



Sketches

December 2006 Newsletter

Local Thespians Shine in "The Secret Garden"

December 8, 9, 15, & 16 at 7 p.m. December 10 & 17 at 2 p.m.



The cast and crew are already into production rehearsals of the upcoming performance of Marsha Norman's musical, "The Secret Garden," based on the beloved classic by Francis Hodgson Burnett. The music was written by Lucy Simon.

Even with a bare stage and after-school clothes Joselyn Malik is not the eleven year-old who thrilled the audiences at Mendonoma Idol with her songs, but she is now the grief-stricken orphan – Mary Lennox. Mary, who had been raised in India by wealthy parents, is flung by the fates and laws into Misselthwaite Manor and the custody of its owner, Archibald Craven. Phil Atkins, who is a window covering specialist by day, portrays a Lord Craven who is so crippled by his own grief over the death of his wife Lily that he cannot stand to be around their sickly child – a boy of about eleven. The bed-ridden Colin Craven is played by Davina Allen, who even at this young age is already the veteran of two other musicals for the Arts Center Theater.

So persuasive is the palatable grief of these three characters that it is no surprise that through their longing ghosts appear. Thus we get to see in flashbacks Mary's former servant, played by Marlee Little, and her parents, Rose and Albert Lennox played by Marla Skibbins and Joel Crockett. Who would guess that in real life Marla is a life coach and Joel Crockett runs the Four Eyed Frog Bookstore? The character Lily Craven, played by Sandra Moores, is far from the property manager Sandra is by day and yet before the footlights she is changed into another century when women were wan and pampered. It is Lily Craven's garden that has been locked up since her death giving birth to Colin.

Misselthwaite Manor is run under the strict and even cruel hands of Mrs. Medlock portrayed by Katie Atherton, the housekeeper. One feels pity for Martha, the very young girl she has put in charge of caring for the new orphan Mary. Yet it is Martha, played by Olivia Harrison, who at thirteen is also a veteran of many productions on this stage. With her brother,

Dickon, she brings to the play the love that begins the healing for everyone.

Dickon, ably portrayed by Keelyn O'Brian the current Mendonoma Idol, along with the manor's gardener, Ben Weatherstaff, become the keys to open the secret and locked up garden. Ben, the gardener, is really Bill Ballagh, a newspaper man who works for the Independent Coast Observer. Amazing.

The cast also includes Bryan Morse – a financial analyst who was great as Daddy Warbucks in "Annie"; Tim Johnson – a consultant; Joe Doughty – a building contractor; Willie Brown – a disc jockey at KTDE at 100.5 FM; Julie Moore O'Brian – a school teacher, and retirees Tina Vasavada, Karel Metcalf, and Jane Simmons. Savannah Powers, who was Annie last year, is Mary's understudy and is in the chorus.

Talk about community theater! This description does not even get into what these people 'retired from' nor does it begin to discuss the professions of the directors and technicians working behind the scenes on the production.

Lynne Atkins, the Director, has brought all these folks, from very different walks of life, together for a heartwarming play. Don Krieger and Sita Milchev are the musical directors who have coaxed wonderful songs from the cast. There will be at least six performances so you can find a day and time that fits your schedule. Get your tickets now at the Gualala Arts office or the Dolphin. In other years every performance has been sold out.

