

In any given small towns across the country, there can be found a cozy in-home salon where the ladies of the neighborhood get their hair coiffed on a weekly basis. Some people might think that these establishments are near extinct, like video stores or pay phones, but rest assured they are alive and well.

The story of one of these salons, and the women who bring it to life, is the beloved film and stage play, “Steel Magnolias.” This hilarious and heartfelt story of six women and their unwavering support for one another has resonated with audiences for 28 years.

Since its debut, “Steel Magnolias” regularly appears across professional and community stages around the world. The rich, dynamic characters, dry wit, and emotional depth of the story continue to attract producers, directors, actors, and audiences alike.

Because of the play’s wide appeal, an actor may find herself in several productions over the course of her career. A young, up-and-coming Shelby may find herself in the role of M’Lynn or in the director’s chair later on.

This month, TexARTS presents “Steel Magnolias,” directed by Christina J. Moore and featuring Babs George as M’Lynn and Sheila Lucas as Ouiser. George has been a professional actress for 35 years and has garnered many B. Iden Payne and Austin Critics’ Table Awards for Best Actress. In Austin, she has performed at The Zach, Mary Moody Northen Theatre, Austin Shakespeare, Breaking String and Penfold Theatre Companies and is a long-time company member of Austin Playhouse. George last appeared on the TexARTS stage as Amanda in “The Glass Menagerie.”

George has performed in two previous productions of “Steel Magnolias,” both times playing the role of M’Lynn.

“I’ve had to learn the play over each time because there have been many plays in between, and as I’ve grown older, my experiences as a person on the planet as well as an actress have changed,” George said. “I’m not exactly the same M’Lynn I was in 1990 or in 2007.”

Lucas is making her TexARTS debut with over forty years of writing, directing, and acting experience. Her television credits include “Is There Life Out There,” “Oil Storm,” and the Emmy-winning “Temple Grandin.” Film credits include “Nashville,” “Coal Miners Daughter,” “Infamous,” and her latest film, “The Devil’s Candy,” which was recently screened at Austin’s own Fantastic Fest.

“I fell in love with ‘Steel Magnolias,’ and Ouiser, the first time I read it,” Lucas said. “Being a southerner, the language makes perfect sense to me, and my life friends and I still converse using quotes from the play.”

As fine arts director for Seguin High School, Lucas directed “Steel Magnolias” for the University Interscholastic League (UIL) One-Act play competition in 2012.

“My girls were wonderful and we advanced to the region level” Lucas said.

“Steel Magnolias” connects artists, friends, and families every time it is performed. This month, TexARTS invites audiences to share this beloved story with friends and family at the Kam & James Morris Theatre, October 16-25. Tickets are available at the TexARTS box office at 2300 Lohman’s Spur, Suite 160 in Lakeway, by phone at 512-852-9079 ext. 101, or online at [www.tex-arts.org](http://www.tex-arts.org).