form—a scene in which the man humiliates, strikes, and effectively renounces his son. Alas, I had to report that we never see Moritz with his father in the original play.)

Still, it has been more than merely adding new scenes, or thoroughly rewriting those already extant. We have created journeys for our three lead characters which do not exist in the original dark fractious fable.

As others have noted, the two biggest shifts we made to the tale occur at the ends of Act One and Act Two—in the hayloft and then in the graveyard. In Wedekind's script, Melchior "date-rapes" Wendla. We wanted to see him make love to her. More: we wanted to show how this young man (who jests at his friend's puberty wounds) first uncovers ineluctable sexual feelings; how he begins to own his sexual identity; how he helps Wendla awaken to hers. The truth is, we had already, irrevocably, set Melchior on this path when we gave him the song: "Touch Me." There, he articulates his sense of "the female" yearning for pleasure, singing as if in some hypothetical woman's voice: "Touch me, just like that. Now, there, *that's* it—God, that's heaven . . ." Sheltered in a hayloft in a rainstorm with an actual young woman—Wendla—and confronted with the possibility of *giving* her that pleasure, Melchior cannot restrain himself.

As for the graveyard . . . suffice it to say, after seven years' labor, we finally dispensed with the notorious Masked Man. This Symbolist figure appears—literally out of nowhere—in the last scene of Wedekind's text. He confronts the despairing Melchior and assures him that with a warm meal in his belly, he will no longer chafe to join his friend Moritz in the grave.

Without a doubt, this character is a sort of throwback, a deus ex machina, like those in Ancient Greek tragedies, who appear in the final scene to resolve the issues of the play. And yet, his appearance, along with the ghost of Moritz, who rises from his grave to tempt Melchior to suicide, effectively marks the birth of the Expressionist Theater (a world where iconic figures body forth the emotions of the central characters).

Since high school—when I first read the play—I have been haunted by the Masked Man. I struggled so long to

incorporate him into our show, offering him up in one incarnation after another: as a sort of somber emcee, as an ever-present silent specter, as an actor who (living or dead) somehow survived the Allied bombing of a German theater. But we finally realized that within our piece the music already performs the role of the Masked Man, for it gives our adolescent characters a voice to celebrate, to decry, to embrace the darker longings within them *as part of them*, rather than as something to run from or repress.

As for Moritz arising from his grave to tell Melchior how good the dead have it, hovering high above joy and despair . . . it just seemed wrong to us—a cop-out, for dramaturgic effect, on a character we cared about and had worked so hard to illuminate. In our show, we witness Mortitz's struggles at school and home first-hand; his devotion to Melchior is his sole anchor. In song after song, he utters heartfelt, would-be defiant cries of anguish at the world grown dark around him. In the Expressionist original, the Moritz we meet in the graveyard is largely an aspect of Melchior's feeling—a projection. But for us, he was still our gangly Eraserhead. We didn't want to see him extend a rotting hand in an effort to betray his friend.

And yet, it felt appropriate to hear from him again, and also from Wendla. The question was: what did *we* want to say? If the answer wasn't a "warm meal" in a young Bavarian belly, then how was Melchior to find the strength to go on? Ultimately, the lyrics—the message—of Melchior's final song, "Those You've Known," came to me while writing it. I found the lyrics telling me: it was the love still felt for those we have known that enables us to continue in the face of losing them.

Now we had the end of our tale: a boy left thoroughly distraught, his rebellious spirit broken by The System, somehow finds sustenance at the source of his sufferings. He has learned to learn from his heart.

If the lesson to be learned was of the heart, then it made sense that we would introduce Melchior as a guy with a naive rebellious pride in the power of his own mind. And so (working backward from that lesson learned by show's end), we wrote his opening number, "All That's Known":