



BETWEEN THE LINES
Taproot Theatre Company's
Subscriber Newsletter
Volume 28, Issue 1

1980s small-town Louisiana brought to life in Robert Harling's *Steel Magnolias*

*"I would rather have thirty minutes of wonderful
than a lifetime of nothing special."
Shelby in Steel Magnolias*

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

Phone:
206.781.9707

Email:
box@taproottheatre.org

Box Office Hours:
Tuesday - Saturday,
Noon - 5 pm

On performance days, the box
office phone is answered until
30 minutes prior to show time.

Tickets always
available online at
taproottheatre.org

Discounts are available for
groups of 8 or more by calling
206.781.9708 or by visiting
taproottheatre.org/
group-sales.

Thank you to our 2020
Jewell Mainstage
Season Supporters!



Verity
Credit
Union

Steel Magnolias is
sponsored in part by



BOOM! Drum fires another shot into the magnolia trees giving Ouiser's dog a nervous breakdown. Truvy's salon is buzzing as gossip and zingers fly between baby's breath and bouffants. Annelle is new and nervous which means things are getting a little poofy. Welcome to Chinquapin, Louisiana. Hold onto your rollers and grab your tissues for this hilariously heartwarming American classic.

"Harling has given his women sharp, funny dialogue... The play builds to a conclusion that is deeply moving." (NY Daily News). Perhaps best known for its film adaptation starring many Hollywood favorites, playwright Richard Harling wrote *Steel Magnolias* to come to terms with his sister's death. Moving between laughs and tears with the ease of a hair flip, his remembrance has touched audiences for decades.

Directed by **Marianne Savell** whose previous Taproot directing credits include *Arsenic and Old Lace* as well as several Taproot Theatre Company touring Christmas shows.

The cast includes **Cas Pruitt** (Tacoma Arts Live's *Sonya and Vanya* and *Masha and Spike*) as Truvy Jones, **Arika Matoba** (5th Ave/ACT's *Urinetown*) as Annelle Dupuy-Desoto, **Marlette Buchanan** (Seattle Opera's *Porgy and Bess*) as Clairee Belcher, **Melanie Hampton** (Taproot's *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*) as Shelby Eatenton-Latcherie, **April Poland** (Taproot's *Sweet Land*) as M'Lynn Eatenton, and **Kim Morris** (Taproot's *Arsenic and Old Lace*) as Ouiser Boudreaux.

The production team includes **Jocelyne Fowler**, costume design; **Amanda Sweger**, lighting design; **Mark Lund**, scenic and sound design; **Katt Greaser**, stage manager; **Emily Brown**, dramaturg; and **Marianna de Fazio**, dialect coach.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Previews: Jan 22 & 23 at 7:30pm | **Opening:** Jan 24 at 8:00pm
Running: Jan 22 - Feb 29 | **PWYC:** Jan 29 at 7:30pm

Show Times: Wed & Thu, 7:30 pm; Fri & Sat, 8:00 pm; Sat Matinee, 2:00 pm

Running Time: Approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes
with one 15-minute intermission.

Steel Magnolias is recommended for ages 12 and above.
Children under 5 are never admitted.

Actor Spotlight: The Cast of *Steel Magnolias* Share Hair Horror Stories



Everyone has that one terrible haircut they'll never forget.

We asked the cast of *Steel Magnolias* to describe their worst hair experience.

Left to Right: Melanie Hampton, Arika Matoba, Cas Pruitt and Marianne Savell

Melanie Hampton (Shelby) - One time, when I was a kid, my dad cut my bangs. It wasn't quite straight so he cut them a little more. They still weren't straight. He cut even more. And then some more. I looked and the mirror and laughed ... and then cried.

Arika Matoba (Annelle) - In middle school, a hairstylist told me she didn't know what to do with my hair—it was so "weird" and thick and heavy. I flipped through pages and pages of white women in a magazine she handed me. I finally picked a style and she butchered my cut. I went home feeling so ugly, I cried for hours, and I told my mom I wished I was white.

Cas Pruitt (Truvy) - I am actually a licensed cosmetologist so my hair experiences are a little different. I don't recall ever having anyone do something awful to my hair. However, I do remember a situation when I was going to Vidal Sassoon Cosmetology School in Santa Monica, California. I had just accomplished cutting a fabulous A-line bob, the client loved it (and she also loved the price of her discounted haircut—the perks of coming to a beauty school.) My instructor was a very unusual, eclectic teacher. It was the early 90s and "baby bangs" were a huge hit, at least they were for my very unusual, eclectic instructor. Upon completion of my awesome A-line bob, it was the instructors job to inspect the cut. Before I could say a word, she grabbed the front section of hair on the client and snipped her a fresh set of "baby bags." I stood drop-jawed and the client's eyes gushed with tears. No longer did she have a perfectly cut A-line bob. So sad.

Marianne Savell (Director) - I've always been adventurous with my hair, not afraid to take risks. One time I let my long time hairdresser do whatever they wanted with the following description: "rockstar hair." Oooooooo, boy. Let's just say that I was super happy when it grew out.

Next on the Jewell Mainstage: *Babette's Feast*

BABETTE'S FEAST

Directed by Scott Nolte
March 18—April 25

Crossing thousands of miles in search of asylum, Babette finds safety across the fjords in a tiny mountain village. But petty squabbles and personal slights render the pious villagers as frigid and unforgiving as their surroundings. In one radical act of generosity, Babette prepares a feast so lavish it awakens grace and transforms brittle hearts.

SINGLE TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

Subscribers get a \$7 discount on additional single ticket purchases to *Babette's Feast*.



Production Spotlight: Wig master, Dennis Milam Bencie

How did you decide to become a wig master?

I was a costume design major in college. Part of that experience was having to learn to do the hair and wigs for the shows I was designing. After a while, I realized I liked doing the wigs more than designing the show. In 1995, I landed an apprenticeship at Los Angeles Opera and I have been wiggling shows ever since.

What shows at Taproot Theatre have you built wigs for in the past?

I have done the wigs for *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Always... Patsy Cline*, *Bright Star* and *The Bishop's Wife: A Live Radio Play*.

What's the most exciting hair (or hairpiece) you've ever built?

I have done several wigs for *RuPaul's Drag Race* Winner of Season 5 Jinkx Monsoon. I did the blonde wig that she was crowned in during the finale. I helped her transition from a blond to her current orange signature color. My favorite wig, however, was one she wore for the *Drag Race* finale of season 8. Jinkx wanted a wig that was very tall, so I built a custom, hand-tied wig over a child's plastic sand bucket from Fred Meyer. I spent over 60 hours hand tying hair for this giant wig and it was only on TV for 18 seconds. No regrets. It is very exciting seeing your work on TV, if only briefly.

How did you build the wigs for this show?

There are 10 wigs in this production of *Steel Magnolias*. (This show has been on my bucket list to wig for many years). All of the wigs are synthetic. Some are brand new and some are older wigs from Taproot's wig stock. The trick is to style them and customize them so the actresses don't look like they are wearing a wig at all.

Do you have a favorite?

Shelby's hair is fun. She has three wigs: one we call "the stunt double" because the wig is rolled and styled (but not necessarily finished) onstage. This wig takes a beating. Her second wig is a perfect, finished version of her iconic long hairstyle. Shelby's third wig is a short hairstyle that is referenced in the storyline. I started with three wigs, exactly alike, and customizing them.

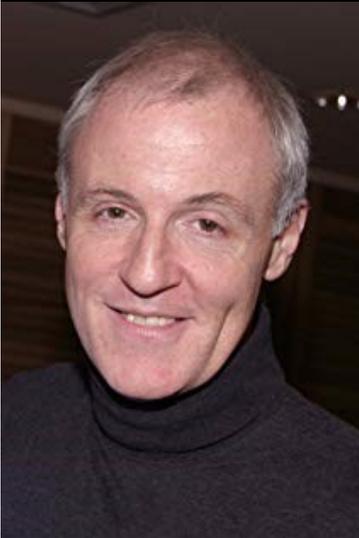
Which wig was the most difficult?

The toughest wig in *Steel Magnolias* is for the character of M'Lynn. In her first scene, she is getting her hair washed and set in rollers on stage in Truvy's salon. It would be very difficult to wash and set a wig on a stage as intimate as the one at Taproot. It would look fake. So we decided to use the actresses own hair for the wash and set scene. But for continuity in the show (so her hair looks perfect and beautiful every night), it is easier to wig her after the wash and set scene for the rest of the play. This actress' real hair color is a beautiful mix of dark brown, reddish brown and grey. It was a challenge creating a wig that actually matches her hair color closely.



A wig for the character M'Lynn in *Steel Magnolias* at Taproot Theatre. Wig design by Dennis Milam Bencie.

The Tragedy and Providence Behind the Writing of *Steel Magnolias*



Steel Magnolias playwright,
Robert Harling.

Photo retrieved from
<https://imdb.com/name/nm0363326/>

“What is art other than taking the pieces around you and re-forming them into some vision that satisfies you and enriches others?”

– Robert Harling, *Garden and Gun Magazine*, 2017

Robert Harling graduated from Tulane University Law School in 1977 and moved to New York to become an actor. He struggled for several years, occasionally booking a commercial here and there, and working as a ticket seller for Broadway shows. Back home in Natchitoches, Louisiana, Robert’s sister and best friend, Susan, cheered him on.

When Susan died in 1985 due to complications related to diabetes, Harling decided to write a short story to chronicle some of who she was, how she died and all that had meant to her family and her community. It was mainly just an attempt to grieve and to help his young nephew remember her. But very quickly, during the writing process, he realized that the short story format wasn’t properly capturing the way people in his hometown of Natchitoches talked, so he switched to writing dialogue. In less than ten days he had written the majority of what would become the play *Steel Magnolias*.

The story takes place in a beauty shop in the fictional town of Chinquapin, Louisiana and each of the characters in the play are based on women Harling knew growing up in Natchitoches. The character Shelby is based on Robert’s sister, Susan, and M’Lynn on his mother. The story follows some of the events that transpired during Susan’s illness.

“I thought somebody would find it in a drawer when they were throwing out my stuff after I was dead,” Harling told *Country Living Magazine* in 2017. “I had no illusions or delusions of grandeur.”

Harling showed his play to a friend to read, just hoping for a little feedback. She passed it along to an agent who then offered to produce it. *Steel Magnolias* debuted at the WPA Theatre in New York in March of 1987 and was an instant success. It transferred to the Off-Broadway Lucille Lortel Theatre where it ran for the next three years.

News spread quickly and very soon Harling had offers from Hollywood to purchase the rights for a screenplay. When acclaimed producer Ray Stark offered to film the story in Natchitoches, Harling was convinced and in 1989 the film version of *Steel Magnolias* debuted, featuring an all-star cast led by Sally Field as M’Lynn and Julia Roberts as Shelby. The play has gone on to become a modern American classic.

“It’s my sister’s story, I just happen to be the one who wrote it down,” Harling said.

Resources:

<https://gardenandgun.com/articles/the-interview-robert-harling/>;
<https://gardenandgun.com/feature/thirty-years-of-steel-magnolias/>;
<https://www.countryliving.com/life/entertainment/a44128/steel-magnolias-30th-anniversary/>



Marlette Buchanan, Melanie Hampton, Arika Matoba and Cas Pruitt in *Steel Magnolias* at Taproot Theatre.

2020 Subscriber Rewards Discounts



American Dance Institute

8001 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | americandanceinstitute.com

Discount: \$40 registration fee will be waived when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card at any of our three locations in Greenwood, Magnolia and Shoreline.

Dance classes taught with an emphasis on technique, sensitivity and respect.

Additional locations: Magnolia – 3116 W Smith St | Shoreline - 1240 NE 175th St



Angry Beaver - NEW!

8412 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | angrybeaverseattle.com

Discount: Show your Subscriber Rewards Card to receive 10% off food and drinks.

Seattle's original hockey bar, Angry Beaver is a great place to quench your poutine cravings and enjoy a great crafted cocktail. We boast the best French dip on the strip and amazing burgers. Specializing in everything hockey with a Canadian neighborhood warmth, we hope to see you soon.



FLYING BIKE
COOPERATIVE BREWERY

Flying Bike Cooperative Brewery

8570 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | flyingbike.coop

Discount: \$1 off your first beer when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card and a ticket stub from a recent show at Taproot Theatre.

Flying Bike is Washington's first co-op brewery. We strive to ensure our tasting room and delicious brews are accessible to all. We're also a cooperative, which means we are owned by our members (100%). Co-op membership also gets you some great deals, and once you're a member it lasts for life -- come be a part of this great community.

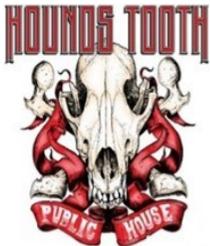


Greenwood Vision

133 N 85th St, Seattle, WA 98103 | greenwoodoptical.com

Discount: 10% off purchase of any pair of eyeglasses up to \$50 when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card. Cannot be combined with insurance plans or other discounts.

An optical office providing exams, contact lenses and eyewear.



Hounds Tooth Public House

8551 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | houndstoothpublic.com

Discount: 10% off all purchases when using your Subscriber Rewards Card. Cannot combine with other discounts.

Consider Hounds Tooth Public House the next time you're on the block. A bar with something for everyone! Great food, stellar staff, full screen projector, multiple TVs for sports and fully equipped pinball guaranteed. Weekly tournament Wednesday, Thursday Trivia and sports daily.



LADYWELL'S
VITALITY SPA & SAUNA

Ladywell's Vitality Spa & Sauna

8538 1st Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98177 | ladywellspa.com

Discount: 10% off entry when you present your Subscriber Rewards Card.

We are a woman's hydrotherapy facility. We have three different heated tubs, (a hot tub, tepid tub and a cold plunge) and three different heated saunas. (A steam room, Cedar Sauna and a Pink Himalayan infrared salt room).



The Lodge Sports Grille - NEW!

8501 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98133 | thelodgesportsgrille.com

Discount: Show your Subscriber Rewards Card for 10% off your total tab.

Upscale locally-owned sports bar in the heart of Greenwood, 48 beers on tap and great food.

2020 Subscriber Rewards Discounts



Luna Azul Latin Cuisine

8552 1/2 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | lunaazulseattle.com

Discount: 10% off when you use your Subscriber Rewards Card.

Luna Azul has high quality food and a competitively priced menu to provide options for any need. We offer fresh, local and exclusive build-your-own menu options. We are passionate about quality food so we use organic and sustainable meat, dairy and produce whenever possible.

Luso Food and Wine

8218 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | lusoseattle.com

Discount: Special pricing when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card.

Wine Tasting: \$10 Wednesday – Saturday, 3pm – 6pm; 2 white, 2 red and 2 fortified wines. Lunch: Two menu items for \$10, Friday – Saturday, 11am – 3pm.

Dinner: One item on the menu for \$12, Wednesday – Thursday, 6pm – 9pm.

A small corner of Portugal in the heart of Greenwood. Welcoming everyone to experience some tranquil time over a glass of wine and some delicious food.



Modern Japanese Cuisine

6108 Phinney Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | modern-seattle.com

Discount: 10% off both lunch and dinner when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card. No discount on happy hour items.

We are a Japanese cuisine and desserts restaurant. We serve Japanese comfort food, sushi, curry, noodle, desserts, sake and beer.

The Olive and Grape

8516 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | theoliveandgrape.com

Discount: 10% discount off your bill when you present your Subscriber Rewards Card.

Traditional Italian and Turkish grill.



Truffle Queen

1524 Pike Place Seattle, WA 98101 | trufflequeen.com

Discount: \$8 Wine Tasting and \$5 Pours (Normally \$10 each) when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card.

Gourmet specialty foods and wine located in the Pike Place Market.



Whole Life Yoga - NEW!

8551 Greenwood Ave N, Suite 2, Seattle, WA 98103 | wholelifeyoga.com

15% off any class pass package or series class purchase when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card.

Whole Life Yoga is a community-focused yoga studio. Our goal is to make yoga available and accessible to all people who could benefit from it. Our approach to yoga is highly adaptable, meditative and coordinates movement with the breath for a uniquely healing practice.



Windy City Pie - NEW!

5918 Phinney Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 | windycitypie.com

Discount: 10% off dine-in when Subscriber Rewards Card is shown. Not to be combined with any other discounts.

Windy City Pie is bringing some of the flavor of the Midwest to Seattle with Chicago-style pan deep-dish pizza. We're not a clone of any particular pizza in or around Chicago but we offer a pan style pizza that looks to new ingredients and techniques while respecting its traditions.

