

SPRING AWAKENING

DRAMATURGY

CASEBOOK



Play by Frank Wedekind

Adapted by Steven Sater

Music by Duncan Sheik

Clint Sides

Jazmine Logan

Central to every happy and well-adjusted adult life has been the ability to live through the challenges and traumas of adolescence and young adulthood. The perils of awakening sexuality in each of ourselves brands us with our own individuality. This play honestly addresses feelings and events that connect us all.

Themes of the Play

This play resonates with young people today for the same reasons it did when written, over a century ago. The constant and never-ending challenge of teaching each new generation of children how to positively grow into their adult bodies, with healthy attitudes and a sound understanding of their own sexuality. Spring Awakening was written by an educator; a man who saw a need for openness and honesty about what was wrong with children's educations in the Europe of the 19th century. Parents' fears and expectations for their adolescent children were causing suffering and despair for the young; as much can be said about parents in America today.

The Progress of a Century

Where do parents in today's world stand on sex education? How are we addressing the problems children face that lead them to despair and thoughts of suicide? Are parents and educators any more prepared to help the young deal with the problems and challenges of growing up in our modern, tech-heavy society which is changing so fast? Have we

grown up more comfortable with our own sexuality; more accepting of all the variations that naturally occur in such a large population?

How the Play Impacts a Modern Audience

These young actors present us with these questions; asking us all to examine honestly our own fears and doubts, our own uncertainties about raising children. We want to have happy, healthy children grow into well-adjusted, productive, and whole adults. For this to happen we must share our knowledge, our own experiences, both good and bad, and what we have learned about our own sexuality in order for the young to understand that, with sustained effort, they too can live fulfilled lives.

PLAYSCRIPT 23

'spring awakening'

frank wedekind

TRANSLATED BY TOM OSBORN



Quick References

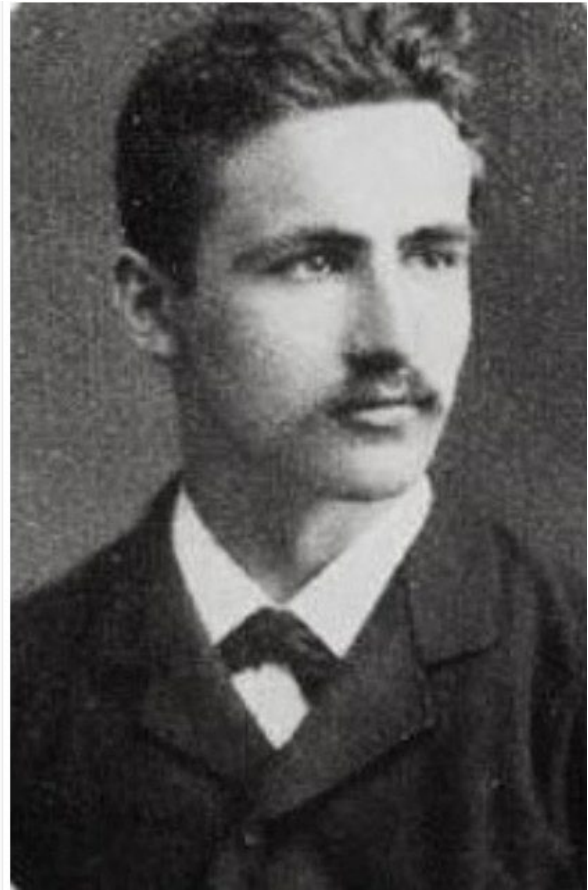
The Original Play written by Frank Wedekind. Frank was a relatively unknown playwright born in Hanover, Germany in 1864. He was named for Benjamin Franklin. At the age of 26, in 1890 he wrote *Spring Awakening*. A very controversial figure, he was among the group of artists who brought about the Expressionist Movement. His plays, which addressed female, as well as male, sexuality, were mostly banned in Europe. He first staged *Spring Awakening* in 1906 in Berlin. He portrayed the Masked Man. His theories about theatre influenced a young member of his company, Bertolt Brecht. Upon Wedekind's death, Brecht held a wake and wrote for his obituary in the *Augsburger Neueste Nachrichten* "Last Saturday night we sang his songs to the guitar as we swarmed down the Lech under the star-dusted sky... On Sunday morning we were horrified to read that Frank Wedekind had died the day before... Without actually seeing him buried I cannot conceive that he is dead. Like Tolstoy and Strindberg he was one of the great educators of modern Europe. His greatest work was his personality." He wrote a poem that reads:

They stood perplexed in top hats

As if round the carcass of a vulture. Bewildered crows.

And though they (sweating tears) tried hard They couldn't bury this juggler¹

¹ *Wedekind Plays: One Spring Awakening and Lulu: a Monster Tragedy* translated by Edward Bond and Elisabeth Bond-Pable. 1993. Michelin House, London.



It's Relationship to the Musical Adaptation by Steven Sater.

The musical opens with a song sung by Wendla, a young girl in adolescence. She is next talking with her mother, Frau (Mrs.) Bergman. She wants to know where babies really come from. Her mother is caught off-guard and is completely un-equipped to explain sex and childbirth to Wendla. It begins in Act II, Scene II of the original play by Frank Wedekind.

A Brief Description of the Play from “Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers”.

“Spring Awakening is based on Frank Wedekind’s controversial 1891 drama, which was scandalous in its day for addressing sex, violence and suicide. The story, dialogue and costumes suggest the 19th Century, and are perfectly wedded to a beautiful alternative pop music score by Grammy nominated singer/songwriter Duncan Sheik and author and lyricist Steven Sater. The creative team also includes Tony Award Winning director Michael Mayer and legendary choreographer Bill T. Jones. Spring Awakening takes its inspiration from one of literature’s most controversial masterpieces – a work so daring in its depiction of teenage self-discovery, it was banned from the stage and not performed in its complete form in English for nearly 100 years.”²



² Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers”.

Important Themes of the Play

The relevance and importance of the story are very much the same today as when written over one hundred and twenty years ago. From the opening scene, in which a young girl asks her mother why she must dress differently and cover her body, we see a clear message of the anxiety created in both children and parents around the issues of puberty, sex, and sexuality. Knowledge of human sexuality is still highly suppressed and controversial in all but the most progressive societies of the world. *Spring Awakening* is filled with the problems and traumas which every new generation of children must face as they begin the journey toward adulthood. In Frank Wedekind's groundbreaking play; and in the musical adaptation, issues which haunt parents and their children around the world are honestly addressed and brought out into the light. Teenage sexuality. Female and Male. Masturbation. Intercourse. Love. The dark side of growing up as well. Anxiety. Fear. Repression. Punishment. Abuse. Rape. Molestation. Incest. Suicide. These are all among the heaviest and most difficult issues we all must face in order to live healthy, productive lives as adults. As seen through the eyes and experiences of these loving, curious young people, we as modern adults can continue to hope and help each new generation of young people become who they are meant to be – healthy, happy, fully-realized, whole individuals; with the capacity and understanding to live - and to enjoy the pleasures and joys that come from positive, healthy sex in their relationships for their lifetimes.

Research

Following are descriptions of: The meaning of the play; the original staging, and biographies of the writers.

“The play also focused on other issues plaguing teens today: sex, abortion, coming into one’s own and the struggle that exists between teens and authority figures. **Epic theatre** earned its name by using clear description, a reporting style, choruses and projections as a means of communicating with audiences. It renounced the romanticism of earlier theatre and presented characters who represented different sides of an argument. The audience was invited to draw its own conclusions about the situations presented in a more detached “scientific” way—an approach fully developed in the mid-20th century by noted German playwright, **Bertolt Brecht**. He called the scientific approach the “**alienation effect**.” Both Wedekind and Brecht used unrealistic sets and comedy to soften the harsh realities of events presented in their plays.

The ever-present anxiety of the characters in *Spring Awakening* foreshadowed the **expressionist movement** in German theatre which became prominent in the early 20th century. Involving a distortion of emotion, the concept of expressionism was widely present in European art movements of the time. **Edvard Munch’s “The Scream”** is a good example of the expressionist style. *Spring Awakening* also incorporates an element of epic theatre called “**breaking the fourth wall--an imaginary partition at the front of the stage separating the actors from the audience**.” Theatrically speaking, “the fourth wall” is meant to symbolize the barrier between the world of fiction on stage and the audience. When an actor “breaks the fourth wall” he or she speaks to the audience directly...One actor can also play several roles, as the two “adults” in the musical version play mothers, fathers, headmaster and mistress of the school. All of these techniques are present in 1800s German theatre, which one can safely assume was light years ahead of its time.

The set design was conceived by Frank Wedekind himself for his original 1906 production. His use of a “one size fits all” set was considered quite avant-garde for the time. In keeping with Wedekind’s original idea, Jones included no set changes. One set served as a multilayered, multi-purpose backdrop for all of the action. Some audience members were seated on rows of chairs on the stage. Other audience members could watch and see how the space transformed itself into a classroom. In collaboration with lighting designer Kevin Adams, Jones utilized neon lights on the walls of the stage as well as the theatre, to extend the classroom space into the theatre space, inviting the audience in. With this spacial configuration, the center stage held a multi-layered platform which, depending on the scene, was used either plainly or with minimal furniture to indicate changes in location.”³

³ Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers”.

Scene Breakdown Comparison

Musical

Act One, Scene One – Wendla confronts Frau Bergman about where babies come from. Frau Bergman at first refuses to answer and then only tells Wendla that making a baby requires love.

Mama Who Bore Me, Mama Who Bore Me

(Reprise)

Act One, Scene Two – The Boys in Latin Class, Moritz makes a mistake and Melchior defends him. Moritz talks about his dreams and Melchior agrees to write down everything he knows about reproduction for Moritz. Herr Knochenbruch and Fraulein Knuppeldick discuss Melchior and Moritz's relationship.

All That's Known, The Bitch of Living

Act One, Scene Three – The Girls
The Girls discuss boys on the way home from school, Georg attends a piano lesson, Hanschen jerks off.

My Junk

Act One, Scene Four – Moritz visits Melchior to discuss Melchior's essay, Frau Gabor notices Moritz seems off, Moritz abruptly leaves.

Touch Me

Act One, Scene Five – Wendla and Melchior meet in the woods and discuss charity and their lack of interaction, after which Melchior walks Wendla home.

The Word of Your Body

Play

Act One, Scene One – It's Wendla's 14th

birthday. Wendla complains that her new dress is too long and convinces Frau Bergman to allow her to wear her princess dress for a while longer.

Act One, Scene Two – A Sunday evening. The Boys play, but then the group breaks off to do homework, leaving Melchoir and Moritz alone. They discuss their future children, the masculine itch, and Melchior agrees to write down everything he knows about reproduction for Moritz.

Act One, Scene Three – The Girls discuss boys, Martha's beatings, and their future children.

Act One, Scene Four – Moritz returns from breaking into the staff room to reveal that both he and Ernst Röbel have passed. Professors Gutgrinder and Bonebreaker express their lack of understanding of Melchior and Moritz's relationship.

Act One, Scene Five – Wendla and Melchior meet in the woods and discuss charity and Martha's abuse. Wendla asks Melchior to beat her and he does.

Act One, Scene Six – Moritz returns from the headmaster’s office to reveal he has passed middle-terms. Herr Knochenbruch and Fraulein Knuppeldick discuss Moritz’s future at school.

Act One, Scene Seven – The Girls again discuss boys. Martha reveals her father beats her. Martha and Ilse’s situations are juxtaposed.
The Dark I Know Well

Act One, Scene Eight – Wendla finds Melchior in the woods. They discuss beatings. Wendla asks Melchior to beat her, and he eventually does.
The Word of Your Body (Reprise)

Act One, Scene Nine – Moritz reveals to Herr Stiefel that he has failed.

Act One, Scene Ten – Frau Gabor responds to Moritz’s plea for help.
And Then There Were None

Act One, Scene Eleven – Melchior copes with his guilt for beating Wendla, Wendla finds Melchior in the hayloft. The two begin discussing their last meeting and then begin to make love.
The Mirror Blue Night, I Believe

Act Two, Scene One – Father Kaulbach delivers a sermon; Wendla and Melchior finish making love. *The Guilty Ones*

Act Two, Scene One – Moritz vents to Melchior. Frau Bergman brings the boys tea. Moritz and Melchior discuss sexual pleasure from men and women’s perspectives.

Act Two, Scene Two – Frau Bergman reveals that Ina has had a baby. Wendla inquires about where babies come from. She first receives an answer about the stork and then eventually Frau Bergman says that a wife must love a husband with her whole heart to have a child.

Act Two, Scene Three – Hanschen masturbates.

Act Two, Scene Four – Wendla finds Melchior in the hayloft. Melchior and Wendla have sex.

Act Two, Scene Five – Frau Gabor responds to Moritz’s plea for help.

Act Two, Scene Six – Wendla’s morning after.

Act Two, Scene Seven – Moritz monologues about suicide. Ilse enters and they discuss her life with the Phallustics and their childhood. Ilse leaves and Moritz kills himself.

Act Two, Scene Two – Moritz contemplates killing himself, Ilse finds him by a river. They discuss the present as well as the past, then Ilse tries to get Moritz to walk her home, but he refuses and then shoots himself.
Don't Do Sadness, Blue Wind

Act Two, Scene Three – Moritz's funeral.
Left Behind

Act Two, Scene Four - Herr Knochenbruch and Fraulein Knuppeldick discuss the corruption of their school and then interrogate Melchior about his essay to Moritz.
Totally Fucked

Act Two, Scene Five – Hanschen and Ernst discuss their relationship.
The Word of Your Body (Reprise)

Act Two, Scene Six – Wendla receives a letter from Melchior. Doctor von Brausepulver prescribes Wendla pills for her “anemia.” After Frau Bergman and the Doctor talk, Frau Bergman returns to find out who impregnated Wendla. Wendla sings as the scene shifts to Frau Gabor and Herr Gabor discussing whether or not to send Melchior to the reformatory.
Whispering

Act Two, Scene Seven – Melchior receives a letter from Wendla. The reformatory boys enter and begin a circle jerk. They discover Melchior's letter, read it aloud, and reveal that Wendla is pregnant. Melchior steals the letter back and escapes from the reformatory. This scene is cut with Frau Bergman meeting Schimdt to

Act Three, Scene One – The Professors discuss Moritz's suicide and Melchior's corruption. They interrogate Melchior but don't allow him to get a word in.

Act Three, Scene Two – During Moritz's funeral his father denies that Moritz was his son. The Boys discuss how Moritz did it and Ilse reveals to Martha that she has the gun.

Act Three, Scene Three – Frau Gabor and Herr Gabor argue over Melchior's possible future in the reformatory.

Act Three, Scene Four – The reformatory boys participate in a circle jerk. Dr. Procrustes plans to reinforce the reformatory windows.

Act Three, Scene Five – Dr. Lemonade prescribes Wendla pills for her “anemia.” Frau Bergman reveals that Wendla is in fact pregnant. Mrs. Schmidt arrives.

Act Three, Scene Six – Ernst and Hanschen discuss their futures. Frau Bergman meeting Schmidt to discuss Wendla's abortion and then dropping Wendla off for her abortion.

Act Two, Scene Nine – Melchior waits

Discuss Wendla's abortion and then dropping Wendla off for her abortion

Act Two, Scene Eight for Wendla in the graveyard and then discovers her gravestone. Moritz and Wendla's spirits visit Melchior and convince him to go on living.

Those You've Known

Act Two, Scene Ten – The coda.

The Song of Purple Summer

Act Three, Scene Seven – Melchior in the churchyard. He discovers Wendla's grave. Then, Moritz's spirit visits him and brags about how great it is to be dead and tries to convince Melchior to commit suicide. The Masked Man arrives and convinces Melchior to live.⁴

⁴ Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers”.

Spring Awakening Glossary

Act I, Scene 2

Virgil: Roman poet, best known for his national epic, the Aeneid (p.5)

Aeneid: A Latin epic poem, written by Virgil between 29 and 19 BC, that tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans (p.5)

Vi superum saevae memorem lunonis ob iram: By the power of the gods on account of the mindful anger of savage Juno (Ancient Roman goddess, the protector and special counselor of the state. A daughter of Saturn, she is the wife of Jupiter and the mother of Mars, Vulcan, Bellona, and Juventas) (p.5)

Multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem: and he suffered many things also in war, until he could find a city (p.5)

Arma virumque cano, trojae qui primus ab oris: I sing of arms and of the man, fated to be an exile; (p.5)

Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit litora: And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate (p.5)

Laviniaque venit: The Lavinian

Litora...multum enim-: Shores...a lot of... (mispronunciation of multum enim)

Multum olim: A lot of time

Servius: Servius Tullius was the legendary sixth king of Rome, and the second of its Etruscan dynasty. He reigned 575-535 BC. Roman and Greek sources describe his servile origins and later marriage to a daughter of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, Rome's first Etruscan king, who was assassinated in 579 BC

Aulus Gellius: Latin author remembered for his miscellany *Noctes Atticae* ("Attic Nights"), in which many fragments of lost works are preserved. Written in Athens to beguile the winter evenings, the work is an interesting source on the state of knowledge and scholarship of his time.

Claudius Donatus: Roman Latin grammarian known for *Interpretationes Vergilianae*, a commentary to Virgil

Litora, multum ille et terrae iactatus et alto vi superum saevae memorem lunonis ob: To the Lavinian shores, he was tossed much on both the land and in the deep by the power of the gods on account of the mindful anger of savage Juno

Inferretque deos Latio: gods restored

Neurasthenic: An ill-defined medical condition characterized by lassitude, fatigue, headache, and irritability, associated chiefly with emotional disturbance

Repetez, s'il vous plait (French): Please repeat

Herr Sonnenstich: Sonnenstich means "sunstroke"

Headmaster Knochenbruch: Knochenbruch means "bone fracture"

Fraulein Knuppeldick: Knuppeldick means "very thick"

Fraulein Grossenbustenhalter: Grossenbustenhalter means "big bra"

Herr Stiefel: Steifel means "boot" or "stiff" or "unyielding"

Schmidt: Schmidt means "blacksmith"—in this context, referencing that an abortionist is not a skilled or legitimate doctor

Song Sequence

ACT 1

SCENE 1.1 (pg 1-4):

Mama Who Bore Me (#1)

- Wendla

Mama Who Bore Me Reprise (#2)

- Wendla, Martha, Ilse, Thea, Anna

- Melchior, Moritz, Hanschen, Ernst, Georg, Otto

SCENE 1.2 (pg 5-15):

All That's Known (#3)

- Melchior, Moritz, Hanschen, Ernst, Georg, Otto

The Bitch of Living (#4)

-

SCENE 1.3 (pg 16-20):

My Junk (#5)

- Wendla, Melchior, Moritz, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto

SCENE 1.4 (pg 21-27):

Touch Me (#6)

- Wendla, Melchior, Moritz, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Girl #1, Girl #2, Boy #1, Boy #2

SCENE 1.5 (pg 28-31):

The Word of Your Body (#7)

- Wendla, Melchior

SCENE 1.6 (pg 32-33):

N/A

SCENE 1.7 (pg 34-39):

The Dark I Know Well (#8)

- Moritz, Martha, Ilse, Ernst, Georg, Otto, Boy #1, Boy #2, Girl #1, Girl #2

SCENE 1.8 (pg 40-44):

The Word of Your Body Reprise 1 (#8a)

- Otto, Georg

SCENE 1.9 (pg 45-46):

N/A

SCENE 1.10 (47-49):

And Then There Were None (#9)

- Moritz, Hanschen, Ernst, Georg, Otto

SCENE 1.11 (pg 50-56):

The Mirror- Blue Night (#10)

- Melchior, Hanschen, Ernst, Georg, Otto, Boy #1, Boy #2

I Believe (#11)

- Wendla, Melchior, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Girl #1, Girl #2, Boy #1, Boy #2

ACT 2

SCENE 2.1 (pg 57-59):

The Guilty Ones (#12)

- Wendla, Melchior, Moritz, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Girl #1, Girl #2, Boy #1, Boy #2

SCENE 2.2 (pg 60-64):

Don't Do Sadness (#13)

- Moritz

Blue Wind (#13a)

- Ilse

Don't Do Sadness/ Blue Wind (#13b)

- Moritz, Ilse

SCENE 2.3 (pg 65-66):

Left Behind (#14)

- Wendla, Melchior, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Girl #1, Girl #2, Boy #1, Boy #2

SCENE 2.4 (pg 67-70):

Totally Fucked (#15)

- Wendla, Melchior, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Girl #1, Girl #2, Boy #1, Boy #2

SCENE 2.5 (pg 71-73):

The Word of Your Body Reprise 2 (#16)

- Wendla, Melchior, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Girl #1, Girl #2, Boy #1, Boy #2

SCENE 2.6 (pg 74-79):

Melchior Letter Underscore (#16a)

- N/A

Whispering (#17)

- Wendla, Melchior

SCENE 2.7 (pg 80-84):

Wendla Letter Underscore (#17a)

- N/A

Abortionist Underscore (#17b)

- N/A

Melchior's Escape (#18)

- N/A

SCENE 2.8 (pg 85):

Almost Midnight (#18a)

- N/A

SCENE 2.9 (pg 86-89):

Those You've Known (#19)

- Wendla, Melchior, Moritz

SCENE 2.10 (pg 90-91):

The Song of Purple Summer (#20)

- Wendla, Melchior, Moritz, Martha, Ilse, Hanschen, Ernst, Thea, Georg, Anna, Otto, Adult Man, Adult Woman, Girl #1, Girl #2⁵



⁵ Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers”.

Biography – Duncan Sheik

Duncan Sheik - Composer and Lyricist of Spring Awakening In addition to writing the music for Spring Awakening, which received a critically acclaimed Lincoln Center American Songbook Concert staging last season, Grammy award nominated singer-songwriter Duncan Sheik collaborated with Playwright Steven Sater on The Nightingale, a musical based on the Hans Christian Andersen classic which premiered during the 26th annual O'Neill Music Theater Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Sheik has composed original music for the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park production of Twelfth Night and for The Golden Rooms of Nero, which recently debuted at Cornell University and opened at the Magic Theater in San Francisco earlier this year. His self-titled debut album, which was an enormous popular and critical success, introduced the hit singles "Barely Breathing" and "She Runs Away," and spent 30 weeks on the Billboard 200. Other albums include "Humming," "Daylight," "Phantom Moon" with lyrics by Steven Sater and his latest, "White Limousine", which was released in January of 2006. Film Soundtracks: Great Expectations, The Saint, Teaching Mrs. Tingle, Three to Tango, What a Girl Wants, Transamerica and A Body Goes Down. Sheik recently composed and produced the original score for the feature film A Home at the End of the World, directed by Michael Mayer and starring Colin Farrell. ⁶

Biography – Steven Sater

Steven Sater - Author and Lyricist of Spring Awakening Steven Sater won the 2007 Tony Awards for Best Book and Best Score for his work on Spring Awakening, along with the Drama Desk and Outer Circle Award for Best Lyrics. His plays include the long-running Carbondale Dreams, Perfect for You, Doll (Rosenthal Prize, Cincinnati Playhouse), Umbrage (Steppenwolf New Play Prize), A Footnote to the Iliad (New York Stage and Film), Asylum (Naked Angels), Murder at the Gates (commissioned

⁶ Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers".

by *Eye of the Storm*), and a reconceived version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with music by Laurie Anderson, which played London's Lyric Hammersmith and toured internationally. In addition to *Spring Awakening*, Sater has collaborated with Duncan Sheik on the NY premiere of *Umbrage (HERE)*, *Nero (The Magic Theatre)*, *The Nightingale (O'Neill Musical Theatre Conference, La Jolla Playhouse)* the critically acclaimed album *Phantom Moon (Nonesuch)*, and the songs for Michael Mayer's feature film *A Home at the End of the World*.⁷



Production History

Spring Awakening started in flux, with a seven-year period of workshops, concerts, and numerous rewrites. Among the notable productions in this period include workshops at the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego and the Roundabout Theatre Company in New York, as well as a concert at Lincoln Center. The musical premiered Off-Broadway at the Atlantic Theatre Company with a run from May 19, to August 5, 2006. Its success prompted an opening on Broadway at the Eugene O'Neill

⁷ Stage Notes: A Field Guide for Teachers”.

Theatre on December 10, 2006, directed by Michael Mayer, choreographed by Bill T. Jones, and running until January 18, 2009, with 859 performances. On August 15, 2008, the first national tour began in San Diego; it ended on May 23, 2010, but another non-union tour ran soon after from October 14, 2010, to May 15, 2011. The original London production opened January 23, 2009, at the Lyric Hammersmith before transferring to the Novello Theatre and closing on May 30, 2009. However, the London production was not the European premiere of *Spring Awakening*. That title goes to a production at the Varmlandsoperan in Karlstad, Sweden, on August 30, 2008, utilizing completely Swedish text. Throughout 2009 and 2010, the musical premiered in a multitude of countries and languages, including Finland, Hungary, Japan, Argentina and Australia. 2011 saw the premieres of both an Australian tour and a UK tour. More recently, *Spring Awakening* premiered in 2013 in New Zealand and Portugal, and faced a production by the University of Birmingham that completely reinterpreted the script.⁸

⁸Music Theatre International. <https://www.mtishows.com/show-history/1153>

Review:

THEATER REVIEW

In 'Spring Awakening,' a Rock 'n' Roll Heartbeat for 19th-Century German Schoolboys

SPRING AWAKENING

NYT Critic's Pick

Off Broadway, Musical

Closing Date: August 6, 2006

Atlantic Theater Company at the Linda Gross Theater, 336 W. 20th St.

By **CHARLES ISHERWOOD** JUNE 16, 2006

“As species go, the rock star is relatively young. Carbon dating has fixed its emergence from the primordial ooze of postwar pop at sometime in the 1950's, somewhere in the continental United States. So it is disorienting to find the 19th-century German schoolboys in the new musical "Spring Awakening" yanking microphones from inside their little woolen jackets, fixing us with baleful gazes and screaming amplified angst into our ears.

It is also exhilarating. When was the last time you felt a frisson of surprise and excitement at something that happened in a new musical? For that matter, when was the last time something new happened in a new musical?

A fresh breeze of true inspiration blows steadily through this ambitious if imperfect show, which features alluringly melancholy music by the pop singer-songwriter Duncan Sheik and book and lyrics by Steven Sater. "Spring Awakening," which opened last night at the Atlantic Theater Company, is an adaptation of the once-scandalous 1891 play by Frank Wedekind, the German playwright who is probably best known as the author of the source material for the Alban Berg opera "Lulu." But

Mr. Sheik and Mr. Sater have not transposed Wedekind's fragmented meditation on the pleasures and dangers of hormonal efflorescence to a suburban American junior high school, circa yesterday, as you might expect. Nor do they traffic in pastiche, the lingua franca of contemporary musicals.

Instead, they invest Wedekind's young boys with the anachronistic souls of would-be rock 'n' roll stars, dreamers and screamers strutting on stages in their minds, even as they insist we see them in their original historical context. Now that a proper language has been created to channel the slashing torments of teendom, they imply, it would be folly to employ any other musical idiom. After all, you wouldn't try to revisit "Oklahoma!" by turning it into a Sex Pistols jukebox musical, would you?

The conceit is bold, funny and inviting, and it is matched by a vibrant production from the director, Michael Mayer, that is all of those things, too. We are swept into the show instantly in an early scene in which a roomful of fidgeting schoolboys erupts in irritation at their stern Latin teacher. They continue to recite passages robotically from that famously dead language, but they do it to the lively sounds of a new one, expressing their inward rebellion by stomping around as drumbeats clatter and a guitar strums.”⁹

⁹ Isherwood, Charles. “In 'Spring Awakening,' a Rock 'n' Roll Heartbeat for 19th-Century German Schoolboys.” *The New York Times*,

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Contemporary Analysis of Sex Education and Mental Health Awareness in the United States

This section will provide you with an overview of how sex education has evolved starting in the 1960s and what schools are currently doing in regards to promoting mental health and providing sex education.

History of Sex Education in the US- Timeline

1964- Dr. Mary Calderone, Medical director for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, found the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States

1975- World Health Organization (WHO) established the definition of sexual health: Sexual Health is the integration of the somatic, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects of sexual being, in ways that are positively enriching and that enhance personality, communication, and love

1980s- Debate began in the United States between a more comprehensive approach to sex education and abstinence only programs

1981- Congress passed the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA), also known as the “chastity law”, where federal funds for this program were developed by churches and religious conservatives nationwide

1990- SIECUS convened the National Guidelines Task Force, a panel of experts that constructed a framework within which local communities could design effective curricula and/or evaluate existing programs

1993- U.S. Supreme Court held that federally funded programs must delete direct references to religion

1996- Congress attached a provision to welfare legislation that established a federal program to exclusively fund abstinence-only programs

December 2004- Representative Henry Waxman released a report on 13 abstinence-only programs-The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence Only Education Programs. The report found that abstinence only until marriage programs were often inaccurate and sometimes dishonest

September 2005- SIECUS and Advocates for Youth filed a challenge to the federal government funding of inaccurate and ineffective abstinence-only-until-marriage and called upon the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) and HHS to immediately cease sponsorship of programs that fail to provide medically accurate, complete sexual health information

2006- The Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) developed a position paper that concluded that “Abstinence only, as a basis for health policy and programs should be abandoned.”

October 2006- The Government Accounting Office (GAO) released a report supporting Rep. Waxman that most of the abstinence only programs funded by the US Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) were not reviewed for scientific accuracy

2007- Christopher Trenholm published his study for Mathematica Policy Research, Inc, which found that four abstinence programs were ineffective in helping young people to change their behavior

August 4, 2007- British Medical Journal published a UNAIDS/WHO evaluation of 13 abstinence-only programs for HIV prevention in “high-income countries”

November 2007- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned pregnancy published Emerging Answers, Douglas Kirby’s summary of the findings of 115 studies conducted during the previous six years to measure the impact of sexuality education programs.

2008- Douglas Kirby reviewed 56 studies to compare the impact of abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education curricula. These and other studies showed that the increased dominance of abstinence only programs from 1992 to 2005 left an increasing proportion of teenagers without formal instruction about birth control

2008- 21 states required medical or scientific accuracy in the provision of sexuality or HIV/AIDS education- although many did not define exactly what that meant

2009- The Obama Administration transferred funds from the Community-based Abstinence Education Program, and budgeted \$190 million in new funding for two new sex education initiatives: the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) and the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP).

January 2012- A consortium of organizations- the Future of Sex Education Initiative (FoSE)- published its National Sexuality Education Standards- Core Content and Skills, K-12

2015- A second cohort of 81 grantees were funded through TPPP. A Planned Parenthood developed curriculum was added to the list of evidence-based programs.

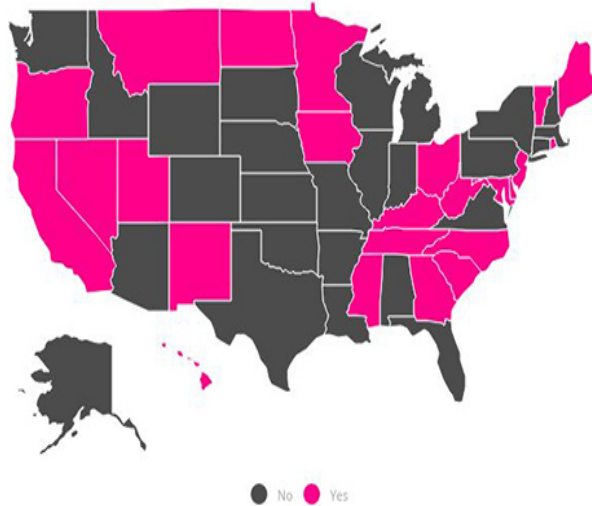
2015- The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published a study that synthesized over thirty years of research on parent-child communication around sexual health and found that communication around sexual health with parents plays a protective role in safer sex practices among adolescents

2015- Planned Parenthood affiliate education departments provided sex education to over 750,00 participants

Just 24 States Mandate Sex Education for K-12 Students, and Only 9 Require Any Discussion Of Consent. See How Your State Stacks Up

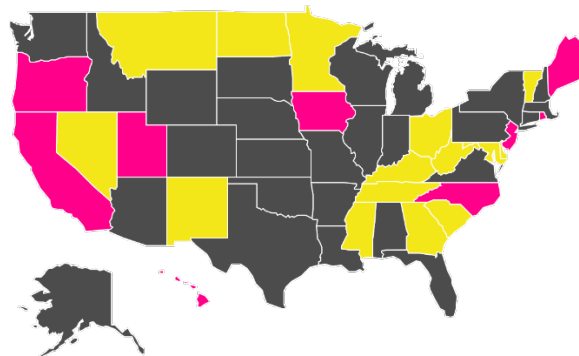
Charts that depict the current state of Sex Education

Is sex education mandated?



Source: [Guttmacher Institute](#)

Is sex education required to be medically accurate?



Black= Sex education is not mandated

Pink= Mandated, medically accurate

Yellow= mandated but not required to be medically accurate

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/the-conversation/story/2019-05-09/sd-california-sex-ed>

[California's Health Education Initiatives](#)

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2019/10/19/mental-health-day-students-more-states-embracing/4036423002/>

<https://www.educationdive.com/news/more-states-requiring-mental-health-education/561250/>

Important Terms/Topics that are addressed in Spring Awakening

This section will cover definitions of important topics and terms that are addressed in this production, in addition to resources, tips on how to handle addressing these topics, and important rules to consider when acting out intimate scenes.

Definitions

Mental Health: Includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, It affects how we think, feel, and act. Some disturbances in our emotional health include depression, anxiety, self-destructive or suicidal thoughts and some physical symptoms such as sleep or appetite disturbance, chest pain, stomach upset

- Moritz Steifel deals with stress and pressure from his parents to succeed in school. However, when he expresses to his father that he may not move up to the next grade, his father beats him and explicitly displays disgust towards him for failing at his school (Act 1, Scene 9). This leads him to his suicide in Act 1, Scene 10.

Abuse: There are four types of abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. In *Spring Awakening*, the types of abuse being addressed are child abuse in a physical and sexual manner.

- Herr Sonnenstich striking Melchior for standing up for Moritz's mistake in class (physical abuse- violence as a punishment in the classroom) (Act 1, Scene 2)
- Martha telling Thea, Wendla, Anna about her father beating her up at home as discipline (Act 1 Scene 7)
- Martha and Ilse then transition into "The Dark I Know Well," where they reveal their fathers sexually abuse them at night before they go to sleep. (Act 1 Scene 7)
- Melchior strikes Wendla with a branch after she asks to be beaten so she can experience pain due to her curiosity (Act 1 Scene 8)

Abortion: Defined as the termination of pregnancy by various methods including medical surgery, before the fetus is able to sustain independent life. Some state

legislatures have passed limitations such as requiring teenage girls to obtain their parents' consent in order to get an abortion.

- Frau Bergman, Wendla's mother, takes Wendla to an abortionist doctor to get an abortion to terminate her child (Act 2, Scene 7)

Important Rules for Working on Intimate Scenes

When working with intimate scenes on stage, please consider these rules and guidelines in order to foster a safe, comfortable environment:

1. **Context:** Figure out the context of the intimate scene and set up boundaries (what is allowed and what isn't allowed)
2. **Communication:** Always communicate any discomfort you have
3. **Consent:** All performers must consent to the proposed action. Consent is directly linked to context: "just because you consented to kissing in this scene, doesn't mean that you consent to kiss in another scene"
4. **Choreography:** Intimacy choreographer collaborates with the performers to create safe and repeatable choreography. Stage manager is responsible for ensuring that the choreography is performed as intended in rehearsal and performance
5. **Closure:** Intimacy choreographer establishes a closing moment to signal the end of the intimate moment to clearly distinguish between the personal and the professional.

Here are more sources for reference:

<https://www.theatreartlife.com/one-and-done/5-cs-intimacy-conversation-siobhan-richardson/>

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2018/10/23/intimate-exchanges/>

SFSU Campus Resources

24 Hour Emergency Services for Suicide Prevention

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- San Francisco Crisis Hotline: 415-781-0500
- Alameda 24 Hour Crisis Line: 1-800-491-9099
- Contra Costa 24 Hour Crisis Line: 1-800-833-2900 (works only if calling from a Contra Costa County phone number)
- San Mateo Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Center: 1-650-579-0350
- Hopeline: 1-800-442-HOPE (4673)
- Lifeline Spanish Speaking Suicide Hotline: 1-888-628-9454

<https://health.sfsu.edu/birth-control-and-sexual-health>

SF State & Local Community Resource

- [The SAFE Place](#)

SF State- SSB 205

(415) 338-2208

Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/

- [Bay Area Women Against Rape \(BAYWAR\)](#)
- [Community United Against Violence \(CUAV\)](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program \(SF State Staff Only\)](#)
- [SFSU Pregnant and Parenting Student Rights](#)
- [San Francisco Sexual Assault Response Team \(Booklet\)](#)
- [San Francisco Women Against Rape \(SFWAR\)](#)
- [Trauma Recovery Center / Rape Treatment Center \(TRC/RTC\)](#)
- [Victim Services Division \(SF DA's Office\)](#)
- [Women Organized to Make Abuse Nonexistent, Inc. \(W.O.M.A.N. Inc.\)](#)

Other Resources

- [A Call To Men](#)
- [INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence](#)
- [California Coalition Against Sexual Assault \(CALCASA\)](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Intimate Partner Violence](#)
- [Male Survivor](#)
- [Men Can Stop Rape](#)
- [My Strength](#)
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)
- [Office for Victims of Crime - Domestic and Family Violence](#)
- [Office of Justice Program - National Institute of Justice: Intimate Partner Violence](#)
- [Rape Abuse & Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#)
- [US Department of Justice - Office of Violence against Women](#)
- [US Department of Justice - Defending Childhood](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education, regional office](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education, national office](#)

<https://titleix.sfsu.edu/contact>

<https://titleix.sfsu.edu/resources>

