

Stage Right drama 'The Miracle Worker' opens Sept. 7

With the prospect of snagging a plum role in respected drama, "The Miracle Worker," nobody was surprised that several newcomers, as well as Stage Right's seasoned actors, showed up for auditions weeks ago at the Crighton Theatre.

The classic drama, based on the true story of blind and deaf Helen Keller whose distraught parents hired teacher Annie Sullivan as a last resort, is anticipated to be among the most appealing of the season.

"As predicted, we have quite a few newcomers in this show," Carolyn Corsano Wong, a SR founder, wrote in an e-mail.

"Two young girls appear as Helen," she added. "Both auditioned so well that play director Reena DeSanto could not choose just one." Lena Torluemke and SR newcomer Lauren Santana will alternate in the role.

Both possess stage experience. Lena portrayed an orphan in SR's musical "Annie"



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two seasons ago and a mouse in season closer "Cinderella." Both children attend Humphrey's School for Musical Theatre, and have performed in productions at Houston's Hobby Center.

Another SR beginner is Layci Jones, whose previous stage experience was primarily in musicals elsewhere. She portrays teacher Annie Sullivan.

True to his status as a "man of all trades," Katt Gilcrease depicts Helen's father, Captain Keller. Katt accumulated kudos for his acting proficiency, as well as his readiness to function is whatever capacity needed at SR.

Katt, a professional actor,

and teacher for SR's Bravo Company, built the set for this show, and serves on the SR board of directors. Little Lauren's mom, Karen Santana, provides exquisite antique furniture, along with set decorations for the show.

Depicting Helen Keller's mother is Beverly Watkins, another SR newcomer. Her most recent theatre outing was in the Crighton Players' musical revue "Smokey Joe's Café" at the Owen Theatre.

Harley the Wonder Dog makes his third SR appearance in "The Miracle Worker." His additional credits were accrued as a Certified Therapy Dog who regularly visits rehab centers, and even school libraries, where he basks among members of his adoring public. He also gained prowess as Stage Right's mascot.

This production marks the beginning of Stage Right's fifth year, "A Season of Miracles," at the landmark Crighton Theatre. "It's ap-

propriately titled," Carolyn Wong observed wryly.

The group began when the Crighton Players moved several years ago to the Owen Theatre, fewer than two blocks away from the Crighton. Sheer determination, talent, and a bit of good luck kept the cluster alive. Now some shows attract record crowds.

As is its custom, SR provides a generous helping hand to area residents and organizations. During the run of "The Miracle Worker," used eye glasses will be collected for the Conroe Noon Lions Club whose outreach distributes eyeglasses to those unable to afford them.

With this production, Stage Right gives special consideration to both teachers and students.

"Since the show is about an extraordinary teacher and her pupil, and since students learn the story of Helen Keller in school," Carolyn went on, "we are offering discounted

tickets to teachers and students."

Admission for teachers is \$10; students pay \$5. Teachers who bring five or more class members, pay only \$5 admission.

"We hope a large number will see this inspiring true story of a courageous teacher and the little girl she transported out of a dark and silent world," Carolyn added.

Discounts must be arranged through the Crighton box office, 234 N. Main, by phone at (936) 441-7469, or at www.stageright.org.

Show dates for "The Miracle Worker" are weekends September 7—23 at 8 p.m., with 2 p.m. Sunday matinees September 16 & 23. Ticket price is \$17 for adults, \$15 for the elderly, and \$12 for students (although student tickets for this production are specially priced at \$5; \$10 for teachers). Regular group rates exist for 10 or more.

When SR presents "My Three Angels" during the Christmas season, a special

treat is planned for children. This will include a Saturday matinee children's show, plus cookie treats and a visit with Santa. Title of this particular children's Saturday matinee is a closely guarded secret, but will be revealed at the appropriate moment.

In April, Stage Right presents "The Red Velvet Cake War," a comedy by the authors of "Mama Won't Fly," that held its world premier with SR at the Crighton.

What may turn this one into a comedic war of its own is a contest to decide which local cook makes the best red velvet cake. Resident theatre and food critics will choose the winner from all entries submitted by area theatre goers. In addition to fame and glory, the red velvet cake winner gets tickets for the 2013—2014 SR season. So, ladies, (and gentlemen), start your mixers!

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