



THE HUMANS

BY
STEPHEN KARAM



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



THE HUMANS
Copyright © 2016, Stephen Karam

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of THE HUMANS is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for THE HUMANS are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, LLC, 11 Madison Avenue, 18th floor, New York, NY 10010. Attn: John Buzzetti.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce THE HUMANS is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

THE HUMANS had its world premiere at American Theater Company (PJ Paparelli, Artistic Director), Chicago, Illinois, in November 2014. It was directed by PJ Paparelli, the set design was by Dave Ferguson, the costume design was by Brittany Dee Bodley, the lighting design was by Brian Hoehne, the sound design was by Patrick Bely, and the stage manager was Amanda Davis. The cast was as follows:

ERIK BLAKE Keith Kupferer
DEIRDRE BLAKE Hanna Dworkin
AIMEE BLAKE Sadieh Rifai
BRIGID BLAKE Kelly O’Sullivan
FIONA “MOMO” BLAKE Jean Moran
RICHARD SAAD Lance Baker

THE HUMANS was commissioned and originally produced Off-Broadway by Roundabout Theatre Company, at the Laura Pels Theatre, opening on October 25, 2015. It was directed by Joe Mantello, the scenic design was by David Zinn, the costume design was by Sarah Laux, the lighting design was by Justin Townsend, the sound design was by Fitz Patton, the production stage manager was William Joseph Barnes, and the stage manager was Devin Day. The cast was as follows:

ERIK BLAKE Reed Birney
DEIRDRE BLAKE Jayne Houdyshell
AIMEE BLAKE Cassie Beck
BRIGID BLAKE Sarah Steele
FIONA “MOMO” BLAKE Lauren Klein
RICHARD SAAD Arian Moayed

The Roundabout production of THE HUMANS transferred to the Helen Hayes Theatre on Broadway, with the same cast and creative team, on January 23, 2016. The Broadway production was produced by Scott Rudin, Barry Diller, Roundabout Theatre Company, Fox Theatricals, James L. Nederlander, Terry Allen Kramer, Roy Furman, Daryl Roth, Jon B. Platt, Eli Bush, Scott M. Delman, Sonia Friedman, Amanda Lipitz, Peter May, Stephanie P. McClelland, Lauren Stein and the Shubert Organization, and Joey Parnes (Sue Wagner and John Johnson, executive producers).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ERIK BLAKE, 60

DEIRDRE BLAKE, 61, Erik's wife

AIMEE BLAKE, 34, their daughter

BRIGID BLAKE, 26, their daughter

FIONA "MOMO" BLAKE, 79, Erik's mother

RICHARD SAAD, 38, Brigid's boyfriend

NOTES

- 1.) A slash (/) means the character with the next line of dialogue begins their speech.
- 2.) Dialogue in brackets [] is expressed non-verbally.
- 3.) *The Humans* takes place in one real-time scene—on a two-level set—with no blackouts. Life continues in all spaces at all times.
- 4.) *The Humans* explores the fears of a middle class family—not necessarily a white middle class family. Though the family’s heritage draws from my own background (I am half Irish-American, half Lebanese-American), the primary obsession of the play isn’t unpacking of the Irish-American experience; as such, I hope families of all ethnicities will be gathered around the table in future productions. The casting of actors of color shouldn’t be viewed as a radical concept, nor one that requires the author’s permission.

—SK

There are six basic fears, with some combination of which every human suffers at one time or another...

The fear of POVERTY

The fear of CRITICISM

The fear of ILL HEALTH

The fear of LOSS OF LOVE OF SOMEONE

The fear of OLD AGE

The fear of DEATH

—Napoleon Hill,
Think and Grow Rich

The subject of the “uncanny”... belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror... The German word [for “uncanny”], unheimlich, is obviously the opposite of heimlich, meaning “familiar,” “native,” “belonging to the home”; and we are tempted to conclude that what is “uncanny” is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar... [But] among its different shades of meaning the word heimlich exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, unheimlich... on the one hand, it means that which is familiar and congenial, and on the other, that which is concealed and kept out of sight.

—Sigmund Freud,
“The Uncanny”

THE HUMANS

A turn-of-the-century ground floor/basement duplex tenement apartment in New York City's Chinatown. It's just big enough to not feel small. It's just small enough to not feel big.

The two floors are connected via a spiral staircase. Each floor has its own entrance.

The apartment's pre-war features have been coated in layers of faded off-white paint, rendering the space curiously monotone. The rooms are worn, the floors are warped, but clean and well kept.

The layout doesn't adhere to any sensible scheme—the result of a mid-century renovation in which two autonomous apartments were combined.

Upstairs: *two rooms divided by an open entryway. The room with the staircase also has the apartment's lone, large, deep-set window with bars. The window gets no direct sunlight. An urban recliner is the only piece of furniture upstairs. The other room has a door that leads to the duplex's sole bathroom.*

Downstairs: *two windowless rooms divided by an even larger open entryway—with a different floorplan than upstairs. A small kitchen alley is wedged awkwardly behind the spiral staircase. The other room is dominated by a modest folding table. The table is set with six paper plates and napkins with turkeys on them. Plastic silverware. Scattered moving boxes. Not much else.*

The apartment is a touch ghostly, but not in a forced manner; empty pre-war basement apartments are effortlessly uncanny.

At lights: Erik is upstairs, alone, some plastic bags in his hands. Beside him is an empty wheelchair. He takes in the space. The main door is open. Beat.

A sickening THUD sounds from above the ceiling. Erik looks up.

ERIK. [What the hell was that?]

He recovers.

Gradually his attention shifts away from the noise; he continues to explore the space when—

Another sickening THUD sounds from above, startling him. He looks up.

[God, what the hell is that?]

A toilet flush.

Aimee and Brigid enter through the main door carrying a few plastic bags.

AIMEE. This is the last of the goodies...

BRIGID. *(To Erik.)* I told you guys not to bring anything.

Deirdre and Momo exit the bathroom; Momo is shaky on her feet. Erik helps her into her wheelchair.

DEIRDRE. Mission accomplished...

BRIGID. It's pretty big, right?

AIMEE.
Definitely bigger than
your last place.

ERIK.
I gotcha Mom,
there you go...

ERIK. Is there some kinda construction going on upstairs?

BRIGID. Oh, no that's our neighbor, we think she drops stuff? Or stomps around?—we don't know...

Downstairs: Richard emerges from the kitchen alley.

RICHARD. *(Calling up.)* Everyone okay up there?

BRIGID. We're fine, babe, just keep an eye on the oven, we'll be down in a minute.

RICHARD. You got it.

ERIK. Have you complained to her about the noise?

BRIGID. No, Dad, she's a seventy-year-old Chinese woman, / I'm not gonna—

DEIRDRE. Well, Brigid, I'm sixty-one—older people can still process information, we're / still able to—

BRIGID. I'm saying she means well, she's older so I don't wanna disturb her if I don't have to /... Hey, here, I'll take your coats...

MOMO. (*Mumbled.*) You can never come back... you can never come back /... you can never come back... cannever you come back...

DEIRDRE. Alright... you're alright, Mom...

Momo's mumbling is not directed to anyone—her primary focus is down, towards the floor, lost; she is passive and disconnected.

BRIGID. What's she saying?

DEIRDRE.
She's—[who the hell knows]
—even when she *is* sayin'
real stuff... what's been comin'
out is still all... [muddled]

MOMO.
... fernall heres ullerin...
werstrus um black... sezz
it bigger... fernal down
/ black... sornit all...

ERIK. Mom, hey Mom, this is Brigid's new apartment...

BRIGID. How are you, Momo?

DEIRDRE. We're gonna have Thanksgiving at your granddaughter's new place, / that sound good?

MOMO. (*Mumbled.*) ... you can never come back... you can never come back...

BRIGID. Momo, you can absolutely come back, any time you want.

Deirdre moves into the room with the recliner.

ERIK. This is a decent layout, Bridge... / good space...

DEIRDRE. Really nice...

BRIGID. It's good, right?—I can set up my music workspace downstairs so I won't drive Rich crazy.

DEIRDRE. This is a fancy chair... Erik, check out this fancy chair...

ERIK. I thought all your furniture was on the moving truck.

BRIGID. It is—Richard's parents gave us that—a couch, too... we're not sure if the living area'll be up here or—this might become the bedroom...

AIMEE. (*Noticing the staircase.*) I can't believe you have a downstairs...

ERIK. Why would they give something this nice away?

BRIGID.
Because they got a new one, Dad.

MOMO. (*Softly mumbled.*)
... fernall all sertrus inner...

DEIRDRE. (*Re: the recliner.*) You might want something even bigger up here...

BRIGID. This isn't Scranton, I don't need an oversized recliner in every room.

MOMO. (*Mumbled.*) ... you can never come back... you can never come back...

Erik is drawn to the window, studies the surroundings.

BRIGID. Momo...?

DEIRDRE. It's her latest phrase-of-the-day... The doctor says it's normal, the repeating...

BRIGID. And... how's she been?

*Eriks stops staring out the window.
Momo's face remains blank and focused on the floor.*

ERIK. Uh... she's still got her good days, you know?... Yesterday

she was pretty with it for most of the morning, but now she's [all over the place]... I dunno where she goes...

DEIRDRE. I tried to do her hair, I want her to look good, / you know?

AIMEE.
She does...

BRIGID.
Treat yourself to a spa day...
/ the both of you should go—

DEIRDRE. No, no way, do you know how much that costs?

BRIGID. Yeah, well you'll burn out if you're / not careful—

DEIRDRE. Hey, hey don't worry about us—having her at home with us is, until it becomes too much, it's a blessing, you know... right Erik?... Erik...

Erik has been staring out the window—something outside caught his attention.

AIMEE. Dad— / come back to earth...

ERIK. Sorry, sorry... long drive.

BRIGID. Are you okay?

ERIK. Yeah, once I get some caffeine in me, I'll be good...

AIMEE. (*Trying to find the light switch in the bathroom.*) Hey is the light switch...?

BRIGID. No, it's on the outside...

Another THUD sounds above the ceiling. Erik is the only one who looks up.

ERIK. You want me to call the super about the noise?—

BRIGID. No, no this is New York, people are loud, why are you so—

THE HUMANS

by Stephen Karam

WINNER OF THE 2016 TONY AWARD FOR BEST PLAY

2M, 4W

Breaking with tradition, Erik Blake has brought his Pennsylvania family to celebrate Thanksgiving at his daughter's apartment in lower Manhattan. As darkness falls outside the ramshackle pre-war duplex, eerie things start to go bump in the night and the heart and horrors of the Blake clan are exposed.

"Drawn in subtle but indelible strokes, Mr. Karam's play might almost qualify as deep-dwelling reportage, so clearly does it illuminate the current, tremor-ridden landscape of contemporary America. . . . THE HUMANS is a major discovery, a play as empathetic as it is clear-minded, as entertaining as it is honest. For all the darkness at its core. . . a bright light shines forth from it, the blazing luminescence of collective artistic achievement."

—The New York Times

"THE HUMANS explores, across an enthralling spectrum of ups and downs, what being a family is all about."

—The Washington Post

"Great plays are usually great in one of two ways. Either they are culminating examples of existing ideas, or groundbreaking examples of new things entirely. . . . THE HUMANS, it turns out, is not just one of those culminating genre pieces but also, at the same time, one of those 'new things entirely.' Into the familiar dinner-table-drama genre the playwright has mixed the unexpected element of terror—or, rather, he has created a new element by bombarding one with the other. I should add that, for all this, the play is rackingly funny even as it pummels the heart and scares the bejesus out of you."

—New York Magazine

"[An] inestimably kind, rich and beautiful play. . . truly remarkable and exceptionally moving. . . Few writers of his generation have achieved anything quite like THE HUMANS, a play about the horrors of ordinary life and the love we need to counter them."

—Chicago Tribune

Also by Stephen Karam
SONS OF THE PROPHET
SPEECH & DEBATE

ISBN 978-0-8222-3527-9



DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.