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Dramatic Publishing

The Awakening



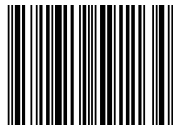
Adapted by Max Bush
From the novel by Kate Chopin

The Awakening

Drama. Adapted by Max Bush. From the novel by Kate Chopin.
Cast: 4m., 5w. When *The Awakening* was first published in 1899, it shocked the sensibilities of both the public and the critics. Kate Chopin, stung by the severe criticism, soon ceased writing. The novel all but disappeared until rediscovered mid-20th century as part of the women's movement. Twenty-eight-year-old Edna Pontillier questions her marriage to her older husband, Leonce. She frequently seeks the company of the young Robert Lebrun. Together they share a love of the sea and the romance of local lore. As their relationship progresses, Robert forces himself to move to Mexico. However, this does not stop Edna from continuing her personal journey to awaken to her greater self—to nature, both within and without her. *Unit set.*
Approximate running time: 100 minutes. Code: AM1.

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The Awakening

By

MAX BUSH

From the novel by

KATE CHOPIN



Dramatic Publishing Company

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(THE AWAKENING)

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The Awakening was first produced at the Holland Civic Theatre in Holland, Mich., and opened on March 6, 2015, with the following cast and crew:

CAST:

Leonce Pontellier Brian M. Everitt
Edna Pontellier Kristin Ripley
Robert Lebrun Spencer Tomlin
Adele Ratignolle CJ Namenye Wood
Mariequita Kaija Von Websky
Mademoiselle Reisz Beth Coats
Lady in Black Margo B. Walters
Dr. Mandelet Robert R. Robins
Alcee Arobin Richard Mulligan

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Directors Kelly Herremans, Max Bush
Producer Brian M. Everitt
Costume Design Onalee Sherry
Set Construction William Hoffman Jr.
Light Board Operator Hunter Kendall, Lynette Bush
Props Jo Lee Hansen

The Awakening

CHARACTERS

Leonce Pontellier: 40
Edna Pontellier: 28
Robert Lebrun: 26
Adele Ratignolle: 30
Mariequita: 20-25
Mademoiselle Reisz: 30-60
Lady in Black: 25-45
Dr. Mandelet: 60
Alcee Arobin: 30-35

TIME: Summer and fall of 1899, early spring of 1900.

PLACE: Various locations around Grand Isle and New Orleans: the front porch of the Pontellier cottage, the seaside, the Reisz living room, the horse racetrack, the Pontellier home, Edna's little house and Adele's salon.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 100 minutes.

To Kelly Herremans and Brian Everitt,
in gratitude for all you do.

I thank the following for their invaluable help in the
development of this script: Brian Everitt, Miller Fenwood
Restoration, Westshore Mall, Buttons and Blooms LLC,
Lynette Gallert, Abigail Fergus, Hannah Cremin and the cast
and crew of the initial production.

The Awakening

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Preshow music begins.

The actor playing MADEMOISELLE REISZ appears at the piano and plays the opening of Polonaise in G Minor, opus posthumous, measures 1-12, by Chopin.

Music continues through the opening.

At rise we see the front of the Pontellier cottage in Grand Isle. It is Sunday, late morning, summer of 1899.

LEONCE PONTELLIER reads the newspaper, sitting on a wicker chair. ROBERT LEBRUN, who carries an umbrella, enters with EDNA PONTELLIER, laughing, having just finished swimming in the ocean.

Piano out.)

LEONCE. What folly! To bathe at such an hour and in such heat. You should have gone for your plunge with me early this morning.

(EDNA moves to LEONCE, holds out her hand, and LEONCE puts rings on her finger. EDNA looks at ROBERT, then laughs. ROBERT, understanding her, laughs as well.)

LEONCE *(cont'd)*. What is it?

(EDNA and ROBERT speak simultaneously.)

EDNA. I dove underwater and would not come up until—

ROBERT. She stayed underwater until I became worried and—

EDNA. And I came up behind Robert—

ROBERT. I was frantic, I couldn't see you; I never imagined you could stay under so long—

EDNA. I pinched his side and he screamed like a little girl!!

(She screams as he did. They laugh. LEONCE rises, yawns and stretches.)

LEONCE. The morning seems long. But then Sunday mornings always seem long in Grand Isle. I have half a mind to go over to Klein's Hotel for a game of billiards. Come along, Lebrun. I'll make you a rich man.

ROBERT. Thank you, but I prefer to stay and talk to Mrs. Pontellier.

LEONCE. Well, send him about his business when he bores you, Edna.

EDNA. Here, take the umbrella.

(She retrieves the umbrella from ROBERT and hands it to LEONCE. He hands her a letter.)

LEONCE. Your letter from your sister. You have not opened it as yet and I am assured there is an important announcement in it. *(He starts off.)*

EDNA. Coming back to dinner?

LEONCE *(halting, shrugging his shoulders)*. Depends upon the size of the game. Tell the children I promise to bring back bonbons and peanuts. *(He exits.)*

ROBERT. I thought you would never come up out of the water and then— *(She pinches his side again.)* Ah! *(They both laugh again.)* I shall miss this. I shall miss you, Mrs. Pontellier.

EDNA. Whatever are you talking about, Robert? (*Opening the envelope.*)

ROBERT. I intend to go to Mexico in the autumn, where my fortune awaits.

EDNA. You are always intending to go to Mexico, but some way, you never get there. I will see you in New Orleans this winter. (*She unfolds letter; reads. Her demeanor darkens.*)

ROBERT. I cannot continue forever in my low position in the mercantile house. As I say, my fortune awaits in Mexico! (*He sees she is distracted.*) Well, what is it that takes you away from me?

EDNA. My sister Janet has announced her impending marriage ... Foolish girl.

ROBERT. Foolish? She is to be married!

EDNA. She welcomes her "fate." (*ROBERT seems to not understand this.*) We grew up on our father's Mississippi plantation and on our home in old Kentucky blue grass country. (*With a thick Kentucky accent.*) I am afraid you would not understand.

ROBERT. Are you saying that her marriage will resemble yours?

EDNA. Perhaps I am. Mine was purely an accident, which resembles many other marriages which masquerade as fate.

ROBERT. How can a marriage be an accident.

EDNA. Leonce fell in love, as men are in the habit of doing, and he pressed his suit with a passion which—apparently—I could not ignore. As the devoted wife of a man who worshiped me, I felt I would take my place with a certain dignity in the world of reality, and leave my secret passions, in childhood.

ROBERT. Ooohhh, secret passions ...

EDNA. I grew fond of Leonce. (*Carefully folds letter.*) And realized—with satisfaction—that no trace of passion or excessive warmth colored my affection for him. Therefore, they could cause no threat to our union. (*Slowly tears letter into pieces.*) Add to this my sister's and my father's (*Thick Kentucky accent.*) violent opposition to my marrying a Catholic, (*Back to her voice.*) and you will need no other motives for my marriage, and need not call it "fate".

ROBERT. What is your father like?

EDNA. Successful.

ROBERT. And your mother?

EDNA. She died. When I was five. (*She drops pieces of the letter.*) Leonce will not be coming back until late this evening.

ROBERT. There are a good many New Orleans club men over at Klein's; and Mr. Pontellier is expert at billiards.

EDNA. Will you join us for dinner? The children are so fond of you.

ROBERT. Of course.

(A pregnant ADELE RATIGNOLLE enters, followed by MARIEQUITA, who carries ADELE's sewing basket.)

ADELE. Ah, you are home, Mrs. Pontellier. With, of course, young Robert at your feet.

EDNA. Madam Ratignolle, have you come to sit a while?

ADELE. In my condition, it is what I must do.

(She sits in the rocker. MARIEQUITA helps her sit, then hands her the sewing basket.)

ROBERT. Congratulations once again. Your fourth?

(She indicates "yes.")

EDNA. Then may I sketch you?

ADELE. If you wish.

(EDNA exits quickly.)

MARIEQUITA *(with a coy smile)*. Hola, Roberto.

ROBERT. Mariequita.

ADELE. Robert, will you walk me home after my visit?

ROBERT. Of course.

MARIEQUITA. *Claro que si.*

ADELE *(to MARIEQUITA)*. You may go.

MARIEQUITA *(to ROBERT)*. *Ai, Roberto, tu es mono grande estúpido de las mujeres, no?*

ROBERT. *Y tu intiendo nada, Chiquita.*

ADELE. In English!

MARIEQUITA. Thank you, Robert, you are a gracious gentleman, are you not?

ROBERT. As gracious as you are insightful, little Mariequita.

ADELE. You may go, Mariequita.

MARIEQUITA. Madam. *(Flirtatiously.)* Roberto ...

(MARIEQUITA exits as EDNA re-enters, carrying her sketchbook and pencils.)

EDNA. I believe I ought to work, again. What do you think of that?

ADELE. Your talent is immense, dear.

EDNA. Nonsense.

ADELE. Robert?

ROBERT. Immense!

ADELE. The picture of apples you gave to me—One is tempted to reach out and take one. The romantic cavalry officer—dignified and yet sad-eyed, a face like Napoleon himself. And your image of the Tragedian—So sad, so full of life, so enigmatic—love and death in one moment. How do you do it?

EDNA. You are kind, Madame Ratignolle, And a tempting subject. Your beauty is all there; apparent to everyone.

ROBERT. Oh, yes.

EDNA. Hair that no comb or pin could restrain; blue eyes like sapphires; an artist would not want your neck less full or your beautiful arms more slender. Your hands are exquisite; it is a joy to look at them while you sew. You ... awaken feelings that ... may not be understandable ...

ROBERT (*in a serio-comic tone*). Yes, and could anyone fathom the cruelty beneath that fair exterior? She knew I adored her once, and she let me adore her. It was “Robert, come; go; stand up; sit down; see if the baby sleeps. Come and read Daudet to me while I sew.”

ADELE. I never had to ask. You were always there under my feet, like a troublesome cat.

ROBERT. You mean like an adoring dog. And just as soon as Mr. Ratignolle appeared, then it *was* like a dog. *Passez! Adieu! Allez vous-en!* (*Continuing in a serio-comic tone.*) Oh, the sleepless nights hopelessly dreaming of you; of consuming flames till the very sea sizzled when I took my daily plunge.

ADELE. *Blagueur—arceur—grosbete, va!*

EDNA. Robert, you must never speak like this to me. It would be unacceptable and annoying.

ROBERT. Of course.

(ROBERT moves to EDNA and sits next to her. EDNA stops drawing, puts her hand on ROBERT affectionately and gazes off at some inward vision.)

ADELE. Of whom—of what are you thinking?

EDNA. Nothing ... How stupid! That's the reply we make instinctively to such a question. Let me see. I was not conscious of thinking about anything. But ...

ADELE (*fanning herself with her fan, which she always has dangling from a ribbon*). Oh, never mind. It is really too hot to think about thinking.

EDNA (*rising, gazing out*). It was a summer day in Kentucky, in a meadow that seemed as big as the ocean. As I walked through the grass, which was higher than my waist, I threw out my arms as if swimming. My sun bonnet obstructed the view, I could see only the stretch of green before me, and I felt as if I must walk on forever.

ADELE. Where were you going that day?

EDNA. I don't remember now. Likely as not it was Sunday (*She laughs.*) and I was running away from my prayers, from the (*Thick Kentucky accent.*) Presbyterian service (*Her voice.*) read in a spirit of gloom by my father.

ADELE. And have you been running away from prayers ever since, *ma chere*?

EDNA. No! Oh, no! I was a little unthinking child in those days, just following a misleading impulse without question. On the contrary, during one period of my life religion took a firm hold upon me; after I was twelve and until—until—why, I suppose until now, though I never thought much about it. But do you know, sometimes I feel this summer as if I were walking through the green meadow again; idly; aimlessly; unthinking; and unguided.

(ADELE rises, moves to EDNA, takes EDNA's hand and clasps it firmly.)

ADELE. *Pauvre chérie.*

EDNA. Poor? No, Madame Ratignolle ... the memory is like a light which shines again.

ADELE. But clearly it disturbs you. *(Short silence.)* It is the heat today. Perhaps, something to drink, Mrs. Pontellier?

EDNA. Of course.

ROBERT. Shall I help you?

ADELE. Robert, I have a stiffness in my joints. Could you accompany me around the walk?

(ROBERT holds out his arm, and she leans heavily on him. EDNA exits. ROBERT slowly escorts ADELE as she leans on him.)

ADELE *(cont'd)*. You must do me a favor, Robert.

ROBERT. As many as you like.

ADELE. You must leave Mrs. Pontellier alone.

ROBERT *(laughs)*. *Voilà que Madame Ratignolle est jealous!*

ADELE. Jealousy? Nonsense. She is not one of us; she is not like us. She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously.

ROBERT. Why shouldn't she take me seriously? Am I always to be regarded as a clown?

ADELE. If your attentions were ever offered with any intention of being convincing, you would not be the gentleman we all know you to be, and you would be unfit to associate with the wives and daughters of the people who trust you.

ROBERT. Now if I were like Arobin—you remember Alcee Arobin and that story of the consul's wife?

ADELE. You are not Alcee Arobin. You are a *bon garcon*—a good boy.

ROBERT. You make one mistake, Adele: There is no earthly possibility of Mrs. Pontellier ever taking me seriously. You should have warned me against taking myself seriously.

ADELE. *Bon garcon ...*

(EDNA returns with a tray, holding a large glass of water, a handkerchief and a bottle of cologne water.)

EDNA. Are you faint?

ADELE. I am much improved.

(ADELE drinks water. EDNA pours some cologne water on the handkerchief and then dabs it on ADELE's face.)

ROBERT. Will you come bathing, Mrs. Pontellier?

ADELE. Robert?

EDNA. I am tired and I think not.

ROBERT. Oh, come; the sun is low in the west and the breeze is soft and warm.

ADELE. Don't be a pest, Robert.

ROBERT. The water will revive you; it will not hurt you.

ADELE. But you have made promises to me.

ROBERT. I will walk you home and return for you, Mrs. Pontellier? We will have time for a swim before our dinner.

EDNA. Very well.

(ROBERT begins to escort ADELE off.)

ADELE. *Blagueur.*

(EDNA watches them go off, then dabs her face with the handkerchief. Lights up on REISZ as she plays the piano. At present, she plays a couple flourishes as if she is warming up.)

REISZ. But why have you come to me, today?

EDNA *(still dabbing her face. This is a memory)*. To hear you play, Mademoiselle Reisz.

REISZ. You are the only one worth playing for. Those others in society? Bah!

EDNA *(picking up her drawing)*. You are mistaken. Your playing arouses a fever of enthusiasm. "What passion! What an artist!" the others say. "No one can play Chopin like Mademoiselle Reisz. *(Looking at her sketch.)*

REISZ. You wish to hear Chopin, then?

EDNA. I wish you to please yourself with a selection.

(REISZ pauses to consider.)

EDNA *(cont'd)*. Whenever you play, it evokes pictures in my mind.

(REISZ begins to play Chopin's Étude op. 10, no. 3, in E Major, measures 1-8.

EDNA listens attentively. The music affects her directly. After about a minute of playing, REISZ pauses.)

EDNA. But why have you stopped?

REISZ. What picture is in your mind?

EDNA. A young man, standing near a large rock on the seashore. He is watching a distant bird winging its flight away from him.

REISZ. Ah, *cherie* ... and now this ...

(She resumes playing Waltz in A Minor, opus posthumous. This new section is lighter at first. EDNA closes her eyes, smiles and sways with the music, almost dancing.)

REISZ continues to play the piano as EDNA exits. REISZ continues until she comes to an end. Crossfade to the next scene.)

SCENE 2

(The beach, later that evening, just after sunset. The LADY IN BLACK enters, reading her Bible aloud. She sits.)

LADY. “For they eat the bread of wickedness. And drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”

(EDNA and ROBERT run onto the beach in their bathing suits. EDNA sees the LADY and stops for just a moment as ROBERT sets out a blanket.)

LADY *(cont’d)*. “The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble.”

(EDNA and ROBERT lie on the blanket.)

EDNA. How easy it is! All summer I attempted to learn to swim. And now!

ROBERT *(applauding)*. Yes, yes!

EDNA. I always had a dread about me in the water, unless there was someone near who could reach out and hold me. *(Suddenly charged.)* Did you see, Robert, I swam out—alone!

ROBERT. My special teachings have taught you to trust yourself.