

PARENT GUIDE

SPRING AWAKENING AT FORT SALEM THEATER



ABOUT THE SHOW

Based on Frank Wedekind's groundbreaking play, Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik's brilliant rock score and searingly emotional book take the story of sexual awakening, youth revolt, and self-discovery into a new century. It's 1891, and grown-ups hold all the cards. Headstrong Melchior and naive Wendla stumble into each others' arms, passionate and curious, while anxious Moritz struggles to live up to the stringent expectations of society. With only each other for guidance, this group of young men and women travel the fraught and rocky path of adolescence, discovering their bodies, their minds, and themselves along the way.

SPOILER WARNING!

This guide is intended to offer a no-secrets approach to Spring Awakening, including in-depth details that will spoil the plot. **Proceed with caution!**

ADULT THEMES

Spring Awakening puts controversial issues front and center: teen sexuality, domestic and sexual violence, abortion, and suicide.

ADULT LANGUAGE

- Song titles include "The Bitch of Living," "Totally Fucked," and "Touch Me."
- Proper terms are used to describe body parts, including vulva, penis, breast, vagina, and genitalia.
- Vulgar lyrics and dialogue include the words: ass, bitch, fuck, shit, Christ (used as a curse once), slut

OTHER

The Broadway production of "Spring Awakening" suggested the show for viewers over 15.



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BEHIND THE SCENES

- The actors portraying teens in FST's Spring Awakening are ages 19-31.
- Private "Intimacy Rehearsals" were held for all sensitive moments in the show, with only the director, choreographer, and stage manager present (representing both male and female supervision).
- Did you know? The original Broadway cast of Spring Awakening included Glee's Lea Michele, Frozen's Jonathan Groff, and Pitch Perfect's Skylar Astin!

DETAILED SCENE BREAKDOWNS



Below, director Brian Clemente shares his approach to the specifics of each scene that may be considered challenging for some audience members.

- Moritz is haunted by dreams of a sexual nature. He confides in his friend Melchior, who shares that all of the other boys in the class have them as well. They sing a song entitled "The Bitch of Living" which is about frustration – sexual and otherwise. These feelings are treated as completely normal and Melchior promises Moritz he will make a pamphlet detailing things for him. There is some language in the song, and some talk of sexual situations, but nothing physically depicted.



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DETAILED SCENE BREAKDOWN (CONTINUED)

- One of the boys, Hanschen, is seen at home where it is implied he is masturbating. This is done with his hand under a nightshirt where he is simply moving his hand up and down under it. He will be wearing undergarments.
- There is a song entitled "Touch Me" where all of the children sing about how it might feel to share love with someone. There is no interaction between any of the teenagers, and nothing is sexually explicit in the movement. The vision for this song was as if the children were a sheath of wheat in a field, and at the mercy of the wind - being blown back and forth.
- Two of the girls, Martha and Ilse, reveal in scene and song that they have been beaten and sexually abused at home. They sing of "The Dark I Know Well" which alludes to this family secret. None of the abuse is ever shown, and the focus here is on the two girls finding comfort in each other and their friends during this difficult time.
- Wendla, one of our main characters, is very young and lives a very sheltered life and has no idea how to comfort Martha. In her effort to understand what she is going through, asks Melchior to hit her with a stick. She explains that she has never felt "anything" before. He refuses at first but then concedes. He strikes her several times, and goes too far, scaring both of them. He runs off, crying. Later they discuss that they were both at fault for what happened. The first, very weak hit, is shown in view of the audience. The harder hits are shown with Melchior hitting the back of Wendla, with her facing the audience, so we do not physically see him striking her. He also is not striking her, but rather, the sound you will hear is a sound effect. They take no pleasure in this, and later both express regret about it.
- Melchior and Wendla reconcile in a hayloft and, during this time, confess some feelings for each other. They kiss and eventually have sex. Wendla is hesitant at first, but Melchior insists that just because it feels good doesn't mean it is wrong. There will be no nudity, but the audience will know what is happening. There is touching and, during the song, Melchior lies between Wendla's legs. This is nothing graphic happening here.

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DETAILED SCENE BREAKDOWN (CONTINUED)

- Moritz has a very dysfunctional home life and he is failing his classes. He is also going through some mental health problems and has no help in dealing with these feelings. He is purposely failed out of school by the teachers so that their school remains in good public standing. His father slaps him for failing and as a result of this, and other things, he commits suicide. We do see Moritz putting a gun to his head, but we do not see him follow through. We just know that he has and this is treated as a tragic event, and in the following scene, all the characters mourn him.
- Wendla becomes pregnant as a result of her night with Melchior. Because her mother refused to tell her where babies come from, she did not understand the consequences of her actions. We only hear about her pregnancy from a doctor.
- Melchior is sent to a reformatory school where he encounters other boys that bully him. At one instance, they begin to masturbate together in a circle as a "contest" where they mock Melchior and his situation. This scene is brief and will be played with their backs to the audience, with the actors, once again, miming the action with their hands.
- Wendla's mother takes her to a doctor to perform an illegal abortion. We only see Wendla arriving there and the doctor welcoming her in. We also see Wendla's fear regarding going to the doctor in the first place, as her mother has not told her about it. We do not see anything regarding the procedure itself. We later find out Wendla dies as a result of the botched abortion. Again, however, we do not see any of this, only find out through others.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To view the Broadway "Parent's Guide" videos, click the images below to view Part One and Part Two:



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For additional information, please contact Kyle@FortSalem.com!

