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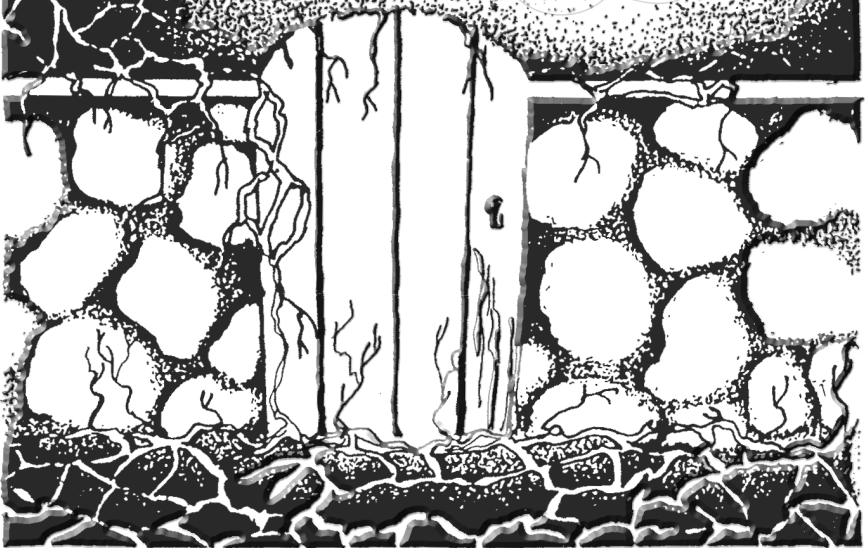
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Family Plays

Frances Hodgson Burnett's

*The
Secret
Garden*



*Adapted for the stage
by Helen P. Avery*

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The Secret Garden

Premiered at Seattle Junior Theatre with a successful second production at Adventure Theatre in Glen Echo Park, Md. Adapted from the beloved classic by Frances Hodgson Burnett, here is a poetic adventure that entralls and delights.

Drama. Adapted by Helen P. Avery. From the book by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Music by Sonya Lawson. Cast: 5m., 3w. Mary Lennox, the spoiled child of uncaring parents now dead in India, is sent to Yorkshire to live with her uncle and guardian in a mansion on the moor. There she hears mysterious crying down the halls and knows that the housekeeper and the doctor are plotting something evil. Through the sympathy of a young housemaid, Martha, and her brother, Dickon, who tames animals, including a rabbit, Mary comes to know what love means. Together they solve the mystery of the crying. In the “secret garden,” she and her friends experience the restorative powers of creativity and self-realization. *Multiple simple sets. 1910 English costumes. Music in book. Code: ST9*

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The Secret Garden (Avery)

The Secret Garden

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**This adaptation of
THE SECRET GARDEN
is dedicated to
RAY and SHANNON**

"The Secret Garden" won the Seattle Junior Theatre Playwriting Contest in July 1983, and its premiere was given a series of performances there the following November.

In March 1985 its first production on the East Coast was staged at Adventure Theatre, Glen Echo, Maryland, where its adapter, Helen Avery, has been associated in many capacities since the theatre's beginnings in 1951.

Adventure Theatre is one of the earliest adult theatres for young people to be developed in this country. For 17 years it has had its own auditorium at Glen Echo, Md., which it built in cooperation with the National Park Service. The 195 seat theatre is ideally situated for parents and children to come from Maryland, Virginia or the District of Columbia. The plays run for four performances a weekend for six successive weeks to accommodate its audiences.

Adventure Theatre has been giving children solid, caring productions for more years than the Kennedy Center has been doing shows for adults. Its program of plays continues throughout the year, and there are also extensive classes offered in drama for both children and adults. It is the only theatre for the young in the Washington area with an unbroken record of performances for 37 years.

About "The Secret Garden" one Washington area reviewer wrote: "This lovely plot touches the deepest part of ourselves . . . and makes us think and feel more than we did before we went into the theatre." The enduring classic by Frances Hodgson Burnett was first published in 1911. Her books were enjoyed by young and old, and "The Secret Garden" has never been out of print and continues its popularity.

This adaptation was directed at Adventure Theatre by Elizabeth Goodwyn, assisted by Jill Metzger, and produced by Priscilla Wimpres, with music and choreography by Sonya Lawson.

Adventure Theatre's Cast

Frances Hodgson Burnett	Irene Elliott / Jill Metzger
Martha	Ann Marie Holmes
Dr. Sturgis	Tom Bakry
Mrs. Medlock	Charlotte Maas
Mary	Katryna Nields
Ben Weatherstaff	Bob Appleton
Dickon	Will Johnson
Mr. Craven	Mike McGarvey
Colin Craven	Ethan Malasky
Taped voices	Marlie Griffin, Omar Pancoast
Mitten	Simon, pet of Sonya Jarmuth

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

- MARTHA a young Yorkshire housemaid
DR. STURGIS the family Doctor, Mr. Craven's nephew
MRS. MEDLOCK the housekeeper at Misselthwaite Manor
MARY LENNOX a girl about twelve
BEN WEATHERSTAFF a gardener, in his seventies
DICKON a Yorkshire lad about fifteen, brother of Martha
MR. CRAVEN the master of the Manor
COLIN his son, aged ten

SCENES

Voices from India; then

- ACT I. *Scene 1.* Mary's bedroom at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire.
View of garden and wall SR.
Scene 2. The same, morning, and the corridor (*front of curtains*)
Scene 3. Mary's bedroom again. Three days later.
- ACT II. *Scene 1.* Mr. Craven's study (*front of curtains*)
Scene 2. Colin's bedroom
Scene 3. Colin's bedroom. Morning, a week later
Scene 4. On the Moor and on the Garden Walk, a short time
later (*front of curtain*)
Scene 5. The Secret Garden. Three months later.

The time is early spring around 1910.

THE SECRET GARDEN

ACT I, Scene 1. *After the lights go down, but before the curtain goes up, voices are heard:*

MAN'S VOICE: (*sound of door opening*): There's no one here apparently.

WOMAN'S VOICE: What desolation!

MAN'S VOICE: That *pretty* woman, dead so suddenly. The child too, I suppose. I heard there was a child.

MARY'S VOICE: Where is my Ayah—my nurse? Send her to me at once!

WOMAN'S VOICE: What is that?

MAN'S VOICE: (*sound of opening door*) I say, wait a minute. There *is* a child here.

WOMAN'S VOICE: In a place like this? Mercy on us! Who are you, child?

MARY'S VOICE: I am Mary Lennox. I fell asleep when it was so quiet last night. Why does nobody come?

MAN'S VOICE: It's the child!

WOMAN'S VOICE: She's actually been forgotten.

MARY'S VOICE: Why have I been forgotten? Why does nobody come?

MAN'S VOICE: Poor little kid!

WOMAN'S VOICE: There is nobody to come.

MARY'S VOICE: But where are my parents, and my Ayah?

WOMAN'S VOICE: Your Mother and Father cannot come. Not your nurse. You must go to your relatives in England. . . You must leave India, my child, and go to England. . .

(The curtain opens on Mary's bedroom at Misselthwaite Manor. SR beyond an imaginary wall with French windows there is a garden and high brick wall with a door hidden by drooping ivy. At the opening of the scene the garden is in darkness. The bedroom contains a bed, chair, a small table, a small washstand and a fireplace with grate. There is an entrance SL. The sound of high wind is heard. Martha is seen placing a wool nightgown on the bed. Then she turns down the bedclothes. As she is hurriedly arranging some sprigs of broom in a small vase on the mantelpiece, a wailing sound, like someone crying, is heard through the blowing of the wind. Martha claps her hands over her ears.)

MARTHA: Oh, Lorry! The child will be hearin' o' that sound for sure. It's na Christian to bring her to this house! *(She shakes her head and is about to exit when Dr. Sturgis enters SL. He is dressed in black, walks rather furtively, and carries a small black Doctor's bag.)*

DR. STURGIS: Martha, you are needed—ah—down the corridor.

MARTHA: *(with a bobbing curtsey)* Aye, Dr. Sturgis. I'll go at once. I have finished with Miss Mary's room.

DR. STURGIS: Oh, this is where the child is to be kept, is it?

MARTHA: *(her back up)* Kept? It's not like she's in a prison, Sir. When the weather clears, she can play in the gardens.

DR. STURGIS: Yes, Martha. But she must not roam about the corridors of the Manor. You understand that?

MARTHA: *(with another bob)* Yes, Doctor.

DR. STURGIS: It's unfortunate that Mr. Craven wanted her to come here at all. She has some distant cousins in London. She should have gone to them.

MARTHA: But Mr. Craven is her Uncle and her guardian.

DOCTOR: Yes, I know. But he does not want children here. You may go now, Martha.

MARTHA: Yes, Sir. *(She bobs again and exits SL. Dr. Sturgis gives the room a brief, rather disdainful inspection, muttering to himself, "We don't want little noses poking about. That we don't." Then he exits SL. There is a moment when the stage is empty, but the wind*

howls loudly. Enter Mrs. Medlock imperiously—a large woman dressed in purple with a flowered bonnet and florid cheeks—followed by Mary Lennox in black coat and hat, from which straggle lank strands of straight hair.)

MRS. MEDLOCK: This is your room, child. *(She moves toward SR.)*
And out there is the garden where you can play tomorrow if the storm clears.

MARY: *(vehemently, after looking slowly around)* I don't like it here!
I want to go back to India.

MRS. MED.: You know you can't go back. There's nothing to go back to, with your parents gone.

MARY: It's cold here—and gloomy. I *hate* it! *(The wind howls.)*

MRS. MED.: You'll just jolly well *have* to like it. It's very good of Mr. Craven to take you in, even though he is your guardian. He never invites people here to Misselthwaite Manor. He likes to stay by himself.

MARY: He sounds horrid. I won't like him at all. *(Wind again.)*

MRS. MED.: You probably won't see him. He hardly ever sees people. But he's sorry your poor mother and father died, and is trying, in his way, to help you, Mary. Now, it's time you went to bed. Take off your hat and coat. *(She plumps up the pillows and picks up the nightgown.)* When you get undressed, you'll find this will keep you warm.

MARY: *(who has been standing rigidly in the center of the room, suddenly stamps her foot)* I won't take anything off! You have to undress me.

MRS. MED.: I certainly do not! Gracious! A great girl like you can surely undress herself. Take off your things at once.

MARY: My Ayah always undressed me, and dressed me in the morning.

MRS. MED.: Your *Ayah*—what's that?

MARY: My nurse in India. She did everything I told her to.

MRS. MED.: Well, I declare! No one's going to do everything for you here, Miss Mary, Mary, quite contrary. You've been spoiled, that's what. Perhaps that's why you're so pale and sickly looking. I think Dr. Sturgis had better take a look at you.

MARY: Who's he?

MRS. MED.: He's Mr. Craven's nephew, and a very fine doctor.

MARY: I don't need a doctor. I'm not sick.

(Suddenly the wind rises again, and through the sound a wail is heard.)

MARY: *(frightened)* What's that?

MRS. MED.: Oh—uh—its's jut the Yorkshire wind howling about the moors. It blows hard on a night like this.

(She looks out toward the garden, then continues hurriedly.)
It is chilly here in the north of England when a storm's about. Quite different from India. I'll send up Martha, the housemaid, to fix a fire in the grate. But she's not going to be your nursemaid. I told you to take off your coat and hat, Mary.

MARY: *(tearing off her hat and throwing it hysterically at Mrs. Med.)*
I hate it here! I hate it! It's a dismal, gloomy old house! And who—who's going to sing me to sleep after I get in bed?

MRS. MED.: There's no one to sing to you. You're not a baby. Here, I'll take your coat, but you must get undressed yourself.

MARY: My Ayah always sang me to sleep after my mother came to say good night. I couldn't understand the words, but I liked to hear hers sing.

MRS. MED.: You'll sleep well enough after the long carriage ride we had from the station. *(She picks up the hat and puts the coat over her arm.)*

MARY: *(vehemently)* No, I won't! I'll stay awake all night. And I forbid you to leave me alone in this horrid room!

MRS. MED.: Forbid me?! My word! You may have bossed your nurse in India, but you're not going to be bossy here. Get undressed and into bed at once, Miss spoiled Mary, Mary. Good night.

(She sails out in dudgeon. Mary, panic-stricken, runs SL after her.)

MARY: Mrs. Medlock! Mrs. Medlock! Come back! Don't leave me! *There is no answer. She throws herself on the bed and weeps. After a short while she sits up.* Oh—oh! I'm so miserable. And it's cold. I've never been so cold in my life! *(Shivering, she gets up and tries to undo her dress, but she can't unfasten all the buttons. After struggling for a while, she crams the wool nightgown over the dress with an exclamation of impatience. Then she struggles with a shoe.)*

MARY: Oh—it's stuck! *(Another struggle with the other one. Finally she jumps into bed and pulls the covers up over her head. She moves restlessly around under the covers for a bit, turning the pillow this way and that. Soon she pokes her head out and sits up.)* I can't sleep here. I shall never sleep again! *(She jumps out of bed, then shivers with the cold and, getting on the bed, wraps herself in a blanket. After floucing around, she settles down at the foot of the bed.)* Maybe I could sing something myself which would put me to sleep. *(She sings softly and sadly.)*

My mother was so beautiful,
Sometimes in silken clothes
She came to say good night to me,
And then the door would close.

And after she had gone away,
My Ayah dimmed the light
And sang in strangest syllables
Until my eyes closed tight.

My Mother wore long strings of beads,
a jeweled pin and ring.
She never stayed for very long
Or heard my Ayah sing.

But oh, I loved the sight of her
With crystals in her hair,
And when she left for parties,
My Ayah still was there.

(She is beginning to get drowsy, when there is a knock on the door.)

MARY: What's that?

MARTHA: It's Martha. (*Enters.*) I've brought some wood, luv, and will make up th' fire. Tha must be nigh frozen this night. (*She sets about making a fire in the grate.*)

MARY: I've warmed up a little.

MARTHA: It's not usual here to keep a fire goin' in the grate at night, but Mrs. Medlock thought th'd be needin' it, comin' from a hot place like India.

MARY: It's very cold here—and lonely. I hate it.

MARTHA: Eh, tha' won't hate it when it clears off. And tha' won't be lonely with the birds singin' to thee, and the sheep and ponies on the moor. Tha'll look out there beyond the the garden at the moor and think what a grand place it is.

MARY: Mrs. Medlock and I drove across the Moor on our way here. I don't like it a bit. Nothing but miles of dark, bare land.

MARTHA: Tha' will like it. It's covered wi' growin' things as smells sweet now that Spring's comin'. (*She cross R.*) And it's all purple with the heather later on. (*Mary sits up and swings her feet over the side of the bed.*)

MARY: Are you going to be my servant?

MARTHA: I'm the housemaid. Tha' art a big girl. Tha' won't need much waitin' on. (*She looks at Mary.*) But look here, luv. Tha's got the bed all messed up. (*She starts straightening it.*) And tha' nightgown is over tha' dress! Canna tha' undress thyself?

MARY: I beg your pardon. I can't understand a word you're saying.

MARTHA: Ah, I forgot. I mustna talk too much of the Yorkshire, or you won't know what I'm talkin' about. I mean, can't you undress yourself?

MARY: My Ayah always undressed me. I couldn't undo the buttons.

MARTHA: Here, I'll help you—this once, mind. But you're not to have a ladies' maid. (*She helps Mary off with the nightgown, dress and petticoat; then puss the nightgown back on over her chemise and bloomers.*)

MARY: Mrs. Medlock should have helped me. I want my Ayah!

MARTHA: There, luv. Now that'll be more comfortable, I'm thinkin'. I'll bring thee new bright clothes in the mornin'. Mr. Craven doesn't want thee wearin' black.

MARY: I hate black things.

MARTHA: So does Mr. Craven. Black reminds him of his wife's death.

MARY: Oh, I didn't know he had a wife.

MARTHA: He did have one, but she died—a right pretty young woman she was, and he adored her. But he was always a little strange, and when she died, he became stranger then ever.

MARY: How was he strange?

MARTHA: Well, he's a hunchback, you know.

MARY: What's a hunchback?

MARTHA: He has a crooked back. And now that his wife is gone, he doesn't want to see anyone at all. He travels some, or stays here in the West Wing. There's about a hundred rooms in this house, you know.

MARY: It does seem terribly big. *(Again, suddenly there is a sound somewhere of wailing.)*

MARY: What's that? It—it sounds like a child crying!

MARTHA: Oh—ah—no. It's the wind wutherin'. Sometimes the wind on the moor sounds as if someone was lost out there and wailin'. It's got all sorts o' sounds. *(The wailing sounds again.)*

MARY: *(insistently)* But listen! It's here in this house. Mrs. Medlock said it was the wind, but I know it isn't.

MARTHA: It was th' wind. Or if it wasn't it was Betty Butterworth, the kitchen maid downstairs. She's had a toothache all day. Now, it's time for you to go to sleep.

MARY: I can't sleep now. I don't like the sounds here. and—my Ayah used to sing to me.

MARTHA: Aye, and my mother used to sing to me, too. To all of us young uns. There's twelve of us. Eh! you should see them all. Mother still sings to the little 'uns—but I'll sing you the song I like the best if you lie down quiet now.

MARY: Yes. Sing to me, Martha. (*She lies down under the covers, and Martha sits on the bed.*)

MARTHA: (*sings*): Mother of mine, where go the stars, go the stars, go the stars?
Mother of mine, where go the stars
the moment the night is over?

They put out their lights and close their eyes,
close their eyes, close their eyes,
And rest far above the sunlit skies
until the day is over.

Mother of mine, where goes the moon, goes
the moon, goes the moon?
Mother of mine, where goes the moon
the moment the night is over?

It lowers its lamp and sails away, sails
away, sails away
To far and beyond where it will stay
until the day is over?

*From Columbia LP record CL 1348. *Songs of the British Isles*. with the Herman Luboff Choir. The tune is similar to "This is the way we wash our clothes."

MARY: I like that song.

MARTHA: I'll sing tha' one more verse, if tha'll go to sleep now.
(*Mary settles down and Martha gets up and tucks her in as she is singing.*)

Mother of mine, where goes the sun, goes the sun, goes
the sun?

Mother of mine, where goes the sun the moment the
day is over?
It goes to its home beneath the sky, 'neath the sky,
'neath the sky,
And there it will sleep like you and I, until the day
is over.

(Mary appears to be asleep. Martha tiptoes out of the room. The lights dim; then Mrs. Medlock enters with a night light followed by Dr. Sturgis. They approach the bed and talk in low voices.)

MRS. MEDLOCK: This is the child, Dr. Sturgis. She's gone to sleep, I'm glad to say. I thought she would never settle down.

DR. STURGIS: She looks very thin.

MRS. MED.: Her parents paid little attention to her before they died in the cholera epidemic. Their Indian nurse took care of her. She is spoiled, Dr. Sturgis—and already she has heard the crying and wants to know what it is.

DR. STURGIS: She would only cause trouble. She mustn't know. She must stay in this room and only go outside through the garden. She must never wander about the house.

MRS. MED.: I shall do my best, Doctor. I know it is important to you that she keep out of - ah - other parts of the house.

DR. STURGIS: I shall see that you are well paid for your help.

(They go out. Mary raises her head, looking after them. She gives a moan of misery, then pulls up the covers and settles down to sleep.)

(Blackout. End of ACT I, Scene 1.)

ACT I, Scene 2. *(The same as Scene 1, the next morning. The sun is shining in the garden and floods the room. Mary is asleep, but presently there is a knock at the door which awakens her. Martha enters with a breakfast tray, a dress and sweater over her arm.)*

MARTHA: It's a bright mornin', luv. The storm's gone off in the night pretendin' it's never been here. Now, here's a bite of breakfast to warm tha' stomach. *(She puts the tray on the bedside table and moves it DS, then places a chair next to it.)*

MARY: (*Yawning and making a face*) I'm not hungry.

MARTHA: I brought thee some clothes Mr. Craven ordered for thee from London. I'll help thee on wi' them if tha'll get out of bed. When th'art dressed, tha'll find an appetite. Go wash tha' face first. (*Martha lays out the clothes on the bed. Mary reluctantly rises and washes her face at the washstand. She then comes DS and stands stock still while Martha takes off her nightgown and puts the dress on.*)

MARTHA: (*as she works*) Hold up your arms now. Mr. Craven wants thee to have everything tha' needs. My, but th'art a thin one! We mun fatten thee up and put pink into thy cheeks.

MARY: How can you put pink into my cheeks?

MARTHA: Tha'll go out in the garden and talk to the birds. That'll do it.

MARY: I don't want to!

MARTHA: (*buttoning dress*) There—much better than black, I'd say.

MARY: You're taking too long!

MARTHA: Soon tha'll be dressin' tha'self. Now, put tha' shoes on.

MARY: (*flouncing over the bed*) My Ayah always put on my shoes. It was the custom.

MARTHA: Eh, but it's no at all the custom here! Take the shoe here and put it on. I'll buckle it for thee this time. (*Mary puts the shoe on the wrong foot, finally gets it right.*) Now the other one. (*Another struggle.*) There now, sit down and eat tha' breakfast.

MARY: I told you I'm not hungry!

MARTHA: Try the porridge. Here, I'll put a bit o' sugar on it.

MARY: I don't want it, I tell you. I don't want it!

MARTHA: Eh, if my brothers and sisters saw that tray, they'd clean it bare in five minutes.

MARY: Why?

MARTHA: Why? Because they scarce ever had their stomachs full. They're hungry as hawks morn till night.

MARY: I'll try a piece of that toast.

MARTHA: (*pouring out a cup of tea for her*) Tha'll get some appetite when tha' goes out on the moor. Our Dickon—he's the next oldest to me—spends all day makin' friends wi' the animals. He has a pony named Jump follows him everywhere.

MARY: (*interested in spite of herself*) Jump? Where did he get it?

MARTHA: He found it on the moor and brought it some bits o' bread and a carrot. It lets him ride on its back. He has a pet fox and a crow, too.

MARY: I've never had a pet.

MARTHA: Perhaps he'll bring thee one.

MARY: I can't eat any more. (*She pushes the food away.*)

MARTHA: Then here's a sweater for thee. Put it on, and tha' can go out into the garden. The sun's tellin' us Spring's here at last.

MARY: Who'll go with me?

MARTHA: Eh, tha'll go by thyself.

MARY: I might get lost.

MARTHA: Not if tha' stays in the gardens. There's a kitchen garden, a rose garden with a fountain, and lots of other gardens. There's only one that's locked up so tha canna get into it.

MARY: Where's that one?

MARTHA: That's it there with the wall around it. (*She points SR.*)

MARY: Why is it locked?

MARTHA: Mr. Craven had it shut when his wife died so sudden. He won't let anyone go inside.