

Mother *(and me)*

A Daughter's Story of Love, Loss and Goulash

By Melinda Buckley

Part of the Fielding Studio Series

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A larger-than-life Hungarian 'Mama Rose,' is slowly slipping into dementia as her Broadway baby, Melinda slips into de'middle age. A brilliantly funny and touching story of two women who are losing everything they've ever been-in very different ways-as they lose each other. Who's it harder for? The one who can't remember? ...Or the one who can't forget? This one-woman tour de force by Broadway performer and comedienne Melinda Buckley was an award-winner at the 2014 NY Fringe Festival.

Bay Street Theater presents a one night performance of the one woman show *MOTHER (and me)* written by and starring Melinda Buckley.

She Ain't Crazy, She's My Mother...
A Daughter's Story of Love, Loss, and Goulash.

A larger-than-life Hungarian 'Mama Rose,' is slowly slipping into dementia as her Broadway baby, Melinda slips into de'middle age. *MOTHER (and me)* is a story of two women who are losing everything they've ever been—in very different ways—as they both lose each other. Who's it harder for? The one who can't remember? ...Or the one who can't forget?

Melinda has appeared on Broadway and in the National tours of several shows, including: Crazy For You, A Chorus Line, Raggedy Ann and the great honor of working with Bob Fosse in the revival of Sweet Charity. She performed Improv and Sketch material with Gotham City Improv and Chicago City Limits and appeared as a stand up at Caroline's, the Comic Strip and Gotham Comedy Club. She has written and performed several solo shows and this most recent show, *MOTHER (and me)* was just featured in FringeNYC 2014 where it won, 'Best of Fest' at the C.O.W.

On the other side of the table, Melinda directed Town Hall's hit musical series, Broadway By The Year, which featured a Tony award winning cast and choreographed *Paramour*, which starred Len Cariou and premiered at the Old Globe Theatre. For the big screen, she choreographed the musical sequences for Columbia Pictures', *Stuart Little I and II* with Geena Davis and Jonathon Lipnicki, the independent film *1999*, starring Amanda Peet and Jennifer Garner and assisted Pat Birch on several projects, including *Working Girl* and several episodes of "Saturday Night Live." She also assisted Lonny Price as an SDC Fellow in the filming of *Company* at the NY Philharmonic, which starred Neil Patrick Harris, Patti Lupone, Christina

Hendricks, Jon Cryer and Stephen Colbert. Other TV credits include, choreographing an award-winning promo for CBS' Fall Line up and the daytime drama "One Life to Live."

Melinda has written, directed and choreographed numerous commercial and corporate productions for such clients as Fox, ESPN, WE tv, Sesame Street, McDonald's, Microsoft, Pepsi, IBM, American Express and Audi. Proud member of AEA, SAG and SDC.

Kimberly Senior is a freelance director and the director of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony-nominated play *Disgraced* by Ayad Akhtar. Her New York and regional credits include: *Disgraced* (Broadway, Lincoln Center Theater 3), *The Who and The What* (La Jolla Playhouse, Lincoln Center Theater 3), *Little Gem* (City Theatre), *Murder on the Nile*, *A Few Good Men* (Peninsula Players), *Mauritius* (Theatre Squared, Fayetteville, AR). Her many Chicago credits include *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn* (The Goodman) *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Letters* (Writers Theatre, where she is a Resident Director), *4000 Miles*, *The Whipping Man* (Northlight Theatre), *Want*, *The North Plan* (Steppenwolf), *Inana*, *My Name is Asher Lev*, *All My Sons*, *Dolly West's Kitchen* (TimeLine Theatre, where she is an Associate Artist), *Disgraced* (American Theater Company), *The Great God Pan*, *After the Revolution*, *Madagascar*, *The Overwhelming* and *The Busy World is Hushed* (Next), and *Waiting for Lefty* (American Blues), among others. Kimberly is adjunct faculty at Columbia College, and is a proud member of SDC.

"The joy and genius of this show is Miss Buckley's ability to have us on the verge of tears and then make us laugh." -TheFrontRowCenter.com

"A tour-de-force one-woman show... Gorgeous. A must see!" -NYTheaternow.com

"People are always amazed when... one person can memorize all those lines. It is even more remarkable when that one person writes those many lines and portrays more than one character. And perhaps the biggest challenge of all is to successfully imbue tragedy with comedy. All of this and more is accomplished by Melinda Buckley in Mother." -by Patricia Norris on *Playing Around*

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MOTHER

Melinda Buckley wrote and stars in *Mother*, a tour-de-force one-woman show about her relationship with her immigrant mother, whom she describes, as her "Hungarian Mama Rose."

Buckley crafts deeply personal material into a very funny, very sad, very beautiful elegy for her mother as she slips into dementia, going back and forth through time to describe their relationship, which has at its emotional center their attachment to music, dance

and performance. What could seem like sentimentality in a lesser performer comes here from a source of deep emotion and authenticity.

Buckley's mother's dementia and dying took place over many years, and Buckley shows us how she herself ages throughout this process. The audience surrounding me was made up of mostly middle-aged women. Most of us were laughing and crying along with Buckley, as she navigated the terrain of 'assisted living,' the loss of a husband, an estrangement with her brother and the gradual, inexorable loss of her mother.

Buckley's relationship with her mother was not without its darker sides, and this is not a sentimental gloss on mother-daughter relationships. However, she maintains a humor - a humor earned through hard-won experience - and a lightness that can only be found only in those who have walked through darkness.

My one quibble with the way Buckley (and presumably her director Christine Renee Miller) chose to craft the material, especially because she does have musical-theater skills (she is a Broadway performer who has worked with the likes of Bob Fosse), is that I wish she had perhaps done a little bit more with song and dance. The bits of this they did add throughout the show were to great effect. After certain numbers (which I call 'numbers' because Buckley and Miller shaped even 'straight' bits to work like musical numbers), the audience spontaneously applauded. Finally, at the end of the show, much of the audience gave Buckley a standing ovation, which surprised her, but was well deserved.

Anyone who has ever cared for an ailing relative, partner or friend with dementia, or lost a parent with whom they had an enmeshed relationship or had to deal with the Kafkaesque nightmare of health care for those without a lot of money will connect with Buckley in a personal way. For anyone interested in how to craft a gorgeous show from deeply personal even raw material, this show is a must-see.

As a minor disclaimer, I do know Buckley as an acquaintance, but we have never worked together nor have I ever seen her work until now.

Posted By Casey Curtis on Sep 2, 2014

Some theater performers are known as "triple threats" because they act, sing, and dance. Given that Melinda Buckley, an actor with Broadway credits (*Crazy For You*) and former ballet soloist, also writes brilliantly, perhaps she should be called a quadruple threat. But do not feel threatened, feel fortunate, because Miss Buckley brings her considerable wide-ranging talents to a marvelous new solo show, *Mother*.

In *Mother*, Melinda Buckley tells the story of her mother Eileen's descent into dementia and her own symbiotically-connected life as she descends into "de-middle age." Using a combination of narration interspersed with hilarious comedy vignettes, Miss Buckley achieves the perfect blend.

The show tells Eileen Buckley's history escaping from war-torn Hungary via a short-lived marriage to an American soldier who leaves her to raise two young children by

herself in suburban Massachusetts. A feisty “Hungarian Mama Rose”, Eileen Buckley manages well and poorly enough to engender life-long gratitude and co-dependence in her daughter. Any obstacle Eileen encounters can be fended off by either her smarts, her beauty, or a well-placed, “go to hell darling and tell them Zsa Zsa sent you.”

Miss Buckley spends an appropriately modest amount of time relating family history and instead adroitly steers us through the mother and daughter’s parallel journeys with touching emotional vignettes, e.g. —Melinda dressing up her mother (rather than dolls) for dates, a shared experience at the ballet, and an-ill advised but ultimately pleasurable bike ride to Plymouth Rock. The joy and genius of this show is Miss Buckley’s ability to have us on the verge of tears and then make us laugh. This supremely satisfying tandem is brilliantly employed for the entirety of the performance.

I am a huge fan of sit-down monologists Mike Daisey and the late Spalding Gray, but seeing Melinda Buckley take command of a stage with her flawless movement and comedic skills creates a more fully satisfying solo show experience. Given the ubiquity of mental slippage among aging parents and the complex range of emotions their children feel as a result, this perfect exploration of the topic should resonate with all who attend.