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# STUDIO

THEATRE

**DAVID MUSE**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
**MERIDITH BURKUS**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

# THE FATHER

BY **FLORIAN ZELLER**  
TRANSLATED BY  
**CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON**

DIRECTOR  
**DAVID MUSE**

SET DESIGNER  
**DEBRA BOOTH**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**WADE LABOISSONNIERE**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**KEITH PARHAM**

SOUND DESIGNER  
**RYAN RUMERY**

FIGHT DIRECTOR  
**ROBB HUNTER**

DRAMATURG  
**LAUREN HALVORSEN**

CASTING  
**STUART HOWARD**

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER  
**SARAH ELIZABETH FORD\***

PRODUCTION MANAGER  
**JOSH ESCAJEDA**

Originally produced on Broadway by the Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) by special arrangement with Theatre Royal Bath, at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on March 22, 2016.

Its original French production was first presented at the Théâtre Hébertot, Paris, September 30, 2012, directed by Ladislav Chollat, starring Robert Hirsch and Isabelle Gélinas. This production was revived on January 17, 2015.

*The Father* is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

Beginning May 10, 2017  
in the Metheny Theatre.

*The Father* is generously underwritten by  
**Teresa and Daniel Schwartz.**

*\*Member Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States*

## A NOTE FROM THE DRAMATURG, LAUREN HALVORSEN

Florian Zeller discovered playwriting “almost by accident.” After dropping out of university to focus on writing, he published his debut novel at twenty-two; three more books and a war chest of prestigious literary prizes followed in short order. This mix of accolades and intellectual celebrity turned Zeller into a glitzy media fixture and ubiquitous presence in Parisian society.

At the height of his literary fame, Zeller was commissioned to write an opera libretto, an assignment he initially thought of as “a rendezvous with music.” But, in contrast to the solitude of novel writing and its narrative limitations, Zeller found himself enthralled with theatre’s ephemeral nature and expansive possibilities. “In the theatre, you are engaged in a project larger than yourself. What you can see on stage one night will never happen again,” says Zeller. “We are connected with death in the theatre, feeling that the performance is almost nothing, because everything will disappear.”

This sense of impermanence powers Zeller’s plays. His work is poignant yet playful, using an economy of language and inventive form to approach ideas from unexpected perspectives, confounding audiences and challenging their interpretations. With a distinct comic sensibility, Zeller repeats scenes, jumbles timelines, and reintroduces characters, as he interrogates the boundaries between reality and illusion. “What I seek to do is to instill an element of doubt,” says Zeller. “I try to construct little labyrinths in which the audience member tries to find where they are. You hunt down the truth, but as soon as you think you’re able to grab hold of it, it takes on another form and it slips through your fingers.”

Doubt assumes many disorienting shapes in *The Father*, and it wasn’t until Zeller reached the end of his first draft that he realized its central subject. (Since one of the pleasures of the play is decoding the occurrences and oddities that accumulate in André’s life, the fact of its mystery is all that will be noted here.) Subtitled ‘a tragic farce,’ Zeller cites the dark humor of Harold Pinter’s early comedies of menace and Eugene Ionesco’s *The Chairs* among his inspirations for *The Father*, as well as memories of his late grandmother, who raised him, and the celebrated French actor Robert Hirsch, who was 89 years old when he played André in the original Parisian production.

But it’s Zeller’s own past as a fiction writer that informs *The Father*’s most compelling achievement: the play’s dramatization of interiority and the maze of the human mind. Zeller wanted to create a story that was “not told, but experienced,” animating his audience’s empathy by placing them inside his character’s reality. *The Father*’s theatrical frame is a testament to the medium’s power: “What I find most touching is the simplicity of theater as a vocation,” Zeller says. “One simply tries to offer the audience a mirror in which it can see, recognize, and understand itself.”