



A conversation with Lowcountry Weekly publisher Jeff Evans, my husband and co-star in the upcoming Valentine's production of "The Diaries of Adam and Eve" by Mark Twain.

Margaret Evans: So, Jeff, do you feel a little weird about promoting our performance right here in our own publication? Doesn't it seem a little... self-serving? Opportunistic? Vain?

Jeff Evans: No.

Well, okay... sure it does. But coincidentally, this is what we do for a living. We promote good stuff going on in the community – especially in the arts. The fact is, it would be a little weird – or, perhaps “remiss” is a better word – if we ***didn't*** promote the play here. Assuming we actually want people to show up, that is.

ME: Um... yeah. Jury's still out on that. Give me a few more rehearsals and I'll let you know.

So, we did this play once before, at the Lady's Island Dinner Theater. About seven or eight years ago, right? Somehow, I thought it would be easier to learn the lines this time around!

JE: This is the first time, in 30 years of acting, that I've gone back and done the same material a second time. So I really had no idea. But, yeah... while it's certainly familiar, you still have to learn the lines. And there are a lot of lines!

ME: Thank goodness we get to read some of them. (Gotta love that "diary" angle!) I want to make sure people know that, despite all these cursed lines, this play is short and sweet... just one act. USCB is serving champagne and chocolates at 6 pm, we hit the stage at 6:30, and folks can make it downtown for 8 pm dinner reservations... with time to spare. I look at the whole shebang as a "Valentine's Happy Hour."

So... the play. I don't know about you, but I feel like I understand it better this time around. There's just so much more *there* than I saw before. Is it because I'm older? Because we've been married longer?

JE: All of the above. I would imagine that any time you revisit something you've done before, years later, you have a new take on it because, in many ways, you're a new person. While the work is the same, your experience of it is completely different.

ME: And we've got some pretty great characters to play, thanks to the genius of Mark Twain. How would you describe your character?

JE: Well, Adam is very rigid. He likes order. A lot. Also, he's amazingly curious about the world outside himself, but not so curious about the world *inside* himself... his own nature, if you will. Not as curious as Eve, anyway.

ME: I love my character! I love Eve's big heart, her enthusiasm and, yes, her curiosity. Of course, that curiosity gets them in trouble, eventually. The snake and the fruit and all that...

JE: This play is interesting on so many levels. Since it's adapted from writings by Mark Twain, it's obviously witty, insightful and smart. There's honestly nothing better than working on a script that's well written. At the same time, those Twain essays are well over a hundred years old. And while they were actually very modern for their time, there are some sweet, old-fashioned concepts about men and women that some might find a little... dated.

ME: Hmm... I guess. But I keep being struck by how timeless the play is. It has some *really* funny insights about the relationship between men and women – especially husbands and wives. For instance, there's that bit when I ask you what the words "good and evil" mean. You say you don't know... but I can't let it go. "Well, what do you

think

they mean?" I ask. "Surely you have some idea..." I hound you. I'm obsessed. Meanwhile, you're perfectly content not knowing, and you can't understand why I keep bugging you about it. That is

so

us in real life!

JE: Yeah, I don't know if that's necessarily Men and Women... or just Jeff and Margaret. But it's pretty dead on.

ME: Would you call the play a comedy? It's mostly a comedy, I guess, but it's very tender and dramatic near the end...

JE: Oh, it's definitely a comedy. Almost like a farce. At the same time, it deals with some pretty serious themes. Good and evil, life and death... love and loss. I think people will find it not just fun and entertaining... but fairly profound. Again, it's Mark Twain.

ME: So, now for the gotcha question. What's it like working on stage with your wife?

JE: Well, I work with her everyday, already. Heck, I can't get away from her! Seriously, though, one thing I really cherish – and you might not know this – is that you didn't do this when I met you. This theater thing.

ME: Not since high school, anyway.

JE: And I bugged you and badgered you, and you kept saying, 'No, no, no!' Finally, you got talked into doing it – we threw you into the fire with that Ophelia part! – and you discovered that you not only liked it, but that you're really good at it. (Well, I don't know if *you've* discovered that, yet. But it's true.) I really love that! If I hadn't bugged you so much, you might never have done it! I always think it's cool when people discover new things and grow... and it can be a real thrill to watch your partner discover something that you already know, and watch her grow to love it like you do. So, I get a real kick out of working with you and watching you on stage and knowing I had a hand in getting you up there.

ME: I'll be sure to thank you in my acceptance speech at the Oscars, babe. But, seriously, I love working with you, too. In fact, I think we get along better on stage than off. Or, more specifically, we seem to like each other better when we're working on a play. It's just fun – and kind of exciting, I guess – to see your spouse in a new way... as somebody other than your spouse. (Even in a play like this one... in which you're playing my spouse!) Also, I just love watching you. You've been doing this for such a long time, you make it look easy. Which, of course, it's not.

JE: I really like acting, but I never have a sense of whether I'm any good at it. My general rule is this: When I'm on stage, and I feel like I'm working my a\$\$ off, it usually means it's not going very well. But when I'm on stage and feel like I'm not working at all – like I'm just up there playing – it's probably pretty good. And times like that make it all worthwhile. If you're not having fun, there's no reason to do it.

ME: And talk about fun... next up for you is "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" in mid-March. I can't wait to see you play Big Daddy! But isn't it difficult working on two plays at once? You do have a day job, after all.

JE: Fortunately, "Adam & Eve" and "Cat" are just far enough apart that they're not overlapping much. And it's such a huge privilege to do anything by Tennessee Williams, I just couldn't resist. A role like Big Daddy... it doesn't get much more iconic.

ME: Unless, of course, you're playing Adam, the original man. That's pretty iconic.

Hey, it just occurred to me that we finally have something to do for Valentine's. It's about time...

Back to the Garden

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor

"The Diaries of Adam & Eve," a One Act play based on the writings of Mark Twain, will be performed at the USCB Center for the Arts on Tuesday, February 14th. Champagne and chocolates at 6pm, Performance at 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$15, and all proceeds will benefit the CFA. For more information call 843-521-4145.

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