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Riverside Romps with Sharon Gless in “A Round-Heeled Woman”



Sharon Gless



A



Round-Heeled Woman

Now Playing at The Riverside Theatre

Not many plays open with a celebrated mature actress masturbating on a double bed but in ‘**A Round-Heeled Woman**’, currently at the **Riverside Studios** in **London’s Hammersmith**, **Sharon Gless** manages not to offend while ensuring that the audience falls in love with her real life character **Jane Juska**.

Jane it was who placed the ad, ‘**Before I turn 67 – next March – I would like to have a lot of sex with a man I like**. If you want to talk first, Trollope works for me.’ This adaptation of her popular memoir by playwright/director **Jane Prowse** is both sad and funny and completely compelling.

The men Jane meets in her quest for a love to end her loneliness are, for the most part, dreadful. They come with **wigs, erectile dysfunction, harsh words and hysterical lines**, sometimes bearing candies, or even KY jelly. Gless talks to them, to the audience and to her own literary heroine, Trollope’s Miss Mackenzie, with heart-rending honesty.

Her friends Celia and Nathalie (**played wonderfully well by Jane Bertish – also Jane’s mother - and Beth Cordingly –also Miss Mackenzie**) start out well. They are the friends we all want, supportive, kind; until, oh dear, Jane warms to Graham, a wise head on shoulders half her age and the best of the bunch of men who reply to her ad.

Who wouldn’t warm to Graham, played by Michael Thompson, who also portrays Jane’s estranged and rediscovered son, **Andy**. **Graham doesn’t drag her off to bed but to see Trollope’s original manuscript**, enough to give Jane the much missed orgasm!

There are devices that delight, **the use of Latin American dance to cover the sex scenes**, so much better than waves crashing on the shore, and the resurrection of Jane's long dead mother.

Both Juska's book and the play celebrate the triumph of hope over adversity. Jane herself is full of warmth and wit and now a successful writer in her 70s, **Sharon Gless does her justice in this excellent portrayal** of her late life "adventures".

If there's just one gripe it's that **Gless (she of Cagney & Lacey fame) is such an attractive woman that it's hard to imagine men wouldn't still be flinging themselves at her feet.**

Patricia McLoughlin

To read Patricia's exclusive interview with **Jane Juska** for **Women Talking** then click **here**.



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