

## A Round-Heeled Woman: MILF gets her mojo back

AAA Comments (2) By **Chris Joseph** Thursday, Jan 20 2011

Written and directed by **Jane Prowse**, *A Round-Heeled Woman* is based on **Jane Juska's** 2003 memoir *A Round-Heeled Woman: My Late-Life Adventures in Sex and Romance*. **Sharon Gless**, whom you might recognize as the neurotic chain-smoking mom in hit TV show *Burn Notice*, turns in a candid performance as Jane, a semi-retired, 66-year-old-divorced schoolteacher looking for some nooky.



George Schiavone

Divorced for 30-odd years after a loveless marriage and raised by repressed, emotionally disconnected Midwestern parents, Jane decides it's high time she finds the fulfilling sex life she's never enjoyed. She's no horn-dog cougar, mind you. Jane just knows what she's lacking ("a man who touches me") and what she wants □ an adventure, sexual in nature. But this is not a chronicle of geriatric humping. It's a sexual tale about the quests of a woman in the twilight of her life, or, as one character artfully paraphrases **Dylan Thomas**, "fuck[ing] against the dying of the light."

In her pursuit of satisfaction, Jane takes out an ad in the *New York Review of Books* (because pretentious **Aldous Huxley** readers need their penises rocked too!) and gets straight to the point:

"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."

As would happen with a woman of any age who puts out an ad for sex with no strings attached, Jane gets inundated with saucy letters and photographs of dudes going all **Brett Favre** on her. She gets proposals from all over the country and from men of all ages ("Have **Viagra**, will travel," reads one particularly succinct letter). And just like that, a woman who hasn't been intimate with a man in three decades finds herself drowning in boner pics.

Jane's adventures bounce between the absurd and the comically tragic. She's looking for sex with a man she likes. But, as she soon begins to discover, most men are incurably charming before sex, and complete unconscionable assholes after sex. During one particular dalliance, she encounters a man in his late 80s who dispenses unsolicited advice after they have sex, coarsely telling Jane to get herself some **K-Y Jelly**. He then makes off with her expensive champagne glasses.

Then there's Eddie the cab driver, who finds Jane's ad in a discarded copy of the *New York Review of Books* on the backseat of his ride. Eddie meets her at a restaurant and expects what he interpreted from the ad: a greet-and-screw. He's rude, ignorant, obnoxious, and confuses **Anthony Trollope** — the Victorian novelist Jane references in her ad — with a "naughty trollop," which he calls her as a waiter hands them menus. Still, Jane remains undauntingly positive and with the help of gal pals Celia and Nathalie, attempts to weed out the creeps. She hopes to find a man who knows how to woo a woman with romance and not so much a *Hi, let's go fuck now please*-approach. It's Jane's incurable optimism that has you rooting for her throughout the play. When she plans to meet a suitor for a weekend getaway, she jovially tells her friends, "I'll be at the **Claremont**. If you haven't heard from me in three days, be happy for me!"

Ms. Gless owned the stage with a humorous and earnest performance as the irrepressible Jane. She was equal parts innocent and sexually adventuresome, and her genuine vulnerability and underlying heartache pulled us in as the coital odyssey unfolded. We rooted for her not only to have a hell of a time in the sack, but also to find what she was looking for. But mostly, we rooted for her to have a hell of a time in the sack.

In the story's subplot, Jane tries to reconcile her past, especially memories of an abusive relationship with her father and a seemingly lost relationship with an estranged son who blames her for his own shattered life. Though the sexual anecdotes were comically awkward, we were reminded that the play stems from a true-life memoir roots when Jane's son finds himself homeless and composing a rage-infused tune that includes the lyrics, "fuck you, mama!"

GableStage at the Biltmore's intimate setting fits this production perfectly. But small theaters can be vulnerable to occasional hiccups such as bad lighting or stagehands seen and heard between scenes. And the challenge is especially daunting for a play with no intermission or pause. The production of *A Round-Heeled Woman* was flawless, never allowing audience members to glimpse ropes and pulleys. The direction, lighting, and musical score were impeccable. Characters appeared and disappeared throughout the stage and seized the emotion of the moment or the timing of a comical bit with precision.

Ms. Gless was joined by five costars, who all played multiple roles. **Antonio Amadeo**, who plays a dance teacher, **John Ball**, and Jane's troubled son, Andy, stood out. Amadeo's characters ranged from outrageous to tragic, and he pulled it off brilliantly with a versatile performance.

**Stephen G. Anthony** likewise lost himself in character. He played an exceptionally ignorant douche as Eddie the cabbie; a tragic, displaced figure as Robert; an aloof, deviant soul as Jane's father; and an emotionally detached drunk as John. And **Howard Elfman** was both likeable and loathsome as Jonah, Mr. Rubb, and Sidney the old perv, who hungrily tells Jane to place her tits on the dinner table during a date.