
PREFACE

When we were young Frank Wedekind was the Masked Man of our *Spring Awakening* . . . This was the turn of the century. Bourgeois ideas lay in their agony.

—BERTHOLD VIERTTEL (1885–1953),
WRITINGS ON THEATRE

Suffice it to say, by the time I thought of introducing Wedekind's Masked Man to the American musical theater, those same "bourgeois ideas" had more than managed to rise again.

It was indeed the turn of a new century when I first gave Duncan a copy of the play. Some months later, in the wake of the shootings at Columbine, its subject felt all the more urgent; I approached (director) Michael Mayer about working on it with us.

These days, a short eight years later, in the shadow of the shootings at Virginia Tech, I am often asked why I ever thought *Spring Awakening* could work as a musical. And my only real answer is that I knew and loved the play, that I had long felt it was a sort of opera-in-waiting, and that somehow I could already "hear" Duncan's music in it.

Subtitled "A Children's Tragedy," Wedekind's play is full of the unheard, anguished cries of young people. It struck me that pop music—rock music—is the exact place that adoles-