

## Stefano Benni Bio

Stefano Benni, born in Bologna in 1947, is something of an artistic polymath. He's a journalist, director, performer, playwright, and lyricist as well as an artistic consultant for one of the longest-running jazz festivals in Italy. His work has been released on multiple albums and he regularly tours. But these achievements pale in comparison to his literary output.

Benni has published over 20 novels and his books have been translated into 32 languages. But he is most popular in his native Italy where, as one critic observed, he is "treated more like a rock star than a writer."

Perhaps most impressive, however, is that Benni has managed to combine mass-market popularity with literary heft. His unique blend of magical realism, satire, and comedy is now regarded in Italy as its own literary style: "Benniano."

Stefano Benni's books are always involving tales on their own terms. Yet they are also, inevitably, "about" something. In fact, Benni's books are about many things. Benni has a way of treating metaphors like onions. One interpretation may be both perfectly satisfying and perfectly correct. And yet, there is a fresh interpretation waiting just below the surface which reflects the story in a whole new light.

That's one of the trademarks of the Benniano style. A comic satire on some current event or social trend is often, at a deeper level, a meditation on a human universal. Sometimes his work seems casual, almost stream-of-consciousness, yet there is always a complex and coherent underlying structure. Stefano Benni is one of those rare authors whose works become more engaging on a second – or third – reading rather than less. He would have made an excellent Greek playwright.