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TONY AWARD-WINNING MUSICAL *SPRING AWAKENING* OPENS THE GRIFFIN THEATRE'S 23RD ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Chicago, IL, November 10, 2011 – The Griffin Theatre Company is thrilled to open its twenty-third season with the first made in Chicago production of the Tony Award-winning musical **SPRING AWAKENING**. **Press opening is Sunday, December 4, 2011 at 7:00pm.** The musical which won 8 Tony Awards including “Best Musical” will be directed by Griffin ensemble member Jonathan Berry. The production is a follow-up to his recent New York debut at the Roundabout Theatre with Andrew Hinderaker’s *Suicide Incorporated*. **SPRING AWAKENING** reunites Mr. Berry with Music Director, Allison Kane having previously worked together on Stephen Sondheim’s *Company* last fall.

SPRING AWAKENING’s (November 27, 2011 – January 8, 2012) continues Thursdays – Saturdays at 7:30pm and Sundays at 3:00pm, running through Sunday, January 8, 2012 at Theater Wit – 1229 West Belmont in Chicago. Tickets are \$28 - \$38 and can be purchased by calling the Theater Wit box office at (773) 975-8150.

Based on the Expressionist play that caused a scandal in 19th-century Germany, the musical written by Duncan Sheik with a book by Steven Sater changed musical theater on Broadway forever. A groundbreaking fusion of morality, sexuality, and rock & roll the musical celebrates the unforgettable journey from youth to adulthood.

Recognizing the relevance of the Wedekind play, it still came as a surprise when the pop/rock composer Duncan Sheik and the playwright Steven Sater chose to, in 2005, adapt the 100 plus year old work into a new pop musical. Searching to bridge the gap between the characters in turn of the century Germany and the hoped for market of the modern teenage audience, Sheik and Sater made a bold, theatrical choice. When the teenage characters break into song, they approach the music and lyrics from a modern standpoint, using traditional rock music, hand held microphones, and lyrics that contain modern colloquialism. With this single decision, the potential dust that could weigh down a production of Wedekind’s original play is removed and the connection to modern teenage angst is made intrinsically clear. In addition, all of the adult roles are played by the same two actors, clarifying the students’ belief that all adults are, in the ways that matter to an adolescent, inherently the same.

With these connections firmly in place, Sheik and Sater’s **SPRING AWAKENING** opened on Broadway in December of 2006. While critics were impressed, more impressive was the cult-like status the work achieved among the youth population. Here was a play that was addressing, finally, the very real challenges of teenage sexual awakening and not condescending to the young people in the audience. The piece remains, as Wedekind intended: bold, direct, clear, and challenging to the society that would more often prefer to look away.

The Griffin is thrilled to bring this production to a more diverse Chicago audience and capitalize on the intimacy of storefront theater to heighten the possibility of an audience’s direct connection to the piece.

The upcoming production directed by Jonathan Berry will have a mix of young actors some of who are new to the Chicago theater scene and others who have graduated out of some of the best Chicago-based conservatory theater programs. The cast includes: Josh Salt, Matthew Fletcher, Adam Fane, Adam Molloy, Harter Clingman, Matt Babbs, Aja Wiltshire, Amber Robbin, Lindsay Leopold, Paige Collins, Lauren Paris, Larry Baldacci (last seen at the Griffin in Stephen Sondheim's COMPANY) and Vanessa Greenway (Griffin ensemble member and 2-time Jeff Award winner)

The talented production and design team assembled for the production includes: Scenic: Marianna Csaszar (ON THE SHORE OF THE WIDE WORLD, THE HOSTAGE), Costumes: Izumi Inaba (STAGE DOOR), Lights: Lee Keenan, (BE MORE CHILL, THE HOSTAGE), and Sound: Rick Sims (BE MORE CHILL, NO MORE DEAD DOGS, COMPANY), Choreography: Nicole Pellegrino, Associate Director: Jess McLeod.

SPRING AWAKENING will begin previews on November 27, 2011 and run thru January 8, 2012 at Theater Wit in Chicago at 1229 West Belmont Ave. **Press Opening is scheduled for Sunday, December 4, 2011 at 7:00pm.** **SPRING AWAKENING** begins preview performances Sunday, November 27, 2011 at 3:00pm. Previews continue November 28, December 1, 2 & 3, at 7:30pm. Tickets to **SPRING AWAKENING** range from \$28 - \$38 and are on sale now. The regular run performances (December 4 – January 8, 2012) are Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 pm. and Sunday at 3:00pm. **Note there will be no matinee performance on Sunday, December 4, 2011.** Preview tickets are priced at \$28.00 each and regular run tickets are priced at \$38.00 each. Tickets are on sale now by calling the Theater Wit box office at **773-975-8150** or can be purchased online at **GriffinTheatre.com**. Senior and student discounts and group rates are available.

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