

Elizabeth Peavey is 'spellbinding' in one-woman show

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The stage is mostly dark. There's a pile of clothing and some boxes, and there's a five-foot tubular metal clothes rack holding an assortment of dresses and coats.

That's all it takes to set the stage for Elizabeth Peavey's spellbinding performance of "My Mother's Clothes Are Not My Mother" at The Public Theatre. It's more than an hour of heartfelt reminiscences and plenty of laughs.

Peavey's one-woman production draws a wealth of truth and wisdom from the ordeal of her mother's death. Part of that ordeal is figuring out what to do with her mother's "stuff."

"Were my parents perfect?" Peavey asks aloud. "No, they were fun and funny and fabulously flawed – just like the rest of us."

This play has delighted many audiences since its premiere in Portland in September 2011. The current TPT production is a new version with a new script that takes a deeper look at care-giving. It tackles the thorny questions: "What does a parent owe a child," and "What does a daughter owe her mother?"

On her website, Peavey says, "I had intended to do one night."

Peavey, a Maine author, draws the audience into the personal journey that daughters face when a mother dies. It's much more than deciding what to do with all the "stuff." It's also a matter for sorting through the memories of many years. The play is sure to resonate with baby boomers.

Peavey puts a lot of action into her performance. Some quiet moments of remembrance erupt into whirlwinds of animation as Peavey moves through many stages of memory from childhood to caregiver.

Make no mistake ... this is not a play for women only. The situations translate smoothly into the experiences men can face on the death of a father. We can all relate to the totally male observation, "I'll keep this. I might need it someday."

"My Mother's Clothes Are Not My Mother" won the 2013 Maine Literary Award for Best Drama. This production at The Public Theatre launches the new version. With a \$10,000 grant from The National Endowment for the Arts, TPT participated in further development of this humorous and poignant story.

Peavey is an award-winning writer, performer, educator and author of three books, most recently, "Glorious Slow Going," which is described as "Maine stories of art, adventure and friendship."

A collection of her magazine articles is published as "Maine & Me: 10 Years of Down East Adventures."

Peavey's humor column, "Outta My Yard," can be found at thebollard.com, and she has appeared in Down East magazine since 1993.

Remaining performances of "My Mother's Clothes Are Not My Mother" are Friday and Saturday, Nov. 17-18 at 7:30 p.m. and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 19, with an added 3 p.m. Saturday matinee.

Wine-Down Friday is a free Pre-show Wine Sampling courtesy of Rails Restaurant on Friday, Nov 17, starting at 6:30 p.m.

A free post-show discussion with playwright-performer Elizabeth Peavey and Director Janet Mitchko will follow the Sunday matinee performance.

