**FORT SALEM THEATER**

**SUMMER, 2015**

**June 19-21/Fri and Sat at 8 PM; Sun at 2 PM: *The Secret Garden***

 The Rose Center Theater in Westminster CA presents their acclaimed production of *The Secret Garden*, a [musical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_theater) based on the 1911 novel by [Frances Hodgson Burnett](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Hodgson_Burnett), with book and lyrics by [Marsha Norman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsha_Norman) and music by [Lucy Simon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy_Simon). It premiered on [Broadway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadway_theatre) in 1991 and ran for 709 performances.

Every year for the past five, the Rose’s artistic director, Tim Nelson, brings a troupe of actors east to take in some Broadway shows in New York City and remount in Salem one of their successful classic musicals from the previous season at their Orange County theater home. Nelson, who owns a summer home in Salem, teaches musical theater at the Huntington Beach School of Performing Arts and has been named Teacher of the Year by the National Arts School Network; his students likewise consistently win and place in national award competitions.

Set in the early years of the 20th century, *The Secret Garden* follows Mary Lennox, an eleven-year-old British girl orphaned in [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) by a [cholera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cholera) outbreak, who is sent to [Yorkshire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yorkshire), [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England), to live with relatives whom she has never met.

In a departure from previous visits, Nelson has cast *The Secret Garden* with twenty-five of his students, currently in high school and college. Featured in this cast is Kelsey Kato the Southern California Artist of the Year in Theater, and Vocal Music finalists Lily Buonocore and Garrett Brown.

**June 28, Sunday at 2 PM: *Country Music Jamboree,* with The Spurs USA & The Bluebillies**

 Two of the region’s top country music bands join forces in an exciting afternoon of the sounds of classic country. The Spurs USA, a tight-knit group of veteran musicians, are the favorite country band in the Berkshire’s and have entertained regionally at the Saratoga Race Track and Saratoga County Fair.

For their third visit to the Fort, they’ve joined forces with The Bluebillies, a close harmony singing and songwriting band from the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains. The Bluebillies set out in 1985 to help revive and preserve the tradition of close harmony country music, with a style of bluegrass and American folk music that has generated a repertoire of original songs.

 In their Fort Salem show, these two solo bands will be jamming together in public for the very first time.

**July 10-12/ Fri and Sat at 8 PM; Sun at 2 PM: Aja Nisenson in *Five Years Later***

Returning to the Fort after two sold-out shows in our cabaret last fall, Aja Nisenson performs in the world premiere of her new one-woman show, *Five Years Later.* Nisenson spent some early adult years in Italy, so there may be heavy autobiographical content in her fantasy show of a burgeoning jazz singer who revisits Bologna, Italy, where her music career began. Her publicity describes the show: “One American Girl. One Mammoni (mama’s boy). And a sexy jazz club. It’s one spicy meatball.”

An artist who defies accurate description, Aja is a trained singer who weaves unique jazz song interpretations into cutting-edge comic portrayals of outrageously caricatured characters who are instantly recognizable as suppressed elements of all of us.

 NYTheatre.com says of an earlier show: “ …what Nisenson does so brilliantly is pull the rug out from under us—one minute making us roar with laughter, in the next breath performing a song that will break your heart.”

An internationally recognized actor/comedian/singer/playwright raised in Morris Plains, New Jersey, and East Dorset, Vermont, Aja Nisenson earned a B.A. in Theater Arts with a Capstone in Playwriting at Brown University and has toured internationally as an actress and jazz singer.

**July 17-19/Fri at 8 PM; Sat and Sun at 2 PM: *Little Red Riding Hood, A Feminist Ecological Musical***

 A delightfully original take on the classic fairy tale, this *Little Red Riding Hood* debuted in California in 1976, fully a decade before Stephen Sondheim’s Broadway stab at the legend in *Into the Woods.* Recreated by the Fort’s Artistic Director Jay Kerr, this title character notes that a little red riding hood is “a piece of clothing, not somebody’s name!” *Her* name is Rhoda.

 A piece for all ages, *Little Red Riding Hood* is more Betty Freidan than Betty Boop, exploring the seemingly ageless issues of equal pay for equal work, personhood, and the deteriorating environment. Although it sounds more like the platform for the 2016 Presidential Election than fairytale, the traditional characters, including a wolf who has been raised to be vegetarian and a grandmother mired in the past, are joined by two plucky flowers and Mother Nature herself.

**July 25-26, Sat and Sun at 2 PM; August 1-2, Sat at 2 PM and 8 PM, Sun at 2 PM:**

**The Singing Anchors/*From San José to Broadway and Bacharach***

 The Fort’s popular touring group, The Singing Anchors, comes home for the debut performance of a brand new musical adventure, a salute to the guru of twentieth century popular music, Burt Bacharach. From “Do You Know the Way to San José” to the score of the Broadway musical *Promises, Promises,* through “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ On My Head” and more recent collaborations with Elvis Costello and *Spring Awakening’s* Steven Sater, the anchors’ enthusiastically explore Bachrach’s unique blend of irregular rhythms with soaring melodies.

An opportunity to see your favorite newscasters in an up-close-and-personal setting, Jessica Layton and Benita Zahn, from Newschannel 13, are joined by CBS6 anchor emeritus, Jerry Gretzinger. Formed in our cabaret in 2009, this musical trio has headlined at Saratoga’s First Night, shared their holiday show at Vapor at the Saratoga Racino, entertained at benefits for Capital Region charities, including the Schenectady ARC and My Brothers’ Keeper, and filled a variety of venues, including the Clifton Park-Halfmoon and Guilderland libraries and Chatham’s MacHaydn Theatre.

**August 7-9 &15-16, Fri and Sat at 8 PM, Sun at 2 PM: *Dracula’s Grandmother/A Musical Fable***

Since first appearing in book for in 1897, Bram Stoker’s gothic vampire novel, *Dracula,*  has fascinated audiences, playwrights, and movie makers alike. Shortly before publication, Stoker himself produced a one-time-and-one-time-only dramatic production of his story at London’s Lyceum Theatre, which he managed. *Dracula’s Grandmother* takes off from that historical point.

 Stoker’s boss, Shakespearean actor Henry Irving, the first actor ever to be knighted, asks to play the title role and then starts demanding re-writes. “Dracula must not die at the end!” Mrs. Stoker, who hasn’t acted for years, insists on playing the female lead, to keep the young girls away from her husband. The virile young actors lament that there are no show girls to ply with their charms. The most celebrated actress of the era, Ellen Terry, not yet cast because the roles are for *young* women, begs Stoker to create a role for Dracula’s grandmother.

 The historical dramatic debut of *Dracula* was a disaster. With mirth and melody, Jay Kerr presents this year’s World Premiere Musical as the fabulous explanation as to how such a sure-fire hit was dead on arrival.

**CALENDAR STYLE**

June 19-21 – The Rose Center Theater, Westminster, California, presents *The Secret Garden,* directed by Tim Nelson. Friday and Saturday at 8 PM; Sunday at 2 PM. $30 adults, $27 seniors, $15 twelve and under. Information/reservations: fortsalemtheater.com (518) 854-9200

June 28 – *Country Music Jamboree,* Grand Ol’Opry style starring The Spurs USA and The Bluebillies, in solo sets and a two-band jam. Special pricing: reserved general admission, $20. spursusa.com, thebluebillies.com, fortsalemtheater.com. (518) 854-9200

July 10-12 – Aja Nisenson in the world premiere of a one-woman-musical, *Five Years Later.* Friday and Saturday at 8 PM; Sun at 2 PM. $30 adults, $27 seniors, $15 twelve and under. Information/reservations: fortsalemtheater.com (518) 854-9200

July 17-19 – *Little Red Riding Hood: A Feminist Ecological Musical* for all ages, by Fort artistic director Jay Kerr. Friday at 8 PM; Saturday and Sunday at 2 PM. $30 adults, $27 seniors, $10 twelve and under. Information/reservations: fortsalemtheater.com (518) 854-9200

July 25-26**,** August 1-2**,** The Singing Anchors/*From San José to Broadway and Bacharach***,** a celebration of Burt Bacharachstarring Jerry Gretzinger and WNYT news anchors Jessica Layton and Benita Zahn.Saturday and Sunday (7/25-6) at 2 PM; Saturday (8/1) at 2 PM and 8 PM; Sunday (8/2) at 2 PM. $30 adults, $27 seniors, $15 twelve and under. Information/reservations: fortsalemtheater.com (518) 854-9200

August 7-9, 15-16 – *Dracula’s Grandmother,* a World Premiere Musical based on Bram Stoker’s classic gothic novel, *Dracula.* Friday and Saturdays at 8 PM; Sundays at 2 PM. Sunday at 2 PM. $30 adults, $27 seniors, $15 twelve and under. Information/reservations: fortsalemtheater.com (518) 854-9200