



Stage Notes

Little Theatre of
VIRGINIA BEACH
The Beach's Playhouse since 1948

Season 62, Issue 6

July 2010

LTVB Presents...

The Secret Garden
Book and lyrics by Marsha Norman
Music by Lucy Simon
Based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett
Directed by Dave Hobbs

THE SECRET GARDEN is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

Performances: July 16 - August 8, 2010
Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00pm & Sundays at 2:30pm

A Musical for Everyone...

The Secret Garden is a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It was initially published in serial format starting in autumn 1910; the book was first published in its entirety in 1911. Its working title was *Mistress Mary*, in reference to the English nursery rhyme *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary*. It is now one of Burnett's most popular novels, and is considered to be a classic of children's literature.

The Secret Garden has been adapted many times for other media. The first filmed version was made in 1919 by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation with 17 year old Lila Lee as Mary and Paul Willis as Dickon, but the film is thought lost. In 1949, MGM filmed the second adaptation with Margaret O'Brien. This version was mostly in black-and-white, but the sequences set in the restored garden were filmed in Technicolor. The most acclaimed film adaptation is American Zoetrope's 1993 production. It was directed by Agnieszka Holland and starred Kate Maberly as Mary, Heydon Prowse as Colin, Andrew Knott as Dickon and Dame Maggie Smith as Mrs. Medlock.

Dorothea Brooking adapted the book into many different television serials for the BBC: an eight-part serial in 1952, an eight-part serial in 1960 (starring Colin Spauull as Dickon), and a seven-part serial in 1975. In 1987, Hallmark Hall of Fame filmed a TV adaptation starring Gennie James as Mary, Barret Oliver as Dickon, and Jadrien Steele as Colin. Derek Jacobi plays the role of Archibald Craven, with Alison Doody appearing in flashbacks and visions as Liliias; a young Colin Firth also makes a brief appearance as the adult Colin Craven.

Stage adaptations of the book have also been created. One notable adaptation is this musical with music by Lucy Simon and book and lyrics by Marsha Norman, which premiered in Norfolk at the Virginia Stage Company and opened on Broadway in 1991. The production was nominated for seven Tony Awards, winning Best Book of a Musical and Best Featured Actress in a Musical (Daisy Eagan as Mary, at eleven years old, is the youngest girl ever to win a Tony; Frankie Michaels is the youngest person to ever win a Tony at age ten for his performance in the Broadway musical *Mame* in 1966).



Notes from the director, Dave Hobbs...

Bringing this wonderful production to life here at LTVB has been one of my biggest challenges as a director. It employs a large cast, and there are several scene changes and numerous technical decisions. However, by recruiting a fantastic production team and casting wonderful people in all the roles, the challenges were met and conquered. The garden is the show's central symbol. The secret garden at Misselthwaite Manor is the site of both the near-destruction and the subsequent regeneration of a family. The garden motif explores the healing power inherent in living things. As you watch and become mesmerized by the production, I hope you can connect to the magic to be found in *The Secret Garden*.



Spotlight on Set Designer, Jason Martens

By Lisa Bolen

Jason Martens is a newcomer to the Little Theatre of Virginia Beach, but he brings much experience and talent with him. He has worked with the Little Theatre of Norfolk and Generic Theater, where he is also on the board of directors. His first act of volunteerism with LTVB was on our production, *All My Sons*, where he was the set designer as well as the assistant director. He also worked as the set designer for our last production, *Morning's at Seven*. I had the pleasure of working with Jason during *All My Sons*. Watching the set progress from an empty stage to the immaculate set of the Keller's back yard was a great experience. Each week it became more real: the house was painted, the furniture was added, the tree was made, and the grass was placed. It not only looked like a backyard, it felt like one; the cast and crew often lounged on the set before and after the show as if they were socializing in a real back yard. I wanted to learn more about Jason and his talent for set design, so I asked him a few questions:



Jason Martens on the set of *The Secret Garden*.
Photo by Lisa Bolen

What made you decide to go into set design?

In high school, my focus was in graphic design and fine arts. It just so happened that the drama department needed an artist to assist them in an upcoming production, and I volunteered. I remember opening night: the curtain opened, I saw the set with my contribution, and my jaw hit the floor. I was hooked. I continued working and designing for the Theater Company well into my freshman year of college. However, my focus eventually shifted to career development. For sixteen years, I went without so much as lifting a paint brush. Out of the blue, Claude M. Blanchard, a high school friend and now educator at Ocean Lakes High School, invited me to assist in building the set for *The Paper Chase*. I met with theater teacher and director Christa Jones, and my passion for technical theater was reborn. I would continue to design at OLHS for a couple of years before Ms. Jones introduced me to the small theater on 21st Street called Generic Theater. It was here, under the watchful eye of Hank Sparks, that I really learned my way around the stage and light grid. I find it creative, challenging, and awe-inspiring, and that is why I remain a set designer.

What is your favorite set that you've created?

I am not sure that I have a favorite set design...yet, that is. Each set brings with it new and unique challenges. *Ash Girl* brought me whimsical, cut-out trees and nooks and crannies for the actors to hide in. *The Wake of Jamie Foster* was my first two story house on a very tiny stage. *Evil Dead: The Musical* had its special effects, and *All My Sons* was my first backyard set complete with trees. Each new set design provides me an opportunity to grow as an artist and a designer, so it is safe to say that my favorite is still a long way off.

What do you enjoy most about set design?

The greatest thrill about set design is taking a concept, whether it is drawn or built as a 1/4" scale model, and watching it come to life on stage. It's about meeting and working with people and learning things that you may not otherwise learn. It's about overcoming obstacles. It's about hearing the audience member say, "How did they do that?" or the actor who thanks you for making it feel real. That's what I enjoy most about set design.

Wherefore Art Thou Reviews?

Over the last year, many of you have told us that you miss seeing the regular reviews in the Beacon. Unfortunately, when the current editor arrived, he made the decision to decrease the number of reviews of theatrical productions to a few per year. Unfortunately, this is not something that is within our control.

However, if you miss, or would like to see more community theater coverage, you can contact the following editors and let them know what they're missing! *Virginian Pilot*: Editor Denis Finley, 446-2321 or denis.finley@pilotonline.com and *Beacon*: Editor David Schleck, 222-5108 or david.schleck@pilotonline.com.

Want to take a look behind the scenes at LTVB?

Visit www.ltvb.com and check out the backstage blog, The Green Room, where you can read about the backstage goings-on from one of the actors in the show. You can also become a fan of Little Theatre of Virginia Beach on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/ltvabeach.

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The Beach's Playhouse since 1948

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2010-11 Membership Application

Your season ticket includes: membership in the Little Theatre of Virginia Beach; one ticket to each of the five regular season shows; one bonus ticket to the Little Theatre of Norfolk and one bonus ticket to The Generic Theater; and our bi-monthly newsletter, Stage Notes.

Membership Levels

**Memberships at this level will be acknowledged in our programs

Name

Producer (10 season tickets) \$500+ \$ _____ **

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Send my Stage Notes via () email () snail mail

Senior/Student/Active Duty Military

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Mail this application, with your check made payable to LTVB to:

Membership only (no ticket)

Little Theatre of Virginia Beach
P.O. Box 1053
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Member (voting, 18+ years) _____ x \$10 \$ _____

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DONATION \$ _____
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