

The logo for DanceVision Youth Ensemble features a stylized red graphic on the left consisting of three curved, overlapping shapes that resemble a flame or a fan. To the right of this graphic, the word "DANCEVISION" is written in a large, black, all-caps, sans-serif font. Below it, the words "Youth Ensemble" are written in a smaller, black, italicized serif font.

DANCEVISION

Youth Ensemble

Thoughts on "The Secret Garden"

By, Risa Kaplowitz

I was drawn to making a ballet based on *The Secret Garden* because the story deals with what is most important to me – that is, by nurturing someone or something, one nurtures oneself. Just as magical transformations happened to Mary, Colin and Mr. Craven, the "magic" in anyone can happen as soon as the emphasis is placed on what a person can contribute to the world rather than what the world can give to the person.

While the story of *The Secret Garden* was my greatest inspiration, the passion for the ballet bloomed when the music was chosen. Claude Debussy and Jules Massenet wrote some of the most glorious and theatrical music I have ever heard. To me, it seems as if the music was written for the story.

A tremendous force in making the ballet possible is the masterful work of its production manager, Dave Haneman. An avid photographer, Mr. Haneman has taken pictures from local areas in New Jersey and has used them as the backdrop for *The Secret Garden*. Projection Art allows the ballet to move seamlessly to the many locations in the book – from India to Yorkshire, from inside the mansion to inside the garden. Like the book, not all of the ballet is rosy. There are several powerful moments in the story and it was important for me to include them in the ballet. The beautiful dancers projecting the catastrophes temper scenes such as the death of Mary's parents by cholera and the death of Colin's mother from a fall. The latter part of the ballet is all about redemption, renewal, and just plain fun.

It has been challenging to bring to an original ballet to fruition. As Stephen Sondheim's lyrics attest from *Sunday in the Park with George*, "every little detail plays a part" in making certain that the world gets to see a fully bloomed creation, whether it be from the seed of a flower, the training of a dancer, or an idea for a ballet.

Despite the dancers' young ages, ranging from age seven to young adults, they are outstanding in both technique and artistry. Approximately sixty performers take part in the ballet. In starting the DanceVision Youth Ensemble, Susan Jaffe's and my goal was to help each dancer realize his or her potential within the studio and outside of it. Each dancer has something special to share, and we admire his or her determination to work courageously on "putting it together, piece by piece." As Mr. Sondheim wrote, it is the "only way to make a work of art."

