

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

Chance Theater proudly presents an encore production of

The Secret Garden - The Musical

This emotional, Tony Award-winning musical brings a darker coming-of-age story back to Chance Theater's Holiday Literature Series this winter

June 7, 2017 ... Anaheim, California ... Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, is pleased to announce the return holiday engagement of ***The Secret Garden - The Musical***. Written by Marsha Norman and Lucy Simon and once again directed by KC Wilkerson and Casey Long, ***The Secret Garden* will preview from November 24 through December 1; regular performances will begin December 2 and continue through December 23 at Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Cripe Stage.**

Based on the popular children's book of the same name, ***The Secret Garden*** follows the story of Mary Lennox, a young British girl born and raised in colonial India. When the 11-year-old's parents die in a cholera outbreak, she is sent to Yorkshire to live with a reclusive uncle, his invalid son — and a host of ghosts, spirits, and lost souls inhabiting Mary's new home. With the help of the spirits, Mary and a young gardener uncover the mystery of the manor's magical garden, bringing life to the neglected estate as Mary's own personality blossoms alongside the flowers. Filled with amazing music, elegant choreography, and a heartwarming story of forgiveness and renewal, ***The Secret Garden*** is the quintessential holiday musical for all ages.

The Secret Garden rounds out Chance Theater's traditional Holiday Literature Series, which includes rotating productions of *Little Women* and *Anne of Green Gables*. This year's production of ***The Secret Garden*** reassembles members of the original 2013 production team, including directors KC Wilkerson and Casey Long and choreographer Robert Hahn.

"With its heart planted firmly on its sleeve, it's a story about connecting," says co-director KC Wilkerson. "Connecting to family, friends, to our belief systems and the earth. Connecting to our own past, present, and future; and connecting to those who are no longer with us."

"I am so delighted to be returning to this musical for the third time," says co-director Casey Long. "Although the show is darker in tone than the other two shows in our Holiday Literature Series — *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women* — that just means that it has to work so much harder for its happy ending. There's a reason this show won three Tony Awards — the music is amazing, and the story also deals with some real issues of grief while never losing the magic and wonder of a timeless coming-of-age story."

Here are what critics had to say about the Chance's past productions of *The Secret Garden - The Musical*:

"... a lyrical musical that evokes the mixture of hope and fear, and the sense of something mystical, found in Burnett's novel" – *The Orange County Register*

"... spellbinding, emotionally powerful holiday entertainment well worth a first (or return) visit" – *StageSceneLA*

"... enlightening and emotion-filled — a must for families" – *OC Arts & Culture*

MEET THE TEAM

Marsha Norman (Book and Lyrics) is an American playwright, screenwriter, and novelist. In addition to *The Secret Garden*, she has also written the book and lyrics for the Broadway musical *The Red Shoes*, as well as the libretto for *The Color Purple*. Norman's first play, *Getting Out*, was produced at the Actors Theatre of Louisville and then Off-Broadway in 1979. The play reflects Norman's experience working with disturbed adolescents at Kentucky's Central State Hospital, and had a successful run. This success led to continued work with Actors Theatre and eventually writing *'night, Mother*, which would turn out to be her best-known work, given its Broadway success and its star-powered film version. The play, dealing frankly with the subject of suicide, won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Drama as well as the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Hull-Warriner, and the Drama Desk Award. Most recently, she has written the libretto for the musical adaptation of the film *The Bridges of Madison County*, with the score by Jason Robert Brown. The musical premiered at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in 2013 and opened on Broadway in January 2014. Norman is currently co-chair of the playwriting department at The Juilliard School.

Lucy Simon (Music) began her professional career at the age of sixteen singing folk tunes with sister Carly as The Simon Sisters and later folk-rock. Simon made her Broadway debut as the composer of *The Secret Garden*, for which she was nominated for a Tony Award and Drama Desk Award. She also wrote songs for the Off-Broadway show *A... My Name Is Alice*. She composed the music for a musical version of the Russian novel *Doctor Zhivago*, with lyricists Michael Korie and Amy Powers and book writer Michael Weller. The musical had its world premiere at the La Jolla Playhouse in May 2006. She won a Grammy award in 1981 together with her husband, David Levine, in the Best Recording for Children category for *In Harmony: A Sesame Street Record*, and again in 1983 in the same category for *In Harmony 2*.

KC Wilkerson (Co-Director and Production Designer) is a critically-acclaimed, award-winning lighting and video designer based in southern California. He is currently the senior lighting designer for Disney Parks & Resorts Creative Entertainment, where he leads the group responsible for the design, implementation, and programming of entertainment lighting for the Disney properties in California and Hawaii. He also designs lighting and projection for theaters across southern California where his recent credits include, *Songs for a New World*, *The Laramie Project Cycle*, *West Side Story*, *A Man of No Importance*, *There's One In Every Marriage*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *The Who's Tommy*, *The Secret Garden*, *Welcome Home*, *Jenny Sutter*, and *Merrily We Roll Along*. Awards include two LA Drama Critics Circle Awards (Lighting Design and Video Design), LA Stage Alliance Ovation Honors Award (Video Design), a Backstage Garland Award (Lighting Design), and several *StageSceneLA* Awards (Lighting and Projection Design).

Casey Long (Co-Director) is a Chance Founding Artist and a graduate of the Leadership Anaheim program, Annenberg Foundation's Alchemy training, and the Fieldstone Foundation Leadership program. He has appeared in numerous Chance productions including Samuel Hunter's *A Bright New Boise*, the Orange County Premiere of Sarah Ruhl's *Passion Play*, Southern California Premiere of *Reborn*, and the West Coast premiere of *Nerve*. Casey has directed all three shows featured in Chance's Holiday Literature Series -- *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little Women - The Broadway Musical*, and *The Secret Garden - The Musical*.

The production team for ***The Secret Garden*** also includes associate director Sarah Figoten Wilson (*Little Women, She Loves Me*) and choreographer Robert Hahn (*The Secret Garden - The Musical*).

Mary Kay Fyda-Mar is the Executive Producer for this production. Bette and Wylie Aitken are Season Producers for the entire 2017 production schedule.

To schedule press interviews, request photos, schedule press comps or for any additional information, please contact Casey Long at (714) 900-3284 or by e-mail at casey@chancetheater.com.

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER recently received a National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing. The Chance has won six Ovation Awards, including two for Best Production of a Musical – Intimate Theater for its West Coast premiere of *Triassic Park – The Musical* and Southern California premiere of *Jerry Springer – The Opera*, as well as four LADCC Awards, including the Polly Warfield Award for Outstanding Season. The Anaheim City Council named Chance Theater “the official resident theater company of Anaheim”, and Arts Orange County has twice named the Chance as “Outstanding Arts Organization”. Known for using bold and personal storytelling to promote dialogue and connection within the Southern California theatrical landscape, the Chance is committed to contributing to a more compassionate, connected and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, Network of Ensemble Theaters, and the LA Stage Alliance, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: **THE SECRET GARDEN - THE MUSICAL**

Based on the popular children’s book of the same name, ***The Secret Garden*** follows the story of Mary Lennox, a young British girl born and raised in colonial India. When the 11-year-old is orphaned in India, she is sent to Yorkshire to live with an embittered, reclusive uncle and his invalid son. As Mary and a young gardener bring life to a neglected garden, her own personality blossoms alongside the flowers.

WHEN:

Preview Performances:

November 24 - December 1

Fridays at 8pm (special 3pm performance on Nov. 24)

Saturdays at 8pm

Sundays at 7pm

Regular Performances

December 2 - December 23

Thursdays at 7:30pm

Fridays at 8pm

Saturdays at 3pm and 8pm (no 3pm performance on Dec. 2)

Sundays at 3pm

Special 7:30pm performance on Wednesday, December 6

WHERE: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Cripe Stage

Tony Award-winning SECRET GARDEN musical returns November 24.

5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

TICKETS: \$31.00 - \$45.00. Call (888) 455-4212 or visit www.ChanceTheater.com.
Discounts available for seniors, students and military.

REVIEWERS and OTHER PRESS are encouraged to attend:

Opening Performance on Saturday, December 2 at 8pm

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