

'Magnolias' will make you laugh, then cry

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The Richmond Hill Players' production of ``Steel Magnolias'' runs the gamut of emotion, but laughter is the main course.

The cast is a quintet of well-differentiated women who become a special sisterhood in a Louisiana carport that has been converted into a beauty salon.

Jalayne Riewerts is both director and stage manager for the show. She also located the impressive props --- beauty-shop equipment that sat in a basement in Morrison, Ill., for 25 years. When the beauty operator retired, Ms. Riewerts bought the chairs, sinks and dryers that make this set so real.

Tuvy, the owner of the salon, is played by Melissa Scott with a soft and charming accent. She looks spectacular in three different hair colors and dramatic clothes like a shirt with a horse head over each breast, their black and white manes flowing down the sleeves.

This is as good a time as any to compliment Angela Rathman on the costumes that enhance the characters portrayed.

Ryan Mosher plays Annelle, who comes to work in the salon when she is deserted by a no-good guy who may or may not be her husband. Her transformation from a nervous waif to a rigorous Bible thumper then moderates to something less obnoxious, but she keeps the faith.

Liz Blackwell plays Claire, the mayor's widow, who buys a radio station and is nuts about sports. She's also a good sport.

Stacy McKean plays Shelby, first seen as a bride-to-be and later as a young matron. She wears nothing but pink and suffers from diabetes.

Melissa McBain plays M'Lynn, Shelby's mother. She tries her best to give her daughter life twice - at birth and through an organ transplant.

Linda McGraw plays Ouiser, an eccentric rich widow who dotes on her hairless dog and garners a lot of laughs in the beauty shop. She says, ``I'll support art. I'll write a check. I just don't want to see it."''

Tuvy's philosophy is, ``There is no such thing as natural beauty," and she and Annelle actually shampoo, set and dress hair onstage, concocting some reasonable hairdos.

There are a bevy of terrific one-liners delivered with great humor throughout the play, but some drama also is mixed in. After laughing its way through the play, the audience is confronted by M'Lynn's agonized grief in the final scene. Ms. McBain makes it completely real. The rest of the cast does the same for the sense that life goes on.