

PSC's 'Hausfrau' an inspiring comedy

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Journal Tribune Arts Reviewer

PORTLAND — The

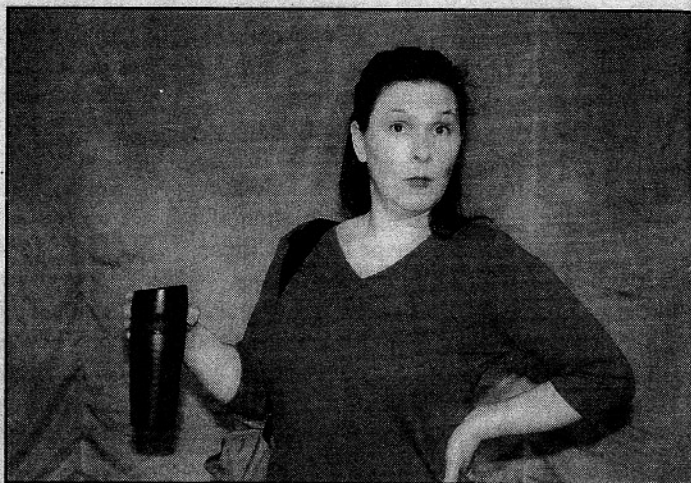
Passion of the Hausfrau, a new solo comedy by Bess Welden, Annette Jolles and Nicole Chaison, takes the audience on a hilarious and touching roller-coaster ride of self discovery as the hausfrau (the German courtesy title for house wife) struggles with her conflicted desires to devote herself to children and family and to revive her abandoned writing career.

The play opens as the heroine gets her young daughter ready to leave the house to pick up her older son. As her daughter calls to her, "My shoe fell in the potty," the audience laughs a knowing laugh and empathy begins to flow.

Welden's wonderful acting and comedic talents are showcased as she plays all of the roles, from the hausfrau to her two children, her husband, her mother, her grandmother, and even a former football player, among other characters in this fast moving 80-minute production.

The simple stage setting allows Welden the freedom to be wherever the action of the story takes her, from her car to the grocery store and even hell. Innovative projections of Chaison's comics amplify the story and add warmth and charm, while music and sound design by Hans Indigo Spencer and lighting by Matthew Cost all work together to create a cohesive sense of place throughout the play.

The Hausfrau idea began with Nicole Chaison, a Portland based cartoonist, who publishes the popular Hausfrau



Bess Welden, as the heroine in the one-woman play 'The Passion of the Hausfrau,' now showing at Portland Stage Company.

"muthah-zine." Chaison had put her career on hold to raise her children until a friend shared with her a comment her mother-in-law made about another woman: "She was an intellectual and a really gifted writer, but now she's just a hausfrau."

Chaison took up the challenge with her successful ongoing comic 'zine, proving that intellect and creativity can flourish along with motherhood. In 2007 Bess Welden, Portland Stage Affiliate Artist and a fan of the muthah-zine, approached Chaison about turning the stories and illustrations into a one-woman play. Working with director, Annette Jolles, and supported by Chaison, Welden adapted stories from the first five years of the Zine to create the *The Passion of the Hausfrau*.

The *Passion of the Hausfrau* has something for every viewer. The family scenes – as the hausfrau confronts turning 40, having lice, rehabilitating an old Victorian house, grocery

shopping, sex life in marriage, and even having breakfast (her son turns his toast into a gun) maintain the humor of the play, while allowing the deeper allegory to unfold.

The heroine grapples with her conflicted relationship with her mother and her frustrations with her lack of writing accomplishment and parenthood. Every heroic journey has a guide and the hausfrau's is her inspirational, cigarette smoking, rough talking grandmother, who makes the audience laugh as she helps the hausfrau recognize that she can embrace her feminine powers and be triumphantly engaged in both her family and her creative process.

The Passion of the Hausfrau is showing from March 19 to April 11 with regular performances on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and matinees at 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are available through Portland Stage: 774-0456 or www.portlandstage.com.