

Everybody's reading The Secret Garden!

✘ The Festival Theatre is delighted to announce an exciting new Education Project to coincide with the venue's spectacular in-house Christmas production, The Secret Garden.

Organised by the theatre's Education Department, the scheme will offer every Primary 7 class in Edinburgh and the Lothians free copies of Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic novel for each of their pupils along with detailed study resources. With many schools already signed up, the project is expected to engage with almost 10,000 young people.

Emma Robertson, Education and Audience Development Officer for the Festival Theatre, said: "We are delighted to be in a position to offer such a wonderful opportunity to local schools. The Secret Garden is a magical story, so we're very much looking forward to exploring it with schools and to staging our musical version in December."

The books, published by Penguin Popular Classics, will be delivered to the participating schools by the end of August and accompanying study materials and practical exercises linking to the Second Level Curriculum for Excellence will be available at www.secretgardenmusical.co.uk.

Using The Secret Garden novel as a source material, the project will provide opportunities for Languages and Literacy work, as well as addressing other study areas such as Health and Wellbeing, Sciences (Our Living World), Social Studies and Religious and Moral Education. In addition, children will be able to explore the Expressive Arts through The Secret Garden stage show.

Robertson added: "With such a huge reach this project has scope to assist hundreds of Scottish Primary Schools make a

smooth transition into teaching the Curriculum for Excellence and play a role in helping to give thousands of children a rounded and challenging first term in their last year of primary school.”

First published in 1911, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s novel continues to appeal to readers of all ages and regularly appears in the Top 10 of all time favourite children’s literature. It tells the tale of orphan Mary Lennox, sent to live with her uncle in his austere and foreboding property on the Yorkshire moors. Left to her own devices, Mary soon discovers her sickly cousin Colin, hidden away in a lonely corner of the house, and a secret walled garden. In bringing Colin and the garden together, can Mary help them both bloom again?

The Secret Garden musical, created by Lucy Simon and Marsha Norman and directed by Anna Linstrum, will become the latest in a line of exciting new in-house musicals produced by the Festival Theatre. The show runs for five weeks from Thursday 9 December 2010 to Saturday 8 January 2011. Then, at the invitation of Canada’s most prolific theatre producer and theatre manager David Mirvish, the production will transfer to the Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto, Canada.