

## VISITING THE REP

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater is housed in the Milwaukee Center at the corner of Wells and Water Streets, downtown. Our building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company. This name is still carved on the wall outside.

You'll enter on the Wells Street side into a large, open space. Our box office will be visible on your left as you come through the front doors. The large space is the main hub for the businesses that share this building: a bank, an office tower, the Pabst Theater, and the Inter-continental Hotel. If you walk into the center of this area, you'll see a staircase on your left. You will take this staircase to the Powerhouse Theater lobby.

Inside the lobby are restrooms, water fountains, and a coat check. If you decide to bring a snack, please know that food and drink are NOT permitted in the theater. However, you can leave things (at your own risk) in the coat check room, and enjoy them outside the theater during intermission. Most plays have one intermission that is about 20 minutes long. You might also want to look for signs in the lobby which give the full "running time" of the play.

**For more information on our education programs and our productions, please visit our website at [www.milwaukeeep.com](http://www.milwaukeeep.com)**

*"You need three things in the theatre – the play, the actors and the audience, and each must give something." – Kenneth Haigh*

Theater is described as a collaborative art form. The success of a production relies upon every member of the process: playwrights, directors, designers, technicians, actors and the audience. Plays require audiences to give a new life to performances through their careful attention and enthusiastic reactions. The audience has an active role to play and the actors rely on you to be respectful and attentive. Through your observation of sets, costumes, lighting and the work of the actors, you'll be better able to follow the story and enjoy its live presentation. You are important in the final performance and your participation is what makes this process worthwhile.

<i>Programs in the Education Department receive generous funding from:</i>	The Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation
The Helen Bader Foundation	Johnson Control
The Einhorn Family Foundation	MPS Partnership for the Arts
GE Healthcare	Milwaukee Arts Board
The Harley Davidson Foundation	National City Bank
	Northwestern Mutual Foundation

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**The Rep Milwaukee**

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater Presents

# THE LADY WITH ALL THE ANSWERS

by David  
Rambo

November 24 - December 20, 2009

Quadracci Powerhouse Theater



This study guide is researched and designed by the Education Department at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and is intended to prepare you for your visit. It contains information that will deepen your understanding of, and appreciation for, the production. We've also included questions and activities for you to explore before and after our performance of THE LADY WITH ALL THE ANSWERS.

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## SYNOPSIS

“Because you need someone to listen to your side of the story—someone who won’t yell at you, or tell you you’re lying, or crazy. And so often, you write, ‘I have nowhere else to turn.’”

For decades, newspaper columnist Ann Landers has dispensed wit and wisdom to millions of Americans in need of advice. In *THE LADY WITH ALL THE ANSWERS*, Landers finds herself writing a column about a new kind of heartbreak-- her own. Drawn from Landers' life and letters, this show is a touching and comic portrait of a wise, funny, no-nonsense

woman who is one of the most influential figures in America. Through her sometimes controversial opinions, she shaped the way Americans viewed everything from war and politics; marriage, divorce and sexuality, to the proper way to hang a roll of toilet paper in the bathroom.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The son and grandson of librarians, David Rambo became interested in literature and art at an early age. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1955 and was well versed in literature and fine arts throughout his childhood, although he did not become interested in writing until later in his life.

Rambo moved to New York when he was 18 with dreams of becoming an actor. There he took many classes and was involved in many productions at various off-off-Broadway theaters. After some time, Rambo left New York to look for a career in television and film. He acted in some commercials, as well as some TV shows, including *The Best of Times*, starring Nicholas Cage, but he was unable make a living as an actor. During this time, Rambo supported himself as a real estate agent.

It wasn't until his mid-thirties that Rambo realized that he had an interest and a skill for writing plays. In 1993, a song that he wrote—*Elizabeth Taylor*—was used in an off-Broadway show. After receiving rave reviews, as well as a good amount of money, Rambo started to brainstorm ideas for scripts. His early plays include *THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOUSE*, *SPEAKY-SPIKEY-SPOOKEY* and *LODGE NIGHT*. Through the years, Rambo not only wrote original plays, but also adaptations of screenplays including *ALL ABOUT EVE*, *SUNSET BOULEVARD* and *CASA-BLANCA*. His adaptations have starred several famous actors including Tim Curry, Calista Flockhart, Angela Lansbury, Angelica Houston, Sir Ben Kingsley and Christian Slater. Rambo's *THE LADY WITH ALL THE ANSWER* premiered at the Old Globe in San Diego in 2005. It received high acclaims and has continued to prosper all over the country. Rambo has also written for and co-produced the television show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* which has been on air for five years.



**Dear Nashville:** Josh must not allow this 16-year-old girl to prevent him from going to college in another state if that is what he wants to do. My hunch is she is afraid he will meet someone who threatens the relationship, and if the school is far away, she will not be able to see him often enough to protect her interests.

I hope Josh's favorite teacher or some adult outside the family will help him understand that he is much too young for marriage and that if what he feels now is truly love, it will last until he can make a mature, balanced decision that comes from his head, not his hormones. [#1]

**Dear Parents:** You have a right to be deeply concerned-- about that little punk you're raising. Teach the kid to mind his own business. [#2]

**Dear Kid:** No 14-year-old should have so much work at home that she cannot keep up her grades or have any kind of social life. I'm sure your mother has no idea that you are under so much stress. Discuss this situation with your mother. Explain that your schoolwork is suffering and you cannot handle all this responsibility yourself. You can also talk to your school guidance counselor and ask him or her to give you some assistance in working this out. The load you are carrying is too heavy, and it's not fair. [#3]

After this activity, write your own letter or question you would like answered. Put all the letters together. Go around the room and have each person pick a letter to answer. Following Ann Landers' suit, reply to the question and then share your answers with each other.

## RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

*Ann Landers Archive*. Creators.com. 11 October 2009. Creators Syndicate. 13 October 2009. <<http://www.creators.com/advice/classic-ann-landers/archive.html>>.

*David Rambo*. 2009. 6 October 2009. <<http://www.davidrambo.com>>.

Howard, Margo. *Eppie: The Story of Ann Landers*. Pinnacle Books: New York, 1983.

Judd, Robin. *Ann Landers*. Jewish Virtual Library. 2009. The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. 6 October 2009. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Landers.html>>.

Landers, Ann. *Ann Landers Says... Truth is Stranger*. Prentice Hall: Denver, 1969.

Landers, Ann. *The Best of Ann Landers: Her Favorite Letters of All Time*. Ballantine Books: New York, 1997.

## ADVICE GIVING

Below are some questions that were written to Ann Landers. Write a response to the letters. Compare what you have written to what Ann wrote (on the next page). What differences do you see? Do you think Ann gave good advice or poor advice? Explain your answers and discuss with your classmates.

**Dear Ann Landers:** We have a 17-year-old son who is in love. "Josh" is a good kid, doesn't drink or do drugs, and makes excellent grades. We only want what is best for him, but Josh says he wants to marry his girlfriend. She is only 16. She has no plans to go to college and has made it clear she does not want Josh to attend school out of state. What is even more upsetting is the girl's mother is encouraging this relationship. I suspect she would like to get them married as soon as possible.

I know young love can be crushingly important, but, Ann, I am scared to death that my son will be making a huge mistake. What can I do?

— Nashville Mom [#1]

**Dear Ann Landers:** Our daughter, who is a junior in college, is interested in "Sid," a young graduate students. Last week, Sid was a guest in our house. He shared a bedroom with our 13-year-old son.

This morning after our daughter and Sid left for school, our son told us he'd had an opportunity to learn a few things. Sid's suitcase had someone else's initials on it. His driver's license indicated that he is 23, not 24. He owes someone \$1,200, according to a note in his wallet. There was a mushy letter in his suitcase from a girl who lives in Buffalo. Also, he carries a picture in his wallet of two girls-- our daughter and another girl. What do you make of this?

— Concerned Parents [#2]

**Dear Ann Landers:** I'm a 14-year-old girl and will probably be laughed at for writing you, but I don't care. I need your help. My mother works two shifts every day. She expects me to look after my three younger siblings. This would be OK, but I have a life to live, too. When I come home from school, there is a list of chores waiting for me. When I'm through, I have to prepare dinner, give my brothers and sisters a bath and make sure they go to bed. Then, I have to do my homework. I'm so tired every morning that my grades are not as good as they should be. Forget about a social life. I don't have one. I feel sorry for my mom that she has to work so hard, but I am miserable because of the extra responsibilities that are laid on me. Please tell me what to do.

— East Coast Kid [#3]

## WHO IS ANN LANDERS?

For 56 years, the *Ask Ann Landers* advice column was a regular feature in many newspapers across North America. Ann Landers was a pen name created by Ruth Crowley of the *Chicago Sun Times* in 1934 and was taken over by Eppie Freidman in 1955. Esther "Eppie" Pauline Friedman was born July 4, 1918, just 17 minutes before her identical twin sister, Pauline Esther. Eppie's parents were Russian Jewish immigrants and lived in Sioux City, Missouri. Eppie and her sister, Pauline, did many similar things. They wore the same things, they attended the same high school and college, they participated in the same activities and both wrote for the *Morningside College* newspaper, sharing a gossip column. They even had a double wedding in 1938.



Eppie married Julius Lederer, a salesman. The couple moved to Eau Claire, WI where they lived for about 15 years and had a daughter, Margo. Eventually, Eppie, Julius and Margo moved to Chicago where Eppie began her search for a job. She contacted Wilbur Munnecke, a family friend, at Field Enterprises to see if there were any openings at the *Chicago Sun Times*, specifically in column writing. Fortunately for her, their advice columnist, Ruth Crowley, was leaving shortly and would need a replacement. The *Sun Times* held a contest to see who would fill her spot, and Eppie entered, doing research, contacting old associates and using all available resources in order to best answer the sample questions from the *Sun Times*. Realizing that Eppie was not your average, young writer, the *Sun Times* hired her almost immediately after receiving her writing. Her first column as Ann Landers appeared in the paper on October 16, 1955.

Eppie's writing was often times direct and critical and she sometimes expressed unpopular opinions. She was pro-choice, favored legalization of prostitution and tended to mock letter-writers who seemed unintelligent to her. Her columns regularly covered politics, social injustices and questions about women's roles in society. About three months after Eppie became the well-known advice giver, her sister, Pauline, started her own advice column and became known as "Dear Abby." While Eppie tried not to let her sister bring her down, the rival columns alienated the sisters.

Despite the competition between the two, Eppie's column continued to flourish. By 1959 she had received just over 1000 invitations to speak and made just over 100 appearances at various events. Eppie's opinionated views, witty comments and devotion to her readers made her extremely popular. Although she died of cancer in 2002, the Ann Landers column is still in syndication in various papers across the nation and she continues to influence people of all ages.

## IN HER OWN WORDS

*Ann Landers was considered to be a witty and sometimes controversial columnist. Her responses ranged from insightful to sarcastic to political, and they helped and entertained readers for decades. Below are some examples of Ann Landers' columns.*

### “ The Ten Commandments of How to Get Along with People

1. Keep skid chains on your tongue. Always say less than you think. Cultivate a low, persuasive voice. How you say it often counts more than what you say.
2. Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully, no matter what the cost.
3. Never let an opportunity pass to say a kind and encouraging word to or about somebody. Praise good work, regardless of who did it.
4. Be interested in others: their pursuits, their work, their homes and their families. Make merry with those who rejoice: with those who weep, mourn. Let everyone you meet, however humble, feel that you regard him as a person of importance.
5. Be cheerful. Don't burden or depress those around you by dwelling on your aches and pains and small disappointments. Remember, everyone is carrying some kind of a burden.
6. Keep an open mind. Discuss but don't argue. It is a mark of a superior mind to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.
7. Let your virtues, if you have any, speak for themselves. Refuse to talk about the vices of others. Discourage gossip. It is a waste of valuable time and can be destructive and hurtful.
8. Take into consideration the feelings of others. Wit and humor at the expense of another is never worth the pain that may be inflicted.
9. Pay no attention to ill-natured remarks about you. Remember, the person who carried the message may not be the most accurate reporter in the world. Simply live so that nobody will believe him. Disordered nerves and bad digestion are a common cause of backbiting.
10. Don't be anxious about the credit due you. Do your best and be patient. Forget about yourself and let others "remember". Success is much sweeter that way. ”

Do you think that Ann's column about the **10 Commandments of How to Get Along with People** is accurate? Would you change any of the commandments? Would you add anything that you think would be better? Discuss your answers with a small group.

“ **Dear Ann Landers:** I am a 14-year-old girl and have a friend who is dominating my life. "Julia" calls me so often, my family has started making up excuses why I can't come to the phone. She invites me to her house every day. I usually decline because her brothers are foul-mouthed and Julia constantly gets into fights with her mother. Every time I go there, I come home feeling upset.

I no longer enjoy Julia's company, but she makes me feel so guilty that I wind up making plans with her anyway. I feel sorry for her because she doesn't seem to have any other friends. What makes it even worse is that she gets angry and jealous when I go out with other girls and don't include her. Frankly, my other friends don't like her. She's overly critical and says hurtful things.

I don't know how to get out of this relationship. I don't want to harm her obviously fragile self-confidence, so I lie about how much I value her friendship. When I think of how stuck I am in this situation, I end up in tears. Please tell me what to do.

— New Jersey

**Dear N.J.:** You are very kind to remain friendly with Julia, even though she is domineering and difficult. You need not let her run your life, however. Make dates with other girls, and if Julia doesn't like it, too bad. ”

“ **Dear Ann Landers:** I am a secretary in an academic department at a California State University. I was in my office one morning when a part-time lecturer walked in. This woman was in her early 30s, had a bachelor of arts degree and a master's degree, and was working on her Ph.D.

"Nora" started to complain that her large toenail was making a hole in her pantyhose. She sat down, whipped off her pantyhose and proceeded to trim her toenail with her teeth. I was absolutely speechless when she put her foot up to her mouth and started to perform this incredible act.

I am enclosing my home number in case you want to verify this story, but please don't print my name. I would never hear the end of it.

— Still Stunned in California

**Dear Still Stunned:** I don't need to phone you. I don't doubt for a minute that the incident occurred. I wonder how many women over 40 who are reading this can get their big toe up to their mouth? I tried it and finally succeeded, but it was one gigantic struggle.

*Shortly after this column appeared, I received a letter from an angry woman whose mother tried to put her toe in her mouth and wound up in the hospital with a wrenched back..* ”

Find some more letters to Ann Landers. Compare what you have found with your classmates. What do you think of her advice? Why do you think Ann Landers has been noted as controversial?