

'Miracle' To Open Thursday

By CLARA HIERONYMUS

William Gibson's inspiring play about a deaf and blind child and her half-blind teacher—a true story about Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan—opens Thursday at Nashville Academy Theater.

The Miracle Worker is a moving drama about determination and courage and is always welcome as part of a theater season. But there is special significance in this particular production.

Playing the role of the young teacher, Annie Sullivan, whose stubborn convictions keep her working against difficult odds to free a small child from a dark, silent world, is Nashville actor-storyteller, Estelle Condra, who is herself legally blind.

BORN IN South Africa where she was graduated from the University in Pretoria with a degree in drama, she later studied in London at the Toynbee Theater School. She has both taught and acted, and is a skillful professional storyteller of South African tribal tales and other stories. Nashvillians have heard her *From the Dung Fires* and her dramatized ghost and goblin stories for children.

She lived in Atlanta before moving to Nashville in 1979 with her husband, Robert Condra. She has told her folk tales here under the auspices of the Nashville Institute for the Arts and at Lincoln Center in New York, as well as on cassettes and radio. But *The Miracle Worker* provides the community with its first oppor-



Teacher, Annie Sullivan, having struggled with the half-wild Helen Keller, finally communicates with the intelligent but blind and deaf little girl. Their story, *Miracle Worker* opens Thursday at Nashville Academy Theater. In the roles: Estelle Condra, left, and Terry D'Onofrio.

tunity to see her in a full-scale characterization on stage.

Terry D'Onofrio, of NAT's professional acting company, will be seen as Helen, the willful child who surmounts, with Annie's

help, the handicaps with which she was born and finds the direction that will make her a remarkable woman with rich talents. A recent theater graduate of Valdosta (Ga.) State College, she played Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* earlier this season.

OTHERS IN the cast are John Oliver as Captain Keller; Sherry Keeton as Kate Keller; Ted Giles as James; Fran Austin as Aunt Ev; and Dan Neely as Dr. Anagnos. Guy Keeton, NAT artistic director, is the play's director; Russ Bralley designed it, and the music is by J.S. Wheaton.

Performances are at Monday through Friday 17-22, Nov. 28-Dec. 9, and 27. There will also be an performance on Thursday 1, and Jan. 27; and Saturdays at noon on Dec. 3 and 21.

The theater is at 724 Ave. S., behind the Metcalf complex. There is ample parking, and for the ever-formances the area is well-lit. For information call 254-6020 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.