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**GUTHRIE THEATER PRESENTS THE TENDERHEARTED FAVORITE *STEEL MAGNOLIAS*
FEATURING AN ALL-FEMALE CAST, DIRECTOR AND DESIGN TEAM**

**Previews begin Saturday, October 26; Opening on Friday, November 1;
Playing through Sunday, December 15 on the McGuire Proscenium Stage**

(Minneapolis/St. Paul) — The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) today announced casting for the beloved comedy ***Steel Magnolias***, written by **Robert Harling** and directed by **Lisa Rothe**, who is making her Guthrie mainstage debut. Rothe has assembled an all-female design team to complement the strong ensemble cast featuring **Nicole King, Melissa Maxwell, Adelin Phelps, Austene Van, Amy Van Nostrand** and **Sally Wingert**. The play explores the power of multigenerational relationships within the walls of Truvy's salon, where the play's women laugh, grieve and share their stories.

Steel Magnolias will run October 26 – December 15, 2019, on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. Single tickets start at \$15 for preview performances (October 26–31), and regular tickets start at \$25. Tickets are on sale now through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free) or online at guthrietheater.org. Post-play discussions and access services (ASL-interpreted, audio-described and open-captioned performances) are available on select dates and by request.

Truvy's salon is Chinquapin, Louisiana's go-to place for a beauty fix with a hearty side of gossip. Along with her overeager assistant Annelle, Truvy pampers her small-town clients with hairdos, manicures and all kinds of unsolicited advice. Anybody who's anybody is a regular: There's the doting M'Lynn and her soon-to-be-married daughter Shelby, the moody Ouiser and the well-to-do widow Clairee. Through witty banter and wisecracks, this hodgepodge group of women form friendships as strong as steel, which they are forced to lean on when tragedy strikes.

Harling is a native of Natchitoches, Louisiana, and based M'Lynn and Shelby on his own mother and sister. Deeply impressed by how the community of women around him pulled together to support his family after his sister's death, Harling wrote *Steel Magnolias*, his debut play. *Steel Magnolias* premiered off-Broadway in 1987, and Harling adapted the play for the 1989 film of the same name starring Olympia Dukakis, Sally Field, Daryl Hannah, Shirley MacLaine, Dolly Parton and Julia Roberts. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the iconic film's release.

The play is nostalgically set in the 1980s and takes place in one location — Truvy's salon — which is a converted carport next to her home. Rothe describes the salon as a sacred, transcendent space and a sanctuary for this group of women. At first rehearsal, Rothe shared, "I remember the first time I went to a hair salon with my grandmother and aunt. I was amazed by all the unfamiliar hair accoutrements, but the energy was so familiar. There were so many women talking, laughing and sharing. It was a warm and safe space."

Rothe added, "In our story, Truvy creates that same environment in order for these women to take care of themselves and share their stories — stories they can't share anywhere else. It's a space where they feel free to confess their loves, losses, hopes and regrets. And we're privy to their intimate stories and private moments."

The cast of *Steel Magnolias* includes **Nicole King** (Guthrie: debut) as Shelby, **Melissa Maxwell** (Guthrie: debut) as M'Lynn, **Adelin Phelps** (Guthrie: debut) as Annelle, **Austene Van** (Guthrie: *Familiar, Trouble in Mind, Disgraced*) as Truvy, **Amy Van Nostrand** (Guthrie: *A View From the Bridge, Six Degrees of Separation*) as Clairee and **Sally Wingert** (Guthrie: *Noises Off, Blithe Spirit, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*) as Ouiser.

The creative team for *Steel Magnolias* includes **Lisa Rothe** (director), **Narelle Sissons** (scenic designer), **Kara Harmon** (costume designer), **Cat Tate Starmer** (lighting designer), **Jane Shaw** (sound designer/composer), **Carla Steen** (dramaturg), **Jill Walmsley Zager** (resident voice coach), **Jason Clusman** (stage manager), **Katie Hawkinson** (assistant stage manager), **Jamie J. Kranz** (assistant stage manager) and **Laura Leffler** (assistant director).

Robert Harling (playwright) is an actor, playwright, screenwriter and director who was born in Natchitoches, Louisiana. He graduated from Tulane University School of Law, but opted to become an actor instead of taking the bar exam. After successfully working in voiceovers and commercials, Harling was inspired to write the highly acclaimed stage play *Steel Magnolias* based on his mother and sister. The play premiered off-Broadway in 1987, and Harling bridged his career from stage to screen by adapting his original play into the popular 1989 film of the same title. Harling continues to be a sought-after screenwriter whose credits include *Soapdish, The First Wives Club, Laws of Attraction* and *The Evening Star*, which he also directed.

Lisa Rothe (director) is a New York City-based freelance theater director, coach and educator. Most recently, her production of *Hold These Truths* by Jeanne Sakata won three Theatre Bay Area Awards for the Tony Award-winning TheatreWorks, including Outstanding Direction of a Play and Outstanding Production of a Play. Rothe was also nominated for SDCF's Joe A. Callaway Award for Direction. She

has recently directed at Kansas City Repertory Theatre (*Fun Home*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), Indiana Repertory Theatre, Irish Repertory Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Two River Theater, People's Light and PlayMakers Repertory Company. Rothe is the director of new works at Kansas City Repertory Theatre, co-artistic director of The Actors' Center, recent co-president of the League of Professional Theatre Women, Usual Suspect with New York Theatre Workshop, member of the National Theatre Conference and former Drama League and Fox Fellow.

Rothe is a graduate of NYU's Graduate Acting program and Directors Lab, and she has taught and directed at NYU, Yale School of Drama, The Juilliard School, Queens College and Chautauqua Conservatory. For more than five years, Rothe was the director of global exchange at The Lark, where she provided expanded opportunities for playwrights with a focus on advancing new work to production nationally and globally. www.lisarothe.com.

Related events for the Guthrie Theater's production of *Steel Magnolias*:

***Steel Magnolias* Hair Salon**

Monday, November 11, 7:30–9:30 p.m. on the McGuire Proscenium Stage

Inspired by the world of *Steel Magnolias*, the Guthrie will host an evening of community conversation that explores hair as a historical, cultural and personal-yet-universal human obsession. Local hair experts and members of the drag community will share stories, demonstrate techniques and celebrate all things hair and beauty.

The event is free to the public, but general admission ticket reservations are required through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free) or [online](#).

***Steel Magnolias* Relaxed Performance**

Sunday, November 24 at 4 p.m. on the McGuire Proscenium Stage

The first relaxed performance of the 2019–2020 Season is *Steel Magnolias*. Relaxed performances are designed for patrons, families and students who may benefit from a more relaxed and judgment-free theatergoing experience. This relaxed performance is sponsored by Target.

Single tickets are \$29 for adults and \$15 for students. Tickets are on sale now through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free) or online at www.guthrietheater.org/relaxed.

The Guthrie Theater's production of *Steel Magnolias* is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

THE GUTHRIE THEATER (Joseph Haj, artistic director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. The Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance, serving nearly 400,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. guthrietheater.org

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