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THEATER

MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2013

'The Secret Garden' blooms into hope and visual bliss

BY [ADDY BHASIN](#) | SENIOR STAFF

LAST UPDATED MARCH 4, 2013

"The poetry of the earth is never dead," wrote John Keats. This statement of the eternal power of nature is a perfect summary of Cal Performances' and the San Francisco Opera's latest production — an adaptation of the classic children's novel "The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett, a novel written in 1910 whose message has remained relevant even after 100 years.

The libretto, conducted by Sara Jobin and directed by Jose Maria Conde, tells the story of Mary Lennox (Sarah Shafer), a young girl who is sent to live with her detached uncle at Misselthwaite Manor in the gloomy moors of Yorkshire after her parents are killed by a cholera epidemic in India. The story develops from a place of darkness to one of positivity as Mary finds the key to an old, hidden garden, which she cultivates, bringing peace and gratitude to both her bleak situation and that of those who live with her at the manor.

The story itself is a simple tale: It reveals the healing power of nature and a triumph over misfortune and heartbreak. But the effort put into the visuals of the opera are astounding and sophisticated.

These stunning sets can be attributed to multimedia artist Naomie Kremer, whose work is exhibited at the Berkeley Art Museum and the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. "I wanted (the sets) to be slightly surreal and sort of dreamlike," she said. The visuals do

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indeed convey a sense of mystical eeriness. Projected onto large screens, images include Eastern-inspired patterns and natural, still visuals. However, some scenes include video projections of moving trees and swaying flowers to convey a sense of reality that

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Cal Performances, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Jose Maria Condemi, Mary Lennox, Naomie Kremer, Nolan Gasser, San Francisco Opera, Sara Jobin, The Secret Garden



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UCSB graduate student nominated for 2020-21 UC student regent position

UC Santa Barbara graduate student Jamaal Muwwakil was nominated for the position of UC student regent for the 2020-21 school year Wednesday.

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