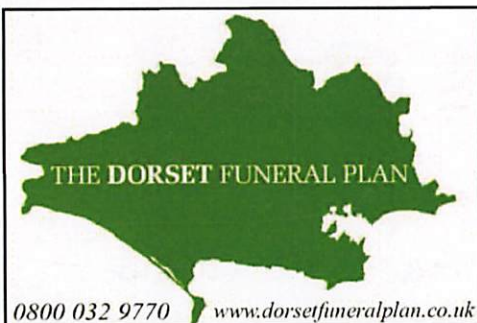


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STEEL

Magnolias

by Robert Harling
Directed by Boo Feltham

Maggie Steed writes specially
for Wimborne Drama

Wimborne Drama
22nd - 24th October 2009

Wimborne Drama's next production

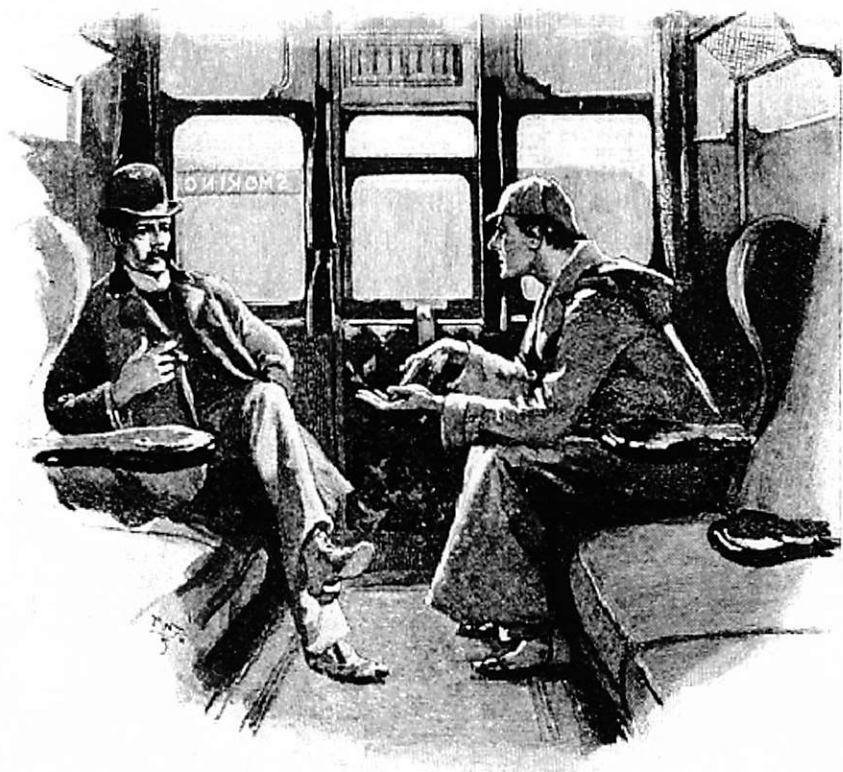
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Saturday Matinee

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Get in on the act...



Staging three productions a year, Wimborne Drama always gives a warm welcome to new members, experienced or not. Whatever is your inclination there is a place for you — acting, set designing and constructing, directing, property mastering, play-writing, makeup and hair-style designing, prompting, photography, poster designing and placing are just a few of the activities our members get up to. Our present production even required a little practical plumbing!

For those who'd rather be in the audience, Wimborne Drama Patrons enjoy advance notification of plays, priority booking service, a free ticket and programme for each production, an invitation for drinks and nibbles with the cast and crew after Friday night performances, a quarterly newsletter, and invitations to our other events throughout the year.

Get in touch with our Community Manager Boo, and drop in to one of our regular meetings on the last Thursday of each month.

01202 885659, e-mail: communitymanager@wimbornedrama.co.uk, or visit our website at: www.wimbornedrama.co.uk

Wimborne Drama *Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling.

Wimborne Drama is delighted to be returning to the Tivoli Theatre for their final production of 2009 with Robert Harling's touching drama "Steel Magnolias". The play is something of a counterpoint for the group in that its all female cast balances the all male cast of "Journey's End" that was produced to great critical acclaim in 2007.

Robert Harling was born in Louisiana in 1951 and "Steel Magnolias" remains his most famous work to date, although he has recently completed a sequel to the play, "Terms of Endearment".

The action of the play takes place in Truvy's Beauty salon – really more of a lean-to garage – in Chinquapin, Louisiana in the 1980s. Truvy (Carolyn Hewitt) dispenses shampoo and advice in her own inimitable, wise-cracking style with the help of her new assistant Annelle (Keely Campbell). Annelle's journey from shy, anxious newcomer, uncertain if she is still married, to a confident, partying woman is explored as the drama unfolds. Joining them in the beauty parlour are eccentric millionaire Miss Clairee Belcher (Chrissie Neal) and the local social leader M'Lynn (Trish Ruff). M'Lynn's daughter Shelby (Tracey Nicholls) is about to marry, and the play begins on the morning of her wedding to local man Jackson. Completing the line-up is the town's rich curmudgeon Ouiser Boudreaux (Jan Stevenson).

The play covers events over the next three years and the drama covers Shelby's decisions to have a child despite suffering from type one diabetes and the complications that arise from her decision. We focus on the camaraderie of these six strong Southern women as they gossip, needle and harangue each other through the best of times – and comfort and support each other through the worst.

The play was memorably filmed twenty years ago starring Shirley Maclaine, Sally Field, Dolly Parton and Olympia Dukakis, and provided an early starring role for Julia Roberts as Shelby. Unlike the film version, the play concentrates solely on the "Steel Magnolias" themselves – the six women survive without any visible interference from their men folk!

Director Boo Feltham is delighted to be in charge of "Steel Magnolias" – her debut in this role after several memorable performances onstage for the group over the past few years. She said:

"This play is a real group effort and it's a great opportunity for Wimborne Drama to go with an all female ensemble piece. The story is both funny and heart-warming, as well as providing moments of real pathos. I've got a fantastic cast to work with and it's always good to mix up the more established members with newer people. I do hope people enjoy the show as it is a great script and the cast are doing it proud".

Cast Notes...



Keely Campbell: I joined Wimborne Drama in February and Steel Magnolias will be my first ever speaking part. Unlike others who have tried and tested techniques to help them learn their lines, I didn't have any idea. I asked my fellow cast members for advice but everyone had a different approach that worked for them. In the end the help from my partner (and his hilarious female voice impression) in going over and over the lines with me finally had them sinking in...I hope!

When I auditioned for Steel Magnolias some people asked me if I had accent coaching to help with my American accent. I wish my answer could have been yes but unfortunately the embarrassing truth is... I have a serious addiction to American sitcoms that helped me perfect my American accent...

I had thought my one concern was going to be learning lines, but that was only until I realised I had to wash, dry and style hair whilst on stage... Truvy says, "I think we can trust Annelle to roll you up!" Well Annelle *might* be able to, but I'm not sure about me! Luckily though, we got Melanie onboard, a great hairdresser, and also my cousin, to help Carolyn (Truvy) and me to become the next Toni and Guy! Wish us luck... and pray the rollers stay in!



Carolyn Hewitt: I am playing the part of Truvy, made famous by Dolly Parton in the film. I would like to think that it is my acting ability which got me the part and not any other resemblances I may have to Dolly Parton. It is a long time since I took on a substantial role, usually preferring nice little cameos – maids and the like, so I admit to wondering how I got talked into this. Rehearsals have been hilarious, laughing at each other's lines and accents sometimes wandering round the world. I would like to apologise in advance to Tracey (Shelby) for any "interesting" hairstyles she may get on the night, and to thank my American friend Harry for not pulling too many faces when I practiced my accent on him.



Twentyone years ago I was offered the part of Truvy in "Steel Magnolias" in the West End. I had heard that there had been a film made of it and that my part had been played by Dolly Parton, a wonderful woman and a wonderful performer . So I was pleased at the offer but a bit bemused. I could see that it was a true and moving story with lots of laughs; what kept me awake at night though was that I had to play the part of an efficient hairdresser and do an immaculate hairstyle for a bride, flowers in the hair etc, eight times a week, on stage!!! The management seemed quite confident in me — I was quaking! My assistant and I were to go to the Vidal Sassoon Hairdressing School for a week and be given a crash course. I said yes and held my breath.

The day arrived and Janine Duvitsky and I arrived at the school. We didn't know each other but were joined at the hip by the end of the week. We were lucky to be taught by their top man Michael, and they were lucky that they kept us in a private room away from the other students because our language as we dropped combs and rollers and sprayed water all over the flowers was not the sort to be heard in a salon! It was exhausting as well... for five days we stood alone in front of gruesome plastic heads screwed to a table, learning how to wield a tail comb... not easy and dangerous around the eyes, do a traditional brick set — i.e. rollers on the centre of the head and also down the sides, and most important of all, the final "comb-out".

I had to learn the style that I was going to subject poor Joely Richardson's hair to with such regularity. It had to be good enough for her to say, "Perfect Truvy," on completion. This was achieved with difficulty at times and you could hear the tremor in her voice as she refused to look me in the eyes! However, despite collapsing trolleys of brushes and rollers and a few tears on occasions, Michael came up to me on the first night and whispered in my ear that, if I really *wanted* to, I COULD become a hairdresser. My cup overflowed!

Good luck to you all, but... *I shall be thinking particularly of the ones wielding the tail combs.*

Maggie Steed

Teasing Maggie Steed

Writing specially for Wimborne Drama, Maggie Steed shares memories of how she got tangled up with the first West End production of *Steel Magnolias*.



The Lyric Theatre, 1989

Truvy **Maggie Steed**
 Annelle **Janine Duvitsky**
 Clairee **Stephanie Cole**

Directed by Julia McKenzie

Ouiser **Jean Boht**
 Shelby **Joely Richardson**
 M'Lynn **Rosemary Harris**



Chrissie Neal: I joined Wimborne Drama so long ago, “why Jesus wasn’t even born,” (to borrow a line from my character “Miss Clairee”) – it is more than 20 years! In that time I have enjoyed working backstage and been given the opportunity to take on some wonderful roles on stage, with the ice-cold Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca* a particular favourite. By contrast, Clairee Belcher, the former first lady of Chinquapin parish, is a warm-hearted and dry-witted southern belle. Life appears a breeze for Clairee, although she has a tough inner resolve, coping with the loss of her husband of 49 years and proving to be a successful businesswoman. It has been a blast playing Clairee and working with “the girls”.



Tracey Nicholls: I have vivid memories of watching this film for the first time with my Mum and us both laughing and crying in equal measure! I honestly never thought I would have the opportunity to be in a production of it, and I am absolutely delighted to be playing Shelby. She is a great character – an independently-spirited young woman with a very warm heart who loves pink! I have really enjoyed playing out the relationship between Shelby and her mother, M'Lynn. It is obvious that they love each other to pieces but

there are inevitable rifts when Shelby’s independence and M'Lynn’s protectiveness collide. It has been an absolute joy rehearsing this play, there has been a lot of laughter and life has really imitated art in the mutual support and affection between the cast and crew. As to my favourite line – it would have to be, “I would rather have thirty minutes of wonderful, than a lifetime of nothing special.” I am very happy to say that being part of *Steel Magnolias* has been three months of “wonderful”!



(continued)

More Cast Notes...



Trish Ruff: After 14 years in musical theatre with only one previous minor excursion into 'legit', being offered the part of M'Lynn was exciting but was going to take me right out of my comfort zone. I was going to work with 'actORs'!

I was as nervous as Annelle on her first day at the salon as I walked into my first rehearsal but was immediately made welcome by my lovely 'daughter', Shelby, and have found it a delightful and educating experience to work with such a talented group of 'girls'. Though to find that to the younger ones the 80's is history to be read up about, whereas I still have clothes in my wardrobe from that era, was a bit of a shock!

I found discovering the character of M'Lynn a little difficult at first because she is so real and I was used to playing clearly defined characters, but the play is so beautifully written that the more we rehearsed the more it became obvious that she and I have a lot in common. I think that all mothers will empathise with M'Lynn and all daughters will recognise her.

My favourite line is not as sharply funny or poignant as many of the lines in the play, but as a teacher of many years standing and a mother to two daughters it rings very true, "I'm supposed to be the expert on behaviour and I can't seem to manage the people in my own family."

Oh, and just in case I forget this line, "Men are supposed to be made of steel or something," I thought I'd better put it in here because it's the only mention of steel in the play!

Janet Stevenson: I have been with Wimborne Drama for many years and have played a variety of roles. Ouiser Boudreaux is a good one to play. She is good fun, very determined and set in her ways. She has lived life to the full and can appear to be hard-hearted, but is really quite soft on the inside. She is obsessed with her dawg [dog] Rhett, and doing things her way. She has an ongoing feud with her neighbour regarding a tree. I hope you enjoy her as much as I have.



"I have no responsibility here whatsoever" is a tongue-in-cheek line from the film *A Few Good Men* and is spoken by Tom Cruise's assistant lawyer.

This springs to mind as I contemplate my role as Assistant Director for *Steel Magnolias*!

For those of you who have often thought, either as an actor from the stage or as a member of the audience, that a line should be spoken differently, a character portrayed in another manner, or that a move just should or should not be there, then Assistant Director (or even Director) could be for you.

Boo Feltham, your Director with *complete* responsibility, has created a moving, interesting and highly amusing portrayal of *Steel Magnolias*, and it has been my pleasure to assist her at rehearsals where possible and when needed. Having been a 'lone' director once before, I can truly extol the merits of having another person to bounce ideas off. Thank you for asking me, Boo.

I am scripting this halfway through rehearsals, and in particular following a hairdressing lesson for the cast. I sympathise. Hairdressing is to *Steel Magnolias*, as tap dancing is to *Stepping Out*, and trying to combine a new skill with reciting lines and making necessary moves, is not something to be taken lightly.

As the cast come to terms with and develop the 'oh so different' characters of these women, I have witnessed the play coming to life in front of me and my own particular favourite personality changes week by week. I hope you like them all.

Jan Bursby Assistant Director

I have been a member of Wimborne Drama Club for only a short time. I had belonged to the group when I was a young lad, when I started off as a call boy and just helping out back stage. Since I have re-joined I have become stage manger for this show.

Doing stage management for this show is great due to the small cast and the way it all comes together. For me the best part is that there are no big scene changes to worry about. I also really enjoy some of play's very funny lines.

I have worked on a number of shows, both professional and amateur, but I always feel at home with Wimborne Drama Club.

Matthew Gill Stage Manager



Directors' Notes



Hello and welcome to Wimborne Drama's production of *Steel Magnolias*. I hope you're sitting comfortably, and are ready to journey with us to Louisiana for the next couple of hours, where you can watch Truvy and her friends enjoy friendship, fun and good old fashioned gossip!

Wimborne Drama as a club is very encouraging to all its members to get involved in all aspects of theatre production, not just the acting, and so from very early on as a member of the club I often wondered what it would be like to direct a play. I decided that if I was

going to give it a go, my first shot would have to be with a play that meant something special to me.

I first saw *Steel Magnolias* in 1989 when my parents took me to see it in the West End. I remember being so amused and entertained by the women's banter and camaraderie, which was something I could relate to quite well, living as I did at the time in an all girls boarding school Monday to Friday. During the interval I sat and looked at the programme, and read that the play was a true story, written by Robert Harling, who was the brother of the character Shelby. For the second half of the play, the story took on a new meaning.

A few years later it was released as a film, and I enjoyed it every bit as much, although I was disappointed that there was no reference to the fact that it was based on a true story, and that these wonderful women really did exist.

So when toying with the idea of directing, and the necessity for a play that I could really care about, there was no better choice than this. I have been so fortunate to have been supported by such a wonderful team of people, in particular Jan Bursby who has assisted me with the directing, and obviously my six marvellous actresses, who have thrown their heart and soul into this production, not only having to cope with learning lines and remembering where to go and what to do, but also how to style hair in front of hundreds of people!

I hope I have done it justice, and I hope that you enjoy your snap shot of life in Truvy's Salon with the fine women of Chinquapin Parish.

Boo Feltham Director

Slivers



Playwright, Robert Harling (born 1951, Louisiana) based the story of "*Steel Magnolias*" on the life of his younger sister. Susan Harling had type one diabetes (the most severe form of the condition) and experienced complications after the birth of her child. *Steel Magnolias* began as a short story but Harling found the medium restrictive as it failed to provide a voice for his sister,

mother and the other women in their lives who shared with their family in the good as well as the bad times. Harling's six female characters assumed louder voices and their dialogues formed a full length play which more vividly portrayed the complexity of the relationships and emotions that existed between them. Harling felt it important to include the way the characters utilized humour and light-hearted conversations to assist them in coping with the seriousness of the underlying situations – something which he remembers his sister, Susan, doing during times of tension and difficulty. The play is dedicated to Susan as a "celebration of women".



In subsequent years Harling has concentrated on working as a screenwriter. His film screenplays include "*Soapdish*" (1991), "*The First Wives Club*" (1996) and "*Laws of Attraction*" (2004). He is currently working on the screenplay for the film version of "*Dallas*". He also wrote and directed the sequel to "*Terms of Endearment*", titled "*The Evening Star*". "*Steel Magnolias*" is by far his most successful and well-known work.



Robert Harling told his sister, how hard it was to be a writer in New York and have people consider his work. She commented on how she wished she could help him somehow, but she didn't know what she could do. Harling wrote "*Steel Magnolias*" in her honour, thereby making him an established and respected writer.



WIMBORNE DRAMA

Presents

Steel Magnolias

By Robert Harling

THE CAST

Annelle Dupuy-Desoto	KEELY CAMPBELL
Truvy Jones	CAROLYN HEWITT
Clairee Belcher	CHRISSIE NEAL
Shelby Eatenton-Latcherie	TRACEY NICHOLLS
M'Lynn Eatenton	TRISH RUFF
Ouiser Boudreaux	JAN STEVENSON

The action of the play centres around Truvy's beauty parlour in a converted car port, in Louisiana.

Act I Scene 1 Summer in the early 80's.

Act I Scene 2 December.

Act II Scene 1 June, eighteen months later.

WIMBORNE DRAMA

BACKSTAGE

DIRECTOR	BOO FELTHAM
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	JAN BURSBY
STAGE MANAGER	MATTHEW GILL
ASM	RICHARD NEAL
	MICHAELA SLATFORD
PROMPT	ROB CORDING
SET DESIGN	JACKSON ELLEN
SET CONSTRUCTION	MARK ELLEN
	COLIN PILE
PROPS	BARRY BAYNTON
COSTUMES	CAROLYN HEWITT AND CAST
CURL WRANGLER (hair)	MELANIE JEFFRIES
SOUND EFFECTS	PAUL HEWITT
TRANSPORT	STEVE SYMONDS
PHOTOGRAPHY	TONY FELTHAM

Thanks to:

- ♦ The Tivoli Theatre production team for lighting and technical assistance
- ♦ Members of Wimborne Drama for help with set construction, properties, programmes etc.

