

The Sappy Critic

Reviewing, Promoting, and Loving Cincinnati Theater

20 HOURS AGO NOVEMBER 10, 2015 NOVEMBER 10, 2015 KIRK SHEPPARD

REVIEW: Steel Magnolias

As many of you know, my sister unexpectedly passed away last month. So I'm not sure I will be winning any Son-of-the-Year Awards for taking my mother to see **STEEL MAGNOLIAS** at Human Race Theatre in downtown Dayton yesterday.

For those of you who've been living under a rock for the last 30 years, **STEEL MAGNOLIAS** is the story of Shelby, a diabetic, and her tragic end way too soon. Her mother, M'Lynn, grieves along with her best friends who all hang out at Truvy's salon.

I forgot how it ended . . . I know, not the smoothest move ever.

Yet, Mom and I both thought the show was exceptional. It's a brilliant piece of writing, I've always thought that. But this dynamic cast, the time-perfect set, and the energy of the production all works together for a terrific show.

Christine Brunner is quite believable as Truvy, the bubbly salon owner. She sets the tone right from the outset as the kind of warm, loving woman who cares about her clients and the community. Maretta Zilic ("Annelle") is appropriately guarded and anxious but sympathetic and likeable. Patricia Linhart plays "Clairee" with class and grace. It's easy to see why the town loves her so much; Linhart's own wicked sense of humor shines through in her characterization.

Shelby is a little tough to love at first; she's a little full of herself but it is her wedding day. Julia Geisler, though, does a nice job of softening her and morphing into a strong but sympathetic character as that first scene progresses. And of course we get it once we understand her story; her wonderful mother, M'Lynn (played by the marvelous Carolyn Popp) has protected her all her life and now she's ready to do things her way. The first act really picks up with Caitlyn Larsen shows up. Her "Ouiser" is lively, eccentric, and laugh out loud funny.

The costumes by Janet G. Powell are perfect for the tone set by director Heather N. Powell. The set by Eric Moore reminds me of the kind of place my mom used to go to get her hair done when I was a kid in the 80s. All the tech supports the fine company. This is a very, very good production.

STEEL MAGNOLIAS is a classic and when it's produced this well it will always remain that way. Both of us – my Mom and I – were thoroughly entertained and moved. I just wished I prepared her better for

how it ended. (Though, honestly, she was totally fine; I'm not completely the worst son ever.)

Human Race Theatre's STEEL MAGNOLIAS plays through November 29th at The Loft Theatre in Downtown Dayton. Click [here](http://humanracetheatre.org/1516/steel-magnolias/whoswho.php#whoswho) (<http://humanracetheatre.org/1516/steel-magnolias/whoswho.php#whoswho>) for more information.

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 **HUMAN RACE THEATRE**  **PATRICIA LINHART**  **STEEL MAGNOLIAS**

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