

# **The English Theatre of Hamburg**

*Established 1976*

Presents

## **BEAUTY OF THE FATHER**

**A Play by NILO CRUZ**

**Premiere on 14 February, 2019**

**Preview Performances at reduced prices on 11, 12 and 13 February**

**Performances Tuesday to Saturday at 19.30 Hours**

**Matinee Performances at 11.30 Hours on Tuesdays and**

**Fridays beginning 19 February**

The English Theatre of Hamburg

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or online at [www.englishtheatre.de](http://www.englishtheatre.de)

Dear Teachers and Friends,

The English Theatre will premiere **BEAUTY OF THE FATHER** on 14 February, 2019, with the usual preview performances at reduced prices on 11, 12 and 13 September. Bookings for this contemporary American play have already started. See the cover of this study guide for dates and times of performances. The text of the play may be obtained at [www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) Teachers interested in being invited to a dress rehearsal of the play on 10 February at 19:30 should contact [marketing@englishtheatre.de](mailto:marketing@englishtheatre.de)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nilo Cruz (1960 --) is a contemporary playwright who has been called one of America's most authentic as well as poetic voices. Most of his writing could be categorized as magical realism in the tradition of other Latin American authors. In 1970 he emigrated with his family from Cuba and settled in Miami's Little Havana, USA, when he was ten years old. His interest in theatre began with acting and directing in the early 80s before later taking up playwriting. He first became well known for his play **ANNA IN THE TROPICS**, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Steinberg Award for Best New Play in 2003. Since then his dramatic works have been performed in theatres throughout the United States. In addition to **BEAUTY OF THE FATHER** (2007), some of the author's more recent plays include **THE COLOR OF DESIRE**, **HURRICANE**, **SOTO VOCE**, **BATHING IN MOONLIGHT** and **EXQUISITE AGONY**. Nilo Cruz is also a respected pedagogue, having taught playwriting at Yale University, Brown University and the University of Iowa. He currently lives in Miami and New York City.

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### ABOUT THE PLAY

**BEAUTY OF THE FATHER** is a gripping family drama that deals with the varieties of love and the pain each type can cause: familial affection, physical attraction and platonic companionship. It is set in Granada, Spain, where American painter Emiliano is getting ready for a visit from his daughter whose mother has just died and whom he has not seen in ten years. He abandoned her and her mother in the United States when the mother divorced him due to his bisexuality. Now Emiliano lives with a Spanish female companion and a young man from Morocco in a ménage a trois. Shortly after Emiliano's daughter arrives in Spain, she falls in love with the handsome Moroccan, unaware that he is not only married to her father's female companion but is her father's bed partner as well. During the emotional fireworks that follow, the ghost of dead Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca is on hand to advise Emiliano on being a good father and the pitfalls of physical passion. Lorca's surreal presence, underscored by Spanish classical guitar music and dance, gives this otherwise realistic play a magical, poetic quality that is reminiscent of Lorca's writing.

### Characters in

#### BEAUTY OF THE FATHER

Emiliano: A middle-aged American painter (born of American and Spanish parents) now living in Spain.

Marina: Emiliano's daughter who visits him in Spain from the United States.

Paquita: A Spanish woman who is Emiliano's live-in companion.

Karim: A young man from Morocco living with Emiliano and Paquita.

The Ghost of Federico Garcia Lorca: The Spanish poet who was executed by Franco's soldiers during the Spanish Civil War.

### Summary of

#### BEAUTY OF THE FATHER

Setting: The open terrace of an old beach house facing the Mediterranean Sea in Granada, Spain. Part of the terrace has been converted into an artist's studio.

Time: Summer of 1998.

#### ACT I, Scene 1

Emiliano is currently painting a picture of the murder of Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca, who was executed in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War by Franco's soldiers. The dead poet is so much on the artist's mind that he imagines that the ghost of Lorca appears to him and that they converse with each other. Lorca, who is visible and audible only to Emiliano, seems to be very happy to have been called back into the world of the living. He soon finds himself, however, embroiled in Emiliano's family problems and serving as the painter's confidant, counselor and alter ego.

The problem facing Emiliano at the moment is the imminent arrival from the United States of his daughter Marina, whom he has not seen for ten years. Emiliano abandoned Marina and her mother when the mother divorced him due to his bisexuality. Now, following the death of the mother, Emiliano is driven by the desire to

reconnect with Marina, so he invites her to visit him in Spain.

Before Marina arrives, Emiliano asks Lorca to go away. "Ashamed to introduce me?" Lorca inquires. "No," Emiliano replies. "But what would she think when she sees I converse with a dead man?" When Marina arrives, she meets her father's female companion Paquita and the young Moroccan man Karim, both of whom live with Emiliano. Although burdened by the recent death of her mother, and uncomfortable around a father who abandoned her, Marina is put in good spirits by the enthusiastic way she is received by the whole household. Karim tells her she is beautiful and that she makes him laugh, Paquita makes coffee for them, and Emiliano says he would like to be a father to her again and include her in his family.

#### ACT I, Scene 2

Later that day Emiliano shows Lorca the painting he is creating of the poet's execution by Franco's soldiers. Lorca admires the painting, but remarks, "Nobody wants to talk about the dead." He then is able to observe Marina modeling for her father a number of extravagant female hats she found in the house. Invisible to the girl, Lorca even tries on some of the hats himself. "She's a darling," he tells Emiliano after Marina has gone back into the house. The poet also observes the current state of the relationship between Emiliano and Karim. The young Moroccan, whom Emiliano picked up off the street and who has since then been sleeping with the painter, has now apparently cooled in his passion for the older man. When he refuses to sleep with Emiliano that night, the artist accuses him of being attracted to his daughter. Karim denies the accusation and storms off. "This boy will be the end of you," Lorca warns Emiliano.

#### ACT I, Scene 3

The next day Emiliano notices Karim, who sells exotic perfumes, sharing some of his samples with Maria. The painter is not pleased with the way Karim is flirting with his daughter and insists that the young man accompany him to the nearby village. On the same day Marina is surprised to learn that Paquita and Karim are married. Paquita explains to Marina that she married the young foreigner so he could legally stay in the country. When he gets his citizenship papers,

she plans to divorce him and, hopefully, marry Emiliano, whom she adores. She and Emiliano have been a couple a long time, but now they sleep together only after he has been drinking a lot, Paquita says sadly. She endures the situation, however, because the artist's love and companionship are more important to her than sex at this stage in her life. "Sex is like a summerhouse I closed up for the winter," she says with a chuckle."

#### **ACT I, Scene 4**

At five o'clock the next morning, Lorca is trying to calm Emiliano down. The artist is upset because Karim took Marina to a disco the previous night and they have not yet returned. When they finally come home, Emiliano blames Karim for the drugged state his daughter is in. She wants to continue dancing, and insists they all go to the beach to watch the sunrise. While Emiliano is fetching a glass of milk for his daughter, she and Karim kiss passionately and rush off to the beach. Emiliano is furious when he returns with the milk and discovers where Maria and Karim have gone. Ignoring the advice of Lorca, he rushes off to find the young people.

#### **ACT I, Scene 5**

The following day Paquita is on the terrace from where she expects to observe later an eclipse of the sun. Marina joins her. Together they admire and talk about the mysterious universe. Paquita, assuming that Marina is aware of her father's relationship with Karim, tells her that she married Karim because Emiliano asked her to, so that Karim could stay in the country with him as his lover. Maria is shocked and confused, not because of her father's sexual orientation (her mother had already told her about that), but because neither he nor Karim had told her about their relationship. When Emiliano appears, Marina confronts her father about him and Karim, and apologizes for coming between them. Emiliano blames Karim for wooing his own daughter right in front of his eyes. When Karim appears to view the eclipse, the tension between him and Emiliano, and between him and Marina, is palpable. Nevertheless, they all put on their sunglasses and observe the solar wonder in silence as Lorca looks on.

#### **ACT II, Scene 1**

The following day everyone is on the terrace celebrating San Juan's Day, which occurs on June 23<sup>rd</sup> each year in Spain. (On this day a fire is made and things no longer useful or wanted are burned. It is also a way of cleansing life of bad memories by burning the objects that evoke them.) At the moment, Emiliano is laughing and dancing to music with a bottle of wine in his hand. Paquita joins him in the dance, and Marina and Karim clap their hands.

Lorca appears and observes the festivities. He holds a balloon representing the moon on a leash. The ghost has apparently decided to make himself visible to everyone now, not just to Emiliano. When Paquita notices him, she and Emiliano stop dancing. Lorca waves to them, and Paquita waves back. She wants to offer the strange man some of their bread and sausage, but he goes away before she can do so.

The family then settles down to their food and wine. During their banter, Emiliano teases Paquita about having a foot fetish. She takes her napkin and starts to beat him with it. He runs off the terrace and she runs after him. In their absence, Karim grabs Marina's arm and wants to know why she has been avoiding him. "Because I don't want to talk or see you again!" she replies. She moves away from him as Emiliano and Paquita come back onto the terrace laughing.

They gather wood to burn in the fire. Paquita tells Karim privately that she is going to burn one of his shirts because of his shameless behavior with Marina and his rejection of Emiliano. She hopes that burning the shirt will make him vanish from their lives. When Emiliano and Marina are alone, he says he will not burn anything because he does not believe in such myths and traditions. Marina says she would like to burn the memory of the day her father left home. She angrily accuses him of never coming around after the breakup with her mother. He explodes. "How was I supposed to be around," he shouts, "when she was always making it impossible for me to see you!" He then calms down and tries to ease the situation. "I always thought it was punishment," he says sadly. "You were her ammunition, her way of getting back at me."

Marina kisses her father and goes into the house.

When Lorca reappears, Emiliano wants to know if the poet thinks he has been selfish and failed as a father in the past. Lorca assures him that an artist needs to be selfish in order to create art, and that he did the right thing for Marina by staying away and not involving her in a custody battle with his wife. Lorca then insists that they light the fire right away and burn the past. "Ah, there's so much in my life I'd like to burn," he says. As the flames flicker Lorca begins to dance to flamenco music. He grabs Emiliano by the arm, insisting that the painter dance with him. Then, when Paquita comes out of the house, he pulls her into the dance as well. The three of them dance off the terrace out of sight.

Marina comes onto the terrace followed by Karim. He watches her with frustration as she pours into the fire the perfume he gave her. It is clear to him that this is her attempt to banish him from her life. She explains: "I came here to be with my father, not to steal you away from him." Although he is embarrassed to talk about such things with her, Karim claims he never liked having sex with Emiliano. He was desperate for a place to live where he could be secure. The artist is like a father to him, he says. Marina urges Karim to continue his relationship with Emiliano for her sake. He insists he can only love her. He wants her to come with him to the village where a friend of his has a room for them. Marina refuses, but it is obvious that she is torn between desire for the young man and love for her father. She runs from the terrace toward the beach. Karim runs after her.

Emiliano and Paquita return to the terrace. She regrets that Lorca had to leave and is no longer there to dance with them. Emiliano tells her she looks beautiful in the moonlight. "You evil man!" she says playfully. "Why do you always tell me beautiful things when you drink?" She places her head on his chest. They kiss. He pulls away from her. "Goodnight, my dear. I love you," he says. He then goes into the house, leaving Paquita near tears on the terrace. She is heartbroken.

#### ACT II, Scene 2

The next day Lorca is on the terrace manipulating a hand puppet. They are talking

and playing an amusing guessing game with each other. When Emiliano comes out of the house, Lorca puts the puppet away. He warns Emiliano to be careful with Karim, who is hurting and could be dangerous now because of what has happened between him and Marina. The poet talks about his unhappy love affair with the painter Salvador Dali. He would like to fall in love again, he says, but not with a human being. "Maybe a guitar, or a painting, or a ship. Humans are too complicated," he points out.

Karim interrupts their conversation. He has decided to please Marina by continuing his intimate relationship with Emiliano. "We should fix what's broken between us," he tells the artist. But Emiliano does not believe the young man is really sincere, and he fears that Karim will eventually do to Marina what he has done to him. Although he admits that Karim and Marina make a nice couple, he orders the young man to move out of his house. Karim is enraged. He picks up and hurls Emiliano's sketches and paintings all over the terrace. Paquita and Marina, who have heard the noise, rush out of the house to see what is going on. Karim tells Marina that her father has just thrown him out of the house, and he wants her to go with him. She refuses. He grabs her arm and attempts to drag her away with him. Emiliano steps between them, shouting at Karim, "Didn't you hear what she said?!" Karim challenges Emiliano to confront him outside, and leaves the terrace. Emiliano tells Marina and Paquita to go into the house. He then gets his rifle and leaves the terrace looking for Karim.

Lorca observes from the terrace the confrontation between Emiliano and Karim in the distance. He shakes his head in sadness as they argue, shout and struggle for the gun. When two gunshots ring out, Lorca reacts as if he has been shot, remembering his brutal execution years ago by Franco's soldiers. After a few moments, Emiliano stumbles back onto the terrace out of breath. "Am I dead?" he asks Lorca. "No, the boy missed," Lorca replies.

Marina and Paquita, alarmed by the gunshots, rush from the house onto the terrace. Emiliano assures them that he is unharmed and that nothing happened. Marina regrets that she has caused her father so much heartache and asks

how she can make it up to him. “Just be my daughter,” he tells her lovingly. She is also concerned that Karim might have left them. Paquita, relieved that a bloody tragedy was avoided, tries to cheer everyone up.

Karim comes onto the terrace. He is clearly ashamed of what he has done. Lorca urges Emiliano to let Karim stay, pointing out how empty the painter’s life will be without the young man. Emiliano walks to Karim and takes the gun from him. He is apparently willing to forgive Karim, or at least establish a truce between them. Emiliano then says to

everyone, “Let’s clean up the place.” The family, apparently reconciled for the moment, puts all of the things that Karim threw around the terrace back in place. When they have finished, they go into the house. Lorca expresses his relief that no deaths occurred. “No. No deaths,” he says. “Only a father, a daughter, a young man playing marbles with their hearts and a woman crying because she ran out of tears.” He then unbuttons his vest and reveals two bullet holes.

### Curtain

### Multiple Choice Exercise

1. **BEAUTY OF THE FATHER** is set on the southern coast of (a. France, b. Spain, c. Italy).
2. Emiliano is painting a picture of the (a. confirmation, b. marriage, c. execution) of Frederico Garcia Lorca.
3. Lorca appears in the play as a (a. ghost, b. puppet, c. soldier).
4. Marina is angry with her father because he (a. reduced her pocket money, b. took away her cellphone, c. abandoned her as a child).
5. Paquita adores and wants to marry (a. Emiliano, b. Lorca, c. Karim).
6. Emiliano wants Karim to be his (a. business partner, b. lover, c. artistic assistant).
7. Karim is in love with (a. Paquita, b. Emiliano, c. Marina).
8. Marina resists falling in love with Karim because (a. he is Moslem, b. she does not want to live in Morocco, c. she does not want to interfere in his relationship with her father).
9. Throughout the play, Lorca advises Emiliano about (a. writing poetry, b. personal problems, c. professional ethics).
10. At the end of the play, the family (a. breaks up, b. is reconciled for the moment, c. plans to get some therapy).

Answer Key:

1. b, 2. c, 3. a, 4. c, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. c, 9. b, 10. b

### Interpretative Exercise

1. **BEAUTY OF THE FATHER** deals with four people in love, all with apparently the wrong person. Explain.
2. The play depicts an unconventional family rather than a more traditional one. Which type do you prefer to live in, and why?
3. The play ends with important questions for the family still undecided. How do you think their story continues? Will Emiliano become a good father? Will he continue his relationship with Karim? Will Paquita and Emiliano get married? Will Marina and Karim become a couple?