

The Guide

A Theatergoer's Resource

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The Breath of Life

By David Hare

Cast and Creative Team

Learn more about the team that created this amazing production.

[-Click Here-](#)

World of the Play

Explore the background of the play, the playwright and more.

[-Click Here-](#)

An Interview with the Cast

Learn more about the two stars of *The Breath Of Life* and their relationship onstage and off.

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Brief Synopsis

The Breath of Life is a 2002 play by Sir David Hare.

"Life being what it is, one dreams of revenge." Gauguin's epigram serves as the motto for this moral tale of two women, both in their sixties, whose lives are interwoven in ways neither of them yet understands.

Madeline Palmer is a retired curator, living alone on the Isle of Wight. One day Frances Beale comes to her door, a woman she has met only once, who is now enjoying sudden success, late in life, as a popular novelist.

Frances was the dutiful wife of Martin. Madeleine was his not-so-dutiful mistress of 25 years. Now Martin has moved to America with a younger woman, so the two enemies meet face to face at last, to discuss their relationships with the elusive man whom they refuse to be defined by.

We learn that Madeleine met English lawyer Martin when both Brits were in Alabama during the civil rights protests of the early '60s. Their single night of lovemaking would have been a distant memory if it weren't for a chance meeting between the two many years later when Martin was married to Frances. A long affair commenced.

Over the course of one day and one night, the women reflect on their lives and relationships with the same man. The result is a surprising and profound meditation on what can emerge when a man's wife and mistress finally confront each other.