Review: History Theatre's feminist, pro-union 'Hungry Like the Wolf' is hilarious

The cast of playwright Sandra Struthers' new comedy "Hungry Like the Wolf," which runs through April 12, 2026, at St. Paul's History Theatre. (Rick Spaulding / History Theatre)

By **ROSS RAIHALA** | rraihala@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press

PUBLISHED: March 23, 2026 at 4:53 PM CDT

History Theatre's new play "Hungry Like the Wolf" is a tough one to pin down.

It's about the Willmar 8, the eight women employed by Citizens National Bank in Willmar who went on strike in 1977 over charges of sex discrimination and earned national acclaim in the process. But it's also about the 1981 documentary about the women and the 1984 made-for-TV movie "A Matter of Sex." But it's also about Lee Grant, the Oscar-winning actress who directed both projects. But it's also about playwright/star Sandra Struthers' family history. But it's also about Duran Duran. Plus, there's also audience participation.

If all of that sounds like an utter mess, I'm with you all the way. Yet, "Hungry Like the Wolf" succeeds in large part because it's so busy, with an endless barrage of gags fueling the multiple storylines and bold politics.

To be clear, this show is unapologetically feminist, fiercely pro-union and utterly unafraid to criticize men, to the point of murder. It's almost comically forceful on all three fronts and one can't help but think it's largely going to preach to the choir.

Whatever the case, it's a ton of fun and a huge success both for Struthers and newly named artistic director Laura Leffler, who directs.

Struthers wrote the play in 2018, during the Brett Kavanaugh hearings, and first staged it during History Theatre's Raw Stages program in 2024. Playing herself, she leads a cast of three other women (Jen Burleigh-Bentz, Jan Maren, Allison Vincent) and a single man (Sam Landman). And, yes, she finds time in the script to playfully roast the theater for not having the budget to hire eight women in a show about eight women.

Across two acts, Struthers skillfully tells multiple stories while covertly inserting political commentary and history lessons between the laughs. She often speaks directly to the audience and fully admits that she wrote the show because she knew she could get a grant to do so, not out of any particular love of Minnesota history. She also speaks frankly about dwindling acting roles for women of a certain age and how she found inspiration from the aforementioned Lee Grant, who transitioned into directing later in her life.

The inspiring, surprising story of the Willmar 8 hangs heavy over the evening and Struthers slowly unspools the facts, some of which earned gasps from the audience on opening night. It turns out happy endings and tidy resolutions don't have much of a place in the world of "Hungry Like the Wolf."

The top-shelf cast play ably multiple characters and help sell Struthers' stories. Vincent in particular is an absolute blast to watch thanks to her clear gift for physical comedy as well as her memorable portrayal of Duran Duran's lead singer Simon Le Bon. And Landman totally got the assignment and deftly plays a series of selfish, clueless and/or spiteful clods.

Given that the program states it's a 100-minute performance with no intermission, but it was actually two acts with an intermission suggests "Hungry Like the Wolf" was continuing to evolve right up to opening night. That probably explains the disappointing ending, which drags on far too long. I get what Struthers was aiming for, but it felt both muddled and incomplete.

Still, "Hungry Like the Wolf" is well worth seeing thanks to its clever script and terrific performances. It'll be interesting to see what Struthers comes up with next.

'Hungry Like the Wolf'

- **When:** Through April 12
- **Where:** History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St., St. Paul
- **Tickets:** $55-$25; 651-292-4323 or historytheatre.com
- **Capsule:** A smart, funny and unpredictable history lesson.