

SABINA

By Willy Holtzman

New Jewish Theatre
January 28 – February 15
At Clayton High School Little Theatre

SEX! MADNESS! SCANDAL!

WHO'S WHO and Time Line

Sigmund Freud: b. 1856, Vienna – d. 1939, known as the Father of Modern Psychoanalysis

Carl Jung: b. 1875 – d. 1961, early disciple of Freud who later split with him to develop his own approach to analysis

Ludwig Binswanger: b. 1881 – d. 1966, a doctor at the Burgholzli Hospital who also treated Sabina

Sabina Spielrein: b. 1885, Rostov – d. 1942, Rostov, daughter of a Russian-Jewish family who was admitted to the Burgholzli Hospital in Zurich with severe psychosis, was cured by Jung and then went to medical school and became an analyst in her own right

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

Setting: 1906, Burgholzli Hospital, Zurich

In the dawn of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud was always on the alert for new disciples, especially those who would expand acceptance of his controversial theories. One early convert was the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, who had had some success with a young patient named Sabina Spielrein, with whom Jung may have had an affair but who certainly became intricately involved with both men. The twisted tale of this triangle involving two titans of psychoanalysis, once so close and later so implacably estranged, and an obscure Russian woman, who pursued a career of her own as an analyst, was virtually unknown until a cache of documents was discovered in Geneva in 1977. Sabina Spielrein was one of the pioneers of psychoanalysis—a profound influence on both Freud and Jung until her death at the hands of a Nazi death squad.

The play (based on letters to and from her which were discovered and published in 1977) shows how even before dying with her two daughters at the hands of the Germans in her native Rostov in 1942, her fate was manipulated by both Jung and Freud for their own opportunistic ends: Jung published her case history and his Freudian analysis of her without her permission in order to gain favor with Freud; Freud

then took Jung to America as his protege but warned him that bringing Spielrein along might provoke a scandal.

The play follows the relationships of the three beginning with Sabina's first encounter with Jung in the Burgholzi Hospital in Zurich where, in 1906, the 19 year old granddaughter of a Rabbi, had been admitted as a patient. Jung was looking for someone to try out some of Freud's "talking cure" ideas. Traumatized by a 1906 pogrom in her native Rostov, she selects Jung - and is selected by him - to be cured of her catatonia by the use of a myth of her own choosing: Siegfried. The Wagner Ring Cycle mythology figures heavily in the story.

The triangular relationship between Spielrein, Jung and Freud had all the elements of a psychological thriller, wreathed in an aura of real history and sizzling with sexual passion. The undercurrents of anti-Semitism lend further fuel to the dramatic fire.

The play provides a tantalizing look into the life of a relatively unsung female pioneer in early psychoanalytic theory, Sabina Spielrein, a Russian Jew who was analyzed by both Jung and Freud.

ABOUT WILLY HOLTZMAN

Willy Holtzman was born and raised in St. Louis. *Sabina* was originally produced by Primary Stages in New York in 1996. It was revised and played in New York again in 2007. His play *Hearts*, about his father's struggles with the aftermath of being a liberator of Buchenwald, was performed to sold out houses by the New Jewish Theatre In December of 2004. It has also played at the Long Wharf Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Alliance Theatre, People's Light and Theatre and was nominated for the 2003 Pulitzer Prize. It also received the Arthur Miller Award for Dramatic Writing, Barrymore Award for Outstanding New Play and Smith and Kraus Best New Plays award.

Other plays by Holtzman include *Bower Boys*, *San Antonio Sunset* (Best Short Plays). His films include: *Edge of America* (directed by Chris Eyre, Sundance Film Festival Opening Night 2004), *Point Hope* (which shoots in 2005), *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* (in development for Matthew Perry); for television: *Blood Brothers* (HBO, WGA Nomination), *The Aaron Henry Story* (HBO, Emmy Nomination). Willy received the HBO Award at the National Playwrights Conference. He taught as a visiting artist at Bronx Regional High School in the South Bronx, 1987-89, and was Resident Playwright at Juilliard, 1990-92. He has worked with the 52d Street Project in New York's Hell's Kitchen and on the Navajo Reservation.

Willy currently resides in Connecticut.