

Press Release

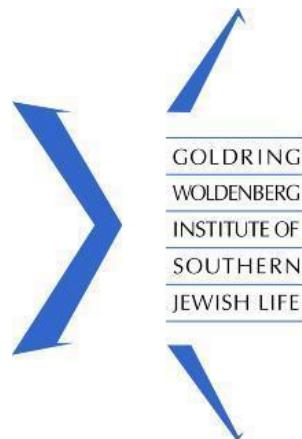
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Mark Twain's The Diaries of Adam and Eve at Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez

Natchez, MS – The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) proudly presents Mark Twain's *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*, edited and adapted for the stage by David Birney. This timeless tale of the first family offers sparkling Mark Twain wit and wisdom in a unique staging, with classic characters brought to dazzling life at Temple B'nai Israel, home to Natchez's historic Jewish congregation.

Jews have flourished for over two centuries in the so-called “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. The city’s Jewish community today 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. The temple is now under the auspices of the ISJL’s Heritage and Interpretation Department, which interprets and shares the rich tradition of Jewish life in the American South through public programs, trips and tours, shared experiences, and more. In 2017, the Mississippi Heritage Trust named Temple B’nai Israel one of the Ten Most Endangered Historic Places in Mississippi.

The congregation’s 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 bring the building into adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 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.

This preservation process will be accompanied by cultural offerings and dynamic experiences, making use of the space and bringing people together even while construction is still underway. The ISJL is excited to announce that this cultural-experiences-under-the-dome series will begin on Saturday, April 28th, at 7pm and Sunday, April 29th, at 2pm with a staged reading of Mark Twain’s *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*, directed by ISJL Director of Heritage and Interpretation Nora Katz.

The production stars Robert Atwell, a first-year musical theatre major at Belhaven University, as Adam, and Rachel Glazer, an ISJL Community Engagement Fellow, as Eve.

“It’s thrilling to get to work on such a little-known play,” says Glazer. “We’re exploring this world that we all feel like we know, but with Mark Twain’s words and storytelling, it’s a totally different version from anything we’ve seen before.”

“We’re excited to perform in this historic environment,” adds Atwell. “It adds such a unique dimension to the audience and actor experience.”

The production at Temple B’nai Israel features the unveiling of a statue of Mark Twain, donated to the Historic Natchez Foundation by StudioEIS, a New York-based firm that is the nation’s premiere historic sculpture studio.

Mark Twain’s connection to Natchez is well-documented in *Life on the Mississippi*; he describes Natchez as “the last of the beautiful hill-cities” along the Mississippi River, and praises it as “an oasis in the desert.” Mark Twain’s return to the city of Natchez is long overdue.

“We’re excited to have immense community support for the production,” says Katz, who also serves as co-chair of Temple B’nai Israel’s Board of Overseers. The project is sponsored in part by the Natchez Convention Promotion Commission and Visit Natchez, with additional support from Atmos Energy, the Historic Natchez Foundation, and community members Stratton Bull and Neal Nathanson. All of the proceeds from the event will benefit the Temple B’nai Israel Restoration and Preservation Fund.

Join in the fun at Temple B’nai Israel, 213 S. Commerce Street, Natchez, Mississippi, on Saturday, April 28th, and Sunday, April 29th. Tickets are \$15 for regular admission and \$10 for students, seniors, and groups of 10 or more.

To learn more and to purchase tickets, visit www.templebnaiisraelnatchez.org/adamandeve. Tickets are also available in person at the Natchez Visitor Center. For more information, contact ISJL Director of Heritage and Interpretation Nora Katz at nkatz@isjl.org or 601.362.6357.

The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) promotes Jewish life and heritage in the South through innovative programs and shared resources, serving communities seeking new solutions or where Jewish resources are limited. To learn more about the ISJL visit www.isjl.org, call 601-362-6357, or “like” the organization at Facebook.com/TheISJL

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