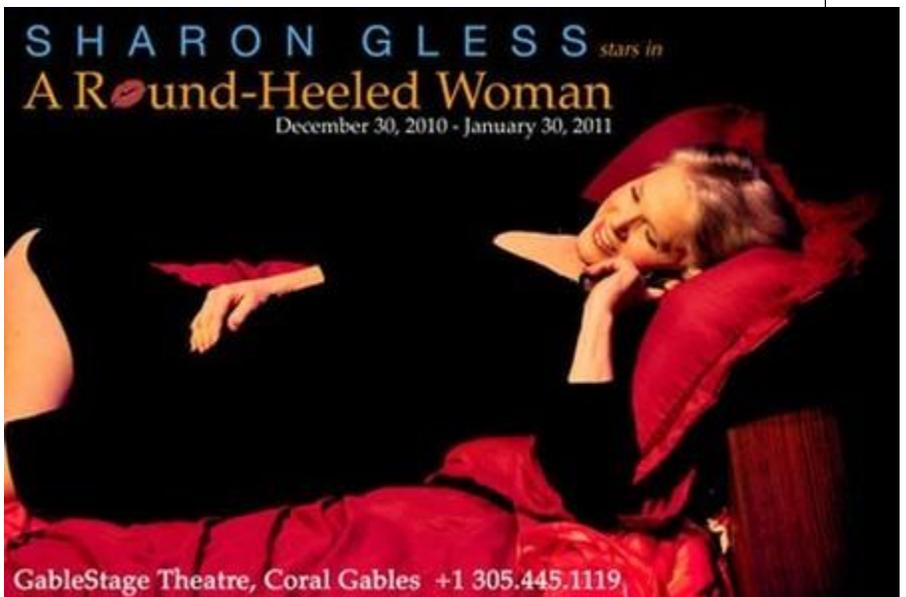


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## Sharon Gless stars in *A Round-Heeled Woman*

Opening at GableStage at the Biltmore

by James Cubby on December 22, 2010



**T**he first time I saw Sharon Gless was in the 70s when she was auditioning for a play in a little rehearsal studio a couple of blocks from Hollywood & Vine in Los Angeles. The play was *Little Mary Sunshine* and although Sharon Gless was cast in the show, she had to turn down the role because she signed on as a contract player with Universal. The theater lost a wonderful talent to a very successful television career but as Sharon Gless says, "I have no regrets" and now Ms. Gless, known by audiences for

her starring roles in television series *Cagney & Lacey*, *Queer As Folk* and *Burn Notice* will get the opportunity to exercise her talents on the stage as she appears in the Southeastern Premiere of the play *A Round-Heeled Woman*.

*A Round-Heeled Woman* is the stage adaptation of Jane Juska's memoir *A Round-Heeled Woman: My Late-Life Adventures in Sex and Romance*. Jane Juska was a divorcee who decided that she'd been celibate for way too long (30 years) so she placed a personal ad in *The New York Review of Books*. The ad read: '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 ...'. Juska took a sabbatical from teaching to meet some of the men who replied (64) and the book (and play) is the story of her experience.



Sharon Gless not only originated the role, playing Jane Juska, when it made its world premiere in San Francisco earlier this year but was instrumental in getting the book transformed into a play. "My husband Barney and I had just had a quarrel and he stormed out of the room," says Gless, remembering how it all came to pass. "Later he rushed back into the room

and announced, 'If you had any balls you'd go after this.'" Gless' husband Barney Rosenzweig happens to be an Emmy Award and Golden Globe Award winning television producer and apparently knows a good project when he sees one. He was referring to a story about Jane Juska's book that he had just read in *The New York Times*. Gless read the story and was fascinated by what she read and set out trying to get the rights to the book. Not only did Sharon Gless show she had the balls to go after the book but she persevered and had it turned into a play. "I've owned the project for 11 years," said Gless. "I first thought it would make a great television series. Nobody wanted to touch it." Since the world of television was not interested in a project about an aging woman and her sexual adventures resulting from placing a personal ad, Sharon thought it might make a good play. It was then that she contacted her friends Jane Prowse (playwright and director) and Simon Moore (who wrote the stage adaption of Stephen King's *Misery*) and the rest is history so to speak as Jane not only wrote the play but is the director of this production. Sharon Gless has made a career of playing strong women like Christine Cagney in *Cagney & Lacey*, Debbie Novotny in Showtime's *Queer As Folk*, Colleen Rose in FX's *Nip/Tuck*, and currently as the chain-smoking Madeline Weston in USA Network's *Burn Notice* which happens to be set in Miami. Now she gets to play another strong woman, the character of Jane Juska, this time onstage. "The character that I play is a very strong woman," said Gless. "What first attracted me to this story was this woman's courage. She never gives up. She's never defeated." "She's a woman in her late 60s who was lonely and wanted a man to touch her. She had the courage and the guts to go after what she wanted."



After boasting about the courage of Jane Juska, Sharon then shares her fears. “Live theater scares me,” she says. “My favorite part of playing this role is getting over my fear.” One would not think multiple Emmy and Golden Globe-winner Sharon Gless would have a fear of performing. “I’m trained as film actress, my work has all been in front of the camera.” Gless has made a point to overcome her fear of live theater. Gless made her stage debut in Lillian Hellman’s *Watch on the Rhine* at Stage West in Springfield, Massachusetts. Since then she has also starred in two different productions in London’s famed West End. In 1992, Gless created the role of Annie Wilkes in the stage adaptation of Stephen King’s *Misery* and in 1996 in Neil Simon’s comedy *Chapter Two*. Earlier this year, Gless starred in the world premiere of a workshop production of *A Round-Heeled Woman* at Z Space at Theater Artaud in San Francisco.

*A Round-Heeled Woman* (the title refers to an archaic phrase that means a loose or promiscuous woman) has been totally rewritten since the San Francisco production. “In San Francisco, my character had a therapist, now I use the audience as my therapist,” says Gless. From the sound of it, Gless has no fear in her performance of *A Round-Heeled Woman*. “I have phone sex onstage,” she says. Is this play about sex. Indeed, but it’s also about courage. “It’s about courage and going after what you want,” says Gless. When I asked if there was humor in the play Gless replied, “Some people call it a comedy.” It’s about a

woman's courage to go after what she wants and how she and her family deals with it.

Sharon Gless, who counts Miami as one of her three homes, is making her Miami premiere in *A Round-Heeled Woman*. Gless has proven to her husband that she has balls, undoubtedly numerous times, but in this instance she got the property and is the star of the southeastern premiere of *A Round-Heeled Woman* at GableStage. Like Jane Juska, Sharon Gless went after what she wanted. Like Jane Juska, who has a sequel in the works, Gless has future plans for *A Round-Heeled Woman* and has her sight on New York and London productions.

*A Round-Heeled Woman, based on the true story of Jane Juska, is written for the stage and directed by Jane Prowse with Sharon Gless, Antonio Amadeo, Steve Anthony, Howard Elfman, Kim Ostrenko and Laura Turnbull. A Round-Heeled Woman runs from December 30-January 30 at GableStage at the Biltmore, 1200 Anastasia Ave., Miami. 305.445.1119 or [www.gablestage.org](http://www.gablestage.org).*