



SPOTLIGHT

401 North 6th Street

July 15, 2017

www.fslt.org

Dates: Opening Night Gala of FSLT's production of the musical, *The Secret Garden*, will be July 27. Regular evening performances will be July 28-29, August 2-5 and 10-12. Matinees will be offered on TWO SUNDAYS, July 30 and August 6.

Times: All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Patrons may be seated after 6:45 p.m. The matinees begin at 2:00 p.m. Patrons may be seated after 1:15 p.m.

Box Office Hours: The box office is open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on Saturdays from 5 to 7 p.m. during the run of the show.

Reservations: Reservations can be made by calling 479-783-2966. Calls will be returned in the order they are received. Reservations will be held until 15 minutes before the show. Gala Tickets \$30. All other shows \$15.

Season Ticket Holders:

Regular season ticket patrons are encouraged to call July 15-19 for preferred seating.

They can also reserve a General Admission seat for every Season Ticket they have. General Admission reservations will not be filled until July 20.

Reminder: When you call to make a reservation, Press 2.

LOVE AND MUSIC BLOOM IN *The Secret Garden* Opens July 27

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow” – *Audrey Hepburn*

Fort Smith Little Theatre will take a step back in time to stage a much-loved children's book for this summer's musical. Frances Hodgson Burnett's beloved Victorian classic, *The Secret Garden*, blooms anew in this musical version by Pulitzer Prize-winner Marsha Norman and Lucy Simon. The FSLT production will be co-directed by George Mann (musical director) and Carole Rogers (stage director).

When young Mary Lennox (Marie Gray) loses her parents to a cholera outbreak in India, she is sent to live with her hunch-shouldered uncle, Archibald Craven (Nathan Stockemer), who lives like a hermit in an imposing, secluded manor on the British heath.

Inside the house upon the hill, Mary encounters a collection of “dreamers” — spirits of people from Mary's past. They sing hauntingly beautiful music to guide her in her new life. The dreamers are: Lily Craven (Emily Guadagnini); Fakir (Jeremy Marston); Ayah (Trish McCully); Rose Lennox, Mary's mother, (Valerie Valentine); Capt. Albert Lennox, Mary's father (Jon Gustafson); Lt. Peter Wright (Alex Marrin); Lt. Ian Shaw (Cody Walls); Mrs. Shelley (Jamie Lambdin); Claire Holmes (Shanna Prater-Davis); and Alice, Rose's friend (Kirsten Binns).

See *The Secret Garden* on page 3





Sparks

Health System

Sparks Health System Applauded as Show Sponsor

We are pleased to recognize Sparks Health System as the sponsor for our upcoming production of *The Secret Garden*. In 1947, the Young Ladies Guild of Sparks Memorial Hospital sponsored an amateur theatre production as a fundraiser to buy hospital equipment. That play, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, literally “sparked” an interest in the performing arts, and the Fort Smith Little Theatre was formed. Seventy years later, we applaud Sparks’ civic spirit and their continued support of FSLT. Our community benefits from the quality healthcare they provide and their generous donations to non-profit groups like ours.



Stage Director’s Letter

While I have directed numerous FSLT productions, this is my first time to do stage direction for a musical. I could not have chosen a better vehicle for my debut. *The Secret Garden* is a lovely, heartwarming story combined with the most beautiful music. It will bring a warm feeling to your heart and possibly a tear to your eye. I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the talent of this cast, and I feel sure you will be too. My heartfelt thanks to George for asking me to spread my wings and try something new, and to our hard-working cast for their patience with me while I learned.



So, get on board and travel with us to 1900 India and Yorkshire, and follow the lives of Mary, Colin, and their families. I know you will enjoy the ride.

- **Carole Rogers**

Musical Director’s Letter

Each time that I have set my cap towards the work involved in getting a musical up and running at FSLT, I have never failed to be gratified by the results — there is, after all, so much talent here in our community. But *The Secret Garden* — ah! That was going to be the proof of the pudding!

The Secret Garden has been a favorite of mine since I first did it with Southside High School over 20 years ago. The Frances Hodgson Burnett book, and the movie with Maggie Smith, were all wonderful – but when exquisite music was added, it became an irresistible dream.

The complexity of the music has been a daunting factor over the years; the vocal demands are great, the writing is complex, and the amount of singing much more closely resembles operetta than a standard Broadway musical. That is why this show was moved many times to the bottom of our list for consideration. This year, however, we were confident that that we had sufficient talent and commitment required for the task, and ‘boy howdy!’ were we ever right!

FSLT patrons will be charmed by the famous story of Mary Lennox, a British girl orphaned by a cholera epidemic in India, who is sent to live with an uncle marooned in his own grief and loss. You’ll see how love triumphs to resurrect relationships and cause neglected gardens to spring to life again. It is our desire that the extraordinary work which has gone into this production will be the perfect cultural, artistic, and musical cap to everyone’s summer. Come to the Garden!

- **George Mann**

NOTE: EXTRA PERFORMANCE DATES for *The Secret Garden*

In anticipation of a large demand for tickets, 3 additional evening performances – Thursday, Friday, and Saturday (August 10, 11, and 12) – have been added to the full run of show dates for *The Secret Garden*.

In addition, we will perform 2 Sunday Matinees on July 30 and August 6. Call our Box Office to reserve your seat for these extra dates just as you would for any other performance. And be sure to thank this awesome cast and crew for performing this demanding, extended schedule!

The Secret Garden - opens July 27

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Since her Aunt Lily's death during childbirth, Mary's Uncle Archibald has pushed away his surviving loved ones, leaving his bedridden son, Colin (Brenden Chick) hidden away in the depths of the manor. The child's confinement and medical treatment is dictated by Archibald's brother, Dr. Neville Craven (Brandon Bolin).

When Mary discovers her Aunt Lily's hidden garden, locked and overgrown with vines, she becomes doggedly determined to revive the floral beauty that once reflected joy and hope. Surrounded by the spirit dreamers, who both warn and welcome her, Mary begins to peel away the layers of sadness that cover the house and the garden. Her efforts symbolize the impact one small girl can have when she desperately wants something to change and grow.

Other talented cast members who help reveal this famous story include: Mrs. Medlock, the housekeeper (Hannah Curlin); Martha, the chambermaid (Katy Featherston); Dickon, Martha's brother (Eric Wells); Ben Weatherstaff, the gardener and Major Holmes (Eric Krigbaum); and Mrs. Winthrop, headmistress and Dreamer ensemble (Lynne Gustafson).

The role of Colin is played by the youngest member of the cast, 11-year-old Brenden Chick. He has been

involved extensively in local youth productions and was a munchkin on our stage in *The Wizard of Oz*. Meanwhile, FSLT newcomer, Marie Gray plays the young girl, Mary. A resident of Greenwood, she has been heavily involved in theatre and school choirs for several years.

Bringing authenticity to the musical is costume designer, Hannah Curlin, who also plays the role of Mrs. Medlock. "I love the Victorian and Edwardian time periods in this show," she said. Curlin, an Ozark resident, personally created many of the costumes and supervised her wardrobe assistants Barbara Saviers, Lynne Gustafson, and Suzanne Thomas.

Additional crew assistance is provided by these able backstage hands: Nancy Blochberger and Vicki Broadaway, co-producers; Kelsey Flippo, stage manager; Neal Goodwin, props; Rebekah Martin, lighting design; Jim Moody and Jennifer Roller light and sound operations; Thomas Iverson and Cliff Scott, stage hands; Nathan Stockemer, digital videography; David Burney, choreographer, and Eric Wells, dance instructor. The set construction crew, led by Jeremy Marston, includes Eric Wells, Eric Krigbaum, Orville Chick, Brenden Chick, and Kelsey Flippo.

This is the first FSLT production for Chaffin Junior High Choral Director,

Emily Guadagnini, who plays the part of Lily. She was encouraged to audition by her colleague, Northside High School Choral Director and FSLT veteran, Katy Featherston, who plays Martha in this production. Emily commented, "I hope audience members will walk away thinking. Music opens minds, and this show is a beautiful portrayal of light conquering darkness and the power of positivity. All of us occasionally need to be reminded of that."

So, please join us in the garden. You'll enjoy a story of hope, love, and recovery told through hauntingly beautiful music, and seen through the eyes of a child.



JBU COLLABORATION

A few months ago, several FSLT volunteers made the easy drive to Siloam Springs to attend John Brown University's production of *The Secret Garden*. The campus, the people, and the production were impressive. Since that time, key persons involved in that show have kindly provided us with advice and assistance on choreography, set construction, and costumes. In particular, we wish to thank Liesl Dromi, David Burney, and Kirsten Pearson for sharing their expertise. For information about JBU future productions go to jbu.edu.



Fort Smith Little Theatre
SPOTLIGHT

P.O. Box 3752, Fort Smith, AR 72913

www.fslt.org

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From the Top...

In the late 1960s, the Beatles and Joe Cocker both recorded a song “I get by with a little help from friends.” I always liked the lyrics, and feel that they still ring true today – especially at FSLT.

As reported earlier in this issue, the staff of John Brown University (JBU) has generously shared with us their experience of producing *The Secret Garden*. Goddard United Methodist Church lent us their choir room for auditions and music rehearsals while *Eurydice* was being performed on our stage. Our light board went on the fritz, and we hustled to transport it to a vendor in Springfield. When we learned their repairman would be servicing equipment at a school in Lincoln, Arkansas, Bruce Birkhead, without hesitation, agreed to transport our light board one hour north so we could save shipping cost and valuable downtime. During *Eurydice*, a cast member was hospitalized. As it turned out, she was released a few days later. But because the show must go on, Plan B was required. Hannah Curlin, who was costuming the show, quickly created a costume for an emergency stand-in just 48 hours before Hannah’s European vacation.

In all these examples, there was nothing to be gained. There was no money that changed hands. People helped because they had skills, time, or knowledge that they were willing to share. At FSLT, we are better for their caring and sharing. We do get by with a little help from our friends, and we are very grateful.

- Michael Richardson, *President*

Next Up

Auditions for *Making God Laugh*, directed by Lora Rice, will be held at 7 p.m. on August 14 and 15 at the theatre. The cast calls for 2 females and 3 males, approximately 20-60 years of age. Production dates are September 21-30. This is an honest look at family life layered with real humor, real people, and real meaning. For more information, go to fslt.org.

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