

PRESS RELEASE

Women's Theatre Festival, Based in North Carolina and Streamed Nationally to Feature Stories from Jewish Women's Theatre (JWT) for the First Time

Inside Our Time, Stories of COVID Happenings from Jewish Women's Theatre (JWT), Will Bring Tales from Joy to Tender Sadness to National Women's Theatre Festival



Santa Monica and virtually everywhere (June 30, 2020): The popular and prestigious Women's Theatre Festival (WTF), based in North Carolina but streaming the world over, will include live performances of eight stories from *Inside Our Time: Stories from the Sheltering*, Jewish Women's Theatre's (JWT) thoughtful and touching look at what COVID-19 is doing to our lives, our families, our communities, and ourselves.

This is the first time in the WTF's five-year history that JWT has been included in this national event, which seeks to address gender parity, diversity, and inclusion in the national theatre community. JWT was selected from more than 30 submissions to perform during the month-long festival and will perform *Inside Our Time* twice, once on Saturday, July 18, at 2:30 pm ET, which includes a talkback with the actors after the performance; and once on Saturday, July 25, at 2:45 pm ET. The performances are freely available at the scheduled times at www.Twitch.TV/wtheatrefestivalnc. Donations gratefully accepted at Paypal.me/wtfestivalnc — in the Note section, please type "Inside Our Time - JWT."

"It is an honor to be included in an event that will bring 250 hours of programming to theatre lovers throughout the globe," says Ronda Spinak, JWT's artistic director. "We know that viewers everywhere will be moved by our stories of what ordinary people are feeling and experiencing during this unprecedented time in history."

At this year's virtual festival, a cast of talented performers will share stories from JWT's popular webcast, *Inside Our Time*, directed by Susan Morgenstern. Viewers will meet a woman who uses the quarantine to clean out her closets and cabinets from which she unearths memories and a

secret stash of hand sanitizer, and a woman who remembers her ancestors and their culinary secrets as she strives to duplicate their delicious and healing soup.

There is also a heartfelt tribute to a former gymnast sister who is now an ER doctor on the frontlines of coronavirus treatment, and another piece about a mother who is touched by her busy daughters suddenly finding the time to check in on her regularly. And don't be surprised if tears spring when you hear how a father, now in a nursing home, will no longer be able to receive the chocolate milkshakes that were the only highlight of his long, lonely days.

One story, written and performed by Kate Zentall, a JWT Abby Freeman Artist-in-Residence at JWT, gives a different and hopeful slant on the pandemic when she says, "Think of it this way. We are not having to hide in an attic....Your grandparents were called to war. You're being called to sit on the sofa. You can do this!"

Johannah Maynard Edwards, Executive Director of WTF and speaking from Raleigh, explains how the WTF began in 2016 when "a group of women working here locally began ruminating about the question of representation in our theatre community. We put together a meeting to invite people to discuss whether the idea of a festival of all works by women was of interest, and about 250 women from a cross-section of the community showed up!"

The first year, they staged eight productions and included workshops and other educational opportunities to expand women's knowledge of all aspects of theatre, onstage and behind the scenes, including technical areas that make production possible, such as lighting and sound. Soon they founded a 501(c)(3). They staged a week-long festival last year and were planning the same for this year. After the pandemic struck, they adapted and decided to stage it virtually, to last the entire month of July instead.

After receiving many submissions, theatre organizers decided they wanted to get more plays that speak to this unique moment in history, where COVID has turned our world upside down. It was then that Susan Morgenstern, JWT's producing director, learned about the Festival and thought *Inside Our Time* was a perfect fit.

"This is the first time JWT submitted some of its original work to be included in a festival," Morgenstern says, "so I was delighted that we were invited to participate! As our reach expands across the country, we embrace this opportunity to showcase our original material, our actors, and our unique hybrid theatre/storytelling style in our ongoing mission to challenge minds, move hearts, and unify people around the world who hunger for timely and timeless stories."

Stories were authored by Barbara Koletsky, Suzanna Kaplan, David Chiu, Maureen Rubin, Betty Bildner, Kimberly Anton, Kate Zentall, and Jennifer Roth Krieger. Actors are Shelly Goldstein, Lisa Cirincione, AJ Meijer, and Kate Zentall.

JWT's *Inside Our Time* series and festival participation is made possible in part with generous support from the City of Santa Monica, the Erwin Rautenberg Foundation, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture.

“When audience members watch the performances in our Festival, we hope they will find connections and that we inspire hope for all possibilities for the future,” Edwards says. “COVID is not going away for a while, so we have to find new spaces for continuing our work as artists.”

Jewish Women’s Theatre, voted one of the “Best Live Theatres on the Westside” three years in a row by *The Argonaut*, presents American Jewish stories, art, and other programming that highlights Jewish contributions to contemporary life. Going into its 13th season, JWT’s salon theatre of original dramatic shows, each written to a specific theme, displays the diverse and eclectic community of writers, artists, and creators who celebrate Jewish life, one story at a time. Learn more about JWT at: www.jewishwomenstheatre.org. All *Inside Our Time* videos are available to stream at www.jewishwomenstheatre.org/insideourtime.

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For more information about WTF, visit: womenstheatrefestival.com