

# The Mother

By Karel Capek

Play no. 50

Opening show: 03/12/1939

Hebrew by: Avigdor Hameiri

Staged by : Zvi Friedland

Setting by: E. Luftglass

The Cast

**The Mother:** H. Rovina

**The Father:** M. Genessin

**Andreas:** A. Varshaver }

**Georg:** S. Bruk }

**Kornel:** R. Klatzkin } their sons

**Peter:** A. Kutai }

**Toni:** F. Liubitz }

**Radio Announcers:** S. Doar, B. Lanzet

The scene is laid at the home of a family, whose head was a commander in a colonial war; it was seventeen years ago when he lost his life in the war. The mother was left at the time with her five sons, whom she raised through many hardships and educated with much difficulty. The eldest son, Andreas, fell a victim on the field of medical science a martyr, like his father, for a noble cause.

## Act 1

The curtain rises on the father's room, where the youngest son, Toni, is seen writing a poem, and his brother Peter is occupied in solving a chess puzzle. They discuss their brother Georg, the pilot, who is that day to make his mark as an aviator. Kornel enters and begins quarrelling with his brother Peter; the two twin brothers entertain different views on things. The mother, who comes in, reprimands them with slight sarcasm. Her only consolation is her youngest son, lovable Toni, who is of a quite nature and unlike his father in lust for warlike adventures. The mother remains alone, anxious about Georg, and in her gloom begins to converse with the portrait of her dead husband. She is soon carried off by dreams of the past. The father suddenly appears and they both talk of their five sons and of his own heroic death. In the course of their conversation he takes the liberty to be somewhat derogatory about that bit of heroism: Simple enough! If not for the faulty command given at the time, he would now be among the living! The mother does not want her sons to be heroes to give up their lives for any cause. But fate has worked against her. Her elder son Andreas, the physician, followed his father's footsteps and lost his life in combating yellow fever in some tropical country. Just then Andreas himself appears and participates in the discussion. He justifies his sacrifice, speaking laudatory terms of its value: It was an important experiment in the methods of curing the disease, and he could only carry out this experiment on himself. This was done for the advancement of medical science! The mother,

however, favours simple life, a family circle. Georg, the pilot, comes in. As he takes notice of the dead he falls to talking with them, and the mother understands that he too is no longer among the living. He has met with an accident in his record-flight. She receives a violent emotional shock in conceiving that there is a new victim of heroism in her family. There is a knock at the door. The ghosts disappear. The sons enter and tell of the aeroplane accident that has actually happened.

## **Act 2**

The civil war between the "Whites" and the "Blacks", the Left and the Right, broke out. Kornel fights on the side of those controlling the military forces; Peter, who heads the left wing, is among the hostages. "If the disturbances continue, he may be put to death by the firing-squad", Kornel tells his brother Toni. The latter is astounded and imagines it all in his poetic fancy. The mother, who comes on the scene, is very much perturbed over the long absence of Peter. Kornel makes an attempt to make her see the view-point of his party, but in vain; she maintains that there must exist no animosity among people. Just then shots are heard. The riots continue. Peter appears; he is not living, for he has been executed. The mother drops in a swoon. The rest of the dead, - the father, the physician, and the pilot, - all hurry to bring her to, and talk with Peter about his execution. They recall their life in this room and still feel like its occupants.

The skirmish out of doors goes on. The radio announces the order of the "lets" to surrender the city, threatening with bombardment.

The dead disappear with the volley of bombs. The mother comes to. Toni tells her that Kornel has gone out to join the fighting ranks.

## **Act 3**

After the internal strife is over, a new war rages, but this time it is outside of the country. The military of the neighbouring power pry into the country, without any declaration of war. The radio denounces such acts of violence and calls to all men to enlist. Toni wants to volunteer; the mother, however, objects with all her might. When Toni leaves her, she is again plunged into her melancholy meditations.

The family meeting, in the presence of the dead, ensues. All, except the mother, favour active military service. The eternal interests of the mother and woman are in absolute clash with the military ideals which the men look up to. The radio announces that the fatherland is in great danger. Another announcement follows, telling of the sinking of a ship and its crew of four hundred young sailors in training. The last regards from those drowning is transmitted to their families. Toni enters. The vision of sadness fleets. Only the mother is in the room. The radio again announces: "The enemy is

bombarding a school' many children's lives are lost!" The mother then changes her mind, and handing Toni the rifle, says: "Go, my son!"