The University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance,  
Department of Theatre & Drama  
presents

Uncommon Women and Others

By Wendy Wasserstein

Director  John Neville-Andrews
Scenic Designer  Janine Woods Thoma
Costume Designer  Jessica Hahn
Lighting and Video Designer  Adam McCarthy
Sound Designers  John Bell, Charlotte Campbell
Vocal Coach  Annette Masson
Assistant Director  Louis King
Stage Manager  Michelle Elias

Setting:
A restaurant, 1978, and Mount Holyoke College, 1972

There will be one intermission.

Uncommon Women and Others is presented by special arrangement with
Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change. As a courtesy to others, please
set pagers to silent mode and refrain from texting during the performance. Cellular phones
and electronic watch alarms should be turned off so as not to interrupt the performance.
Photography, audio recording and videotaping of any kind are not permitted due to copyright
restrictions. Flash photography endangers performers by causing momentary blindness.

The School of Music, Theatre & Dance acknowledges the generosity of McKinley
Associates, Inc. whose support has helped make this production possible.
CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

Narrator ................................................................. Ray Rabidoux
Kate Quin ............................................................... Emily Berman
Samantha Stewart .................................................. Quinn Scillian
Holly Kaplan ........................................................... Laura Lapidus
Muffet Di Nicola ...................................................... Bridget Coyne Gabbe
Rita Altabel .............................................................. Elly Jarvis
Mrs. Plumm ............................................................. Janet Maylie*
Susie Friend ............................................................ Bonnie Gruesen
Carter ........................................................................ Stephanie Williams
Leilah .......................................................................... Devin Lytle

* Ms. Maylie appears by permission of Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

WENDY WASSERSTEIN (Playwright) (October 18, 1950 – January 30, 2006) A graduate of Mount Holyoke College and the Yale School of Drama, Wasserstein was born in Brooklyn and raised in Manhattan. She received the 1989 Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the New York Drama Critics Circle, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards for The Heidi Chronicles. Originally produced by Lincoln Center Theatre in 1992, The Sisters Rosensweig was nominated for five Tony Awards including Best Play and earned a 1993 Outer Critics Circle Award and the William Inge Award for Distinguished Achievement in American Theatre. Other plays include Uncommon Women and Others (Phoenix Theatre, 1978) Isn’t it Romantic, a musical Miami (with Jack Feldman and Bruce Sussman); Waiting for Philip Glass, included in Love’s Fire (The Acting Company), An American Daughter, Old Money, Psyche in Love, and Third. Her screenplays include House of Husbands and The Object of My Affection (based on a novel by Stephen McCauley). For PBS Great Performances she wrote Kiss, Kiss Darling; Drive, She Said; adaptations of John Cheever’s The Sorrows of Gin, and her own Uncommon Women and Others. She adapted The Heidi Chronicles for TNT (1996 Emmy Award nomination for Best Television Movie) and An American Daughter for Lifetime Television. Her adaptation of The Nutcracker was performed at The American Ballet Theatre at The Met, and her adaptation of The Merry Widow premiered at San Francisco Opera. She was the librettist for the original opera “Festival of Regrets: Central Park (Glimmerglass Opera and New York City Opera). Her other books include the essay collections Shiksa Goddess and Bachelor Girls. Ms. Wasserstein died of lymphoma in January, 2006.
Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006) was among the handful of Baby Boomers to have written plays that won wide attention for drawing on the feminism that sprang up in the 1970s and 1980s. Her plays, along with those of her fellow Pulitzer winners Beth Henley, Marsha Norman, and Paula Vogel, explore serious concerns in ways that are often enlivened by humor—though in her vision, and in theirs, and in the UM’s School of Art & Design’s Holly Hughes’s, prospects for the future sometimes turn darker.

Born into a well-heeled Jewish-American family in New York City, Wasserstein earned degrees from Mt. Holyoke College, the City University of New York, and the Yale School of Drama. Her thesis play at CUNY, *Any Woman Can’t*, was produced not long before she began the studies that generated her MFA thesis play at Yale. This piece, *Uncommon Women and Others*, marked her first success off-Broadway before it was filmed for PBS. The cast of the 1977 stage production included Swoosie Kurtz and Glenn Close playing two among the group of Mt. Holyoke students who carry on their friendships after graduating, and the video version substituted Meryl Streep for Close when the latter actress ran into a conflict. More of Wasserstein’s plays would feature rich roles that attracted other noted actresses to playing characters who grapple with the range of choices women face in a feminist and post-feminist world.

The most conspicuous part of Wasserstein’s career came in 1989 when *The Heidi Chronicles*, with its mini-history of second-wave feminism, earned her the Pulitzer and the Tony Award for Best Play and was later filmed with Jamie Lee Curtis in the leading role. The play was also prophetic for ending with its art-historian heroine’s becoming a single mother. The playwright left an account of her own tortuous pregnancy, achieved when she was 48, in a moving essay written for the *New Yorker* and anthologized in Wasserstein’s second book of collected essays, *Shiksa Goddess* (2001). Her mock self-help book, *Sloth* (2005) was commissioned as part of a series on the seven deadly sins, and it laid out a regimen for laziness that could hardly have stood at greater odds with the playwright’s busy life.

Among her other plays are *Isn’t It Romantic* (1983), her first commercial success and, in her view, her most autobiographical play, *The Sisters Rosensweig* (1992), an homage to Anton Chekhov that offered Wasserstein’s take on life as herself the youngest of three sisters, *An American Daughter* (1997), about the controversial nomination of a successful physician to a key position in an administration much like Bill Clinton’s, and *Old Money* (2000), a time-traveling treatment of the effects of fortune-hunting on a self-satisfied American aristocracy. In a remark that belied the effervescence in all of her plays, Wasserstein wrote in her introduction to *Old Money* that she always hoped that her plays would “reflect how a group of people live at a certain time.” (continued on next page)
This evocative power is evident in *Uncommon Women and Others*. For men like me who were young at the time our female friends, girlfriends, and future wives were making their pathbreaking ways through the world, the play raises issues we all too often were barely aware of. The same manly self-absorption was in force during my own contact with Wendy, when I played a character she told me was based on her brother for the premiere of *Any Woman Can’t* at New York’s Playwrights Horizons in 1973. This “Markie” was unfailingly cheerful, spectacularly unquestioning, and as I see it more clearly now, blithe in his absolute sense of entitlement.

I remember Wendy, full of anticipation and glee, tap-dancing her way into our rehearsals. Her early death robbed the American stage of one of its leading lights and most joyous craftspersons. Her daughter, produced by a perilous pregnancy that led to the motherhood she had looked forward to for so long, must have mattered to the playwright as much as her highwire career did.

— Leigh Woods, Professor of Theatre & Drama, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, reprinted from Backstage at the UM School of Music, Theatre & Dance, Fall 2009

### A Selected Glossary of Terms

Some terms, names, and references used in the play that might be unfamiliar.

**American Canco** was a manufacturer of tin cans. It was a member of the Tin Can Trust that controlled a “large percentage of business in the United States in tin cans, containers, and packages of tin.”

**Baba Ram-Das:** Aka Richard Alpert, is a contemporary spiritual teacher who wrote the 1971 best-seller *Be Here Now*. He is well known for his personal and professional association with Timothy Leary at Harvard University in the early 1960s.

**The Bell Jar:** American writer and poet Sylvia Plath’s only novel, which was originally published under the pseudonym “Victoria Lucas” in 1963. The novel is semi-autobiographical with the names of places and people changed. The book is often regarded as a roman à clef, with the protagonist’s descent into mental illness paralleling Plath’s own experiences with what may have been either bipolar disorder or clinical depression. Plath committed suicide a month after its first publication.

**Cactus Flower:** Based on the play *Fleur de cactus* by Pierre Barillet and Jean-Pierre Gredy, the comedy focuses on the relationship between young, wild Toni and her older, married lover Julian, a dentist.

**Cambodia Strike:** Student strike in 1970, following the military invasion of Cambodia.

**Car 54 Where are you?:** An American sitcom that ran on NBC from 1961 to 1963.

**Leonard Cohen** is a Canadian singer-songwriter, musician, poet and novelist.

**Consciousness Rap:** Rap/poetry about societal, political, and civil rights issues.
**Cries and Whispers**: A 1973 Swedish film about two sisters who watch over their third sister on her deathbed, torn between fearing she might die and hoping that she will.

**Walter Cronkite** was an American broadcast journalist, best known as anchorman for the CBS Evening News for 19 years (1962–81).

**The Dave Clark Five** was an English pop rock group. It was the second group of the British Invasion, after The Beatles, to have a chart hit in the United States.

**Simone De Beauvoir** was a French writer and philosopher. She wrote novels, monographs on philosophy, politics and social issues, essays, biographies, and an autobiography in several volumes.

**Emily Dickinson** was an American poet, who lived a mostly introverted and reclusive life. She spent a short time at Mount Holyoke before returning to her family’s house in Amherst.

**The Faerie Queene** is an incomplete English epic poem by Edmund Spenser. The first half was published in 1590, and a second installment was published in 1596. “The Faerie Queene” is notable for its form: it was the first work written in Spenserian stanza and is the longest poem in the English language.

**The Feminine Mystique**: A book written by Betty Friedan, which brought to light the hidden lack of fulfillment in many women’s lives.

**The Genealogy of Morals**: A work by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, composed and first published in 1887 with the intention of expanding and following through on certain new doctrines sketched out in his previous work *Beyond Good and Evil*.

**Girl Friday**: A term used to describe an especially faithful female aide, particularly in detective films-noir.

**John Glenn** is a retired United States Marine Corps pilot, a former astronaut who was the first American to orbit the Earth, and United States Senator.

**Germaine Greer** is an Australian-born writer, academic, journalist and scholar of early modern English literature, widely regarded as one of the most significant feminist voices of the later 20th century. Greer’s ideas have created controversy ever since her book *The Female Eunuch* became an international best-seller in 1970.

**Merv Griffin** was an American television host, singer, and media mogul. During the 1960s, Griffin hosted his own talk show, *The Merv Griffin Show*, and created the game shows *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*.

**The Group**: A novel written by Mary McCarthy about eight young women friends in 1933 who graduate from New York’s Vassar College. Over the course of the book, the reader learns about the liberal and sometimes surprisingly conservative views of the eight women, concerning contraception, extramarital affairs, love, socialism, child education and psychoanalysis.
“Lay Lady Lay” is a song written by Bob Dylan and originally released in 1969 on his album *Nashville Skyline*.

**Eva Le Gallienne:** An actress, producer, director, and open lesbian in the first half of the 20th century.

**Doris Lessing:** A Persian-born British author of such works as the novels *The Grass is Singing* and *The Golden Notebook*. In 2007, Lessing won the Nobel Prize in Literature. She was described by the Swedish Academy as “that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny.”

“Love Look Away” from *Flower Drum Song*: *Flower Drum Song* is a musical written by the team of Rodgers and Hammerstein, based on the 1957 novel of the same name by Chinese-American author C. Y. Lee. The Broadway production opened in 1958 featuring, for the first time in Broadway history, a mostly Asian cast.

**Robert S. McNamara** was an American business executive and the eighth Secretary of Defense, serving under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson from 1961 to 1968.

**Margaret Mead** was an American cultural anthropologist, who was frequently a featured writer and speaker in the mass media throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

**Modess Living Rooms:** Modess sanitary napkins conducted a famous advertising campaign from 1948 to the 1970s in the U.S.A. Usually the only words were “Modess...because.” Advertising journals of the time occasionally made fun of the series; sometimes they praised it. In a sense, the unfinished phrase summed up the American public’s feelings about menstruation.

**Mount Holyoke:** Founded by revolutionary educator Mary Lyon in 1837, Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA, was the first women’s college in the United States and the founding member of the Seven Sisters, the female equivalent of the formerly all-male Ivy League. Mount Holyoke is consistently ranked among the top 25 liberal arts colleges in the country, attracting intelligent, talented, and driven women from literally all over the globe. True to its mission statement, Mount Holyoke’s empowering atmosphere is geared toward “fostering the alliance of liberal arts education with purposeful engagement in the world.” Smart women choose Mount Holyoke for its academic excellence, beautiful campus, and the amazing and friendly women who go there. Mount Holyoke women can also take advantage of the 5-College Consortium, which connects MHC to nearby Amherst, Smith, and Hampshire Colleges, as well as UMass-Amherst.

**Ms.** was launched as a “one-shot” sample insert in *New York Magazine* in December 1971; it would become a landmark institution in both women’s rights and American journalism.
Edvard Munch was a Norwegian Symbolist painter, printmaker and an important forerunner of expressionistic art. His best-known composition, *The Scream*, is part of a series *The Frieze of Life*, in which Munch explored the themes of life, love, fear, death, and melancholy.

“One Apple Don’t Spoil the Whole Bunch Girl” was a single released by The Osmonds in December 1970. It hit number one on Billboard’s Hot 100 Chart in February 1971 and stayed there for five weeks.

Pataphysical: A term coined by French writer Alfred Jarry (1873 – 1907), it is a philosophy or pseudophysics dedicated to studying what lies beyond the realm of metaphysics. It is a parody of the theory and methods of modern science and is often expressed in nonsensical language.

Picara: A woman who is a rogue or adventurer.

Pousse-café: A layered drink prepared by gently adding each ingredient from densest to least dense in order to create colored stripes when the drink is viewed from the side.

Donna Reed was an Academy Award-winning, American film and television actress, perhaps best known for her performances in *It’s a Wonderful Life* and *The Donna Reed Show*.

Rorschach Tests: Also known as the Rorschach Inkblot Test or simply the Inkblot Test, is a psychological test in which subjects’ perceptions of inkblots are recorded and then analyzed using psychological interpretation, complex scientifically derived algorithms, or both.

J.D. Salinger is an American author, best known for his 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, as well as for his reclusive nature. He has not published an original work since 1965 and has not been interviewed since 1980.

Sexual Politics is a classic feminist text written by Kate Millett, said to be “the first book of academic feminist literary criticism,” and “one of the first feminist books of this decade to raise nationwide male ire.”

Jean Shrimpton: English model and actress nicknamed “the shrimp,” and known for her trendsetting style.

Jacqueline Susann: Bisexual novelist and actress who wrote the best selling novel *Valley of the Dolls* about the friendship of three women and their difficult life choices.

The Village Voice is a free weekly newspaper in New York City featuring investigative articles, analysis of current affairs and culture, arts reviews, and events listings for New York City.


Whiffenpoofs: The Yale Whiffenpoofs, established in 1909, are the oldest collegiate *a cappella* group in the United States.
**A Selected Glossary of Terms**

**Wittgenstein** was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked primarily in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language.

**Leonard Woolf**: Leonard Sidney Woolf was an English political theorist, author, publisher and civil servant, but is perhaps best known as the widower of author Virginia Woolf.

— *Researched and compiled by Louis King, Assistant Director*

**Acknowledgments**

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"We’re Saving Ourselves for Yale” ©1946 by David McCord Lippincott. Used by permission, all rights reserved.

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“A Plea for the Uncommon Woman,” Inaugural address by Richard Glenn Gwettell, President of Mount Holyoke College, November 2, 1957. Used by permission, all rights reserved.

Special thanks to Jennifer Gunter King and Deb Morrisey, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections. Additional thanks to Robin Wilson, the Department of Dance and the Duderstadt Center Video Studio.

**KC/ACTF** This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC/ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater productions. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC/ACTF representative, and certain students are selected to participate in KC/ACTF programs involving awards, scholarships, and special grants for actors, playwrights, designers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.
The performers in this production are undergraduate students and faculty in the Department of Theatre & Drama and guests. The designers are undergraduates and faculty in the Department of Theatre & Drama and guest artists. Scenery, costumes, properties, sound, and lighting were realized by the students and staff of University Productions, the producing unit of the SMTD.

### About the Cast

**EMILY BERMAN** (*Kate Quin*) junior, BFA Perf., Wilmette, IL

**BRIDGET COYNE GABBE** (*Muffet Di Nicola*) senior, BFA Perf., New York, NY

**BONNIE GRUESEN** (*Susie Friend*) senior, BFA Perf., St. Charles, IL

**ELLY JARVIS** (*Rita Altabel*) first-year, BFA Perf., St. Cloud, MN

**LAURA LAPIUS** (*Holly Kaplan*) senior, BFA Perf., Winnetka, IL

**DEVIN LYTLE** (*Leilah*) junior, BFA Perf., Atlanta, GA

**JANET MAYLIE** (*Mrs. Plumm*) see About the Artists.

**RAY RABIDOUX** (*Narrator*) guest artist, Ann Arbor, MI

**QUINN SCILLIAN** (*Samantha Stewart*) first-year, BFA Perf., Grosse Pointe Park, MI

**STEPHANIE WILLIAMS** (*Carter*) sophomore, BFA Perf., Austin, TX

### About the Artists

**JOHN BELL** (*Sound Designer*) is a 5th year double major studying Electrical Engineering and Performing Arts Technology - Sound Engineering. **UM:** *The Who’s Tommy*, master electrician.

**CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL** (*Sound Designer*) is a sophomore Bachelor of Theater Arts student with a concentration in sound engineering. **UM:** *Dog Sees God*, sound designer; *Under Milkwood*, sound board operator; *Donut Play (With Guns)*, assistant stage manager and sound board operator; *Baltimore Waltz, 24 Hour Theater 2009*, light board operator.

**MICHELLE ELIAS** (*Stage Manager*) is a junior in the BFA design and production program, concentrating on stage management. **UM:** *Arcs in Time, Ella Minnow Pea* (First ASM); *As You Like It* (ASM); *42nd Street* (LBO). Basement Arts: *Summertime* (ASM), *Brooklyn Boy* (SM). **Other:** *Dance Mix* (SM).

**JESSICA HAHN** (*Costume Designer*) Assoc. Professor, Head of Design and Production, Dept. of Theatre & Drama. **UM:** *Pride and Prejudice, Madmen and Specialists, You Never Can Tell, J.B., Playing for Time, The Pajama Game, The Burial at Thebes, The Boys from Syracuse, City of Angels, The Rover, An Arthur Miller Celebration, Guys and Dolls*. **Regional Theatre:** Virginia Stage Company; Goodman Theatre; Lyric Opera Center; Northlight Theatre; Court Theatre; Roundabout Theatre, N.Y.; Utah Shakespearean Festival; Minneapolis Children’s Theatre Co.; former resident designer: Hubbard St. Dance Co., National Jewish Theatre. **Awards:** Seven nominations and three Joseph Jefferson Awards, Charles MacArthur Award. **Other:** Member, USAA; MFA in Design, Carnegie Mellon University.

**JANET MAYLIE** (*Mrs. Plumm*) Off-Broadway/NYC: Original production of A.R. Gurney’s *The Dining Room* (Playwrights Horizons, The Astor Place Theatre), *Fourtune* (Actors'
About the Artists

Playhouse), Approaching Zero (LaMaMa ETC), Twelfth Night (Alvina Krause Theatre), Chamber Music (Walden Theatre), The Private Ear. Regional Theatre: Meadow Brook Theatre, New Mexico Repertory, Arizona Theatre Co., Barter Theatre, American Stage Festival, Performance Network, Purple Rose Theatre Co., Gem Theatre. TV: Hill Street Blues, The Love Boat, As The World Turns, over 90 national and regional commercials, numerous radio and television voiceovers. Four Theatre Excellence Awards from the Detroit Free Press. Other: Member of SAG, AFTRA, AEA.

Adam McCarthy (Lighting & Video Designer) is a junior BFA in design and production concentrating in lighting and scenic design. UM: The Show-Off(LD), Pride and Prejudice (AME), Rent (ALD), Carousel (Deck Electrician), Jane Deegan’s senior thesis Sideman (LD). MUSKET - Rocky Horror (TD), The Full Monty (TD). Rude Mechanicals - Richard II (ME). Regional Theatre: Berkshire Theatre Festival - general technician (2008), properties carpenter (2009). www.AMcCDesign.com


Janine Woods Thoma (Scenic Designer) is a 2005 graduate of the Dept. of Theatre & Drama. She is currently the Technical Director at Performance Network. UM: Romeo and Juliet, Good Night Desdemona (Goodmorning Juliet), scenic designer; A Flea in Her Ear, In Arabia We’d All Be Kings, lighting designer; An Arthur Miller Celebration, scenic and lighting designer. Rude Mechanicals: The Fantasticks. MUSKET: Urinetown, Chicago. Regional Theatre: Performance Network Theatre, A Picasso, A Feminine Ending, Doubt. Awards: KC/ACTF 2005, 2nd Place National Competition.
STAFF FOR UNCOMMON WOMEN AND OTHERS

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Carpenter (Walgreen) ............... Robert Michael
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Sound ............................. Owen Campbell
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* Practicum Student
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Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change.

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No food or drink is allowed in the theatre.

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