

Boulder's Tara High School to perform 'The Secret Garden' June 15-18



Zoe Ashbaugh, left, and Jinx Bramson, right, rehearse a dialog. Students at Tara Performing Arts High School in Boulder are rehearsing their all-school musical, "The Secret Garden," on Saturday.

By Isabelle Hammond

Images by Cliff Grassmick,
Staff Photographer

Tara High School students are preparing for their annual all-school musical to show next Thursday through Sunday. The group of roughly 40 students will perform "The Secret Garden" at the school's own theater, the Nomad Playhouse.

Nearly a month after academic classes ended in May, Tara High School students and staff continue to meet for six days each week to rehearse lines, master choreography and practice with props. The private school boasts a unique learning atmosphere, claiming to be perhaps one of the only performing arts high schools that follow the Waldorf education model based on the block system.

"Performing arts is the medium through which this self-growth and personal development can happen with all the adolescents here, so everyone's required to be a part of the musical," said Catherine Barricklow, production manager, alum and daughter of founder Betsy Barricklow.

In line with the intentional teaching style of the arts, the directors, including the school's co-founder Laurel Fisher and alum Natalie Simpson, and the students worked together to pick a musical that best embodied the students' journey and the message they wanted to share with the community.

“The story is timeless. It’s about healing, which is something I think everyone has a connection to,” Simpson said. Simpson is not the only alum who returned to the school, as many others came back as teachers, staff or production crew. The community has remained tight-knit as a smaller school with humble beginnings.

Laurel Fisher, Greg Fisher and Betsy Barricklow founded the Boulder school in 1997 after four years of planning. Some of the staff working on this year’s “Secret Garden” performance were among the cast of the same musical during their high school years, including Catherine Barricklow and Natalie Simpson.



This generation is double cast, with two groups splitting eight total showings. Seniority in casting has led to seniors obtaining main character roles after years of preparation in chorus roles for the annual all-school musical and yearly grade productions.

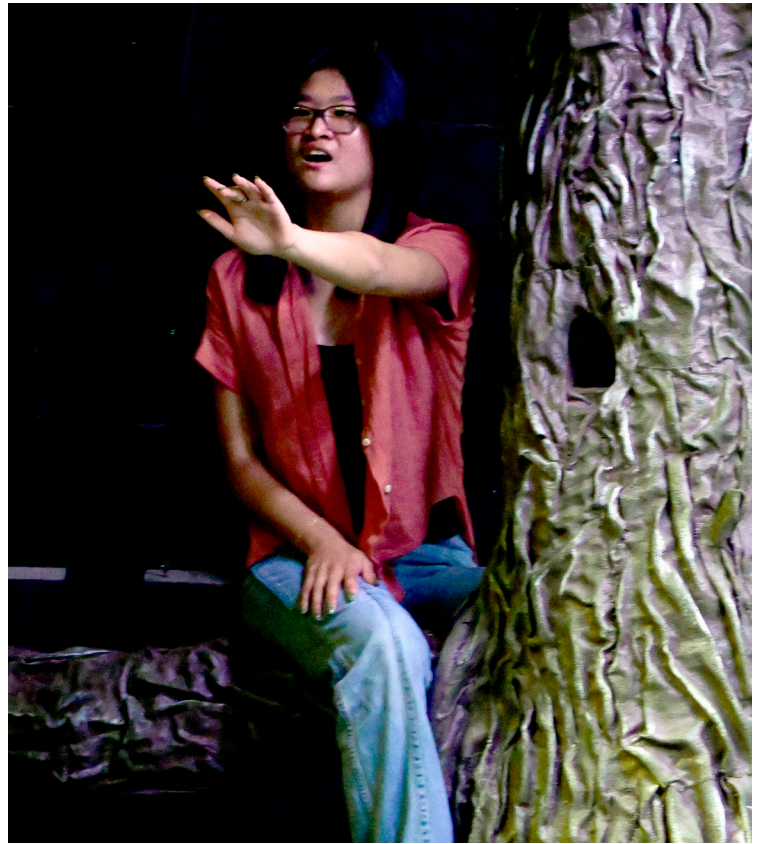
“This is my fourth year, and it’s a very different feeling being in a musical and being a main character rather than being a side character or just part of the chorus,” said senior Sophie Farrell, who plays the chambermaid Martha. “It’s just really, it’s really fun to kind of have that spotlight.”



Extra time after classes ended allows students to focus entirely on their roles and reflect on their learning at the performing arts school. Despite the long hours into summer break, even the students who don’t plan to continue studying in this field show up to rehearsals with energy and support for their fellow cast members.

“Yeah, it’s definitely more about finding yourself than the actual performance,” said senior Sarah Alexander, who plays the ghost of Lily. “It’s more about just the developmental process of where we are and finding yourself through different characters that you’re acting.”

“The Secret Garden” will play at the Nomad Playhouse at 1410 Quince Ave. at 1:30 and 7:30 p.m. daily from June 15 through 18. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$20 for students, seniors and alums on the school’s website at tarahighschool.org/tickets.html.



“I want to stress the importance of this theme of the restorative power of nature and the role of a garden as a place of healing,” Catherine Barricklow said. “Laurel is doing an incredible job passing this on and planting the seeds for the future as she mentors some of these alums.”

