

FPA FELLOWSHIP FOR PERFORMING ARTS

PRESENTS

C.S. LEWIS

ONSTAGE

THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT



FPA
FELLOWSHIP FOR PERFORMING ARTS

presents

C.S. LEWIS

ON STAGE

THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT

Written and Performed by
Max McLean

Scenic Design
Kelly James Tighe

Costume Design
Michael Bevins

Lighting Design
Geoffrey D. Fishburn

Original Music & Sound Design
John Gromada

Projections Design
Rocco DiSanti

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ARUBA Productions LLC

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Lew Mead

Marketing, Advertising and Press
Cheryl Anteau, Southside Entertainment

Stage Manager
Lew Mead

Executive Producer
Ken Denison

Co-Directed by
Ken Denison and Max McLean

There will be no intermission. Please turn off cell phones and personal electronic devices before the performance begins. Thank you.

CAST AND LOCATION

C.S. Lewis.....Max McLean

Location.....Lewis' Study, Magdalen College, Oxford, 1950

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY

In 1950, C.S. Lewis received a letter from a young American writer expressing his struggle to believe Christianity because he thought it "too good to be true." Lewis responded, "My own position at the threshold of Christianity was exactly the opposite of yours. You wish it were true; I strongly hoped it was not...Do you think people like Stalin, Hitler, Haldane, Stapledon (a corking good writer, by the way) would be pleased on waking up one morning to find that they were not their own masters...that there was nothing even in the deepest recesses of their thoughts about which they could say to Him, 'Keep out! Private. This is my business'? Do you? Rats!...Their first reaction would be (as mine was) rage and terror."

This was Lewis' mindset before he "gave in" as he put it. Lewis embraced materialism, a worldview also known as "atheism," "naturalism," "determinism" or "reductionism". What they all hold in common is the view that all of life, every action, emotion or perception, can be reduced to pre-existing physical causes all the way back to the Big Bang. There is no need to appeal to a supernatural source. God is not required to explain or define origin, meaning, ethics or destiny.

For many years, Lewis was a defender of this view. And given his rhetorical gifts and love of debate one could see him fit into the "New Atheist" camp with the likes of the late Christopher Hitchens or Sam Harris.

This play is an exploration of Lewis' dramatic conversion from this position to Christianity. It is my view that his vibrancy and resonance as a Christian apologist is rooted in this experience.

The primary sources for this play were Lewis' autobiography *Surprised by Joy* as well as his *Collected Letters*. I also relied on several of his books and essay collections including *The Problem of Pain*, *The Weight of Glory*, *Mere Christianity*, *God in the Dock*, *Present Concerns* and *Christian Reflections*. Last, I was greatly helped by the many biographies and critical insights by Douglas Gresham, Walter Hooper, Devin Brown, Tim Keller, Alan Jacobs, Jerry Root, Andrew Lazo, George Sayer, David Downing, Alister McGrath, Armand Nicholi, Sheldon Vanauken, Kenneth Tynan and A.N. Wilson to name a few.

This play takes place prior to the publication of Lewis' first Narnia story and well before he met his wife, Joy Davidman. That may beg the question "will there be a sequel"? Well...there is! The journey continues in *C.S. Lewis on Stage: Further Up & Further In* on tour now.



Max McLean

WHO'S WHO

MAX McLEAN (C.S. Lewis, Co-Direction, Adaptation) As playwright/adaptor: *The Screwtape Letters*, *C.S. Lewis on Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert*, *The Great Divorce*, *Genesis* and *Mark's Gospel*. Co-writer with Chris Cragin-Day of *Martin Luther on Trial*. As actor, created the role of C.S. Lewis in *The Most Reluctant Convert* play and in the international hit film based on it, *The Most Reluctant Convert: The Untold Story of C.S. Lewis*; C.S. Lewis in *C.S. Lewis on Stage: Further Up & Further In*; *Screwtape* (NYC, London, National Tour), *Mark* in *Mark's Gospel* (Chicago, Jeff Award for Solo Performance) and Storyteller in *Genesis* (NYC, National Tour). Max is the 2022 recipient of the C.S. Lewis Foundation Award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions in Faith and Dramatic Arts. Additionally, he has narrated the Bible five times as well as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Classics of the Christian Faith*. His narrations received four Audie Award nominations. He is the Founder and Artistic Director of Fellowship for Performing Arts. Max enjoys time with the grandkids and a round of golf. Ephesians 2:10.

KEN DENISON/ARUBA PRODUCTIONS (Director/Executive Producer) is a general management and executive producing organization that manages and produces shows worldwide. Ken was Associate Producer for Disney's *The Lion King* on Broadway and around the world. Ken serves as the Executive Producer for FPA's productions including *C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *Martin Luther on Trial*, *C.S. Lewis on Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert* (also co-director), *A Man for All Seasons* and *Shadowlands*. Ken's additional credits include *Human Nature* in Las Vegas and worldwide, *Back Home Again* (featuring the songs of John Denver), *Broadway & The Bard* (starring Len Cariou), *Songbird* (Off Broadway), Executive Producer for *Desperate Measures*, *Doctor Zhivago* in Australia and on Broadway and *An Officer and A Gentleman* in

Australia. Ken was also the General Manager and Director of Production and Operations for the renowned Old Globe Theatre in San Diego for 15 years.

KELLY JAMES TIGHE (Scenic Design) Off-Broadway and national tour credits include *Martin Luther on Trial*, *Shadowlands*, *The Most Reluctant Convert*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Fantasticks*, *Almost Heaven*, *Movin' Out*, *Shear Madness* and *Cats*. Other credits: Disney theatrical, Paper Mill Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Laguna Playhouse, Center REpertory Company, SlowBurn Theater, Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, Sacramento Theatre Company, Gateway Playhouse, Broadway by the Bay, Contra Costa Musical Theatre, Diablo Theatre Company and Ray of Light Theatre. Kelly's theatrical work is published in the textbook *Scene Design and Stage Lighting* and his work as an illustrator has been published in *Mooseltoe*, *A Moose and a Dream*. Awards and recognitions include the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle, DramaLogue and the Shellie Awards. kjtdesign.com

MICHAEL BEVINS (Costume Designer) Michael is happy to be collaborating with Max McLean and Ken Denison on another FPA production after *The Most Reluctant Convert*, *The Screwtape Letters* and *Shadowlands*. Recent films include *The God Committee* with Kelsey Grammar and Julia Stiles, *Clean* with Adrien Brody and *The Bread Factory* by Patrick Wang with Tyne Daly and Janeane Garofalo. Television credits include two seasons of Amazon's series *Alpha House* starring John Goodman and Bill Murray, and two seasons of the web series *Cop Show* with Colin Quinn and Jerry Seinfeld. He has also designed costumes for numerous Off-Broadway plays, including *Sidd*, *White's Lies*, *All Eyes and Ears*, *Machiavelli* and *Good Ol' Girls*. www.michaelbevins.com

WHO'S WHO

GEOFFREY D. FISHBURN (Lighting Designer). Lighting Design - New York: *Almost Heaven*, *Martin Luther on Trial*, *The Great Divorce* and *The Most Reluctant Convert*. Lighting Design - Regional: *Mary Poppins*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Addams Family*, *Titanic*, *Peter Pan*, *Hairspray*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Phantom*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Gypsy*, *The Wiz* and *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*. Assistant Sound Design - New York & National Tours: *Dreamgirls*, *West Side Story*, *The Secret Garden*, *Nixon in China* and *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*. Associate Sound Design - Regional: *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *My Fair Lady* and *The Spoleto Festival*.

JOHN GROMADA (Composer/Sound Designer) FPA: *Paradise Lost*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *Shadowlands*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Most Reluctant Convert* and *The Great Divorce*. Broadway (Composer and/or Sound Design): 41 productions, including *Birthday Candles*, *All My Sons*, *Torch Song*, *The Elephant Man*, *The Trip to Bountiful* (Tony nomination), *The Best Man* (Drama Desk Award), *Clybourne Park*, *Seminar*, *The Columnist*, *A Bronx Tale*, *Prelude to a Kiss*, *Proof*, *Sight Unseen*, *Rabbit Hole*, *Twelve Angry Men* and *A Few Good Men*. Other New York: *The Young Man from Atlanta*, *The Cake*, *Amy and the Orphans*, *Old Hats*, *Dada Woof Papa Hot*, *Ripcord*, *My Name Is Asher Lev*, *Measure for Measure* (Delacorte Theater), *The Orphans' Home Cycle* (Drama Desk and Henry Hewes Awards), *Shipwrecked!* (Lucille Lortel Award), *The Skriker* (Drama Desk Award) and *Machinal* (Obie Award). His regional theatre credits number more than 300 productions at major regional theatres. Television credits include a score for the Emmy Award-nominated film version of *The Trip to Bountiful*. Johngromada.net

ROCCO DISANTI (Projection Design) Broadway: *The Snow Geese*, *The Columnist*, *Wit*, *Collected Stories* and *Time Stands Still*.

Off Broadway: *Incident at Vichy* (Signature), *Desire*, *Lift*, *Inner Voices*, *Wide Awake Hearts* (59E59), *Completeness* (Playwrights Horizons), *A Second Chance* (The Public) and more. Regional: *Fly*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Spin*, *Company* and *A Second Chance* (Signature Theatre). Kansas City: *Swing!*, *Lift* and *The Adventure of Fishy Waters: in Bed with The Blues* (Crossroads). AWARDS: Nominated for a 2012 Henry Hewes Design Award for Completeness.

LEW MEAD (Production Manager and Stage Manager) Broadway engineering credits include: *A Chorus Line*, *Dreamgirls* and *Bring Back Birdie*. Broadway design credits include *Onward Victoria*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Urinetown*, *The King and I* and *Wonderful Town*. Touring credits include Julie Andrews and Leslie Uggams. Fellowship for Performing Arts credits include *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce* and *C.S. Lewis on Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert*. Lew is the Director of Autograph A2D an audio distribution company located in New York City and London.

FELLOWSHIP FOR PERFORMING ARTS (Producer) Fellowship for Performing Arts is a New York City-based film and theatre production company founded by Artistic Director Max McLean. FPA's mission is to produce theatre and film from a Christian worldview that engages diverse audiences. In its New York seasons it has produced *Shadowlands*, *C.S. Lewis on Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert*, *The Great Divorce*, *Martin Luther on Trial*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *A Man for All Seasons* and *Paradise Lost*. FPA tours at universities (Brown, Princeton, UC Berkeley and more) and in major performing arts centers across the country. FPA is the producer of the international hit film *The Most Reluctant Convert: The Untold Story of C.S. Lewis* and its newest theatrical production *C.S. Lewis on Stage: Further Up & Further In*. FPAtheatre.com

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The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association,
the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

The Fellowship Circle is a key building block to help Fellowship for Performing Arts achieve our mission of presenting theatre and now film from a Christian worldview that engages a diverse audience. The following Circle Members provided the financial support to produce *The Most Reluctant Convert* film, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce* and *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert*:

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The names on this list were last updated on 8/15/2022. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please call us with any questions or corrections. FPA values the donations of our many other supporters and friends and extends our deepest gratitude to all. To join our Fellowship Circle, visit: fpatheatre.com/support, email Giving@FPAtheatre.com or call us at 212.582.2920.



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NOTE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

While experiencing a production by Fellowship for Performing Arts, some people are curious about what drives our work.

FPA's objective is to engage and entertain its patrons by telling stories from a Christian worldview that have the power to capture the imagination of a diverse audience.

Our process begins with careful attention to selecting works we think can accomplish this objective.

We also strive to execute our artistic vision to the highest level of excellence our budgets allow. Part of achieving this is to attract a first-rate cast and creative team.

I'm aware that, despite the best of intentions, the notion of a "religious" play might send up a yellow flag.

During our first New York season, several reviewers expressed this skepticism in print. One critic, upon discovering our worldview, wrote "my heart sank." Another made the understatement that presenting plays from a place of religious conviction "to a general audience is no easy thing."

In both cases, it was the work that turned them around. The first declared, "I expected a preachy bore, not this deliciously witty, theatrical treat that still resonates and amuses the day after." He went on, "I expect that, like the first, [the next production] will be entertaining, very well-staged and imbued with serious

Christian thought and an earnest invitation to introspection."

The second critic began by stating that he was "Jewish by birth, liberal by conviction and an atheist by observation and introspection." He went on to express "how much I admire the approach of Fellowship for Performing Arts...They do their work through a careful combination of good storytelling—craft comes first...allowing any message implicit in the material to take care of itself."

A third critic commented that "Fellowship for Performing Arts offers something that has been sorely missing from the New York theater scene for far too long: high-quality, challenging theater from a Christian perspective. Most impressively...they let the drama lead the way, allowing us to debate what we have witnessed on the trip home."

Such feedback is welcomed. Art hints at the deeper structures of reality. FPA desires to create theatre that contributes to a better understanding of that reality. To do that requires honest, clear-eyed storytelling that entertains and engages its audiences. If a play doesn't do that, it really doesn't matter what else it does.

Thank you for the privilege of attempting to do just that at this performance.



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