

## Our Reviews

# 'Spring Awakening' is definitely worth all the conversation

By KRISTIN SANTA MARIA  
CORRESPONDENT

"Spring Awakening" has become one of the most talked about musicals on Broadway in the past few years. After seeing it performed at The Bushnell on Tuesday, Feb. 23, it is very easy to see why.

★★★★  
**Theater**

The musical courageously and truthfully captures the repressive atmosphere prevalent in 19th century Germany. More than that, the musical sends a stark message that if people talked about the things that are usually glossed over (sexuality, abuse and suicide) then we would all be a lot better off.

"Spring Awakening" focuses on the turbulent

time period when teenagers are coming of age. The rock musical with a folksy edge with music by Duncan Sheik and book/lyrics by Steven Sater perfectly captures those moments when you are coming out of adolescence and just beginning to find out who you want to be. Questions, insecurities and fear are all part of the process. On stage, you can see those emotions in the eyes of every character. You can feel their tumult as they sing the songs. You can relate to them.

The show is really an ensemble show. Each character adds something to the musical. The set is simple and well put together. The staging and set make it easy to focus on the characters. They all fit the part of teenagers even though in reality I am sure they are in

their twenties. However, all you see are angst ridden teens that truly remind you what it was like to be that age.

Chief among the characters are Melchior (Jake Epstein), Moritz (Taylor Trench) and Wendla (Christy Altomare). As much as this is an ensemble show, these three actors do carry a lot of it. The show opens with Altomare's character standing on a chair and singing to the audience "Mama Who Bore Me." Her sweet and enchanting voice is the perfect way to open the show. The song also sets the stage for the rest of the musical. She sings about her mother and how she wishes her mother would tell her more about the world. This beginning makes you sympathize with her and also

understand her innocence.

Trench infuses Moritz with this loveable and inquisitive nature. He is truly a unique character and perhaps one of the most relatable on stage. You cannot help but like him and feel for him as he comes to terms with his sexual awakening.

Melchior is supposed to be someone all the girls love. As he sings "All That's Known," Epstein's Melchior is the perfect brooding teenager who wants so much out of life. His rebellious nature is something we can all relate to, especially since we all thought we knew everything there was to know at that age.

The greatest thing about "Spring Awakening" is the way I was invested in these characters in large part thanks to the direction

of Michael Mayer and the superb acting of the cast. In "The Word of Your Body" and throughout the musical, Epstein and Altomare both truly capture those moments of finding your first love in all their awkwardness, heartache and beauty. Their chemistry on stage is palpable. I also found it impossible not to relate to Trench's Moritz who gets so despondent after failing school. His "Don't Do Sadness" really makes your heart stop for a second. The beauty of the musical is the way it draws the audience in and makes you want to run up to these characters and tell them everything will be fine.

The musical constantly pushes the envelope in the right direction. Every action that occurs on stage is appropriate. Yes, there is

some small nudity and sexual themes, but how can you have a musical about coming of age without including those things?

"Spring Awakening" reminded me of those first musicals I saw as a child. You know, the ones where everything is new and exciting. The show was raw, poignant and two-and-a-half hours of pure enjoyment.

I give this production 4 out of 4 stars.

"Spring Awakening" ran at The Bushnell in Hartford Tuesday, Feb. 23 to Sunday, Feb. 28. For more information, please visit [www.bushnell.org](http://www.bushnell.org) or [www.springawakening.com](http://www.springawakening.com).

## Kids' listings

**FRIDAY, MARCH 5**  
**BRISTOL**  
**10TH ANNUAL OUT OF THIS WORLD FESTIVAL.** 5 to 8 p.m. Blast off into space with the ESPN Space Theater in partnership with NASA. Hand's on activities. Look at the night sky. Imagine Nation, One Pleasant St., Bristol. (860) 314-1400.

ImagineNation.org

**SATURDAY, MARCH 6**  
**BRISTOL**  
**READ TO THE DOGS.** 1 to 2:30 p.m. Children are invited to READ to dogs for 15 minutes. Bristol Public Library, High Street, Bristol. Free. TailsofJoy.org

**MARCH 10, APRIL 14, MAY 12**  
**OTHER**  
**JUNIOR KEEPERS.** 3 to 4 p.m. Program for animal lovers and enthusiasts. The Children's Museum's UTC Wildlife Sanctuary, 950 Trout Brook Dr., West Hartford. \$80 per person for four sessions for members,

\$100 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. TheChildrensMuseumCT.org

**MARCH 19, APRIL 1, 15**  
**BRISTOL**  
**SPRING HOME SCHOOL PROGRAM.** 2:30 p.m. Manross Memorial Library, 260 Central St., Forestville. Theme is "World

Culture Slam" and will focus on learning about cultures through their celebrations. Geared for home school students ages 5 to 12. One hour. No cost, registration required. (860) 584-7790.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 28**  
**SOUTHINGTON**

**BREAKFAST WITH THE EASTER BUNNY.** 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Sons of the American Legion 72, 66 Main St., Southington. Eggs, omelets, pancakes, bacon, sausage, hash, home fries, toast, coffee and juice. \$7 per person. (860) 621-4243.

## Health listings

**SATURDAY, MARCH 6**  
**BRISTOL**  
**WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY INFORMATION SESSION.** 2 p.m. Bristol Hospital Wellness Center, 842 Clark Ave., Bristol. (860) 314-2798.

**OTHER**  
**YOGA CLASSES.** Mondays 9 to 10:30 a.m., Morning meditation and gentle yoga. Wednesday, 6 to 7:15 p.m., mixed level; 9 to 10:15 a.m., Mixed Level. Merriman Woods, 37 Black Walnut Lane, Burlington. \$12 drop-in. (860) 675-3684.

**BRISTOL**  
**BRISTOL HOSPITAL EMS OFFERS CPR CLASSES.** Full certification, full recertification, families and friends, heartsaver CPR, first aid. EMS Training Center, 420 North Main St., Bristol. (860) 314-0632.

**MARCH 5-7**  
**OTHER**  
**ANNIE.** Friday at 7:30 p.m., Saturday at 2 and 7 p.m. and Sunday at 1 and 6 p.m. Shubert Theatre, 247 College St., New Haven. \$15 to \$68. Shubert.com, 1-800-228-6622.

**OTHER**  
**FIRST THINGS FIRST.** A comedy. Fridays and Saturdays at 8:15 p.m. Clockwork Repertory Theatre, 133 Main St., Oakville. \$17. (860) 274-7247.

**NOW thru MARCH 14**  
**OTHER**  
**THE LADY WITH ALL THE**

**ANSWERS.** Tuesday, Wednesdays, Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.. Weekend matinees at 2:30 p.m. About Ann Landers. TheaterWorks, 233 Pearl St., Hartford. TheaterworksHartford.org

**MARCH 5 to APRIL 3**

## Theater listings

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