

# PlayNotes

Season | 48   Issue | 7



## SABINA

Written by **Willy Holtzman**, Music By **Louise Beach**, Lyrics by **Darrah Cloud**

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# Discussion Series

Due to Covid-19 our regularly scheduled discussions are moving online. Head to [portlandstage.org/plays-events/discussions/](http://portlandstage.org/plays-events/discussions/) to view our discussion schedule and Zoom links.

Join us for a Book Club-style **Page to Stage** with the Portland Public Library. Check out your copy of the script and join us two weeks before previews of each Mainstage Production. Scripts are available at the reference desk at the Main Branch of the Portland Public Library. This year discussions will be held over Zoom at 6pm. Feel free to come and chat about the plays with Literary Manager, Todd Brian Backus; his Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentices, and special guests. Visit [portlandlibrary.com/programs-events/](http://portlandlibrary.com/programs-events/) for more information.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Portland Stage is suspending in-person and online talkbacks for the **Artistic Perspective** and **Curtain Call**. At this time we are working to distribute interviews between Anita Stewart (Executive and Artistic Director), Todd Brian Backus (Literary Manager), and the Casts and Artistic Teams of each production. We hope as the Omicron wave recedes we can move back to in-person discussions and will do so as soon as seems safe and efficient.



MEREDITH G. HEALY LEADS A CONVERSATION WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR, AND CAST OF Rx MACHINA BY CAITY-SHEA VIOLETTE AS PART OF THE 2021 DIGITAL LITTLE FESTIVAL OF THE UNEXPECTED.

# Sabina

Written by Willy Holtzman, Lyrics by Darrah  
Cloud, Music by Louise Beach

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Portland Stage Company Educational Programs, like *PlayNotes*, are generously supported through the annual donations of hundreds of individuals and businesses, as well as special funding from:



**The Onion Foundation  
The Robert & Dorothy Goldberg Foundation  
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# Letter from the Editors

**CONTENT WARNING:** Several articles in this issue of *PlayNotes* include mentions of Nazis, mental illness, and hospitalization.

Dear *PlayNotes* Readers,

Welcome to our seventh and final issue of *PlayNotes* for the 2021-2022 Season!

In this issue, we explore the world of *Sabina*, a new musical with a book by Willy Holtzman, music by Louise Beach, and lyrics by Darrah Cloud. This period piece dramatizes the life, work, and relationships of the real-life psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein, who made invaluable contributions to the field of psychology, both through her own theories and as a patient studied by Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. We explore historical context around the real figures characterized in the play, as well as the setting that serves as their backdrop with the articles "Who Were the Historical Figures in *Sabina*?" (p. 15), "Notable Historical Events in the Show and in the World" (p. 17), "Setting the Scene: Zürich, Vienna, and the Burghölzli Hospital" (p. 19), and "Sabina's 'Death Instinct'" (p. 30). In "The Myth of the Damsel in Distress and the Knight in Shining Armor" (p. 25) and "Mental Health in Media" (p. 28), we put popular tropes and topics covered in *Sabina* in conversation with their usages in mainstream media. There are also interviews with playwrights Holtzman, Beach, and Cloud (p. 9) and directors Daniella Topol and Danilo Gambini (p. 13) to get insight into the creative development of this production.

When compiling each issue of *PlayNotes*, we strive to provide articles and interviews that give you insight into what the process has been like behind the scenes (see articles in "Portland Stage's *Sabina*"), contain pertinent information about the play's setting and major themes ("The World of *Sabina*"), and provide deeper dives into specific subjects that compelled our literary department ("Digging Deeper"). We include a list of books, films, plays, and television shows that we hope audiences will access for more cultural content that relates to the play ("Recommended Resources").

Thank you for engaging with a wide range of plays and topics through *PlayNotes* throughout this past season, and we look forward to seeing you at the theater!  
Sincerely yours,

The Portland Stage Literary Department  
Macey Downs  
Meredith G. Healy  
Todd Brian Backus

# About the Play

by Meredith G. Healy

When Sabina Spielrein arrives at the Burghölzli Hospital as a patient in 1904, psychologist Carl Jung sees an opportunity. He begins a correspondence with Sigmund Freud and receives Freud's blessing to use his "talking cure" as a means of treating Spielrein. In the sessions that follow, Jung is able to help Spielrein with her recovery and the two develop an intimate emotional and romantic relationship. Over the course of the show, Spielrein goes from a patient to an analyst, and brings with her a novel approach of empathizing with her own patients.

*Sabina* introduces the audience to five historical figures, two of whom, Freud and Jung, are still seen as giants in the field of psychology. The other three—Spielrein, Emma Jung, and Ludwig Binswanger—made their own contributions to the discipline, but are largely forgotten by history. Spielrein's work, in particular her hypothesis regarding the "death instinct," was most notably co-opted by Jung and Freud, two men who claimed to be invested in her work as an analyst. The play forces the audience to consider the idea of what it means to undergo a transformation and to leave a legacy, and which people history sees as being worthy of remembrance.

*Sabina* was first developed as a non-musical play by Willy Holtzman and was featured in Portland Stage's 4th Annual Little Festival of the Unexpected in 1993. The original version of the show premiered at Primary Stages (NYC) in 1996, and was revived by the company due to audience demand when Primary Stages moved to a new space in 2005. Composer Louise Beach adapted the play into a musical at the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop (NYC), with a book by Holtzman and lyrics by Darrah Cloud. It was developed alongside popular musicals like *Avenue Q* and *Next to Normal*. *Sabina* has since received a series of development workshops at The Cell Theatre (NYC), and was a finalist for the Richard Rodgers Award and the Kleban Award. The production at Portland Stage is the world premiere of the musical.



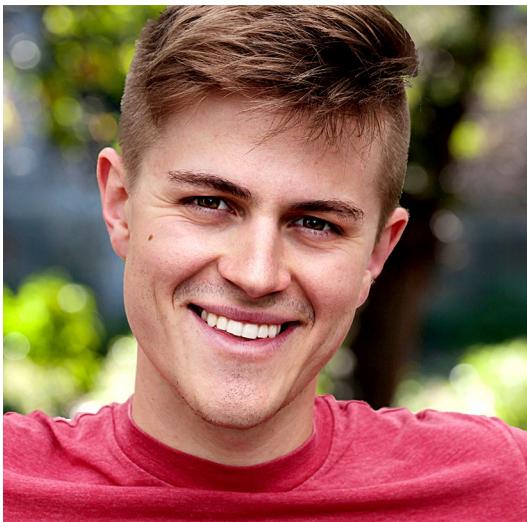
THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM DURING A REHEARSAL FOR *SABINA*, PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY, 2022.  
PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON.

# About the Cast and Characters

by Meredith G. Healy



**Name:** Stephanie Machado  
**Character:** Sabina Spielrein  
A patient of Carl Jung's who becomes a doctor, she suffers from schizophrenia and a vulnerable heart.



**Name:** Philip Stoddard  
**Character:** Carl Jung  
An adventurous psychologist who is unafraid to test boundaries and convictions.



**Name:** Jason Michael Evans  
**Character:** Ludwig Binswanger  
Jung's skeptical colleague, who prefers traditional boundaries.



**Name:** Sarah Anne Fernandez  
**Character:** Emma Jung  
Jung's enduring wife, who puts family and her sense of duty before everything.



**Name:** Bruce Sabath  
**Character:** Sigmund Freud  
Jung's waning predecessor, who fears no one will carry his legacy.

# Interview with the Writers: Willy Holtzman, Louise Beach, and Darrah Cloud

Edited for Length and Clarity by Meredith G. Healy

**Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice**  
 Meredith G. Healy spoke with Willy Holtzman (book), Louise Beach (music), and Darrah Cloud (lyrics) during the second week of rehearsals about the genesis of the play, their working relationship, and why *Sabina*'s story should be told now.

**Meredith G. Healy (MGH):** *Can you each give me a little background about yourselves? What has your career in the theater, and in the performing arts, looked like?*

**Willy Holtzman (WH):** Like a lot of writers, I knocked around a bit before I found writing for the theater, which became my passion even if it hasn't always paid the bills. I started at the Actors Studio writers unit and my mentors were Elia Kazan, Arthur Penn, Robert Anderson, A.R. Gurney, and Geraldine Fitzgerald. I was admitted to New Dramatists and later became a resident playwright at Juilliard, both of which

were immensely helpful to my growth as a playwright. Primary Stages has been my Off-Broadway home, and it has produced five of my New York premieres. Darrah and I both have written for television and independent movies, which poses different creative challenges but provides excellent health insurance. It seems every ten years or so I get talked into working on a musical. I'm indebted to Louise for her persistence with *Sabina*, because it has been by far the most fulfilling collaboration in my theater career.

**Darrah Cloud (DC):** I'm a playwright and a lyricist. I got my start at Ensemble Studio Theatre (NYC) with *The House Across the Street*, a play about John Wayne Gacy's neighbors, and I've been in New York ever since. I got introduced to writing for musical theater because I was commissioned to write the first adaptation of a Willa Cather novel—*O Pioneers!*, which has an



WILLY HOLTZMAN ADDRESSES THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM OF SABINA DURING REHEARSAL, PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY, 2022.  
 PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON.

## **PORTLAND STAGE'S SABINA**

unfortunate title and is actually a really sexy, beautiful, sweeping project. We needed a way to make the land into a character, and that was through music. I wrote lyrics for that, and I was hooked.

**Louise Beach (LB):** My early career was as a dance musician—teaching and composing and improvising—and I loved the collaborative aspect of that world. I later got a graduate degree in composition and particularly loved writing art songs, but was a bit at a loss once I graduated and was on my own laboring over chamber works. Willy is responsible for my falling hard in love with the collaborative world of musical theater when he suggested that I try out for the Composer-Librettist Studio at New Dramatists, which was followed by a long stint in BMI (Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, NYC). I think I was the only one who ever auditioned for BMI with art songs! My class was stellar—Tom Kitt (*Next to Normal*), Jeff Marx and Bobby Lopez (*Avenue Q*). *Sabina* was met with a little bit of bafflement: “Is this opera? Is this musical theater? What is this?” But also with a lot of admiration, particularly from Maury Yeston, and it appealed to the Guggenheim committee, too! So BMI was a great place to try out early material and become immersed in writing for musical theater. But I’ve never had a production, so at this moment, I feel like I’ve died and gone to heaven. Portland Stage, and this production and design team, is pure heaven.

**MGH: Can you talk about your experience as co-writers and how exactly you have worked together?**

**DC:** I have the perfect answer—we sail in circles! We come up with ideas and then we throw them out, or we keep part of it. Will has a say, and Louise has a say, and I have a say, and we end up somewhere.

**LB:** It’s a fluid process, and it can be messy and all over the place and also wonderful. When we’re inspired with an idea, we just go towards a vision together and help all the pieces get there. Yes, it’s sailing in circles, but then the wind fills the sails and off we go!

**WH:** With *Sabina* we had a historical figure, and the play’s version of history, as a starting point for structure. I don’t mean for that to sound rigid, because it was the opposite. It was very freeing. As we discovered our version of the story, we were able to throw out any piece of the play that didn’t apply. I would also say that, going back to the original play and our experience with the musical, but there’s always been a mystical side to this experience and to this journey. You get to a point with *Sabina* where it feels like she’s speaking to you. You’re almost a conduit for her lost story, and you have to honor that. We had a contract to do the musical at Madison Rep years ago. But there was an administrative scandal and the theater went under. Each of us got busy with other projects, yet it was almost as if *Sabina* kept always calling us back to her story. This is a fulfillment of that mystical calling, I think.

**MGH: This show is based on Willy's play *Sabina*, which was featured in Portland Stage's Little Festival of the Unexpected in 1993 and originally produced by Primary Stages in 1996. How did it become a musical?**

**LB:** It was really my husband Brian who had the idea. We had seen *Sabina* fairly recently and were very moved by it, so we just immediately went to Willy.



*THE SET OF WILLY HOLTZMAN'S SABINA, PRIMARY STAGES, 1996.  
SET DESIGN BY JUDY GAILEN.*

**WH:** It was kind of natural because Brian is my best friend and we'd been cannibalizing each other's lives and work for a long time. My first play was based on his experience as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War, when he was a community worker assigned to a skin-headed gang in Scotland. *The Morini Strad*—which did very well in Portland—was also a chapter from Brian's life, once he became a noted violin maker. So, we do a lot of stealing back and forth. I didn't think it was a good idea initially, but of the three of us—and I'm the first to admit it—I'm the least musically literate. I know the least about musicals, so I had to have it explained to me. Then Darrah soon joined the team—and she and Louise know far more about musicals than I ever will—so I just went with their vision on this.

**MGH:** *Sabina* was originally scheduled to premiere at Portland Stage in May of 2020, but that production was postponed due to the COVID pandemic. I can only imagine how devastating that must have been at the time, but I also know that you all feel as though it gave you an opportunity to revisit the script and to take it to new places. How has the script changed between 2020 and now?

**WH:** Because our experience with Madison Rep was such a setback, we had a kind of theatrical PTSD. But I've known and worked with Anita [Stewart, Executive & Artistic Director of Portland Stage] for years, and she is the most determined and honorable artist I've met in the theater. Still, when we were officially back on the calendar, we breathed a collective sigh of relief. Darrah can speak to how we spent the year, which has meant so much to the growth of the show.

**DC:** We just kept finding things. In a way, these are things we might have found had we had—oh, I don't know—two or three out-of-town tryouts for it. But we were able to reconnect and start working on it again knowing that we had this production. Knowing that we had our peeps in place—Daniella [Topol] and Danilo [Gambini]—and as all of that came together, there were new influences to it. Daniella is an amazing dramaturg and Danilo has this vision that's astonishing, so it was a gift. One of those strange COVID gifts.

**LB:** We have had such sharp eyes and wise minds appraising the material, thanks to Anita and the co-directors and you too, Meredith—just questioning everything: "Why are the women singing here? What is this moment about?" Every word, every lyric, every note has had to justify itself. As a result, we cut away some of our old babies—things that the audience had loved—but what's left is something leaner, deeper, more true, more poignant, more FUN! And the recent songs that we've written are moments that we've never captured before; they're not rewrites, they're new moments—some of them ideas that came from the actors themselves—and they take my breath away with the new staging that is so fluid and alive. This show is a different animal from the show we had in 2020, more powerful and transcendent than I had ever imagined we could achieve.

**MGH:** Did you all come into those summer workshops with Danilo, Daniella, and Anita with an expectation of where you were hoping they would go? Or, did you come in and say, "Give us what you've got and then we'll see where we're heading?"

**WH:** Because any play development is seldom a straight line—you have a workshop one place, you're in a festival another place, you get busy with other projects and come back to it—there's so much vestigial stuff, things that made sense at some earlier point, but don't really apply any longer. So this was an incredible opportunity to go through and do that kind of inventory. As recently as last week, we worked through the night and morning and caught crucial overwritten and disjointed portions in the second act. We're very grateful for workshops and readings, but there's a detrimental side to that process. Plays and musicals become static when they're just presented on stools. As much as Zoom has kept things going, it exacerbates the problem. This revelation of getting in the room with accomplished, uninhibited actors and an extraordinarily imaginative director finding the kinetic side of the storytelling—it's profoundly gratifying.

## *PORTLAND STAGE'S SABINA*

**MGH:** *Why do you think it is important to do this show right now?*

**DC:** The question of "What does the world need now?" has never changed. The answer to that has never changed. We're dealing with that in the play. I find that I think about that all the time. [Sabina] is a character who takes responsibility for what she wants and what she perceives. You could say there is some "me too" aspect to it, but that's not where she goes with it. I think that has always been a fascinating and challenging aspect of the show, and one that I found myself understanding very well.

**WH:** We made a promise to ourselves very early on that we were not going to dumb this story down. Which didn't mean that it was going to feel researched or literary or academic, or anything like that. Just that we wanted to faithfully dramatize Sabina's

brilliance and originality. The other promise we made is that we were going to partake in what I guess you would call mythic-archetypal storytelling, because that's part of what she contributed to the world of psychology and psychoanalysis. It wasn't an intellectual exercise on her part; it came out of her struggle with schizophrenia. She was fearless and unique as a practitioner, and she was courageously honest with what her experience had been with so-called madness. It turns out that the archetypal contents of her mind are timeless and universal by definition. So in a way it's not surprising that Sabina's story, which ended in Rostov in 1942, is only 131 miles from Donbas, where innocent civilians are suffering again. We want the audience to make all those connections. She had something profound and eternal to say about the human mind. In the end, this is a story about love. Not just romantic love, but a very feminist experience of universal, communal, collective love.



*Louise Beach (left) and Darrah Cloud (second from left) with the cast and creative team of SABINA, PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY, 2022.  
Photo by Mical Hutson.*

# An Interview with the Directors: Daniella Topol and Danilo Gambini

Edited for length and clarity by Meredith G. Healy

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Meredith G. Healy spoke with directors Daniella Topol and Danilo Gambini during the second week of rehearsals about the way they collaborate as co-directors and what draws them into the story of *Sabina*.

**Meredith G. Healy (MGH):** *Can you each tell me a little bit about yourselves? What have your journeys been like as theater practitioners?*

**Daniella Topol (DT):** I have been focused on directing, developing, and producing new plays and musicals for a loooonnnng time! For the past seven years, I have been the Artistic Director of Rattlestick Theater in NYC, a 27-year-old theater that has been committed to producing ambitious and relevant new works. Before that, I was a freelance director, working on projects all over the country and in NYC. This is my first time working in Maine though, and I am so grateful to be at Portland Stage after hearing so much about it from so many wonderful artists.

**Danilo Gambini (DG):** I started my directing career back in Brazil almost two decades ago, and I directed a lot of opera and musicals back in my home country. I moved to the United States five years ago to attend grad school, and right after that I started working at Rattlestick Theater, where I met Daniella and we became close friends and collaborators. It is also where I had my NYC directing debut!

**MGH:** *How have you collaborated as co-directors?*

**DT:** Danilo and I work together quite closely at Rattlestick, so I knew we would have a shorthand when we walked into this process together. But we work together even better than I had imagined! I suppose this is because we have a great respect for and trust of one another's perspectives, are in sync with how we envision the show, and yet also have very different styles. I am more

dramaturgical and Danilo is more visual. I am more focused on the language and on the internal life of the characters while Danilo is more focused on the staging and the physicalization of the storytelling. But Danilo also cares about the language and the internal life and I also care about the physicalization and the staging. To quote a lyric in the show, "I lead, then you lead, then I lead..."—and it feels like that in this process.

**DG:** Then you lead, then I lead. Yes!

**MGH:** *Talk to me about your respective histories with the show. Is there something in particular that drew each of you into this story?*

**DT:** There are many aspects of the piece that I find quite compelling but I am most captivated by *Sabina* herself. I am pulled into the vulnerability of this Jewish woman who is traumatized by the death of her sister and then has the courage to emerge and find this intimacy with Jung. And in spite of being betrayed, she finds the herculean strength to keep going and create a body of work, become a mother, and return to Russia in spite of the trauma that awaits her. If only we all had her strength and courage!

I have known this piece and these writers for 17 years, since they were first developing the piece! I have seen and engaged in many iterations of the piece over the years and have watched, with great admiration, the great collaboration, the fierceness, and the commitment of these three writers. Process-wise, I am compelled by the complexity and integrity of the writers' process.

**DG:** I consider myself a very visual and symbolic director. I do frequently quote Jung while directing plays that have nothing to do with Jung whatsoever—and I thank my many years of psychoanalysis for that. Us humans learn the world through symbols—

## *PORTLAND STAGE'S SABINA*

language, facial expressions, gestures, signs—and the collection of symbols that are transfigured in archetypes are how we operate psychologically. At least, I myself agree very much with this belief system. So, for me, investigating the humans that brought to life such concepts is just pure joy. I also believe the stage is a breach in space and time that allows us to dream up new realities, and it also (hopefully!) provides us a glimpse into the collective subconscious. In that same vein, I believe the actors are the straws that connect our mundanity to the sublime, and allow some of that energy to populate our existence. I feel now that I wondered too far away from the question, but there you go! Maybe this is me trying to be Jungian myself.

**MGH:** *What elements of the show are you most excited to explore with the cast and the creative team?*

**DT:** I am most curious to see how the span and scope of the internal lives of the characters exist in contrast or in sync with their external lives. We are fortunate to have an incredible cast and music director who are able to fully breathe into the lives of these characters and I look forward to seeing how that grows in every

week of work on the piece. Danilo is staging the piece right now in such an artful and seamless way, finding all of the possibilities in Anita [Stewart]'s poignant and poetic set. So now I am deeply curious and excited to see how that will look on the actual set, what Chris [Akerlind] will be able to do lighting-wise, and the world that Brad [Vieth] and the musicians will create with the score that will fully pull us into this complex emotional landscape.

**DG:** What else can I say? Working with this group of incredible artists has just been an absolute blast of joy, heart, soul, and fun. All of it—I am excited about all of it!

**MGH:** *What are you hoping audiences will take away from this production?*

**DT:** The courage to be honest. To dare to imagine their lives fully. And to study who Sabina was and all that she contributed to psychoanalysis!

**DG:** That love is bigger than all of this that we understand as reality. It is bigger than our understanding of time, our perception of space, and even our experience of romance. It is sublime—and it is available to all of us.



*DIRECTORS DANILO GAMBINI (LEFT) AND DANIELLA TOPOL (RIGHT) DURING A REHEARSAL FOR SABINA, 2022,  
PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON.*

# Who Were the Historical Figures in *Sabina*?

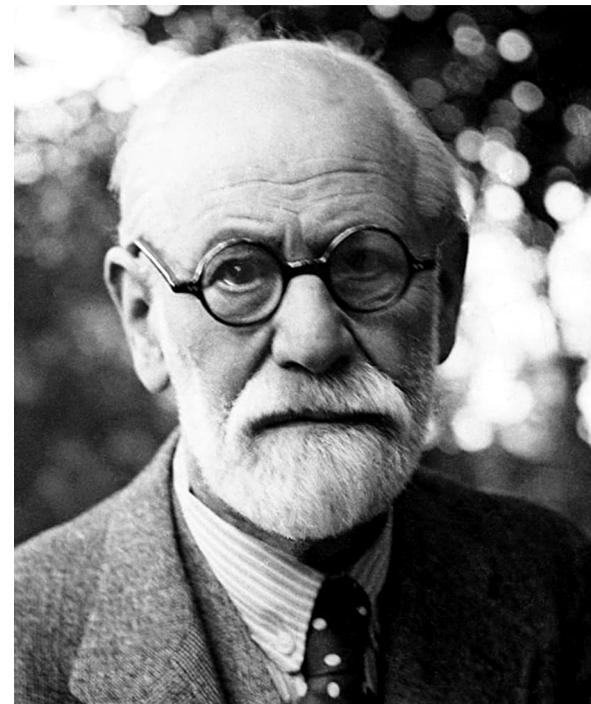
by Meredith G. Healy

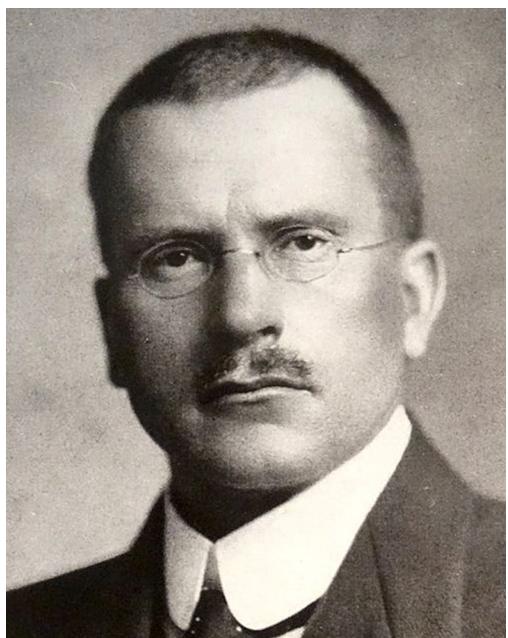
The five characters we meet in *Sabina* were all real-life people who each contributed to the field of psychology during the first half of the early twentieth century. Read on to learn more about their lives and legacies.



**Ludwig Binswanger** (April 13, 1881–February 5, 1966) was a Swiss psychiatrist known for his work in the field of existential psychology. He believed that many psychological issues developed as a result of a distorted self-image, and treated patients by helping them establish a complete and independent sense of self who has unique interactions with the larger world. Binswanger graduated with a medical degree from the University of Zürich in 1907. While there, he crossed paths with Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. He was the medical director of the Bellevue Hospital, in his hometown of Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, from 1911 to 1956. In 1942, Binswanger published his book *Basic Forms and Knowledge of Human Existence*, in which he combined psychotherapy with existentialism, and introduced the term "Daseinsanalysis," which means existential analysis.

**Sigmund Freud** (May 6, 1856–September 23, 1939) was an Austrian neurologist best known for developing and founding the practice of psychoanalysis. At the age of four, Freud moved to Vienna with his family and lived there until the Nazis invaded Austria in 1938, which forced him to flee to London, England, for the final year of his life. Amongst his most prominent contributions to the field of psychology are his work on dream analysis and the subconscious, and the introduction of the concepts of id (which is primitive and unconscious, and responsible for sex and aggression), ego (the "I" which influences the way people perceive the outside world), and superego (the moral voice and conscience) as the three essential parts that make up the human personality. His books *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923) are still notable texts in the field today. From 1906 to 1914, Freud worked closely with Carl Jung, but their professional and personal relationships disintegrated after Jung published a book disputing Freud's theories.





**Carl Gustav Jung** (July 26, 1875–June 6, 1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist who founded analytical psychology. His father was a Protestant pastor, but as a teenager, Jung developed an interest in philosophy which led him to study medicine at the University of Basel. In 1900, he began working at the Burghölzli, a psychiatric hospital in Zürich, where he initially treated and later worked alongside Sabina Spielrein. During his career, Jung allegedly engaged in extramarital relationships with his patients Sabina Spielrein and Toni Wolff. Although he was one of the first psychiatrists to employ Freudian psychoanalysis on patients, he began to break from Freud after publishing *Psychology of the Unconscious* in 1912. In the book, Jung disputed some of Freud's most famous theories, in particular those about the sexual basis of neuroses. One of Jung's most notable texts was *Psychological Types* (1921), in which he introduced the concept of introverts and extroverts, and named other personality types such as sensing versus intuition and thinking versus feeling. According to Jung, these traits inform how we interact with the world.

**Emma Jung** (March 30, 1882–November 27, 1955) was a Swiss psychoanalyst. She was the daughter of Berthe and Johannes Rauschenbach, and her father was a wealthy industrialist who owned a luxury watch company. In 1896, she was introduced to Carl Jung for the first time when he was visiting her parents. The two were married on February 14, 1903, and had five children together; they were married for 52 years until her death in 1955. In 1916, she was named as the first president of the Psychology Club of Zürich and held the position until 1919. She began working as an analyst in 1930, and from 1950 to 1955 was the vice president of the Carl Gustav Jung Institute of Zürich. Jung is remembered for approaching the practice of psychoanalysis with an awareness of the female psyche, which is notable because of the sexism present in the male-dominated field during her time.

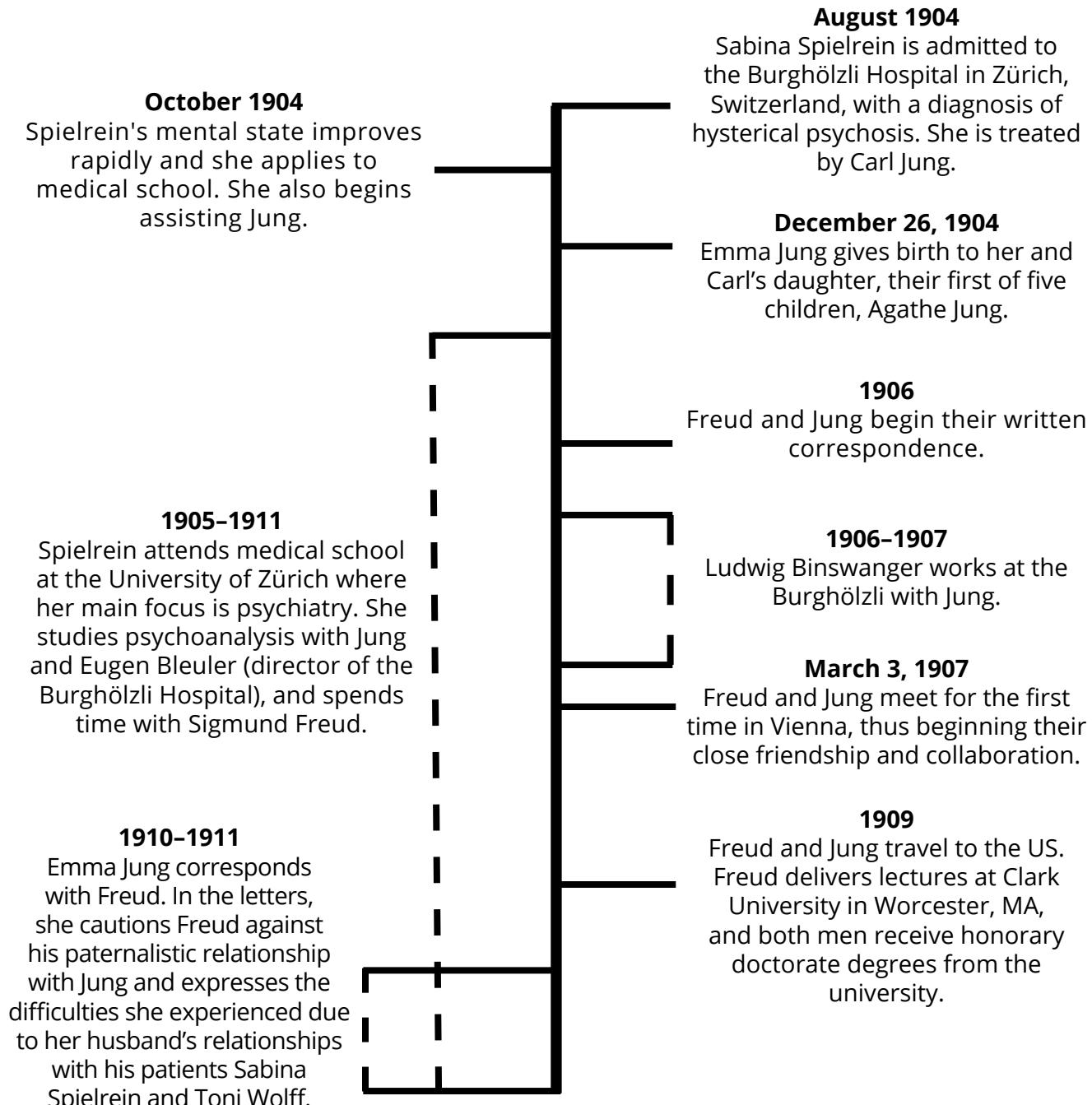


**Sabina Spielrein** (November 7, 1885–August 1942) was a Russian physician and psychoanalyst. She was the eldest of five children, and after the death of her sister Emilia, she experienced severe mental health issues which resulted in hospitalization. In August 1904, she began inpatient treatment with Dr. Carl Jung at the Burghölzli Hospital in Zürich, Switzerland. Spielrein improved rapidly and was able to apply for medical school in October of that year. From 1905 to 1911, she attended medical school at the University of Zürich where her main focus was psychiatry. Spielrein studied psychoanalysis with Jung and Eugen Bleuler (the director of the Burghölzli Hospital), and spent time with Freud. Her dissertation "On the Psychological Content of a Case of Schizophrenia" (1911) was the first published by a woman. In 1920, Spielrein began working at the Rousseau Institute, where she studied child development alongside distinguished psychologists like Jean Piaget. During her career, she made countless contributions to the field of psychology and published over 35 papers in German, French, and Russian.

# Notable Historical Events in the Show and in the World: 1904-1942

By Meredith G. Healy

*Sabina* is a work of historical fiction that is based on real people and real events. The timeline and representation of some of the events in the play have been altered to fit the dramatic narrative, but we thought it would be useful for *PlayNotes* readers to have a sense of how this story unfolded in reality.



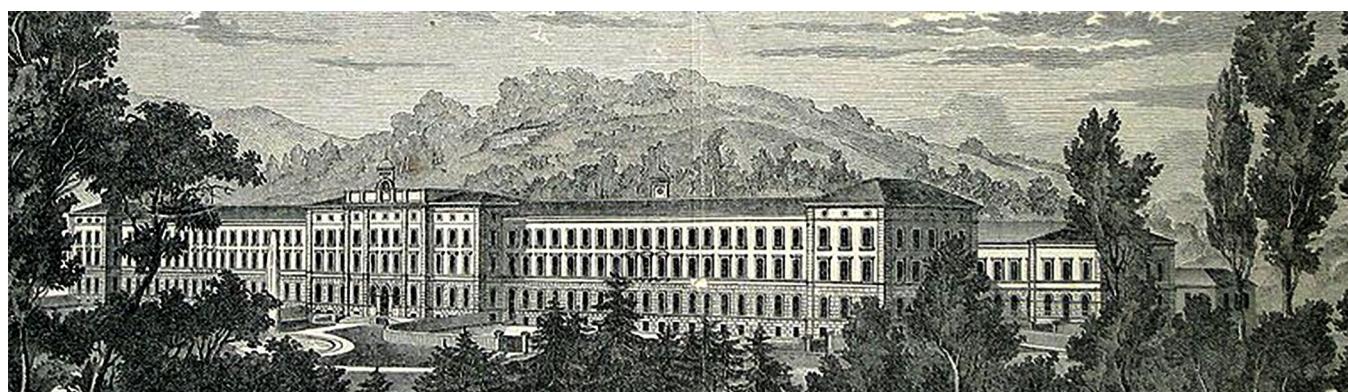
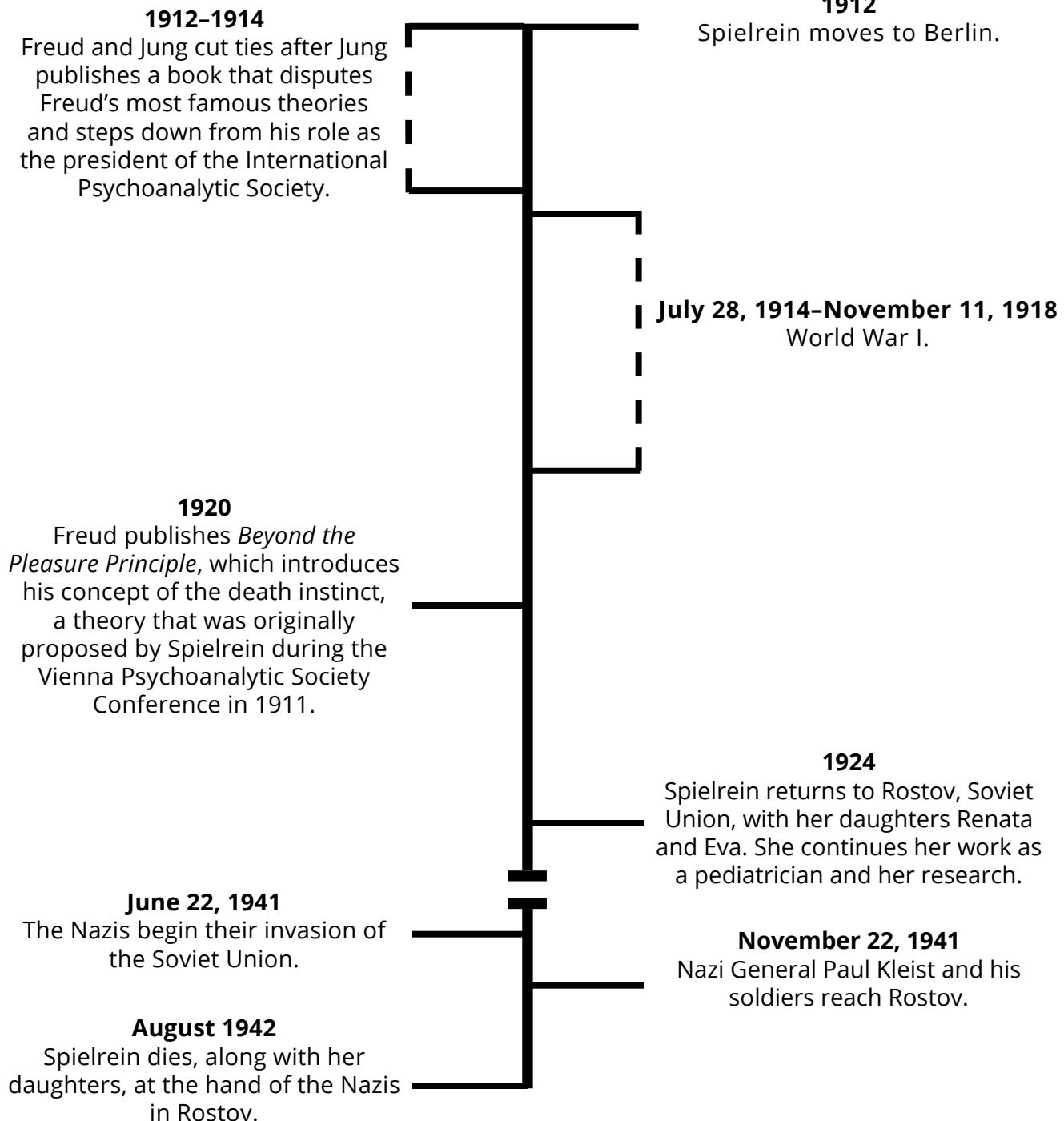


ILLUSTRATION OF THE BURGHÖLZLI HOSPITAL.

# Setting the Scene: Zürich, Vienna, and the Burghölzli Hospital

by Meredith G. Healy

*Sabina* takes place from 1904 to 1937 and is set primarily inside of the Burghölzli Hospital in Zürich, Switzerland; Sigmund Freud observes and provides commentary from his office at Berggasse 19 in Vienna, Austria. The ways in which these places functioned during the early 1900s helps inform the world that the characters in the play inhabit.

## Zürich, Switzerland

Zürich is located in the foothills of the Alps and has two rivers, the Limmat and the Sihl, running through it. These geographical features allowed for early economic growth because of the trade routes that utilized the Gotthard Pass and the rivers. In the mid-19th century, the political and industrial landscape of Zürich was shaped by Alfred Escher, a railway tycoon who transitioned into politics and was elected president in 1848. Escher was responsible for constructing Switzerland's first railway lines, and in 1856 he founded the banking institute, Schweizerische Kreditanstalt (now known as Credit Suisse). These changes

led to Zürich's new role as the financial and economic center of Switzerland; this role continued into the 20th century. On January 1, 1893, Zürich's population grew from 90,000 to 120,000 when the city incorporated eleven neighboring communities. This population jump made Zürich Switzerland's first metropolis. By 1900, the city's population had grown to 150,703.

Switzerland was able to maintain neutrality during World War I (WWI), but there were cultural tensions between citizens with ties to Germany and those with ties to France. There were also frustrations from the working class toward the government at the end of the war because men who had been mobilized to defend Swiss borders received no compensation for their lost wages. The result was a strike which began in Zürich in 1918 and brought about important changes, including the shift to an improved 48-hour work week and unemployment benefits.



ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND IN THE 19TH CENTURY.

### Vienna, Austria

Vienna is located in northeast Austria. The city is situated between the foothills of the Carpathians and the Alps, and along the Danube River. Similarly to Zürich, this positioning meant that Vienna was along several major trade routes. The city underwent major changes in the mid-19th century, like the construction of new public buildings, improved drinking water, and freedom of trade. These innovations resulted in both economic and population growth at the turn of the century, and by 1900 almost 2 million people resided in Vienna. The city became a home for many influential artists in the late 19th and early 20th century; amongst them were painter Gustav Klimt, composers Johannes Brahms and Gustav Mahler, and architect Otto Wagner.

During WWI, the city opened its doors to refugees, which further increased the population. Following the war, the Austrian monarch King Charles abdicated the throne and Social Democrats came into power. This group brought about reform in different public sectors, including housing, education, welfare, and health care. As a result, Vienna was nicknamed "Red Vienna," and it became a model for how to implement modern welfare policies.

### Burghölzli Hospital

In 1860, Wilhelm Griesinger, a German psychiatrist and neurologist, began to work toward opening an institution that would provide humane care for people with mental



ILLUSTRATION OF A MARKET PLACE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, EARLY 1900s.



CARL JUNG OUTSIDE THE BURGHÖLZLI HOSPITAL, 1910.

health issues. The hospital, the Burghölzli, opened in 1870. The first three hospital directors believed that mental illness could be attributed solely to biological factors, and focused on brain pathology and physiology. The fourth director, Auguste Forel, brought a new approach that combined the biological focus of German psychiatry and the emotional processes of France's dynamic psychiatry. This shift in thought brought the clinic international attention and recognition.

Eugen Bleuler was the director of the Burghölzli from 1898 to 1927. During his tenure, both Carl Jung and Ludwig Binswanger worked at the hospital, and Sabina Spielrein was treated as a patient before enrolling in medical school. Under Bleuler, the hospital became the first clinic to utilize and test Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories and therapeutic methods. In his role as director, Bleuler is also remembered for working against institutionalization and advocating for early discharge, and is thus viewed as one of the early adopters of the community psychology movement.

# Glossary

by Meredith G. Healy

**Archetype:** An inherited idea or mode of thought in the psychology of Carl Jung that is derived from the experience of the human race and is present in the unconscious of the individual.

**Berggasse 19:** The location of Freud's office from 1891 until 1939 where he developed his theory of psychoanalysis, wrote books, and treated patients on the building's second floor.

**Bourgeoisie:** The middle class, typically with reference to its perceived materialistic values or conventional attitudes.

**Brünnhilde:** In Wagner's four-part German opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, she is the wife of Gunther, who instigated the murder of Siegfried (see below). In Norse myths, she is a Valkyrie whom Sigurd (the counterpart of Siegfried) wins by penetrating the wall of fire behind which she lies in an enchanted sleep.

**Budapest:** The capital of Hungary. It consists of two parts, Buda and Pest, which are situated on opposite sides of the river Danube and connected by a series of bridges.

**Burghölzli Asylum:** A psychiatric asylum located in Zürich, Switzerland. Burghölzli entered the history of psychoanalysis as a result of the interest shown by Dr. Eugen Bleuler and his students (including Carl Jung) in Sigmund Freud's theories and their possible application to the mental patients at the asylum. The



BURGHÖLZLI TODAY.

Burghölzli's treatment method served as a bridge between the dynamic approach taken by French psychiatry and the biological orientation of German psychiatry. After Jung's falling out with Freud, the clinic lost its importance as a center of psychoanalytic research and a vehicle for its dissemination.

**Cataleptic:** Affected by or characteristic of catalepsy, which is a medical condition characterized by a trance or seizure with a loss of sensation and consciousness accompanied by rigidity of the body.

**Catatonic:** Relating to or characterized by catatonia, which is abnormality of movement and behavior arising from a disturbed mental state (typically schizophrenia). It may involve repetitive or purposeless overactivity, or catalepsy, resistance to passive movement, and negativism.

**Complexes:** A related group of repressed, or partly repressed, emotionally significant ideas which cause psychic conflict leading to abnormal mental states or behavior.

**David and Goliath:** From the story in the Bible in which David, a young boy, kills Goliath, a giant, with a stone; used to describe a situation in which a small person or organization defeats a much larger one in an unexpected way.

**Death instinct:** Also known as "death drive," the drive toward death and destruction, often expressed through behaviors such as aggression, repetition, compulsion, and self-destructiveness. Sabrina Spielrein first presented her death instinct hypothesis during her "On Transformation" lecture at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society Conference in 1911.

**Delirium:** An acutely disturbed state of mind characterized by restlessness, illusions, and incoherence, occurring in intoxication, fever, and other disorders.

## THE WORLD OF SABINA

**Din:** A loud, unpleasant, and prolonged noise.

**Effigy:** An image or representation, especially of a person.

**Franc:** The basic monetary unit of Switzerland and several other countries (including France, Belgium, and Luxembourg) until the introduction of the euro; equal to 100 centimes.

**Fräulein:** A title or form of address for an unmarried German-speaking woman, especially a young woman.

**Freud's Wednesday Society:** An informal group founded by Freud in 1902. Each meeting included the presentation of a paper or case history with discussion and a final summary by Freud. The group later became the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.



*FREUD (FRONT LEFT) AND SEVERAL OTHER MEMBERS OF THE WEDNESDAY SOCIETY, BERLIN 1922.*

**Gentile:** A person who is not Jewish.

**Herr:** A title or form of address used of or to a German-speaking man, corresponding to Mr. and also used before a rank or occupation.

**Id:** The one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that is completely unconscious and is the source of psychic energy derived from instinctual needs and drives.

**Impiety:** A lack of respect, especially for God or religion.

**"In the Land of the Blind, the one-eyed man is king":** A proverb dating to 1500 and credited to Desiderius Erasmus's *Adagia*, it means that in a difficult situation someone with only a few skills is in a better position and more powerful than those people who have none.

**Institute Rousseau:** A private school in Geneva, Switzerland. Founded in 1912, this institution was given the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to whom founder Édouard Claparède attributed the "Copernican reversal" of putting the child, rather than the teacher, at the center of the educational process.

**Malignancy:** A cancerous growth.

**Neurasthenic:** A person with neurasthenia, which is an ill-defined medical condition characterized by fatigue, headache, and irritability, associated chiefly with emotional disturbance.

**Neurosis:** A relatively mild mental illness, not caused by organic disease, that involves symptoms of stress (depression, anxiety, obsessive behavior, hypochondria) but not a radical loss of touch with reality.

**Neurotic:** Abnormally sensitive, obsessive, or anxious.

**Odessa:** A city in southwestern Ukraine about 275 miles south of Kyiv.



*ODESSA, UKRAINE.*

**Oedipus:** The son of Jocasta and Laius, king of Thebes. Sigmund Freud named the *Oedipus complex* after this character. *Oedipus complex* refers to the complex of emotions aroused in

a young child, typically around the age of four, by an unconscious sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex. The term was originally applied to boys, with the equivalent in girls being called the *Electra complex*.

**Oracle:** A person (such as a priestess of ancient Greece) through whom a deity is believed to speak.

**Orthodox:** Conventional.

**Paralytic:** Relating to the loss of the ability to move (and sometimes to feel anything) in part or most of the body, typically as a result of illness, poison, or injury.

**Patricide:** The murder of one's own father.

**Practitioner:** A person actively engaged in an art, discipline, or profession, especially medicine.

**Privyet:** An informal way of saying "Hello" in Russian.

**Psychoanalytic:** Relating to or involving the treatment of mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind through the use of techniques such as dream interpretation and free association.

**Psychogalvanic:** Pertaining to or involving electric variations in the body that result from reactions to mental or emotional stimuli.

**Psychotic hysteria:** A dated name for a condition in which psychotic symptoms (e.g., hallucinations, delusions, bizarre and sometimes violent behavior) appear suddenly in a person, usually in response to a stressful precipitating life event.

**Puritan:** A person with censorious moral beliefs, especially about self-indulgence and sex.

**Renata:** The name of Sabina's elder daughter with Russian Jewish physician Pavel Nahumovitch Sheftel; she was born in 1913.

**Rostov:** A city in northwestern Russia which lies along Lake Nero and the Moscow–Yaroslavl railway.

**Schizophrenia:** A long-term mental disorder of a type involving a breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion, and behavior, leading to faulty perception, inappropriate actions and feelings, withdrawal from reality into fantasy and delusion, and a sense of mental fragmentation.

**Siegfried** (character): The hero of the first part of the four-part opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. A prince of the Netherlands, Siegfried obtains a hoard of treasure by killing the dragon Fafner. He marries Kriemhild and helps Gunther to win Brünnhilde, but is killed by Hagen.

**Siegfried** (opera): The third of the four operas in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Ring Cycle). It is the story of the hero Siegfried and how he grows into manhood to discover fear and love. Siegfried kills the dragon Fafner and comes into possession of Alberich's cursed ring. But Siegfried faces his ultimate challenge when he follows a birdsong to find the sleeping Brünnhilde whom fate has destined Siegfried to awaken and fall in love with. At the end of the opera, Siegfried gives the ring to Brünnhilde to prove and symbolize his oath of love and fidelity to her.



SIEGFRIED AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA, 2019.

**SS George Washington:** An ocean liner built in 1908 for the Bremen-based North German Lloyd. When *George Washington* was launched in 1908, she was the largest German-built steamship and the third-largest ship in the world. *George Washington* was built to emphasize comfort over speed and was sumptuously appointed in her first-class passenger areas. The ship could carry a total of 2,900 passengers, and made her maiden voyage in January 1909 to New York.

**Talking cure:** A method of treating psychological disorders or emotional difficulties that involves talking to a therapist or counselor, in either individual or group sessions.

**Thrall:** The state of being in someone's power; captive.

**Transference:** A phenomenon in which an individual redirects emotions and feelings, often unconsciously, from one person to another. This process may occur in therapy, when a person receiving treatment applies feelings toward—or expectations of—another person onto the therapist and then begins to interact with the therapist as if the therapist were the other individual.

**Typhoid:** An infectious bacterial fever with an eruption of red spots on the chest and abdomen and severe intestinal irritation.

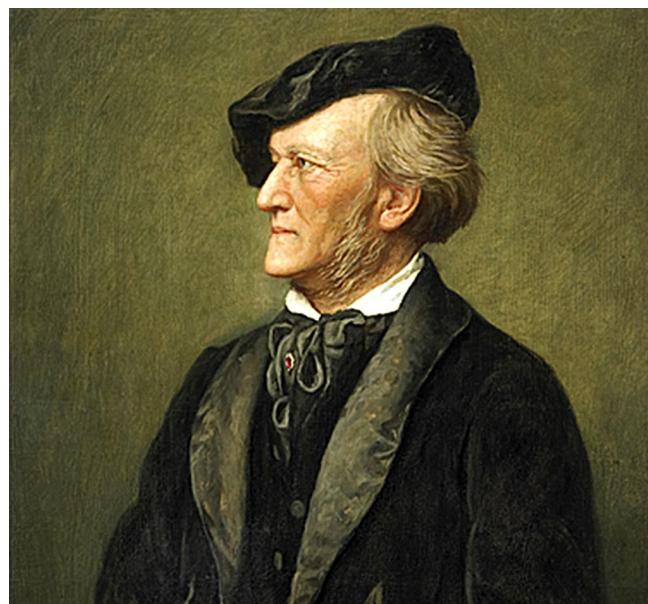
**Vienna:** The capital of Austria. Vienna produces more than half of Austria's capital goods and almost half of its consumer goods. Special Viennese products include silk, velvet, linen, ceramics, jewelry, scientific and musical instruments, watches, cutlery, leather goods, furniture, paper, and carpets.



VIENNA, AUSTRIA.

**Wilhelm Richard Wagner** (May 22, 1813–February 13, 1883): A German dramatic composer and theorist whose operas and music had a revolutionary influence on the course of Western music, either by extension of his discoveries or reaction against them. Among his major works

are *The Flying Dutchman* (1843), *Tannhäuser* (1845), *Lohengrin* (1850), *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), *Parsifal* (1882), and his great tetralogy, *The Ring of the Nibelung* (1869–76).



WILHELM RICHARD WAGNER.

**Wotan:** Another name for Odin, who is the supreme god and creator, god of victory, and god of the dead in Norse mythology.

**Zürich:** The largest city of Switzerland and capital of the canton of Zürich. Located at the northwestern end of Lake Zürich, this financial, cultural, and industrial center stretches out between two forested chains of hills, about 40 miles from the northern foothills of the Alps. Two rivers, the Limmat and Sihl, run through the city.



ZÜRICH SWITZERLAND.

# The Myth of the Damsel in Distress and the Knight in Shining Armor

By Macey Downs

*Where is the hero?  
A hero is just a man  
Can I become the man  
Who will bring her home*  
- Carl Jung in *Sabina*

The beginning of *Sabina* leans into an idea that is very familiar to many forms of storytelling: a male protagonist rescues a troubled female protagonist, and he becomes publicly recognized as a hero. This trope spans centuries and a variety of mediums, and is still frequently seen in media today. What attracts us to the myth of the damsel in distress and the masculine hero, why do we continue to tell these tales, and what stories choose to subvert this idea?

Traditionally, the story of the damsel in distress and her knight in shining armor surrounds a rescue mission, in which a woman, characterized as young, innocent, and helpless, has been put in danger, and a daring man must

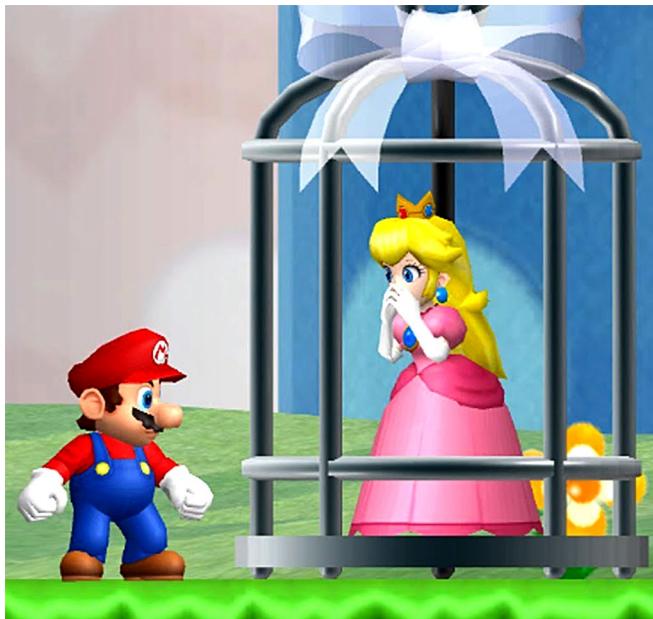
conquer an obstacle—often an enemy—to save her. In doing so, he proves himself a hero and publicly solidifies his masculinity. Some of the earliest damsel in distress stories still recognized today take the form of Western myths, traditional stories of seemingly historical events that spread a particular understanding or explanation of the world. These tales are especially prevalent in Greek mythology. A classic example is the myth of Andromeda, a beautiful princess who is chained to a rock as a sacrifice to a sea monster, only to be rescued by the adventurer Perseus and subsequently become his queen. We also see this narrative told and retold with Western fairy tales like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Snow White*, in which young women are rescued and find true love in the form of their princely male counterparts. Popular video games also utilize this trope by centering the male protagonist's quest around rescuing a woman—usually a member of his family or a love interest who has been kidnapped by the game's main villain.



TRUE LOVE'S KISS IN SLEEPING BEAUTY (1959).

## DIGGING DEEPER

The most famous example of this is the *Super Mario Bros.* franchise, in which the majority of games involve the hero character of Mario setting out to rescue Princess Peach, a damsel in distress captured by the evil Bowser. All of these versions of the damsel in distress story reflect and shape the societies they are passed down through.



MARIO AND PRINCESS PEACH IN NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. WII, (2009).

Most visibly, myths of the damsel in distress and knight in shining armor communicate “appropriate” gender roles in European and dominant US society. The trope is so embedded in the stories we tell that in Jung’s book *In Man and His Symbols*, he writes about it in relation to women’s psychology:

Girls in our society share in the masculine hero myths because like boys, they must develop a reliable ego-identity and acquire an education...As [a woman grows] older and [begins] to know herself better, she [begins] to see that for a man, life is something that has to be taken by storm, as an act of the heroic will; but for a woman to feel right about herself, life is best realized by a process of awakening. A universal myth expressing this kind of awakening is found in the fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast*.

Jung’s understanding of hero myths points to a prescriptive binary, in which men grow to see life through active heroism and women realize life through awakening. In the damsel in distress

trope, these processes are interdependent: the rescue asserts the man’s heroism and awakens the woman, usually to love for her savior. The damsel and the hero need each other to perform and assert their respective femininity and masculinity.

Today, the damsel in distress trope is often criticized for indoctrinating individuals into a patriarchal gender binary, in which both women and men will reach peak fulfillment only by fitting into the limited gender expressions that the trope allows. These expressions are also weaponized in real-life circumstances. “White Woman Tears” are often cast by White women during difficult conversations with BIPOC individuals to victimize themselves and inspire onlookers to come to their defense, usually with the intention of further marginalizing the BIPOC person. Cisgender men are less likely to be penalized for unwanted advances or coddling women peers in the workplace because relationships where men are action-oriented and superior to women are seen as normal. Myths cannot be separated from society itself—as long as they are repeated, they continue to inform the communities that hear them.

Stories are now being told that comment on the damsel in distress narrative, or try to present it from a feminist perspective. Often attempts at subverting this trope are taken to another harmful extreme that still devalues femininity, such as when women heroes are written solely with traditionally masculine traits like aggression or valuing logic over feelings. For example, the character Trinity in *The Matrix* is written as



CARRIE-ANNE MOSS AS TRINITY IN THE MATRIX (1999).

strong and capable, but her primary function is to support the male protagonist Neo, and she contributes little to the plot of the movie on her own. However, when deployed with intentionality, the damsel in distress trope can be a useful storytelling device: conveying more about pre-existing characters during a crisis situation, normalizing asking for or accepting help, or strengthening community connections. For example, in *Frozen*, a loose retelling of *The Snow Queen* fairy tale, Princess Anna assumes she needs Prince Hans's true love's kiss to cure her impending frozen heart. However, it is her own act of bravery and relationship with her sister Elsa that saves her life in the end. Here, the damsel in distress and the knight in shining armor are both contained within Anna, who exhibits feminine traits like optimism and softness, as well as masculine heroism.

While the character of Sabina Spielrein in *Sabina* originally sees Jung as her hero, as the play progresses she realizes that "the hero is me." Sabina becomes a hero by surviving her overwhelming grief and by dedicating her life to furthering the field of study that helped her heal. Through this journey, the play disrupts the myth of the damsel in distress and her knight in shining armor. *Sabina* instead proposes a narrative in which we recognize our feelings of distress and become our own heroes in response.



ELSA AND ANNA AT THE END OF FROZEN (2013).

# Mental Health in Media

by Macey Downs

**CONTENT WARNING:** *This article contains content related to mental illness and mentions of self-harm, trauma, and suicide. If you or someone you know are struggling with mental illness, the following resources are available:*

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1-800-273-8255**  
**Crisis Text Line: Text "HELLO" to 741741**

*Sabina* dramatizes early conversations and ideas around mental illness through the relationships of historical characters Sabina Spielrein, Carl Jung, and Sigmund Freud. Since the publication of work by these and other psychoanalysts in the early 1900s, mental health has been often portrayed in the media through movies and television, as well as in the news. Many of these portrayals have been scare tactics or included idealistic romanticization around mental illness, increasing stigmatization. More recently however, pop culture has been actively aiming to show mental illness more realistically, with the goal of normalizing something that over 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with at some point in their lives.

Often, news and media portray people experiencing mental illness as dangerous. When devastating, violent acts get national attention, headlines about the perpetrator point to a history of mental illness as the cause of their actions. Mental health professionals and researchers have pushed back on this characterization, arguing that experiencing mental illness does not increase a person's risk of committing acts of violence; rather, a person's access to a weapon augments that risk. In truth, people with mental illness are ten times more likely to be a victim of a violent crime than to be a perpetrator, and they are also significantly more likely to be victims than people who are not experiencing mental illness.

This stigmatization of people with mental illness as dangerous is widespread by films and television programs that use mental health disorders as a plot device. In horror movies, mental illness is often exploited as a scare tactic, with killers being characterized as "crazy" and beyond help. This equates people experiencing mental illness to malicious

monsters, thereby dehumanizing them and encouraging the audience to root for their inevitable destruction. The 1978 film *Halloween* opens with the central killer Michael Myers escaping from a psychiatric hospital, a classic and common backdrop of the horror genre. While the portrayal of mental health in horror movies is fictional, it still helps define how we view and interact with our world. For many people, their first or most frequent encounters with discussions of mental illness occur through consuming pop culture.

More recently, mental illnesses are also being unrealistically romanticized by the media, meaning that aspects of mental health struggles are idealized without accurately representing the lived experience of those struggles. Especially in media targeted toward young people, characters' experiences of anxiety or depression are often portrayed as poetic or tragically beautiful. This can lead to people not taking their own or others' mental health struggles seriously; not seeking help when they are experiencing mental illness; or viewing symptoms as a desirable, unchangeable part of their personalities. The adapted television series *13 Reasons Why* as well as the musical *Dear Evan Hansen* have both



BEN PLATT IN DEAR EVAN HANSEN, 2017.



THE CAST OF THE UMBRELLA ACADEMY, 2020.

been criticized by mental health advocates for portraying characters who die from suicide as martyrs, and for prioritizing shock factor over factual information that spreads awareness on mental health resources. *13 Reasons Why* now includes content warnings and resources at the start of every episode, but this was only added after the show's popularity corresponded with an increase of teenage self-harm and suicide rates.

While everyone's experience with mental health is different and no portrayal can be perfect, Netflix shows like *Never Have I Ever*, *Sex Education*, *The Umbrella Academy*, and *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* have been praised for their more nuanced depictions of characters experiencing mental illnesses or recovering from trauma. In theater, the rock musical *Next to Normal* has also been commended for centering a character who is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and normalizing the impact that mental illness has on families. These stories do not shy away from the devastating and debilitating effects mental illness can have on a person's life, while also pointing to hope for recovery. Mental illnesses are treatable with the right access to individualized care.

*Sabina* can also invite continued discussions about mental health in our Portland communities. Its dramatization of early mental health research shows the scale of the journey professionals have taken in developing that

care: from Freud's early work with the "talking cure" to now having an ever-increasing range of options for therapy and treatment. Using media to raise informative, humanizing, and nuanced awareness of mental health can help support more people to access the resources they need, as well as call for mental health treatment to be made more far-reaching and accessible to everyone.



JESSY BARDEN AND ALEX LAWTER IN THE END OF THE F\*\*\*ING WORLD, 2017.

# Sabina's "Death Instinct"

By Macey Downs

*"There is something about the human spirit that must challenge death by sailing to the very edge of life."* Sabina Spielrein in *Sabina*

In *Sabina*, we see Sabina Spielrein's journey from a severe mental health crisis to the development of her own psychoanalytic theories. During her life, Spielrein boasted a 30-year career as a psychoanalyst, and her innovative work went on to inspire both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. She was respected by these famous psychoanalysts, other colleagues, and the public throughout her career as a leading scholar. Yet soon after she was brutally murdered during the Holocaust in 1942, her contributions were widely forgotten, leaving her to be



YOUNG SABINA SPIELREIN (LEFT) WITH HER MOTHER AND SISTER.

remembered solely as the patient, muse, and mistress of Jung. In 2014, over 100 years after she started her career as a psychoanalyst, the first volume of her complete writings was published in Brazil, garnering more of the public recognition and respect that her contributions deserve.

Spielrein's most famous work is her paper "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being," which she published in 1912. This paper expands upon the "death instinct" theory (also known as the "death drive" or "death wish"), which she publicly hypothesized a year prior during her "On Transformation" lecture at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Spielrein's analysis of the death instinct came from questions that arose in her research around sexuality. In the opening of "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being," she asks of human sexual inclinations: "Why does this most powerful drive, the reproductive instinct, harbour negative feelings in addition to the inherently anticipated positive feelings?" Spielrein goes on to argue that humans are not purely pleasure-seeking organisms, but also contain a drive toward death and destruction. People can find joy in pain, such as through the catharsis of seeing a tragedy onstage. Even creation through reproduction comes at the price of destruction, especially for women—sometimes of the life of the mother during childbirth, and always of parts of her identity as an individual. Freud went on to publish theories around the death instinct in 1920 in his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and only cited Spielrein's contributions in a footnote. There are many fundamental differences between Spielrein's and Freud's arguments around the death drive, with Spielrein believing that drives toward pleasure and drives toward death are inseparably interconnected, and Freud believing that humans contain a purely negative drive outside of their instincts for pleasure. Freud also leaves out Spielrein's focus on the connections between the death instinct and femininity.



FREUD (FRONT LEFT) AND JUNG (FRONT RIGHT) AT CLARK UNIVERSITY IN 1909.

Spielrein's contributions to psychoanalysis stretch far beyond her death instinct theory. In "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being," she also called for psychologists to look to biology to better understand the workings of the human brain, laying groundwork for our current understanding that the mind and body are interconnected. She published over 30 essays on psychoanalysis during her lifetime, including studies on schizophrenia and new ideas around childhood development that inspired the work of renowned child psychologist Jean Piaget.

Jung and Freud both cite Spielrein in their work, particularly in the theories they develop from her original ideas on the death instinct. However, as their essays were translated into other languages, the footnotes of their work were not translated, erasing Spielrein's name from the papers that people around the world were reading. Readers were learning about the ongoing development of Spielrein's theory, but not the person who originated it. Historians have since discovered letters from Spielrein to Jung expressing concern about the erasure of her name from these translations, already predicting that she was going to be excluded from worldwide psychoanalyst recognition.

She unfortunately foresaw what would happen for the following decades: theories around "death instinct" became predominantly attributed to Freud and Jung, with Spielrein's name being left out of her own narrative. While this is partially due to her innovations being lost through translation, sexism, antisemitism, and anti-Russian sentiments also contributed to her erasure.

In 1942, Spielrein's voice was permanently lost during the Nazi invasion of her home in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, which not only took her life, but the lives of her two daughters and 27,000 other people living among them. Like millions of other victims of the Holocaust, Spielrein was left without a family legacy to pass down her story. Eighty years after her death, she is finally getting recognition in psychology literature that she deserves. Works like *Sabina* provide hope that her name will soon receive the same public attention as her male contemporaries.

# Recommended Resources

by Editors

## Books:

*The Essential Writings of Sabina Spielrein: Pioneer of Psychoanalysis* by Sabina Spielrein, edited by Ruth I. Cape and Raymond Burt  
*The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung* edited by William McGuire, translated by Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull  
*Freud's Vienna and Other Essays* by Bruno Bettelheim  
*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by C.G. Jung  
*A Most Dangerous Method* by John Kerr

## Plays:

*Next to Normal* book and lyrics by Brian Yorkey and music by Tom Kitt  
*Sabina* by Willy Holtzman

## Film:

*My Name Was Sabina Spielrein*  
*The Sound of Music*  
*A Dangerous Method*



J. ROBERT SPENCER AND ALICE RIPLEY IN *NEXT TO NORMAL*, ARENA STAGE, 2008.  
PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS.

# Portland Stage Company

## Education and Outreach

Join Portland Stage as we discuss, debate, and explore the plays on our stage and in the classroom! Portland Stage is dedicated to bringing exciting theater, inspiring conversation, interactive experiences, and thought-provoking literature to a wide audience of youth and adult learners. Whether you take part in a discussion, subscribe to *PlayNotes*, take a class in our Theater for Kids space, or bring a group of students to see a performance, there is something here for everyone. How would you like to participate?

### **Student Matinee Series**

The Portland Stage Student Matinee Program annually provides more than 7,000 middle and high school students from Maine and New Hampshire with discounted tickets for student matinees. This season, we are offering this program digitally. Portland Stage can send you the video in a way that works best for your group. We would be happy to do a workshop with you too!

### **Play Me a Story**

Experience the Fun & Magic of Theater on Saturday Mornings at 10:30am with Play Me a Story: in your living room! All ages can enjoy a free performance of children's stories on Facebook live. Ages 4-10 are welcome to participate in an interactive workshop over zoom for \$5. Build literacy, encourage creativity and spark dramatic dreams!

### **After School Classes**

After school classes at Portland Stage produce a safe environment for young people to find a higher sense of play, stretch their imaginations, and gain valuable social skills such as listening, risk-taking, ensemble building, public speaking, and leadership through storytelling. These classes are wildly fun, creative, spontaneous, and begin to build skills for the young actor or non-actor's voice, body, and imagination. Visit our website for this year's offerings!

### **Vacation and Summer Camps**

Our theater camps are fun, challenging, and enriching. We use stories of all kinds to fuel these active, educational and lively, process-based week-long school vacation and summer programs for youth. Theater for Kids works with professional actors, directors, artisans, and composers. Students are invited to think, speak, and act, and even sing imaginatively, critically, and creatively in an environment of inclusivity and safe play.

### **Virtual Portland Stage PLAY**

An interactive dramatic reading and acting workshop for elementary school students in grades K – 5. Professional teaching artists perform children's literature and classic poetry for the entire school, and then work with select classrooms in workshops based on the stories. Actors actively engage students in small groups/workshops using their bodies, voices, and imaginations to build understanding of the text while bringing the stories and characters to life. PLAY helps develop literacy and reading fluency, character recall, understanding of themes, social emotional skills, physical storytelling, and vocal characterization. The program also comes with a comprehensive Resource Guide filled with information and activities based on the books and poems.

### **Virtual Directors Lab**

Schools get access to a 50 minute filmed production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* performed by professional actors/teaching artists. After the performance, students engage directly with the text in an interactive virtual workshop with the actors and creative team. In these workshops, students practice effective communication, creative collaboration, rhetoric, and critical analysis. The program also comes with a comprehensive Resource Guide filled with information and resources about the play we are focusing on. Directors Lab puts Shakespeare's language into the hands and mouths of the students, empowering them to be the artists, directors, and ensemble with the power to interpret the text and produce meaning.

# Portland Stage Company

## 2021-2022 Staff

Anita Stewart *Executive & Artistic Director*

### **Artistic & Production Staff**

Meg Anderson *Props Master*  
Todd Brian Backus *Literary Manager*  
Daniel Brodhead *Production Manager, Lighting & Sound Supervisor*  
Hannah Cordes *Education Director*  
Ted Gallant *Technical Director*  
Nate Genrich *Carpenter*  
Myles C. Hatch *Stage Manager*  
Meg Lydon *Stage Manager*  
Julianne Shea *Education Administrator*  
Susan Thomas *Costume Shop Manager*

### **Affiliate Artists**

Ron Botting	Callie Kimball
Peter Brown	Daniel Noel
Daniel Burson	Ed Reichert
Maureen Butler	Hans Indigo Spencer
Ian Carlsen	Dustin Tucker
Hannah Cordes	Bess Welden
Moira Driscoll	Monica Wood
Abigail Killeen	Sally Wood

### **Administrative Staff**

Paul Ainsworth *Business Manager*  
Cody Brackett *Marketing Associate*  
Chris DeFilipp *House Manager*  
Beth Given *Development Director*  
Lindsey Higgins *Development Associate*  
Mical Hutson *Marketing Director*  
Zoë Lewis *Executive Assistant*  
Jennifer London *Company Manager*  
Martin Lodish *Finance Director*  
Renee Myhaver *Assistant Box Office Manager*  
Donald Smith *Audience Services Manager*  
Madeleine St. Germain *Front of House Associate*  
Adam Thibodeau *House Manager*  
Shannon Wade *Front of House Associate*

### **Intern/Apprentice Company**

Julian Bencze *Costumes Intern*  
Casey Boriskie *Stage Management Intern*  
Sophia B. Diaz *Education Apprentice*  
Macey Downs *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*  
Savanna Genskow *Props Apprentice*  
Meredith G. Healy *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*  
Audrey Kastner *Electrics Apprentice*  
Taylor Kibbler *General Intern*  
Katie Ludlam *Company Management Intern*  
Jessica Mount *Education Intern*  
Mallory Topel *Stage Management Intern*  
Kelly Yamahiro *Costumes Intern*