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The MOMologues

The original comedy about
motherhood

by Lisa Rafferty,
Stefanie Cloutier and
Sheila Eppolito

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



NEW YORK HOLLYWOOD LONDON TORONTO

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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The MOMologues
by Lisa Rafferty, Stefanie Cloutier and Sheila Eppolito.

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“The MOMologues”
(with the initial “MOM” in capital letters)

The following subtitle shall follow:

“The original comedy about motherhood.”

The MOMologues was originally presented at the ICA Theatre in Boston on May 3, 2002. It was directed by Lisa Rafferty, with lighting by Heidi Hinkel, and costumes by Kim Dickinson. The production stage manager was Kristie Froman. The original cast was Stefanie Cloutier, Charlotte Dietz, Ellen Stone and Maria Wardwell.

The MOMologues returned to the ICA Theatre in Boston on April 23, 2003. Again, it was directed by Lisa Rafferty, with lighting by Heidi Hinkel, and costumes by Kim Dickinson. The stage manager was Kristie Froman. The four original cast members returned – Stefanie Cloutier, Charlotte Dietz, Ellen Stone and Maria Wardwell – with three of the cast members “job sharing” the roles with Jane Eyler, Johanna Perri and Cinda Donovan, respectively.

In April 2004, *The MOMologues* opened in Boston’s theater district at the Stuart Street Playhouse, Second Stage. It was directed by Lisa Rafferty, lighting by Ken Elliot, costumes by Kimmerie Jones, and stage managed by Hadley Tieger. It was produced by Rita Fucillo and Lisa Rafferty and the company manager was David Polanzak. The show featured a rotating cast of 11 actors who shared the four roles including: Jennifer Burke, Stefanie Cloutier, Charlotte Dietz, Cinda Donovan, Lisa Caron Driscoll, Jane Eyler, Johanna Perri, Lea Renay, Ellen Stone, Holly Vanasse and Maria Wardwell.

At the same time, the show traveled to the Palace Theater in Manchester, New Hampshire for a show on April 23, 2004; the Company Theater in Norwell, Massachusetts for three shows on May 7, 8 and 9, 2004; and the Regent Theatre in Arlington, Massachusetts for a show on June 5, 2004. Various members of the Boston cast appeared at those theatres.

CHARACTERS

Charlotte

Ellen

Maria

Stefanie

SETTING

One chair with a small table with phone down left, one chair with a small table down right. Up left is a round table with two chairs and up right is a park bench.

ACT I

*(Suggested preshow music: Mother-themed songs like Supremes “Baby Love,” Beatles “Lady Madonna,” Paul Simon’s “Mother and Child Reunion,” “Mother’s Little Helper” by the Rolling Stones, etc.)**

*(Lights up on **THREE WOMEN** dressed in career clothes, carrying briefcases.)*

STEF. I spent my twenties trying not to get pregnant, and my thirties trying desperately to get pregnant.

MARIA. We were lucky – it happened right away – wow, I’m pregnant!...NOW WHAT???

CHAR. Clomid, Pergonal, luteal phase, cervical mucus, basal body temperature, ovulation, insemination – who knew trying to have a baby would be so scientific?

(WOMEN exit as ELLEN walks in:)

ELLEN. After the old fashioned way didn’t work, my husband and I went in to learn all about the administering of fertility drugs. The popular drug at the time – Pergonal – came from the urine of post-menopausal Italian nuns, I kid you not...It is meant to be injected into your hip with a hypodermic syringe the size of a screwdriver. I am clinically averse to any kind of needle – after all, I had been lying to doctors for years about having a tetanus shot...So the nurse suggests my husband practice on an orange first, and then announces he’s ready to go. Here? Now? OOOOOKAAAAY. I lean forward on to the examining table, hold my breath, and just as he’s about to jab me, the nurse says – “Don’t hold back now – just pretend you are playing darts and she’s the bullseye – now go...”

* Please See Music Note on Page 3.

(ELLEN *exits*, MARIA *walks on*.)

MARIA. OK – so my husband and I decide we are ready to try and have a baby – so I look up “how to get pregnant” in this crunchy-granola book. I read the bar graph that pinpoints the approximate time of the month that ovulation occurs. I open up my day planner and look at the date. I look at the bar graph in the book. I stare at my day planner. I walk over to my husband and say: um – ya know, according to this book, tonight would be, you know – the night. He says: “Great – let’s go!” That was it. Boom. One try. Mission accomplished.

(*over to*.)

CHAR. For me, deciding to get pregnant and getting pregnant were two totally different things. For years I had faithfully used birth control but after six months of no-holds-barred, unprotected sex, and still no sign of sperm meeting egg, I began the circuit of fertility testing and basal body temp charting. Now, the basal body temp thing was pretty interesting [insert digital thermometer into mouth], take your temperature at the same time every morning, before you’ve so much as moved a muscle, never mind going to the bathroom, and at some point you’ll see a spike in your temperature, which tells you the egg has dropped. Of course, the secret is to have the sperm in place BEFORE the egg drops, so the timing of sex became pretty tricky. And with all this charting and testing going on, sex wasn’t exactly about sex anymore, it was more like a job you had to get up and go to whether you wanted to or not. Most of the time, there was nothing I wanted to do LESS than have sex. And then, finally, after months of charting and testing and completely scheduled sex, the stars aligned, one of his sperm made it to the egg! Hallelujah! At last we could stop with the fucking sex! Funny thing though, the more pregnant I got, the hornier I became. Something to do with hormones and blood flow to the vagina, but there I was, hugely pregnant, with no easy way to PERFORM

the act, begging my husband to give it a try. I was THAT horny....When the o.b. came in shortly after I'd pushed out my nine pound daughter and told me "No sex for six weeks," I thought, you silly, silly man, it'll be SIX YEARS before I let my husband near me again!

(*CHAR exits. STEFANIE enters on the phone:*)

STEF. Mum? It's me. I saw it today! The baby! We had an ultrasound, and saw the little heart beating. There wasn't much to see – it looked like a bowl of hot & sour soup actually, but when we saw the little heart kind of light up with each beat the relief was wonderful... What? Me too. I feel like this one's going to hang in and be fine. Anyhow...Yes. I feel good too, Mum. This one's going to happen.

(*next in:*)

ELLEN. OK – let's get a couple of things straight... First, morning sickness is a misnomer. Verge-of-barfing-all-day-and-night-sickness is more accurate. And the glow of pregnancy? Hides the unglamorous reality – the bloating, swelling, indigestion, heartburn, hemorrhoids, fatigue...yuck! From your very first o.b. appointment, your dignity pretty much goes out the window. But there's nothing in the world that compares to those anxious moments when your doctor is moving that instrument over your belly trying to find the first heartbeat. And then wow! – when you hear it – it sounds like a "swish swish" in your own private seashore...and you literally feel your heart swell with a rush of some primordial motherhood hormone. Then you start to show and actually look pregnant, which sure beats just looking chubby and the onslaught of unsolicited advice begins, and never ends... And, you just cannot believe how much nerve total strangers have in telling you peculiar, private, sometimes horrifying things – and the hands-on contact! Private personal space has no meaning when your belly sticks out from here to Sunday. Everyone seems fascinated... If you're the kind of person who likes attention, you'll love being pregnant...

(ELLEN picks up her bag as CHARLOTTE, STEF and MARIA surround her.)

STEF. Wow – you’re huge – how far along are you?

MARIA. Did you plan this pregnancy?

CHAR. My gawd – you’re so big – do you really have four months to go?

STEF. I drank and smoked through all my pregnancies and my kids turned out all right.

CHAR. You’re not supposed to drink wine or anything – ever, not a teeny bit, not for any reason. Don’t even think about it.

MARIA. I just had a miscarriage – you know one out of four pregnancies end that way.

CHAR. Bagels, pizza, junk food – no, no, no. All empty calories you know...

MARIA. You’re going to nurse that baby aren’t you?

STEF. You really need to nurse for a full year.

CHAR. You really should nurse for two years.

MARIA. You can mix a bottle with nursing at the beginning, don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t.

STEF. Whatever you do, don’t mix breast and bottle.

CHAR. Are you finding out what you’re having?

MARIA. You’re carrying way in front – it must be a boy.

STEF. Gaining weight in your face means you are having a girl...

CHAR. Are you hoping for a boy?

MARIA. Girl?

STEF. You’re not going back to work are you?

CHAR. Is this your first?

STEF. Don’t be a martyr, honey, take the drugs. (*walks out of scene discreetly*)

MARIA. I really think women should give birth the natural way.

CHAR. If it’s a boy, he shouldn’t be circumcised you know.

MARIA. If it's a boy, you're going to have him circumcised right?

CHAR. Your life is about to change forever...

MARIA. Your life will never be the same...

C&M. It's the toughest job you'll ever love!

(**STEF** *in:*)

STEF. (*on phone*): Mum? Oh, thank God you're there. I think I'm getting to the scary part of pregnancy... my ass is falling out. Really and truly, parts of my ass have left my body...I know they're hemorrhoids. Tuck them in?...WHAT? Wear gloves and tuck them back in? Jesus. Another closely guarded secret discovered... Why doesn't anybody ever tell you this shit? Yup... Thanks, Mum...

(*Lights up on CHARLOTTE and ELLEN [both quite pregnant] at a Starbucks table up left:*)

CHAR. Nothing like an extra decaf venti mocha frappuccino to get you through the day...

ELLEN. Yeah, I'm pretty tired of this pregnancy diet restriction thing. I mean, avoiding alcohol and caffeine is one thing...

CHAR. ...but it's like no wine, no diet Snapple...

ELLEN. ...nothing sweet, nothing fattening, and drink lots and lots of milk. And just be healthy as you can be dammit.

CHAR. And I'm gaining more weight than I ever thought possible. I've always had a high and low weight number in my head. The dream weight, that I'll never be again and the nightmare weight number that as I approach I head straight for Jenny Craig. Well, I knew it was going to be trouble when at my second appointment I already exceeded the nightmare weight number by five pounds.

ELLEN. It's pretty friggin' bad news when you step on the doctor's scale and they have to move the big bottom weight over to 150...scary!

CHAR. And what's up with checking your weight first and then checking your blood pressure? I mean, what the hell do they think my blood pressure is going to be after I get weighed?

ELLEN. I always starve myself the morning of the appointment, as if not eating those few hours will make a big difference. And it goes without saying that I take my shoes off before getting on that scale...

CHAR. Of course...and how about the sex thing? Kind've weird in this condition don't you think?

ELLEN. My cousin Debbie told me that she was really horny through most of her pregnancy, just couldn't get enough. She thought maybe it was the way the baby sat inside. Whatever it was, I could use a little of it. I have nothing. It's as if all my sex hormones detoured right through the umbilical cord and into producing the baby. It isn't that sex is unpleasant, it just feels like a trip through a Jiffy Lube. Charity sex is what it comes down to, my poor husband. And now that we are nearing the end, when I am blown up like a hydroblimp, we have some...ahhh, access challenges. Sort of like finding your way onto the Leverett Circle onramp (*or some other local geographic reference...*)

CHAR. Oh my god...

ELLEN. Ah well – it won't be long now, and then, from what I understand, the real fun begins...

(**ELLEN** and **CHARLOTTE** exit. A very pregnant **MARIA** walks on.)

MARIA. Balsamic vinegar. Thai food. A long walk through a Japanese Garden. Nipple stimulation. Or the lady who took one look at me as I waddled around the mall and said, "Honey, you need to go home and do the nasty with your husband..." These things are supposed to start you in labor as you head down the home stretch. When you are SO READY to have the baby. When that baby is like a guest who has stayed too long...And all

the phone calls from people who can't BELIEVE you haven't had the baby yet. And the weekly – or daily – doctor's appointments. It's like the whole world is focused on your cervix. The waiting, the wondering. Was that a Braxton Hicks or the real thing? It sure feels real. But I could still talk while it was happening. They told me I wouldn't be able to talk. Why does my back hurt? Why am I cleaning everything in sight? Am I nesting? Am I a bird for christ sake? Where is the baby? I'm done, over done, well done. Done, done, done!

(ELLEN and CHARLOTTE – now postpartum – on three chairs down center.)

ELLEN. So about those Lamaze classes...

CHAR. My labor was certainly NOT how they describe it in Lamaze classes...

ELLEN. Did you think they helped at all?

CHAR. Fucking useless. I mean, REALLY.

(MARIA joins them with chair after having changed out of her pregnancy pillow.)

ELLEN. Yeah, I like the advice about all the walking, massaging and relaxing stuff that should happen at the hospital before the baby is born. I mean, I actually brought a tennis ball with me so my husband could rub my back. But, you know, my water broke at home and WHAM – hard contractions a minute apart, I got thrown in a bed with every medical contraption they could round up – then I screamed bloody murder for seven hours till I got an epidural...

CHAR. With my first, I labored, or so I thought, all day. I sashayed into the hospital, told them I was there to have a baby – and the nurse looks me up and down and says "Honey, you look WAY too happy to be here. You can tell your husband not to pay the parking, 'cause you are going RIGHT home."

MARIA. I finally went into labor while I was at work, in the middle of the city. The company nurse insists on putting me in a wheelchair to take me out through the lobby – during lunch hour. She wheeled me outside – through sidewalk construction – when we hit a bump and I go flying into traffic...

ELLEN. That night, when I went into labor, just as my husband and I got home very late from a Christmas party, and we were in bed, exhausted, when I looked at him and said, “Well, either the baby just kicked me in the bladder or my water just broke.” And he turned to me and said: “Well, I hope it’s your bladder because I’m too tired to have a baby tonight.”

CHAR. With my twins, I popped the first one out and he was literally caught by a one-gloved o.b. – the labor nurse started screaming at me to “close my legs” and stop pushing. Stop pushing? Fuck that!

MARIA. So what was your favorite part of labor and delivery?

CHAR. Gosh, there’s so much to choose from, I just couldn’t say. Maybe it was the hours of literally feeling that my body was splitting in two...

ELLEN. Ooh, I know, it was answering the litany of authorized hospital questions from the nurse as I was on the bed, groaning in agony...social security number? 183-79- aagh! No, no allergies, HUT HUT HOOoooo. Primary physician? Are you NUTS? ASK MY HUSBAND – DOES HE LOOK BUSY?!

MAR. Well, when I was laying there, pushing for all I’m worth and the doctor says, “So, how do you feel about episiotomies?” And I’m thinking, gee, I love it when someone cuts through a muscle in a very sensitive place on my body. And she says, “It’s better than tearing down there,” which is exactly what I’m thinking. She takes a very sharp pair of scissors and points them in a place I’d rather not think about. And later, when she’s stitching and stitching down there, I tell her “You know, some of those holes are SUPPOSED to be there!”

ELLEN. I actually asked for a couple of EXTRA stitches... my fear was that after the baby came through I'd be as big as the Callahan tunnel. *(or local reference)*

CHAR. And afterwards, wasn't it just a little weird to feel that scar? I mean, I guess I knew WHERE they were cutting, but I just didn't really think about it until weeks later, in the shower, when I thought, My GOD, that scar heads right up into me!

MAR. Ah, the joy of delivering your little miracle into the world...

(CHARLOTTE and ELLEN exit, MARIA acts as "nurse" helping STEF sit down left, with her feet on a chair and handing her the phone – then exits:)

STEF. Mum? It's me. How was the wedding? I can't believe you guys were all at the wedding and I missed it. I sort of remember talking to you last night, but I probably wasn't making much sense. Did I tell you I decided on her name? Sophie...Yup. Oh my gawd, it was so scary, you know? They broke my water, and we're off to the races, right? Then the nurse puts the fetal monitor back on and there wasn't ANYTHING. I'm watching her face, and as good as she is, I can see she's worried. So she hits some button behind me, and a flood of people come flying in, and meanwhile the nurse has her hand inside me, but I don't care, because I can see things are going south fast. The nurse says "cord is prolapsed," and someone unhitches my bed from the wall, and I'm whisked down the hall. So the pictures start in my head, zooming and ugly, of us as parents with this baby in a wheelchair and me forever changed...So I start to pray, to Mary, because I figure she's a mother too, right? So I do the Hail Mary like an auctioneer, with my eyes closed because I can't stand to see the gray faces everywhere...We're running now, to an operating room, and my body is out there for all to see with some stranger's hand up inside me, and then the anesthesia guy says that this is the fast acting stuff, and if I just count back from 100 and a mask goes

over my face and I pass out... And that's it, eleven minutes from start to finish. From the water breaking to the baby's birth – eleven minutes.... What?... Yes, she's beautiful. She's got a perfect c-section head, not all traumatized from regular delivery, But I'm still a little freaked out. I'm still in the middle of what-almost-was. I know she's fine, Mom, I do. And I just about got a callous from pushing the lousy morphine beeper. It's set to give you a dose every seven minutes...RIGHT! Seven minutes! I asked the nurse, "What happens if I hit the beeper more than once every seven minutes?" And she says, "Nothing," except they keep a log of your beeps. So now they think I'm Janice Joplin or something...

(Brief fade – not to black – then lights back up again:)

STEF. *(cont.)* Mum? It's me. She's so sweet it's staggering. Today I laid down next to her on my bed while she napped, and I smelled her head, and thanked God for the millionth time that she's perfect. And then I stuck my face right next to hers and breathed her in; I mean I took in what she breathed out. I just wanted to have her in me again, even for a minute...I won't let anybody visit – I think everyone thinks I'm a little whacked – but I'm just being with her. Yeah, the pain is better too...The doctor gave me some opium knock-off and it doesn't hurt so much. And I held her, and I cried for a long time for all of it, and I think I've forgiven her. And so now we're starting over.

(Fade out a little then MARIA walks in with her planner, CHARLOTTE enters with a "What to Expect" book – on bench – and ELLEN with photos and photo album to work on – at the table:)

MARIA. I've loved my day planner since the first day I was introduced to it, at a work seminar. I used it every day: it had my daily task list, appointments, important conversations, voicemail records – everything. I lived by this book. When I got pregnant, I even marked the

baby's due date in it, in big bold letters. After I had my baby, I kept using it for all my new mom information – I'd mark when the baby ate and which breast I started on, how many times the baby pooped and peed and who gave what gift. And when I go back to work, I'll use it for all my work stuff and playdates and gymboree lessons. I love my planner. I don't know how people organize their children without one! (MARIA *exits.*)

CHAR. I always figured I'd have children some day. Doesn't every little girl have a baby doll that she loves to dress and undress and push around in anything resembling a doll carriage? Anyway, I was never very clear on the details, just knew that I'd have children one day...So, I graduated from college and spent my twenties building my career, meeting guys, partying with friends, and the marriage thing happens in my thirties. Then MORE years traveling with my husband, cementing my career, and we finally got around to having kids. So, after much trying and testing, we finally had our first baby. Our little bundle of joy. Or so baby commercials and magazines would have you believe – you know the shots of sweet little crawling, gurgling, dimply babies...I can't believe I was sucked in so easily. After being discharged from the hospital, the visiting nurse showed up to check on us and as soon as I saw her, I burst into tears. The baby had been crying nonstop for the past three hours, my milk hadn't yet come in, and I was exhausted from walking endless laps around the dining room, rocking and cooing and singing to this tiny torturer. And that was just day three of motherhood... (CHARLOTTE *exits.*)

ELLEN. Time does strange things once you have a baby in your arms. Everyone says things to you like "cherish your time with them – they will be grown up before you know it..." And on the one hand, you are in awe of the new miracle in your life. Time seems to stand still when you are marveling at all they do and how

they look. That's the wonderful part... But time slows down in another way – I mean damn near stops... Like on those nights when your new baby is crying relentlessly and you are desperate for sleep, or when the “arsenic hour” begins in the evening with the requisite irritability and inconsolable hysteria. Then time creeps forward in some warped parents-only mode. Instead of dog years, they should have something called mommy minutes... Like the minutes after you have finally gotten your newborn to sleep at three a.m., but you want to wait just a little longer to make sure he won't scream again when you put him down... I used to count to one hundred slowly – and then count by five's to make sure, and then count backwards from one hundred just to make doubly sure and then put my son down. Then I would stagger to bed to catch two hours sleep, and of course that would fly by in a millisecond....

(**MARIA** and **CHARLOTTE** on the bench.)

MARIA. I've always knew that I would breastfeed – I don't know, it just seemed like it would be great the closeness, the bonding...It just seemed practical...

CHAR. Really!? I really thought the whole thing was kind've...well, gross really, but felt I had to give it a try. Every two hours hooking up and wincing in pain through the whole thing. Yeah, loving that vampire-like suction on my bleeding nipples. There was no bonding, let me tell you, only resentment.

MARIA. I don't know, it was the easiest thing in the world for me, especially when I was home on my maternity leave. It was great that I could just sit and feed him and not have to think about anything.

CHAR. Not think about it! Damn, I was obsessed with just getting though five minutes of the torture – okay I'm supposed to hang in there for two weeks – uh huh, like anyone would voluntarily sit through a root canal for two weeks...No thank YOU. Nudge my husband at two a.m. to get the bottle, and I am feeling much more love for that newborn.

MARIA. Yeah, but for me it was just open my pajamas and it's there – the right amount, the right temperature. I could sleep through the whole thing.

CHAR. You're lucky. I mean the bottle thing is a pain – the sterilized water – the cost of it – it's like liquid gold... But my mom can give the bottle, a babysitter, anyone...

MARIA. Yeah, well, I just pump a lot when I want someone else to feed him. But there are downsides, I mean it's not always easy to find a place to open my blouse, whipping it out in public. Have you ever tried to find a place to nurse in a mall? I finally did it in the food court; I figured everyone else was eating there, why not him?

CHAR. Well, maybe when I have another, it will go easier, but believe me, the best bonding I ever did with my daughter was when I wasn't in agony trying to feed her!

MARIA. Oh, I plan to nurse until he's ready to give it up. A lot of the books say it's great to continue nursing, you know, for the comfort and bonding, until the child is really ready.

CHAR. So you mean you would actually keep nursing him at TWO years old?!

MARIA. Uh-huh. I have one friend whose daughter is three and still likes to nurse in the morning and at bedtime; it helps to calm her.

CHAR. Yeah, better save your money for THAT therapy later! I can't imagine my walking, talking toddler lifting up my shirt when she needs comfort!

(They get up to leave.)

MARIA. Hey, in other countries women breastfeed their children till three or four, and they all grow up ok.

CHAR. Those are also countries where breasts aren't sex objects...

MARIA. Is that good or bad?

CHAR. Oh honey, that's a bad thing...

(They exit.)

(over to:)

STEF. Mum?...Help! My milk has come in, and my breasts are on fire. Huge, fiery volcanoes of searing molten lava. Yup! I've got the ice packs on them.... I'm not even going to nurse the baby for christ sake and I've got milk here for a small third world country. Got milk? the ad says. Ya, I got milk. I got milk into my armpits, I'm serious. Mum, please tell me how you did this five times!

(next is:)

MARIA. So I go back to work after my son is born, and I'm still breastfeeding. Which means of course, pumping milk, which means pumping at work. So every day, at the appointed time according to my day planner, I would close the door of my office, pull out my semi-discreet little electronic La Leche pump thing and go at it, so to speak. All I could think about was everyone in the office standing outside my door, listening to the hum of the breast pump, wondering, "What the hell is she doing in there anyway? Is that a vibrator?" I was horrified to think of anyone finding out that I was sitting in my office half naked during my lunch hour – even though I was providing nourishment for my four month-old son. So, I concealed all evidence and prayed I wouldn't start leaking during a meeting, I kept this up for five more months until my mother made me listen to reason. The bottle worked great and I learned much later on, no one in my office ever had a clue what I was doing all that time...

(MARIA is joined by CHARLOTTE and STEF. at the bench.)

CHAR. What do you miss most?

MARIA. What do you mean?

CHAR. If your life is divided into before kids, and after kids - what do you miss most?

STEF. Privacy ... alone time ... solitude ... I want one day - just one day, where I get up in the morning and I say to myself - "I wonder what I should do today??"

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