

# Spring Awakening at The Traverse



The Traverse Theatre Company and Grid Iron have joined forces to present a new version of Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* by Douglas Maxwell. This exciting project, directed by Ben Harrison, represents the first time two of Scotland's most important theatre companies will have worked together.

Grid Iron, known for their innovative work with new writing, stage another work by Douglas Maxwell following their award-winning revival of his play *Decky Does a Bronco*. This 2010 Festival Fringe hit revived a relationship that put both Grid Iron and Douglas Maxwell on the map back in 2000, when the production had its original staging. Ten years on, Grid Iron and Maxwell have created another work about young people, this time focusing on the tragic story of a group of teenagers.

*Spring Awakening* is the first time that both Grid Iron and Douglas Maxwell will have worked with a major play in the European repertoire. First produced in 1906, Wedekind's text still has the power to shock and provoke, as it looks at how the adult machine represses and corrupts young people.

Douglas Maxwell's lean and dynamic new version re-locates the play in turn of the century Scotland. The co-production with the Traverse Theatre Company sets the action in a giant classroom, which becomes a metaphor for learning about life and death. A group of teenagers, aware of the decadent influences of Europe, are never the less trapped within the confines of a strict Calvinist education system. Parents and teachers expect their children to excel in the classroom, whilst imposing harsh restrictions against their natural sexual impulses.

Speaking about the production, Judith Doherty, co-artistic director of Grid Iron said, "we feel incredibly excited to be co-producing with the Traverse Theatre Company for the first time. They have provided enormous support in making this project a reality, not least because this is the first time Grid Iron have worked with a canonical text, so their dramaturgical advice is invaluable. Douglas Maxwell's amazing response to Wedekind's play shows that this work continues to have the power to shock people and to speak to adults about the mistakes we still make with our children today."

Photo by Laurence Winram