

## Cynthia Walker



### *Can't wait to see 'The Secret Garden'*

**M**y kids have hundreds of books: some gifts, some purchased over the years, most from used book sales, a few new. A treasured few are left over from my childhood.

Recently, for lack of anything important to do, I performed the perennial task of resorting all the kids' books back into alphabetical order by author's last name: Alcott, Allen, Anderson, Ardizzone, Banks, Barrie, Baum, Brink, Brown, Burnett ...

We have two by Frances Hodgson Burnett: "A Little Princess," still with its glossy pink paper cover, bought new for Anne's ninth Christmas, and my old copy of "The Secret Garden," with its shabby turquoise cover, scotch-taped spine, impassioned illustrations, and unparalleled prose.

"When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too."

This opening captivated me when I was 8 years old, and I read on breathlessly to discover who Mary was, and why she was so sour.

From India in the midst of a cholera epidemic, by steamer, train, and brougham, to the Yorkshire moors and a gloomy manor with mysterious secrets, I followed her, stumbling over the hard words. For the next four years, "The Secret Garden" was one of my very favorite books.

I rejoiced when I turned 10, because I was as old as Mary, and I felt a little sad to turn 11 and leave her behind. Something about the book's message of the redemptive power of Nature and Nature's God sank deep into my soul.

Now South Valley Civic Theater is performing "The Secret Garden." I am going to see it with my 10-year-old daughter, who is as thin as Mary ever was, and sometimes as sour. I hope the play is even half as good as the book. I wonder how they are going to manage the robin, and how they are going to use sets to convey the magic of spring transforming a garden.

Showtime is 8: p.m. on May 26th and 27th and on June 3rd, with 2 p.m. matinees on May 28th and June 4th. All performances will be at the Gilroy High School Theater at Tenth and Princevalle.

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## ▶ ENTER A 'SECRET GARDEN'



JAMES M. MOHS/Chief Photographer

**Ce-Ce Miley, center, who plays a spoiled child named Mary, throws a temper tantrum as Stephanie Smith, Jordan Stephens and Stephanie Egbert look on during a rehearsal for "The Secret Garden," Wednesday night at Gilroy High School theater. Performances start tonight at 8 p.m. at GHS theater at 10th and Princevalle. Performances continue at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays through June 3 with matinees on May 28 and June 4 at 2 p.m.**

# The Secret Garden set to open

Special to The Dispatch

South Valley Civic Theatre presents a family musical version of *The Secret Garden* beginning Friday, May 12, at the Gilroy High School Theater on the corner of 10th Street and Princevalle.

This classic story about young Mary Lennox, who goes to live with her rich uncle in England after her parents die of cholera in India, is adapted from the classic novel by Francis Hodgson Burnett. Directed by Carol Harris and produced by Jon Reed and Janet Espinosa, this story is sure to touch your heart as it shows how Mary and her new family are drawn together by their own ailing hearts and bodies, and in doing so all their lives improve.

Each year for 30 years SVCT has produced a season of plays, musicals, comedies

and dramas, all presented locally and showcasing local talent both as actors and as staff. The group also proudly supports the Josh Brawn scholarship fund for graduating seniors from local high schools. A non-profit organization, South Valley Civic Theatre offers season ticket discounts and membership privilege categories. For more information about local community theater, volunteers may call 842-SHOW.

Performances continue at 8 p.m. on Fridays May 19 and 26 and Saturdays May 13, 20, 27 and June 3. There will also be two matinees on Sundays May 28 and June 4 at 2 p.m. Admission is \$10, \$8 for seniors and children under 12 years old. Tickets are available at the door or by calling 842-SHOW or visiting our web site at

[www.svct.org](http://www.svct.org). Tickets are also available at BookSmart in Morgan Hill or California Music in Gilroy.

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