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Mother, Mother: The Many Mothers of Maude

By

JULIE JENSEN

Dramatic Publishing Company

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(MOTHER, MOTHER: THE MANY MOTHERS OF MAUDE)

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Mother, Mother: The Many Mothers of Maude received its world premiere at the Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center by Pygmalion Productions in Salt Lake City on Nov. 4, 2022.

CAST:

ANNIE Colleen Baum
JULIA..... Barb Gandy
MAUDENicole Finney
MARTHA..... Tamara Howell
UNCLE BIG/MANNY/CHARLES/
SENATOR/LEVI.....Darryl Stamp

PRODUCTION:

DirectorFran Pruyn
Stage Manager Jennie Pett
Set Design Allen Smith
Costume Design Maddiey Howell Wilkins
Light Design.....Pilar I
Soundscape DesignMikal Troy Klee
Publicity Daisy Blake Perry
PhotographyRobert Holman
Light Operator.....Jennie Pett
Sound OperatorMikal Troy Klee
Master ElectricianForest Ethington

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Mother, Mother: The Many Mothers of Maude

CHARACTERS

ANNIE: Asaneth (*pronounced ah-SEEN-ith*) Adams, an actress and mother of Maude Adams. Dramatic. Ages from 13 to 67.

MAUDE: Maude Adams, the most celebrated actress in the American theatre. Ages from 13 to 40.

JULIA: Julia Ann Adams, mother of Annie Adams. Dry and acerbic. Ages from 40s to 89.

MARTHA: Martha “Mattie” Hughes Cannon, physician, politician, polygamist wife and a mother of three. Energetic, knows more than she lets on. Ages from 12 to 57.

UNCLE BIG*: Brigham Young, president of the Mormon Church. Fond of his own voice.

MANNY*: Director of theatre in the mining camp of Ruth, Nevada. New York accent.

SENATOR*: Senator Arthur Brown, the first U.S. senator from Utah. Melodramatic.

LEVI*: A farmer in Utah. Rural western accent.

* These characters are played by one actor.

PRODUCTION NOTES

STYLE: This play borrows from the American theatre in the 19th-century. The acting style and the look of things in general should reflect that influence.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Rooted in the real lives of the Adams women, most of the play is factually and historically true. The rest of the play comes from the author's creative interpretation.

SETTING: The setting should be kept simple and efficient. Two or three pieces of furniture that can be moved. No blackouts.

PACING: This play is not in verse, although there is an effort to use an iambic rhythm in order to suggest the slightly archaic. The short lines, on the other hand, are meant to give actors more ease with what is sometimes rather convoluted diction.

Mother, Mother: The Many Mothers of Maude

ACT I

Scene 1

(Open in JULIA's home in 1861. 19th-century waltz music plays. JULIA, mid-forties, and MARTHA, twelve years old, stand watching offstage. ANNIE, thirteen years old, calls from offstage.)

ANNIE *(off)*. Is everyone ready to watch and pay attention?

JULIA *(calling)*. I'm here.

MARTHA *(calling)*. I'm ready upon ready.

ANNIE *(off)*. Are you all watching?

JULIA *(calling)*. Yes, dear, we are watching.

MARTHA *(calling)*. Watching upon watching.

(ANNIE twirls on. She looks like a spinning top with arms flailing. She arrives with a plunk, slightly dizzy.)

ANNIE. How was that?

MARTHA. That was excellent.

JULIA. That was good. But *what* was it?

ANNIE. In the script, it says, "She enters onto the stage, twirling."

MARTHA. That's what you did, very perfectly.

JULIA. Yes, that's what you did, I'd say.

ANNIE. I can try another one. Would you like to see that?

JULIA. Yes, I think I would.

MARTHA. Oh, yes, another one.

(ANNIE twirls in place, looking like an awkward spinning top.)

ANNIE. Was that good?

MARTHA. That was the best yet.

JULIA. Yes, that was good. But what kind of person twirls?

ANNIE. It's to show she is happy.

JULIA. What kind of person twirls when she is happy?

ANNIE. This is the theatre, Mother, it is larger than life.

MARTHA. You looked larger than life when you did those twirls.

ANNIE. And it is also about beauty.

JULIA. What is?

ANNIE. The theatre. Everything about the theatre is also about beauty.

JULIA. Oh.

ANNIE. What's wrong with beauty?

JULIA. Silly subject to think about, that's all.

ANNIE. Beauty is what life is about, Mother.

And theatre is about life,
so, beauty is what everything is all about always.

JULIA. Is that so?

ANNIE. It is so.

MARTHA. And that is why you are so good at it, at the theatre.

JULIA. Except ...

ANNIE. Except what?

JULIA. Except, beauty is an invented thing.

ANNIE. Invented?

JULIA. Invented by people.

So is romance. Steer clear of them both.

ANNIE. Sometimes I do not understand what you are talking about.

JULIA. You will someday.

Now pull up your stockings
and go put on your shoes.

And you, Mattie, it is time for you to go home.

MARTHA. I liked the show very much, Annie.

And I will ask my mother if I can come to see the play
when you come in twirling.

JULIA. Good night, Mattie.

MARTHA. Good night, Mrs. Adams.

Good night, Annie.

(She moves away, then returns.)

MARTHA *(cont'd)*. I think that you might be extra-ordinary.

ANNIE. You are probably right, Mattie.

(MARTHA grins and skips out. ANNIE plops down and puts on her shoes.)

ANNIE *(cont'd)*. Uncle Big is sending his carriage to fetch me.

JULIA. Brigham Young is sending a carriage? Surely he is not.

ANNIE. Father said I could go.

JULIA. Well, you may *not* go.

ANNIE. Father said I could.

JULIA. This is not your father's decision.

ANNIE. Why not?

JULIA. Because it is my decision.

And you may not go anywhere
in anyone's carriage.

That is how young girls lose their way.

ANNIE. It will be here at half past six.

JULIA. I do not care, Asaneth.

I am not allowing you to ride with him.

ANNIE. That is not my name!

And it is not Uncle Big, it is his carriage.

JULIA. You may not ride to the theatre

with Uncle Big or in his carriage.

Your brother has saddled the horse.

ANNIE. So that I may arrive onstage smelling like horse sweat!

JULIA. Asaneth, please.

ANNIE. Do not call me by that name!

And for your information,

Uncle Big is helping me with my career.

JULIA. You are thirteen. You do not have a career.

ANNIE. He said he will help me become an actress upon the stage.

JULIA. This is merely a childhood dream, dear.

ANNIE. It is a forever dream. Past, present, future, for time and all eternity.

JULIE. Why don't you do something else with your life?

ANNIE. Why should I?

JULIA. Because you look different,

that is, you look like no one else that goes onstage.

ANNIE. I am unique.

Separate and apart from all others.

I will make great and glorious contributions to the theatre!

JULIA. The world abounds with numerous other possibilities.

ANNIE. There is nothing else for a girl to become.

Except a writer of novels,

which is piling boredom on top of boredom,

or a teacher of children,

which is nonsense upon nonsense.

I would much rather be an actress upon the stage.

JULIA. You could be a mother. It runs in your family.

ANNIE. No, thank you.

JULIA. What's wrong with motherhood?

ANNIE. Too much like being a servant.

JULIA. Some aspects can be frustrating, it is true.

But much more of it is highly rewarding.

ANNIE. I'd rather be an actress upon the stage.

Uncle Big says I have great expression and a fulsome voice,
and that I am destined for bigger stages.

JULIA. All well and good. But you still may not ride in his
carriage.

ANNIE. What is wrong with Uncle Big?

JULIA. He has twenty-seven wives.

ANNIE. What's wrong with that?

JULIA. He cannot help but imagine
every woman as another wife.

ANNIE. Your brother is a "plig."

JULIA. My brother has one additional wife.

ANNIE. What's the difference?

JULIA. Twenty-six additional wives!

ANNIE. You are afraid that Father will become a plig, are
you not, Mother?

Are you not?

JULIA. Hush now. That is enough.

ANNIE. You are standing in the way of my great and glorious
future.

JULIA. You have a small part in a little play; it is not your
whole life.

ANNIE. That is where you're wrong. I have had a vision.

A woman appeared to me in a pillar of light,

at the foot of my bed,
floating in mid-air.

She called me by name and said,

“Annie Adams, you are to take none of the paths before you.

Rather, you are to become an actress,

an actress upon the stage.”

JULIA. Please do not repeat that story to others.

Now, let me fix your hair.

ANNIE. No, I’ll do it. I know what I am doing, Mother.

JULIA (*getting a hairbrush*). You do not know what you are
doing. You are thirteen.

ANNIE. Yes, I do!

JULIA. When you have done all the important things in life.
Twice.

Then you may say you know what you’re doing. (*Brushing
her hair.*)

ANNIE. I will be an actress, an actress upon the stage. Just
you wait and see!

*(ANNIE strikes a pose. Both freeze. Sound of a Mormon
hymn. Lights fade.)*

Scene 2

*(Same Mormon hymn. ANNIE is waving from the side.
UNCLE BIG arrives in a carriage.)*

UNCLE BIG. Annie, Annie, there you are.
Suffer the little children to come unto me.
Hop up here beside me, child.

(ANNIE jumps in beside him.)

ANNIE. I am not a child.

UNCLE BIG. You most certainly are not!

ANNIE. Mother doesn't know I'm here.

UNCLE BIG. Then this is what we do.

We couch our truth in silence.

ANNIE. Meaning what?

UNCLE BIG. Meaning this and only this.

(Touching her lips.) The silence is all.

ANNIE. Mother says I am not to ride in carriages.

Because that's how girls lose their way.

UNCLE BIG. Your mother is the victim of outsized fear.

We must pity her. And pray for her.

She imagines wanton acts of rape and pillage.

ANNIE. Because she does not trust you.

UNCLE BIG. She does not trust you, either.

ANNIE. She does not believe you want to help me with my career.

UNCLE BIG. Give me your hands; I'll warm them for you.

(Taking her hands.)

I am the bridge between you and the wider world.

I am also the proprietor of the finest playhouse west of Berlin.

ANNIE. Mother does not believe in my career.

UNCLE BIG. Well then, we shall take our own path, you and I.

ANNIE. What path is that?

UNCLE BIG. The path that will prove her wrong.

ANNIE. So, tell me, Uncle Big. How shall we prove her wrong?

UNCLE BIG. We shall make you the finest young actress in the West.

ANNIE. And Mother will be dazzled?

UNCLE BIG. Oh yes, indeed. She shall be dazzled.

ANNIE. Because I will be dazzling.

UNCLE BIG (*putting his hand on her head*). As night follows day,

it is hereby ordained,
you shall be dazzling.

ANNIE (*snuggling into him*). Oh, I love you, Uncle Big. I do. I do.

UNCLE BIG. Now then, there is a young man I have recently met.

I desire you to become acquainted with him.

ANNIE. I'm not old enough to meet young men.

UNCLE BIG. Of course you are. This is a young man of means.

ANNIE (*sitting up*). But I do not want to be a wife.

I want to be an actress upon the stage.

UNCLE BIG. You will be both.

ANNIE. I cannot be both.

UNCLE BIG. With my help, you can.

ANNIE. But first, I shall be an actress upon the stage.

UNCLE BIG. Ah, but if you are to be an actress upon the stage, you must first be married.

For an unmarried woman on the stage
is presumed for sale.

ANNIE. I am not for sale. I am in training for my career.

Every day I train myself.
I go to the hill behind our house,
where I speak speeches.
And declaim.

UNCLE BIG. What do you declaim?

ANNIE. Lines of great beauty and utmost importance.

“I am dying, Egypt. I’m dying.” (*Falling over.*)

UNCLE BIG. Whatever you recite, make sure the words are worthwhile.

ANNIE. That is why I am to be an actress upon the stage,
to speak great truths that are all worthwhile.

UNCLE BIG. If I were you, I would recite—

ANNIE. Not recite, “declaim.”

UNCLE BIG. If I were you, I would declaim the scriptures.

ANNIE. I prefer the lines from plays, especially dying lines.

“Out, out, brief candle.” (*Falling over.*)

UNCLE BIG. This young man I was speaking of. His name
is Kiskadden. (*Pronounced Kiss-CAD-en.*)

James Kiskadden.

Is not Kiskadden a beautiful name for an actress on the stage?
Mrs. James Kiskadden.

ANNIE. James Kiskadden? That man is a gentile.

UNCLE BIG. You will deliver unto him the sacred word.

And because of you, he shall hear and believe.

ANNIE. My brother says he is a sassy man.

UNCLE BIG. Not so, he has only to meet the right woman.

ANNIE. I am not a woman. I am a girl.

UNCLE BIG. But so close to the edge
that at any moment

you could tip right over into the arms of womanhood.

ANNIE. That does not interest me, Uncle Big.

UNCLE BIG. It will, it will. All in due time.

ANNIE. Not until I have become an actress upon the stage.

UNCLE BIG. Annie, dear, this is a young man of means.

ANNIE. I want to make my own means.

UNCLE BIG. He will be in attendance at the play tonight.

You will meet him afterwards.

I shall introduce you.

Then you shall see what bounty and fair fortune
he is capable of bringing you.

(Putting an arm around her. Beat.)

In the meantime, let us talk about the future,
the future that will be yours, all yours,
when you play the many stages in the West.

ANNIE. All of them, Uncle Big?

UNCLE BIG. All of them.

(Emphasizing the rhythm.) Sacramento, San Francisco,
San Diego.

Fresno, Barstow and San Bernardino.

ANNIE. Oh, I can hardly wait for that day to come.

Say those names again.

UNCLE BIG. Sacramento, San Francisco, San Diego.

Fresno, Barstow and San Bernardino.

*(ANNIE hugs him. Both freeze. Sound of a horse galloping.
Lights fade.)*

Scene 3

*(A few years have passed. The sound of a religious march
plays as MARTHA trudges on in boots. ANNIE calls to her
from the back of the house.)*

ANNIE *(calling)*. Mattie! Mattie Hughes!

(MARTHA stops.)

ANNIE *(cont'd)*. Wait up! I have great news, great and
glorious news.

(ANNIE catches up to her, breathless.)

MARTHA. I must be at work before dark,
and I have an errand to run.

ANNIE. And you must wear those boots to set type?

MARTHA. The streets are muddy.

ANNIE. What is your errand?

MARTHA. I must stop by the Lion House
to retrieve a letter from Brigham Young,
which I will then put in the post.

ANNIE. Remarkable! I, too, am on my way to the Lion House.
I must pick up a letter from Brigham Young.
We will walk together.

(ANNIE grabs MARTHA's hand, and they trudge on. Beat.)

ANNIE (*cont'd*). Are you ready now for the great and glorious
news?

MARTHA. Let me check. (*Beat.*) Yes, I am ready.

ANNIE. I am about to go on the road!

MARTHA. Which road?

ANNIE. I am joining a company.

MARTHA. A business company?

ANNIE. A company of actors.

I will be in a troupe of players,
just like those in *Hamlet*.

“Speak the speech, I pray you, trippingly on the tongue.”

MARTHA. Where?

ANNIE. Where what?

MARTHA. Where are you playing your plays?

ANNIE. Mining camps first.

MARTHA. Oh, Annie, do you not remember that
mining camps can be dirty, dangerous and degrading?

ANNIE. How could a place named “Ruth”
be anything but lovely?

MARTHA. Oh, Annie, I fear for you.

Ruth is the worst of the worst.

My uncle worked in Ruth.

He lost his wife, his honor
and his testimony.

ANNIE. There will also be Frisco, Silver Reef and Thistle
Junction.

Then onto Caliente and Panaca. (*Pronounced pan-AK-ah.*)

Followed by the Comstock Lode itself
in the city of Virginia City,
in the territory of Nevada!

MARTHA. But mining camps, Annie,
your honor could be compromised.

ANNIE. Just a short time there.

Then on to Sacramento, San Francisco, San Diego.

Fresno, Barstow and San Bernardino!

MARTHA. What about your daughter?

ANNIE. I am taking her with me.

MARTHA. What about your husband?

ANNIE. Kiskadden remains here at home,
to shuffle his numbers
and pile his papers.

MARTHA. While you launch your boat
on the high seas of this world.

ANNIE. While I become what I am destined to become!

MARTHA (*beat*). I have my own news as well.

ANNIE. Can it possibly be better news than mine?

MARTHA. I am to enroll in medical school at the University of Pennsylvania.

ANNIE. Oh, no, Mattie. You must have that wrong. They do not accept women.

MARTHA. In the letter I am collecting,
a letter your Uncle Big is writing on my behalf,
he argues that I be made an exception.
He claims I will be a student there, come fall.

ANNIE. The letter I must collect
is one Uncle Big has written for me.

MARTHA. Then you have not yet received an offer from the company.

ANNIE. No, but I will. It is foregone.

MARTHA. You exaggerate, Annie.
A trait you promised your mother to control.

ANNIE. I simply know things before they happen. When do you leave?

MARTHA. Quite soon, though I am less than confident.

ANNIE. Oh, Mattie.
You have longed long for this.
We decided it all in childhood,
sitting under the big tree,
thinking big thoughts about our lives.
You would be a physician,
and I would be an actress upon the stage.

MARTHA. There are no saints in Philadelphia, no women.
I could be all alone.

ANNIE. You are talking like a sissy.

MARTHA. It is very cold in the east.
The wind comes off the sea and up the rivers.

ANNIE. You will be in a city,
with people and plays
and great amounts of bustling.

MARTHA. The laboratories smell like chemicals and death.
There are bodies, hairless and pale.
Bodies of animals, rodents and people.

ANNIE. That is your stage, Mattie.
Where you are meant to be.

MARTHA. You invent things, Annie.
I must prove things.

ANNIE. Take note of this, Mattie, my glorious future.
I am taking a curtain call.
There are roses raining down from the sky.
I bow, very low, to express my appreciation.
I pick up one stem and kiss it.
They are cheering and clapping and stamping on the floor.
“Thank you, thank you,” I say.
You see, I am very humble.

MARTHA. This is my future.
I am all alone in a cavernous room.
It is cold and drafty. Sounds echo.
I am cutting into a cadaver.
It makes a sound.
I want to flee but I may not,
because I am a woman,
and I may not show fear.

ANNIE. Your imagination is simply inadequate, Mattie.
This is what I see for you.
You are healing a soldier
without a leg.
He is writhing in agony and pain,
pale from loss of blood.

You enter the room.

The pain stops as he looks at you.

Then he rises from his bed and struggles toward you.

He walks again. You are like Jesus.

A girl Jesus.

MARTHA. Sometimes I can hardly breathe,

so great is my fear.

ANNIE. Stop. Right here.

Who is the most powerful man in the world?

MARTHA. Brigham Young.

ANNIE. And who is allowing our wildest dreams to come true?

MARTHA. Brigham Young.

ANNIE. Don't you see?

MARTHA. See what?

ANNIE. Verily, verily, Mattie-Mattie.

We both have parts in a miracle.

MARTHA. I do not believe in miracles.

ANNIE. They do not require that you believe in them in order to be true.

MARTHA. I believe in science.

ANNIE. I believe in miracles.

Now then, let us go, you and I,
and become what we are destined to become.

*(They both take a giant step and freeze. Lights fade.
Dancehall music.)*