

## North Denver Tribune

# Driving Miss Daisy meaningful, funny, heartbreakingly beautiful

August 1, 2012 by [admin](#)



by Craig Williamson |

LODO – For the last five years, Senior Housing Options (SHO) has presented a play as a fundraiser in the lobby of the historic Hotel Barth in Downtown Denver. SHO provides subsidized housing at the Barth and 13 other facilities across the state for low income and disabled seniors. This year's offering is the thoughtful comedy *Driving Miss Daisy*, by Alfred Uhry. This touching play is about aging, race, rich and poor, and most of all, friendship.

Alfred Uhry's *Driving Miss Daisy*, first produced as a play in 1987 and then adapted for film two years later, is the story of the friendship between a white Jewish widow and her black driver in Atlanta, spanning the 25 years from 1948 to 1973. Stubbornly independent, Miss Daisy initially refuses the driver her son has hired, then tolerates him, then grows to appreciate him as a friend. Uhry's script is touching and meaningful without overt sentiment.

Ashlee Temple took over directing duties this year from Terry Dodd, who directed the previous productions at the Barth. She handles the material very well, highlighting the relationships and the depth of meaning in the script, revealed both through comedy and more serious moments. The overall tone the show is perfect. However, there were a few key moments when the blocking choices didn't quite work for the thrust staging with audience on three sides. One actor blocked my view of the other, even though I was in the center of the middle section.

The acting in this show is phenomenal. Billie McBride is stubborn, strong, and opinionated as Daisy. Her frustration at losing her independence is completely clear and believable. Sam Gregory plays her son, Boolie, and the two really capture the give and take of a mother-son relationship, and how that relationship changes as both age. As the driver, Hoke, Dwayne Carrington is the perfect balance of respect and opinion – he knows how far he can push things in the world he lives in, and never goes too far. He relates to the other two in different ways, but appropriately for each. Perhaps the biggest challenge of this play is that given the time span, the characters must age 25 years. Carrington and McBride both age very convincingly, changing physically, emotionally, and even vocally.

SHO stages their plays environmentally – this is not a formal theater, but the lobby of a hotel with temporary seating on risers, and lights on booms. The set consists of furniture only, and the car is just two chairs. This simple approach works for this show. Stuart Barr's lighting design is reasonably effective, highlighting the acting areas, but did not cover quite as much area as needed in a couple of scenes. Nicole Harrison's costumes were appropriate to

the time period and the class and race expectations of the time. El Armstrong's sound design, consisting of perfectly appropriate transition music, established the time and the overall tone of each scene very well.

*Driving Miss Daisy* is a play about friendship, an unlikely close friendship that develops over 25 years between Daisy and Hoke, told against the backdrop of changing times. It is a lovely story, told well, that elicits gentle smiles, some full laughter, and a few tears. In the end, these talented actors connect with each other to deliver heartbreakingly beautiful performances. While sad at times, this play also affirms the value of people and friendships, even with all our faults, leaving the audience feeling good about life. *Driving Miss Daisy* at The Barth is a wonderful and touching way to spend an evening, and benefits a worthy cause.

#### Driving Miss Daisy

*Driving Miss Daisy will be performed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8:00 through August 18, with additional performances August 6 and 15, in the lobby of the Hotel Barth at 1510 17th Street in downtown Denver. Proceeds from the performance benefit Senior Housing Options. Tickets are \$25-\$35. Group discounts are available. To purchase tickets, or for more information about this production or about SHO, visit their website at <http://seniorhousingoptions.org/events/current-events/driving-miss-daisy-info/>. *Driving Miss Daisy* runs about 90 minutes and is presented without intermission. Parking downtown is always a challenge, especially if there is a Rockies home game. But if you time it well, and don't arrive too early, you can see the show and get back to your car in just under the two-hour parking meter limit.*