

THE CARROLLWOOD CULTURAL CENTER
PROUDLY PRESENTS

Steel
MAGNOLIAS

Written by ROBERT HARLING

Directed by DAVID J. VALDEZ

MARCH 14-23, 2025



Presented through Dramatists Play Service.

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STEEL MAGNOLIAS

By ROBERT HARLING

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Annelle.....	Candace Del Rio
Truvy.....	Liz Anderson
Clairee (u/s M'Lynn)	Judy Heck Lowry
Shelby.....	Ryan MacLean
M'Lynn.....	Monica Van Nort
Ouiser.....	Donne Petito
D.J. Voice	William Ashburn
Swing (Annelle, Shelby)	Ava Meyer
Swing (Truvy, Clairee, Ouiser).....	Rena Romano

ASL Interpretation on March 21 by Tampa Bay Interpreted Performing Arts.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive Director	Paul Berg
Artistic Director	Chris Holcom
Director	David J. Valdez
Stage Manager	Tyler Temple
1st Assistant Stage Manager	Payton Van Nort
2nd Assistant Stage Manager	Luis Graham
Scenic Design	Paul Berg
Lighting Design	Josh Eberhart
Costume Design	The Cast
Wig Design	Susan Haldeman
Sound Design.....	David J. Valdez
Sound Technician/Mixer	Daniel Gentry
Publicity	Adrienne Hutelmyer
Videographer	Mackley Fogarty
Publicity Photography	Chaz Dykes

RUN TIME

Act I: 68 minutes

Act II: 49 minutes

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Please refrain from videography and flash photography. Thank you.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

At its core, *Steel Magnolias* is a story about belonging, resilience, and the power of community. Truvy's salon isn't just a beauty shop—it's a sanctuary. It's where these women come to be themselves, to laugh, cry, and lift each other up. It's a space where they can exist free from the pressures of the outside world, a world that often asks them to be smaller, quieter, or less complicated than they truly are.

Many of us find *Steel Magnolias* to be the perfect escape: funny and warm, nostalgic from the hit 1989 film. But what these characters are dealing with, the contrast between the world inside Truvy's salon and the world outside it, is serious business. The salon is warm and built on love, while the world beyond is often harsh, unpredictable, and marked by traditional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Shelby, in particular, straddles both worlds. She embraces the traditions of womanhood—marriage, motherhood, and beauty—but also defies expectations by making choices that others see as reckless or defiant. Her story reminds us that strength comes in many forms. Sometimes it's loud and bold, sometimes it's quiet tenacity and unwavering. But it's always about standing in your truth, even when the world pushes back.

Growing up, it was strong, supportive women—women much like the ones in this play—who helped shape me and gave me a place to be my true self. Just as Truvy's salon provides a refuge for these women, queer people have long built communities in places where they can find understanding, love, and a sense of belonging. Whether in salons, theaters, bars, or chosen families, these spaces are vital. That's why *Steel Magnolias* still matters in 2025. It's a reminder that the relationships we all build in these spaces are life-giving and life-saving.

What has made this production truly special is not just the story we're telling, but the way this cast and crew have embodied its themes. From the start, there have been challenges—scheduling conflicts and unexpected hurdles; moments where it felt like the odds were against us. But just like the women in this play, this team showed up for each other. They persevered, supported one another, and never lost sight of why this story is worth telling. It has been an honor to watch them bring these characters to life, not just with talent, but with heart. Creatively, this production is as much theirs as it is mine, and I am lucky to have each of them.

In the end, *Steel Magnolias* is about showing up for the people we love. It's about finding strength in each other and in the spaces we call home. That's what this cast and crew have done, and I couldn't be more proud. This show belongs to them, to you, and to everyone who understands the power of love, friendship, and resilience. I dedicate this production to my mother, CeCe—my biggest fan and the steeliest magnolia I know. Without her and for many reasons, none of us would be here tonight, in this moment, experiencing this together.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for being part of this community. We're so glad to share this story with you. It's all for you.

—David J. Valdez, Director of *Steel Magnolias*

SPECIAL THANKS

Sarah Goodson Anderson, Paul Berg, Sarah Jackson Brinson,
Branden Del Rio, Chaz Dykes, Chris Holcom, Jaime Giangrande-Holcom,
Adrienne Hutelmyer, Gary King, Jason King, Ava Meyer,
Peter Nason, Rena Romano,
and the unbelievably talented cast and crew.



LIZ ANDERSON

(Truvy) is a Tampa native holding a master's degree in Vocal Performance from the University of South Florida. Usually off sailing the seas as a vocalist, she is excited for her first show with Carrollwood Cultural Center. Previous credits include *Girl in ONCE*, *Priscilla Queen Of The Desert*, *Burn The Floor*, and *Syds Norman's Pour House*.



JUDY HECK LOWRY

(Clairee; u/s M'Lynn) is thrilled to return to Center, where she played Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*.

She played Kate in *All My Sons* (Monti Award) and Mom in *True West at Plant City Entertainment*, Clairee in *Steel Magnolias* at Carrollwood Players, and performed at the Billymunk and Direct Theatres (NYC), Asolo Rep, Town & Country Playhouse, and Huron Playhouse, among others. Favorites include *Eliza*, *Look Homeward, Angel*; *Beatrice*, *A View from the Bridge*; *Toby*, *Gingerbread Lady*; *Mother Abbess*, *Sound of Music*. Training: HB Studios (NYC), Asolo Conservatory, The Ohio State University. Judy is an ICF Master Certified Coach (Lifecoach.com).



MONICA VAN NORT

(M'Lynn) moved from Ohio to Florida with her husband and two children in 2020. She was intro-

duced to community theater in Zanesville, Ohio when she was cast as Truvy in *Steel Magnolias* in 2008. She has participated in many shows over the last 17 years. Her favorite roles to date are the Wicked Witch from *The Wizard of Oz* (for obvious reasons), M'Lynn Eatonton from *Steel Magnolias*, and Birdie Hubbard from *Little Foxes*; though she enjoys every role she is blessed to be cast in. This performance is dedicated to a good friend, Dee McCarthy; the one who exposed Monica to community theater and with whom Monica had the privilege to play alongside in several shows (RIP dear friend).



An alum of Chicago's Goodman School of Drama, DONNE PETITO (Ouiser) has performed extensively in New Jersey. Favorite

roles include Linda in *Death of a Salesman*, Rosemary in *Picnic*, Sonia in *Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike*, Maude in *Bakersfield Mist*, and Widow Quin in *Playboy of the Western World* (for which she won a NJ Perry Award) as well as Sr. Aloysius in *Doubt*, Gertrude in *Hamlet*, and Charlotte in *Beyond Therapy*. Locally, she's appeared in *Exit Laughing*, *4000 Miles*, *The Mousetrap*, *Unnecessary Farce* and, most recently, as Helen Hubbard in *Murder on the Orient Express*. She is thrilled to be playing Ouiser with this incredibly talented group of people.



RYAN MACLEAN (Shelby) is so pleased to make her Carrollwood Cultural Center debut in *Steel Magnolias*, one of her most favorite plays. She previously appeared in *Tinytypes* and *Stage Door* (Francis Wilson Playhouse), *Company* (Eight O'Clock Theater), and *Peter Pan* (Masque Theatre). Her most treasured credit is a role by the name of "Mommy" at a playhouse where the director is very tiny yet quite opinionated.



CANDACE DEL RIO (Annelle) is a professional singer and actress in the Tampa and Orlando area. Some of her credits

include Peggy in *The Andrews Brothers* with Breakroom Ent., Lilly in *Alabama Story* with Powerstories Theatre, and Pippi in Stageworks' production of *The Great American Trailer Park Musical* for which she was nominated for an award with Theatre Tampa. As her day-job, she sings with several bands in the area playing at weddings, events, bars, and theme parks but her true love is the work that is performed on stages like this one. Candace is thrilled to be a part of this classic show alongside such an amazing group of women and wonderful crew.



WILLIAM ASHBURN (D.J. Voice) is thrilled to be making his Tampa theatre debut with this fantastic

production. Past credits include *The Shadowbox* (Joe), *Mrs. Sherlock* (Thomas Chapman), *Peter/Wendy* (Smee), *Enemy/Flint* (Martin Keele).



RENA ROMANO (Swing: Truvy, Clairee, Ouiser) began her stage career as a Professional Keynote and TEDx Speaker. Longing to

fulfill a lifelong dream she closed her Speaking and Coaching business at the end of 2022 setting her sights on film, theater, and modeling. A mere three days into her new career she was cast in a short film, and her acting career blossomed from there. Going from a background actor, to supporting, to the lead actor in several short and feature films. She was nominated for Best Actress in 2024 for a comedy short called "Goes by Lefty" for the Orlando OIF film festival.



AVA MEYER (Swing: Annelle, Shelby) is thrilled to be swinging for Annelle and Shelby in *Steel Magnolias*. She is currently a student at University of South

Florida with a Theatre Performance major. She was most recently in USF's production of *Arturo Ui* (Wounded Woman, Sheet, and Defense Counsel). Ava would like to thank her friends and family for their constant support, it is what keeps her motivated to continue theatre!



DAVID J. VALDEZ (Director, Sound Design) is a Tampa native and award-winning freelance director. At Carrollwood Cultural Center, he directed *The*

Glass Menagerie in 2023. He has directed works at Urbanite Theatre, University of South Florida, New Tampa Players, Tampa Fringe, and Carrollwood Players, among others. His *The Normal Heart* at Carrollwood Players was named one of Tampa Bay's "Top 10 Most Powerful Productions of 2021" by BroadwayWorld.com. He adjudicates for Florida State Thespians and the Educational Theatre Association, serving as a Thespy Awards and Mainstage adjudicator nationwide. Up next: *AIDA* at MAD Theatre of Tampa (June 2025). MFA: Florida State University.

A Tampa Bay native, TYLER TEMPLE (Stage Manager) received his BA in Theatre Arts from the University of South Florida. *Steel Magnolias* marks his 10th year of stage managing. Selected credits include *Deathtrap*, *The SpongeBob Musical*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Gypsy*, *Matilda*, *Titanic*, *Seussical* (Carrollwood Cultural Center); *Green Day's American Idiot* (American Stage); *Tick, Tick... Boom!* (Spanish Lyric Theatre); *A Doll's House* (Carrollwood Players.) He gives many thanks to his mom and friends for their continuing support. Thank you for supporting live theatre and the arts!

PAYTON VAN NORT (1st Assistant Stage Manager) is ecstatic to make her Tampa debut with this production. She is a recent graduate from Marietta College, having received a B.F.A. in Theatre Directing. Previous credits

include *Stratum: An Original Musical* (SM), *Love's Labor's Lost* (ASM), and *Spring Awakening* (ASM).

ROBERT HARLING (author) Robert Harling made his directorial debut with "The Evening Star" for Paramount, which he also wrote for the screen based on Larry McMurty's novel. "The Evening Star" reunited Shirley MacLaine and Jack Nicholson and co-stars Juliette Lewis, Bill Paxton, Scott Wolf, Miranda Richardson, and Marion Ross. "The Evening Star" is the continuation of one of the most beloved and acclaimed movies of our time, "Terms of Endearment." Before launching a successful stage and screenwriting career, Robert graduated from Tulane University School of Law, but instead of taking the bar exam, he opted to become an actor in New York. After years of productive work as an actor in voiceovers and commercials, Harling was inspired to write the highly acclaimed stage play *STEEL MAGNOLIAS*, which was based on events from his personal life. *STEEL MAGNOLIAS* continues to thrive in theatrical productions throughout the world. Immediately bridging a career from stage to screen, Harling adapted his original play into the popular film of the same title, which starred Sally Field, Julia Roberts, Shirley MacLaine, Olympia Dukakis, Dolly Parton, and Daryl Hannah. Over the years, Mr. Harling has become a much sought-after screenwriter: other credits, to name a few, include "Soapdish," which was based on Harling's acting experience and starred Sally Field, Whoopi Goldberg, and Robert Downey Jr., and "FIRST WIVES CLUB" for Paramount, starring Bette Midler, Goldie Hawn, and Diane Keaton.

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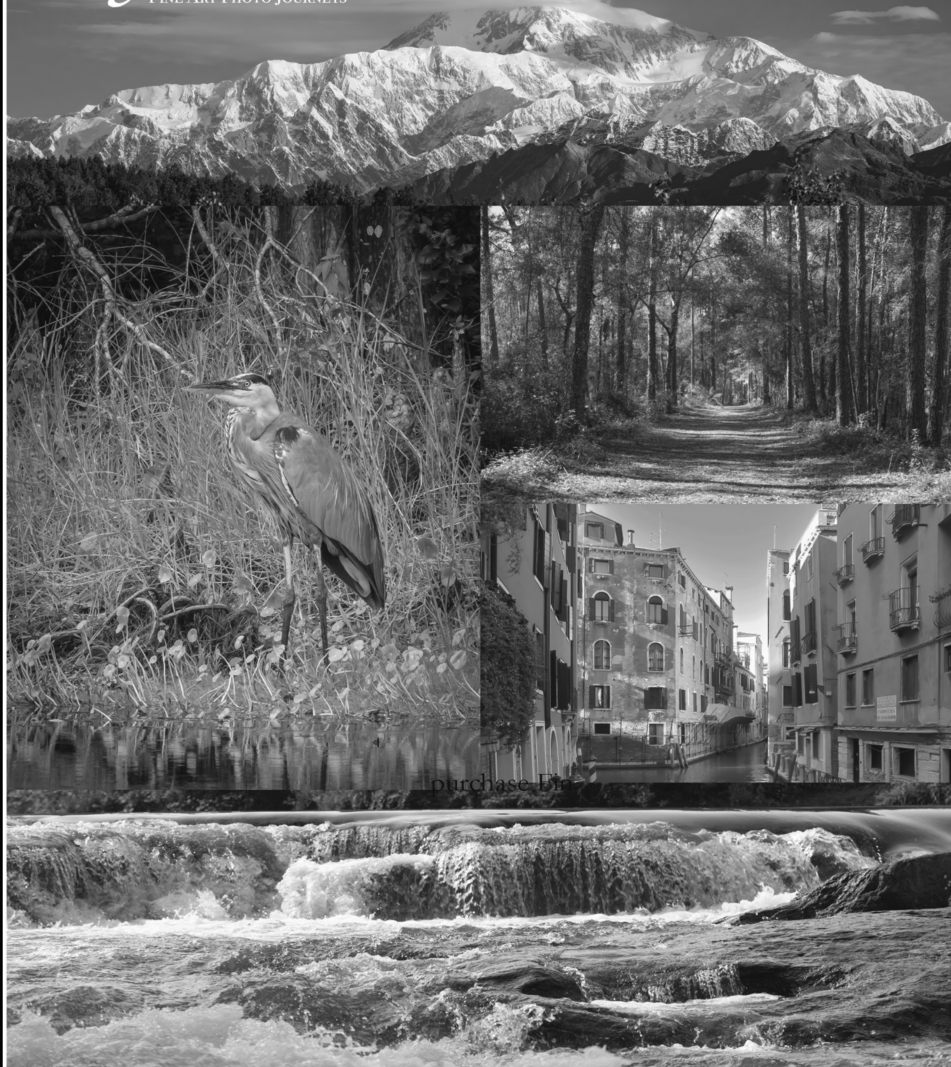
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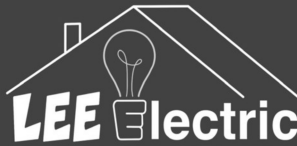
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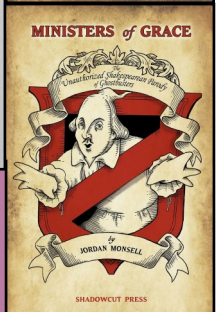
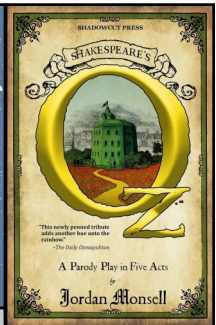
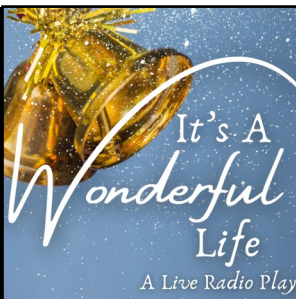
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Dec. 14-15, 2024: *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*

Adapted by JOE LANDRY | Playscripts, Inc.

Jan. 24-26: *Letterhead*

By SEBASTIAN HAGELSTEIN | Arrangement with the author

Feb. 8-9: *Shakespeare's Oz: A Parody Play in Five Acts*

By JORDAN MONSELL | Arrangement with the author

March 14-23: *Steel Magnolias*

By ROBERT HARLING | Dramatists Play Service

May 17-18: *Ministers of Grace:*

The Unauthorized Shakespearean Parody of Ghostbusters

By JORDAN MONSELL | Arrangement with the author

July 18-27: *Return to the Forbidden Planet*

By BOB CAROLTON | Concord Theatricals

Sept. 13-14: *Every Brilliant Thing*

By DUNCAN MACMILLAN with JONNY DONAHOE | Dramatists Play Service

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