

# Miracle Worker Gimmicked Approach Doesn't Fit In

The Miracle Worker, by William Gibson, with Larry Walz, Ann West, Paul Gold, Anne Carson, Phyllis Rankin, Ronald Weaver, Abby Hurwitz, Henry Ramer, Ed Grady, Margaret Cathell, Anne Faushee, Alice Dawson, Marty Grady, Judy Lipton, Debora Myers, Valerie Myers, Louise Pettis, Rebecca Scott, Kathy Wagoner, Nancy Carson, Kermit Ewing, Dude Hatten, Dick King.

Bonnie Wilson, Sean Grady. Directed by Wesley Van Tassel. Design and lighting by Harry Callahan.

By MYLES LUDWIG (Imagine playwright Gibson, who journals the prostitution of an artist in his SEESAW LOG, hovering over his typewriter, hands folded, and dreaming.)

"Heh, heh, heh . . . they think

I sold out last time . . . I'll write them an artistic failure that'll be a fantastic success. I'll take a story about this kid, make her a girl who can't see, hear, or talk, just like Helen Keller, and then I'll get somebody to teach her how to fold a napkin. Yeah, that's it. Then, let's see, I need a family. Well, I'll take a couple of characters from that TV thing I saw last week . . . father not understanding son jazz, mother caught in middle. And then, yeah, this will really hook 'em. I'll throw in some symbols—bells that ring in crucial places, voices from somebody's past. Got to be careful not to allow the characters to become too real. Man, it ought to run for years and then I can write a book about this one too. I'll make a million."

**Gibson Exploits Characters**  
Perhaps the playwright is not as callous as I make him out to be. But the Miracle Worker is concerned with a rather delicate though certainly noble subject, the transformation of an almost bestial being into a "human child." Whether this subject and its ramifications are theatrically valid or not, is not the question at hand. Rather, the talent seems to be, is Gibson's talent large enough to carry the theme without exploiting his characters or embarrassing his audience?

I feel that he is very definitely using Helen just as he is using the church bells and, though I admit to a certain amount of guilt-tugging embarrassment at the sight

of a sidewalk pencil vendor, I would have been thoroughly appalled by Helen's strangled movements, had they been played as written. Certainly without this gimmicked approach, the play could never stand on its own. The family is entirely one dimensional; and even Annie Sullivan borders on the superficial, though admittedly she is granted the possibility of another side by a dramatic attachment to her dead brother and by Captain Keller's abortive suggestion of an ulterior motive in her desire to teach the child. Furthermore, the playwright, as if the foregoing were not enough to strain our credulity, adds three "plantation nigras," straight out of Birth of a Nation.

Though filled with rough-and-tumble scenes, the play is generally dull and talkative. The audience knows very well what it is waiting for and can do without the contrived effects and dramatic incidents that are so much filler. Perhaps, if Gibson had attempted to relate Helen's side of the story, instead of making her a dramatic device, he would have succeeded in holding my attention.

In my opinion, VAN TASSEL's greatest error in judgment was choosing to play the piece in the round. Arena staging is, as Kenneth Tynan says, "a method which overrates the importance of 'intimacy' in the theatre and, by citing the circus as an indication of the creed, overlooks the fact that of the two most exciting things that happen in a circus, one takes

place behind bars and the other hundreds of feet in the air." For me, this type of theatre takes the play off the stage and puts it into the livingroom — thus destroying Claman's "x quality" or the "magic" which is so basic to the drama. Furthermore, this method taxes unreasonably the concentration of the actor and necessitates some part of the audience missing a dramatically important point. With a play such as this, i.e. one where in the dramatic intensity hinges so much on facial expression and movement, arena staging cannot be successful.

**Worked Against Script**  
Bearing these handicaps in mind, it is difficult to judge the overall production. The performance was quite casual and not once did I feel that the actors had hit upon a truthful moment. And stranger yet, it seemed to me that the cast was working against the script rather than with it.

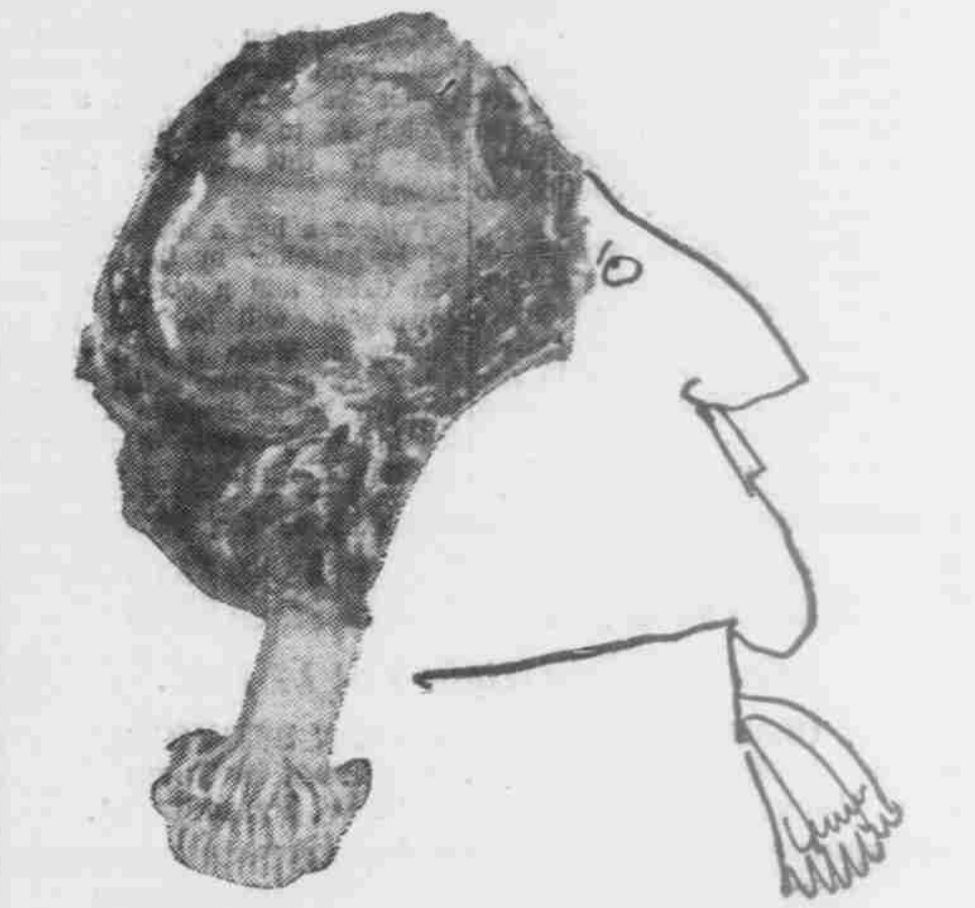
ANN WEST played the wailing mother as if she were simply horrified by the whole proceedings and PAUL GOLD, though his third act was beautiful, merely walked heavily through most of the play.

Perhaps, if HENRY RAMER had not shown so much contempt for the character he was playing, the situation between father and son might have been more believable. But as he acted the role, I see no reason for the two men to ever find a basis of understanding.

I have no quarrel with MARGARET CATHELL'S characterization of Annie Sullivan. But although she was superbly puckish in her tender scenes, Miss CATHELL seemed to substitute vocal and physical posturing for genuine emotion when called upon to participate more dramatically. Reserved praise goes to ANNE CARSON who played the part of Helen. Miss CARSON handled the role with too much restraint and assuredness, but did come alive in some of the violent scenes with her teacher. She seemed, as did many of the actors, to be victims of overdirection.

WESLEY VAN TASSEL moved his players through HARRY CALAHAN'S miniature set with little regard for natural relationships. Consequently, the performance moved from mob-scenes to tableaux vivant in a distressingly theatrical manner.

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**DAILY CROSSWORD**

ACROSS  
1. Sacred prohibition  
6. Split  
11. Ride for  
12. Shout of greeting: var.  
13. Sniffed  
14. Beneath  
15. One of the Dodecanese islands  
16. Lake freighter cargo  
17. Half em  
18. Kind of sweet bread  
21. South American river  
22. Person's bearing  
23. Extorted, as money  
24. Full of activity  
27. Emerson's middle name  
28. Optimistic  
29. Gap between mountain peaks  
30. Malt beverage  
31. Refreshing drinks  
35. Iron: sym.  
36. Taxi  
37. Roman 12  
38. Cited  
40. Place of worship  
42. Become active

DOWN  
1. Armored vehicles  
2. In progress  
3. Bass voice  
4. "Miss"  
5. Ancient  
6. Butter-maker  
7. Narrow roadway  
8. Old times  
9. Swindled  
10. Violent, whirling  
16. Over: poet.  
19. Slothful  
20. Actress  
21. Taylor  
21. Sick  
23. Formal dance  
24. Sea  
31. One who does wickerwork  
32. Loud  
33. Gay  
34. Kings, as addressed  
36. Instance  
38. Except  
40. Warp-yarn  
41. Game of chance

**Yesterday's Answer**  
31. One who does wickerwork  
32. Loud  
33. Gay  
34. Kings, as addressed  
36. Instance  
38. Except  
40. Warp-yarn  
41. Game of chance

**DAILY CRYPTOQUOTE — Here's how to work it:**  
A X Y D L B A A X R  
L O N G F E L L O W  
One letter simply stands for another. In this sample A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

## Campus Briefs

**COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR**  
All students interested in the Community Ambassador program of the Experiment in International Living are invited to attend a meeting Tuesday, Dec. 18 at 5 p.m. in Y Court. Those unable to attend should notify Anne Lee Ridenhour, 968-9097. Applications will be distributed at this meeting.

**SEMINARS ABROAD**  
All interested persons are invited to a meeting to discuss travel and study abroad Tuesday at 4 p.m.

**CHEERLEADER TRYOUTS**  
Tryouts for freshman Head Cheerleader will be held in the Tin Can at 5 p.m. Monday.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
There will be a meeting of the Finance Committee at 7 p.m. Monday in Student Govt. Offices.

**COOP COMMITTEE**  
There will be a meeting of the Coop Committee Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the offices of the Student Govt.

**CAROLINA FORUM**  
There will be an emergency meeting of the Carolina Forum today at 2 p.m. in GM.

**CAMPUS SING**  
Sunday evening the Men's Glee Club, Phi Mu Alpha, and the Orde of the Grail will sponsor an All Campus Carol Sing. The sing will start in Y-Court at 7:45 and proceed to the Upper Quad to pick up participants. In the course of the sing the group will stop at President Friday's house. The sing will culminate at Graham Memorial, where coffee and donuts will be served. Join in the true meaning of Christmas.

**JUDICIAL COMMITTEE**  
The Student Legislature's Judicial Committee will meet in the Grail Room in GM at 3 p.m. today. The "Bad Check" bill will be considered at this time. All interested persons are invited to attend.

**YACK PROOFS**  
Tuesday, Dec. 18, is the final day for approving Yack picture proofs or ordering copies. Proofs may be seen in the basement of GM from 1-5 p.m. each day through Friday.

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