



Honky Tonk Angels

Book By Ted Swindley

Music By Country's Greatest Song Writers

JULY 14 – AUG. 20

 theREP ★



Maggie Mancinelli-Cahill
Producing Artistic Director

Philip Morris
Chief Executive Officer

**theREP
presents**
**Ted Swindley's
HONKY TONK ANGELS**

Featuring
(in alphabetical order)

Erin Edelle*
Elizabeth Nestlerode*
Kara-Tameika Watkins*

Christopher Rhoton+
Set Design

Sera Bourgeau
Costume Design

Travis McHale+
Lighting Design

Jeffrey Salerno
Sound Design

Michael Dunn
Wig Stylist

Harry Lumb & Josh D. Smith
Musical Arrangements

Stephanie Klapper, csa
Casting Director

Christopher B. Sadler*
Production Stage Manager

Rose Biggerstaff*
Assistant Stage Manager

Kate Kern*
Assistant Stage Manager

Musical Direction
Mark Galinovsky

Directed and Choreographed by
Gary John La Rosa++

Presented by special arrangement with Stage Rights (www.stagerights.com)

*Denotes Member of AEA

+ denotes member of USA



++ denotes member of SDC



Capital Repertory Theatre

Honky Tonk Angels

A Note from the Director

"Honky Tonk Angels" premiered at the American Theatre Company in Tulsa, Oklahoma in May of 1998. Written by Ted Swindley and featuring the classic music of Tammy Wynette, Loretta Lynn, Kitty Wells, Bobbie Gentry and Dolly Parton (among others), as well as some traditional songs, it has since been seen across the nation in hundreds of successful productions over the last 25 years.

"Honky Tonk," as told by three gals following their "Music City" dreams to Nashville, is a favorite of country music fans and theatregoers alike and often creates new ones with every performance. The popularity of the show led author Swindley to create two sequels. *"The Honky Tonk Angels Holiday Spectacular"* has the Angels story continuing with more hits and hijinks at a reunion concert. In *"Honky Tonk Angels and the Mystery of Bubba's Revenge!"*, a country western-style Halloween seance, a foot-stompin' gospel jubilee, and a "psychically sensitive" beer-drinkin' Bubba all combine in the final installment of the trilogy. No doubt, all three shows will endure for many years to come.

Swindley, a South Carolinian, is best known for creating the entertaining and touching musical, *"Always...Patsy Cline."* This hugely successful show was an earlier foray into the country music oeuvre and celebrates the legendary life and music of Patsy Cline, who tragically died at the age of thirty at the peak of stardom. Swindley, who has always loved the powerful voices of archetypal female country singers, found a way to feature them live in all these shows, with a little sass, a lot of humor and a good dose of warmth thrown in for good measure.

As we all know, the last few years have been challenging. So, we felt some very tuneful music and a little light-hearted fun was in order. Mark, the cast and I have had a wonderful time working on

this show. Heartfelt thanks to my wonderful designers and theREP collaborators and author Ted Swindley for his continued friendship. A special thank you to Artistic Director Maggie Mancinelli-Cahill for welcoming me into her artistic family with love and trust.



We have had more than a few laughs in rehearsal and have found the music to be iconic, entertaining and often inspiring. We celebrate the themes of the power of friendship, never letting go of your dreams and women's empowerment. We hope you will too.

Gary John La Rosa
Director - Choreographer

Capital Repertory Theatre

Honky Tonk Angels

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Angela.....ERIN EDELLE*

Darlene.....ELIZABETH NESTLERODE *

Sue Ellen.....KARA-TAMEIKA WATKINS*

Swing..... NICOLE ZELKA*

Understudy (Darlene).... MADALYN MONTGOMERY

The Band

MARK GALINOVSKY – Piano / Conductor

NICHOLAS DWARICKA - Bass

TIM HOUSTON – Steel Guitar / Dobro

IAN KERR-MACE – Percussion

HARRY LUMB – Guitar

LUCY NELLIGAN – Fiddle / Mandolin

PHOTOGRAPHY ADVISORY

As a courtesy made possible by the rules and regulations of United Scenic Artists (USA) and the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), photos of the set are permitted **before the show and at intermission and may be shared on social media.**

ABSOLUTELY NO PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO OR ANY OTHER RECORDING IS PERMITTED AT ANY TIME DURING THE SHOW. VIOLATORS WILL BE ASKED TO SURRENDER AND DELETE ALL PHOTOS BEFORE LEAVING THE THEATRE.

Meet the Cast

Erin Edelle* as Angela

Erin Edelle, a Kingston local, is thrilled to be back up on stage, and this time, so close to home. National tours: "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" (Mrs. Potts), "Shrek the Musical" (Mama Ogre/Mama Bear/Dragon), "The Drowsy Chaperone." Other credits include: Disney Cruise Line ("Tangled: the Musical" premiere cast), "Nunsense," "Sweeney Todd," "Tommy," "Godspell," "Rent," "The Light in the Piazza." Huge thanks to everyone at theREP, and especially Mark and Gary John for another chance to chew all the scenery. Love to my Nicky. As always, for Mom. @erinrosee



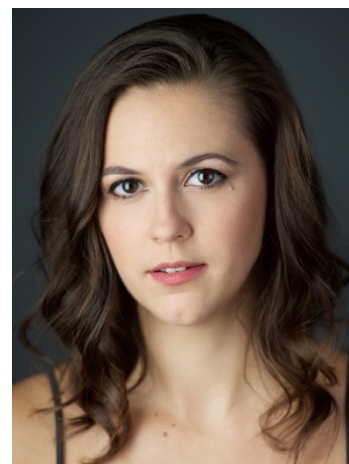
Madalyn Montgomery as Understudy

Madalyn Montgomery is so ecstatic to be back at theREP! Recent Credits: "Reframe of The Last Five Years" (Cathy 3) at Nazareth University, "Selections of The Tempest" at Shakespeare's Globe, "Jersey Boys" (Francine) at theREP. Love and thanks to family, friends, Bill Daugherty for their endless support and the Honky Tonk Angels team for an incredible summer!
@madalyn.a.montgomery



Elizabeth Nestlerode* as Darlene

Elizabeth Nestlerode is thrilled to return after playing Evelyn/Mary Bailey in "It's A Wonderful Life." Off-Broadway/New York: "The Other Josh Cohen" (Diane Cohen, u/s Woman 1), "Gypsy" (Louise), "The Meanest Birthday Girl" (MBG), Regional: "Ebenezer"...San Diego Christmas Show (Ghost of Christmas Present & others) at the Old Globe, 4 productions of "Once"(Girl) including Cape Playhouse, Actors Playhouse, 3 productions of "Ring of Fire" (June Carter Cash) Violet (Violet) ..."Spelling Bee"(Olive), "Buddy Holly" (Vi – director Hunter Foster) 54 Forever (director Tommy Tune). TV: "The Late Show with David Letterman." AEA Member. Instagram: @elizabethnestlerode
www.elizabethnestlerode.com

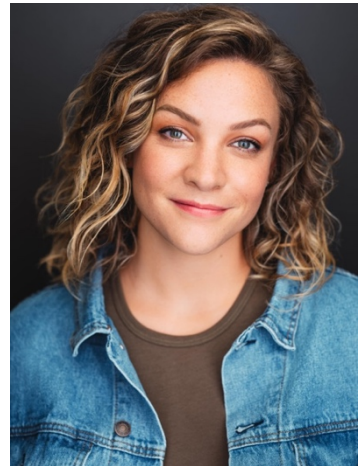


Kara-Tameika Watkins* as Sue Ellen

Kara-Tameika Watkins (Sue Ellen) is pleased as punch to make her Capital Repertory Theatre debut! Other credits include "Rock of Ages" at Arts Center of Coastal Caroline; "Carman: An Afro-Cuban Musical," "Peter Pan," "Miss You Like Hell" at Olney Theatre; "Passing Strange," "Daphne's Dive," "Dreamgirls," "Hairspray," "A Funny Thing...Forum," and "Light Years" at Signature Theatre; "Crowns," "Smokey Joe's Cafe," "The Pajama Game" at Arena Stage; "Little Shop of Horrors," "Children of Eden" at Ford's Theatre; "Caroline or Change" at Studio Theatre; "Once on This Island," "Caroline or Change" at Roundhouse Theatre; "Barnum" and "Leader of the Pack" at Totem Pole Playhouse; "Ain't Misbehavin'" at Barter Theatre; "Hairspray" at PCLO, Northshore Music Theatre and the Nevada productions of "Hairspray" and "Smokey Joe's Cafe." Member AEA.

**Nicole Zelka* as Swing**

Nicole Zelka (Swing)-So excited to be spending another summer at theREP after appearing last summer as Lorraine/Others in "Jersey Boys". Other credits at theREP include Lisa in "Mamma Mia!" and Estelle in "The Full Monty." National Tour: R&H's "Cinderella" (Gabrielle, u/s Marie), "Elf" (Ensemble, u/s Emily, u/s Deb), "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" (Ensemble, u/s Mrs. Teavee, u/s Mrs. Gloop). Proud LDC artist. Thank you to the Honky Tonk team & Maggie. Love to the fam!
@nicolezelka / nicolezelka.com



Meet the Creatives

Christopher Rhoton+ – Scenic Designer

Christopher Rhoton (Scenic Designer) - Christopher is thrilled to be making his design debut at Capital Rep. He has designed productions all over the country and internationally. Some of his favorite credits include Associate Scenic Designer for the West End production of *The Prince of Egypt* in London and *Into the Woods* at the Hollywood Bowl. Upcoming productions include *The Life & Slimes of Marc Summers* coming soon to Gretna Theatre in Pennsylvania and Alleyway Theatre in Buffalo. He is currently the Assistant Art Director for *Pretty Little Liars: Summer School* for HBO, and previously for *Poker Face* for Peacock. For more information, please visit his website at www.Christopher-Rhoton.com or find him on IMDb.

Sera Bourgeau – Costume Designer

Sera Bourgeau (Costume Designer): Selected Design Credits Include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Capital Rep), *Honky Tonk Angels* (Artistree Music Theatre Festival), *Some Lovers*, *Nikola Tesla Drops the Beat*, *Knights of the Sales Office*, *The Boy in the Bathroom* (Adirondack Theatre Festival), *Something Happens for Joe* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Still Life With Iris* (Long Wharf Theatre), *Pete(Her) Pan, Jr.* (Northern Stage), *Battle of Angels* (Blessed Unrest/New Ohio Theatre/Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival), *Nickel Mines* (New York Musical Theatre Festival, ACT of Connecticut), *Sound of Music*, *Intimate Apparel* (Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center). *The Lion in Winter*, *Chapter Two*, *Outside Mullingar* (Cape May Stage). MFA: University of California, Irvine. BA: University of New Hampshire. @serabourgeau www.serabourgeau.com

Travis McHale+ – Lighting Designer

Travis McHale (Lighting Designer) Capital Rep: *Jersey Boys*, *Shakespeare In Love*, *His Eye is On The Sparrow*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Camelot*, *The Irish...*, *Blithe Spirit* and others. Recent designs include *Get Happy! A Judy Garland Celebration* (Carnegie Hall) *Is There Still Sex In The City?*, *Mister Miss America*, and *#DateMe* (off-Broadway), and over a dozen shows for Norwegian, Regent, Oceania, & Carnival Cruises. Regional Theatre: Alabama Shakespeare, Bucks County Playhouse, Cape Playhouse, Northern Stage, Riverside Theatre, Theatre Aspen, Westport Country Playhouse, Weston Theatre Company, among others. Broadway: Associate Designer for 11 shows and tours, including *Sunset Boulevard* and *Something Rotten!* Seven seasons designing for NY Fashion Week. Faculty: SUNY New Paltz. Member: USA829. www.travismchale.com

Jeffrey Salerno – Sound Designer

Jeffrey Salerno (He/him) is a New York City based Sound Designer. He is thrilled to be returning to Capital Repertory Theatre after having designed *THE WIZARD OF OZ* last Fall. Jeffrey's work has been heard throughout the North East and has been awarded with the 2022 CT Region Broadway World's Best Sound Design for *THE AGITATORS*. Most recently Jeffrey designed *INDECENT* at Playhouse on Park in West Hartford, CT, which was nominated for a 2023 CT Critics Choice Award and *THE STARS ABOVE: AN ALL AMERICAN OPEN AIR CIRCUS* with Hideaway Circus. Off Broadway Jeffrey was Associate Sound Designer to Nathan Leigh on *SPACE DOGS* at MCC. Other regional credits include Berkshire Theatre Group: *GODSPELL*, *WHAT THE*

JEWS BELIEVE; Northern Stage: *SIDE BY SIDE BY SONDHEIM*. Jeffrey also regularly designs at Siena College including this spring's production of *DR. FAUSTUS*. Jeffrey would like to thank his fiancé Melanie, his cat Thomas, and his friends and family for their love, support and constant music recommendations. For more information about his current or past projects and what's coming up next, visit www.jeffreysalerno.com--

Harry Lumb – Co-Arranger, Lead Guitar

Harry Lumb is a Schenectady-based guitarist and orchestrator specializing in musical theater; he has played at many theaters on the East Coast. This is Harry's sixth production here at Capital Rep, and the fourth he has contributed musical arrangements to; he hopes to enjoy many more productions in the future.

Josh D. Smith – Co-Arranger

Josh D. Smith is delighted to return to Capital Repertory Theatre! Past productions include; *Ethel Waters: His Eye is On the Sparrow*, *The Full Monty*, *Ring Of Fire*, *She Loves Me*, *Camelot* And *The Secret Garden*. He is an Associate Artist at the REP. He has performed, music directed and/or accompanied numerous productions throughout the US—from Arizona to Maine. Capital Region audiences may recognize Josh as former resident Musical Director at the Mac-Haydn Theatre in Chatham, NY and the Artistic Director for the ArtisTree Music Theatre Festival in Woodstock, VT. His musical arrangements can be heard in venues across the country including Feinstein's/54 Below, The Green Room 42 and The Laurie Beechman Theatre in Manhattan. Josh is originally from Syracuse, NY. Proud member of Actors' Equity and American Federation of Musicians Local 802.

Stephanie Klapper - Casting Director

Stephanie Klapper is elated to return to working with Maggie, the Capital Rep family, and the *Honky Tonk Angels* creative team. SKC's award-winning work is frequently seen on Broadway, off-Broadway, regionally, on film, television, and streaming media. Stephanie, along with her exceptional team, is dedicated to continuing to expand and champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in the business. Connecting creative, caring people to each other to make extraordinary things happen is amongst her greatest joys. Ms. Klapper is passionate about arts education and working with creative teams to develop and expand the scope of established and new works. Ms. Klapper is a member of the National Board of the Casting Society of America, Casting Society Cares, and New York Women in Film.

Christopher B. Sadler* – Production Stage Manager

Christopher B. Sadler is thrilled to be returning to Albany for his eighth production with theRep since 2002, most recently as stage manager for *An Iliad* in 2017. Professor at The University of Oklahoma's Helmerich School of Drama, he heads up the stage management emphasis and teaches multiple courses in stage management and dramatic literature. Chris has a successful freelancing career, having been on stage management teams for over 100 productions at theatres nationwide. He is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association and is co-editor and contributor to *Off Headset: Essays on Stage Management Work, Life, and Career*, published in 2022 by Focal Press/Routledge and USITT.

Rose Biggerstaff* - Assistant Stage Manager

Rose Biggerstaff - Assistant Stage Manager is thrilled to be back working with theRep! Prior to working on Honky Tonk Angels, Rose has worked both backstage and on stage! Past credits include directing and stage managing with companies such as Northeast Theater Ensemble, SLOC, BrownBox Productions, NSCP, Proctors, as well as many others. Outside of theatre she enjoys painting, reading and going on hikes. Wishing broken legs to the cast and crew who have worked tirelessly to put this show on stage!

Kate Kern* – Assistant Stage Manager

Kate is absolutely thrilled to be one of the ASMs on this wonderful production of Honky Tonk Angels. Kate loves working with Capital Repertory Theatre and has worked as an occasional Stage Manager and the Assistant Company Manager for the past few years. Kate is also a company member of Troy Foundry Theatre, where she has worked as the Production Stage Manager for shows such as Illium Burns: Where There's Smoke and City Of Myth: Illium Sings. She is also proud to have worked with wonderful companies such as Black Theatre Troupe, Proctors, and the Theatre Institute At Sage. Kate is a recent graduate from Russell Sage College-majoring in Business Administration and Theatre, where she was the Stage Manager for 4 years at the Theatre Institute At Sage; Stupid F#cking Bird, The Diary of Anne Frank, Oliver, Tribes, and many more. Kate loves working with the people at Capital Repertory Theatre, and she wants to thank her family, friends, and NJH for all their support.

Gary John La Rosa++ – Director/Choreographer

Gary John La Rosa (Director/Choreographer) is so pleased to be joining Capital Repertory Theatre with his third production of Honky Tonk Angels. La Rosa has staged over 250 productions nationally including the national tour of Footloose; the World Premiere of Michael Ching's A Midsummer Night's Dream (Opera Memphis; recording: Albany Records); Always...Patsy Cline and Sister Act at Virginia Musical Theatre; Candide at Cabrillo Stage in CA; Nunsense and The Fantasticks at ArtisTree in VT; and Buddy: the Buddy Holly Story at Long Island's new Argyle Theatre. Other credits include: Marry Me a Little (starring Sally Mayes and Brent Barrett); The Sound of Music at Ogunquit Playhouse (starring Rex Smith); Les Misérables, The Light in the Piazza and Next to Normal (Ostrander Award – Direction of a Musical) at Playhouse on the Square in Memphis; Fiddler on the Roof (starring Brad Oscar) at Barrington Stage Company (2 BroadwayWorld Awards) and at the St Louis MUNY (Judy Award) / Starlight Theatre in Kansas City; The Full Monty at Phoenix Theatre; La Cage aux Folles at Downtown Cabaret (Connecticut Critic's Award Outstanding Direction); Die Fledermaus at Finger Lakes Opera and numerous productions at Broadway Sacramento, WV Public, Maine State Music Theatre; Theatre by the Sea; and the Fulton Theatre in PA.

He is also respected for recreating the original Robbins staging for Fiddler on the Roof and has done so for dozens of productions, as well as directing its 50th Anniversary Broadway celebration (starring Topol, Sheldon Harnick, Joshua Bell, and a cast of 90) and appears in the documentary "Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles." Gary John has been a Guest Director at more

than a dozen universities (Adjunct Faculty at Montclair State University in NJ), has staged over 100 corporate theatre shows (including Samsung, Canon, Johnson & Johnson, Transitions, and True Value) and is a mentor at the Drama League. A UCLA graduate, he is a former performer with credits that include Broadway and National/International tours. A special thank you to John D. Smith. www.garyjohnlarosa.com

Ted Swindley - Playwright

Ted Swindley is internationally known as writer and director of the popular musical, *Always... Patsy Cline*. He is the founding artistic director of Stages Theatre in Houston, Texas. He was also named to the Esquire Magazine's register of outstanding Americans in Arts and Letters. Mr. Swindley was the recipient of the Los Angeles Dramalogue Award for outstanding direction of *Carnal Knowledge* by Jules Feiffer. Currently, he is president of Ted Swindley Productions, Inc., a theatrical licensing and consulting company, and continues his 40-year career writing plays and musicals, consulting and mentoring playwrights, as well as directing plays & musicals for various theatres throughout the U.S. and abroad. For more info, go to www.tedswindleyproductions.com

Musical Numbers

ACT I

Setting: Angela's trailer in Waxahachie, TX,
Darlene's yard in the Mississippi Delta,
Sue Ellen's office in Los Angeles,
and on a Greyhound bus bound for Nashville

IT WASN'T GOD WHO MADE HONKY TONK ANGELS.....	The Band
I'LL FLY AWAY.....	All
STAND BY YOUR MAN.....	Angela
COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER	Darlene
9 TO 5.....	Sue Ellen
ODE TO BILLY JOE.....	Darlene
DON'T COME HOME A DRINKIN'.....	Angela
THE PILL.....	Angela
THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKING.....	Sue Ellen
I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.....	All
PARADISE ROAD.....	All
DELTA DAWN.....	All
CALLING ALL ANGELS.....	All
TIME FOR ME TO FLY / I'LL FLY AWAY	All

- There will be a 15 minute intermission -

ACT II

Setting: "Honky Tonk Heaven," a bar in Nashville

YOUR GOOD GIRLS GONNA GO BAD.....	All
IT WASN'T GOD WHO MADE HONKY TONK ANGELS.....	All
NIGHTLIFE.....	All
CLEOPATRA, QUEEN OF DENIAL.....	Sue Ellen with Angela, Darlene
HARPER VALLEY PTA.....	Angela
FANCY.....	Darlene
ROCKY TOP.....	Sue Ellen & Darlene
BARROOM HABITS.....	Angela
CORNELL CRAWFORD.....	Sue Ellen
ALMOST PERSUADED.....	Angela
SITTIN' ON THE FRONT PORCH SWING.....	All
ANGELS AMONG US.....	All
WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN?.....	All
I'LL FLY AWAY (Reprise)	All
SILVER THREADS AND GOLDEN NEEDLES.....	The Band

MUSIC PUBLISHING CREDITS

<u>Song Title</u>	<u>Author(s)/Composer(s)</u>	<u>Publishers</u>
Act One		
<i>I'll Fly Away</i>	Traditional	
<i>Stand By Your Man</i>	Sherrill/Wynette	EMI Al Gallico Music Group
<i>Coal Miner's Daughter</i>	Lynn	Sunfire Music
<i>9 to 5</i>	Parton	Velvet Apple Music/ Warner/Tamerlane-Fox
<i>Ode to Billy Joe</i>	Gentry	MCA
<i>Don't Come Home a Drinkin'</i>	Lynn/Wells	Sunfire Music
<i>The Pill</i>	Lynn/Bayless/McHan	Loretta Lynn Ent.
<i>These Boot Are Made for Walking</i>	L. Hazelwood	Theory Music
<i>I Will Always Love You</i>	Parton	Velvet Apple Music
<i>Paradise Road</i>	Parton	Velvet Apple Music
<i>Delta Dawn</i>	Harvey/Collins	EMI
<i>Calling All Angels</i>	Stewart	MCA
<i>Time For Me to Fly</i>	Cronin	Fate Music
<i>I'll Fly Away</i>	Traditional	
Act Two		
<i>Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad</i>	Sherrill/Sutton	EMI Al Gallico Music
<i>It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels</i>	Miller	Peer Int.
<i>Night Life</i>	Nelson/Breeland/Buskirk	Sony/ATV/Tree Glad Music
<i>Cleopatra, Queen of Denial</i>	Weinstein	Big Wedge Music
<i>Harper Valley PTA</i>	Hall	Warner/Chappell
<i>Fancy</i>	Gentry	MCA
<i>Rocky Top</i>	F. Bryant/B. Bryant	House of Bryant
<i>Barroom Habits</i>	Kemp	Sony/ATV/Tree
<i>Cornell Crawford</i>	Oslin/Miller	Arthur Aaron JPM International
<i>Almost Persuaded</i>	Sherrill/Sutton	EMI Al Gallico Music
<i>Sittin' On the Front Porch Swing</i>	Sheffield	Unknown
<i>Angels Among Us</i>	Hobbs/Goodman	Sony/ATV
<i>Will the Circle Be Unbroken</i>	Traditional	
<i>Time for Me to Fly</i>	Cronin	Fate Music
<i>I'll Fly Away</i>	Traditional	



Honky Tonk Angels

**The Women of (and that MADE)
Country Music!**

**BY MEGAN DELLENBAUGH, DRAMATURGY
INTERN AT THEREP**

"Honky Tonk Angels," written by Ted Swindley, premiered in May 1998 in Tulsa, OK, at the American Theater Company. Following three girls on their way to fulfilling their dreams of country music stardom, "Honky Tonk Angels" is "a highly enjoyable revue" and "a raucous and enjoyable evening of entertainment," according to the Chicago Tribune and the North Bay Stage and Screen, respectively.

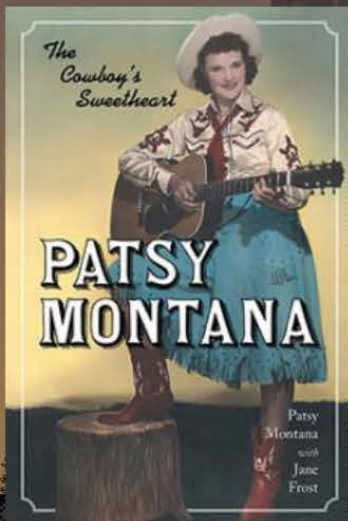
It is the first musical in a trilogy; also featuring the Christmas-themed "Honky Tonk Angels Holiday Spectacular" and Halloween-themed "Honky Tonk Angels and the Mystery of Bubba's Revenge!" All three shows are packed with classic country music hits—hits that would not exist without the dozens of women who developed the country genre.

1920s

Singer Sara Carter formed one of the first country music groups with her sister-in-law Mother Maybelle Carter and her husband. Calling the group the Carter Family, they traveled from Maces Springs, VA, to Bristol, TE, to record songs that quickly became successful. On her 1928 songs "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" and "Wildwood Flower," Maybelle uses a guitar technique now called the "Carter Scratch" that is considered the moment where "country music" emerges. The Carter Scratch involves strumming the top strings and picking out the melody on the bottom strings. Listen to "Wildwood Flower" at the end of the document and try to pick out the Carter Scratch.



1930s



Country music began being played on radio programs like the Grand Ole Opry and Chicago's National Barn Dance. Kitty Cora Cline became the Grand Ole Opry's first female soloist in 1928 and performed on the radio show throughout the 30s. The Opry House in Nashville, TE, is known as the home of country music. Patsy Montana had a "yodeling cowgirl style" that broke her out of just the Chicago Barn Dance and later got her inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1996. Listen to "I Wanna Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" at the end of the document.

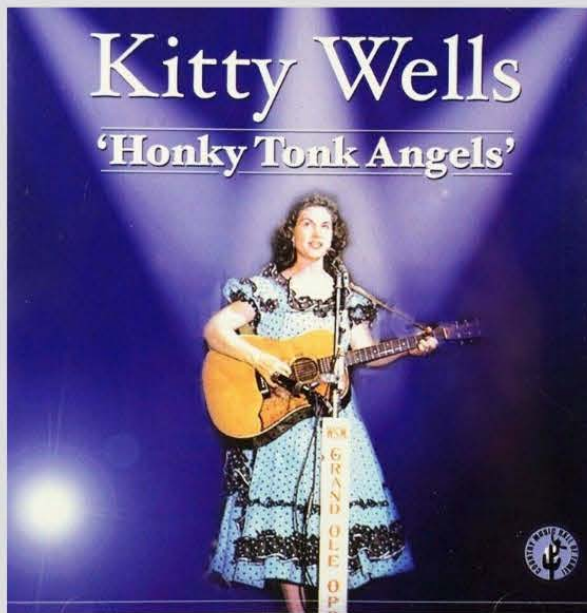
1940s

Minnie Pearl, a comedienne from the Southern independent theater circuit, brought her hillbilly humor to the Grand Ole Opry. Greeting the audiences with “How-w-w-DEE-E-E-E! I’m jest so proud to be here!” then telling them funny stories about her hometown of Grinder’s Switch, TE. Her hillbilly humor went on to inspire the character of country music. Listen to her iconic greeting at the end of the document.



Minnie Pearl

1950s



Getting her start as the frontwoman in the Tennessee Hillbillies and the Tennessee Mountain Boys, Kitty Wells released “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels” in 1952.

The song became the first single by a female singer to hit number one on the Billboard Country Music chart, where it lived for six weeks. It is the song the musical is named after and appears in all three musicals of the "Honky Tonk" trilogy.

Wells produced thirty-six top-ten country singles, becoming the first solo country artist to have a number-one single, sell a million records and headline a major tour. She was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1976. Listen to “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels” at the end of the document.



1960s

The combination of pop and country transformed the genre into “countrypolitan,” a smoother sound further from the bluegrass/folk roots of the genre. Both Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn got their start in the late 50s, gaining star status by the 60s. Patsy Cline’s hits “I Fall To Pieces” and “Crazy” helped evolve the country sound to more modern music. She died in 1963 in a plane crash. She was the first solo female artist inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame (1973).

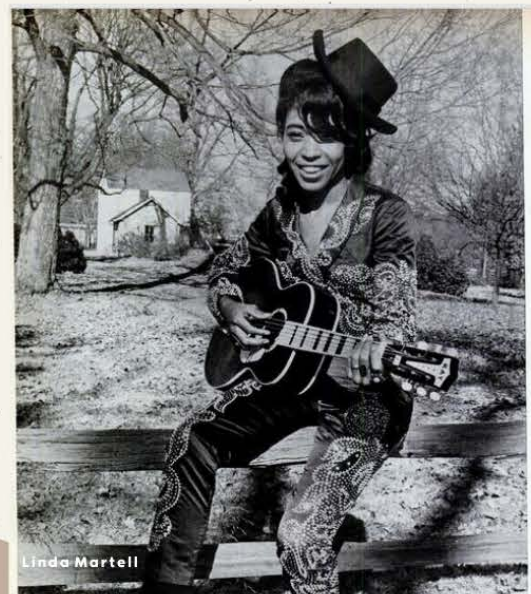


Loretta Lynn created a reputation as an outspoken feminist housewife, releasing hit songs like “I’m a Honky Tonk Girl” and “Don’t Come Home A Drinkin’ (With Lovin’ on Your Mind).” She released “Coal Miner’s Daughter” in 1970, an autobiographical song that was her first single to chart on the Billboard Hot 100. Vibrant and active until her death in 2022, Lynn is known as the most famous female country artist to date.

Listen to their hits “I Fall to Pieces” and “Coal Miner’s Daughter” at the end of the document.

In 1969, Linda Martell became the first Black female artist to have a Top 25 country song with her cover of “Color Him Father” by The Winstons. She was also the first Black woman to perform on the Grand Ole Opry.

Unfortunately, her career was relegated to obscurity because of her race, and while other Black country artists were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, Martell was not. Listen to her cover of “Color Him Father” at the end of the document..



1970s

Known as one of the most iconic decades for country music, the 70s created famous female country singers like Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton, and Tanya Tucker, as well as bolstering the fame of established artists like Loretta Lynn.

Wynette released albums with her husband George Jones with superficially joyous songs that had an undercurrent of sadness that may have stemmed from their tumultuous relationship.



In 1974, Parton split from her husband and sang “I Will Always Love You,” catapulting herself to global iconicity and creating a reputation of charity and kindness. Parton holds the record for most number-one songs by a female artist on the Billboard Hot Country chart (25!). Listen to “I Will Always Love You” at the end of the document.

Tanya Tucker got her start at 13 in 1972 via her hit single “Delta Dawn” then released her racier, more rock-like 1978 album with one of her signature songs, “Texas (When I Die).” Listen to “Texas (When I Die)” at the end of the document.



The Pointer Sisters won two Grammy awards (Best Country Song and Best Country Music Performance) in 1974 for their single “Fairytale.” Having a “countrified” soul sound, the Pointer Sisters went on to have ten top-40 singles between 1974 and 1983. Being a Black girl group, the Sisters struggled against being unfairly categorized into certain genres and subjected to racist marketing, but their songs had a subtle undercurrent of feminism that inspired future female country and pop artists. Listen to “Fairytale” at the end of the document.

Nominated in 1975 for country music's most promising female vocalist, Ruby Falls was a Black woman who became one of only five to chart on the Billboard Top Country chart. In October 1977, her song "You've Got to Mend This Heartache" reached number 40, which was her peak spot on the chart. She had a small tour throughout the 80s, but she died suddenly in mid-1986. Her success has been mostly lost to history. Listen to "[You've Got to Mend This Heartache](#)" at the end of the document.

Ruby Falls



1980s

In the 80s, Tanya Tucker became emblematic of country's shift towards "outlaws" and its rising acceptance into mainstream American culture. She had 14 top-10 Billboard Country singles, survived addiction, starred in films, and dated many men. She won two Grammy awards in 2020 and is possibly country's most prominent female outlaw and survivor.



Dolly Parton wrote songs for "9 to 5," a film she starred in alongside Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, and Dabney Coleman. In 1981, the titular song reached the top of Billboard's Country, Hot 100 and Adult Contemporary charts.

In 1983, she reached the global number one spot with "Islands in the Stream," a duet with Kenny Rogers. She received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1984 after starring in other feature films, then opened Dollywood, an amusement park in her name, in 1985. Listen to "[Islands in the Stream](#)" at the end of the document.

Reba McEntire became a platinum-selling Hall of Fame country singer via her 1986 song "Whoever's in New England." The video for the song was country music's first big pop-inspired video success, allowing McEntire to become a television star with hundreds of appearances, including her sitcom, "Reba" which aired from 2001-2007. Watch the original music video for "[Whoever's in New England](#)" at the end of the document.



With her 1987 song “Green Eyes (Cryin’ Those Blue Tears)” peaking on the Billboard’s Hot Country chart at 62, Dona Mason became the last Black woman to have a song on the Billboard country singles chart until Rissi Palmer in 2007.

In 1987 Nisha Jackson competed on TNN-TV’s country talent TV show “You Can Be a Star,” becoming the grand champion. Her song “Alive and Well” then charted on the Billboard Top Country, making her one of five Black female solo artists to chart.

Listen to “[Green Eyes](#)” and “[Alive and Well](#)” at the end of the document.

1990s

Dona Mason

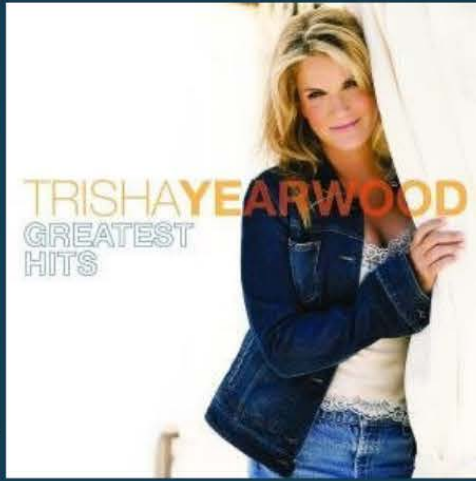


Shania Twain is one of the most famous female country artists from the 1990s. Born in Canada, her 1995 track “Any Man of Mine” became her first number-one on the Billboard Country chart and her song “You’re Still The One” crossed over to the top ten on the global charts.

Shania Twain



As of 2020, she has received five Grammy awards, 27 BMI songwriter awards, a World Music Award and stars on the Hollywood and Canada Walk of Fame. Billboard named Twain as the 13th Greatest Music Video Female Solo Artist of all time. She is also the only female artist to have three consecutive diamond-selling albums and the sixth best-selling female artist in American history. Listen to “[Any Man of Mine](#)” at the end of the document.



Dozens more female country artists who sold as many or more albums as their male competitors appeared in the 90s. LeAnn Rimes' song "How Do I Live" in 1997 became the most successful song of the 1990s according to Billboard Magazine.

Trisha Yearwood sold over ten million albums in ten years. Faith Hill became country music's last number-one Billboard Hot 100 single of 1999 with "Breathe," which she won the Best Female Country Vocal Performance Grammy for in 2001. Listen to "How Do I Live" and "Breathe" at the end of the document.

2000s

Rissi Palmer was featured in a documentary called "Waiting in the Wings: African-Americans in Country Music" in 2004 that wondered why Black people were so unsuccessful in the genre despite their many contributions. Her debut single in 2007 became the first song by a Black female artist to make it on the Billboard country singles chart since Dona Mason. She sang at the Grand Ole Opry in 2007 but her fame has mostly faded.



In an interview with the Tennessee Tribune in 2023, she expressed her disdain for the lack of representation in country: "Dr. Jada Watson's 'Redlining in Country Music' report shows that BIPOC women only made-up point-five percent of all radio airplay between 2002-2020. This is why there have only been five solo Black female Country artists to chart EVER: Linda Martell, Ruby Falls, Nisha Jackson, Mickey Guyton, and me." Listen to her performance at the Opry at the end of the document.

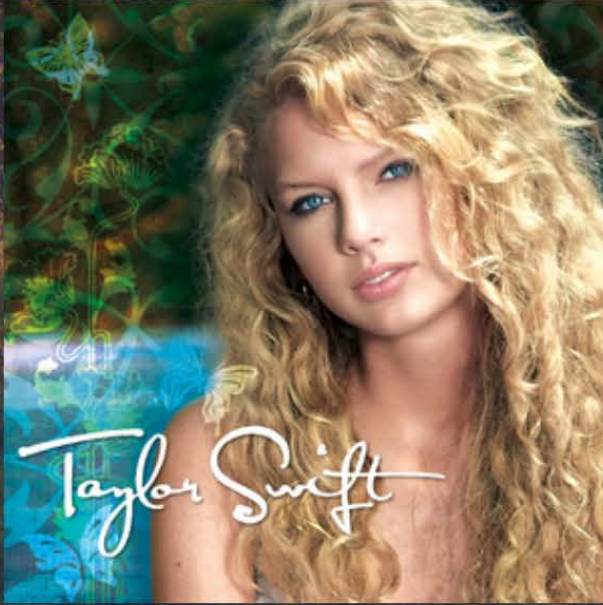


The Dixie Chicks' 1998 album, "Wide Open Spaces," became their first major hit, selling more albums that year than every other country artist or band together. They refused to cut the banjo and fiddle to avoid "going Nashville." In doing so, they brought country back to its traditional bluegrass roots.



In 2003, they infamously commented on how they were ashamed that President W. Bush was from Texas because they disapproved of the Iraq War. This sparked a flood of threats from the American public, accusing them of being traitors, burning their CDs, and banning them from the radio, effectively destroying their career until they released the album "Gaslighter" in 2020 and changed their name to The Chicks. The Chicks are the best-selling female country band of the last 30 years and have been consistent feminists, inspiring future famous artists like Taylor Swift to begin their music careers. Listen to "Goodbye Earl" at the end of the document.

Taylor Swift released her debut album in 2006, where it peaked at number five for 275 weeks in the Billboard top 200. She became the youngest person to win the BMI Songwriter of the Year in 2007 at just 18 years old. The same year, she won awards at the CMAs, ACMs and AMAs and was nominated for the Best New Artist Grammy. Her second album, "Fearless," debuted at number one on the Billboard Top 200 and was the number one best-selling album in the USA. She won Female Artist of the Year from Billboard and four Grammy awards, including Album of the Year, in 2009.



Her third album, and last explicit country album, "Speak Now," sold one million copies in its first week and debuted at number one on the Billboard Top 200. She won dozens of awards for the album, including Billboard's Woman of the Year, ACM's and CMA's Entertainer of the Year and BMI's Songwriter of the Year. After "Speak Now," Taylor Swift began transitioning to pop music, but she holds dozens of records in the music industry. She became the youngest artist to win the Grammy for Album of the Year, write a number-one song on the Hot Country Songs chart and win CMA's Entertainer of the Year award.

She holds the record for the most AMAs in history at 40, the most number-one hits in the Billboard chart for digital song sales at 24 and the most weeks at number one on Billboard's Top Country Albums (breaking Shania Twain's record) at 98 weeks. She is also the first female artist to win three Album of the Year Grammy awards and is the highest-earning female musician of the past decade. She is the only artist in history to have all top ten spots on the Hot 100 chart in one week. Listen to her debut single "[Tim McGraw](#)" at the end of the document.

2010s

The 2010s were a decade where Black female country artists began to get more recognition than before. Rhiannon Giddens has created over a dozen albums and EPs solo and with her groups The New Basement Tapes and the Carolina Chocolate Drops. She won the Best Traditional Folk Album Grammy in 2011 for "Genuine Negro Jig" with the Carolina Chocolate Drops. She has a place in the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame with the rest of the Drops. Listen to the [titular song on the album](#) at the end of the document.

Rhiannon Giddens



Mickey Guyton is 40 years old and has been recording for almost a decade. She has two studio albums and an extended play record. In 2015, she sang her debut single “Better Than You Left Me” at the Grand Ole Opry, becoming one of the most recent Black female singers to sing there. She was nominated for best new female artist at the ACM awards in 2016, and in 2020, she was the first Black female solo artist to perform at the ACMs. Listen to “[Better Than You Left Me](#)” at the end of the document.

2020s

Maren Morris first won a Grammy with her debut single “My Church.” In 2020, she won the CMA Female Artist of the Year award for her song “The Bones,” the most successful female country single in Billboard history. In her speech, she thanked six Black female country artists for pioneering the genre, including Linda Martell, Yola, Mickey Guyton, Rissi Palmer, Brittney Spencer and Rhiannon Giddens. Listen to “[The Bones](#)” at the end of the document.



Only 13-15% of songs on the radio are made by women, and even fewer are Black women. "Honky Tonk Angels" is a start to recognizing the women that have shaped the country genre for almost a century, changing its style, winning dozens of awards, and bringing it into the mainstream culture of America.

Check out the reference and song list below!

Dramaturgy Resources:

1. <https://www.stagerights.com/allshows/honky-tonk-angels/>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/jul/18/dixie-chicks-used-and-abused-by-everybody-who-wanted-to-make-money-off-us>
3. <https://www.insider.com/taylor-swift-broken-records-made-history-2022-8#honorable-mention-spotify-temporarily-crashed-when-taylor-swift-dropped-her-latest-album-midnights-16>
4. <https://tntribune.com/black-women-country-artists-a-look-to-the-future/#:~:text=five%20percent%20of%20all%20radio,Mickey%20Guyton%2C%20and%20me.>
5. <https://djrobblog.com/archives/12028>
6. <http://www.hillbilly-music.com/artists/story/index.php?id=16863#:~:text=She%20was%20Bertha%20Bearde n%20Dorsey,black%20female%20country%20music%20singers.>

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