



Listen, Do You Want to Know a Secret? Jewish Women's Theatre (JWT) Reveals Plenty of Them in its Naughty, Touching New Salon, *Family Secrets*

Playwrights Dig Deep to Unlock Personal Stories from Their *Family Secrets* vaults in Jewish Women's Theatre's (JWT's) First Play of 2019 Season, Opening January 19 in Santa Monica



Rosie Moss rehearses Eve Lederman's "Discovering My Dad," in *Family Secrets*.

Do nothing secretly for time sees and hears all things and discloses all.
- Sophocles

Santa Monica (January 8, 2019) Every family has a secret. They can be embarrassing, dangerous, humiliating, shocking, well intentioned or even wonderful. The first show of Jewish Women's Theatre's 2019 Salon Season will reveal plenty of them in the debut of *Family Secrets*, opening January 19 at the Braid in Santa Monica and traveling throughout the state until February 13th.

A dozen pieces, selected from over 60 submissions, will be performed by professional actors during the performance. Many of the writers divulge things about their families that have been locked in their memories, as they were too painful or personal to expose to the world.

"When we came up with the idea for the family secrets theme, we didn't know whether anyone would have the courage to submit stories," said JWT's artistic director Ronda Spinak. "We were overwhelmed by the quality and honesty of the material we received. When reading them, we learned what family secrets can do to people and how they sometimes impact generations."

(More)

JWT audiences will meet a Kosher Jew who sneaks out to have ham and cheese croissants for breakfast, and the descendant of two generations of con men who needs to discover whether she has a criminal gene. There's

of guilty sex stories, too. A young Persian woman has affairs to defy her strict upbringing and gain a multicultural life. And the daughter of an Orthodox Jewish doctor discovers dad's secret stash of the worst kind of pornography.

Many of the stories delve into the reasons for their family secrets. Often, they originated in horrid experiences with Russian pogroms or Nazi terror, and resulted in heartbreaking mixed messages for their progeny.

"But sometimes family secrets have very happy results," says Susan Morgenstern, who co-directs the salon with Lisa Cirincione. "Our stories uncover lost relatives from previous marriages and illegitimate births. One American woman hides her Judaism when she travels to Oman to give a speech, but discovers friendship with people she feared. And a family learns that their white, Jewish grandfather is revered and celebrated for being the only doctor to open many health clinics in apartheid South Africa."

The cast of *Family Secrets* includes:

Michael Naishtut, an international actor who has appeared in New York City, Florida, Los Angeles and Japan. He also appeared at Ensemble Studio Theatre, Theatre for the New City and the NY Public Theatre. He was nominated for an acting ensemble Ovation award for the musical *Memphis* and toured with *Old Jews Telling Jokes*. He has also appeared in numerous TV shows.

Rosie Moss, a television, film and theatre actor who starred in Lifetime/A&E's miniseries *The Rookie*. She originated the role of Sarah Kaufman in West Coast Jewish Theatre's production of FUGU. Other theater performances include *Macbethx5* at the Odyssey. Her film and TV work includes Freeform's *Famous in Love*, Language Arts Film's *Strangers*, and Rebecca Murga's *One Halloween* and *American Girl*.

Debbie Kaspar, a two-time Emmy nominated writer and award winning comedian. She has written for such seminal TV shows as *Roseanne* and *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, and has toured the country several times as a comedian. Her book of humorous personal essays *A POKE IN THE EYE WITH A SHARP STICK* is due out in 2019, and her new one-woman show is slated to open in New York this year.

Niloo is a full time actor, vocalist, and standup comic in Los Angeles. Her Persian roots make her a valuable vocalist in her musical projects, including international wedding and party band 26 Orchestra; as well as her solo project *A Tribe Called Love*, which brings popular and EDM music together with conscious lyrics. Niloo produces a monthly underground comedy show called *That's Funny Niloo*.

Susan Morgenstern, JWT's producing director and co-director of *Family Secrets*, recently co-authored and directed *18 Minutes of Fame: A Musical Journey with Barbara Minkus*, which has had performances in LA and NYC. She also works as a consultant show director at Disneyland Parks and Resorts. Susan has directed numerous JWT salon shows, as well as two of JWT's solo shows, *Annie Korzen: Famous Actress*, and *Sacred Resistance*.

Lisa Cirincione, co-director and an artist-in-residence with JWT, is thrilled to be directing her third production with Susan Morgenstern. Lisa has performed in numerous JWT productions, including *Saffron and Rosewater* and *Uncuffed*. You can see her this season on the FX show *9-1-1*. Lisa received *LA Weekly* and *LA Drama Critic's Circle* nominations for playing the role of Catherine in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* at Pacific Resident Theatre.

Since The Braid is a performance and art space, new theatrical performances are always accompanied by exhibits in The Gallery @The Braid. In conjunction with the premier performance *Family Secrets*, Jewish Women's Theatre (JWT) proudly hosts the debut of *Secrets*, featuring the hidden works of Maury Ornest. His work is a remarkable collection of canvases created by a deeply disturbed artist who coped with his debilitating mental illness by painting joyful scenes filled with hope and happiness.

Opening night of the performance of *Family Secrets* will be accompanied by an art talk featuring Ornest's

sister, former radio news reporter Laura Ornest, and a reception at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, January 19, followed by the first performance of *Family Secrets* at 8 p.m. Additional art talks will take place on Monday, January 28 and Tuesday, January 29 at 6:30 p.m. preceding 7:30 p.m. performances of *Family Secrets*.

Family Secrets opens January 19 at the Braid and will travel to the Westside, the Valley and the South Bay until February 13. For tickets, times, and Salon locations near you, visit www.jewishwomenstheatre.org or call 310-315-1400. The Braid is located at 2912 Colorado Avenue in Santa Monica 90404.

JWT's The Braid, voted one of the "Best Live Theatres on the Westside" two years in a row by *The Argonaut*, stages original dramatic performances, contemporary art exhibits, classes, and other events showcasing the diverse community of writers, artists and creators who celebrate Jewish life, one story at a time.

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CALENDAR LISTING

Who: The Braid, the art and performance space of Jewish Women's Theatre (JWT) will present *Family Secrets*, the first show of its 2019 salon season, which will reveal plenty of juicy secrets of youthful indiscretions, and often naughty activities that make for a moving, eye-opening and funny show exploring events that have only been whispered about until now.

What: The premiere *Family Secrets*, the first show in JWT's 2019 Salon Season and the debut showing of *Secrets*, Maury Ornest's art, a collection of wondrous paintings created by a man with severe mental illness, who found hope and joy in painting.

When: Opening night is Saturday, January 19. Gallery opens at 6:30pm and includes a reception and incisive art talk. Opening night of *Family Secrets*, the first show of JWT's 2019 salon season follows at 8 p.m. and travels throughout the Southland until Feb. 13.

Where: The Braid, 2912 Colorado Ave., #102, Santa Monica, CA 90404 and in other locations until February 13.

How: Art show and exhibit are free, but tickets for the performance are \$45 presale, \$50 at the door and include a scrumptious dessert reception. Visit www.jewishwomenstheatre.com to purchase tickets and learn more about *Family Secrets* and the Gallery exhibit.

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