

PLAYBILL®

IVY GREEN
THE BIRTHPLACE OF HELEN KELLER

THE MIRACLE WORKER





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Photos by: Mary Carton

*The Helen Keller Birthplace Foundation
presents
the 65th Annual Production of
William Gibson's*

THE MIRACLE WORKER

STARRING

ANNA BOND KELLEY ABIGAIL JOHNSON CECILIA GOOCH
RUBY SPARKS NORA SPARKS JONATHAN MOORE
TYLER HUDSON JACK BUTLER LANELLE SIMONS
KATIE DALRYMPLE SHONNA BECKWITH WILLIAM FREEMAN
MAKAYLA JAKALE WILLIAMS ROLAN ISLEY-DEAN QUALLS
CAILUM J.T. HUGHES CHAZ BECKWITH
MADDALYNN BALLEW CLARA BETH BONDS ELLYNN MARIE BURCHELL MAJOR DENSON
ZOE JANE GREEN THEA LOGAN MIA MARKS JO MCCANN SAVANNAH MIERKE
PENN ROBINSON THYRI ROBINSON HATTIE CLAIRE SIMONS KENNEDY TAYLOR AMELIA WORLEY
CHARLOTTE WORLEY WAKEFIELD SELF NEIL SELF

LANDSCAPES BY

SHOALS MASTER GARDENERS (LISA MAPLES, PROJECT CHAIR)

COSTUMES BY

BETH HENDERSON VICTORIA MCCOY ROSE HILL WORKSHOP LANELLE SIMONS
SOUND HELEN COACH / PROJECTIONS LIGHTS
CODY WOODFIN LILLIE MEYER HANA MEYERS
HALEY CROWELL GRACIE MESTAS

STAGE CREW

AMBER ANGLIN KRISTEN SOUTH CHARLEE MCCANN
STAGE MANAGER SCENIC DESIGN BY
WILLIAM FREEMAN DAVID K. RUEBHAUSEN

HELEN KELLER BIRTHPLACE FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS

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LAURA RINGNELL

DIRECTED BY
CAROLINE SELF

*THE MIRACLE WORKER is presented by arrangement with Concord
Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com*



Anna
Bond Kelley



Abigail
Johnson



Ruby
Sparks



Nora
Sparks



Jonathan
Moore



Tyler
Hudson



Jack
Butler



LaNelle
Simons



Katie
Dalrymple



Shonna
Beckwith



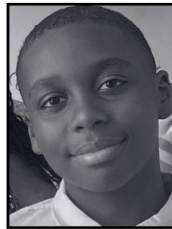
William
Freeman



MaKayla Jakale
Williams



Rolan Isley-Dean
Qualls



Cailum J.T.
Hughes



Chaz
Beckwith



Maddalynn
Ballew



Clara Beth
Bonds



Ellynn Marie
Burchell



Major
Denson



Zoe Jane
Green



Thea
Logan



Mia
Marks



Jo
McCann



Savannah
Mierke



Penn
Robinson



Thyri
Robinson



Hattie Claire
Simons



Kennedy
Taylor



Amelia
Worley



Charlotte
Worley

ANNIE SULLIVAN AND HELEN KELLER

Helen Keller was born at Ivy Green on June 27, 1880. She was a bright, healthy child until a severe illness at the age of nineteen months left her blind and deaf. By the time Helen was six years old, the Keller family was desperate to find someone to teach her.



Annie Sullivan, the daughter of Irish immigrants, was born in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts in 1866. Her family was extremely poor, and Annie developed trachoma of the eye when she was a child, leaving her nearly blind. After her mother's death, she was sent, with her brother Jimmie, to live in the Tewksbury Almshouse. Her broken died at Tewksbury, and Annie begged an administrator to go to school. She began school at the Perkins Institution for the Blind when she was 14. She graduated, as valedictorian, four years later.

On March 3rd, 1887, Annie arrived in Tuscumbia, Alabama to teach Helen Keller. *The Miracle Worker* tells the story of what happened next.

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

A Doctor.....	WILLIAM FREEMAN
Kate Keller.....	ABIGAIL JOHNSON ANNA BOND KELLEY
Capt. Arthur Keller.....	JONATHAN MOORE
Helen Keller.....	RUBY SPARKS NORA SPARKS
Martha.....	ROLAN ISLEY-DEAN QUALLS MAKAYLA JAKALE WILLIAMS
Percy.....	MAKAYLA JAKALE WILLIAMS CAILUM J.T. HUGHES
Aunt Ev.....	LANELLE SIMONS KATIE DALYRYMPLE
James Keller.....	TYLER HUDSON JACK BUTLER
Anagnos.....	WILLIAM FREEMAN
Annie Sullivan.....	ANNA BOND KELLEY ABIGAIL JOHNSON CECILIA GOOCH
Viney.....	SHONNA BECKWITH

Blind Children at Perkins School

MADDALYNN BALLEW, CLARA BETH BONDS, ELLYNN MARIE BURCHELL,
MAJOR DENSON, ZOE JANE GREEN, THEA LOGAN, MIA MARKS, JO MCCANN,
SAVANNAH MIERKE, PENN ROBINSON, THYRI ROBINSON,
HATTIE CLAIRE SIMONS, KENNEDY TAYLOR,
AMELIA WORLEY, CHARLOTTE WORLEY

Jimmie Sullivan.....	WAKEFIELD SELF
Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe.....	NEIL SELF
Belle.....	CHAZ BECKWITH
Visual Storytellers (6/25-6/27 Only).....	RHONDA NESMITH SANDRA SCHMIDT

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT 1

Time: 1882; 1886; 1887

The Keller homestead, Tuscumbia, Alabama; the Perkins Institution for the
Blind, Boston, Massachusetts; the Tuscumbia Depot

ACT 2

Time: March 1887

The Keller homestead; the garden house

ACT 3

Time: April 5, 1887

The garden house; the homestead

THERE WILL BE TWO 10-MINUTE INTERMISSIONS

THE CREATIVE TEAM AND CREW

Playwright.....	WILLIAM GIBSON
Director.....	CAROLINE SELF
Assistant Director.....	LAURA RINGNELL
Technical Director.....	ANDREW MAPLES
Scenic Designer.....	DR. DAVID K. RUEBHAUSEN
Stage Manager.....	WILLIAM FREEMAN
Helen Coach/Projections.....	LILLIE MEYER
Costumes by.....	BETH HENDERSON, VICTORIA MCCOY, ROSE HILL WORKSHOP, LANELLE SIMONS
Stage Crew.....	AMBER ANGLIN KRISTEN SOUTH CHARLEE MCCANN
Sound.....	CODY WOODFIN HALEY CROWELL
Lights.....	HANA MEYERS GRACIE MESTAS
Set Construction.....	GENE MCDUGAL
Landscapes by.....	SHOALS MASTER GARDENERS SALLY MCGUIRE, PENNY TOWNSEND, DWIGHT JAMES, MICHAEL WILSON, LINDA BREWER, MARY FOUNTAIN, PAULA KELLEY
Master Gardeners Project Chair.....	LISA MAPLES
Production Photographer.....	MARY CARTON
Web Design.....	MILNER CROSSLEY MEDIA SOLUTIONS/ J CROSSLEY MOORE

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*"The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old."
- Helen Keller, "The Story of My Life"*

THE CAST AND CREW

ANNA BOND KELLEY (*Annie Sullivan/Kate Keller*) returns to *The Miracle Worker* for her 5th season and is thrilled to portray Annie Sullivan and Kate Keller again. Other theatrical credits include: Shelby in *Steel Magnolias*, Annie in *Annie*, Babette in *Beauty and the Beast*, Lucy Grant in *Bright Star*, and Denise in *Smoke on the Mountain*. Anna graduated from Athens State University with a degree in Elementary Education and teaches kindergarten at Lexington Elementary School. She gives glory to God, and thanks her husband and family for their continuous love and support.

ABIGAIL JOHNSON (*Annie Sullivan/Kate Keller*) is a senior at Auburn University pursuing a double major in Public Relations and Musical Theatre. Throughout her life, she has been involved in numerous theatrical productions, but *The Miracle Worker* holds a special place in her heart. Over the years, Abigail has experienced this story as a blind child, then as Young Annie, later as Kate Keller understudy, and now as Annie Sullivan and Kate Keller. Each role has deepened her connection to the story and its message. Ivy Green has become a meaningful part of her life, and she is honored to help bring this powerful story to audiences once again.

CECILIA GOOCH (*Annie Sullivan*) is excited to be portraying Anne Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker*. This is her seventh year being involved with the production, making this show especially meaningful to her. She has loved watching the story come to life each year and is honored to take on the role of Anne. Cecilia has a passion for performing and enjoys every opportunity to be involved in theater productions. She would like to thank her family, friends, and directors for their continued support, and she hopes you enjoy the show.

NORA SPARKS (*Helen Keller*) is 10-years-old and thrilled to return to

The Miracle Worker for her fourth year. Nora is homeschooled alongside her six siblings. Nora played Fern in *Charlotte's Web* and Gladys in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* this past year. She would like to thank her parents, Rodney and Cassie Sparks, as well as her siblings for always being her biggest fans. Nora hopes you enjoy the show as much as she enjoys being in it!

RUBY SPARKS (*Helen Keller*) is 5-years-old and excited for her debut in *The Miracle Worker*. Ruby is homeschooled alongside her six siblings. This role is extra special to Ruby as she navigates the world with moderate to severe hearing loss herself. She sends a big thank you to Nora, her big sister, for always helping her and being her best friend.

JONATHAN MOORE (*Captain Arthur Keller*) returns to *The Miracle Worker* for his 14th season. Past credits include: *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Radium Girls*, and *Bright Star*. Jonathan serves as Worship Pastor at First Baptist Church of Colbert Heights in Tuscumbia, AL. He holds a B.S in music from the University of North Alabama. Jonathan would like to dedicate this season's performance to his wife, Gina, his son, Grey, and twin daughters, Madelyn & Ellyn. "Love you to the moon and back! Soli Deo gloria! Facebook, Twitter, Instagram: jcrossleymoore."

TYLER HUDSON (*James Keller*) returns for his 7th season and his fourth as James Keller. Other credits include: *Seussical*, *Shrek the Musical*, *A Christmas Story*, *Radium Girls*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Next To Normal*, and *Rabbit Hole*. He served as music director for *A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline* and *The Little Mermaid*, and has performed as a professional vocalist in over 1000 concerts both nationally and internationally. Tyler is the front man for the local rock cover band,

THE CAST AND CREW

Roadside Mattress. Tyler would like to thank his wife and children for allowing him the chance to continue to pursue his passion of performing.

JACK BUTLER (*James Keller*) is thrilled to return to Ivy Green for another summer with *The Miracle Worker*. Jack has been a part of this beloved production since 2011 and considers it a cornerstone of his performing life. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting at the California Institute of the Arts. His recent credits include productions with the Gulf Coast Rep and South Baldwin Community Theatre, as well as work on several independent films. Offstage, Jack is deeply committed to his community through civic involvement, including participation in Boys State and the Junior Leadership Program. He is grateful to the cast, crew, and the Keller family legacy for continuing to inspire him year after year.

SHONNA BECKWITH (*Viney*) returns to *The Miracle Worker* for her second season as Viney. She attended Mississippi University for Women and L.S.U., where she studied Health, Kinesiology, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. While working in Florence City Schools, she enjoyed helping produce many joyous, educational shows featuring students' art, music, dance, and athletics. She retired in 2010 from the State of Alabama and enjoys working with her church's Youth and Children's Ministry, gardening, family, and is looking forward to continuing her work as a trained voice actor.

LANELLE SIMONS (*Aunt Ev*) is a South Carolina native who now lives in Killen with her husband and three children. She has taught and directed children's theatre for over 15 years and loves sharing her passion for the arts with her community. She is honored to return to Ivy Green for the second summer and share the stage with her youngest daughter.

DR. KATIE F. DALRYMPLE (*Aunt Ev*) is thrilled to be back at Ivy Green. Katie is a former Theatre educator and is now an elementary administrator in Athens City. She serves as the assistant principal at FAME Academy at Brookhill Elementary. She has been involved in countless productions locally and in college. Her favorite role that she has ever played is Kate Keller in *The Miracle Worker* at Ivy Green and her favorite show she has directed was Gingerbread's production of *High School Musical* in 2008. Katie completed her Doctorate in Education at Carson Newman University and adjuncts at the University of North Alabama. She spends her free time with her husband (Michael) and three children (Nora, Oliver, and Theodore). They all love Community Theatre, traveling, and just spending time together. Fine Arts education and continuing to make sure that students in the Shoals have access to performance opportunities is Katie's number one goal. Enjoy the show and continue to support the Fine Arts!

WILLIAM FREEMAN (*A Doctor, Anagnos, Stage Manager*) has been active in community theatre for over 30 years, and he worked as a puppeteer and voice actor on the nationwide PBS show "Steve Trash Science". William has volunteered with the Zodiac Players of Shoals Theatre Inc. since 2011 and with the Official Alabama Renaissance Faire since 1990. William also volunteers with Magnolia Church of Christ. He believes this show can bring you a message of hope and perseverance, and is excited to help bring this story to life.

MAKAYLA JAKALE WILLIAMS (*Percy/Martha*) is the daughter of Yasmir Reynolds and Tyler and Whitney Williams. She is an A B honor roll fourth grader at Lauderdale County Elementary School. Makayla's extracurricular activities are hip hop dance classes at Laura's School of

THE CAST AND CREW

Performing Arts and playing volleyball with the Tennessee Valley Volleyball Association. She is a member of First Baptist Church Courtland Alabama. This is Makayla's second year acting and she loves it! She is the granddaughter of Rod and Traci Reynolds. Kassaundras Cooper, Patricia Robinson and Phillip Williams.

ROLAN ISLEY-DEAN QUALLS (*Martha*), is the 11-year-old daughter of Shaqorey Hughes and Ronald Qualls Sr. She is a 6th-grade student at Muscle Shoals Middle School, where she is a member of the 2026–2027 MSMS Show Choir. Rolan enjoys theater, music, drawing, swimming, fashion, and spending time with family and friends. This is her second year to play Martha. Rolan loves performing and expressing herself through the arts. She is especially excited to be part of a production that shares the inspiring story of Helen Keller and the power of determination, friendship, and perseverance.

CAILUM J.T. HUGHES (*Percy*) is the son of Chavarria Hughes-Cole (Gregory) and Myron Lewis-EL. He is a student at Muscle Shoals Middle School where he participates in chorus, marching and concert band playing the alto saxophone. A member of Ekklesia Ministries, Cailum participates in the youth choir. Cailum has been in theater for 2 years now where he was in The Cypress Moon Production of *The Outsiders*. This is where his love and interest for the theater was sparked.

CHAZ "FREE MAN" BECKWITH (*Belle*). 11-year-old Chaz will be taking the stage at Ivy Green for the second time. He loves the cast and crew of *The Miracle Worker* and is happy to play the part of Helen's dog Belle. He is an amazing comforter in any thunderstorm, car trip or Zoom meeting. He gives snuzzles and white noise (Zzzz) at any time. Chaz thanks Mama for being his person, and Grandma Jo, and Auntie Jody.

Forever love and appreciation to Evelyn at Alabama Boston Terrier Rescue. Special thanks to Veterinary Ophthalmologist, Dr. Jana Korsch-Dismukes, for miraculously restoring Chaz's vision.

MADDALYNN BALLEW (*Blind Child*) is 7 years old and attends Leighton Elementary. She's a very social person and well liked among her peers. Her hobbies are dancing and being on the competition team at Next Generation Dance, playing in the water, playing with her friends, and playing softball. She was part of *The Nutcracker* at the Ritz this past December. This is her first year being in *The Miracle Worker* and she's very excited to be part of this special play. Maddy is a hard worker and loves to challenge herself. She is the daughter of Tabitha Ballew and Brandon Ballew.

CLARA BETH BONDS (*Blind Child*) is thrilled to return as Sarah, the Blind Child, for her second year in *The Miracle Worker*. An upcoming second grader at Webster Elementary, Clara's previous theater credits include *Annie Jr.* (Sandy), *The Wizard of Oz* (Munchkin), *The Music Man* (Children's Ensemble), *Frozen Jr.* (Townsperson and Troll), and *Elf Jr.* (Ensemble). In addition to theater, Clara has studied dance for five years and loves performing on stage. She would like to thank her family, directors, castmates, and friends for their encouragement and support.

ELLYNN MARIE BURCHELL (*Blind Child*) is a 5th grader at Kilby Laboratory School. Her parents are Adam and Ashley Burchell. Inspired by Helen's life and accomplishments, this is her first year in *The Miracle Worker*. Ellynn enjoys performing and competing in many sports and activities and is thankful to be part of this 2026 cast.

MAJOR DENSON (*Blind Child*) is a second-grade student from the Shoals Area participating in his fifth

THE CAST AND CREW

production. He has a strong passion for theatre and plans to continue his involvement in it. Major also aspires to direct his own show in the future.

ZOE JANE GREEN (*Blind Child*) is thrilled to be returning as a blind child for her third year in *The Miracle Worker*. She has previously appeared in a variety of community theatre productions including *Willy Wonka*, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, *Matilda*, *Little Women*, *The Outsiders*, and many others. She loves performing on stage and is grateful for every opportunity to grow as an actress, meet new friends, and be part of the theatre community. She would like to thank her family, directors, and fellow cast members for their support and encouragement.

THEA LOGAN (*Blind Child*) is 7 years old. She lives in Muscle Shoals with her parents, sister, and brother. This is her second year as Sarah. She loves performing and creating art.

MIA MARKS (*Blind Child*) is 7 years old and returning as a blind child for her second year. Mia has starred in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* twice and *Charlotte's Web* alongside her parents and sister. She loves to act, sing, draw, and make friends. Her favorite thing about acting is connecting with the audience and working together with the cast to create magical moments on stage.

JO MCCANN (*Blind Child*) is a bright and outgoing homeschooler making her mark on the local stage! She made her debut two years ago as a flower in *Alice in Wonderland*. Since then, Jo has been in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* two years in a row, as well as multiple roles in *Charlotte's Web*. Her first *Miracle Worker* experience was last last year, and she immediately fell in love. Jo delights in the opportunity to embody new characters on stage.

SAVANNAH MIERKE (*Blind Child*) made her acting debut as an angel in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

With her huge heart, you would truly believe she is an angel! Last year, she played Clara, a blind child, and she is very excited to be part of *The Miracle Worker* again. She is an avid video gamer. Don't be surprised if she hasn't beaten you at Fortnite already! She loves animals, especially cats, and she likes to hang out with her best friend Zoe Green on the weekends.

PENN ROBINSON (*Blind Child*) is thrilled to be in his first season of *The Miracle Worker*. Credits include *Willy Wonka* (Augustus Gloop) and *Finding Nemo* (Sheldon). This summer, he plays Barron in *Camp Rock* at the Shoals Theatre. Penn is homeschooled, fences competitively, and thanks his castmates, his parents for the rides, and his sisters for being the best cheerleaders. Love you guys!

THYRI ROBINSON (*Blind Child*) is a 7-year-old homeschooler and is honored to be joining the cast of *The Miracle Worker*. Previous credits include *Seussical* (Sour Kangaroo) and *Elf the Musical* (Ensemble). When she's not on stage, Thyri enjoys sewing, cheerleading, and adventuring with her Polish chicken, Lola. She sends love and thanks to her family and castmates for their endless encouragement.

HATTIE CLAIRE SIMONS (*Blind Child*) is the 6-year-old daughter of Steven and LaNelle Simons of Killen. A member of the Homeschool Co-op of the Shoals, she enjoys dancing, gymnastics, and card games with her family. Hattie Claire has appeared in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* as an angel and *Charlotte's Web* as a gosling. She is excited to make her Ivy Green debut.

KENNEDY TAYLOR (*Blind Child*) is 9 years old and this is her season seasin in *The Miracle Worker*. She lives in Greenhill with her parents, Zach and Krystal Taylor, and her two older brothers. Kennedy enjoys arts and crafts, playing softball, and learning about

THE CAST AND CREW

historical figures and the impact they made on the world. Having family members with visual impairments has made learning about Helen Keller especially meaningful.

AMELIA WORLEY (*Blind Child*) has lived in three states and currently lives in Muscle Shoals. Amelia started acting in third grade. Other hobbies include playing piano and reading. Amelia attends Kilby Laboratory School, where she will be entering sixth grade this fall.

CHARLOTTE WORLEY (*Blind Child*) moved to Muscle Shoals five years ago. Outside of acting, she enjoys tumbling, hanging out with friends and family, and making silly faces at her parents. Charlotte attends Kilby Laboratory School, where she will be entering fourth grade this fall. *The Miracle Worker* is Charlotte's theatrical debut.

CODY WOODFIN (*Sound*) has been in theater for years. He has been in *The Little Mermaid*, *Sound of Music*, and many more, and this is his 4th year working on *The Miracle Worker*. Cody is pursuing a degree in Technical Theater at Auburn University.

HALEY CROWELL (*Sound*) is an audio engineer, vocalist, and lifelong performer with more than 25 years of experience in music and theater. She serves as Audio Engineer at the Shoals Theater and co-owns an audio production company with her father. Haley enjoys combining her passion for live performance and technical production to help bring stories to life on stage. She is honored to be part of *The Miracle Worker* and hopes you enjoy the show.

HANA MEYERS (*Lights*) first ran a light board at age 5 and has been involved with tech ever since, including running lights and sound for many shows at the Ritz Theatre and the Shoals Theatre. She attended the University of North Alabama for Art Education and has a daughter, Sophie.

GRACIE MESTAS (*Lights*) recently graduated community college. She has played a technical role in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Wild Women of Winedale*, *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, and *Charlotte's Web* at the Ritz Theatre, *Seussical* at the Shoals Theatre, *Into the Woods* and *The Little Mermaid* at Northwest-Shoals CC, and this is her third year participating in *The Miracle Worker*. She would like to thank Caroline, Laura, and Andrew for giving her the chance to help with this wonderful production.

AMBER ANGLIN (*Stage Crew*) has had a great love for theatre her entire life, and has recently been involved with community theatre in the Shoals. Her credits include *Waiting for Godot* at the Village School Foundation and *Charlotte's Web* at the Ritz Theatre. Previously, she was co-chair of an alternate history convention, "AnachroCon" in Atlanta GA, from 2017-2020 after volunteering since 2012. She is super excited to be a part of *The Miracle Worker*.

KRISTEN SOUTH (*Stage Crew*) was born in Florence, Alabama, and this is her second season to be on the Stage Crew for *The Miracle Worker*. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with friends and family and she is also a painter.

CHARLEE MCCANN (*Stage Crew*) loves bringing stories to life from every angle. She is glad to return to the stage crew for *The Miracle Worker*, adding to her backstage credits for *Wild Women of Winedale*, *Sweet Delilahs Swim Club*, and *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Charlee also enjoys stepping into the spotlight, having recently played both Uncle and Lurvy in *Charlotte's Web* and Beverly in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Her theatrical passion carries over into her hobbies, which include sketching, character creation, mask making, and sewing absolutely everything.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

CAROLINE SELF (*Director*) is returning for her 7th year as director, but *The Miracle Worker* at Ivy Green has been an important part of her life since childhood. She appeared as a Blind Child, Helen Keller (3 seasons), Annie Sullivan (4 seasons), and Kate Keller (2 seasons). Caroline also directed *The Miracle Worker* at Harvard-Radcliffe College, the alma mater she shares with Helen Keller. Caroline is a television producer and editor. Her executive producer credits include: "The Real Housewives of New Jersey", "Blood Sweat & Heels", "Manzo'd with Children", and "Buying Beverly Hills". Other credits include: "Project Runway", "Big Brother", and "Hell's Kitchen".

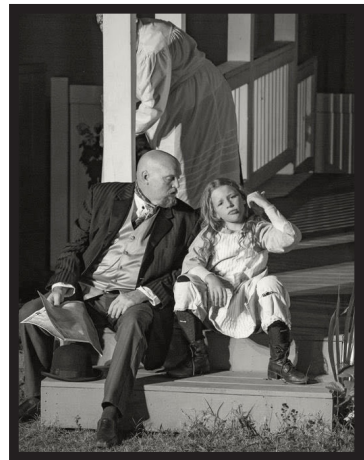
LAURA RINGNELL (*Assistant Director*) has been involved with *The Miracle Worker* for 27 seasons. In 1976 she played a Blind Child and has since played the roles of Aunt Ev and a crone. She has also worked backstage, in the box office, and as Stage Manager. Laura has worked on over 160 local theatre productions. She earned her degree in Theatre at University of North Alabama. She has co-directed 40 shows with Andrew Maples. Laura wants to thank her daughters, Christie and Jamie, for their support.

ANDREW MAPLES (*Technical Director*) has been involved with technical theatre since college when he stumbled in to help on a production. He went on to receive his degree in theatre and radio television and film from UNA. Since college he has been a tech director of many shows in the Shoals area. He enjoys all aspects of theatre. He and Laura Ringnell have directed a total of 40 shows involving both young and adult actors.

DR. DAVID K. RUEBHAUSEN (*Scenic Design*) began his theatrical career in the Kansas City area working as the Student Technical Director for

the Student Technical Director for William Jewell College Theatre. He later served as Theatre instructor and Managing Director for the University of Minnesota Theatre and Minnesota Centennial Showboat. While in the Twin Cities, he directed and/or designed for productions such as *Children of a Lesser God*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *Ghosts*, *Arms and the Man* and *Beyond Therapy*. He also served as the senior faculty member for UNA Theatre, and he directed and/ or designed for UNA productions of *The Man of La Mancha*, *Dracula*, *Noises Off*, *The Tempest*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Playboy of the Western World*, *Lysistrata*, *Candida*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Once Upon A Mattress*. He has also worked with several Shoals community theatre productions as well as with the theatre department at Florence Academy of Fine Arts (FAFA).

LILLIE MEYER (*Helen Coach*) is 15 years old and attends Florence City Schools. Lillie has participated in *The Miracle Worker* since 2022. She played Helen from the 61st-63rd season of the production and now coaches the role of Helen and runs projections.

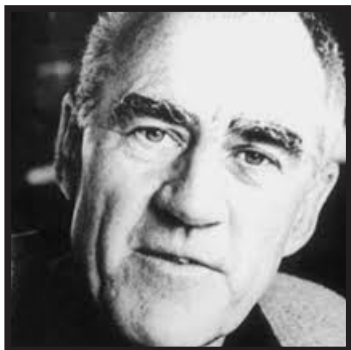


Jonathan Moore, Shonna Beckwith, and Nora Sparks in the 2025 production. Photo by: Mary Carton

THE PLAYWRIGHT

WILLIAM GIBSON (*Playwright*) Born in the Bronx of New York City on November 13, 1914, William "Bill" Gibson was the son of George and Dore Gibson. Gibson spent his childhood in New York City and later attended college there. When he graduated from City College, he moved to Kansas, where he met the lady who would become his wife, Margaret Brenman. They were married on September 6, 1940. They had two sons, Thomas and David.

Some of his early plays were produced in Topeka, Kansas, but his critical and



popular success came when *Two For the Seesaw* opened on Broadway in 1958. Just a year later, *The Miracle Worker* opened on Broadway. A few years later, he adapted the play for the screen.

Other credits include: *A Cry of Players*, *Golda's Balcony*, *The Butterfingers*, *Angel*, *Monday After the Miracle*, *Goodly Creatures*, and *Handy Dandy*. Book credits include: "The Seesaw Log", "A Mass for the Dead", "Shakespeare's Game", and a book of poetry called, "Winter Crook". In 2004, *Golda's Balcony* brought Gibson back to the New York Stage. William Gibson died at his home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts on November 25, 2008. He was 94 years old.

Gibson visited Ivy Green several times, and he provided counsel and support to our production here. He always said that the production at the Birthplace needed to be "the best production of this play anywhere in the world." That is the bar we strive to meet each year.

THE STORY OF THE MIRACLE WORKER

On February 7, 1957, CBS aired a teleplay of William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker* on its series Playhouse 90. The teleplay was a hit, but the story of *The Miracle Worker* was just beginning. The next morning, Gibson met Anne Bancroft, whom Gibson called "Annie", for the first time, and on October 19, 1959, Annie Bancroft opened on Broadway as Annie Sullivan, "the miracle worker".

The original Broadway production of Gibson's *The Miracle Worker*, directed by Arthur Penn, also starred Patty Duke as Helen Keller, Patricia Neal as Kate Keller, and Torin Thatcher as Captain Arthur Keller. It ran on Broadway for 719 performances and won 4 Tony Awards including Best Play, Best Actress for Bancroft, and Best Director for Penn.

In 1962, Gibson, Penn, Bancroft, Duke, and producer Fred Coe teamed



up again for the film adaptation of *The Miracle Worker*. Both Bancroft and Duke won Oscars for their portrayals of Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller. Duke later played Annie Sullivan in a 1979 television movie of *The Miracle Worker* that starred Melissa Gilbert as Helen.

65 YEARS OF MIRACLES AT IVY GREEN

In 2026, we celebrate the 65th Annual Production of William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker* outdoors at Ivy Green, the Birthplace of Helen Keller. Every year since 1962, this moving story of the triumph of the human spirit has been told on the grounds where Annie Sullivan taught Helen Keller the meaning of language. This production is the Official Outdoor Drama for the State of Alabama, and people come to Tuscumbia from all over the world to experience it.

Not long after the Broadway run, Patty Duke visited Tuscumbia to experience Ivy Green. While in Tuscumbia, she was interviewed by Lyn Wagnon, who, along with Ward Wagnon, ran the Starmaker Community Playhouse in Tuscumbia. The idea for producing *The Miracle Worker* on the grounds of Ivy Green was born.



Patty Duke at Ivy Green in the early 1960s

The Miracle Worker opened at Ivy Green on June 29, 1962 to a capacity crowd. It was a hit, and a yearly tradition began. A month later, the Academy Award winning film of *The Miracle Worker*, produced by Fred Coe, directed by Arthur Penn, and starring Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke, was released.



Ann Cash and Teresa Conley in the 1962 production of *The Miracle Worker* at Ivy Green

Ten years after the first performance at Ivy Green, on April 8, 1972, a tragic fire struck Ivy Green and many of the props for *The Miracle Worker* that were stored in the attic of the Keller Shrine were destroyed. In only a few months, a new stage would need to be built on the other side of the lawn, a new lighting system would be needed, and the seating would need to be changed. *The Miracle Worker* faced closure, but after much deliberation, the decision was made. "The show must go on."



Patty Duke with Patty Chambers Hughes, who portrayed Annie in the 1980 production of *The Miracle Worker* at Ivy Green

In the 1970s, the play was performed behind the house, using the real pump for the "miracle" scene. Seating was much more limited than it is today.

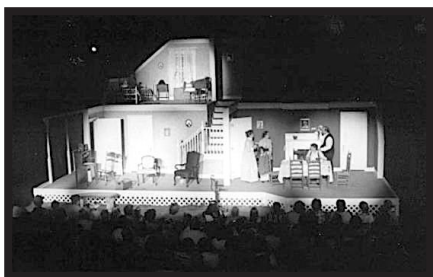
65 YEARS OF MIRACLES AT IVY GREEN

With Helen Keller's 100th birthday approaching on June 27, 1980, the decision was made to build an amphitheatre in time for the 1980 production so thousands more people could experience "the miracle" every summer. That amphitheatre was built on the site where the play is produced today. Patty Duke, who won an Emmy for her portrayal of Annie Sullivan in 1979, was in attendance for *The Miracle Worker* at Ivy Green during that 1980 season.



Patty Duke at Ivy Green in 2006

Duke returned to Ivy Green a few times before her death in 2016. On one of her later visits, Patty Duke remarked that "finally, my spirit has come home."



The set built in 2003

The set that was built in 1980 remained standing until 2003 when the set was rebuilt and the lighting/sound equipment modernized. The current set was built in 2015 with major improvements made for the 2020 production.



The set in 2023

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic shut down Ivy Green to tours for the first time since it opened as a museum in 1954. Without revenue from tours and with gathering restrictions in place, *The Miracle Worker* once again faced cancellation, but again, the decision was made that "the show must go on".



Anna Bond Kelley and Lillie Meyer

You are watching a play that has been performed on these grounds every summer since 1962. Now, more than ever, we are committed to keeping the miracle alive for generations to come.

PORTRAYING HELEN AND ANNIE

Helen Keller has always been one of my biggest role models. From the time I was little, I read book after book about everything she accomplished and how much she gave back to and helped others. When I found out about auditions for *The Miracle Worker*, I was beyond excited - not just for the chance to be in the show but to share my love for Helen. The day I got the call that I had been cast as Helen was unforgettable - I truly felt like the happiest kid in the world.

I am very proud to say I have been a part of telling Helen's story and touching others the way she touched me. This role isn't just a part I played, but something I will carry with me through life.

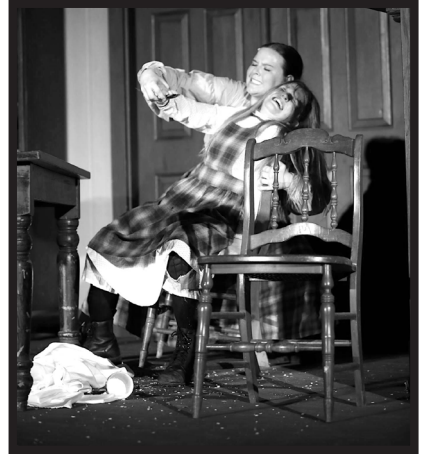
Playing Helen is unlike any other role. Since Helen couldn't speak or hear, I had to learn and find new ways to express her emotions through movement, facial expressions, and physical reactions. It's not about reciting lines, but communicating something deeper without words. There's so much we take for granted and don't realize how blessed we are. It was also emotionally intense. I had to tap into frustration, hopelessness, eventually the joy of connection, and so many more emotions.

While this show is fun, it is also challenging - and worth every second. I know that if Helen were able to be present today, she would be proud of everyone that has stepped on that stage and the lives they have touched. As you watch the show tonight, I hope you experience the miracle with us.

And to Annie and Helen, we love you forever and ever.

-Lillie Meyer
Helen Keller (2022-24)

Being part of *The Miracle Worker* for five years has been nothing short of life-changing. Each time I've stepped into this story, it has offered me something new — a deeper understanding, a different emotion, a fresh appreciation for the resilience of the human spirit.



Anna Bond Kelley and Lillie Meyer.
Photo by: Mary Carton.

In my first two years playing Kate Keller, I had the privilege of experiencing a mother's unwavering love for her child. Kate's tenderness, quiet strength, and deep desire to give Helen a fuller life moved me every time I stepped onstage. Through her, I learned how powerful it is to hope.

Stepping into Anne Sullivan's shoes has challenged and inspired me in ways I never expected. Annie is relentless, fierce, and full of heart. Portraying her has pushed me to find that same determination within myself — to believe in breakthroughs, no matter how impossible they may seem.

This show isn't just about Helen learning to communicate. It's about how powerful love, patience, and persistence can be when the world says "no" and someone dares to say "yes." I'm honored to be part of telling that story — again and again.

-Anna Bond Kelley
Annie Sullivan (2023-Present)
Kate Keller (2022-23, 2026)

ANNIE AND HELEN AFTER THE MIRACLE



In 1900, Helen Keller entered Radcliffe College as a freshman. While at Radcliffe, she wrote her autobiography "The Story of My Life". In 1904, Helen Keller became the first deaf-blind person to receive a bachelor of arts degree.

After college, Helen continued to write, and she traveled the world with Annie. Helen was a suffragist and advocate for humanitarian causes. She worked with organizations such as the American Foundation for the Blind.

Annie died in Forest Hills, New York, in 1936. Helen continued her humanitarian work after Annie's death, with Polly Thomson as her companion. Helen met ten U.S. Presidents during her lifetime, starting with Grover Cleveland and ending with John F. Kennedy.

When Annie Sullivan came to Ivy Green, a 50-year partnership with Helen Keller began. A few months after "the miracle", Helen knew 624 words. She learned to write. She learned Braille. With Annie by her side, Helen studied at the Perkins School for the Blind, the Wright-Humason School for the Deaf, and the Cambridge School for Young Ladies.

Helen Keller died in 1968. Her ashes are interred at Washington National Cathedral with those of Annie Sullivan and Polly Thomson.



**To the Cast and Crew
of The Miracle Worker**

**Break a leg!
Love you, Laura**



ABIGAIL JOHNSON

From Beatrice to Alice, Young Annie to Kate Keller, Abigail has cherished every moment spent on The Miracle Worker stage. She is thrilled to realize her lifelong dream of portraying Annie Sullivan.

Wishing you a wonderful ninth year in this iconic production.

With love,

Dad, Mom, Zachary, and Nathan

Ruby Sparks

*We are so proud of you both and love
you so much! -Pop and Bebe*



*Our favorite Helens! We love you
big! Break a leg!
Daddy, Mama, Isaiah, Parker,
Josiah, Nate, and Jane Ellen*

*We are so proud of your hard work! We love both of
you so much! - Poppi and Granna*

Nora Sparks





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Chaz!**



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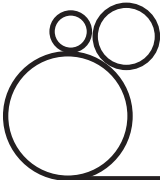
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IN LOVING
MEMORY OF

TERRY PACE

WHO PLAYED
CAPTAIN KELLER
MANY SEASONS
FROM THE
1980S TO THE
2010S

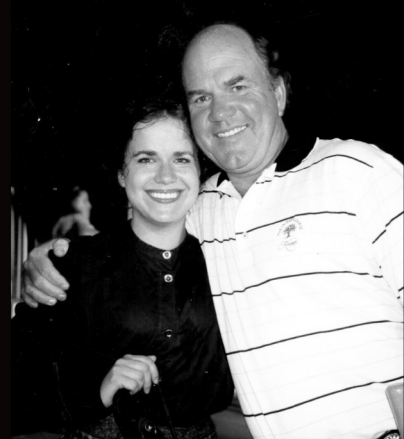


IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Hank Self

PROUD FATHER OF
CAROLINE SELF

who has been part of
THE MIRACLE WORKER
as a Blind Child (1985),
Helen Keller (1987-1989),
Annie Sullivan (2001-2004),
Kate Keller (2018-2019),
and Director (2020-Present)



DIRECTOR'S NOTE ON SEASON 65

The role of Helen Keller would be incredibly challenging even for an experienced adult actress. Actresses portraying Helen must communicate without speaking. Their faces and bodies must convey Helen's thoughts and decisions, and if that isn't hard enough, they must do that while not reacting to what they hear and see.

Usually, because of the sheer difficulty of the role and the maturity required to handle it, actresses portraying Helen Keller are much older than Helen was when Annie Sullivan came to Ivy Green. Helen was a few months shy of 7 on that fateful day. Patty Duke was 12-years-old when she originated the role on Broadway. Most Helens at Ivy Green have been between 9 and 12. I was 10 when I first played Helen Keller decades ago, and it was one of the hardest — and most defining — experiences of my life.

This year, one of our Helens, Ruby Sparks, will turn 6 during the run. Ruby also has moderate-to-severe hearing loss and wears hearing aids during the performance. Ruby is an incredibly gifted child, and these challenges have not held her back at all.

Ruby shares the role of Helen with her big sister, Nora, who is a captivating

Helen in her own right, but who also became a teacher this season as she guided her sister.

We have thought about Helen Keller many times during rehearsal as we have witnessed Ruby — who has a curious and mischievous personality just like Helen — learn, and as we have made adjustments like touch cues to accommodate for her hearing loss.

During rehearsals, I have also been reminded that, even though Annie Sullivan is called "the miracle worker", it took a village for that miracle to happen back in 1887. Thank you to the village that made this season possible. Ruby and Nora's parents. Our Annies. Lillie, our Helen coach. Our cast and crew. Because of this village, Season 65 is a very special one.

As we celebrate this 65th Annual Production, we thank you for joining a long line of people who have come to Ivy Green to experience "the miracle". We hope that you will take a piece of this story with you in your own lives. Love a little deeper. Dream a little bigger. Believe a little harder. And never forget that miracles happen in Alabama.

-Caroline Self



Anna Bond Kelley and Ruby Sparks



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