

## About the Play – continued

The *Hausfrau* idea began with Nicole Chaison, who published the first issue of *Hausfrau muthah-zine* in 2003. Chaison, a writer who had put her professional career on hold to raise her children, launched her “zine for gals with kids,” after a friend told her what her mother-in-law said about another woman who was putting her energy into raising her children: “She was an intellectual and a really gifted writer, but now she’s *just a hausfrau*.” Chaison’s zine was a refutation of this apparently widely-held idea that motherhood was incompatible with intellect and creativity, and also an exploration of how being a hausfrau was something unique and praiseworthy in itself. The zine is now on its 16<sup>th</sup> issue and has built a following not only in the playgrounds and organic groceries of Portland, ME, but around New England and the rest of the country as well. In June 2009 Random House published *The Passion of the Hausfrau*, a graphic memoir, to outstanding reviews ([www.passionofthehausfrau.com](http://www.passionofthehausfrau.com)).

Back in 2007, one of *Hausfrau muthah-zine*’s fans, Bess Welden, approached Chaison about turning the stories and illustrations into a one-woman play. Welden had previously written and performed three other solo shows, and was looking to develop a new project. With Chaison’s support, she began adapting the stories from the first five years of the zine, and brought Annette Jolles onboard, the director with whom she had created two solo works, *Keeping the Word* and *The Handshake* in New York.

Working together on the script, Chaison, Jolles, and Welden brought an early version of *The Passion of the Hausfrau* to Portland Stage’s *Little Festival of the Unexpected* in May 2008. The Little Festival staged readings gave the creative team a wealth of feedback to take with them to the 2008 ENVISION retreat sponsored by New York City’s Voice and Vision Theater ([www.vandv.org](http://www.vandv.org)) at Bard College. Chosen from over 100 submissions, Welden and her collaborators were invited by Voice and Vision to attend the two-week retreat to continue developing the script toward production. In January 2009, Bowdoin College Theater & Dance sponsored a reading during the final stages of script and projection development. On March 20, 2009, *The Passion of the Hausfrau: An Illuminated Solo Comedy* directed by Annette Jolles and performed by Bess Welden, opened in Portland Stage Company’s Studio Theater.