

La Ronde Director's Note

Arthur Schnitzler wrote *Reigen* (our play's original title) in Vienna in 1897. Banned from performance after its initial publication in 1903, the show was not officially performed until 1920. It became popular throughout Europe, specifically in France where it received its more famous French title *La Ronde*. In the U.S. its popularity led to various adaptations, including David Hare's *The Blue Room*, Joe DiPietro's *Fucking Men* and Michael John LaChiusa's musical version, *Hello Again*, which, if you are reading this note in the theatre before the show, you have the pleasure of listening to right now.

My first interaction with this story was through LaChiusa's adaptation. I was enthralled with the music and sought out the source material. And, like many other artists, I found myself incredibly intrigued by this text and its format. While on the surface it is easy to see why, in an earlier time, people branded the show as pornography not fit for public consumption, even the most cursory of studies will lead an engaged observer to see that there is more to this play than meets the eye.

Many believe that this play was never written with an eye towards actual stage performance, or, to use theatrical parlance, some believe it was intended to be a closet drama. Schnitzler knew it would likely be banned, not just due to its inherent sexuality, but also his scathing critique of the social class divisions within 1890s Vienna. People of that era not only had better lives if they were of a certain social strata, but also were thought to be, intrinsically, better people, morally superior and above the base emotions of the lower classes. Schnitzler found this concept abhorrent and hypocritical so he composed a story that addressed this issue within society. The brilliance of this play is that while it can speak to anyone, it gives the audience an objective view of whichever character most represents them within the story. On a broader level, it plays to Schnitzler's basic theory that all people are the same, no matter their social status, and therefore want the same things.

So what is it these characters want? Maybe it is just companionship. We both enter and leave this world alone. Perhaps the characters in this play just want their time in between to be meaningful, and to that end they endeavor to share it with someone. And, like many others, in the absence of authentic emotional connectedness, they will settle for making a physical connection with any proximate personage. Maybe that's enough. Maybe it isn't. But it's clear that this desire is not contingent upon where these characters come from in the societal hierarchy but, rather, exists as a universal human truth shared by all.

We have tried to create an interesting world that blends the exterior world to the emotional interior of our characters. I hope you can enjoy living in that world.