



~ 60 Years ~

# THE *Miss* FIRECRACKER CONTEST

By Beth Henley



Rated PG, May 23 – July 27

**Directed by Harli Cooper Graham**

Co-sponsored by  
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Cumberland County Playhouse presents

# **THE** *Miss* **FIRECRACKER** **CONTEST**

By Beth Henley

Directed by  
**Harli Cooper Graham**

Scenic Design  
**Jill Hassberger**

Lighting Design  
**Sandra "Sam" Hahn**

Costume Design  
**Cody Von Ruden**

Sound Design  
**Aaron Capps**

Props Design  
**Claire Wylie**

Stage Manager  
**Kayla Jenkins**

Production Manager  
**Katy Fagiolo**

Scene Shop Supervisor  
**Tapaynga Hill**

Technical Producer  
**Sandra "Sam" Hahn**

Artistic Director  
**Britt Hancock**

Producing Director  
**Bryce McDonald**

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*The Miss Firecracker Contest* is presented through special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service imprint  
[www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com)

New York Premiere by the Manhattan Theatre Club on May 1, 1984



## Cast of *The Miss Firecracker Contest* (in order of appearance)

<i>Carnelle Scott</i> .....	<i>DeAnna Helgeson</i>
<i>Popeye Jackson</i> .....	<i>Mary Humphrey</i>
<i>Elain Rutledge</i> .....	<i>Heather McCall</i>
<i>Delmount Williams</i> .....	<i>Caleb Sager</i>
<i>Mac Sam</i> .....	<i>Michael Ruff</i>
<i>Tessy Mahoney</i> .....	<i>Caitlin Schaub</i>

## Act I of *The Miss Firecracker Contest*

**Setting and Time:** The action of the play takes place in Brookhaven, Mississippi, a small southern town - the end of June and the beginning of July.

### Act One:

**Scene One:** The living room of Ronelle Williams' house in Brookhaven, Mississippi - about five o'clock Monday afternoon on a hot day at the end of June.

**Scene Two:** The same setting. About eight o'clock in the evening, on the following Saturday

There will be one 15-minute intermission

Please visit the Applause Gift Shop, the Drama Pub,  
and the Concession Stand before the show and at intermission.

## Act II of *The Miss Firecracker Contest*

### Act Two:

**Scene One:** The Carnival grounds - about three o'clock in the afternoon on the Fourth of July.

**Scene Two:** The same setting. Several minutes later.

**Scene Three:** The same setting. That evening.

### Special Thanks to:

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### Special Thanks to:

THE BEEF AND BARREL for the Opening Night Party

## Who's Who in *The Miss Firecracker Contest*



**DeAnna Helgeson (*Carnelle Scott*)** is thrilled to be back on the CCP stage after a year-long hiatus! Favorites include: *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey), *Gypsy* (Louise), *Grease* (Rizzo), *A Chorus Line* (Bebe), *Smoke and Sanders* (Denise), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Kitty), *The Marvelous Wonderettes* (Suzy), *Bright Star* (Margo), *Young Frankenstein* (Inga), *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Molly), *Sylvia* (Sylvia), *Escape to Margaritaville* (Tammy), *Leading Ladies* (Audrey; BroadwayWorld Award). Thank you to Bryce, Britt, and Weslie for always believing in me and to my Josh and Cooper for filling my life with joy, love, and laughter! All the glory to God!



**Mary Humphrey (*Popeye Jackson*)** is immensely honored to be back at CCP for the 2025 Season! She is a 2024 graduate of Lipscomb University's BFA Musical Theatre program, where some favorite credits include *Crazy For You* (Patsy & Dance Captain) and *Big Fish* (Alabama Lamb, Sandra u/s, & Assist. Choreo). You may recognize her from *Moon Over Buffalo* (Eileen), *Unnecessary Farce* (Billie), *White Christmas* (Featured Dancer/ Rita), *Grease* (Cha-Cha & Dance Captain), and *Anastasia* (Odette in *Swan Lake*, Ensemble) here at CCP. Mary was in the original cast of *Hydro Jive Junction* at Dollywood and has trained with Joffrey Ballet School, the Radio City Rockettes, and the Tennessee Titans Cheerleaders. "Glory to God and endless thanks to my family for everything that got me here. Britt and Bryce, thank you for believing in me and giving me these opportunities to do what I love!" instagram: @maryestellehumphrey



**Heather McCall (*Elain Rutledge*)** is thrilled to be back for her 7th season here at CCP! You might recognize her on our stage from *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Carole King; First Night Award Winner), *White Christmas* (Betty Haynes), *All Shook Up* (Miss Sandra), *Grease* (Marty), *Steel Magnolias* (Shelby), *The Marvelous Wonderettes* (Cindy Lou), *Young Frankenstein* (Elizabeth Benning), *Beehive*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Holiday Inn*, *Godspell*, *Leading Ladies*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Johnny and the Devil's Box*. She has happily found her home here at the Playhouse, and enjoys her other passions of Music Directing and Social Media Managing when she's not on stage. Visit her website at [www.heatheremccall.com](http://www.heatheremccall.com). Thanks to her loving and supportive family and friends for all they do.



**Michael Ruff (Mac Sam)** is happy to be starting his 17th season at CCP!! A 2004 graduate of Southeastern Oklahoma State University with a double B.A. in Musical Theatre/Acting and Directing he is now happy to call Crossville home. Some of his favorite roles include Hoke in *Driving Miss Daisy*, Donkey in *Shrek*, Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid*, Joshua Moore in *Alabama Story*, and Agent Frank in *Unnecessary Farce*.



**Caleb Sager (Delmount Williams)** is is ecstatic to be back for another season at CCP! He is so happy and grateful to create art with a fantastic community and family here in Cumberland County. A couple of his favorite roles include Lopakhin in *The Cherry Orchard* and Gerry Goffin in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. He thanks his teachers, his friends and of course, Tapaynga for believing in him. He hopes you enjoy the show and can't wait to see you again later this year! If you'd like to get updates feel free to follow him on instagram @caleb\_aaron\_sager



**Caitlin Schaub (Tessy Mahoney)** is thrilled to be returning to the Playhouse for her fourteenth season! She is a New England transplant that found her place here in Tennessee. Some of her favorite theater credits include: Miep in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Hunyak in *Chicago*, Mayella Ewell in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Greta Ohlsson in *Murder on the Orient Express* and The Green Dress Dancer in *Singin' in the Rain*. Caitlin has a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree from Arizona State University. She would like to thank her parents for their love and unconditional support!

## The Miss Firecracker Contest - About the Playwright

**Beth Henley (Playwright)** is an American playwright of regional dramas set in provincial Southern towns, the best know of which, *Crimes of the Heart*, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1981. Henley, a graduate of southern Methodist University, University Park, Texas, turned from acting to writing as a career because she felt that the theatre offered few good contemporary roles for Southern women. Her first play, the one -act *Am I Blue*, was produced while she was still an undergraduate. *Crimes of the Heart*, her first full-length play, was produced in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1979 and in New York City in 1980.

Henley's later plays include the two-act *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, 1979, in which a small-town woman of dubious reputation attempts to gain respect by winning a beauty contest; *The Wake of Jamey Foster*, 1983, which centres on a family grieving over the death of the alcoholic title character; *The Lucky Spot*, 1986;; *Abundance*, 1991, a revisionist western about mail-order brides in the Wyoming Territory; *Control Freaks*, 1992; and *The Jacksonian*, 2013, which is set in a Jackson, Mississippi motel in 1964 and revolves around a murder. Henley also wrote television scripts and screenplays.

## Production Staff of The Miss Firecracker Contest

**Aaron Capps (Sound Designer)** is returning for their fourth season at the Playhouse and can't wait to be a part of a team that, time after time, comes together and puts everything into each project and provides a magical experience for so many people in a region that wouldn't otherwise receive the kind of art that comes through the Playhouse.

**Jensen Crain-Foster (Wig Designer)** recently joined the Education Team as the new Education Administrator Coordinator. This is a full circle moment after she herself grew up and graduated from the T3 Program. Jensen studied dance at Western Kentucky University and eventually returned to the Playhouse and Crossville to start her career, fulfill her dreams, and raise her family. Jensen has been teaching jazz and contemporary for the Education Department for 8+ years and finds true joy in inspiring others to express themselves through dance. As an extension of being a Dance Instructor, she found a joy in choreographing, and is now the Resident Choreographer for CCP. She recently won her first Broadway World Award for her choreography in *All Shook Up*. Some other choreography credits include *Beautiful: The Carol King Musical*, *Grease*, *Beehive*, *Cinderella*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Elf*, and *Bright Star*. On occasion, you can also catch Jensen performing on stage, or in the costume shop as Wig Designer.

**Katy Fagiolo (Production Manager)** is excited to be in her 15th season at CCP where she has been Stage Manager, Props Master, and Production Manager. Favorite stage management credits include *Scrooge*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Legally Blonde*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Matilda*, *A Christmas Story*, and *Cinderella*. Katy has a Bachelor of Arts in Theater and Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. She has had the honor of working at The Santa Fe Opera, Theatre West, and The Rose Theater. She sends love to her family and friends who give her unending support.

**Harli Cooper Graham (Director)** is a graduate of Northern Kentucky University, and is so excited to be making her directorial debut! She has been with CCP since 2016, participating in nine seasons since then. You've likely seen her on stage, most recently as Anya in *Anastasia*, Annie in *The Play That Goes Wrong*, or Natalie in *All Shook Up*, or as one of many "princess" tracks as Ariel, Belle, or Cinderella. Although her passion for performing has certainly not gone anywhere, she is excited to explore a new passion on a different side of the curtain. Many thanks to Britt and Bryce for trusting her with this opportunity; her amazing cast for exploring and growing with her in this new role; designers, stage



management, and crew for their grace and trust; and her husband, Blake, for listening to multitudes of out-loud thought processing and ramblings. Enjoy the show!

**Sandra "Sam" Hahn (Lighting Designer/Technical Producer)** is a graduate of Oklahoma City University with a BS in Technical Theatre. While in OKC, she was the Production Manager at Lyric Theater of Oklahoma, a staff member at Oklahoma City University and was the Properties Master for Ballet Oklahoma. Sam is proud to be in her 30th season at the Playhouse, where she has worked on shows in many capacities throughout the years. Some of her favorite productions are the *Smoke* trilogy, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Spirit of the Mountains*, *A Homestead Album*, *Little Shop of Horrors* (Stage Manager); *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cats*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Shrek the Musical*, *Sweeney Todd* (Properties); *Golden Boy of the Blue Ridge*, *Winter Wonderettes*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Johnny and the Devil's Box*, *The Play That Goes Wrong* - BroadwayWorld.com Award winner (Lighting Design) and *Dial M for Murder*. She also has enjoyed bringing wonderful music to the Playhouse stages with the concert series each year. Sam is proud of the exceptional work the theater does with the area's children. "Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." - Marcel Proust

**Britt Hancock (Artistic Director)** A graduate of the University of Mississippi with a BFA in Theatre Arts, Britt is in his 26th season with the Playhouse and 10th year as Artistic Director. National Tour performance credits: *The Producers* (Roger DeBris), *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Hairspray*, *Young Frankenstein*. Select CCP performance credits include *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Don Kirshner), *Dial M for Murder* (Tony Wendice), *Leading Ladies* (Leo Clark), *Sylvia* (Greg), *The 39 Steps* (Richard Hannay), *Duck Hunter Shoots Angel* (Duane), *Holiday Inn* (Jim Hardy), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Frollo), *Million Dollar Quartet* (Sam Phillips), *The Odd Couple* (Oscar Madison), *Mamma Mia!* (Sam), *Shrek* (Shrek), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Atticus Finch), *A Chorus Line* (Zach), *The Music Man* (Harold Hill, BroadwayWorld Nashville Award), *Les Misérables* (Javert, Thenardier), *Camelot* (Arthur), *White Christmas* (Bob Wallace), and *Chicago* (Billy Flynn). CCP directorial credits: *Sh-Boom! Life Could Be a Dream*, *Grease*, *Beehive: The 60's Musical*, *White Christmas*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *All Shook Up* (BroadwayWorld Nashville Award - Best Director), *Cinderella* (Outstanding Musical of 2022, First Night Awards), *Plaid Tidings*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Winter Wonderettes*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Forever Plaid*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Legally Blonde*, *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, *Annie*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Christmas Story*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Willy Wonka*, *Mary Poppins*, *Scrooge*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Barbara's Blue Kitchen*, *Damn Yankees*, *Gypsy*, *Grease*, *Suite Surrender*, *Man of La Mancha*, *9 to 5*, *Joseph...Dreamcoat*, and *Big River*. Britt received Nashville's First Night Star Award in 2015 and was nominated for Theaterati of the Year in 2020.

**Jill Hassberger (Scenic Designer)** is happy to be back at CCP for her 7th season as a scenic artist and set designer. Jill moved to Crossville in 2017 with her husband Jere and their Jack Russell Terrier, Calypso. In her previous life, Jill earned a B.S. in Engineering with a fine arts minor from Case Western Reserve University and Master of Architecture from the University of Michigan. In Ann Arbor, she spent several years as a scenic artist and set designer for a school drama club, a dance studio and a show choir while working full time as a practicing architect. Set designs for CCP include *Johnny and the Devil's Box*, *Alabama Story*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and most recently *'Twas The Night Before Christmas*. Jill wishes to thank her husband Jere and daughter Cora Mae, for their endless support and the production staff for their hard work putting this show together. Thank you for supporting the magic that is regional theater!

**Josh Helgeson (Company Manager)** is thrilled to be in his 7th CCP season! Favorite past Playhouse projects include *Grease*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Old Man and the Old Moon*, *Elf: The Musical*, *Godspell*, *Little House on the Prairie: The Musical*, *Peter Pan Jr.*, and *Frozen Jr*. Regional: *Spring Awakening*, *Into the Woods*, *Oliver!*, Josh has also toured across the country with *Rockin' Road to Dublin!*

**Tapaynga Hill (Scene Shop Supervisor)** is elated to be back at CCP for another year! She recently just got off the national tour of *Baby Shark Live* as a Carpenter and Props Master. She is a graduate from Central Wyoming College and Idaho State University with her degree in Performing Arts and Criminal

Justice. She enjoys crafting and making theatre magic happen. She thanks her friends and family for their love and support.

**Bryce McDonald (Producing Director)** is in his 27th season with CCP doing what he loves while working with an amazingly talented company and staff. During his 10 years in NYC, Bryce is proud to have worked on Broadway with *The Snow Geese*, *Come Back, Little Sheba* (Manhattan Theatre Club); *Man and Boy*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Everyday Rapture*, *After Miss Julie*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *A Man For all Season* Roundabout Theatre Company). Off-Broadway: *Tales from Red Vienna* (MTC), *How I Learned To Drive* (Second Stage); *The Piano Teacher* (Vineyard); *The Common Pursuit*, *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*, *Beyond Glory*, *Howard Katz*, *Suddenly Last Summer* (RTC); *The House in Town* (Lincoln Center Theatre). Regional credits include *The Curse of the Starving Class*, *The Killing of Sister George* (Long Wharf Theatre). CCP directorial credits: *Inlaws*, *Outlaws...*, *Ring of Fire*, *Southern Fried Funeral*, *Shrek*, *9 to 5*, *The Sparkley Clean Funeral Singers*, *Mamma Mia*, *The Addams Family*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Sister Act*, *Stand by Your Man*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Holiday Inn*, *Bright Star*, *Elf*, *Clue*, *Alabama Story*, *Godspell*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Johnny and the Devil's Box* (Outstanding Original Work of 2022, First Night Awards), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Ghost*, *Ghost Come Out Tonight*, *Anastasia*, and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Bryce is proud to serve as the Board Chair of the Upper Cumberland Broadcast Council for WCTE, past President of our local Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors, Executive Board President for Tennesseans For the Arts, and is past President of the Crossville Breakfast Rotary Club. Bryce was the recipient of Nashville's First Night Award for Theaterati of the Year in 2019.

**Cody Von Ruden (Costume Designer)** is excited to be returning to Cumberland County Playhouse for *The Miss Firecracker Contest*. Other Playhouse credits include: *Grease* and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Cody is a costume designer and illustrator for theatre, opera, and dance based in Washington DC. Other credits include Rorschach Theatre: *The Figs*. Washington Stage Guild: *Escape From The Asylum*. Wolf Trap Opera and NOI+F: *Seven Deadly Sins*. Catholic University: *Bright Star*. M.F.A: Costume Design – University of Maryland. IG: @ccvonruden. Website: [www.codyvonruden.com](http://www.codyvonruden.com)

**Claire Wylie (Props Designer)** is excited to be back for another full season! She graduated from Brevard College in 2021. Some of her favorite past shows on which she worked are *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Things My Mother Taught Me*, *Cinderella* (Assistant Props), *All Shook Up*, *Grease*, and *Beehive: The 60's Musical*. You can always catch her thinking creatively in how to turn a simple object into that next perfect prop! Claire wants to thank her parents and family for always believing in her.

## Production Team & Crew of *The Miss Firecracker Contest*

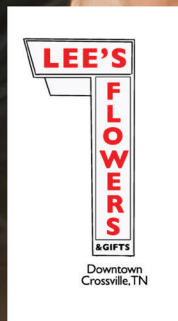
<b>Lighting Supervisor:</b>	Tyler Evans
<b>Assitant Lighting Supervisor:</b>	David Kappel
<b>Electricians:</b>	Carson Brown, Tyler Evans, David Kappel
<b>Set Construction:</b>	Carson Brown, Aaron Capps, Tyler Evans, Katy Fagiolo, Gabe Gettel, Jere Hassberger, Jill Hassberger, Tapaynga Hill, Mickail Holloway, Kayla Jenkins, David Kappel, Denise Kappel, Patty McGary, Coe Olson, Jeremiah Ordway, JJ Ramsey, Mark Richie, Xander Ricks, Jorge Rodriguez, Brendon Thompson, Jim Torgerson, Ava Whittaker, Claire Wylie, Summer Interns, Summer Apprentices
<b>Scenic Charge Artist:</b>	Jill Hassberger
<b>Painters:</b>	Glenna Dame, Ashleigh Duncan, Jill Hassberger, Mickail Holloway, Coe Olson, Summer Interns, Summer Apprentices
<b>Costume Shop Manager:</b>	Kimberly Stark
<b>Head of Wardrobe:</b>	Victoria Hughes
<b>Costume Construction:</b>	Debbie Douglas, Victoria Hughes, Lauren Marshall, Leslie Mullican, Patty Payne, Cody Von Ruden, Kimberly Stark
<b>Wigs:</b>	Jensen Crain-Foster (Designer), Darbi Green
<b>Props Construction:</b>	Cameron Collins, Ashleigh Duncan, Katy Fagiolo, Harli Graham, Robin Houghton, David Kappel, Denise Kappel, Jill Hassberger, Coe Olson, Kimberly Stark, Claire Wylie
<b>Audio:</b>	Aaron Capps, Patty McGary, Jacob Miller, Peri Watson
<b>Light Board Operator:</b>	Kayla Jenkins
<b>Sound Board Operator:</b>	Aaron Capps
<b>Running Crew:</b>	Kyra Crosby, Ava Whittaker
<b>Wardrobe:</b>	Elle Fecteau
<b>Rehearsal Assistants:</b>	Katy Fagiolo, Coe Olson
<b>Summer Interns:</b>	CarlyBeth Butler, Eli hoate, Cameron Collins, Kyra Crosby, Robin Houghton, Ava Lillie Moody, Sarah Kate Norris, Riley Keegan
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Cumberland County **PLAYHOUSE** 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary season

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# MEET THE CAST OF THE *Miss* FIRECRACKER CONTEST

By Beth Henley



DeAnna Helgeson, Carnelle Scott



Mary Humphrey, Popeye Jackson



Heather McCall, Elaine Rutledge



Caleb Sager, Delmont Williams



Michael Ruff, Mac Sam



Caitlin Schaub, Tessy Mahoney

**Rated PG, May 23 – July 27**


Co-sponsored by Ken & Grace Patton



**Directed by Harli Cooper Graham**

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>May</b>					Firecracker	Firecracker
					Opening	Sh-Boom!
					23	24
Firecracker		Sh-Boom!		Firecracker	Sh-Boom!	Sh-Boom! Firecracker
25	26	27	28	29	30	31





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<b>June</b>		Firecracker		Firecracker	Firecracker	Firecracker
Sh-Boom! Closing						Firecracker
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Firecracker		Firecracker		Firecracker	Firecracker	Firecracker
8	5	10	11	12	13	14
Firecracker		Firecracker			Hairspray Opening	Hairspray Firecracker
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Hairspray		Hairspray		Firecracker	SPARC JR. Recital Hairspray	Hairspray Speakeasy
22	23	24 SPARC JR.	25 SPARC JR.	26 SPARC JR.	27	28
Hairspray					<b>July 25 - September 14</b>	
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Snow in the Glade

McAdoo resigns,  
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**LATE SEATING:** Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the Front of House Manager.

**HEARING ASSISTANCE:** The Playhouse has assistive listening devices available free of charge from the Box Office prior to the show. Devices should be returned to Box Office or Front of House Manager after the show. T-Coil is also available for those who wear hearing devices. If you do not know how to turn your T-Coil on, please check with the Box Office or with your provider for assistance.

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**ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCES:**

American Sign Language will be available for certain performances throughout the year. Please check with the Box Office for those options.

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