

# A new moon for playwright Amado del Pino

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Photos: Courtesy of Alejandro Palomino

• "THEATER has such a thriving life that it defies space and time," stated French star Isabelle Huppert on March 27 this year, in her World Theater Day Message. I returned to this beautiful idea after enjoying **Luna Nueva** (New Moon) in Havana's Raquel Revuelta Cultural Complex, located on Línea Street, Vedado, the most recent proposal from the Vital Teatro group, directed by Alejandro Palomino.

The play combines texts from four pieces written for female characters by playwright Amado del Pino (Cuba, 1960 – Spain, 2017):

**Triángulo**, a work of excellence on emotions and encounters, premiered in 2004 precisely by Vital Teatro; the monologue **En falso**; **Cuatro menos**, which won the 2009 Carlos Arniches Prize in Spain, making Del Pino the first Cuban to win the award; and **Revolico a dúo**, written for the group in 2016.

Palomino's proposal in **Luna Nueva** maintains the fluency of the dialogues, and the playwright's choice of language for each character. This combination of texts allows the theater group to present certain contemporary Cuban dilemmas to audiences.

In this theatrical gamble, Palomino achieves a dynamic staging and, as a Vital Teatro premise, the work of the actors is the crowning point, portraying the characters with minimal resources, as noted in the scenery, without grandiloquence, but with complete dedication to their performance and the world created on stage.

The first scene (with texts from **Triángulo**, **En falso** and **Cuatro menos**) was well executed by Nora Elena Rodríguez, Alina Molina, Gretel Cazón, Leivy Rosy, and Adriana Quesada, alongside the only male character (played by Marlon López or Abel Cedre), while Yia Caamaño and Susana Ruiz's internalization and strong characterization was appreciated in **Revolico a dúo**, which was presented in full.

Moments before the show, on a rainy Sunday that heralded Hurricane Irma, Alejandro Palomino offered an interview for our readers.

**You have staged several works by Del Pino. How did you conceive this piece?**

**Luna Nueva** is a point where, precisely in the dramaturgical sense, several of Amado del Pino's female characters come together. A large number of Amado's leading characters are masculine, but these have always been accompanied by female

characters who see important developments in the dramatic action. He was also a man concerned about the role of contemporary women in Cuba, and the decisions and expressive elements that the female character can contribute within his dramaturgy.

So we decided that it was the female characters who would star in **Luna Nueva**, and it is they who develop the dramatic action, and represent on stage many of the obsessions that accompanied him during his life.

**Where does the title come from?**

It's from the lines of the character of Miriam in **Triángulo**, which in full go: 'and she looks at me like a new moon and I can not offer her another face.'

**Let's go back to the female characters...**

For Amado, women have been catalysts, agents of change in society. This is a point of view with which I agree, and that is precisely why we decided that women would be the protagonists. There is only one male character, a young man who is there as a reference, memories, in the sphere of delusions.

The female characters are very solid, with a well-designed structure, they have a vision of the future and of life that are non-negotiable.

**Do you respect Amado's use of language in Luna Nueva, often described as strong and poetic at the same time?**

In the performance there is absolute respect for what has been called the poetry of crudeness in Amado's dramaturgy. Feminine voices are present in **Luna Nueva**, those creatures that prevail in his pieces.

**The play maintains the same aesthetics of the group...**

Yes, we have always worked on the basis of the role of the actor. Our shows depend on the work of the actor. Very handcrafted, with few scenographic resources, but rather the contrast of complementary colors, in this case red and green. The costumes are quite sober, black and white. The actor and his expressive skills are the core of our work



In the Tribute Colloquium to Amado del Pino held in the Dulce María Loynaz Cultural Center, theater critic Osvaldo Cano said of the playwright: "Amado had the great merit of weaving networks of friendship, he was passionate and excessive, an intense Cuban."

and this is no exception.

**Could you tell us about upcoming performances?**

We are making an assessment of U.S. theater. At one point, on the recommendation of Amado himself, with whom we worked systematically for 15 years and owe much of our repertoire, we turned to Williams, O'Neill, Albee, Miller. We are currently reviewing some texts of this intense and interesting theater.

Amado del Pino passed away at the age of 56, a victim of cancer, on January 22, coinciding with Cuban Theater Day, designated in memory of the storming of the Villanueva Theater in 1869.

A few years ago I commented that it was "at least surprising that a contemporary Cuban playwright simultaneously has four of his works on stage. Such good fortune befell Amado del Pino..."

At that time, audiences could choose between **Penumbra en el noveno cuarto** (2003 UNEAC Theater Award); **Tren hacia la dicha** (his first work from 1988); **El zapato sucio** (Critic's Prize, Virgilio Piñera Prize) and **Triángulo**.

Vital Teatro and its director Alejandro Palomino, with whom Amado worked so intensely, today honors him with **Luna Nueva** and the strength of his female characters.

Del Pino's career (playwright, journalist, critic) was vital and ascendant and his dramaturgy is, and will forever be, central to Cuban theater.

Just as Isabelle Huppert understood: "Theater is always reborn from its ashes... theater has such a thriving life that it defies space and time." •



The first scene of **Luna Nueva** combines texts from **Triángulo**, **En falso** and **Cuatro menos**.

## Cuba's Acosta Danza receives rave reviews in the UK



• CUBAN company Acosta Danza, directed by the distinguished ballet dancer Carlos Acosta, received highly favorable reviews in the United Kingdom, after its debut in London's Sadler's Wells Theater.

Several British newspapers praised the chosen program and the quality of the dancers.

Zoë Anderson in the **Independent**, notes: "The 14 dancers bring a sense of unity and individual personality, while the repertory balances Cuban roots and a sense of adventure."

Meanwhile, dance critic Mark Monaham in **The Telegraph** stated that the company's director had brought together "21 of the finest dancers in Cuba, irrespective of their training."

He went on to note: "If this ethnically diverse troupe's generous Debut bill of five pieces is uneven, and downright eccentric in places, its sheer variety and experimental vim certainly make quite an impression."

According to Laura Freeman in the **Evening Standard**, in reference to two of the pieces performed, "If Niagara (choreographed by Cuba's Marianela Boán) is marble, Belles-Lettres (by Justin Peck of the U.S.) is silk."

During the latter, "Eight dancers in costumes of pink and turquoise move with joyful abandon... Their movements are soft, lyrical, tender... Skirts billow and blow like blossom."

Meanwhile, **The Telegraph** described the piece **El cruce sobre el Niágara** as "a tapestry of infinitely slow, piano-wire-tense movements that place extraordinary demands on the

duo's lower-body strength," while recognizing that the dancers - Carlos Luis Blanco and Alejandro Silva - provide "a startling showcase."

Monaham also praises the appearance of the "astonishingly lithe" company director and dancer Carlos Acosta, in the world premiere of **Mermaid**, by Belgian choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, accompanied by former Danza Contemporánea de Cuba principal Marta Ortega.

As Anderson in the **Independent** expresses regarding this piece: "In a red dress by Hussein Chalayan, Ortega rises on pointe, twisting in and out of balance... The duet suggests both a tender partnership and an unbridgeable gap. Ortega ripples through her own weighted moves, or tries to share them with Acosta... the connection they achieve is delicate but fragile."

Likewise, **Twelve**, by Spain's Jorge Crecis, and **Imponderable**, by his compatriot Goyo Montero, also received excellent reviews.

According to critic Neil Norman, in **The Stage**, the latter is "the most effective" piece of the program, in which "dancers collide and leap into curling lifts and accelerated street-dance moves with tireless energy."

Although Norman believes that the program "lacks a defining aesthetic," he praises "Acosta's willingness to try anything," defining this debut as "a promising start."

Acosta Danza's European tour will continue until early November, through several cities in the UK, Germany, and Austria. (PL) •