


S·T·U·D·Y  G·U·I·D·E

# DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

by Ariel Dorfman  
directed by Cassie Greer



**BAG &  
BAGGAGE**

compiled by Renée Zipp

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Artistic Director Scott Palmer

# DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

by Ariel Dorfman

Directed by Cassie Greer

March 8 - 25, 2018

The Vault Theater

## CAST

Paulina Salas ..... Mandana Khoshnevisan  
Gerardo Escobar ..... Nathan Dunkin  
Roberto Miranda ..... Anthony Green

## CREW/PRODUCTION TEAM

Director ..... Cassie Greer  
Stage Manager ..... Ephriam Harnsberger  
Costume Designer ..... Melissa Heller  
Scenic Designer ..... Tyler Buswell  
Lighting Designer & Technical Director ..... Jim Ricks-White  
Projection Designer ..... Jeffery A. Smith  
Sound Designer ..... Tiffany Rousseau^  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Carlee Whalen^  
Props Master ..... Renée Zipp^  
Dramaturg ..... Renée Zipp^  
Marketing Assistant ..... Grant Thackray^

^Bag&Baggage Emerging Artist



## INTRODUCTION

*The time is the present and the place, a country that is probably Chile but could be any country that has given itself a democratic government just after a long period of dictatorship.*



Anthony Green, Mandana Khoshnevisan, and Nathan Dunkin play Roberto, Paulina, and Gerardo in Bag&Baggage's production of *Death and the Maiden*.

It's after midnight and Gerardo Escobar finds himself with a flat tire. When a kind stranger helps him out, Gerardo invites the man to spend the night. In the morning, Gerardo wakes to the discovery that his wife, Paulina Salas, has tied the near-naked doctor, Roberto Miranda, to a chair and is threatening the stranger with a gun.

Paulina, a former political prisoner, insists that Roberto is the same sadistic doctor who tortured her during the dictatorship. Although she was blindfolded during his twisted experiments, Paulina recognizes the man's voice, mannerisms, and sayings. She also discovers a CD in his car with the music the doctor would play during his sexual experiments.

Paulina wants a confession. Roberto wants to live. And Gerardo wants to save both. A chaotic fight for the truth and justice ensues.

*Death and the Maiden*, which premiered at London's Royal Court Theatre on July 9, 1991, confronts the aftereffects and psychological damage of people in a country emerging from the cruelties of a totalitarian dictatorship.



## BACKGROUND: A CRASH COURSE IN MODERN CHILEAN HISTORY

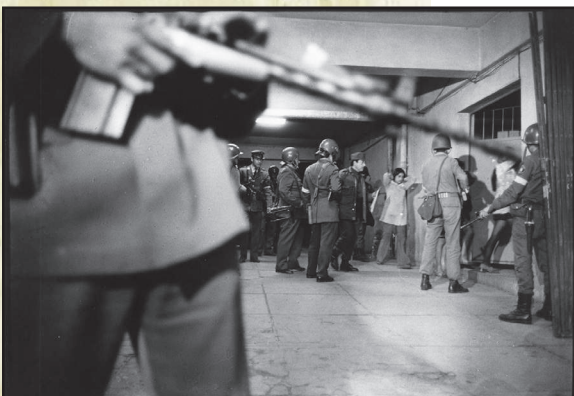
In October 1970, Salvador Allende became the first democratically elected Marxist president of Chile - the first socialist leader in Latin America. Three years later, his government was overthrown by a military coup, and Army General Augusto Pinochet became the new ruler of Chile.

Afraid of the socialist experiment, the American CIA spent \$8 million in the first years of the Allende administration in efforts to destabilize his government. Pressured by President Nixon and fearing that Chile would nationalize its financial institutions, The World Bank, the Export-Import Bank, and other foreign economic powers turned their back on the country. By 1973, the Chilean economy was in shambles, and the United States had successfully created the conditions for General Augusto Pinochet to lead a coup to overthrow Allende's government.

On September 11th, 1973, Chile's armed forces surrounded La Moneda, the presidential palace in Santiago, bombing it with air force jets before it was burned by troops. And so began Pinochet's brutal dictatorship: 17 years ravaged with repression, torture, fear, disappearance, and exile.



*La Moneda - the Chilean presidential palace - being attacked as the coup is underway in 1973.*



*September 1973 - Political prisoners are taken into the basement of the National Stadium in Santiago for interrogation.*

Beginning almost immediately in 1973, political opponents of Pinochet began to mysteriously disappear, vanishing from the streets and leaving no trace or contact with the loved ones in their lives. Pinochet's network of secret police continued to maintain civic control throughout the regime by ensuring that potential troublemakers vanished from society. Once they had been "disappeared", these citizens were often tortured for information, abused, raped, and sometimes killed. In some cases, prisoners were released if they were deemed useless or non-threatening, but the phenomenon of "the disappeared" is one that continues to haunt Chile's national conscience even today. Authorities believe that Pinochet's regime was ultimately responsible for at least 3,200 killings and 38,000 cases of torture. Additionally, over the course of the dictatorship, Chilean courts rejected over 5,000 missing persons cases: 5,000 families torn apart by Pinochet's secret police.

After Pinochet agreed to a national referendum, democratic elections were held and he stepped down as president in 1990 - although he remained head of the army for eight more years. As part of the return to democracy, the Rettig Commission was established to investigate the scope of human rights abuses committed in the 17 years spent under Pinochet's regime.



In 2013, almost 40 years after these atrocities, the Chilean Judges' Association finally apologized: "It must be said and recognized clearly and completely: the court system, and especially the Supreme Court at that time, failed in their roles as safeguards of basic human rights, and to protect those who were victims of state abuse."



Plaques at Villa Grimaldi with the names of hundreds of people either missing from or killed there by Pinochet's secret police.



The Museum of Memory and Human Rights opened in Santiago in 2010, honoring the memory of those lives Pinochet had destroyed, and looking to help heal the country's remaining wounds. The museum features a wall of photos of all those murdered and disappeared during the military dictatorship.

After being deemed unfit for trial multiple times, Pinochet was finally stripped of his immunity by the Chilean Supreme Court on September 9, 2006. Judge Alejandro Madrid indicted him for his 17 years of kidnappings and tortures at Villa Grimaldi, a primary prison camp used during the military dictatorship. Pinochet was charged with 36 counts of kidnapping, 23 counts of torture, and one count of murder. He was ordered to house arrest, and died on December 10, 2006 before being convicted of any crimes committed during his dictatorship.

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### THE PLAYWRIGHT: ARIEL DORFMAN

Ariel Dorfman was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on May 6, 1942. He is the son of Adolf Dorfman, who was born in Odessa, Ukraine (and who became a prominent Argentine professor of economics as well as the author of *Historia de la Industria Argentina*), and Fanny Zelicovich Dorfman, who came from a family of Romanian-Moldovan Jews. Shortly after Ariel's birth, the family moved to the United States and then, in 1954, moved to Chile.

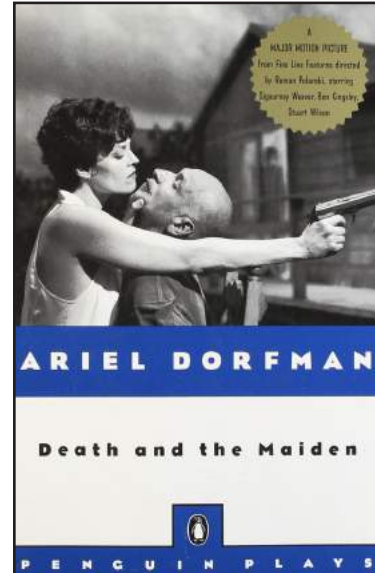
Ariel Dorfman attended and later worked as a professor at the University of Chile, marrying Angélica Malinarich in 1966 and becoming a Chilean citizen in 1967. From 1968 to 1969, he attended graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley and then returned to Chile. From 1970 to 1973, Dorfman served as a cultural advisor to president Salvador Allende. During this time he wrote - with Armand Mattelart - a critique of North American cultural imperialism, *How to Read Donald Duck*.



Dorfman was supposed to work the night shift at the presidential palace in the hours leading up to the Pinochet coup, but had swapped shifts with his friend Claudio Jimeno. As an ally of President Allende, Dorfman was forced to leave Chile in 1973, as General Augusto Pinochet took over the country and Allende committed suicide. He subsequently lived in Paris, Amsterdam, and Washington, D.C.; since 1985 he has taught at Duke University, where he is currently Walter Hines Page Research Professor of Literature and Professor of Latin American Studies. Since the restoration of democracy in Chile in 1990, Dorfman and his wife Angélica have divided their time between Santiago and the United States.



*"Is Walt Disney that innocent? Why are there no parents in his comic books? How come the natives and savages always give up their riches to the duck invaders? What are Huey, Dewey, and Louie doing in Vietnam? The Chilean people began to ask these and other questions in revolutionary Chile in 1970." How To Read Donald Duck offers a critique of "the Disney myth" - specifically with respect to American imperialism - and was briefly banned in the United States. It is being reissued in August of 2018 with a new introduction by Dorfman.*



*Death and the Maiden was adapted for film in 1994 - Dorfman co-wrote the screenplay with Rafael Yglesias. The film - directed by Roman Polanski and starring Sigourney Weaver, Ben Kingsley, and Stuart Wilson - received largely positive reviews from critics.*

## VOCABULARY: TERMS TO KNOW

<b>Amnesty</b>	A general pardon for offenses - especially political offenses - against a government, often granted before any trial or conviction.
<b>Coup</b>	A type of revolution, where there is an illegal and overt seizure of a state by the military or other elites within the state.
<b>Consent</b>	Occurs when one person voluntarily agrees to the proposal or desires of another.
<b>Dialogue</b>	An exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, especially a political or religious issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.
<b>Dictator</b>	A person exercising absolute power, especially a ruler who has absolute, unrestricted control in a government without hereditary succession.
<b>Evidence</b>	That which tends to prove or disprove something; grounds for belief; proof.



**Gaslighting** To cause a person to doubt his or her sanity through the use of psychological manipulation -- i.e. belittlement, dismissal.

**Human Rights** Inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because they are a human being, regardless of their nation, location, language, religion, ethnic origin, or any other status. Human rights are regularly protected as legal rights and should not be taken away except as a result of due processes based on specific circumstances.

**Irreparable** Incapable of being rectified, remedied, or made good.

**Mental Health** A level of psychological well-being, or an absence of mental illness. It is the “psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioural adjustment”.

**Paranoia** A mental disorder characterized by systematized delusions and the projection of personal conflicts - which are ascribed to the supposed hostility of others - sometimes progressing to disturbances of consciousness and aggressive acts, which are believed to be performed in self-defense or as a mission.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** A mental disorder that can develop after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, warfare, traffic collisions, or other threats on a person’s life. Colloquially known as PTSD.

**Schizoid Personality Disorder** A personality disorder characterized by a lack of interest in social relationships, a tendency towards a solitary or sheltered lifestyle, secretiveness, emotional coldness, detachment, and apathy. Affected individuals may be unable to form intimate attachments to others and simultaneously demonstrate a rich, elaborate, and exclusively internal fantasy world.

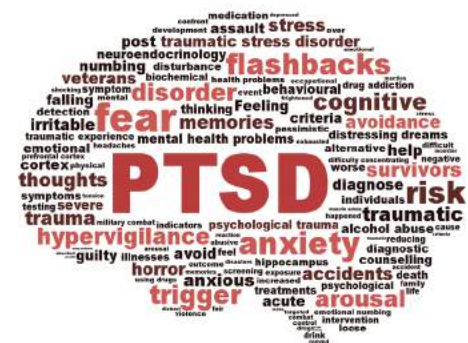
**Sexual Assault** Any act in which a person sexually touches another person without that person’s consent, or coerces or physically forces a person to engage in a sexual act against their will.

**Torture** The act of inflicting excruciating pain as punishment or revenge, as a means of getting a confession or information, or for sheer cruelty.

**Trauma** Emotional shock following a stressful event or a physical injury, which may be associated with physical shock and sometimes leads to long-term neurosis; a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury.



A young General Augusto Pinochet, Chile's eventual dictator, c. 1974.



## THEMES

### Justice:

1. *The quality of being just; righteous, equitableness, or moral rightness*
2. *The administering of deserved punishment or reward*
3. *The maintenance or administration of what is just by law, as by judicial or other proceedings*



Recovering after a long dictatorship, an entire country is searching for justice. In this pursuit, they establish a Commission to investigate human rights abuses. Gerardo Escobar, a lawyer on this Commission, is a figure of absolute justice in the beginning of the play. However, his devotion to justice is tested when he must confront his wife's twisted trial. Paulina Salas, a woman to whom justice will never be served, is presented with a rare opportunity to enact her own justice. Roberto Miranda is unjustly treated by these two people as they each fight for justice.

### Madness:

1. *The state of being mentally ill, especially severely*
2. *Extremely foolish behavior*
3. *A state of frenzied or chaotic activity*

From the beginning of the play, Paulina Salas's mental health is in question. She, like the country in which she lives, is struggling with a great deal of trauma; her husband has helped her through, we can easily assume, a number of relapses. So when Gerardo wakes up in the morning and discovers a maddening scene in his living room, Paulina's wavering sanity allows both him and Roberto Miranda to question the rationality of her behavior. However, if Paulina is correct about Miranda, aren't her actions more sane than anyone else's? Can anyone's reaction be "sane" when confronted with their sadistic torturer? Can one be both insane and rational in a single action? Does Paulina's mental state erase her right to be believed? The theme of madness raises more questions than answers throughout *Death and the Maiden*.

### Truth:

1. *Conformity with fact or reality; verity*
2. *Ideal or fundamental reality, apart from and transcending perceived experience*
3. *Honesty; integrity; truthfulness*
4. *Accuracy, as of position or adjustment*



The search for justice goes hand-in-hand with the search for truth. It quickly becomes clear in *Death and the Maiden* that truth is - ironically - a murky concept. Gerardo Escobar is on a Commission that aims to discover the truth about the cruelties of the previous regime, and yet will not publish the names of the transgressors. Paulina Salas is convinced of her own truth, yet still wants to put the doctor on trial, even knowing that she will only believe one type of confession: "If he's innocent? Then he's really screwed." Under extreme circumstances and fearing for his life, Robert Miranda struggles to maintain his own version of the truth. At the end of the play, we are left wondering where the truth lies.





### Violence:

1. *Rough or injurious physical force, action, or treatment*
2. *An unjust or unwarranted exertion of force or power, as against rights or laws*
3. *Damage through distortion or unwarranted alteration*

Before a single word is spoken in *Death and the Maiden*, the theme of violence is brought to the forefront. Paulina, unsure whether the unfamiliar car is friend or foe, takes out a gun to protect herself. Then, remembering the extreme violence she faced while imprisoned, she ties a Roberto Miranda to a chair and holds him at gunpoint - one violent act in answer to another. In the face of these violent acts, Gerardo Escobar - a man whose job it is to reject unjust violence - does not take strong action to stop the violence happening in front of him. Throughout the show, the characters discuss torture, rape, and the various violent human rights abuses which occurred under the dictatorship, a regime that was, itself, founded in violence.

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### OUR PRODUCTION

Bag&Baggage's production of *Death and the Maiden* comes at a time and place - in American society in 2018 - when we are still asking some of the same questions Ariel Dorfman was grappling with in 1990. The play is deliberately ambiguous, leaving the final judgement up to the members of the audience as far as what is true, who is right, and how should we ultimately resolve conflict and deal with trauma. Director Cassie Greer shares some of her thoughts about the play:

*Death and the Maiden is dense. And challenging. And complicated. ... It's hard to know how to talk about it.*

*But perhaps that's exactly the point.*

*Ariel Dorfman wrote Death and the Maiden in 1990, on the heels of 17 years spent as a political exile from Chile. Returning to his country, he was flooded with a wealth of challenges and complications that were almost impossible to know how to talk about. But to Dorfman, this was precisely why it was important to begin the conversation.*

*"How can those who tortured and those who were tortured coexist in the same land," he writes in the afterword to the 1991 publishing of Death and the Maiden. "How to heal a country that has been traumatized by repression if the fear to speak out is still omnipresent everywhere? And how do you reach the truth if lying has become a habit?"*



Mandana Khoshnevisan plays Paulina Salas in Bag&Baggage's production of *Death and the Maiden*.

*These questions gnawed at the Chilean conscience and at Dorfman's own, prompting him to hurl theatergoers into a 90-minute vortex of violation, vengeance, atonement, truth-seeking, personal pain, political rhetoric, and shifting sympathies, ultimately leaving the verdict in the audience's hands. Part of what makes this play so exemplary is the way it aims to heal without providing any actual answers. What Dorfman acknowledges - which we as Americans in 2018 could certainly take a nod from - is the reality that being challenged to actually engage the tough questions, to have those difficult conversations, to grapple with complicated issues of humanity, goes a whole lot further in making a real difference among contentious groups of people than passively providing tidy solutions.*

*In the notes he includes at the beginning of the script, Dorfman tells us that "the time is the present and the place, a country that is probably Chile but could be any country that has given itself a democratic government just after a long period of dictatorship" — instantly indicating to us that the immediacy of this play is just as important as its history. The questions Dorfman asks of himself and his audiences are not simply appropriate for 90s-era Chileans; rather, they speak straight to the essence of our humanity, challenging us to consider the nature of truth, justice, power, and forgiveness:*

*How do we make sense of the #metoo movement and the Silence Breakers? Do we "believe all women"? What about Black Lives Matter? How should we handle the global refugee crisis, or the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Rohingya, Ukraine, Yemen, or the Islamic State?*

*Ariel Dorfman would invite you to watch this play and live in those questions. And so do I. And while it's painfully true that contentious social movements and politically-charged initiatives and human rights abuses are hard to talk about, I think it's important that we get talking.*



*Anthony Green and Nathan Dunkin play Roberto Miranda and Gerardo Escobar in Bag&Baggage's production of Death and the Maiden.*



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & WRITING ACTIVITIES

### Before you see the show:

1. Considering movements like #metoo and #blacklivesmatter - in which our country is divided primarily between two schools of thought - how does constructive dialogue and unified progress take place?
2. Is it possible for violators and victims to peacefully coexist?
3. Think of a time when you were wronged. Was the other person punished? How did you move past that experience?
4. Have you ever taken justice into your own hands? What motivated you to do this? Are you proud of your actions? What were the repercussions?
5. How important is proof when listening to and believing both violators and victims?

Ben Kingsley and Sigourney Weaver in the 1994 film version of *Death and the Maiden*.



### After you see the show:

6. To what degree do you believe Paulina? To what degree do you believe Roberto? Who do you think Gerardo believes most?
7. What do you think happened to Roberto? What do you *wish* happened to him? How do your answers to these two questions reflect your own feelings about truth, justice, and mental health?
8. Was Paulina just in her treatment of Roberto?
9. Imagine you are Gerardo. Write a monologue that you deliver to Paulina and Roberto, helping to resolve the situation in which you find yourself in *Death and the Maiden*.
10. Look up the clinical definition of Schizoid Personality Disorder (SPD). Then write a persuasive speech, using three specific examples from the play, to convince us whether or not Paulina is, in fact, "prototypically schizoid" as Roberto alleges.
11. Do you believe Paulina finds healing and happiness at the end of the play?
12. Revisit question #1 above. Has your answer changed at all after watching *Death and the Maiden*? Why or why not?

## SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

### **On Ariel Dorfman:**

Dorfman's personal web site  
<http://arieldorfman.com/>

"Ariel Dorfman, Agonized Exile, Writes to Fight" from the *New York Times Books*  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/14/books/ariel-dorfman-agonized-exile-writes-to-fight.html>

"Ariel Dorfman Interview" from *The Progressive*  
<http://progressive.org/magazine/ariel-dorfman-interview/>

### **On Chilean History & The 1973 Coup and Aftermath:**

"September 11th" from *This Day In History* on history.com  
<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/allende-dies-in-coup>

"The Other 9/11" from SBS (Australia)  
<http://www.sbs.com.au/theother911/>

"CIA Nemesis Allende Elected In Chile" from *NewHistorian*  
<http://www.newhistorian.com/cia-nemesis-allende-elected-in-chile/5150/>

"The disappeared are still missing" from *The Guardian*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jan/09/pinochet.chile>

Project Disappeared: Chile  
<http://www.desaparecidos.org/chile/eng.html>

"Chile judges apologise for role during Pinochet regime" from *The Telegraph*  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/chile/10287888/Chile-judges-apologise-for-role-during-Pinochet-regime.html>

### **On Death and the Maiden:**

"Death and the Maiden's haunting relevance" by Ariel Dorfman from *The Guardian*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/14/death-maiden-relevance-play>

"Democracy with blood on its Hands: An Interview With Ariel Dorfman" from *Three Monkeys Online*  
<http://www.threemonkeysonline.com/democracy-with-blood-on-its-hands-an-interview-with-ariel-dorfman/>

### **Related Work by Ariel Dorfman:**

***Widows***, a 1981 novel by Dorfman, a story of thirty-seven women who suspect that their missing husbands have been abducted and killed by authorities of their government.

***How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic***, a 1971 book-length essay by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart which critiques Disney comics, arguing that comic books are used to promote American imperialism, specifically to benefit American business in Latin America.