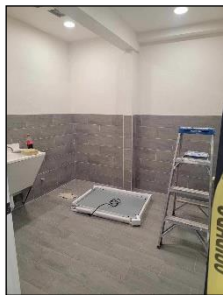


~ Newsletter - Winter 2023 ~

## The Best Seats in the House *by Monica Dwyer*

CLOTA's restrooms recently underwent a much-needed remodel using the profits from our Fireworks Booth Fundraiser. We hired Roger Hernandez "Hernandez Handyman" to make the improvements which included wall-to-wall gray plank-style tile, new sinks, new faucets, new mirrors (with specialty lighting), one bathroom cabinet, and last, but not least, recessed lighting. Not to mention, the walls were also textured and painted white. Also added were new trash cans, paper towel dispensers, toilet paper dispensers and toilet seat cover dispensers.



*In progress...*

*...Completed!*

Roger and his wife Adriana truly went above and beyond by not only helping us pick out the best tile for our needs and recommending recessed lighting but also help in keeping us within our budget. We look forward to them continuing to help us make other much needed improvements to our beloved theater. Amazingly, the remodel took a week from start to finish and the results were aesthetically breathtaking. When it was all said and done, it made all the hard work; the long, arduous, and sweltering hot days volunteering at the Fireworks Booth worth it, well, at least it did for me. A special thanks to Roger and Adriana, as well as all of CLOTA's volunteers, we certainly couldn't have done this without any of you, this was definitely a group effort.

## ❖ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Greetings and Salutations fellow CLOTA members!

*Steel Magnolias* (written by Robert Harling and directed by Daniel Stallings) was a rousing success with both casts performing brilliantly! So inspired by the talent of so many newcomers to our stage, that I baked them a homemade armadillo groom's cake for them to hack into at their cast party.

Once the beauty shop set came down, in the blink of an eye the Spookhouse walls went up. This year's theme is "Here There Be Monsters" and was headed by Olivia Holm. Kudos to her for being so organized and always ahead of schedule. Spookhouse was a howling victory and along with "Spooky Bootique" managed to raise approximately \$5,000 which is bookmarked to go towards the much-needed remodel of the light and sound board as well as new flooring in our actor's green room.

This year, "Spooky Bootique" offered handmade crocheted plushies (made to creep and comfort to the heart's content) playfully named "Sinful Stitches." Kudos to Olivia Holm and Marian Murdoch for their creativity as well as for their hard work and dedication to this project.

Show dates for our last production of 2024, *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* (written by Daniel Stallings and based on the famous poem by Clement Clarke Moore), are December 15th and 16th at 7:30 p.m.

As always, the CLOTA Board is seeking to add members to our various committees. If you are interested in joining a committee (or two!) and adding your expertise to our existing collective, please contact us at 760-446-2411 or e-mail us at [rc.clota@gmail.com](mailto:rc.clota@gmail.com) or visit our website at [www.clota.org](http://www.clota.org) for more information.

With 2024 on the horizon, CLOTA is on the lookout for new directors. The CLOTA Board of Directors is set to meet on December 18th in order to hear show proposal presentations for 2024 (Summer and Fall productions, Spookhouse and Christmas Show). If you are interested, please complete the CLOTA Director Application which was e-mailed to you last week. This application will also guide you through gathering and organizing your information for the best presentation possible. If you didn't receive one, please reach out to me directly at [monica.dwyer@clota.org](mailto:monica.dwyer@clota.org) and I'll ensure that you receive a copy. The deadline for completed applications is December 1st.

Have a play suggestion? CLOTA would be more than happy to provide you with a Play Suggestion Form to complete.

Thank you all for your continued membership, we certainly couldn't do what we do without your support!

Best Regards,

*Monica Dwyer*

President, CLOTA Board of Directors

# **SPOOKHOUSE Postmortem: *Here, There Be Monsters***

*By Olivia Holm*

Congratulations to the cast and crew of Spookhouse 2023 *Here There Be Monsters*! After one month of hard work putting up the entire maze, set decorating, painting, and four successful nights of action, Spookhouse 2023 has come to a close. We had about 837 people come through, each one screaming to high heavens in terror. While most of our profits were in ticket sales, with the reinstatement of Spooky Boutique we were able to increase our profits and push ourselves over the \$5,000 mark.

This year Spooky Boutique consisted of a cuddly collection of Voodoo Dolls, Zombies, Spiders, Bats, Tote Bags, and specialty items like Eyeball Roses, Huggable Monsters, and a rare Bigfoot and Jersey Devil. Thank you to everyone who bought something from the Boutique, but not to worry if you missed out, we will return next year!

I would also like to personally thank the young actor and actresses who gave their heart, souls, and screams to Spookhouse this year. It was truly awe inspiring seeing how many talented and amazing young performers joined CLOTA for Spookhouse and gave brilliant performances. And a large thank you to everyone who aided in the creation of Spookhouse, from the seasoned veterans, to the brand new actors, to everyone who helped work on Spookhouse this year. Here's to another year of successful screams!



*Collage of photos of the actors of the 2023 CLOTA Spookhouse, Here There Be Monsters. Photos provided by Olivia Holm.*

# Propped Up: The Craft of Artisan Props

By Daniel Stallings



*The cast of Clue the Musical (Summer 2023) raise their weapons high.*

Scenery suggests the world. Yet, the world doesn't fully animate until the actors step into it. And they don't *live* in that world without the help of some brilliant props and set dressing. Props bring an actor in contact with their environment, enticing them to actually interact with their surroundings. They add to the story of the characters, giving them personality. They enhance blocking. With the completion of CLOTA's latest production of *Steel Magnolias*, our most prop and dressing heavy show of the 2023 season, we thought it would be nice to examine the world of our artisan props, those specially-crafted trinkets, mementos, and everyday devices designed for our amazing productions.

A prop is simply any movable object onstage distinct from scenery, costume, or actor. A working prop—as in a prop that actually performs its stated function such as a flashlight—is called a practical.

Starting with *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind*, written and directed by Monica Lorenz-Dwyer, from the beginning of this year, one of the most signature props had to be plaster cast of Bigfoot's footprint that Evan brings to the campfire event. The cast is an original one created by Daniel Stallings in 2019 for the first production of the show. Using a cookie tin in the shape of a Bigfoot foot, provided by Monica, Daniel created a sand mold in a plastic tub. He pressed the tin into wet sand and shaped the toes and contours with his hand. He poured in the plaster and let dry. The sand and sticks that got stuck in the plaster were deliberate to give it a forest floor texture.

*Cont. pg. 5, 10, 11*

## Propped Up, cont.

Monica created the signage (“Ridgeview O’er Yonder”) all over the campground from carboard and paint, which were also first created in 2019. Brand new for the CLOTA production was Madeline’s pitch for Bigfoot-themed businesses and experiences in Ridgeview. Monica designed it alongside the improved, full-size map of Ridgeview and Crestwood Lake Campground and the packaging for the unpopular Sweet & Soursquatch jerky. These details flesh out the in-show universe and give more chances for our actors to play.



Left: Janis Kunz holds the plaster footprint cast used in *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind* (March 2023).



Right: Heather McGaha goes through her pitch with the other people at the campground

Fast forward to our summer production, *Clue the Musical*, and the artisan props grew even more elaborate. Bringing a board game to larger-than-life-size brought about its own unique challenges given the demands of the script. First were the signature weapons. Prop Master Daniel Stallings consulted Director Angie Sonia-Pritchard and Assistant Director Beth Sparks-Jacques about what style did they want. Realistic or giant board game pieces? Opting for the board game style, Daniel sourced and created the weapons. The noose was one last seen on the CLOTA stage in *Witness for the Prosecution*. The wrench and revolver were made out of thick foam, cut with a heat knife, papier-mâché, and painted in pewter spray paint. The knife was rubber. The lead pipe was a PVC pipe that was purposefully bent using heat to mimic the game piece. And the candlestick made use of a table base from a thrift store, a PVC pipe cap, and a battery-powered candle. With the paint job, each weapon looked perfectly like the game weapons blown up to human scale.

*Cont. pg. 10, 11*

## ~ Upcoming Events ~

### ❖ November 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>:

*'Twas the Night Before Christmas – Auditions*

From 4-6 pm at CLOTA Center Stage

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### ❖ December 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>:

*Two Dozen Red Roses – Auditions*

@ 7 pm at CLOTA Center Stage

### ❖ December 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>:

*'Twas the Night Before Christmas*

@ 7:30 pm (Doors open @ 7 pm)

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### ❖ January 20<sup>th</sup>:

*CLOTA Banquet – venue TBD*

Social hour from 6-7 pm, Dinner @ 7 pm

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*A special thank you to our sponsors!*

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# CLOTA Wall of Stars

CLOTA generously receives donations from individuals who see the art, beauty, and hard work we do within our community theater as well as the promising future that we help pave for generations to come. These gracious benefactors have assisted us for the past 50+ years and we look forward to what they will do for us well into the future.

Donations are pivotal to us and should not go unnoticed, hence, the establishment of the CLOTA Wall of Stars.

Based on the amount of each donation, a personally engraved Bronze, Silver or a Gold star will be placed on our theatre walls where your generosity can be appreciated by our community for all time.

The star type depends on the amount donated during the calendar year:



**BRONZE STAR: \$51 - \$249**



**SILVER STAR: \$250 - \$499**



**GOLD STAR: \$500 +**

If you wish to make a donation, please contact us for more information.

Thank You!

## The CLOTA Board

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Olivia Holm, Secretary  
Amber Stull, Treasurer  
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# IN REVIEW: *Steel Magnolias*, directed by Daniel Stallings

[*Steel Magnolias* closed in October of 2023. Here are some audience members' thoughts.]



*Steel Magnolias* had two casts, each with four shows.

By Nicole C.

I very much enjoyed CLOTA's performance of *Steel Magnolias*. I have seen the movie several times but never the stage play so while I was familiar with the plot I was interested to see a new interpretation.

The set and costumes were beautiful and full of details that made it seem like we were truly in a beauty shop in the 1980s, from the beauty magazines to the plastic covered stools. I enjoyed how the scenery, clothing, and hair styles changed throughout the show to convey the passing of the seasons. One of my particular favorites was the Christmas decor including the Baby Jesus Wreath hung on the wall of the salon. Along with the visual cues, the radio playing popular 80's music added the perfect touch. It felt like it brought the 80's to life, and provided cues as to what was happening in Chinquapin Parish.

In addition, all of the actors had a wonderful rapport with each other that made it easy to envision the group as longtime friends and family. They played off of each other well and gave us plenty of memorable moments. Even something as simple as discussing recipes felt natural and gave background into the characters, and the scenes with Ouiser injected plenty of humor. In particular the final scene was perfectly acted. I was not the only person moved to both laughter and tears within the span of a few minutes. One of the things I enjoyed more about this production was how Shelby was portrayed both as headstrong and generous. I felt more sympathy and insight in her character and her struggles, and the dynamic between her and M'Lynn was familiar to mothers and daughters everywhere.

I'm very happy that CLOTA and Daniel Stallings were able to bring *Steel Magnolias* to life here in Ridgecrest and look forward to their future productions!

Cont. pg. 9



## IN REVIEW: *Steel Magnolias*, cont.

By Mark L.

I just wanted to take a moment to let you know what an enjoyable experience it was to take in the performance of *Steel Magnolias* on Friday the 29th of September. Although I have seen CLOTA performances at other venues, this was my first opportunity to enjoy your playhouse theatre off Inyo Street. It was wonderful. The theatre is a lovely, comfortable and intimate setting, not a bad seat in the house and quite immersive. It really breaks down any barriers between the performers and the audience and what a wonderful performance it was. Although I'm not familiar with the performers and certainly would not consider myself a critic, I thought they did a delightful job of sharing the Steel Magnolia story. I could hear, see and feel the emotion and energy they were putting out. The cast worked great together. The set was well done and lighting and supporting soundtrack helped transport me to the beauty shop. Thank you so much for allowing me an entertaining and enjoyable date night in our little town. It certainly will not be my last.

By Michelle S.

With two casts gracing the stage in *Steel Magnolias*, there was twice as much southern charm to see. Both casts really embraced their roles and shined in their own ways while telling this heartwarming story of friendship and family.

Cast A had a chemistry that made you feel genuinely immersed in a natural, existing friend group. And their relationships with one another were entirely believable. Cast B had an air of being long, long-time friends that, despite their differences, still come together on weekends to get their hair done and talk about life.

The stars of the show are undoubtedly the Shelby duo, played by Emily Ommen in Cast A and Britney Brown in Cast B. They both embraced this character in different yet perfect ways and were a delight to watch. Without Shelby, there would be no *Steel Magnolias*. And without either of these actresses in the role, we wouldn't have had such a remarkable show.

I also must commend the production and all of the behind-the-scenes. The director had a clear vision, and a lot of hard work went into getting it done. And it paid off with a stunning set, interesting lighting, and smooth set changes by the crew. The only thing I wish had been better was the music during pre-show and intermission since, despite being 80's music, did not fit the atmosphere at all.

Overall, *Steel Magnolias* is one of the best shows I have seen at CLOTA. It definitely felt like a special experience for both the casts and the audience alike.

## Propped Up, cont.

And yet, the script for *Clue the Musical* continued to toss us complex little curveballs. With it being a literal giant board game, we need oversized game cards and a confidential envelope. Daniel designed the cards and created the envelope from poster paper and white electrical tape. Mrs. White needed a raw roast to prep in her kitchen. Using an aluminum roasting tin, Daniel turned it upside down and shaped it with his hands. He used plastic wrap to create the top layer of fat on the raw beef. Paint brought the right combination of colors to the roast. Two slices of PVC pipe created the bone in the center, and model railroad ballast created the seasoning rub on the layer of raw fat. The final touch of magic was a strip of plastic wrap crinkled, painted, decorated, and taped to the top of the roast to create the strip of “fat” Mrs. White trims off the beef during the scene. One audience member really loved that detail. We had a roast we could use night after night without spoilage.



*Left: Calvin Johnson holds the custom confidential envelope that held the solution each performance.*



*Right: Elaine Stewart sings with her prop roast.*

Perhaps the funniest, if not craziest, prop we had to create for *Clue* was a 1939 map of Europe for Colonel Mustard and Mrs. Peacock to perform on, a game of Twister™ with a very suggestive wink. Daniel bought a canvas tarp and, using a projector, hand-drew and hand-painted the historically correct map onto the tarp. Metal pipes zip-tied to either end of the map allowed it to roll up and out like a scroll, holding it in place for the performance. Definitely not a prop we expected to make.

*Cont. pg. 11*

## Propped Up, cont.



*Ben Bockhahn supports Rachael West as they perform a suggestive game of Twister™ on a map of Europe.*



*Pearl Woolam shows off the Christmas Festival poster featuring Rhett.*

Monica also designed the beautiful poster for the Chinquapin Christmas Festival featuring Ouiser's dog, Rhett (with some hair again). And Janis Kunz sourced and styled Shelby's pink radio.

Props are more than just little knick-knacks decorating the set. And not all of them can be bought just anywhere. The imagination of a prop master to create a specialty, artisan prop is just as amazing as any other facet of theatre.

*Steel Magnolias* features set dressing and props from so many amazing sources with donations from the cast and crew to bring their own contribution to the production. Director Daniel Stallings included personal treasures from his grandparents, mother, and sister to honor them on the set and create a comfortable, lived-in feeling for Truvy's beauty shop. The show also has its own fair share of custom props with homemade Christmas decorations (utilizing "tiny white lights, Baby Jesuses, and spoolies!") made by Monica Dwyer for a wreath and the Tree of Beauty trimmed in "hair things."



*Juli Townsend poses with the wreath handmade by Annelle (in reality Monica Dwyer).*

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CLOTA Center Stage

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