

Dramedy? Tragicomedy? Just 'life'?

Charlene Wexler's *Elephants in the Room*

By PAUL WIEDER
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COLORING BOOKS FOR ADULTS are all the rage. But Charlene Wexler's latest book of essays, *Elephants in the Room*, seems more of a connect-the-dots work. The "dots" are individual instances, conversations, objects, even pets she recalls. Then she connects these dots to form a bigger picture: an insight or revelation into the human condition.

Some of the dots are revealed in the titles of her essays themselves: "Second Date," "Apple Strudel," "The Metra Train." These, in turn, are organized into chapters covering the range of a lifespan, from "Coming of Age" to "Senior Moments," with family, friends, pets, and observations on changing times filling her days. We learn what is like to be a teenager in 1959, and a 70-year-old in a new millen-

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nium. In her wry observations of daily life, her work recalls that of Erma Bombeck and Dave Barry.

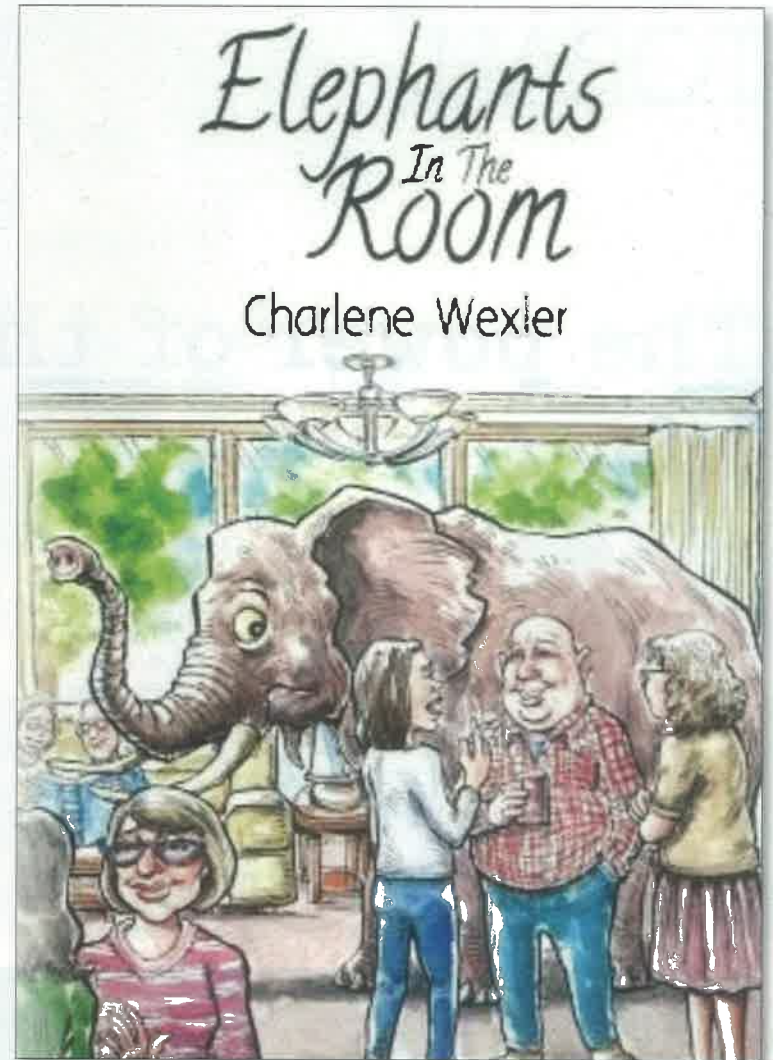
"I have always used writing as therapy," Wexler said. "Now I have the time and opportunity to pursue it as a career. You can do it, and it's never too late."

By turns devastatingly funny and simply devastating, Wex-

ler's stories often focus on relationships— between parents and children, siblings, spouses, humans and nature, even the physical and the metaphysical. In one story, she tells about fainting at a dinner party— only to find out that, at that moment, her sister, in an ER 2,000 miles away, had just been told she had a brain tumor. Her fainting and her sister's illness may be "dots," but how they are connected...? That's a bigger picture, and another story.

Wexler was born in Chicago and is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After years of teaching and office work, she found success as a writer of personal essays, poetry, and fiction. Her other books include *Milk and Oranges* (a similar style to *Elephants in the Room*), two murder mysteries, and the family saga *Lori*.

Wexler's books, including *Elephants in the Room*, are available at Amazon.com. ■



Too much for one medium



them together in a multi-media app titled *Blues, Preludes and Feuds: A Musical Memory*

Users can read the e-book or listen to the solo piano album straight through—or they can

platform for my future work."

Saltzman is a former adjunct

professor of music at Columbia College Chicago, where he developed and taught a series of courses titled "Technology for Musicians." His music has been performed internationally, including at the 1996 Olympics. ■

Hear interview with Saltzman on his life and work at www.juf.org/interactive. Find the *Blues, Preludes, and Feuds* iOS app at the App Store, or as a universal web app. The album is available at Bandcamp and CDBaby.