



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steel Magnolias

to open at the

Covina Center for the Performing Arts

(August 21, 2009): The Covina Center for the Performing Arts is proud to announce a brand new production of Robert Harling's acclaimed exploration of the rich charm and engaging idiosyncrasies of Southern womanhood, *Steel Magnolias*. *Steel Magnolias* will open September 11 and run through October 11, with performances on Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees.

Eve Himmelheber makes her CCPA debut as M'Lynn, the steely matriarch who does everything she can to protect her daughter Shelby, played by another CCPA newcomer, Amie Bjorklund. In a remarkable coincidence, Eve, who is a professor of musical theatre at CSU Fullerton, will be playing the mother to Amie's Shelby. Amie graduated from CSU Fullerton with a degree in Musical Theatre.

The rest of the six-woman cast is rounded out by Ann Thomas, who makes her **CCPA** debut as Ouiser. Ann has a long affiliation with the Grove Theatre in Upland, California; Wendy Friedman, who plays Truvy, the owner of the beauty salon where the main action of the play takes place, returns to the **CCPA** to reprise the role of Truvy, which she last performed at **CCPA** in 2002; Melissa Banks will play Annelle, the newcomer to town. Melissa, who hails from Louisville, Kentucky, makes her **CCPA** debut in *Steel Magnolias*; Jill Gerber, a **CCPA** regular, appears as Clairee. Most recently, Jill was the director of the Young Performers Institute at **CCPA**; and Lila Bassier will understudy Shelby for two performances while Amie Bjorklund is running a marathon in support of Acting Like Marathoners. Lila makes her **CCPA** debut with her CSU Fullerton colleagues.

Steel Magnolias is directed by veteran stage director C. Mack Gilliland. Most recently, Gilliland directed *Wait Until Dark* at **CCPA**. The production staff includes Barbara Masters, Associate Director; Retha Champion, Producer; Angelo Collado, Set Designer; John Prisk, Lighting Designer; Russ Griffin, Sound Designer; Liz Dreisbach, Costume Designer.

Steel Magnolias is the third mainstage production of **CCPA**'s 2009 season, which will conclude with *A Christmas Carol* in December. The next special events production of the season will be *Latinologues*[™] an award winning, collection of comedic and poignant monologues about the Latino experience in America. *Latinologues* contains mature content and is not suitable for audience members under the age

of 17. Finally, the last special event of the season will be a concert version of *HMS Pinafore*, directed by last season's Ali England (*Gypsy*) with musical conductor Robert Brandzel.

Steel Magnolias will open on September 11 and run through October 11, with performances on Friday and Saturday evenings at 8 pm and Sunday matinees at 2 pm.

Tickets are available online or through the box office. All seats are \$34.00.

Call 626.331.8133 box office for tickets.

Contact the director to arrange interviews with the cast and preview tickets.