

# SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

---

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

**For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.**

[www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk)  
or, in the US [www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

# The Secret Garden

A play

by Frances Hodgson Burnett adapted for  
the stage by Neil Duffield

Samuel French — London  
New York - Toronto - Hollywood



© 1999 BY NEIL DUFFIELD

Rights of Performance by Amateurs are controlled by Samuel French Ltd, 52 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5JR, and they, or their authorized agents, issue licences to amateurs on payment of a fee. **It is an infringement of the Copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before the fee has been paid and the licence issued.**

The Royalty Fee indicated below is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

Basic fee for each and every performance by amateurs in the British Isles	Code L
---	--------

The Professional Repertory Rights in this play are controlled by SAMUEL FRENCH LTD, 52 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5JR.

**The publication of this play does not imply that it is necessarily available for performance by amateurs or professionals, either in the British Isles or Overseas. Amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to the appropriate agents for written consent before starting rehearsals or booking a theatre or hall.**

ISBN 978 0 573 05120 3

Please see page iv for further copyright information

## **THE SECRET GARDEN**

First presented at the Polka Theatre, Wimbledon, London  
on 13th February 1997 with the following cast:

**Mary Lennox**

**Mr Craven**

**Colin**

**Mrs Medlock**

**Martha**

**Dickon**

**Ben Weatherstaff**

Lisa Burrows

Richard Walker

Paul Chisholm

Carole Dance

Cerianne Roberts

Jonathan Williams

Richard Walker

Directed by Rosamunde Hutt

Designed by Alex Bunn

Music by Andrew Dodge

## COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

(See also page ii)

This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights including Stage, Motion Picture, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translation into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

**No part of this publication may lawfully be reproduced in ANY form or by any means—photocopying, typescript, recording (including video-recording), manuscript, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise—or be transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, without prior permission.**

Licences for amateur performances are issued subject to the understanding that it shall be made clear in all advertising matter that the audience will witness an amateur performance; that the names of the authors of the plays shall be included on all programmes; and that the integrity of the authors' work will be preserved.

The Royalty Fee is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

In Theatres or Halls seating Four Hundred or more the fee will be subject to negotiation.

In Territories Overseas the fee quoted above may not apply. A fee will be quoted on application to our local authorized agent, or if there is no such agent, on application to Samuel French Ltd, London.

### VIDEO-RECORDING OF AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS

Please note that the copyright laws governing video-recording are extremely complex and that it should not be assumed that any play may be video-recorded for whatever purpose without first obtaining the permission of the appropriate agents. The fact that a play is published by Samuel French Ltd does not indicate that video rights are available or that Samuel French Ltd controls such rights.

## CHARACTERS

### *Major Roles*

**Mary Lennox**, a young girl  
**Martha**, a young maid  
**Mrs Medlock**, housekeeper to Mr Craven  
**Dickon**, Martha's younger brother  
**Colin**, Mr Craven's son  
**Ben Weatherstaff**, a gardener  
**Mr Craven**, Mary's uncle

If required, Mr Craven and Ben Weatherstaff can be doubled

### *Minor Roles*

To be played by the cast

**Photographer**  
**Mother**  
**Father**  
**Ayah**  
**Servant**  
**Ship 1**  
**Ship 2**

### *Animals*

Puppets to be operated by cast or stage management

**Snake**  
**Robin**  
**Lamb**  
**Fox**  
**Raven**

The action of the play takes place in India and then in and around Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire

Time — the early 20th century

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I was commissioned to dramatize Frances Hodgson Burnett's book by Vicky Ireland for Polka Children's Theatre in Wimbledon. The first task I set myself was to make a list of all the ideas this classic story prompted. And the first word that came into my head was "transformation".

As the change from winter to spring brings the garden to life, persuading it to release its secrets, so the characters of Mary and Colin, and finally Mr Craven, begin to bloom. Mary learns to talk to birds, to skip and laugh, to experience the joy of watching things grow. Colin discovers the feel of a newborn lamb, the touch of a bird's feather, and the strength of his own under-used limbs. Mr Craven learns how to release his locked-in grief and open himself once again to the warmth of human contact.

The gardeners of the story — the people who do the tending and nurturing of these characters — are the ordinary plain-speaking no-nonsense characters of Martha, Dickon and Ben Weatherstaff. They provide the key which unlocks the tightly-shut door inside Mary and motivates her, in turn, to bring Colin and his father out of their darkness and into the light.

To Colin and Mary this process of transformation appears so amazing and new that the only word they can think of to describe it is "magic". But to Dickon and Ben it's something much more ordinary — just an everyday aspect of the world they live in. It doesn't bother them that they don't understand the mysteries of nature. They've learned to work with it and love it, and that's enough.

So "transformation" became a key theme in my dramatization of the story. And I wanted this theme to be evident not merely in the text, but in what the audience sees. Consequently, some notion of design became crucial in the writing, and this immediately posed practical problems.

Polka's stage is relatively small. There are no flying facilities, space in the wings is very limited, and there is no army of stage managers ready to rush in the moment the lights dim. Yet the story demands that scenes move rapidly from interior to exterior many times. Also, as the play unfolds, a garden must gradually come into full bloom.

What I didn't want was a lot of clumsy scene changes, with furniture being heaved on and off every few minutes, killing any dramatic build. To avoid this, I opted for a degree of stylization. Alex Bunn, who designed the original production, realized this quite beautifully in his set design, and by using the characters to effect scene changes and changes in the garden, director Rosamunde Hutt made each change a watchable and enjoyable transformation in itself.

The prologue is set in India, which was suggested by long drapes of silk-like material hung so as to give the impression of some sort of outdoor pavilion. At the end of the prologue the material was removed to reveal the main set standing behind it.

Two revolves, operated by the cast, allowed the change from manor house to garden to happen quickly and easily. Furniture was kept to a minimum, and was carefully selected so as to define particular rooms, without the necessity of setting up walls or practical doors.

The journey through the gardens was again highly stylized, achieved by actors visibly moving screens around the stage to give the impression of a complex series of walls and doors. At other times they posed as statues. Music helps enormously in sequences of this nature, as it does in the scene changes.

Once the convention of this sort of stylized theatre is established, operating puppets presents no great problem. It becomes quite acceptable to see the operator, whenever this proves necessary. An audience will take pleasure in clever theatricality.

It's rarely my intention as a playwright to lay down strict guidelines as to how a set should look, what furniture should be used etc. I like to feel I'm leaving enough room within a text for a director and designer to create their own ideas on staging, based on the resources and acting space they have at their disposal. My only advice would be not to attempt any kind of heavy literal design which would be likely to slow down the action and disrupt the rhythm and build of the drama. The story is about using your imagination — so use it.

**Neil Duffield**

## MUSIC

Music recurs throughout the play. It underscores and punctuates the action helping to create and change mood, indicate passage of time, and signal a more stylized form.

The following pieces of music were used in the original production. They are listed here merely as suggestions; directors may choose whatever music they like.

### **Maurice Ravel**

*Pavane pour une Infante défunte*

*Le Tombeau de Couperin*

*Tzigane*

Introduction for harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet

*Gaspard de la Nuit*

### **English Traditional Jig**

*Hunting the Hare*

**Andrew Dodge**

A licence issued by Samuel French Ltd to perform this play does not include permission to use the Incidental music specified in this copy. Where the place of performance is already licensed by the PERFORMING RIGHT SOCIETY a return of the music used must be made to them. If the place of performance is not so licensed then application should be made to the Performing Right Society, 29 Berners Street, London W1.

A separate and additional licence from PHONOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCES LTD, 1 Upper James Street, London W1R 3HG is needed whenever commercial recordings are used.

## PROLOGUE

*Music underscores the whole of the prologue. It should have some Indian influence and a slightly surreal out-of-kilter feel*

*The Lights come up on Mary Lennox; we are presented with the image of a young girl alone in the world*

*We are in the India of the British Raj*

**Mary** *(to the audience)* Everyone said Mary Lennox was the most disagreeable child they'd ever come across. It was true too.

*A photographer enters with tripod, camera and flashpan*

**Photographer** *(to the audience)* She was a sickly, fretful, ugly, little thing with a thin face and a sour expression. *(He sets up his tripod and camera)*

*Mary pouts at the camera as Father enters dressed in imperial uniform*

**Father** *(to the audience)* She had been born and brought up in India, where her father held a position of some importance. *(He stands next to Mary and poses for the camera)*

*Mother enters*

**Mother** *(to the audience)* Her mother was a great beauty who loved dancing and parties. *(She poses next to her husband)* She hadn't wanted a little girl at all. *(She snaps her fingers)*

*Mary's ayah enters*

*Mother signals to the ayah to take Mary away*

**Ayah** *(to the audience)* Mary was looked after by an ayah who was told she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible.

*The ayah leads Mary, with difficulty, out of the pose. Mary swings a kick at her and just misses*

**Mary** Pig!

*The ayah salaams apologetically*

*The photographer takes his picture; there is a flash. Father and Mother relax and turn to each other, ignoring Mary, who stares sullenly. The photographer packs up his tripod and camera; as he does so we hear a terrible wailing from off stage. Mother and Father exchange anxious looks*

*The Photographer exits hurriedly*

**Mother** What is it?

**Father** I told you we should have gone to the hills!

**Mother** You never said it had broken out among the servants!

**Father** (*accusingly*) If it hadn't have been for that stupid dinner party of yours ...

*Father and Mother exit hastily*

*The ayah begins to back away from Mary. More voices add to the wailing and the music builds*

**Mary** What's happening? Who's making that awful wailing? Tell them to stop! I don't like it! (*To the ayah*) Where are you going?

*The ayah continues to back away*

(*Stamping her foot angrily*) Come back here! I'm giving you an order! You're my servant! You have to do what I say!

*The ayah breaks away and runs off*

*The music and wailing continue to build and distort. There is an atmosphere of rising panic*

*A servant rushes on, clearly very ill*

You! What's happening? Tell me what's happening!

*The servant hardly spares Mary a glance*

How dare you ignore me? How dare you!

*The servant exits*

*The Photographer rushes across the stage with his camera, ignoring Mary completely*

*Father hurries in with suitcases*

Father, what is it? Why is everyone rushing about?

**Father** Not now, Mary! Not now!

*Father exits*

*Mother enters with an armful of dresses, following Father and shouting after him*

**Mother** What do I care if they're sick! I want to know who's going to pack my cases!

*Mary tries to attract her attention*

*Mother brushes Mary aside and exits*

*Mary squats down sulkily and covers her ears. The music and wailing build to a climax. Mary falls asleep and the sounds fade to a soft musical underscore which continues under the following scene. The Lights dim*

*A small snake (an actor operating a puppet) enters*

**Snake** She did not know what had happened in the house around her. She did not see the bodies of the dead. She had never heard the word "cholera".

*Mary wakes and watches the snake*

**Mary** Where is everyone? Why is it so quiet?

**Snake** Soon others will arrive and find her. One life. One small solitary life amid so much death.

*The snake exits*

*We hear a blast from a ship's siren. The music swells and the lighting changes*

*Two actors enter and create a ship around Mary*

**Ship 1** She was to be put on a ship, they decided, and sent back home.

**Mary** Home? Where's home?

**Ship 2** England, of course.

**Ship 1** They're sending you to live with your uncle.

**Ship 2** Mr Archibald Craven.

**Ship 1** In Yorkshire.

**Mary** But I don't know anything about him!

**Ship 2** (*confiding*) Parents are both dead.

**Ship 1** She's a plain little piece of goods.

**Ship 2** And they say her mother was such a beauty.

**Mary** I won't listen to you! I won't! I won't! (*She sticks her fingers in her ears*)

**Ship 1** (*mocking*) Mary Mary, quite contrary!

**Ship 2** How does your garden grow?

**Ship 1** How does your garden grow?

**Ship 2** How does your garden grow?

*The ship's siren blasts*

*The ship actors exit, laughing*

*The Lights fade to a spot on Mary standing alone; the music slowly fades to silence. We hear a distant reprise of the wailing. Mary doesn't react to it. The Prologue ends with the same image it began with — a young girl alone in the world*

## ACT I

*Mary remains on stage. The wailing continues softly*

*The set changes to Mary's bedroom at Misselthwaite Manor and the wailing fades out. The Lights come up*

*Mrs Medlock and Martha enter*

*Mrs Medlock and Martha stand for a moment or two, staring at Mary. Mary remains aloof*

**Mrs Medlock** Well. I suppose as you're here, you might as well be told something about the place. Though what they've sent you to Misselthwaite Manor for I can't imagine.

*Mary shows no interest*

# WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

---

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

[www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk)

or, in the US [www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.



**Samuel French London**



**SamuelFrenchLtd**