

Press Release

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Cabaret Under the Dome at Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez

Natchez, MS – The Natchez Festival of Music and the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) proudly present the second annual Cabaret Under the Dome at historic Temple B'nai Israel. This evening of Broadway and opera classics performed by singers from across the South supports the building's restoration and celebrates the Jewish community's important place in the history of Natchez.

Jews have flourished for almost two centuries in the “most Southern place on earth.” From early peddlers to prominent citizens, the impact of the Jewish community has been an important part of the history of Natchez. Today the city's Jewish community is small, but community members remain dedicated to preserving the legacy of Jewish Natchez. In 1991, Temple B'nai Israel went into partnership with the ISJL as a way of preserving the temple into the future. In 2017, the Mississippi Heritage Trust named Temple B'nai Israel one of the Ten Most Endangered Historic Places in Mississippi.

The vision for the temple's future emerged from an appreciation for Natchez as a community that values history, culture, and continuity. The Natchez Jewish community and the ISJL are embarking on a renovation project that will enhance accessibility, restore the historic structure, and preserve the building in perpetuity. Once the multimillion-dollar restoration project is complete, the building will be consistently open as an event space, community arts hub, and museum telling the story of Jewish life in Natchez.

The Restoration, Rehabilitation, and Preservation of Temple B'nai Israel is a multi-phase project that began with the installation of a wheelchair access ramp on the north side of the building, completed in January 2019. A complete restoration and stabilization of the roof and the historic dome was completed in September 2019. The temple recently received a Community Heritage Preservation Grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), which will support the complete replacement of the building's outdated electrical system and the installation of a fire suppression system.

This preservation process is accompanied by cultural offerings and dynamic experiences, making use of the space and bringing people together even while construction is still underway. This programming series continues with Cabaret Under the Dome on Thursday, January 9th, at 7pm. We are excited to bring this annual program back to Temple B'nai Israel in 2020.

The artists performing in the cabaret are featured in the Natchez Festival of Music's annual outreach program. They will share favorite songs from their repertoires in this one-night-only benefit concert in the historic sanctuary of Temple B'nai Israel. Eric Botto, a Houston native, is a tenor currently pursuing a Master of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Mobile. Tennessee native Grace Denton is a Doctorate of Musical Arts student in Voice Performance and Pedagogy at the University of Mobile. Hosea Griffith is a graduate of Mississippi College and a regular performer at New Stage Theatre in Jackson. Harlan Mapp is studying for his Master's Degree in Conducting at the University of Southern Mississippi. Soprano Olivia Russell has a resume of diverse roles in opera and musical theatre, which she continues to build as a student at the University of Mobile. Pianist Julian Jones, a Louisiana native, is a Doctorate of Musical Arts Student in Vocal Pedagogy and Performance at the University of Mobile.

"Last year's concert was a smashing success, and we are thrilled that these amazing performers will once again share their talents with us. Temple B'nai Israel's sanctuary was designed for music just like this, and we are grateful for the Natchez Festival of Music's ongoing support and partnership," says Nora Katz, ISJL Director of Heritage and Interpretation and co-chair of Temple B'nai Israel's Board of Overseers.

Join the celebration at Temple B'nai Israel, 213 S. Commerce Street, Natchez, Mississippi, on Thursday, January 9th, at 7pm. Tickets are \$20. The concert will be followed by refreshments. All of the proceeds from the event will benefit the Temple B'nai Israel Restoration and Preservation Fund.

To learn more and purchase tickets, visit www.natcheztemple.org/cabaret2020. Tickets will also be available at the door. For more information, contact Nora Katz at nkatz@isjl.org or 601.362.6357.

The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) supports, connects, and celebrates Jewish life in the South. To learn more about the ISJL visit www.isjl.org, call 601.362.6357, or "like" the organization at [Facebook.com/TheISJL](https://www.facebook.com/TheISJL).

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