



## Helen Keller's Inspiring Story Comes to Life on Stage at St. Jacobs Country Playhouse

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Based on the extraordinary true story of Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan, the inspiring Tony Award©-winning play *The Miracle Worker* is on stage at the **St. Jacobs Country Playhouse** for three weeks only from **April 24 to May 12**. Audiences are advised to buy tickets as soon as possible as the production is already 70% sold out.

*The Miracle Worker* tells the story of young Helen Keller, who is blind, deaf and consequently unable to speak as a result of an illness contracted in her infancy. She is trapped in a secret, silent world, unable to communicate. Pitied by her parents, Helen is taught no discipline and grows into a wild, angry, tantrum-throwing child in control of the household. Frustrated, lonely, and destructive, Helen is in danger of being sent to an institution. In desperation, her parents seek help from the Perkins Institution, which sends them Annie Sullivan to tutor their volatile daughter. Annie soon realizes there is a mind and spirit waiting to be rescued from the dark.

“Few stories are as timeless or relevant as *The Miracle Worker*,” says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. “This moving drama reveals the courage and resilience of the human spirit, and captures the deep complexities of human connection and the power of language – in all its forms.”

Veteran director **Marti Maraden** will helm this world-renowned classic. Maraden’s career includes 18 seasons at the Stratford Festival, eight years as the Artistic Director of English Theatre for the National Arts Centre, and numerous Drayton Entertainment productions, including last season’s stirring drama *The Rainmaker*, the popular comedy *The Birds & The Bees*, and 2017’s hit production of *Death of a Salesman*, starring George Wendt.

Maraden will be joined by Set Designer **Allan Wilbee**, Costume Designer **Jenine Kroepelin**, Lighting Designer **Kevin Fraser**, and Fight Director **Joe Bostick**.

**Shannon Currie** makes her Drayton Entertainment debut in the role of determined teacher Annie Sullivan. A graduate of the esteemed National Theatre School, Currie has appeared on stage in a variety of productions across Canada, as well as in several prominent television series including *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Saving Hope*, and *Warehouse 13*, among others.

Following her breakout performance as Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird* at the Stratford Festival last season, 12-year old **Clara Kushnir** will play Helen Keller. Kushnir recently appeared in *A Christmas Carol* for Soulpepper Theatre, and in the short films *Damage Control* and *Solitude*.

**Jackie Mustakas** will play Kate Keller, the loving and loyal mother of Helen, who fights for her troubled daughter to get the help she needs. Mustakas has appeared in countless Drayton Entertainment productions including *Jack and the Beanstalk: The Panto*, *Hairspray*, *The Rainmaker*, *Death of a Salesman*, and many more.

**Rob McClure** will take on the role of Captain Arthur Keller, the gruff, middle-aged patriarch of the Keller family, who is frustrated by Helen's challenges and wild behaviour. McClure has appeared in many Drayton Entertainment productions including *Harvest*, *It Runs in the Family*, *The Odd Couple*, *Looking*, and *Deathtrap*. He has also performed at the Stratford Festival and The Second City.

**Thomas Duplessie** will portray Helen's cynical half-brother James, who resents the family focus on Helen. Duplessie previously appeared in the Drayton Entertainment productions of *The Birds & The Bees*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. He has also appeared on screen in *In The Dark*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Man Seeking Woman*, *Bitten*, and more.

**Gabrielle Jones** will play Aunt Ev, Captain Keller's sister who cares deeply for Helen and supports Kate in finding help for her niece. Jones recently appeared in the Drayton Entertainment productions of *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, *The Birds & The Bees*, and *The Drowsy Chaperone*, among other notable productions across Canada.

**Marcia Johnson** will make her Drayton Entertainment debut as Viney, the Keller's cook and housekeeper who is sympathetic to Helen. In addition to her stage work, Johnson has appeared in a number of movies and series including *The Swap* (Disney), *American Gods* (Amazon), and *American Gothic* (CBS). Viney's children Martha and Percy will be played by **Talia Lowell** and **Bryce Wynter**.

**Gerry Mendicino** will play Anagnos, the Headmaster of the Perkins Institution. Mendicino has an impressive stage and screen career having appeared as Uncle Taki in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and Dominic in *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues*, among many other films and television series. He has previously appeared in *Lend Me a Tenor* and *Italian Funerals and Other Festive Occasions* for Drayton Entertainment.

**Omar Alex Khan** makes his Drayton Entertainment debut as the Doctor. Khan has appeared in *The New Canadian Curling Club* for Blyth Festival, *Oslo* for Studio 180/Mirvish, as well as in various Shakespearian productions with Stratford Festival, along with a number of film and TV projects.

A small children's chorus will also be part of this talented acting company, portraying residents of the Perkins Institution:

- **Brook Rickert** of Baden
- **Hannah Findley, Ella Hiemstra, Taylor Katumba, Nyla Lowell, Abigail Schwartz** and **Kyla Wallbank** of Kitchener
- **Isabelle Hiltz** of London
- **Brooke Bauer, Claire Frayne, Yesol Seo** and **Kianna Warkintin** of Waterloo

Written by William Gibson, *The Miracle Worker* is based on Keller's best-selling autobiography, *The Story of My Life*. The stage play premiered on Broadway in October of 1959 and won several Tony Awards© including Best Play, Best Direction and Best Actress. The cast included Anne Bancroft as Annie Sullivan and Patty Duke as Helen Keller, both of whom reprised their roles in the now-iconic 1962 film adaptation; Bancroft and Duke won the Academy Awards© for Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress for the film. The play has also been adapted twice for television. In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the play, it was revived on Broadway in 2010 starring Alison Pill as Annie Sullivan and Abigail Breslin as Helen Keller.

After her difficult childhood, Keller went on to college with the assistance of Sullivan, graduating cum laude from Radcliffe in 1904, at the age of 24. She was the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. During her lifetime, Helen Keller became a revered advocate, fundraiser and author, helping to found the American Civil Liberties Union. Her advocacy work significantly influenced the treatment and education of people who are blind and deaf. She received many honours in recognition of her accomplishments and, along with Sullivan, continues to be among the most significant women in history.

*The Miracle Worker* is proudly sponsored by **Commercial Print Craft**. Media Sponsors are the **Kitchener Post, Waterloo Chronicle**, and **107.1 Juice FM** in Stratford. Design Sponsors are **RWAM Insurance Administrators** and **The McIntyre Real Estate Team**. The Youth Theatre Education Sponsor is **TD**. The 2019 Season Media Sponsor is **CTV**.

Regular performance tickets are \$48 for adults, \$29 for youth under 20 years of age. Tickets for select Discount Dates and groups of 20 or more are \$39. HST is applicable to all ticket prices.

*The Miracle Worker* runs **April 24 to May 12**. Tickets may be purchased in person at the St. Jacobs Country Playhouse, online at [www.draytonentertainment.com/miracle-worker](http://www.draytonentertainment.com/miracle-worker) or by calling the Box Office at (519) 747-7788 or toll free at 1-855-drayton (372-9866).

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