

DESIGNING WOMEN, THE PLAY

This Spring the Public Theatre of Kentucky is excited to be producing the Kentucky premiere of *DESIGNING WOMEN, THE PLAY* by Linda Bloodworth-Thomas. Written by the author of the iconic TV Series from the 1990s, it premiered in 2021 to sold-out houses in a co-production at Theatre Squared and Arkansas Rep.

Set in Atlanta during the 2020 elections, the play provides a fresh, topical update on the original characters of Sugarbaker's Design Firm. We meet the characters from the series, but we pick up in 2020, and the women have aged just a few years from when the series ended. The women partners are in their 40s and 50s.

We find the ladies negotiating not only their ever-evolving relationship, but also their conflicting opinions on all that is going on in America right now. Deeply divided on a plethora of cultural and political issues (and despite humor-fueled discussions about all of them), the women eventually reach a previously unfathomable decision to sell Sugarbaker's and go their separate ways. How they make their way back to each other and manage to cobble a fragile rapprochement (without compromising themselves or their personal beliefs) serves as the unifying theme of the play. It is a classic situation comedy, and there is a lot of humor, skewering Southern stereotypes of all kinds.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

JULIA SUGARBAKER - 50s-60s - Sugarbaker's chief designer and resident sage now has her own, liberal podcast. Devoted to her only son, Julia has never re-married and is just as formidable as ever – an ultra-southern, elegant, charming, seductive, elocutionist and verbal assassin who still knows how to, “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee!”

MARY JO SHIVELY- 40s-50s, single mom-turned-empty-nester. Progressive, up-to-date on all trends and current events -- funny, sardonic quipster. Mary Jo has evolved from being a modest, self-effacing young wife (who put her ex through medical school) to an unapologetic, full-fledged feminist and confident mover and shaker in Atlanta's design world.

CHARLENE FRAZIER - 40s-50s, Missouri born, the oldest of eleven children -- tall, big-hearted, effortlessly sexy and still madly in love with her military husband. Her only daughter, Olivia, is now having a baby girl of her own. Charlene is super organized, uber-responsible -- a DIY whiz who loves playing the lottery and going to psychics.

CLEO BOUVIER - Black, 40s. Anthony's cousin. Ex-schoolteacher, lesbian, master gardener. Married to a Jamaican poetry professor and mother of a thirteen-year-old daughter, Cleo is especially offended by the current under-read, over-exposed, Kardashian, selfie culture. She does not suffer fools gladly.

HALLIE MCFEE - Mid-30s - Charlene's baby sister. (Being the oldest, Charlene, practically raised her.) Sweet, sheltered, evangelical, former stay-at-home mom – incurably enthusiastic and imbued with Charlene's love of learning, Hallie is a high school graduate who has already read

The Hundred Greatest Books Ever Written (as prescribed by Reader's Digest). She is thrilled to be Sugarbaker's new receptionist (her first professional gig) and is in complete awe of her new bosses.

WYNN DOLLARHYDE (Contractor) - 50s-60s. The current romantic interest of both Julia and Suzanne Sugarbaker. Ruggedly attractive, Atlanta contractor and builder, with a languid Georgia drawl. Sensitive, masculine, Wynn exudes a quiet, bemused calmness – suggesting a man who seems like he has a lot to tell but is never going to tell it.

CAULDER CLAY (Suzanne's ex-husband) - mid-40s-50s. Suzanne's soon to be ex, heir to a gargantuan Atlanta family car-dealership. Over-grown frat boy, chronic philanderer, big-game hunter and county club aficionado. Or, as Julia is fond of saying, "always seems like he just stepped out of a Dixie Chicks song."