

# Secret Garden scintillates

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Last weekend's production of *The Secret Garden* was a phenomenal performance by West's theatre department and orchestra.

Based on a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* is a story about a girl, Mary Lennox, who is raised in India and gets shipped off to live with her uncle Archibald in Yorkshire, England, after her par-

garden, outdoors, Archibald Craven's quarters, Mary's room, India, as well as a scene in Paris, France. By altering the slightest details, such as the color of the curtains, the lighting on stage, as well as adding little details such as flower vines or portraits, every scene became beautifully unique, regardless of being placed around the same platform.

The orchestra's performance was also exceptional. Orchestra director Bill Koch and the musicians were able to perform beautifully a variety of music ranging from soft and light to authentically Indian. The music was

very difficult Yorkshire accents as well as the incredible way in which they portrayed their characters (bringing much needed comic relief to the stage) was phenomenal.

As for the remaining cast, the singing performances of Samantha Meron who played Lily and Solomon were outstanding. Senior Dale Mackey wonderfully portrayed a woman we love to hate, Mrs. Medlock; junior Michael Budzik performed powerfully as Dr. Neville Craven; senior Diego Colon overcame some accent problems as well and was great as the dramatic Archibald Craven. Recognition

must also go to senior Joe Cabrera as Fakir and sophomore Margo Chervony as Ayah for dancing around the stage in Indian garb, also bringing some comic relief, although this might not have been the intent of their performances.

Speaking of Indian garb, Francine Schulman's costumes were lavish and authentic and a perfect complement to the music and performances.

As for Kevin Wall's diction, the art with which these characters and the story were brought to life was incredible. In one of the first scenes, in which the family of Mary dies due to a cholera epidemic in India, no tacky fake blood was used; neither did the



Cast members perform a scene from *The Secret Garden*. From left: E.J. Ladlad, Mallory Portnoy, Josh Solomon, Margo Chervony, Diane Teng and Joe Cabrera. Photo courtesy of Kevin Wall.

ents die in a cholera epidemic. Meanwhile, her uncle broods about the death of his wife and his terminally ill son as Mary soon discovers a secret garden, previously owned by her late aunt.

Although there were a few drawbacks to this play, the end result was one of the best performances seen in the Robert L. Johnson Auditorium this year.

Pre-eminent among awe-inspiring sights was the set itself. The crew and other individuals involved in the creation of the set used a single rotating platform center stage and were able to change its décor for each scene. The different scenes took place in the secret

always in synch with the actors' performances and significantly added to the atmosphere of each scene.

The onstage performances garner praise as well. Although sophomore Diane Teng, playing Mary Lennox, and junior E.J. Ladlad, playing Colin Craven, struggled with British accents, this did not take away from their performances. The chemistry among Teng, Ladlad, and senior Josh Solomon, playing Dickon, wonderfully took shape throughout the duration of the show. This reviewer must also commend, specifically, the performance of Solomon as well as that of senior Mallory Portnoy, playing Martha. Their mastery of the

actors take overly-dramatic falls to their deaths.

Accompanied by the orchestra, the actors danced and swayed about the stage, tossing around bright red pieces of cloth from one to the other. Eventually, those who died of the cholera could be identified as such by the red cloth they carried with them throughout the remainder of the play.

The scene was chaotic, but clearly and very creatively brought the cholera epidemic to life.

Those who missed viewing this performance, unfortunately, missed one of the best performances yet by the theatre department.