



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Written by Heather Osteraa

“The Miracle Worker” Extracts Light from Darkness in William Gibson’s Biographical Drama Based on the Life of Helen Keller

“One word, and I can put the world in your hand...”

SALINAS, Calif. – The Western Stage is proud to open their 45th season with “The Miracle Worker,” the story of young Helen Keller, rendered blind, deaf, and mute from illness, and unable to communicate. Through persistence, love, and sheer stubbornness, tutor Annie Sullivan breaks through the silence and darkness that surround Helen, bringing the world to her once again.

PERFORMS: June 1 – 22, 2019 in the Studio Theatre, Hartnell College Performing Arts Center, K116. www.westernstage.com/tickets or at the Box Office: 831-755-6816 (Open Wed. – Sat, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.).

Based on Helen Keller’s 20th Century autobiography, The Story of My Life, William Gibson’s play takes place in the late 1880’s in Tuscumbia, Alabama. An illness renders infant Helen Keller blind, deaf, and consequently mute. Pitied and badly spoiled by her parents, Helen is taught no discipline and, by the age of six, grows into a wild, angry, tantrum-throwing child in control of the household. Desperate, the Kellers hire Annie Sullivan to serve as governess and teacher for their daughter. After several fierce battles with Helen, Annie convinces the Kellers that she needs two weeks alone with Helen in order to achieve any progress in the girl’s education. In that time, Annie teaches Helen discipline through persistence and consistency, and language through hand signals; a double breakthrough that changes Helen’s life and has a direct effect on the lives of everyone in the family.

Language is exalted as the miracle maker for Helen Keller, bridging the void between oblivion and understanding. “Language is to the mind more than light is to the eye,” Annie quotes from her mentor. Yet, for “The Miracle Worker,” the play is most effective when it is wordless. For the 13 year old actor playing Helen Keller (Colette Gsell), it is a formidable endeavor to portray the gradual and complex discovery of language without uttering a single line. Equally formidable a role is her tenacious teacher, Annie Sullivan, played by Chelsea Simmons, who relentlessly spars with Helen, knowing her pupil cannot see, hear, or understand her.

Thoughts from the Director:

“The story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan is an iconic tale woven into the fabric of our American identity. In many ways, it embodies the best of what we as a nation and we as a united people should strive for: perseverance, tolerance, acceptance, equality, and the belief that through unbridled optimism, we can leap boldly and courageously into the unknown in order to push the boundaries of what we once considered attainable—that through determination and sheer will we can better level the playing field in an often unequal society.

My hope in re-staging the iconic tale of these remarkable young women is two-fold: first, to remind us all that Helen’s story is universal. We all have a voice—a need—inside of us aching to be understood, and if we surrender ourselves to the grace of others, that voice *will* be heard. Secondly, I hope that our audiences leave the theatre illuminated by one simple, transformative fact: that we are the authors of the miracles we seek, and once we accept that—once we open our minds and feel with our hearts—anything is possible.” – Justin Gordon, Director of TWS’ “The Miracle Worker”

Cast List:

Doctor...Eddie Couttolenc

Kate Keller...Sara England

Captain Keller...Noah Luce

Martha...Hannah Rebancos

Percy...Sarah Burelson

Viney...Denisha Ervin

Helen Keller...Colette Gsell

James Keller...JT Taylor

Aunt Ev...Kelly Hendrix

Annie Sullivan...Chelsea Simmons

Anagnos...Paul McCormack

Children: Galilea Velasquez, Lilihana De Jesus, Michelle Martinez

This event is wheelchair accessible. Individuals requiring sign-language interpreters, real-time captioners, or other accommodations should contact the Box Office at least one week prior to the event: 831-755-6816

DETAILS

WHAT: The Western Stage is proud to open their 45th season with “The Miracle Worker,” the story of young Helen Keller, rendered blind, deaf, and mute from illness, and unable to communicate. Through persistence, love, and sheer stubbornness, tutor Annie Sullivan breaks through the silence and darkness that surround Helen, bringing the world to her once again.

WHEN: June 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15 16, 21, 22, 2019. Fridays and Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

WHERE: Studio Theater, K116. Hartnell College Performing Arts Center, Building K, 411 Central Ave., Salinas, CA 93901.

TICKETS AND INFO: \$26 general admission, \$24 for seniors and military; and \$12 for children age 5 – 15. Hartnell students are free with student I.D. Other students \$20 with I.D. or \$5 Student Rush (cash only) on day of performance. For single or group tickets and information, go to westernstage.com or call 831-755-6816.

www.westernstage.com/tickets or at our Box Office: 831-755-6816 (Open Wed. – Sat, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.).

PRESS: Contact Customer Relations Manager, Berniz House by phone: 831-759-6012 or email: bhouse@hartnell.edu.

ABOUT THE WESTERN STAGE

Founded in 1974, The Western Stage (TWS) has evolved over the last four decades into one of the most respected community-based theaters on California’s Central Coast. TWS is committed to enriching the culture of its community by bringing together professional artists, theatre students, and community members to produce a dynamic season of plays that enhances the lives of both the artist and audience; developing new works that speak to the history and culture of the Salinas Valley; and provide educational opportunities that allow students of all skill levels to explore and develop their unique talents. www.westernstage.com

HARTNELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT – ESTABLISHED IN 1920

The Hartnell CCD serves over 17,000 students annually through its main campus in Salinas, the Alisal Campus in East Salinas, the King City Education Center, and various outreach learning centers throughout the Salinas Valley. Hartnell College, a Hispanic Serving Institution, provides associate degree and certificate programs, workforce-training, courses in basic skills, and prepares students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Hartnell College is recognized for its innovative public and private partnerships that support world-class education for STEM, career technical education, fine and performing arts, humanities/social sciences, nursing/healthcare, and athletics. We are proud to be the winners of the 2015 Innovation Award for CSin3 – a Computer

Science bachelor's degree in three years. **We are growing leaders through opportunity, engagement, and achievement.** For more about Hartnell CCD, visit www.hartnell.edu.

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