

FUSE THEATRE OF CT PRESENTS
A DEVELOPMENTAL STAGED READING OF

The Awakening

**Adapted & Directed by
Lara Morton**

**Based on the Novel by
Kate Chopin**

March 29, 2025

3:00 pm & 7:30 pm

Lyric Hall

**827 Whalley Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515**

The Awakening is the inaugural work in
Fuse Theatre of CT's Plays In Development series.

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*A Midsummer Night's Dream:
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All Together Now! - 2021

Lost Girl - 2022

Songs For A New World - 2023

*Falsettos*** - 2023

*Wait 'Til You See What's Next:
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- 2023

*The Gospel According
To Broadway: A Fuse Concert* - 2024

*Assassins**** - 2024

* Winner, Best Feature-Length Comedy -
Legacy Theatre Film Festival

** 9 BroadwayWorldCT Nominations

*** 19 BroadwayWorldCT Nominations



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**Fuse Theatre of CT presents
a staged developmental
reading of**

The Awakening

Written & Directed by **Lara Morton**

Based on the Novel by **Kate Chopin**

Produced by **Elizabeth Santaus • Noah Golden**

Technical Direction by **Eric Wolff**

Script Consultation by **Noah Golden**



Costumes by **Nightwing Whitehead**

Technical Assistance by **Robert Berson**

Special Thanks: John Cavalier • Lyric Hall • Jodey
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New Haven • Elinor Slomba • James Berger •
Nancy Herman • Lucy Gellman •
Music Back Then Performance Theater

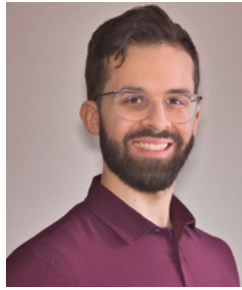
CONTENT WARNING:

The Awakening contains mature themes,
including depictions of suicide.





Mickey
Akridge



Dan
Anderson



Elizabeth
Bottoni



Stephanie
Carroll



Toni-Jo
Chila



Tristan
Cole



Lorin
DeLeo



Noelle
Fair



Keona Marie
Gomes



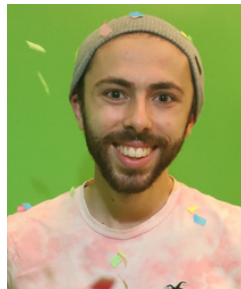
Kat
Lee



Jack B.
Levine



Tina Marie
Manus



Derek
Petti



Michael E.
Rattley



Sofia
Shubin



Dyllan
Siegmund



Elizabeth
Simmons



Gavin
Whelan

Cast

Edna Pontellier.....	ELIZABETH SIMMONS
Robert Lebrun.....	GAVIN WHELAN
Adèle Ratignolle.....	KAT LEE
Léonce Pontellier.....	DEREK PETTI
Mademoiselle Reisz.....	TINA MARIE MANUS
Victor Lebrun.....	MICKEY AKRIDGE
Dr. Mandelet.....	JACK B. LEVINE
Alcée Arobin, Male Lover.....	TRISTAN COLE
Colonel, Mr. Farival.....	MICHAEL E. RATTLEY
Madame Lebrun.....	NOELLE FAIR
Monsieur Ratignolle.....	DAN ANDERSON
Mariequita, Josephine.....	SOFIA SHUBIN
Miss Mayblunt, Female Lover, Cité.....	ELIZABETH BOTTONI
Mr. Gouvernail, Joe.....	DYLLAN SIEGMUND
Catiche, Mrs. Highcamp.....	TONI-JO CHILA
Monique.....	STEPHANIE CARROLL
Woman in Black, Ellen.....	LORIN DeLEO
Stage Directions.....	KEONA MARIE GOMES

Understudies

For Edna, Miss Mayblunt – SOFIA SHUBIN; for Robert, Victor – DAN ANDERSON; for Adèle, Mariequita, Monique – ELIZABETH BOTTONI; For Léonce – TRISTAN COLE; for Dr. Mandelet, Colonel – DYLLAN SIEGMUND; for Alcée – MICKEY AKRIDGE; for Mr. Farival – JACK LEVINE; for Mademoiselle Reisz – TONI-JO CHILA; for Cite – LORIN DeLEO; for Josephine – STEPHANIE CARROLL

Understudies never substitute for the listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the appearance.



Director's Note

Hello and Welcome!



Thank you for joining us for this developmental reading of *The Awakening*, an adaptation of Kate Chopin's groundbreaking 1899 novel. This event marks the inaugural effort of FUSE Theatre of CT's New Works Division, and you are among the first to witness it!

I first encountered *The Awakening* in an American Literature class, and it left a profound impression on me. As I delved into its history, I discovered its long and controversial past – banned for decades due to its themes of female autonomy, sexual freedom, and independent thought, which were considered too radical for their time. The novel's reception effectively ended Chopin's literary career, and she died just five years later, penniless and largely forgotten.

For over half a century, *The Awakening* remained buried in obscurity, removed from library shelves, until the Women's Movement of the 20th century resurrected it. Slowly, it found its rightful place in the canon of classic American literature – ultimately landing in my hands as a college freshman.

Had Chopin written *The Awakening* in the modern era, it would likely have been celebrated from the start. Tragically, she never lived to see the recognition her work deserved, nor did she witness her characters come to life on stage. I believe she would have embraced this project, and in many ways, I feel she is here with us today.

I began adapting *The Awakening* at nineteen, certain that the novel could be transformed into a compelling and faithful theatrical experience by someone who both loved it and understood the mechanics of making theatre. I took on that challenge, working on the adaptation in bursts over the next three years, culminating in a student-produced production during my final year of college – in the midst of a relentless upstate New York blizzard and a cast-wide flu outbreak. That first staging was a magical and transcendent experience for all of us, presented and performed with a wild abandon that Chopin herself would have appreciated. Those who braved the snow to see it were deeply moved – some even returned for a second viewing, despite the fact that the original version ran nearly four hours long.





Director's Note

Since then, life has taken me in many directions, but my passion for this play has never waned. Over the years, I have revisited and refined it, waiting for the right moment to bring it fully forward. That moment, I believe, is now.



Today, as we once again see efforts to silence literature that champions female autonomy and independent thought, *The Awakening* feels more urgent than ever. With books being challenged and removed from schools and libraries, and higher education facing backlash for encouraging critical thinking, I worry that future generations of young women may not encounter this novel the way I did — as an invitation to self-discovery, empowerment, and rebellion. I suspect that most of you here today already understand the vital role great literature plays in shaping our world. My purpose is not to preach to the choir but to invite you to experience *The Awakening* anew — to open your mind and senses to whatever it has to offer you. Somewhere within this story is something you need, something to hold onto as you navigate an increasingly uncertain world.

Kate Chopin paid a steep price for her courage. She risked everything to leave us this extraordinary gift — her words, her wisdom, her truth. She showed us what it means to be an artist of conviction. We owe her this moment. And in this moment, we need her — to remind us of who we are and to lend us strength to endure “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

*“To be an artist includes much; one must possess many gifts — absolute gifts — which have not been acquired by one’s own effort. And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul... The brave soul. The soul that dares and defies.” — Kate O’Flaherty Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899)*

Thank you for being part of this journey. Be brave.

Lara Elizabeth Morton
Playwright/Director, *The Awakening*



Meet The Cast

Micky Akridge (Victor Lebrun) began his pursuit of acting after taking improv classes. He branched out into theatre, working with AspenDream Productions, where he performed in dinner theatre improv shows *A Halloween Whodunnit* and *For Better & For Worse*. Micky made his stage play debut as Officer Harry Haggerty in *Nuts: A Play in Three Acts* with Actor's Gym. He also appears as an extra in upcoming local films "MightyClaw" by Gary Fierro and "In The Name Of Science: Nobel Prize" by Mr. Birdie Productions. When not acting, he enjoys attending local events and book discussion groups.

Dan Anderson (Monsieur Ratignolle), he/him, has worked in tech for a decade but found acting and improv last year as an escape from isolated remote work. This quickly led him to his first performance with Orange Player's in *Acting Up 2024* as Ben in *Bump in the Night*. He is very happy to be a part of this production and thanks Fuse Theatre for the opportunity.

Elizabeth Bottoni (Miss Mayblunt, Female Lover, Cité) is a lifelong theater lover who is thrilled to be helping to bring *The Awakening* to life. She has been acting since 2012, and is glad to be able to be back up on stage again! Some of her favorite roles from other productions include Lady Macbeth in *I Hate Shakespeare*, Gilmer in *Godspell*, Veronica in *God of Carnage*, and Janet in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Stephanie Carroll (Monique), she/her, is excited to be making her debut with Fuse Theatre. After having taken a hiatus from theatre, she is excited to get back into acting. She has been performing with the North Pole Express at the Essex Steam Train in Essex CT for 4 seasons. She has participated in 24 hour theatre at the Mayfly Festival (New London, 2025) and Meteor Night (Windham Theatre Guild, 2024). She will be making her re-debut into musical theatre in the spring as Shirley in *The Producers* (Connecticut Theatre Company). Pre-hiatus shows include: *Aida* (Handmaiden), *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (Laurie Morton), and *California Suite* (Lighting/Stage Manager). She would like to thank her Mom, her sisters, her best friends Sabrina & Cody, her NPBF, and her cat, Penny Lane, for always believing in her & supporting her.

Toni-Jo (TJ) Chila (Catiche, Mrs. Highcamp) of Milford is excited to be making her debut in Fuse Theater of CT 's production of *The Awakening*. She was recently in The Orange Players One Acts, *Acting Up 2024*. Other area credits include performances with Eastbound Theater, Town Players, Newtown, Easton Readers Theater, Carriage House, Norwalk, and Westport Community Theater. TJ is on the Board of The Orange Players and is an active member of SheSpeak, a local organization that celebrates Women's voices and stories. Thank you to Noah and Lara for inviting me into this awesome theater group.

Tristan Cole (Alcée Arabin, Male Lover) is happy to work with Fuse for the first time. His latest work include *The Elephant Man* (Ross), *The Tempest* (Antonio), and *2 Rooms*. Tristan comes from Mystic, CT and enjoys working on new projects. He hopes you enjoy the journey this talented cast is prepared to take you on.

Lorin DeLeo (Woman in Black, Ellen) is making her Fuse and stage debut in *The Awakening*.

Noelle Fair (Madame Lebrun) is delighted to be welcomed into the Fuse family. She just finished directing *My Children! My Africa!* with Eastbound Theatre/MAC and was last seen this summer in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Ford) with Hudson Shakespeare Company. Other CT credits include: *Deadman's Cellphone* (Hermia) with Eastbound Theater and *The Crucible* (Parris) with Escapism Productions. Noelle holds an MFA from the University of Exeter and has studied and performed at Shakespeare's Globe and with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Thanks to Tina and Jon, and Lara and Noah for the opportunity.

Keona Marie Gomes (Stage Directions), she/her, is an award-winning playwright, poet, actress, and arts activist from New Haven, CT. Though she seldomly graced the stage in recent years, she has had the supreme honor of assisting with Fuse productions such as *The Lion King Jr.*, *Lost Girl*, and *The Gospel According to Broadway*. She is thrilled to once again lend her voice to a collective that celebrates community, creativity, and the transformative power of the arts. Keona extends her heartfelt thanks to her dear friends and her endlessly supportive boyfriend for their unwavering encouragement.

Kat Lee (Adèle Ratignolle), she/her, is delighted to collaborate with Fuse Theatre once again. She hopes Kate Chopin's work, courageous for its time, will inspire you to take risks and challenge norms in the present. Past stage credits include: *Assassins* (Fuse), *I Was Loved By a Rat* (NYC Fringe Festival), *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Eurydice*. You can also catch her in the music video "Sway" for the band Mates of State. Kat works as a drama therapist and educator who facilitates embodied storytelling and play with folx recovering from traumatic life experiences. She is a proud graduate of Oberlin College and NYU. Thank you to Jason, Bowie, and her daughter-to-be, whom she looks forward to meeting later this year.

Jack B. Levine (Dr. Mandelet) is excited to play the Doctor in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, adapted for Stage by Lara Elizabeth Morton. Jack is no stranger to acting in the area, as he has performed in several plays in The Orange Players' *Acting Up!*, including *Zooming Thru Life*, *You Haven't Changed A Bit*, and *153*. He played Grandpa Joe in *Willy Wonka The Musical* at Broadway On Main Theater in East Haven. Levine also did a sold-out solo performance at the Palace Theater in their 2nd Act Series. Jack has published eight books of fictional short stories, parodies and comedy sketches, an anthology of his 27 plays, and a memoir.

Dr. Tina Marie Manus (Mademoiselle Reisz) is a performance artist and professional vocalist. She earned her B.A. in Theatre from Southern CT State University, and worked for 20 years as an educator, church soloist, and choir director, before earning her PhD in Organizational Leadership. Tina performs professionally for Grymm Studios, Inc., the North Pole Express CT, and the North Pole Express NYC. She has directed and performed with a number of local community theater troupes, including Eastbound Theatre, The Orange Players, and Theatre Makers Lab. She is excited to play the feisty Mademoiselle Reisz in her first Fuse Theatre production!

Derek Petti (Léonce Pontellier) is an engineer who enjoys doing theater and music in his spare time, and is happy to be able to balance his career while pursuing his passion in his 2nd production with Fuse Theatre of CT. He is also a budding composer and music producer. Some of his recent roles include Czolgosz in Fuse's production of *Assassins*, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Mr. Maraczek in *She Loves Me*.

Michael E. Rattley (Colonel, Mr. Farival), he/him, previously worked in the New Haven School System as a School Psychologist for thirty years. After retirement he found his way to the stage. Michael has appeared as The Captain in *Anything Goes* (Black Rock Theatre) and Uncle Henry/Gatekeeper in *The Wizard of Oz* (Broadway on Main). He has kept busy with numerous one act plays in festivals as part of Genoveva Productions in NY. You may also recognize him from the Yale Cancer commercial as the pizza making grandfather.

Sofia Shubin (Mariequita, Josephine), she/her, is currently a full time student at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) studying biology. Although most of her days entail research, the arts are what fuel her. Sofia has appeared in various musicals and stage adaptations from childhood to college and adulthood, notably, *The Hundred Dresses* and the 2023 and 2024 One Act Festivals at SCSU. She is overjoyed to be working with Fuse and ecstatic for this important message to hit the stage.

Dyllan Siegmund (Mr. Gouvernail, Joe), he/him, is no fresh face to Fuse, having been in multiple productions since as early as their run of *The Lion King Jr.* (Zazu) in 2020 and also performed in their productions of *All Together Now!* (Vocalist) and *Lost Girl* (Toodles/Therapist). Compassionate and uplifting, Dyllan loves the arts and jumped at the chance to be a part of *The Awakening's* development, especially knowing his old friends at FUSE were behind it. He primarily pursues a career in voiceover, having over 7 years of experience, but would never say no to any experience to bust out his physical acting chops! He would like to dedicate his performance to his best friend and childhood therapy cat, Tiger. He passed away just over a year ago, and he is undoubtedly the reason he's still here today. This is Dyllan's first on stage performance since then, and he intends on showing him how he doesn't intend to stop growing now.

Elizabeth Simmons (Edna Pontellier) is excited to be playing Edna in this beautiful adaptation of *The Awakening*. She is part of the Theatre Artists Workshop (TAW) in CT, and recently played Tracy in a TAW developed play, *Potholes*, at the Chain Theatre in NYC. Select regional credits: *The Miracle Worker/And Then There Were None* (Judson Theatre Company) *Sexy Laundry* (Millbrook Playhouse), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Playhouse on Park), *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Queen's Theatre in the Park), *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (Broward Stage Door Theatre). BFA Acting Point Park University/Pittsburgh Playhouse. MS Ed. Theatre CUNY City College of New York.

Gavin Whelan (Robert Lebrun) is a recent transplant to New Haven from Bloomington, Indiana, where he studied at Indiana University. He is proud and grateful to make his Fuse Theatre debut as Robert. For New Haven Theatre Company: *The Christians* (Associate), *Webster's Bitch* (Nick). For Stag & Lion Theatre: *King Lear* (Cornwall). For IU Theatre: *Universal Robots* (Karel Capek), *The Weir* (Jim), *Hamlet* (Osric), *Metamorphoses* (Midas), *Tiger Beat* (Mr. J).

Meet The Creative Team


Lara Morton (Writer/Director), she/her, co-founded Fuse in 2019 after a dynamic career teaching, performing, writing, and directing theatre across Connecticut and New York. With Fuse, Lara has directed standout productions including *Falsettos*, *The Gospel According to Broadway*, *Lost Girl* (2022), *The Lion King Jr.* (2020/virtual), and the acclaimed *A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Rewired Musical*, a pandemic innovation that won Best Feature-length Comedy at the Legacy Theatre Film Festival and is now a teaching resource for educators on YouTube. As a co-producer, she has contributed to *All Together Now!* (2021), *Songs for a New World* (2023) and *Assassins* (2024). Lara is also an accomplished performer and recently appeared in The Essex Steam Train's *North Pole Express*. In addition to her theatre work, she is a voice actor, vocalist, face painter, playwright, acting coach/theatre teacher, and Simulated Patient actor for Yale School of Medicine. Lara is endlessly grateful for the talented team at Fuse, who bring their passion, skill, and warmth to every project. Instagram: @laraemorton_0425.

Noah Golden (Producer/Script Consultant), he/him, has been a lead creative at Fuse since 2020. Noah last directed Fuse Theatre of CT's production of *Assassins*. Other Fuse credits include *Songs For A New World* (director), *The Gospel According to Broadway* (producer), *Lost Girl* (producer), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Rewired Musical* (editor/adaptation). Onstage he has performed in *Falsettos* (Mendel, BroadwayWorld CT nominee), *25th Annual...Spelling Bee* (Barfée), *Man of La Mancha* (Sancho), and *Trestle At Pope Lick Creek* (Chas). Noah has also worked behind the scenes with The Orange Players, Legacy Theatre, A Shared Stage, Vintage Soul Productions, and Long Wharf Theatre. During the day, Noah is a video producer and editor for Yale School of Medicine. Instagram: @Noah.Golden.90.

Elizabeth Santaus (Producer), she/her, graduated from Wellesley College with a major in studio art and a minor in mathematics. Elizabeth has over thirty years of experience in the financial accounting software and bookkeeping industry. With previous experience consulting and as CFO for three sister companies in Branford, Santaus knows how to help businesses prosper and grow. She has consulted, trained, and provided bookkeeping services for more than 300 small businesses in Connecticut and New York since launching Dressler Santaus LLC in 2006. She has been a QuickBooks® trainer for the Community Economic Development Fund's Bridgeport location and currently presents seminars in conjunction with SCORE. Santaus has been Treasurer of The Network of Executive Women of Milford, Inc. for seven years. A member of the Gateway Christian Fellowship congregation, Santaus' strong faith and seemingly effortless grace extends to this community and to the arts. The arts, particularly fine art, musical theater, and dance, have been her unpaid passion, and she is thrilled to be able to combine this love with her financial management skills working with Fuse, and has successfully written several state grants to fund this season's productions. Since coming to Fuse, Santaus has served as Executive Producer on *A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Rewired Musical* (2021), *All Together Now!* (2021), *Lost Girl* (2022), *Songs For A New World* (2023), *Falsettos* (2023), *The Gospel According to Broadway* (2024), and *Assassins* (2024).

Eric Wolff (Technical Director), he/him, has a background in theater, having majored in theater with a minor in religion at Sarah Lawrence College. He has also played the trumpet and recorders since childhood and currently plays in the Guilford Town Band and the SCSU Concert Band. Subsequent to Sarah Lawrence, Eric performed, designed and ran lights, as well as designed and built sets for off Broadway theaters including La Mama ETC, The Open Space, and The Manhattan Theater Club. Also during those years, he worked for John Scher productions at The Capitol Theater in Passaic, Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City, The Casino Arena in Asbury Park, and The Asbury Park convention center with any and every Rock and Roll act that toured in the 70s. Subsequently he became a IATSE stagehand at BAM. Ultimately, Eric formed Aegis Universal Dance and Performance Company with Edward Caton and Gyles Fontaine. Their productions were reviewed in the New York Times and Dance magazine among other publications. He has served as Managing Director of Organizational Development of an international non-profit called Destination Imagination. He has been an instructor at Baruch/CUNY where he taught Systems Thinking and Management Practices. As an Organizational Development consultant he has worked with diverse organizations, including Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, New York Live Arts, and The Thomas Keller Restaurant Group. He is delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to Fuse where he has also served as producer of *The Gospel According to Broadway* and technical director of *Assassins*.





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development of “The
Awakening.”**

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this production or
adaptation.**

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from you!**

