

The Secret Garden

Based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Script by Jennifer Davis

Original music by Bob Nicoll

Characters:

7 Narrators, all narrators are also ‘People from India’

Mary Lennox, protagonist-the spoiled orphan

Mrs. Lennox, Mary’s mother before her passing

Ayah, an Indian servant

3 Officers, from Colonial times in India

Mrs. Medlock, the stern, no-nonsense chief housekeeper

Martha, a kind housemaid from Yorkshire

Colin Craven, protagonist-spoiled, bedridden & wheelchair bound, sickly son of Archibald Craven

Mr. Archibald Craven, Colin’s depressed father

Mrs. Craven, Archibald’s late wife; lovely and kind

People from India, they sing ‘All Alone’ and ‘the Sarvesham Prayer’

Dickon, charming nature boy

Kyle, Dickon’s brother who is also into nature

Ben Weatherstaff, the grouchy, elderly gardener

5-10 Naughty Children

Robin Redbreast, the bird that leads Mary to the Secret Garden

Dickon and Kyle’s pets:

Captain, red fox cub

Soot, the crow

Pony

2 Rabbits

Raccoon

Nut, a squirrel

Shell, a squirrel

2 Lambs

Trees (played by people), however many you need. They sing in some songs.

Flowers (played by people), however many you need. They sing in some songs.

Synopsis:

This adaptation of the famous novel tries to honor Francis Hodgson Burnett's original work as much as possible with only a few minor alterations to allow for one more lead role. It is the story of a girl named Mary born in India to wealthy British parents who neglect her. Mary is raised by her family's Indian servants and she becomes a very spoiled, unhappy girl. After a series of unfortunate events, she ends up living in a huge manor in the English countryside where she finds much healing in the mysterious garden she discovers. She makes some unexpected friends including a few animals who assist in her transformation along with the sickly boy who thinks he's dying and who is the son of the estate's owner. The music and songs in this play are influenced by both cultures that have helped shaped Mary: India and England, and also reflect the changing moods of the book. Some songs are melancholy while others are joyous, hopeful, and even cathartic. Performing this very moving play can help to inspire kids to become interested in great children's literature such as the Secret Garden.

Production notes: The running time of this show is a little over an hour and the cast could be ages 6 and up. There are 6 female roles, 8 male roles and 25-30 gender neutral roles however creative gender casting is always encouraged. The minimum cast size is 30 and the maximum cast size is 50. There are 35 parts with lines which include both leads and minor roles. Performers can play more than 1 role if necessary; for example, the Naughty Children could also play animals (Dickon and Kyle's pets) or the officers and narrators could play flowers and trees as well. At first in the play the flowers are not in bloom so they should be without blossoms. As the play progresses they bloom. The songs allow many from the cast to participate in them. If microphones are available, either standing or body mics, we recommend using them

during the music and songs. Narration could also be done with microphones. Otherwise any background music can be turned to a low volume and the actors/singers will need to project. Everyone back stage can join in on the group songs even if they're not in the scene.

Costumes: Most of the story takes place in the English countryside in the early 1900's so attire should reflect this. People from India can dress in traditional Indian clothes; Saris, Salwar Kameez, Dhotis or other traditional attire from India. The flowers and trees can be done in many different ways. At first the flowers are not in bloom without blossoms so they can be dressed all in green with green gloves, tops and bottoms. When they are in bloom they should have lots of color with flower headbands, flower crowns, and/or flower collars, etc..

Sound effects and songs are labeled by track numbers in the script which match the CD.

The Set and Stage Props:

Because budgets vary, take whatever creative liberties needed to design the set. Some props may include the following.

Scene 1-India;

After the opening of the scene which takes place in front of the closed curtain, the curtain opens and there is a mat center stage and a low table upstage with many (battery operated) lit candles on it and other objects from India. There could be mosquito netting hanging over this area.

Scene 2- Meeting Mrs. Medlock;

This scene takes place in front of the closed curtain. A suitcase is needed, better if it is old fashioned. A large piece of mesh cloth, 5'x10' is needed to be held in front of Mr. and Mrs. Craven's scene which is supposed to represent a past memory.

Scene 3- Misselthwaite Manor- Mary's bedroom;

There is a bed center stage. There is a fireplace, a dresser, a side table and other antique or colonial style looking furniture in this scene which can be made with cardboard boxes and paint unless you can obtain real furniture that is easily moved. Martha uses a fireplace poker to tend the fire. There is a bowl of porridge with a spoon on the side table or dresser. A jump rope is used toward the end of the scene.

Scene 4- The lump;

Colin uses a wheelchair in this scene which takes place in front of curtain. He could wear leg braces too if available.

Scene 5- The Kitchen Garden;

Ben Weatherstaff uses a garden shovel in this scene which takes place in front of the closed curtain. A giant key could be made from cardboard and aluminum foil.

Scene 6- The Secret Garden (without flower backdrop);

Anything to make it look like a garden that is not quite in bloom. For example; a stone wall, a trellis, lots of hanging fake ivy, bushes made out of boxes and green tissue paper, a stone statue, trees, a fountain, etc.. The flower characters are not in bloom yet so they should be dressed mostly in green and are positioned across stage as part of the set. Dickon or Kyle carry instruments of wooden pipes and a flute plus a fake knife. They use baby bottles to feed the animals.

Scene 7- Colin's Bedroom;

This set has a regal looking bed (the headboard could be made from cardboard) with luxurious bedding and other upscale, antique and/or colonial style looking furniture. Mary uses a candle stick with a fake candle to walk through the audience in this scene.

Scene 8- The Tantrum;

Same set as in Scene 7

Scene 9- The Garden is Making Me Well;

Same set as in Scene 6 but now the flowers are in bloom. There is no flower back drop yet-that will appear in the finale.

Scene 10- Mr. Craven's Epiphany;

This scene takes place in front of the curtain with no props.

Scene 11- The Magic;

Same set as Scene 9 but with dramatic flower back drop possibly made from tissue paper flowers.

THE SECRET GARDEN

Scene 1: India

(Curtain is closed. Officer and Mary's mother, Mrs. Lennox enter from stage right in front of the curtain both looking troubled. As they walk across the stage, they have the following conversation. They stop center stage.)

Play Track 1 (Intro)

Mrs. Lennox: Is it so very bad?

Officer 1: Awfully, Mrs. Lennox. You ought to have gone to the hills two weeks ago.

Mrs. Lennox: Oh, I know I ought! I only stayed to go to that silly dinner party. What a fool I was! *(They both exit stage left.)*

Narrator 1: *(narrators 1 & 2 enter from stage right and stand down stage right. Microphones could be used for narration.)* Mary Lennox had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another. Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with happy people.

Narrator 2: Her mother had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, a servant, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Mem Sahib, Mary's mother, she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. Mary became a very spoiled and disagreeable child. (*Ayah and Mary enter stage left and Mary shakes her finger at Ayah in an arrogant fashion.*)

Mary: Dress me at once and then bring me my breakfast. (*Mary stops center stage, faces audience and lifts her arms*) Faster, you're too slow! Oh just leave it be! It's so hard to find good help. You are dismissed! (*Ayah exits stage left.*) Daughter of Pigs! (*Mary exits stage left.*)

(*We hear a loud wailing from back stage as if someone was dying. Mrs. Lennox and the officer quickly enter stage left.*)

Mrs. Lennox: What is it? What is it?

Officer 1: Someone has died. You did not say it had broken out among your servants.

Mrs. Lennox: I did not know! Come with me! Come with me! (*Mrs. Lennox and Officer 1 exit stage right.*)

Narrator 1: When Mary was age 9, a cholera epidemic broke out in its most fatal form and everyone died around her, including her parents.

Narrator 2: Mary had been forgotten during all the confusion and she was now an orphan. (*Narrators exit stage right. Curtain opens with Mary sleeping down center stage. After about 5 seconds, she sits up, looks around disoriented and waits another few seconds.*)

Mary: How queer and quiet it is. It sounds as if there were no one in the bungalow but me and the snake.

(Officers 2 & 3 enter stage right.)

Officer 2: What desolation. That pretty, pretty woman...taken by the Cholera. I heard she had a child but no one ever saw her. *(The officers notice Mary sitting there.)*

Officer 3: Barney! There is a child here! A child alone! In a place like this! Mercy on us, who is she?!

Mary: *(Mary stands up.)* I am Mary Lennox. I fell asleep when everyone had the cholera and I have only just wakened up. Why does nobody come to serve me?

Officer 2: It is the child no one ever saw! She has actually been forgotten.

Mary: Why was I forgotten? *(Mary stamps her foot indignantly.)* Why does nobody come?

Officer 3: Poor little kid. There is nobody left to come. They've all died. *(Mary looks shocked and scared. Music starts and People from India enter stage right.)*

Play Track 2 (All Alone)

Song and Dance: All Alone
(performed by People from India)

Mistress Mary's all alone
Everything she knows is gone
A whole new world
A strange new home

A world unknown
Left alone
Mistress Mary is all alone.

(Curtain closes. Set change to Misselthwaite Manor. The following scene takes place during the set change.)

Narrator 3: *(Narrators 3 & 4 enter stage right in front of the curtain.)* After the two officers had discovered the abandoned child she was taken to a poor English clergyman's house still in India who had 5 children. These children taunted Mary.

(Naughty children enter stage left in front of the curtain.)

Naughty Children: *(Mocking)* Mistress Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With Silver bells, and cockle shells, and marigolds all in a row! *(The children laugh in a mean way and exit stage right running.)*

Narrator 4: She was soon shipped off to England where her uncle, Mr. Archibald Craven, lived. She would now be under his care at Misselthwaite Manor.

Narrator 3: Mary made the long voyage by boat to England and when she arrived she was met by Mrs. Medlock, the head housekeeper at Misselthwaite Manor. *(Narrators exit stage right.)*

Scene 2: Meeting Mrs. Medlock

Mrs. Medlock: *(Mary enters stage right in front of curtain with her luggage. Mrs. Medlock enters from stage left and they both meet at center stage. Mrs. Medlock looks Mary over condescendingly.)* My word, what a plain little piece of goods. And we'd heard that your mother was a beauty. She hasn't handed much of it down. I suppose I may as well tell you something about where you are going to. Do you know anything about your uncle?

Mary: No.

Mrs. Medlock: Never heard your father and mother talk about him?

Mary: No, why would they? *(Mary frowns.)*

Mrs. Medlock: You're a sour puss, now aren't you? Come, let's wait over here for the carriage to pick us up and I'll tell you about the place. *(They both walk down stage left.)* The house is a mansion and it's six hundred years old and it's on the edge of the moor and there's near a hundred rooms in it *(makes dramatic arm movements)* though most of them's shut up and locked. And there's pictures and fine old furniture and things that's been there for ages, and there's a big park round it and gardens and trees with branches trailing to the ground, some of them. But there's nothing else. Well, what do you think of it?

Mary: Nothing, I know nothing about such places.

Mrs. Medlock: Eh, but you are like an old woman. Don't you care?

Mary: It doesn't matter whether I care or not. *(Mary walks over to stage right and folds her arms indignantly looking off beyond audience as if ignoring what Mrs. Medlock says.)*

Mrs. Medlock: *(Mrs. Medlock follows her to stage right.)* You are right enough. Mr. Craven, your uncle, is not going to trouble himself about you, that's sure and certain. He never troubles himself about no one. He's got a crooked back. That set him wrong. He was a sour young man and got no good of all his money and big place till he was married.

Mary: (*Mary looks at Mrs. Medlock suddenly curious.*) He was married? (*Music starts. 2 kids enter stage left holding a large mesh cloth. Mr. and Mrs. Craven enter stage left and Mrs. Craven does her dance during the following dialogue behind the mesh cloth.*)

Play Track 3 (Lilias' Dance)

Mrs. Medlock: (*Music continues.*) She was a sweet, pretty thing, your mother's sister, she was. Her name was Lilias. Mr. Craven would have walked the world over to get her a blade o grass she wanted. Nobody thought she'd marry him but she did and people said she married him for his money. But she didn't, she didn't. When she died... (*Mrs. Craven falls to the ground. Mr. Craven bends down over her and buries his head in his hands. Mrs. Craven slowly gets up and exits stage left waving to Mr. Craven. Music stops.*)

Mary: Oh! Did she die?!

Mrs. Medlock: Yes she died. And it made Mr. Craven stranger than ever. He won't see people. (*Mr. Craven hobbles off stage left moping.*) He cares about nobody and most of the time he goes away and when he is at Misselthwaite he shuts himself up in the West Wing. You needn't expect to see him because 10-1 you won't. And you mustn't expect that there will be people to talk to you. You'll have to play about and look after yourself. You'll be told what rooms you can go into and what rooms you're to keep out of. There's gardens enough. But when you're in the house don't go wandering and poking about. Mr. Craven won't have it.

Play Track 4 (Mind Your Own Business)

Song: Mind Your Own Business

(*Sung by Mrs. Medlock and Naughty Children*)

(Music starts and Naughty children enter stage left.)

(Mrs. Medlock sings)

Don't go wandering
Poking all about
Stay out of trouble
When you're in the house
Don't go wandering
Poking all about
Mind your own business
Even when you're out

(Naughty children sing)

Don't go wandering
Poking all about
Stay out of trouble
When you're in the house
Don't go wandering
Poking all about
Mind your own business
Even when you're out

(Mrs. Medlock sings)

Don't expect anyone to play with you
Everyone is busy
So much work to do

The world doesn't
Revolve around you
Watch your step
I've got my eye on you.

(Naughty children sing)

Don't go wandering

Poking all about
Stay out of trouble
When you're in the house
Don't go wandering
Poking all about
Mind your own business
Even when you're out

Mary: I shall not want to go poking about. (*She frowns.*)

Mrs. Medlock: Come the carriage has arrived to take us to Misselthwaite Manor (*They both exit stage right and Mary quickly gets into bed on stage.*)

Naughty Children: Mistress Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With Silver bells, and cockle shells, and marigolds all in a row! (*They exit stage right running and laughing.*)

Scene 3: Misselthwaite Manor- Mary's bedroom

(*Curtain opens. Mary is lying in her bed sleeping. Martha is tending the fire with a poker while curiously keeping an eye on Mary.*)

Mary: (*She wakes up, sits up and points at audience.*) What is that?

Martha: That's the moor. (*smiles*) Does tha' like it?

Mary: No, I hate it.

Martha: That's because tha'rt not used to the moor.

Mary: Do you like it?

Martha: Aye, that I do (*still smiling*) I just love it. (*She stands up and looks off into audience as if staring at the moor.*) It's none bare. It's covered wi' growin' things as smells sweet. It's fair lovely in spring an' summer covered with heather, gorse, and broom and th' bees an' the skylarks makes such a nice noise hummin' an' singin'.

Mary: Are you going to be my servant? You are a strange servant. Who is going to dress me?

Martha: (*She laughs.*) Canna tha dress thyself?

Mary: I don't understand your language.

Martha: We speak in Yorkshire here, sorry Miss. (*Martha walks over to Mary's bedside.*) Can't you put on your own clothes?

Mary: No. I never did in my life. My Ayah dressed me of course.

Martha: (*She laughs again.*) Well it's time tha' should learn. It'll do thee good to wait on thysen a bit. My mother always said she couldn't see why grand people's children didn't turn out fair fools-what with nurses an' being' washed an' dressed an' took out to walk as if they was puppies!

Mary: It is different in India. (*She says this disdainfully and folds her arms clearly annoyed. There is a wail from back stage.*)

Mary: What was that?

Martha: (*looks disturbed*) It's just the wind comin' off the moor. (*walks to stage right and closes [imaginary] door*)

Mary: It sounded like someone cryin'.

Martha: *(in a short tone)* Don't go runnin' your imagination child. It was the wind, I say. *(Mary glares at Martha. Martha takes the porridge off the side table and tries to hand it to Mary.)* Have your porridge miss.

Mary: I don't want it. *(She pushes it away.)*

Martha: Well it would do thee good to try it. Put some sugar on it.

Mary: I said I don't want it!

Martha: Eh! I can't abide to see good food go to waste. *(Martha puts it back on the side table abruptly.)* If my siblings was at this table they'd clean it bare in 5 minutes. They never had their stomachs full in their lives.

Mary: I don't know what it is to be hungry.

Martha: Well, it would do thee good to try it. I've no patience with folk that sits an' just stares at good bread an' meat.

Mary: Why don't you take it to your siblings?

(Dickon and Kyle enter audience with all their animals through back auditorium doors and walk toward the stage.)

Martha: It's not mine. An' this isn't my day off. I get my day out once a month same as th' rest. Then I go home an' clean up for my mother an' give her a day's rest. *(pause)* Why don't you take thee outside into the gardens? Come here. *(They walk downstage. Martha points at audience. Spot light on Dickon and Kyle or use houselight.)* See the gardens? Hey, there's Dickon and Kyle.

Play Track 5 (Dickon's theme)

(Dickon and Kyle's theme music begins and they walk through the audience with their animals trailing behind them and then exit back out the auditorium doors. Music stops.)

Mary: Who's Dickon and Kyle?

Martha: They're two o' my brothers. There's 12 of us brothers and sisters in my family. Dickon and Kyle love the outdoors and nature. Dickon's 12 years old and Kyle's 11 and the animals love 'em both. They've tamed a pony, a lamb, a bunny and much more. Maybe you'll bump into 'em outside in the gardens. *(Martha walks slowly toward stage right.)* One of the gardens is locked up though. No one has been in it for 10 years.

Mary: *(Mary follows her.)* Why?

Martha: Mr. Craven had it shut when his wife, Liliias, died so sudden. She was sitting on a big old branch on a tree in the garden when it broke off and she fell to her death. Mr. Craven won't let no one go inside. It was her garden. Liliias loved working in that garden. Anyway Mr. Craven locked th' door and dug a hole and buried the key. *(Bell rings from back stage.)*

Play Track 6 (Bell)

Martha: Now run along outside. Mrs. Medlock is wantin' me for somethin'. Oh but wait! *(Martha takes a jump rope out of her pocket.)*

Mary: What?

Martha: *(She hands Mary jump rope.)* You can take this with you.