature of South Africa for his own benefit, discovered the novels of Alan Paton, André Brink, J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer.

In 1983, Michael went to Cambridge University to study for a PhD in South African literature, but in his first year immediately announced to his supervisor that he was going to do no academic work whatsoever, and instead spend all his time writing two stage plays to take to the **Edinburgh Festival** 1984. Luckily, his supervisor said OK. The two plays were *The Life To Come* and *Viardot* (an early draft of *Madame Polina*), and to enable their production Michael formed **The Cambridge Rainmakers Theatre Company**, finding sponsorship from *Forth And Foyle*, a Scottish engineering company. Michael also directed both productions.

In 1985, Michael began to dedicate himself to his doctoral research, and in 1987 won the *Sir Henry Strakosch Memorial Fellowship* to study and travel in South Africa. Michael completed his PhD at the end of 1988, but only got round to spellchecking it in September 1989. In between times, he wrote *Propaganda Fide*. Michael was awarded his doctorate in May 1990.

At the start of 1989, Michael formed **Hostage Productions**, when the Czech playwright and dissident against Communist rule, [Vaclav Havel](#), was imprisoned by the Czech Communist authorities, in response to which, Michael organised a London production of the Havel play *The Increased Difficulty Of Concentration*, opening in September 1989. *Hostage Productions* also produced Michael's play *Propaganda Fide* in the same season, along with David Kane's Scottish comedy *Grave Plots*. These were momentous times for Europe, and by the end of 1989, Vaclav Havel was a free man, and the Berlin Wall had fallen. The **Hostage Productions** production of *Propaganda Fide* was seen by the Romanian theatre director Dan Alecsandrescu, and a Romanian translation of Michael's play, *Teroare Si Credinta*, opened at the **National Theatre Of Romania at Timisoara** in October 1990. The theatre in Timisoara is in the very town square where the Romanian revolution of Christmas 1989 started, and Michael's play was the first international play to be produced in Romania since that momentous event. Subsequently, in 1992, Michael organised the first *National Theatre Of Romania post-Revolutionary Playwriting Competition*, to encourage Romanian new civic voices to emerge, the winning play, *Urma Scapa Turma*, by Alin Fumurescu, opening at Tirgu-Mures before transferring to Bucharest.

In 2000 Michael founded the occasional web design company **Infodezine** with his partner Nick Stubbs. **Infodezine** were responsible for the EU funded *Macclesfield Voluntary Organisations* website, amongst others.

In 2002 Michael founded [www.europawriting.net](http://www.europawriting.net), acting as the ezine's Editor for two years until 2004. [www.europawriting.net](http://www.europawriting.net) encouraged European writing, fact and fiction, from all over the EU and beyond. Highlights included Nicole Ward Jouve's article *The Birth Of The Euro*, written from a French perspective, and Michael's own short story *Chlöe*, about the effects on a German girl with a Baader-Meinhof past of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Michael also worked as a web site designer for **Stockport Education Authority** 2000-2005, before going it alone as a freelance writer 2005-2010.

Michael has been awarded one Arts Council Of England Theatre Writing Options Award (1989), and two Arts Council Of England full Theatre Writing Bursaries (1991, 1998).

In 2007, Michael established the *Michael Black Literary Archive* at Cambridge University Library, with the donation of sixty four of his writing notebooks 1983-2007.

In 2010, Michael founded **Europa Productions**, which completes the story. As Michael so recently said himself “si le conscience d'Européenne n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer”.