

FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

COMMUNICATING THE MISSION OF FELLOWSHIP FOR PERFORMING ARTS

Gifts from Fellowship Circle members provide FPA the means to produce compelling theatre from a Christian worldview that engages a diverse audience.

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NATIONAL TOUR

C.S. LEWIS THE GREAT DIVORCE

Los Angeles Alex Theatre, July 12

Orange County CA Barclay Theatre, July 17-20

Houston Wortham Center, Aug 15-16

Chattanooga Tivoli Theatre, Sept 20

Tampa Straz Center, Sept 26-27

Durham Carolina Theatre, Oct 3-4

San Jose California Theatre, Oct 10-11

San Diego Balboa Theatre, Oct 25

Dallas Eisemann Center, Nov 1

Dallas Majestic Theatre, Nov 9

Indianapolis Clowes Memorial Hall, Nov 15

Washington D.C. Lansburgh Theatre, Dec 19-28

Visit CSLewisOnStage.com for up-to-date tour info. Above dates as of June 16.

PLANTING SEEDS OF TRANSFORMATION

FPA THEATRE PRODUCTIONS START ENGAGING DIALOGUES

When Rebecca Linton told her husband, James, about Fellowship for Performing Art's production of C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*, the same idea came to them.

"We immediately thought of taking our friend," Rebecca says. "I think art gets through to the soul in a way other things don't. It transcends barriers."

Their friend was an atheist.

Rebecca and James, both with deeply held Christian faith, had befriended him more than a year before. James, a trained apologist, enjoyed their ongoing conversations. Slowly, their friend began to see the logic of belief. He moved from believing in nothing, to believing in the existence of a spiritual realm.

Then Rebecca, a high school theatre department director, heard about *The Great Divorce*.

And *The Great Divorce* touched their friend's heart and mind.

"Our friend could see himself in Lewis' characters," she says. "The experience made him think of life after death. It helped him get to a place where he can become more of a believer in a being that transcends all things."

Their friend is on the way, and FPA's production of *The Great Divorce* planted seeds, setting Rebecca and James up to continue meaningful conversations.

"I think art gets through to the soul in a way other things don't. It transcends barriers." Rebecca Linton



SCREWTAPE OPENS EYES

A recent production of *The Screwtape Letters*, drew a woman and her husband, both longtime supporters of FPA's mission to produce theatre from a Christian worldview that engages a diverse audience. They took the opportunity to invite another couple who are good friends and who are Jewish, intellectual and not particularly focused on spiritual things.

"We love FPA's productions because we know how disarming they can be for people who are harder to reach," she says.

Screwtape's inverted world, where a senior tempter in Hell mentors an apprentice on leading people away from the "enemy" . . . God,

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Martin Luther On Trial

‘NOW THE REAL WORK BEGINS...’

Through more than a year of research and writing, including a trip to Germany, playwright Chris Cragin Day has twice submitted drafts of Fellowship for Performing Arts’ newest play—*Martin Luther On Trial*. And each time, the show’s developmental process sent Chris back to her keyboard to continue exploring the life of one of history’s most controversial characters.

Now, the first draft of the latest approach toward the work is in. And Producer Dan Roche offers an interesting observation: “Now the real work begins.”

Begins? Isn’t the draft finished? Yes. The *first* draft in this round.

“Developing a work for the theatre takes time, care and resources,” says FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. “And we hold ourselves to the highest standards.”



Playwright
Chris Cragin Day

But, as FPA now works on Luther, the process grows more streamlined. As an example, *The Screwtape Letters* evolved over a three-year process before its critically-praised run in New York.

The Great Divorce—FPA’s current national touring show—took about a year and a half. And McLean plans for *Martin Luther on Trial* to move ahead briskly with the draft now in.

Still, it’s a time-consuming process of readings, workshops and developmental productions.

“*The Great Divorce* was substantially different at its Phoenix premiere than it was three months earlier in the New York developmental production,” McLean says. “Both *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* went through more than a dozen script revisions before we agreed they were ready to show to an audience. And even after *The Great Divorce*

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tour began, we continue to work to make it more clear and accessible to audiences and to find more humor and pathos. And that’s just what we’ll do with *Martin Luther on Trial*.”

As Roche speaks to FPA supporters across the country, the interest and excitement for *Martin Luther On Trial* is evident from both Catholics and Protestants.

“Luther is a controversial and flawed character. FPA wants to look at all aspects of his story,” he says. “And it must do so in a way that not only has a thoroughly Christian aesthetic, but also engages a diverse audience.”

The vital support of our Fellowship Circle allows FPA to pursue that high standard. ■

On a evening this July at Oxford University's Church of Saint Mary, Max McLean's artistic journey comes full circle.

Invited by the C.S. Lewis Foundation to its Tri-Annual Oxbridge Conference to present Lewis' masterpiece, *The Weight of Glory*, McLean will stand on the only known spot that Lewis delivered the work.



"Knowing that was where Lewis presented *The Weight of Glory* is the reason I memorized it. So I could be free to deliver it in the way this piece

deserves," McLean says. "The challenge with this piece is that it is so complex and beautiful that it may come across as too intellectual. I want to connect all that brilliant firepower with the emotional experience that inspired Lewis to write it. My hope is it will inspire the audience as well."

The C.S. Lewis Oxbridge Conference only occurs every three years. And it takes place at Oxford and Cambridge universities where Lewis taught. Lewis scholars and fans from around the world come to hear lectures, be in community and benefit from performances such as McLean's.

"It's an honor to be invited to participate, but it's more than that as well," McLean says. "In *The Weight of Glory*, Lewis gently yet inexorably reveals our deepest desires and shows us how we were made to find their fulfillment in our maker. God *loves* us, Lewis says, and that changes everything."

Lewis' thoughts about faith, reason and imagination played a key role in McLean's spiritual journey, and his writings have formed the backbone of FPA's theatrical works for the past decade.

McLean has committed *The Weight of Glory* to memory and hopes audiences will experience Lewis' words in a new way as they are thoughtfully recited.

"Lewis is so well known for allegorical works like *The Chronicles of Narnia* or his imaginative fiction like *The Great Divorce*," McLean says. "But *The Weight of Glory* brings together the power of his analogies and the depth of his insight and the beauty of his prose. He helps us see what it truly means to be a human who will one day be a part of God's glory. Lewis says it best."

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

McLean's appearance at Oxbridge is timely as well. Even as he presents Lewis' *The Weight of Glory*, efforts continue to bring *The Screwtape Letters* to London's West End theatre district. FPA has partnered with a leading theatrical producer in

England, and the search is under way for the right actor to portray the title role.

"Lewis has given me so much," McLean says. "A production of *Screwtape* in London is a way of giving back as we bring Lewis' words to life in England where he lived and taught." ■

STANDING WHERE C.S. LEWIS STOOD

C.S. Lewis Oxbridge Conference
Features Max McLean
and *The Weight of Glory*

"I want to connect all that brilliant firepower with the emotional experience that inspired Lewis to write it." MAX McLEAN

ART THAT AWAKENS



On his way to his tutor's home, the teenage C.S. Lewis picked up George MacDonald's novel *Phantastes*. The story's captivating portrayal of goodness took him completely by surprise. Though he couldn't know it at the time, the enchanting tale had got past the "watchful dragons" of his staunch youthful atheism. Years later he would write that *Phantastes* baptized his imagination: It allowed him later to awaken to the beauty and goodness of Jesus Christ.

In his 17th-century work *Pensée*, the French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote, "Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it might be true." The young Lewis hated Christianity. He thought it unreasonable, distasteful and false. Pascal's recommended cure for people like Lewis was "first to show that religion is not contrary to reason" and then to "make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then show that it is."

Lewis' encounter with *Phantastes* started him on a journey that changed him so profoundly that, 30 years later, he could write, "I believe in Christianity as I believe

that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

No wonder Lewis, who knew so personally the power of the imagination, paid tribute to his teacher George MacDonald by making him the Virgil-like guide in Lewis' fantasy *The Great Divorce*. The art of MacDonald had awakened Lewis' imagination, enabling him to receive truth when it came knocking.

The arts have the power to awaken the imagination to receive truth in all its glory. This is why we create theatre at the highest bar of excellence, such as our current production of *The Great Divorce*. This is why our shows reach people at a profound and deep level. No one comes to the theatre looking for an argument, and we don't give them one. Instead we present them with a powerful piece of art that captures their imagination and

has the potential to transform their vision, break through preconceived stereotypes and reveal how appealing and multi-layered Christianity can be.

As part of our Fellowship Circle of supporters, I want to thank you for helping us create the kind of theatre that provokes, awakens and transforms. ■

"The arts have the power to awaken the imagination to receive truth in all its glory."

SEEDS OF TRANSFORMATION Continued from front

particularly captured their male friend's imagination.

"He said, 'I never saw life and death as darkness versus light,'" she says. "He doesn't understand it and now feels he needs to. He's going to read *The Screwtape Letters*."

The play has given both couples the freedom to talk about spiritual matters.

Can theatre make a difference? We see that it can, and it does. FPA's theatre from a Christians worldview is an effective place to take friends who see the

world differently.

"Even if people aren't thinking deeply about spiritual matters, it can plant seeds in them and maybe make them ask questions," Rebecca says. "That's our role—to plant seeds."

Consider taking friends who don't share your perspective to the next FPA production in your area. Theatre that is excellent, engaging, disarming and fun creates opportunities to plant seeds. ■

Please make your tax-deductible gift to FPA using the enclosed card. With any gift of \$1,000 or more, your name will be included in our playbill as a member of FPA's Fellowship Circle. (See insert for level details.)

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