



Steel Magnolia

Robert Harling

Life

HE WAS BORN IN 1951 IN DOTHAN, ALABAMA, ONE OF THREE CHILDREN OF ROBERT M. HARLING JR (1923–2019) AND MARGARET JONES HARLING (1923–2013). HE GRADUATED FROM NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY IN NATCHITOCHEs, LOUISIANA AND OBTAINED A JURIS DOCTOR FROM TULANE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL IN NEW ORLEANS. WHILE IN LAW SCHOOL, HE SANG IN A BAND WHICH PERFORMED IN NEW ORLEANS ON WEEKENDS.

HOWEVER, HARLING NEVER USED HIS LEGAL EDUCATION: SKIPPING THE BAR EXAM, HE INSTEAD MOVED TO NEW YORK CITY TO BECOME AN ACTOR, AUDITIONING FOR BIT PARTS IN PLAYS AND TELEVISION COMMERCIALS AS WELL AS WORKING AS A TICKET SELLER FOR BROADWAY SHOWS.

AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS YOUNGER SISTER, SUSAN, IN 1985 DUE TO DIABETES, HARLING WROTE A SHORT STORY AND ADAPTED IT INTO THE PLAY STEEL MAGNOLIAS, WHICH WAS PRODUCED OFF-BROADWAY IN 1987 TO GREAT ACCLAIM AND WAS TRANSLATED INTO 17 LANGUAGES.

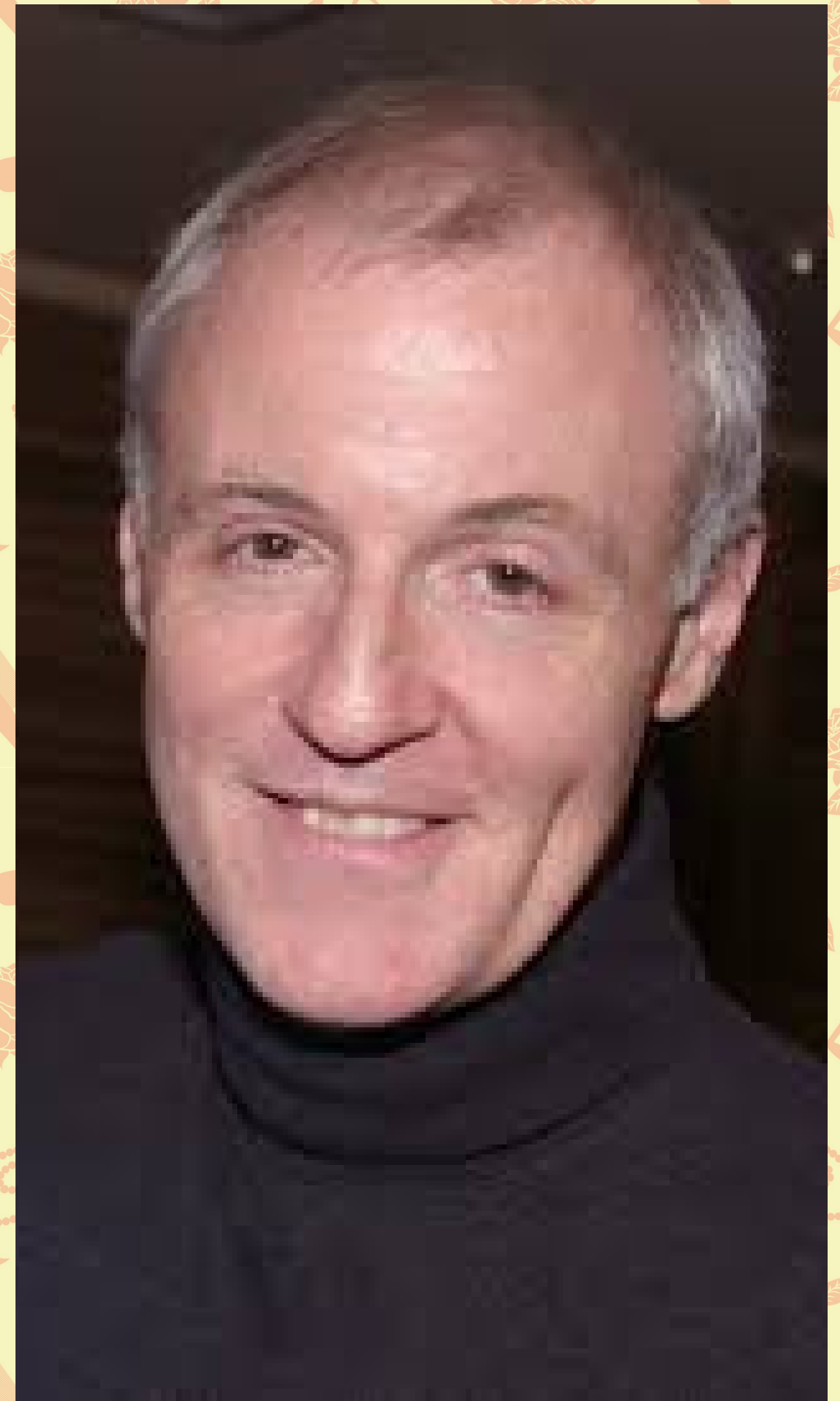
HARLING ALSO WROTE THE SCREENPLAY FOR THE FILM VERSION OF THE PLAY THAT WAS PRODUCED IN 1989. HE PLAYED A SMALL ROLE IN THE FILM AS A MINISTER.

HARLING WROTE MORE SCREENPLAYS: SOAPDISH (1991), THE FIRST WIVES CLUB (1996), AND LAWS OF ATTRACTION (2004); HE ALSO WORKED AS AN UNCREDITED SCRIPT DOCTOR ON A NUMBER OF FILMS.

HARLING ALSO WROTE AND DIRECTED THE SEQUEL TO TERMS OF ENDEARMENT TITLED THE EVENING STAR (1996).

IN THE SPRING OF 2012, HE SERVED AS WRITER AND PRODUCER OF THE TV SHOW GCB. IN THE SAME YEAR, IT WAS REPORTED THAT HARLING WAS ADAPTING SOAPDISH INTO A MUSICAL.

HE IS PRESBYTERIAN AND OPENLY GAY. HE OWNS THE OAKLAWN PLANTATION IN NATCHITOCHEs, LOUISIANA.



Works

WRITER

- 1989 STEEL MAGNOLIAS
- 1990 STEEL MAGNOLIAS (TV PILOT)
- 1991 SOAPDISH
- 1992 COIFFURE POUR DAMES
- 1996 THE FIRST WIVES CLUB
- 1996 THE EVENING STAR
- 2004 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
- 2012 GCB

PRODUCER

- 1997 A SMILE LIKE YOURS
- 2012 GCB

DIRECTOR

- 1996 THE EVENING STAR

Production History

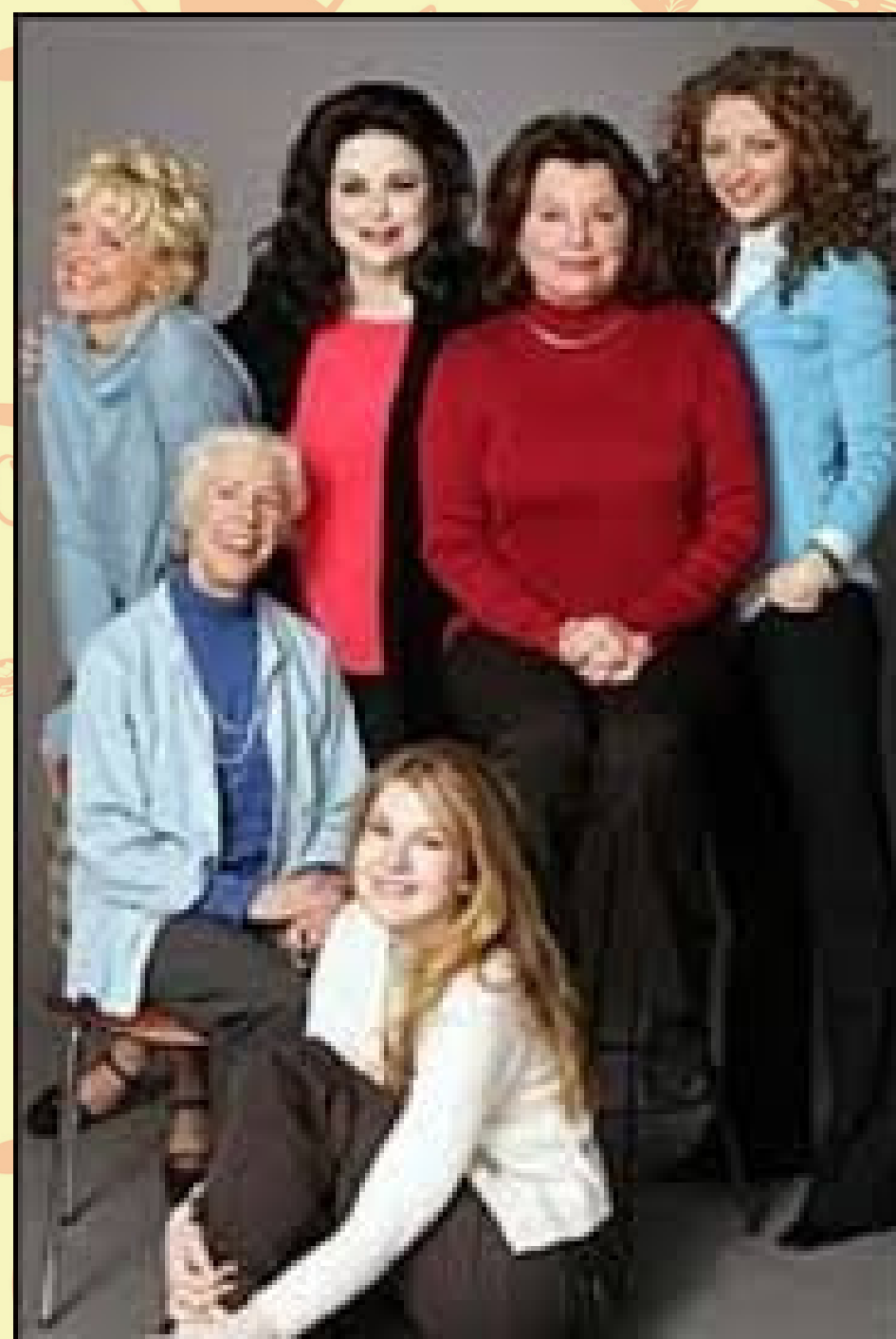
US Productions

THE PLAY ORIGINALLY OPENED OFF-BROADWAY (WITH ONE SET AND AN ALL-FEMALE CAST ALTHOUGH THE VOICE OF A MALE DJ) ON THE RADIO IS INTERMITTENT DURING THE PLAY WITH ALL MALE "CHARACTERS" REFERENCED ONLY THROUGH DIALOGUE) AT THE WPA THEATRE, IN NEW YORK CITY, ON MARCH 28, 1987, WITH BLANCHE BAKER, ROSEMARY PRINZ, MARY FOGARTY, KATE WILKINSON, MARGO MARTINDALE, CONSTANCE SHULMAN AS THE CAST AND PAMELA BERLIN AS DIRECTOR.

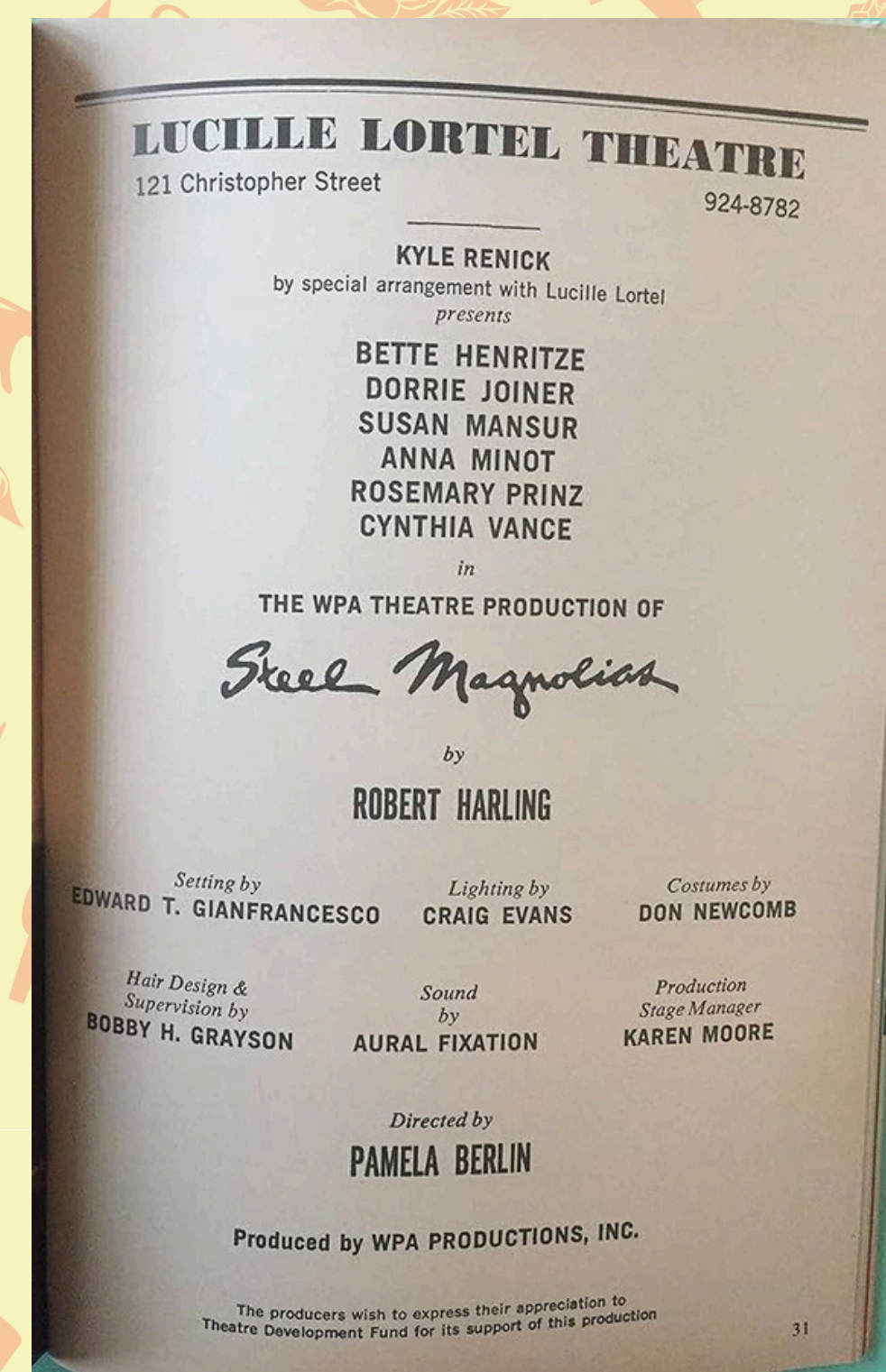
THE PRODUCTION TRANSFERRED TO THE LUCILLE LORTEL THEATRE ON JUNE 19, 1987, AND CLOSED ON FEBRUARY 25, 1990 AFTER 1,126 PERFORMANCES. REPLACEMENTS DURING THE ORIGINAL OFF-BROADWAY RUN INCLUDED ANNE PITONIAK, BETTE HENRITZE, RITA GARDNER, MAEVE MCGUIRE, AND STACY RAY.

A U.S. NATIONAL TOUR WAS LAUNCHED IN 1989. MARION ROSS JOINED THE TOUR AS CLAIREE LATE IN THE RUN. THE PLAY MADE ITS BROADWAY DEBUT IN 2005 AND OPENED AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE, IN PREVIEWS STARTING ON MARCH 15, AND OFFICIALLY OPENED APRIL 4, AND CLOSED ON JULY 31, 2005, AFTER 23 PREVIEWS AND 136 PERFORMANCES. CAST INCLUDED REBECCA GAYHEART, CHRISTINE EBERSOLE, MARSHA MASON, FRANCES STERNHAGEN, DELTA BURKE, AND LILY RABE. DIRECTED BY JASON MOORE.

GUTHRIE THEATER DID A PRODUCTION FROM OCTOBER 26 TO DECEMBER 15, 2019 DIRECTED BY LISA ROTHE.



2005 Broadway
Cast



1990 Cast
Playbill



Nicole Kidman in the
1988 Australian
Production



2012 Irish Cast

UK Productions

THE PREMIERE UK PRODUCTION OPENED IN THE WEST END IN MARCH 1989 AT THE LYRIC THEATRE, DIRECTED BY JULIA MCKENZIE. IT RETURNED TO THE WEST END FOR A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT AT THE WESTMINSTER THEATRE MARCH 30-APRIL 9, 1990, IN A PRODUCTION MOUNTED BY ROSE BRUFORD COLLEGE. A TOUR OF THE SHOW OPENED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL BATH ON APRIL 2, 2012, AND WAS SCHEDULED TO PLAY AT TEN THEATRES INCLUDING THE RICHMOND THEATRE IN LONDON DURING AN ELEVEN-WEEK RUN. IT WAS DIRECTED BY DAVID GILMORE.

International Productions

- AUSTRALIA: NICOLE KIDMAN MADE HER PROFESSIONAL STAGE DEBUT IN THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTION AS SHELBY. THE SHOW OPENED 18 MAY 1988 IN THE YORK THEATRE AT SYDNEY'S SEYMOUR CENTRE AND WENT ON TO PLAY MELBOURNE'S ATHENAEUM THEATRE. THE CAST ALSO INCLUDED NANCYE HAYES, MAGGIE DENCE, MELISSA JAFFER, GENEVIEVE LEMON, PAT McDONALD, AND PETER SNOOK.
- FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND: IN LATE 2023, THE MALANDA THEATRE COMPANY IN FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND RUN THE SHOW WITH HUGE SUCCESS, WITH MARKY BAKER DIRECTING AND FELICITY HUSTON PRODUCING, AND AGAIN IN AUGUST 2024 WITH MARKY BAKER DIRECTING AGAIN AND CHRIS DAVEY PRODUCING. THE CAST INCLUDED JEAN THOMAS, BUCKLEY WATSON, NICOLA SALISBURY-FALKNER, KAITLEN ADAMS, JENNIFER MUsETTI, AND LOUISA CROSSLE.
- IRELAND: STAGED AT THE GAITY THEATRE, DUBLIN ON SEPTEMBER 11-22, 2012, DIRECTED BY BEN BARNES, AND ON COUNTRY-WIDE TOUR UNTIL OCTOBER 19 THE SAME YEAR. THE CAST INCLUDED MISCHA BARTON AND ANNE CHARLESTON.
- FRANCE: COIFFURE ET CONFIDENCES, THE FRENCH-LANGUAGE ADAPTATION BY DIDIER CARON DIRECTED BY DOMINIQUE GUILLO, PREMIERED IN PARIS AT THE THÉÂTRE MICHEL IN OCTOBER 2014. AFTER THREE SUCCESSFUL RUNS IN PARIS AND MULTIPLE NATIONWIDE TOURS, ITS FINAL PERFORMANCE, ATTENDED BY ROBERT HARLING, WAS FILMED ON JUNE 12, 2017 AND RELEASED ON THE FRENCH CHANNEL 8 A FEW MONTHS LATER. CAST: THÉRÈSE (TRUVY) - MARIE-HÉLÈNE LENTINI / ISABELLE FERRON, JEANNE (M'LYNN) - ASTRID VEILLON / ÉLISABETH VITALI / ANNE RICHARD, MAGALIE (SHELBY) - LÉA FRANÇOIS, AGNÈS (ANNELLE) - SANDRINE LE BERRE, CLAIRE (CLAIREE) - ISABELLE TANAKIL / ISABELLE FERRON / ÉLISABETH BUFFET, ODETTE (OUISER) - BRIGITTE FAURE
- JAPAN: STAGED BY THE HAIYUZA THEATRE COMPANY ON NOVEMBER 14-25, 2007, IN TOKYO, TRANSLATED AND DIRECTED BY HAJIME MORI. CAST: MAYUKO AoyAMA AS TRUVY, KAORU INOUE AS ANNELLE, MAYUMI KATAYAM AS CLAIREE, MIDORI ANDO AS SHELBY, ATSUKO KAWAGUCHI AS M'LYNN AND MINAE AS OUISER.
- POLAND: IT PREMIERED AT THE ALEKSANDRA WEGIERKI DRAMATIC THEATRE IN BIALYSTOK ON APRIL 14, 1992. JEAN KORF WAS THE DIRECTOR AND THE PLAY WAS TRANSLATED BY CATHERINE PEEBLES AND ANDRZEJ JAKIMIEC. IT WAS ORGANIZED WITH HELP FROM THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES, WARSAW, ESPECIALLY THE CULTURAL ATTACHE, BRUCE BYERS.
- ON MARCH 29, 2017, THE U.S. EMBASSY WARSAW HELD TWO ENGLISH-LANGUAGE STAGED READINGS AT TEATR POLSKI ARNOLD SZYFMAN THEATRE IN WARSAW AS THE CAPSTONE TO ITS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH PROGRAMMING. THE PRODUCTION WAS DIRECTED BY DEPUTY PRESS ATTACHE STEPHEN E. DREIKORN AND FEATURED AN ALL-EMBASSY EMPLOYEE CAST CONSISTING OF BOTH AMERICAN AND POLISH EMPLOYEES. POLISH DIRECTOR AND ACTOR ANDRZEJ SEWERYN SPOKE BEFORE ONE OF THE PERFORMANCES AND CALLED THE EMBASSY'S PRODUCTION A "GREAT INITIATIVE".
- SWEDEN: PREMIERED ON NOVEMBER 16, 2008 AT VASATEATERN IN STOCKHOLM (WITH ROBERT HARLING IN ATTENDANCE) TITLED "BLOMMOR AV STÅL". IT WAS DIRECTED BY EMMA BUCHT AND TRANSLATED BY KLAS ÖSTERGREN AND EDWARD AF SILLÉN. THE CAST: CECILIA NILSSON AS TRUVY, PERNILLA AUGUST AS M'LYNN, MELINDA KINNAMAN AS SHELBY, SUZANNE REUTER AS OUISER, LINDA ULVAEUS AS ANNELLE AND GUNILLA NYROOS AS CLAIREE.

Screen Adaptations

1989 Film

STEEL MAGNOLIAS IS A 1989 AMERICAN COMEDY DRAMA FILM DIRECTED BY HERBERT ROSS AND STARRING SALLY FIELD, DOLLY PARTON, SHIRLEY MACLAINE, DARYL HANNAH, OLYMPIA DUKAKIS, AND JULIA ROBERTS. THE SCREENPLAY BY ROBERT HARLING IS BASED ON HIS 1987 PLAY OF THE SAME NAME ABOUT THE BOND A GROUP OF WOMEN SHARE IN A SMALL-TOWN SOUTHERN COMMUNITY, AND HOW THEY COPE WITH THE DEATH OF ONE OF THEIR OWN. THE SUPPORTING CAST FEATURES TOM SKERRITT, DYLAN McDERMOTT, KEVIN J. O'CONNOR, AND SAM SHEPARD..

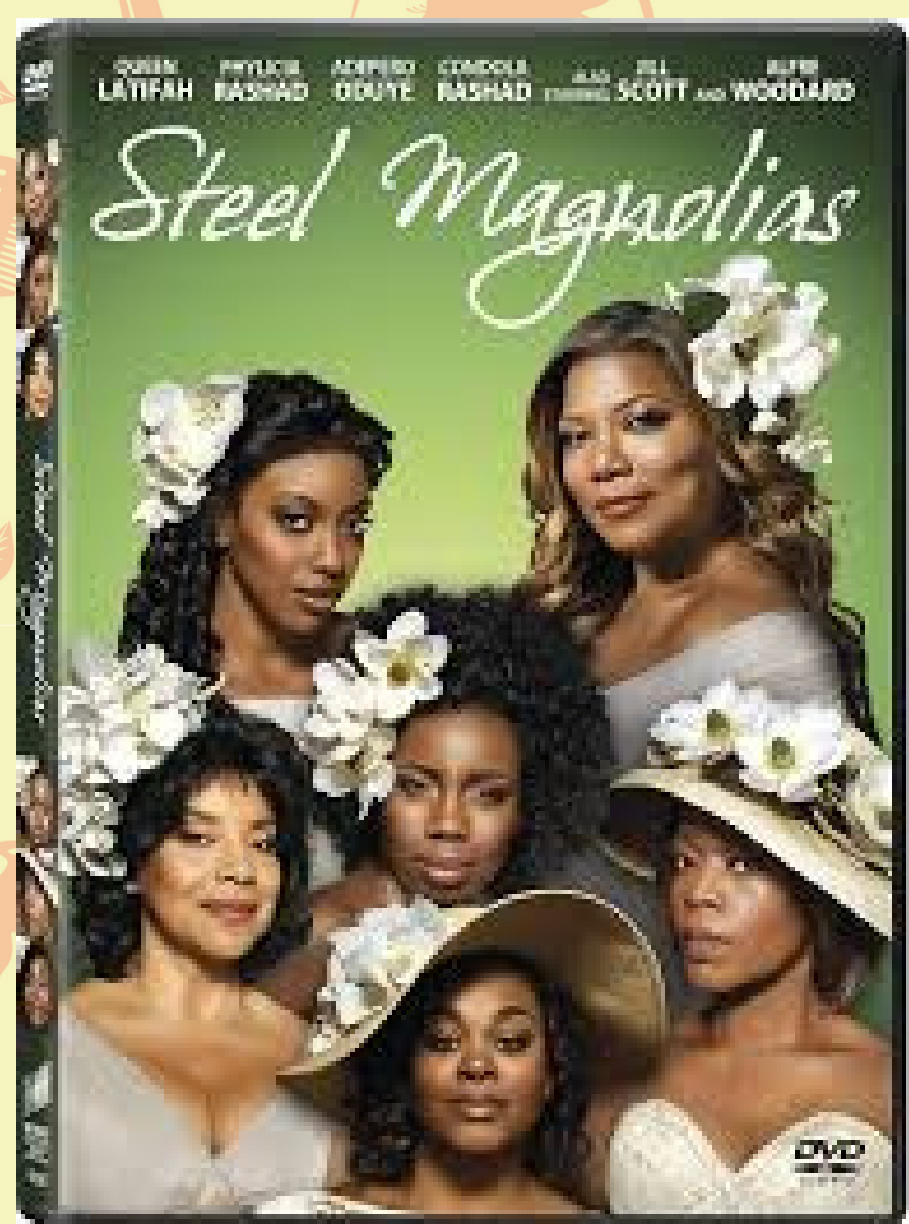
HARLING'S FIRST PRODUCED SCREENPLAY, HE ADAPTED THE ORIGINAL FILM SCRIPT WHICH WAS THEN HEAVILY REWRITTEN BEYOND THE ON-STAGE ONE-SET SCENARIO (WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE ENTIRELY IN TRUVY'S BEAUTY SALON) OF THE STAGE PRODUCTION: THE SCENES INCREASED AND THE SEQUENCE WAS MORE TIGHTLY LINKED WITH MAJOR HOLIDAYS THAN THE PLAY; THE INCREASED CHARACTERS BEYOND THE ORIGINAL, ALL-FEMALE PLAY CAST CAUSED DIALOGUE CHANGES BETWEEN ON-SCREEN CHARACTERS (AMONG THEM, HARLING PLAYS THE PREACHER AND TRUVY HAS ONE SON INSTEAD OF TWO).

FILMING TOOK PLACE FROM JULY 12, 1988, TO EARLY SEPTEMBER 1988 IN NATCHITOCHE, LOUISIANA, WITH HISTORIAN ROBERT DEBLIEUX, A FORMER NATCHITOCHE MAYOR, AS THE LOCAL ADVISOR. THE HOUSE WHERE MUCH OF THE FILM WAS SHOT IS NOW A SIX-SUITE BED AND BREAKFAST. THE CHURCH USED FOR A WEDDING SCENE IS ST. AUGUSTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NATCHEZ ON THE HISTORIC ISLE BREVILLE.



Television

CBS-TV PRODUCED THE TWO-HOUR STEEL MAGNOLIAS SITCOM PILOT IN APRIL 1990 IN ROBERT HARLING'S CHILDHOOD HOMETOWN OF NATCHITOCHE, LOUISIANA. HARLING WAS SCREENWRITER WITH HIS SCRIPT BEING A CONTINUATION OF THE PLAY AND 1989 FILM FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF SHELBY. THOMAS SCHLAMME DIRECTED AND CAST INCLUDED: CINDY WILLIAMS AS M'LYNN, SALLY KIRKLAND AS TRUVY, ELAINE STRITCH AS OUISER, POLLY BERGEN AS CLAIREE, AND SHEILA MCCARTHY AS ANELLE. ULTIMATELY, CBS PASSED ON THE SERIES GIVING THE PILOT A SINGLE AIRING ON AUGUST 17, 1990.



2012 Film

STEEL MAGNOLIAS IS AN AMERICAN COMEDY-DRAMA TELEVISION FILM DIRECTED BY KENNY LEON THAT PREMIERED AT LIFETIME NETWORK ON OCTOBER 7, 2012. IT IS A CONTEMPORARY RETELLING OF THE PLAY STEEL MAGNOLIAS AND ITS 1989 FILM ADAPTATION. THE NEW FILM STARS AN ALL-BLACK AMERICAN CAST, INCLUDING QUEEN LATIFAH AS M'LYNN, JILL SCOTT AS TRUVY, CONDOLA RASHAD AS SHELBY, ADEPERO ODUYE AS ANELLE, WITH PHYLICIA RASHAD AS CLAIREE AND ALFRE WOODARD AS OUISER.

THE FILM HAS BEEN MET WITH POSITIVE REVIEWS FROM CRITICS, WITH A SCORE OF 74 OUT OF 100 FROM METACRITIC. MANY CRITICS PRAISED ALFRE WOODARD'S PERFORMANCE AS OUISER.

THE FILM PREMIERED ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2012, ON LIFETIME AND EARNED 6.5 MILLION VIEWERS. IT IS THE 3RD HIGHEST VIEWED LIFETIME ORIGINAL.

Cultural References - Glossary

- **PRINCESS DI**- A NICKNAME FOR DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES OF ENGLAND. IN THE MID-1980'S, SHE MADE INTERNATIONAL NEWS WITH HER NUMEROUS CHARITIES AND REGULAR PUBLIC APPEARANCES TO HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS.
- **PRINCESS GRACE**- AN AMERICAN ACTRESS WHO, AFTER MARRYING PRINCE RAINIER III, BECAME THE PRINCESS OF MONACO. KNOWN FOR HER BEAUTY AND FASHION SENSE, SHE WAS INAUGURATED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL BEST DRESSED LIST HALL OF FAME IN 1960.
- **JACLYN SMITH**- AN AMERICAN ACTRESS AND BUSINESSWOMAN WHO IS BEST KNOWN FOR HER STARRING ROLE IN THE 1970'S TELEVISION SHOW CHARLIE'S ANGELS. IN THE MID-1980'S, SHE ENTERED THE BUSINESS WORLD WITH HER COLLECTION OF WOMEN'S APPAREL.
- **THE PETROLEUM CLUB OF SHREVEPORT**- A PRESTIGIOUS, MEMBER-OWNED CLUB IN SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA. MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO EXPAND THEIR SOCIAL AND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS, AS WELL AS HAVE ASSOCIATIONS WITH MORE THAN 50 NATIONALLY-KNOWN CLUBS.
- **MONROE AND WEST MONROE**- MONROE IS THE EIGHTH-LARGEST CITY IN LOUISIANA. THE NEIGHBORING CITY OF WEST MONROE SITS ACROSS THE OUACHITA RIVER. BOTH CITIES ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE TWIN CITIES OF NORTHEAST LOUISIANA.
- **ON THE PILL**- A SLANG TERM FOR THE USE OF BIRTH-CONTROL IN THE FORM OF A BIRTH-CONTROL PILL.
- **G.I. JOE**- A LINE OF ACTION FIGURES THAT HAVE BEEN PRODUCED BY THE TOY COMPANY HASBRO SINCE 1967.
- **SPOOLIES**- HAIR CURLERS FROM THE 1940'S AND 50'S THAT WERE ADVERTISED AS THE MOST COMFORTABLE TO WEAR TO BED.
- **HAWAII FIVE-O**- AN AMERICAN POLICE DRAMA SERIES PRODUCED BY CBS. THE SHOW HAD VERY RECOGNIZABLE THEME SONG, AND THE SERIES AIRED FROM 1968 TO 1980.
- **EARP**- A SLANG TERM THAT MEANS TO THROW UP.
- **ELIZABETH TAYLOR**- A BRITISH-AMERICAN ACTRESS KNOWN FOR HER NUMEROUS MARRIAGES.
- **DARK VICTORY**- A 1939 AMERICAN DRAMA FILM ABOUT A YOUNG, CAREFREE SOCIALITE WHO IS DIAGNOSED WITH AN INOPERABLE MALIGNANT BRAIN TUMOR.
- **ELIZABETH ARDEN**- A CANADIAN-AMERICAN BUSINESSWOMAN WHO FOUNDED AND BUILT A COSMETICS EMPIRE. LOCATED ON NEW YORK'S FIFTH AVENUE, HER COMPANY WAS CALLED RED DOOR SALON FOR ITS SIGNATURE RED FRONT DOOR.
- **REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE**- AN AT&T ADVERTISING JINGLE THAT WAS COINED IN 1979.
- **GETTING COLORS DONE**- THE PROCESS OF FINDING COLORS OF CLOTHING AND MAKEUP TO MATCH A PERSON'S SKIN COMPLEXION, EYE COLOR, AND HAIR COLOR. THE IDEA OF BASING THESE COLORS ON THE FOUR SEASONS BECAME POPULAR IN THE LATE 1970'S.
- **VALIUM**- A MEDICATION COMMONLY USED TO TREAT A RANGE OF CONDITIONS INCLUDING ANXIETY.
- **DEPUTY DAWG**- A CARTOON CHARACTER FEATURED ON THE ANIMATED TELEVISION SERIES TERRYTOONS.
- **ZWOLLE**- A SMALL TOWN IN SABINE PARISH, LOUISIANA.
- **TICKFAW**- A SMALL VILLAGE IN TANGIPAHOA PARISH, LOUISIANA.
- **DAGO**- AN ETHNIC SLUR FOR ONE FROM ITALY, SPAIN, OR PORTUGAL.
- **DRY PONG**- A SMALL VILLAGE IN CENTRAL GRANT PARISH, LOUISIANA.
- **BATON ROUGE**- THE CAPITAL OF LOUISIANA, AND THE STATE'S SECOND LARGEST CITY.

