



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 27, 2008

Contact: Kari Parkinson, Marketing and Press Relations, 971 226 0629

Scott Palmer, Artistic Director, 503 516 4840

Bag&Baggage Productions opens Steel Magnolias at The Venetian Theatre in Hillsboro

Robert Harling's Classic Southern Comedy, Steel Magnolias, opens September 10th for a 15 performance run at the newly remodeled Venetian Theatre in downtown Hillsboro

Hillsboro, OR (August 27, 2008) – Bag&Baggage Productions, Hillsboro's only professional theatre company, opens a classic of American theatre, ***Steel Magnolias***, at The Venetian Theatre in downtown Hillsboro on September 10th. The show, directed by Artistic Director Scott Palmer, is the first of three shows in the company's season of work at the newly opened venue and runs Wednesday through Sunday until September 28th.

"Steel Magnolias is the perfect show to start our season at The Venetian," said Palmer. "It is one of the most popular plays in American theatre history and allows Bag&Baggage a chance to showcase both our dramatic and comic talents."

The production stars Maggie Chapin as the irrepressible Truvy, the owner of a small town Louisiana beauty shop where the women in the town gather to gossip, laugh, cry and support each other through the hardest of times. Chapin, who has appeared in a number of Bag&Baggage shows, said, "This production of ***Steel Magnolias*** will be very different from other versions audiences may have seen. We have worked very hard to make sure we stay true to the script Robert Harling wrote and not duplicate the hugely successful film."

Directing a theatre show that was also made into an enormously successful Hollywood film is an enormous challenge, according to the director. "The movie was amazing, and wonderfully acted by some of America's greatest actresses, but the original play is a really different story," Palmer said. "The film focused attention on the relationship between Julia Robert's character and Sally Field's character, but the play is more of an ensemble piece. All of these women all have their own individual tragedies, their own struggles, and we are working hard to bring those stories to light, too."

Audra Petrie-Veber, the company's Production Manager and a Hillsboro native, said, "This production of ***Steel Magnolias*** is going to be truly different from other productions I have seen. The actors are spending a lot of time understanding the social and economic realities of 1980s Louisiana and the political and social pressures on women in the south. It feels a lot smarter and more realistic to me."

Other members of the cast include Maria Aparo, a recent transplant to Portland from Georgia and a recent graduate of the Portland Actors Conservatory, in the role of Shelby. Ruthanne Kendrick Noll, a Portland-based actress originally from Alabama, plays Shelby's mother, M'Lynn.

"It is such a stroke of luck that we had two such talented actors, both originally from the south, with real Southern accents, audition for this show," Palmer said. "They bring such a wealth of experience

and knowledge about Southern culture and have helped us all understand how Southern women interact and talk to each other.”

Chapin said, “When we are in rehearsals together, it feels like we are just all sitting around a beauty salon having a chat. It is so natural and connected, and a lot of that has to do with having two real Southern belles in the room with us.”

Janet Noble, an actor based in Denver, Colorado, travelled to Hillsboro specifically to audition for *Steel Magnolias*. She said, “I had heard of Bag&Baggage from friends of mine in Portland and there was such a buzz about the new theatre and the new company I just rolled the dice and came out here to see what might happen. I am delighted to be in the first show in the new space.” Noble, who has extensive experience working in Denver and New York, plays the role of Truvy’s new assistant, Annelle.

Fayra Teeters, a Portland based actor and the Artistic Director of the outdoor Moliere Company Masque Alfresco, plays Clairee and Christine Shields, a successful voice-over artist based in Beaverton, plays Ouiser.

“It is a remarkable cast of actors,” said Palmer. “They are actually kind of frightening. As the only man in the entire production, it is amazing how quickly all of these women have grown close. I’ve never seen a more supportive, more connected group of actors. The show is going to be amazing, and really very surprising for audiences.”

The Venetian Theatre will host an Opening Night Gala Fundraiser Event on September 10th, beginning at 7:00pm, to support Bag&Baggage Productions. This \$50 per ticket black tie event will feature a red-carpet welcome, wine, refreshments and appetizers prepared by The Venetian’s chefs. Members of the Bag&Baggage Artistic Team will also be present to speak about the show, about plans for the future and about the role supporters can play in helping make professional theatre a permanent part of Washington County.

Tickets are \$50 for the opening night gala, \$22 for general admission and \$18 for students and seniors for all other shows. Performances take place Wednesday – Saturday (September 10 – 27) at 8:00pm with Sunday matinees on September 14, 21 and 28 at 2:00pm. For more information on dates and times of performances, visit www.bagnbaggage.org. To purchase tickets, visit The Venetian Theatre website at www.venetiantheatre.com.

#

CALENDAR AND EVENT LISTINGS:

September 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27 at 8:00pm (Sept 14, 21 and 28 at 2:00pm)

The Venetian Theatre & Bistro

253 E. Main Street

Hillsboro, OR 97123

Tickets: \$50 Opening night (tickets are limited), \$22 general admission, \$18 seniors and students

Reservations online at www.venetiantheatre.com or 503 693 3953

Publicity Photos available upon request. Interview and Photo Calls also available by request.

For additional information:

Kari Parkinson

kari@bagnbaggage.org

971.226.0629