

# 'Secret Garden': Story of loss, dreams, hope

## Guiding hands: Musical based on classic children's book comes to Capital Playhouse

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Though it's based on the children's book by Frances Hodgson Burnett, the Broadway version of "The Secret Garden" is a musical with something to say to all ages.

The story is about young Mary, who goes to live with her reclusive uncle, a widower with a bedridden son, after her family dies.

In the musical by Marsha Norman and Lucy Simon, the lost loved ones are present on stage, guiding and helping the living characters.

"I say to the cast, 'I hope this is the way life really is,' " said Troy Arnold Fisher, who's directing the show that opens this weekend at Capital Playhouse. "I hope the people who have gone on before me are there still watching me and helping me even if I don't see them."

Norman refers to Mary's late parents and her Uncle Archie's late wife, who died giving birth to a son, Colin, as "dreamers."

"It's really a hopeful show," Fisher said. "Everyone is trying to work through the loss in their lives. The dreamers guide and protect them until everyone is whole and well at the end, and the dreamers leave one at a time."

The show is appropriate for young children, too.

"A little kid would watch it and see little Mary and Colin who are doing fun things and having a great adventure," Fisher said. "An adult would see it from a whole different perspective. The show is a great piece of art. It can be viewed in different layers."

Mary is played by Kate Hayes, 10, in fifth grade at Lincoln Elementary, and Colin by Clarke Hallum, 12, in sixth grade at Washington Middle School. Over the holidays, Clarke played Ralphie in the new musical "A Christmas Story" at Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre.



Although Clarke has done shows with the playhouse's Kids at Play program, this is his first main-stage role with the company. Clarke said he's having a great time with the part of the bedridden Colin.

"Colin is a brat," he said. "About every scene I'm in, I throw a tantrum, and I'm fighting and throwing pillows at people. It's very fun to portray that."

Clarke's theatrical schedule has been busy since Christmas. He has had several callbacks for a role in Broadway's "Billy Elliott" and has visited New York City to record the original cast album for "A Christmas Story."

"When I found out that this team was going to be able to record the cast album, I was crying tears of joy," he said. "I'll be on an album forever. I can show my grandkids this."

The 1991 Broadway production of "The Secret Garden" won multiple Tony awards, including one for Best Book of a Musical.

A friend of Fisher's was involved with the Broadway production, and he was able to attend rehearsals. He recalled the first rehearsal where the actors sang with the orchestra.

"This woman was sitting on the staircase in the lobby, and she had this glow of light coming out of her," he said. "I finally asked someone who that was, and it was Lucy Simon." (She's the sister of Carly Simon.)

"It has a real musical theater quality," he said of the music, "but a couple of the main characters are from Yorkshire, so they are more Celtic in their dialect, and some of the songs have a Celtic flavor. The score is unique."