

SUMTER PLAYERS

PRESENTS



A Comedy By **Beth Henley**

DIRECTED BY

MANDY FULLER

MAY 19, 20, 21, 22 2005

RYLANDER THEATRE



Sumter Players

The Miss Firecracker Contest is presented through special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc
New York Premiere By The Manhattan Theatre Club On May 1, 1984



THE CAST [In Order Of Appearance]

Carnelle Scott Karen Glass
Popeye Jackson Bonnie Sullivan
Elain Rutledge Rachel Reis Obermeyer
Delmount Williams David Hudnall
Mac Sam James Michael Elliott Gibson*
Tessie Mahoney Elizabeth Parks*

THE SETTING

The action of the play takes place in Brookhaven, Mississippi, a small southern town.

THE TIME

The ending of June and the beginning of July

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1

The living room of Ronelle William's house in Brookhaven, Mississippi -- about five o'clock Monday afternoon on a hot day at the end of June.

Scene 2

The same setting. About eight o'clock in the evening on the following Saturday.

ACT II

Scene 1

The carnival grounds -- about three o'clock in the afternoon on the Fourth of July.

Scene 2

The same setting. Several minutes later.

Scene 3

The same setting. That evening.

There Will Be A Ten Minute Intermission Between Acts I and II

PRODUCTION STAFF

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ETH HENLEY (1952 -)

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aywright, screenwriter, and sometime actress Henley first entered the critical spotlight in 1978 when one of her plays – a black comedy about three maladjusted sisters set in the small town of Hazlehurst, Mississippi – won the Great American Play Contest sponsored by the Actors Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky. *Crimes of the Heart* [presented by Sumter Players in 1988] went on to win several more awards, including

the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best new American play and the Pulitzer Prize for drama, both in 1981. Henley also received a Tony Award nomination for best play and, five years later, an Academy Award nomination for best adapted screenplay. The play and subsequent film version showcased Henley as one of a new breed of American dramatists dedicated to preserving regional voices on the stage.

Elizabeth Becker Henley was born in Jackson, Mississippi, the daughter of an attorney and an actress. She earned a BFA at Southern Methodist University and there wrote her first play, the one-act *Am I Blue*, which was produced at SMU’s Margo Jones Theatre in 1973.

Henley followed the success of *Crimes of the Heart* with *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, in which a socially outcast woman, Carnelle Scott, wishes to improve her standing in her small southern town by winning “The Miss Firecracker” beauty contest. First produced onstage in Los Angeles in 1980, the play would be adapted into a Hollywood film with a screenplay by Henley.

Other plays by Henley include *The Wake of Jamey Foster*, produced on Broadway in 1982; *The Debutante Ball*; *The Lucky Spot*; *Abundance*; *Signature*; *Control Freaks*; and *L-Play*. Her play *Impossible Marriage* debuted off Broadway in 1998. Set in Savannah, Georgia, it tells of a young bride whose wedding is opposed by everyone, including her older sister, portrayed by Holly Hunter, who has appeared in *The Miss Firecracker Contest* on stage and film and in six other Henley plays.

Sumter Players and its Board of Directors appreciate all those who have participated onstage, backstage, front of house, in the audience and in the background during our forty-one seasons.

As we prepare for the forty-second season, we are confident that the selected plays will not only be entertaining, but will provide ever more challenging opportunities for everyone aspiring to hone their stagecraft skills.

Watch during the summer for public announcement of next season’s plays. Meanwhile, the members of Sumter Players should plan to attend the Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Dinner on June 11 in the Parish Hall at St. Mary’s Catholic Church.



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