The God of Carnage

As you may know, the “theme” in this year’s Themester is “Good Behavior, Bad Behavior: Molecules to Morality.” While our next production, the Tony Award-winning musical Spring Awakening, is not an official Themester-related production, its story of adolescents and sexual yearning in a suppressive, regimented society will certainly add to the conversation about good and bad behavior. We’ve a number of interesting essays about the musical, its creators, its themes, and its source. Our final production is Yasmina Reza’s The God of Carnage, winner of the Tony Award for Best Play and London’s Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. It might also win an award for Best Depiction of Bad Behavior, and we are happy to introduce it to you in this issue. We’re also previewing the upcoming Theatre Circle Cabaret, the Themester dialogue between director Lee Caldwell and Professor Brian D’Onofrio, and giving you a first glance At First Sight. Enjoy!
Ignorance without Bliss

The male students in Spring Awakening attend a gymnasium, a secondary school that prepares students for higher education at a university. The gymnasium in Spring Awakening is a strict one, the subjects being taught from a conservative viewpoint guided by the German government of Kaiser Wilhelm. Following World War I, the pendulum would swing the other direction in the ultra-liberal Weimar Republic (1919-33) and revert back to the even more radical conservative Nazi government. The model of the gymnasium school, taken to extremes, became the means of instruction for the Hitler Youth.

The military spirit that was present in the German gymnasium of the late 19th century generally manifested itself in the administration of harsh disciplinary rules and in the subdued and obedient nature of the students. Most teachers had military training and kept strict discipline in their classes. If a teacher had passed his qualification examination and had not yet been appointed to a school, he often earned a salary serving in the army reserves. In addition to having militaristic instructors, the students experienced a long and strenuous school week—from Monday through Saturday, 8 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon. Students had little free time, and their behavior, even outside of school, was dictated by many rules, such as: They were disallowed from going to public houses or theatres unless accompanied by parents; they were not to use public libraries (so they would not be polluted by sensational literature or social, political, or religious heresies); and they were forbidden from producing student publications and obliged to attend church.

“To depict poetically the phenomenon of puberty so as to facilitate more humane and rational judgments among parents and educators.” So Frank Wedekind wrote of his reasons for writing the 1891 play Spring Awakening: A Children’s Tragedy. Spring Awakening has always provoked controversy with its themes of adolescent angst and sexuality, homosexuality, masturbation, teen pregnancy, abortion, incest, pedophilia, psychological and physical abuse, and suicide. It was viewed as a scathing criticism of a society so repressed that it was unable to discuss basic information about sex and reproduction. The play was not fully produced until 1906, in Berlin, and then to extreme negative reaction. Spring Awakening was subsequently banned and censored many times throughout Europe, England, and the United States. It has also, over time, become the quintessential example of the German play: as much as Oklahoma exemplifies a particular moment and genre in American musical theatre history, so does Spring Awakening create a landmark in the development of modern drama and theatre history by its melding of Naturalism, Realism and Expressionism.

The cold light that Wedekind shines on the religious hypocrisy of German society in 1891 has been and continues to be both controversial and universal. And the political/cultural movements experienced in Germany—from Wedekind’s ultra-conservative society to the wide-open culture of the Weimar Republic and back to the conservative moral strictures used by the Nazis to come to power—find a parallel in recent U.S. cultural and political history.

Nearly a century after the publication of Spring Awakening, events in the United States such as the sexual revolution, the gay movement, the feminist movement of the 1960s, and the 1973 Roe v. Wade court case, which legalized abortion—these events set the stage for a backlash of political conservatism cloaked in American religious fervor. The political influence of the religious right in the U.S. of the 1980s led to the resurgence of an active anti-abortion movement, a virulent anti-gay movement (partially in response to the first wave of the AIDS epidemic), and the push for “abstinence only” sex education programs in private and public schools. The “Family Values” crusades led by Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority created a deep, clearly defined chasm between liberal and conservative political factions, a chasm that continues to divide and polarize our red state/blue state nation. The more things change, the more (some things) stay the same.

“My God, [Mama,] why didn’t you tell me everything?” Wendla, Spring Awakening, 1891.

The argument against comprehensive sex education has always been based on the idea that knowledge will lead to experimentation and a compulsion to do what has been learned in the classroom. Based on this point of view, the only option that should be taught in schools is total abstinence before marriage. Beyond its key tenet, the abstinence-only movement had little to offer the system during the AIDS epidemic.

Credits and Thanks for Issue 1

Because of space issues, we were unable to credit many of the articles and images in the last issue of Theatre Circle Insights / Stages. Articles were contributed by Miriam Poole, Tom Shafer, Trish Hausmann, Drew Bratton, Chris Drummond, and Gavin Cameron-Webb. Photographs and Renderings were contributed by John Edward Kinzer, Tom Shafer, Michael Bourne, Ric Craddock, Fred M. Duer, Julia Mancini, Katie Cowan Sickmeier, Ray Fellman, Lara Berich, and Michael Riha. Special thanks is due to Undergraduate Academic Advisor Kim Hinton for help in captioning our group photo of new alumni. Miriam Poole provided yeoman service in creating the first draft of the past issue’s “Class Notes” section; she learned more about our alumni than almost any person alive, and she made that section of the issue possible with her good work.

Errata for Issue 1

1.) As several people kindly pointed out, the department has begun its 5th decade (not its 50th) as an academic unit devoted solely to theatre and drama. I apologize for the error. 2.) The date for the Theatre Circle Cabaret Evening is Friday, January 25. See the preview article in this issue.

Credits for this issue

Articles are by Spring Awakening production dramaturg Scott Jones, assistant dramaturg and co-editor Miriam Poole, and dramaturg and editor Tom Shafer. Designs are by Dan Tracy, Barbara Harvey Abbott, Christopher Rhoton, and Eriko Taiko.
Because of the risks of AIDS, many sex educators initiated the distribution of condoms in schools or began to provide instruction of their use. This urgent response to a health crisis met with strong disapproval from the abstinence-only group. It is ironic that this fervent resistance to comprehensive sex education occurred when comprehensive knowledge about sex was most needed.

“Abstinence-only programs have not demonstrated successful outcomes with regard to delayed initiation of sexual activity or use of safer sex practices... Programs that encourage abstinence... but offer a discussion of HIV prevention and contraception as the best approach for [sexually active] adolescents, ...delay the initiation of sexual activity and increase the proportion of adolescents who reported using birth control.” American Academy of Pediatrics, 2010.

The American Medical Association “urges schools to implement comprehensive... sexuality education programs that... include both factual information and skill-building related to reproductive biology, sexual abstinence, sexual responsibility, contraceptives including condoms, alternatives in birth control, and other issues aimed at prevention of pregnancy and sexual transmission of diseases... [and] opposes the sole use of abstinence-only education.” 2008.

At the beginning of Spring Awakening young Wendla pleads for clear information from her mother about basic human biology and is met with embarrassed silence and misguidance. Wendla’s education has clearly failed her as well, and she pays the price for this lack of knowledge. When he adapted the script of Spring Awakening into the book of the 2006 musical of the same name, lyricist Steven Sater kept much of Wedekind’s play intact, often word for word. Taking the hundred-year-old play into the world of the rock opera further contextualizes its familiar themes. The rock and rock-ballad music that is Spring Awakening’s score serves to heighten and comment on the action. The musical numbers also let us hear the characters’ inner-monologues as they experience their adolescence amid the oppressive and restrictive school atmosphere.

“Characters would not serenade one another in the middle of a scene. Rather, each student would give voice to his or her inner landscape.” Steven Sater, Spring Awakening librettist and lyricist.

The school administrators manipulate events with Machiavellian expertise to preserve the status quo and the gymnasium’s reputation; in doing so, they bring about painful consequences. The tragic themes of the musical Spring Awakening are, sadly, still relevant, which may explain its enormous popularity among younger audiences. One need only think of the sadness, isolation, and bullying that drive teens to suicide, even in spite of today’s constantly in-touch world of Facebook and social media, to understand the connection the musical makes to the lives of adolescents.

Ignorance or willful ignorance—both imply an absence or failure of education. The conflict found between the service to dogma, to politics, and to the good of the children is universal, whether it is 1891, 1981, or 2012.

“If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down.” Congressman Todd Akin, Missouri State Representative, 2012.

—Scott Jones, with Miriam Poole & Tom Shafer
Resources
Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health and Committee on Adolescence. Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents.
Wedekind, Frank. Spring Awakening, 1891.
In the 1890s James E. Russell, dean of the Teachers College and Barnard Professor of Education at Columbia University, was commissioned by the Bureau of Education of the United States to study German schools. His report, based on a two-year residency, was published in book form in 1898. Below, Miriam Poole summarizes salient observations about German secondary education, highlighting elements that give a context to the society and culture of Spring Awakening.

Each school day (Monday-Saturday) began at seven or eight in the morning and went till eleven or noon, then resumed in the afternoon, going till five. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, afternoons were free. Each state ran their secondary schools, typically called a gymnasium or real-school, differently, so in some states school went from September to July and others went all year round with a four-week break in the hottest part of the summer. There were about 40 minutes of breaks a day, but most breaks were from five to fifteen minutes in between classes. There was very little time for play. Gymnastics was really the only physical activity the boys engaged in; field sports were not popular. There was no time to study during the school day and it was a major concern of many parents and teachers that the students would be overtaxed by homework assignments. Not only were poor health, near-sightedness, headaches, and anemia issues of concern, but so was insanity and depression. Suicide was also on the rise. “In Prussia the number of suicides of males between the ages of ten and twenty years increased from one hundred and sixty-five in 1869 to two hundred and sixty in 1881” (159). The Prussian government worked to limit the hours of home work time, and the Prussian Lehrplan (the Prussian Teaching Manual) advised that homework should consist “principally in rearranging and rewriting notes taken in class, memorizing material indispensable for class work, and reviewing and fixing in the mind what has already been learned in class” (160-1). But some teachers continued to give additional assignments, and as long as parents did not complain, they went unnoticed.

School attendance was compulsory until age 14, which would have been about the fifth year at a secondary school. However, secondary school tuition was never free, even though most elementary school tuition was, so it was a financial burden for many families to have to send their children to these secondary schools. Some scholarships were available, as well, but because parents had to pay, they were very much invested in their child’s success, and if they could afford to pay for the entire nine year sequence, they especially expected results. Final examinations were of utmost importance, and children were expected to do whatever it took to pass. There were also exams each year in various subjects which factored in whether a student could be promoted to the next level or not. The quality of their daily work was a factor, too, but in general whether a student was promoted or not was based on the teacher’s judgment, not concrete markings.

Gymnasiums had classically based curricula and included the following subjects: Latin, Greek, German, French, Religion, Mathematics, Physics, Philosophy, History and Geography, Natural History, Drawing, Writing, Singing, and Hebrew. However, in the mid-1800s the industrialization of Germany brought about a desire for subjects that were more practical, and so “real-schools” were created to serve this purpose. Latin might have been taught as a subject, but the modern languages, natural science, and mathematics took emphasis. The Emperor of Prussia spoke about these changing values at the School Conference of December 1890, saying: “It is our duty to educate men to become young Germans, and not young Greeks or Romans. We must relinquish the basis which has been the rule for centuries, the old monastic education of the Middle Ages, when Latin and a little Greek were the most important. These are no longer our standard; we must make German the basis, and German composition must be the centre around which everything else revolves” (105-106).

Lastly, it may be important to note that there were no coeducational schools in Germany for students over 14 years of age. Secondary schools for girls did exist, but the schools relied on private or local funding and not the state government; hence, there was no uniformity of curricula among these schools for young women. An association of female teachers was established in 1890 to advance their professional standing and to get the right to teach at the high school for girls. But these female teachers had not gone to university like the male teachers, and they were not as prepared to pass the state examinations and be allowed to teach at a secondary school.

Steven Sater adapted Frank Wedekind’s play into the book of the musical Spring Awakening. He also wrote the lyrics for the songs. He was awarded the 2007 Tony Awards for Best Book of a Musical and Best Original Score for Spring Awakening, along with the Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Lyrics. With alt-rocker Duncan Sheik, he received the 2007 Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album for Spring Awakening. In addition, the two received The Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award, the Outer Critics Circle, the Drama Desk, the Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics’ Circle, and Drama League Awards for Best Musical.

Steven Sater was born in Evansville, Indiana, and attended Washington University in St. Louis and, for graduate school in English Literature, Princeton. While working in New York City as a literary agent, he continued writing plays. And he became a Buddhist. At Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist organization, he met his future wife and Duncan Sheik, his future writing partner on Spring Awakening. Steven is the author of numerous plays, including the long-running Carbondale Dreams, Perfect for You, Doll (the Rosenthal Prize, Cincinnati Playhouse; Umbrage (Steppenwolf New Play Prize); A Footnote to the Iliad New York Stage and Film, The Miniature Theatre of Chester); Asylum (Naked Angels); Murder at the Gates (commissioned by Eye of the Storm); In Search of Lost Wings (Sanford Meisner Theater) and a reconceived version of Shakespeare’s Tempest, with music by Laurie Anderson, which played London’s Lyric Hammersmith and toured throughout Great Britain. In addition to Spring Awakening, Sater has collaborated with Sheik on the New York premiere of Umbrage (HERE), Nero (The Magic Theatre, workshopped at the New York Shakespeare Festival and New York Stage & Film), and The Nightingale (workshopped at the O’Neill Musical Theatre Conference, La Jolla Playhouse, A.C.T., and New York Theater Workshop).

Duncan Sheik composed the music for Spring Awakening. Music) was born 1969 and is a composer and singer-songwriter. He studied at Phillips Academy, Andover, and at Brown University. Duncan Sheik, his 1996 self-titled debut album was certified Gold and included his Grammy-nominated single “Barely Breathing.” Other recorded works of original tunes include Whisper House (Sony/ Victor 2009), White Limousine (Rounder 2006), Daylight (Atlantic Records 2002), Phantom Moon (Nonesuch 20001), Humming (Atlantic Records 1998). In 2011, Duncan released Covers 80’s, in which he covered many synth-pop songs from the 1980s. In addition to writing the music for Spring Awakening (1007 Tony Awards for “Best Orchestrations” and “Best Original Score,” 2008 Grammy Award for “Best Musical Show Album”), Sheik’s other theatrical credits include Nero (Another Golden Rome) (The Magic Theater) and Whisper House (Old Globe Theater).

For film, Sheik composed the original scores for Harvest (2010), Little Spirit: Christmas in New York (2008), The Cake Eaters (2007), Through the Fire (2009), and
Frank Wedekind

When the 1848 revolution in his homeland failed, German physician and liberal activist Friedrich Wedekind fled to California, setting up a practice in San Francisco. It was there that he later met and married the German-born Emilie Kammerer, a singer who was twenty-four years his junior. They conceived a child in California shortly before returning to Europe, and on July 24, 1864, Benjamin Franklin Wedekind was born in Hanover, Germany. In 1872, Wedekind’s family to Switzerland, where they lived in a castle near Aargau. So: Frank Wedekind grew up in a Swiss castle.

From early on in his childhood, Wedekind demonstrated creative talent, composing songs and playing guitar, writing poems, and performing scenes that he had written. He was also a prolific letter-writer and in these he began to develop the themes which he later put into his plays—namely love, sex, family, the education of children, literature, death, and religion. Throughout his life, he was greatly interested in social conditions rather than politics as his father was.

In 1884, Wedekind enrolled at Lausanne University in Switzerland where he studied German philology and French literature. After a few months there, his father forced him to quit and attend law school in Munich. Wedekind was not fond of this course of study, and he attended concerts, theatre, opera, and the circus nearly every night to make his life in Munich more bearable.

When Wedekind told his father in 1886 that he had decided to become a writer, the two had a severe argument in which Wedekind struck his father. It took nearly a year before Wedekind finally sought reconciliation with his father; he had wanted to wait until he was certain of his writing career and had written a few articles for Neue Züricher Zeitung, as well as his first play. Just the next year, 1888, Friedrich Wedekind died and his son dropped out of law school.

After leaving school, Wedekind traveled Europe, visiting its major cities on his inheritance. He traveled to Berlin, London, to Munich, then to Paris, and then to Berlin again, he wrote Spring Awakening: A Children’s Tragedy, finishing it on Easter Day 1891. It was published, and although Wedekind did not expect the provocative play ever to receive a production, in 1906 director Max Reinhardt produced it in Berlin at the Deutsches Theater. This version was heavily censored, however, and the fourth and sixth scenes were removed from the third act. The third scene of act two was so reduced that Wedekind died and Reinhardt decided to leave the entire scene out as well. Wedekind himself acted in the play as the Masked Man in the final scene. Reinhardt’s production in Berlin was very popular and ran for twenty years with 615 performances and about twenty changes to the cast. Spring Awakening made Wedekind famous, and until WW1 he was the most produced playwright in Germany.

In between the publishing of Spring Awakening and its first production, Wedekind wrote several other plays which were produced, wrote a novel titled Mine-Haha, and composed political poems for the satirical magazine Simplicissimus. He also served a seven-month prison sentence for those political poems, toured as a singer-songwriter with a Munich-based cabaret called The Eleven Executioners, and married actress Mathilde “Tilly” Newes. Wedekind’s most well-known plays besides Spring Awakening were the two “Lulu” plays. He originally wrote them as one play under the name Pandora’s Box: A Monster Tragedy, but he

Written by Scott Jones, Tom Shafer

Theatre Circle Insights

A Home at the End of the World (2004). His music and performances have been featured on the soundtracks for Transamerica (2005), Great Expectations (1998), and the TV series Friends, Glee, Cold Case, and 90210, among others. His producer/arranger credits include Holly Brook (2011), Micah Green (2008), Chris Garneau (2006), and the Original Cast album of Spring Awakening (2007). Sheik’s most recently produced collaboration with Steven Slater is The Nightingale, which was presented as part of La Jolla Playhouse’s Play Development Program this past July and August. Spring Awakening had its first workshop in September 1999. The musical premiered Off-Broadway June 15, 2006, at the Atlantic Theatre Company (Producer) in New York City, and moved to Broadway December 10, 2006, at the Eugene O’Neill Theatre, running 888 performances. The production starred Lea Michelle and Jonathan Groff, future stars of the Glee television series. The production was awarded a total of eight Tonys, including the 2007 Tony for Best Musical, Book, Score, Orchestration, Direction, Choreography, Featured Actor, and Lighting Design. Other Best Musical Awards include The Dramatists Guild, the Drama Desk, the Lucille Lortel, the New York Drama Critics Circle, the Drama League and the Outer Critics Circle Awards and four Oliviers for the London production. The Broadway cast album also won a Grammy. A movie version of Spring Awakening is in development with Playtone Studio.
had difficulties getting it published, so he rewrote the play several times and eventually split it into two parts. The first part, Earth-Spirit, was published in 1895 and received productions in Leipzig and Munich in 1898. Earth-Spirit begins the story of Lulu, a woman with an insatiable sexual appetite, whose first husband dies when he finds her with another man. Her second husband kills himself, and she murders her third husband. The second part, Pandora’s Box, continues the story as Lulu escapes from prison and becomes a prostitute; she is eventually murdered by Jack the Ripper in London. Pandora’s Box was produced in Vienna in 1905, with Tilly Newes as Lulu and Wedekind as Jack the Ripper. (In 1929 the great German director G. W. Pabst directed a silent film version of Pandora’s Box starring an iconic Louise Brooks as Lulu.)

Other notable plays include The Singer, The Marquis of Keith, and Hidalla.

By the time Wedekind married Tilly in 1906, both were in great demand to perform in theatres across Germany. They moved to Berlin and then settled in Munich in 1908. Wedekind and his wife had two daughters: Anna Pamela, born in 1906, and Fanny Kadidja, in 1911. Although Tilly wrote in her memoir Lulu: The Role of my Life that Wedekind was an unreasonably jealous husband and always consumed by his work, he was a good father. Both daughters recalled how he always treated them with respect, as if child and parent were equals.

In the fall of 1914, Wedekind had surgery for appendicitis, but his scar never healed. For three and a half years, he endured agonizing pain and underwent frequent operations. He nevertheless continued to write and act in plays, and he successfully hid from those around him how ill he truly was. He died on March 9, 1918, at the age of 53. A large funeral was held for him in Munich. In addition to many theatrical and literary personalities in attendance, such as Bertolt Brecht, a rowdy mob of fanatical young people crowded the cemetery. One of the members of The Eleven Executioners, a poet named Heinrich Lautensack, was so overcome that he jumped down into the grave with a wreath of roses, dedicating it, “To Frank Wedekind, my teacher, my model, my master, from your least worthy pupil!” Wedekind—actor, cabaret singer, and playwright—died a popular, radical figure.

—Miriam Poole

Above: Frank Wedekind as the Masked Man in the original production of Spring Awakening. This mysterious character, masked like the Lone Ranger, first turns up in the last scene of the play, when he appears to young Melchior and leads the young man from despair to hope. In Sater and Sheik’s musical adaptation, the Masked Man’s function is performed in song (“Those You’ve Known”) by characters who are already a part of the play. Below: Christopher Rhoton’s scenic design for The God of Carnage.
Yasmina Reza came to the attention of the English-speaking world through the London production of her play *Art*. And the London production came to be because a Scottish actor was given a rough English translation of the play on the beach by his wife, who was French and had seen and enjoyed the production in Paris. “Here,” said Micheline Connery to her husband Sean, “I think you’ll enjoy this.” Connery liked the comedy so much he signed on as a co-producer of *Art* in a better English translation (by playwright Christopher Hampton) on London’s West End, where the play won the 1997 Olivier Award for best new comedy. Seventeen months later, *Art* opened on Broadway, and Reza’s work began to be performed wherever English-language theatre was performed.

World famous playwright Yasmina Reza was born on May 1, 1959, in Paris to a Hungarian violinist and a Russian-Iranian businessman of Jewish descent. Growing up, Reza primarily spoke English (among other languages) with her parents, and the family frequently vacationed in Switzerland and Austria. Despite her ancestry and cosmopolitan childhood, she considers herself to be completely French.

At age sixteen, Reza graduated from high school and went on to study sociology and theatre at the University of Paris X in Nanterre. She then attended the Jacque Lecoq International Drama School in Paris and began her career as an actress in the mid-1980s. Reza had been writing since she was seven years old, but it was not until 1986 that she began to write for theatre. Her first play, *Conversations après un enterrement* (*Conversations After a Burial*), premiered in Paris at the Théâtre-Villette in 1987, and it won a Molière Award (the French equivalent to the Tony Award) for best author. As its title suggests, *Conversations* centers on a family who has gathered after the burial of their father and reveals deep-seated tensions within their relationships, setting the precedent for themes that continue to be explored throughout Reza’s plays: family, social class, and love.

The play that brought Reza international fame, however, was *Art*, premiering in 1994 in Berlin, opening later that year in Paris, and making its English-language debuts in London in 1996 and New York in 1998. It is a comedy about the relationships among three upper-class male friends, one of whom has recently acquired a white-on-white painted canvas. *Art* won numerous awards, including Paris’s Molière Awards for best play, best production, and best author, a Laurence Olivier Award (Britain) for best new comedy, and a Tony Award for best play.

In 2005, Reza was approached by a German director looking to commission her to write a play. At first she refused, but when she got an idea for a play based on an incident that happened to a friend of her son, she went back to the director and asked if they still needed a play. She had just three months to write *Le dieu du carnage* (*The God of Carnage*), which premiered on November 24, 2007, in Zürich, where it received a Viennese Nestroy-Theatreprize for best German-language performance that season. Reza directed the French premiere of the play at Paris’s Théâtre Antoine in January 2008. The play opened in London in March 2008 with Christopher Hampton’s English translation and won a Laurence...
Theatre Circle Insights

Olivier Award for best new comedy. The following year, God of Carnage opened on Broadway starring Jeff Daniels, Hope Davis, Marcia Gay Harden, and James Gandolfini; the play won a 2009 Tony Award for best play. In 2011, Reza adapted the play into the film Carnage, which was directed by Roman Polanski and, like the Broadway production, was set in Brooklyn, not Paris.

The God of Carnage brings two sets of parents together in one of their apartments. Their two eleven-year-old boys have had “an altercation,” as they say, on a playground, and one has hit the other with a stick, breaking two of the victim’s teeth. The parents have assembled to settle matters, to come to an agreement about medical payments, to resolve any issues the children my still have, and so on. All seems to be adult, grown-up, and amicable, but beneath the civilized exterior and good behavior lives the god of carnage, a bestial thing that leads to less-than-admirable remarks and actions. Arguments break out, alliances shift, and cell phones and business calls keep interrupting the evening. It’s a lovely descent into chaos, one which Reza carries it off with humor and sometimes dark, wicked laughter. The comedy carries echoes of Jean-Paul Sartre, Harold Pinter, and Samuel Beckett, for Reza’s characters find that the civilizing force of language, which shapes society and relationships, cannot bear the stress and weight of the evening. In her study of Reza’s plays in English and American production, dramaturg Amanda Giguere couples The God of Carnage with “the failure of language”: When characters discover that language is “unreliable” and “devalued,” she writes, “their social masks droop, revealing the animals within.” And when the animals in a small, confined space are released, they don’t especially practice good behavior.


Reza currently resides in Paris and has two grown children with director Didier Martiny.

—Miriam Poole, with Tom Shafer

Eriko Taiko, costume designs for The God of Carnage.

Talk about Behaving Badly
Professor Brian D’Onofrio and Director Lee Cromwell in Conversation

On Thursday, November 29, at 5:30 p.m., director Lee Cromwell and Dr. Brian D’Onofrio will discuss Yasmina Reza’s The God of Carnage in the Studio Theatre, located on the 2nd floor of the IU Theatre at 7th and Jordan.

Lee Cromwell is a second-year M.F.A. student in directing and the director of our production of The God of Carnage. For IU Theatre he assistant directed A Midsummer Night’s Dream and In the Next Room or the vibrator play. For Indiana Festival Theatre Lee was the assistant stage manager for Damn Yankees and The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!. He has directed Doubt, All My Sons, Dinner With Friends, The Shadow Box, Harvey, Pippin, and The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Lee graduated Magna Cum Laude from Bucknell University with degrees in music and theater and a Master
Theatre Circle Insights

Professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. He conducts research in the area of behavior genetics, in conjunction with developmental psychopathology, family systems, and children’s intellectual abilities. He is interested in not merely exploring genetic and environmental influences on human behavior, but also in how both of these influences act and interact. Within his research, he also focuses on intervention studies for couples going through divorce.

During the rehearsals for *The God of Carnage*, Dr. D’Onofrio met with the cast in order to discuss the psychological behavior behind the characters in the play. During the November 29 event, Dr. D’Onofrio will focus on the stress of parenting, especially when parents have to deal with behavioral and emotional problems with their children.

This Themester-sponsored discussion will explore both the play, human behavior in the play, and the psychological effects of stress and family.

At First Glance—The Play Readings

Playwrights Kelly Lusk and Nathan Davis will present readings of their new plays on Sunday, December 9, at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. These will be rehearsed reading of plays-in-progress that will then go on to receive full productions in March. The readings on December 9 are an invaluable step in the writing process for the playwrights, for they hear their plays aloud and meet with an audience’s response. It is also an exciting opportunity for the public to watch a play as it develops and to know they helped shape the final product.

*Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea* by Nathan Davis deals with Dontrell, whose dreams have never been more fantastic or more harrowing: Nightly, he sees a captive African—the spitting image of his own father—thrown overboard during the Middle Passage. As visions of this man’s last fateful hours continue, Dontrell makes a decision: He will dive into the ocean and retrieve the drowned captive from the deep. All he needs is a boat, swimming lessons and—most importantly—the faith of his family and loved ones as he pursues an impossible task. Determined to bring back a record of the voyage, he sets off with a willing companion and a hero’s bravery. But the ocean, like the tides of history, holds many mysteries that must remain untold; and the sea has its own laws concerning “redemption” and “return.”

*A Love Story* [working title] by Kelly Lusk

“Love stories are timeless,” explains Kelly, as he discusses his play-in-progress. “The elements that make up a love story are sword fights, princesses, talking animals, and, of course, love. This play is no exception. Three different love stories intertwine to create an epic journey where our heroes search for love, the truth, and a way to make sense of this crazy world.”

December 9 will be a day devoted to these plays and readings, and we invite you to join us, to hear these works where they are today, to provide feedback and comment, and to enjoy the unique process of bringing new work into being. More details will come your way as we get closer to that Sunday afternoon and evening, but do mark your calendars: this will be one of those opportunities you’ll want to take. And enjoy.
Theatre Circle Insights

THEATRE CIRCLE CALENDAR

November 2012
Friday, November 9, 6:15pm  
Dinner with Director and Designer  
Spring Awakening  
Neal Marshall Grand Hall

December 2012
Monday, December 10, 4:00pm  
Board Meeting  
Von Lee Conference Room

December 30, 2012-January 4  
TC at Sea II Trip  
Miami and the Bahamas

January 2013
Friday, January 25  
Cabaret Evening  
Neal-Marshall Grand Hall

February 2013
Sunday, February 10  
Trip to Indiana Repertory Theatre for  
A Little Night Music  
Sponsored by Continuing Studies

Friday, February 15  
Special Event To Be Announced  
Save the Date!

March 2013
Monday, March 4, 4:00pm  
Board Meeting  
Von Lee Conference Room

Thursday, March 23, 5:30pm  
Theatre Circle Lecture  
with Ken Weitzman, Theatre + Drama  
At First Sight  
Studio Theatre

April 2013
Thursday, April 11 5:30pm  
Theatre Circle Lecture  
with Michelle Facos, Fine Art  
Sunday in the Park with George  
Studio Theatre

Friday, April 19, 5:30pm  
Theatre Circle Annual Meeting  
Sunday in the Park with George  
Neal-Marshall Grand Hall

Broadway Bound!

Each spring the senior class of B.F.A. Musical Theatre students travels to New York City where they have the exciting opportunity to perform for numerous theatrical agents and casting directors. This is their chance to show off their triple-threat talents—singing, dancing, acting—and look for their professional break in the musical theatre capital of the world. On Friday, January 25th, 6-9 p.m., the students of IU’s B.F.A. program will host a cabaret showcase to raise funds for the students’ travel expenses. Seniors, as well as underclassmen, will entertain an audience with a glittering evening of songs under the direction of Musical Theatre Director Terry LaBolt. Come support the B.F.A. Class of 2013’s final step in their IU journey and their first step to their future careers!

You will receive additional information and a reservation form closer to the date of the Cabaret, itself. There will be dinner, a cash bar, and entertainment from students who, this spring, will be Broadway Bound.

Above: The seniors in the B.F.A. musical theatre program: Carrie vanDoren, Evan Mayer, Brook Woode, Chloe Williamson (front), Erica Evans Johnson, Kurt Semmler, and Aaron Densley