

Miracle Worker Niantic Bay Playhouse

Director's Note:

There are three excellent movies of the play – one (1962) with Anne Bancroft as Annie and Patty Duke as Helen, one (1979) with Patty Duke as Annie and Melissa Gilbert as Helen, and one (2000) with Alison Elliot as Annie and Hallie Kate Eisenberg (Jesse Eisenberg's little sister) as Helen.

SIDES FOR THE MIRACLE WORKER AUDITIONS

KATE: Hush. Don't you cry now, you've been trouble enough. Call it acute congestion, indeed, I don't see what's so cute about a congestion, just because it's yours? We'll have your father run an editorial in his paper, the wonders of modern medicine, they don't know what they're curing even when they cure it. My men and their battle scars, we women will have to – (but she breaks off, puzzled, moves her finger before the baby's eyes.) Will have to – Helen? (Now she moves her hand quickly.) Helen. (She snaps her fingers at the baby's eyes twice, and her hand falters; after a moment she calls out loudly.) Captain. Captain, will you come -- (But she stares at the baby, and her next call is directly at her ears.) Captain! (And now, still staring, KATE screams.)

ANNIE: (In response to KELLER's "Cleanliness is next to Godliness") Cleanliness is next to nothing, she has to learn that everything has its name! That words can be her eyes, to everything in the world outside her, and inside too, what is she without words? With them she can think, have ideas, be reached, there's not a thought or fact in the world that can't be hers. You publish a newspaper, Captain Keller, do I have to tell you what words are? And she has them already – eighteen nouns and three verbs, they're in her fingers now, I need only time to push one of them into her mind! One, and everything under the sun will follow. Don't you see what she's learned here is only clearing the way for that? I can't risk her unlearning it, give me more time alone with her, another week –

ANNIE: I wanted to teach you – oh, everything the earth is full of, Helen, everything on it that's ours for a wink and it's gone, and what we are on it, the – light we bring to it and leave behind in – words, why, you can see five thousand years back in the light of words, everything we feel, think, know – and share, in words, so not a soul is in darkness, or done with, even in the grave. And I know, I know, one word and I can – put the world in your hand – and whatever it is to me, I won't take less! How, how, how do I tell you . . .

KELLER: Katie, I will not have it! Now you did not see when that girl after supper tonight went to look for Helen in her room--The child practically climbed out of her window to escape from her! What kind of teacher is she? I thought I had seen her at her worst this morning, shouting at me, but I come home to find the entire house disorganized by her--Helen won't stay one second in the same room, won't come to the table with her, won't let herself be bathed or undressed or put to bed by her, or even by Viney now, and the end result is that you have to do more for the child than before we hired this girl's services! From the moment she stepped off the train she's been nothing but a burden, incompetent, impertinent, ineffectual, immodest-- shall I go on?

ANAGNOS: --who could do nothing for the girl, of course. It was Dr. Bell who thought she might somehow be taught. I have written the family only that a suitable governess, Miss Annie Sullivan, has been found here in Boston and will come. It will no doubt be difficult for you there, Annie. But it has been difficult for you at school too, hm? Gratifying, yes, when you came to us and could not spell your name, to accomplish so much in a few years, but always an Irish battle. For independence. This is my last time to counsel you, Annie, and you do lack some--by some I mean all--what, tact or talent to bend. To others. And what has saved you on more than one occasion here at Perkins is that there was nowhere to expel you to.

THE MIRACLE WORKER Audition Sides | KATE and ANNIE

KATE: I expected – a desiccated spinster. You're very young.

ANNIE: (Resolutely) Oh, you should have seen me when I left Boston. I got much older on this trip.

KATE: I mean, to teach anyone as difficult as Helen.

ANNIE: I mean to try. They can't put you in jail for trying!

KATE: Is it possible, even? To teach a deaf-blind child half of what an ordinary child learns – has that ever been done?

ANNIE: Half?

KATE: A tenth.

ANNIE: (Reluctantly.) No. Dr. Howe did wonders, but – an ordinary child? No, never. But then I thought when I was going over his reports – he never treated them like ordinary children. More like – eggs everyone was afraid would break.

KATE: (a pause) May I ask how old you are?

ANNIE: Well, I'm not in my teens you know! I'm twenty.

KATE: All of twenty.

ANNIE: (valiantly) Mrs. Keller, don't lose heart just because I'm not on my last legs. I have three big advantages over Dr. Howe that money couldn't buy for you. One is his work behind me, I've read every word he wrote about it and he wasn't exactly what you'd call a man of few words. Another is to be young, why, I've got energy to do anything. The third is, I've been blind.

KATE: (Quietly) Advantages.

ANNIE: (Wry) Well some have the luck of the Irish, some do not.

CAPTAIN KELLER and KATE

KELLER: Katie, I will not have it! Now you did not see when that girl after supper tonight went to look for Helen in her room –

KATE: No.

KELLER: The child practically climbed out of her window to escape from her! What kind of teacher is she? I thought I had seen her at her worst this morning, shouting at me, but I come home to find the entire house disorganized by her – Helen won't stay one second in the same room, won't come to the table with her, won't let herself be bathed or undressed or put to bed by her, or even by Viney now, and the end result is that you have to do more for the child than before we hired this girl's services! From the moment she stepped off the train she's been nothing but a burden, incompetent, impertinent, ineffectual, immodest –

KATE: She folded her napkin, Captain.

KELLER: What?

KATE: Not ineffectual. Helen did fold her napkin.

KELLER: What in heaven's name is so extraordinary about folding a napkin? KATE: (With some humor) Well, it's more than you did, Captain.

Captain Keller and James

JAMES: -- no, but shouldn't we give the devil his due Father? The fact is we lost the South two years earlier when he outthought us behind Vicksburg.

KELLER: Outthought is a peculiar word for a butcher.

JAMES: Harness maker, wasn't he?

KELLER: I said butcher, his only virtue as a soldier was numbers and he led them to slaughter with no more regard than for so many sheep.

JAMES: But even if in that sense he was a butcher, the fact is he –

KELLER: And a drunken one, half the war.

JAMES: Agreed, Father. If his own people said he was I can't argue he –

KELLER: Well, what is it you find to admire in such a man, Jimmie, the butchery or the drunkenness?

JAMES: Neither, Father, only the fact that he beat us.

KELLER: He didn't.

JAMES: Is it your contention we won the war, sir?

KELLER: He didn't beat us at Vicksburg. We lost Vicksburg because Pemberton gave Bragg five thousand of his cavalry and Loring, whom I knew personally for a nincompoop before you were born, marched away from Champion's Hill with enough men to have held them, we lost Vicksburg by stupidity verging on treason.

JAMES: I would have said we lost Vicksburg because Grant was one thing no Yankee general was before him –

KELLER: Drunk? I doubt it.

JAMES: Obstinate.

CAPTAIN KELLER and JAMES #2

JAMES: Let her go.

KELLER: What!

JAMES: (A swallow) I said – let her go. She's right (KELLER glares at the chair JAMES has put between them, then glares at James. JAMES takes a deep breath, then headlong:) She's right, Kate's right, I'm right, and you're wrong. If you drive her away from here it will be over my dead – chair, has it never occurred to you that on one occasion you might be consummately wrong?

AUNT EV and JAMES

AUNT EV: How does she stand it? Why haven't you seen this Baltimore man? It's not a thing you can let go on and on, like the weather.

JAMES: The weather here doesn't ask permission of me Aunt Ev. Speak to my father.

AUNT EV: Something ought to be done for that child.

JAMES: A refreshing suggestion. What?

AUNT EV: Why, this very famous occultist in Baltimore I wrote you about, what was his name... oh, yes, Dr. Chisholm. Yes, I heard lots of cases of blindness people thought couldn't be cured he's cured, he just does wonders. Why don't you write to him?

JAMES: (Lightly) Good money after bad, or bad after good. Or bad after bad-- --

AUNT EV: Well, if it's just a question of money, Arthur, now you're marshal you have this Yankee money. Might as well -- -- - Say what you like, James, but that child is a Keller. I needn't remind you that all the Kellers are cousins to General Robert E. Lee.

DR. ANAGNOS and ANNIE

ANAGNOS: I have written the family only that a suitable governess, Miss Annie Sullivan has been found here in Boston – and will come. It will no doubt be difficult for you there, Annie. But it has been difficult for you at our school too, hm? Gratifying, yes, when you came to us and could not spell your name, to accomplish so much here in a few years, but always an Irish battle. For independence. (He studies ANNIE, humorously) This is my last time to counsel you, Anne, and you do lack some – by some I mean all – what, tact or talent to bend. To others. And what has saved you on more than one occasion here at Perkins is that there was nowhere to expel you to. Your eyes hurt?

ANNIE: My ears, Mr. Anagnos.

ANAGNOS: Nowhere but back to Tewksbury, where children learn to be saucy. Annie, I know how dreadful it was there, but that battle is dead and done with, why not let it stay buried? -- - (Frowns) Annie, I wrote them no word of your history. You will find yourself among strangers now, who know nothing of it.

ANNIE: Well, we'll keep them in a state of blessed ignorance.

ANAGNOS: Perhaps you should tell it? So they'll understand. When you have trouble.

ANNIE: The only time I have trouble is when I'm right. (But she is amused at herself, as is ANAGNOS) Is it my fault it's so often? (a pause) Mr. Anagnos (her voice is trembling) Dear Mr. Anagnos, I -- -- Well, what should I say, I'm an ignorant opinionated girl, and everything I am I owe to you?

ANAGNOS: (Smiles). That is only half true, Annie.

ANNIE: Which half? I crawled in here like a drowned rat, I thought I died when Jimmie died, that I'd never again – come alive. Well, you say with love so easy, and I haven't loved a soul since and I never will, I suppose, but this place gave me more than my eyes back. Or taught me how to spell, which I'll never learn anyway, but with all the fights and

the trouble I've been here it taught me what help is, and how to live again, and I don't want to say goodbye. Don't open the door, I'm crying.

HELEN

Director's Note: Helen obviously doesn't have lines, although she will need to vocalize. To audition for Helen, participants should be prepared to take several steps toward a table, feel around on it for a plate with some pretend food, act as if she is eating the food, and feel around the table to the next plate, then sit in a chair by that plate – all while being "blind".

Participants should also be prepared to improvise/pantomime moments from the show.