

Pizarro: 'Spring Awakening' makes a splash at San Jose Rep

[By Sal Pizarro](#)

spizarro@mercurynews.com

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As opening nights go, the San Jose Rep probably couldn't have wished for better than it got with "Spring Awakening" on Wednesday.

An energetic buzz filled downtown's Hammer Theatre Center before the show, as audience members stole glances at choreographer Sonya Tayeh of "So You Think You Can Dance" fame. She was easy to spot, thanks to her jet-black mohawk and red tartan outfit.

This collaboration with the San Jose Rep marked Tayeh's first foray into theater choreography, and she exuberantly bounced out of her seat as the actors performed her moves.

Steven Sater, who wrote the book and lyrics for the musical, was also in the sold-out house and was the first to rise for a standing ovation when the show ended.

Many audience members at a post-show reception praised the show as one of the most provocative in the Rep's 31-year history. But the show's scenes of teenage sexual angst and confusion certainly aren't for everyone. (I heard that one patron who had been unaware of the show's content described it as "depraved.")

At a cast party later Wednesday night at Eulipia, Rep Artistic Director Rick Lombardo -- who also directed the show -- conceded that some people might be turned off by the material. But he countered that the audience for the previews and opening night was noticeably younger than it has been in the past.

In any case, Managing Director Nick Nichols said ticket sales have been brisk for the run, which ends Sept. 25. Sounds like the Rep may have a hit on its hands.