



**ORPHEUS  
DESCENDING**  
BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ORPHEUS DESCENDING  
MAKES A THREE-CITY TOUR TO MISSISSIPPI  
February 23 – March 3, 2012**

*January 23, 2012, Provincetown, MA, USA* – The Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival is teaming up with The Infinite Theatre to bring their popular production of ORPHEUS DESCENDING to Tennessee Williams’ home state of Mississippi next month. A total of nine performances are planned in three cities: Columbus, Oxford and Jackson, Mississippi, from February 23<sup>rd</sup> through March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

For the past two years, this powerful and heartbreaking rendition of ORPHEUS has been a runaway success at the annual fall Festival, held in September in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Arts, culture and political leaders from Mississippi were so impressed with the production that a coalition of supporters has been formed, funds have been raised, and the New York-based Infinite Theater will soon be on its way to Mississippi in a touring production involving over 20 people, co-produced by the Festival.

**About the Play**

The production is conceived as a morality play – to be performed in a house of worship. The imagery in the text comes not only from the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus, but from Williams’ own Episcopal upbringing in small-town Mississippi. Three local churches will play host to this innovative show.

ORPHEUS DESCENDING takes place in the Mississippi Delta. It follows the handsome, guitar-playing Val Xavier (Thomas Beaudoin) as he tries valiantly to turn his back on corruption. He appears in a metaphorical purgatory, arriving mysteriously in a small-town dry goods store run by an Italian immigrant named Lady Torrance (Irene Glezos). She’s married to an old, dying man, but Lady takes in the alluring drifter, giving him a bed in the store and thereby unlocking her long-repressed desire. Val’s arrival stirs up the insular, suspicious townspeople, leading to his inevitable expulsion, while the free-wheeling misfit, Carol Cutrere (Beth Bartley), haunts Lady’s store in a tangle of innocence and vice. Broken, brazen and defiant, these three tragic heroes are the ultimate outsiders. Yet their ordinary weaknesses reveal extraordinary zeal.

“What an amazing opportunity to bring this exquisite play back to its roots where it belongs,” says the play’s director, Nick Potenzieri, “We are incredibly honored to be invited.”

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### **About the Tour**

Tennessee Williams said, “Home is where you hang your childhood. For me that is Mississippi.” The Provincetown Festival attracts theatergoers from 33 states, and the Mississippi Division of Tourism has recently become a sponsor of the Festival as a way of reaching a new audience. This tour is another opportunity for partnership between Mississippi and Massachusetts.

Sarah McCullough manages Cultural and Heritage Development for Mississippi Tourism. After seeing ORPHEUS DESCENDING last September in Provincetown, she was amazed at how Williams “so brilliantly expressed the complexities of human interaction and emotion.” She also added, “We in Mississippi have a special capacity to understand the people in this play.”

In Columbus, Mississippi, the production is hosted by the Tennessee Williams Tribute, led by Brenda Caradine, who has teamed up with the First United Methodist Church to put on the play. Ms. Caradine is an annual attendee at the Provincetown Festival, and a tireless supporter of Tennessee Williams. The Tribute, which is an annual celebration of Tennessee Williams’ birthplace, has presented several productions that were first shown at the Tennessee Williams Festival in Provincetown, but ORPHEUS is by far the largest production they have undertaken in Columbus. The Tribute and its generous supporters and partners will be providing scenery and props, and three local actors will be taking part in the show.

In Oxford, Mississippi, the production is hosted by the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, led by Wayne Andrews, who has partnered with the Paris-Yates chapel on the campus of the University of Mississippi, “Ole Miss.” The Arts Council has also made in-roads with another important cultural body, the Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale, where the company will enjoy their day off exploring the area of Mississippi where Williams set many of his plays, including ORPHEUS.

In Jackson, Mississippi, the production is hosted by the Greater Jackson Arts Council, and coordinated by local resident Jane Alexander, who has engaged the hospitality of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in the trendy Fondren neighborhood. The company will close the tour in the state capitol of Jackson, and return to New York from there.

“The outpouring of support has been phenomenal,” says Jef Hall-Flavin, Executive Director of the Provincetown Festival. “I couldn’t be more pleased at what this tour is doing to connect people through our great American playwright. Here is real evidence of the great synergy between our three Tennessee Williams festivals.”

Ms. McCullough is elated that the play is on its way to her home state. “Cultural heritage tourism is really about being a tourist at home.” She says, “Given the richness of our literary heritage, having a New York theater company of this caliber bringing Williams’ work home to Mississippi is not only an incredible opportunity for inspiration, but it is indicative of how far Williams’ legacy reaches.”

## **Performance and Ticket Information**

### **ORPHEUS DESCENDING**

By Tennessee Williams

Directed by Nick Potenzieri

Produced by the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival and The Infinite Theatre

#### **Columbus, MS**

**First United Methodist Church, Artz Fellowship Hall**

**602 Main St. / Columbus, MS 39701**

Box Office: 662-328-ARTS (2787)  
Columbus Arts Council  
501 Main St, Columbus

Performances: Feb 23 (\$5) *Preview* – 7 pm  
Feb 24 – 7 pm  
Feb 25 – 7 pm

Tickets: \$15 Adults / \$10 Senior or Military / \$5 – Students

#### **Oxford, MS**

**Paris-Yates Chapel**

**University of Mississippi / Oxford, MS**

Box Office: 662.236.6429  
[www.oxfordarts.com](http://www.oxfordarts.com)

Performances: Feb 26 – 7pm  
Feb 27 – 7pm  
Feb 28 – 2pm

Tickets: \$10 Adults/\$5 Students

#### **Jackson, MS**

**St Luke's United Methodist Church**

**621 Duling Ave / Jackson, MS 39216**

Box Office:

Performances: Mar 1 – 7pm  
Mar 2 – 7pm  
Mar 3 – 7pm

Tickets:

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