

## Theater review: ‘My Mother’s Clothes’ version 2.0 still spirited and sentimental

Elizabeth Peavey reprises her revised one-woman show at The Public Theatre in Lewiston.

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In 2009, Maine writer Elizabeth Peavey faced the heartbreaking reality of losing her final parent, Shirley Peavey. In the aftermath of her mother’s death, Peavey did what she does best and started writing about it, turning her experience into a one-woman show called “My Mother’s Clothes Are Not My Mother.”

Under the guidance of director Janet Mitchko, Peavey brings a rewritten version of the 2013 Maine Literary Award-winning play to The Public Theatre’s stage for a two-weekend run that kicked off Friday.

Anyone who has lost a parent, or witnessed a parent’s decline in health, knows how difficult the role reversal of providing care can be. In this revised rendition of “My Mother’s Clothes Are Not My Mother,” Peavey bares her soul about her complicated relationship with her mother and how difficult it was to move on after her death.

The one-act play is set in Shirley’s walk-in closet after her death. The condo has sold, and Peavey must tackle the task of weeding through her mother’s clothes to decide what to keep and what to give away. What at first seems to be an easy task soon turns daunting as memories associated with each piece of clothing begin bubbling to the surface.

Peavey recounts her tale to the audience using words and pantomimed recollections, addressing patrons directly as if they are trusted confidants. Through choked-back tears and heartwarming laughter, Peavey’s life story with her mother unfolds.

The audience laughed Friday as she recalled how her mother would feverishly clean the house spotless after taking Ayds weight loss candy – “chocolate-covered amphetamines” per Peavey – and painted a vivid mental image of her mother ironing and starching clothes with Aqua Net while dramatically smoking a cigarette.

Then there was the time that Peavey started menstruating, one of many taboo topics in her childhood household. Her description of the first pad that her mother unceremoniously handed her is definitely worth hearing from Peavey firsthand.

“My Mother’s Clothes Are Not My Mother” is without a doubt a play about Peavey, her mother and her coping mechanism after her mother’s passing, but it explores a subject that affects many. Peavey brings her mother to life with warmth and humor that are touching and easy to identify with. It’s a well-written memoir that’s sure to spark personal memories in the audience, and the ending is the perfect combination of sentimental and high-spirited fun.