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Teen ripens to her role as 'Secret Garden' pick

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

NEWPORT - It was the music that attracted 14-year-old Blake Selnick to the role of Mary Lennox in the Footlighters' production of "The Secret Garden."

"It's gorgeous," Blake said. "The play is easy for me because I fell in love with the music."

Director Dennis Murphy agreed.

"I saw the Broadway production and loved the music," said Murphy, who spent seven years as director of outreach for the Cincinnati Opera.

"I purchased the CD and came to love the story. The show has beautiful, lyrical music and we have a very talented cast of singers to make that music come to life."

The play concerns the recently orphaned Mary Lennox who returns to her native England to be cared for by her Uncle Archibald. But her uncle is too distraught by the death of his wife to deal with Mary.

Mary befriends the estate's servants who show her the secret garden that was locked up with Uncle Archibald's wife died. Mary then discovers her sickly cousin Colin whom Uncle Archibald had locked away in a remote part of house.

Murphy has his own view of the play.

"Most people wouldn't think this when they hear the title of 'The Secret Garden,' but I call the show a ghost story," he said.

"There is a vocal ensemble in the show called 'The Dreamers' and they float through the show commenting on the action."

This is the second time Blake has played Mary. She played the role in the Showboat Majestic's production. She sang in "The Sound of Music" with the Pops and Symphony.

"The Secret Garden" runs from May 4 to May 21 at the Stained Glass Theatre at 802 York St. in Newport. Ticket information can be found at www.footlighters.org or at (513) 474-8711.

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