

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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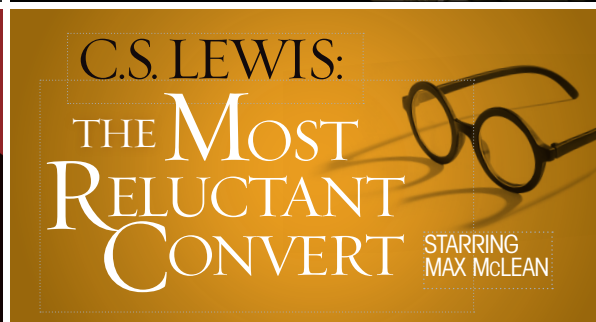
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■ Creating Culture

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FPA in New York City 4 Months, 4 Shows



CURRENT PRODUCTIONS

NYC THEATRICAL SEASON 2015/16

C.S. LEWIS THE GREAT DIVORCE

November 13 - January 3

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

January 8 - January 24

THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT

December 13, 14, 20, 21; Feb. 18-21

MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL

February 7 - February 21

C.S. LEWIS
THE
Screwtape
LETTERS

Visit ScrewtapeOnStage.com
for dates and tickets.

Every year, millions of people attend a show in New York's theatre district. Musicals, plays, new works, classics—representing every conceivable point of view.

This year, four shows from Fellowship for Performing Arts will be among them—bringing theatre from a Christian worldview to one of the most diverse, demanding and influential audiences in the world.

For the first time, FPA will produce a theatrical season—November 2015 to February 2016—with all shows at The Pearl Theatre on West 42nd Street. Playing alongside some of the world's most influential theatre, will be *The Great Divorce*, *The*

Screwtape Letters, a lab production of *Martin Luther on Trial* and a special presentation of a new work, *C.S. Lewis: The Most Reluctant Convert*.

"We will begin our season with C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* for six weeks," said FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. "Then *The Screwtape Letters* will return in January, followed by a developmental production of *Martin Luther on Trial*. And we will debut a new work—*The Most Reluctant Convert*—in which I'll play C.S. Lewis."

Every theatre company in New York expresses a worldview. Almost none expresses a *Continued on back*

CRITICS RESPOND

The appeal of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* to mainstream critics and theatregoers is one measurable indication that we are making progress toward bringing a Christian voice to the arts community.

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

The New York Times

Lewis' Tempters, Meticulously Paving the Road to Hell

The Devil has rarely been given his due more perceptively and eruditely than in C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, an epistolary novella that examines the Christian religion from the point of view of the other side. And in a humorous and lively stage adaptation by Jeffrey Fiske and Max McLean now playing at Westside Theater, he is every inch the cunning English gentleman he is often purported to be.

The humor of this stage adaptation is mostly cerebral, and a large part of what makes it successful is an energetic performance by Mr. McLean as Screwtape that brings some semblance of action to the stage. Karen Eleanor Wight is aptly reptilian as Toadpipe.

One doesn't have to be a Christian to benefit from or enjoy *The Screwtape Letters*. Whatever a person's faith may be, human failings and foibles are pretty much the same the world over. ■

"PURE GENIUS!"

NATIONAL REVIEW

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

One Hell of a Good Show

Clowning about matters metaphysical is not the exclusive privilege of unbelievers. Fellowship for Performing Arts, an organization that supports "the integration of faith and the arts," is currently presenting an Off-Broadway stage version of C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, the wickedly witty epistolary novel in which His Abysmal Sublimity Screwtape, Under Secretary of the Satanic Lowerarchy, instructs his nephew Wormwood, a doltish junior tempter, in the fine art of persuading unwitting humans to part with their souls. It is—if I may say so—one hell of a good show.

The production stars Max McLean, whose plummy, supercilious bass-baritone voice is ideally suited to Screwtape. McLean is clearly having himself a time-and-a-half, and no wonder: Lewis' topsy-turvy exercises in inverted moral theology were made to be read out loud, preferably with lip-smacking relish. McLean is so delightfully repulsive that you won't notice anything else. ■

THE GREAT DIVORCE

The Washington Post

Striking...Vivid...Serious

Serious theological stuff packaged into a tidy, brightly designed 90-minute show. This faithful adaptation is by Max McLean and Brian Watkins, with a cast of three — Michael Frederic, Joel Rainwater and Christa Scott-Reed — taking on nearly 20 characters. Scott-Reed gets some especially striking vignettes, running the gamut from a furious-at-God grieving mother to a comically grumbling woman who is little more than a walking cloud of complaint. Rainwater embodies gruff entitlement as a man who wants his just deserts from the Lord. The digital scenery sweeps the action from a rainy urban hell, through the stars and into surreally green valleys and towering mountains. What's behind the actors is practically a full-blown movie, yet (the) vivid projections never overwhelm the action. In fact, the cinematic style nicely frames the parade of character studies. Bit by bit, Lewis' argument comes into sharp relief in a show that is blessedly free of finger-wagging. To judge by the rapt crowd . . . *Divorce* is reaching its congregation. ■

A rare and welcomed treat!



WORLD
MAGAZINE

World class theatre...raising questions of eternal significance with disarming ease.

It takes a good deal of cunning to "steal past watchful dragons," but Max McLean's stage production of *The Great Divorce* rises to the challenge, raising questions of eternal significance with disarming ease, showcasing McLean's commitment to creating culture from a Christian worldview.

In order to recreate Lewis' abstract allegory, McLean's creative team utilized cutting-edge videography and set design. The plot was condensed to keep the story moving...but Lewis' wry humor was paced perfectly throughout, lightening the mood just enough for the mind to absorb the story's deep theological truths. ■

**Fascinating...brings Lewis to life
with lively wit and generous humor.**

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

THEATRE THAT TOUCHES LIVES

FPA Production Helps Skeptic See the Light

Adrienne tried it all—the synagogue of her parents' faith, church with friends, Buddhism and more. Then friends invited her to see Fellowship for Performing Arts' production of C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*.

"I had never heard of the book and did not know what the play was about," Adrienne said. "As it turns out, seeing the show had a very large impact on me. I have been on what you might call a 'spiritual journey' over the course of the last year, after spending 29

years as an atheist. I've been trying all kinds of stuff—from synagogue to churches to to Buddhist chanting, to Sufi healings—trying to get

more God. The bit in the play where *Screwtape* says a moderated religion is as good as no religion at all really hit me. I don't

want to just be a 'spiritual seeker'; I want to be a spiritual finder."

The Christian worldview presented on stage so engaged Adrienne that she traveled to another city to see *Screwtape* a second time. She, also, accepted and read a copy of Lewis' *Mere Christianity* from a friend.

"I have started praying in Jesus' name and asking God to please cover me in his light and protect me from the evil forces," she said. "I believe spiritual warfare is real and that not too long ago I was

corrupted by the darkness. This is what brings me here. I am now clawing my way toward the light."

In *Mere Christianity*, Adrienne

found this quote from Lewis: "It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have

**THEATRE FROM A CHRISTIAN
WORLDVIEW THAT CAPTURES
THE MORAL IMAGINATION
AND ENGAGES
A DIVERSE AUDIENCE.**

**'YOUR WORK
REALLY MATTERS.
FPA IS
ACCOMPLISHING
ITS MISSION.'**

broken that law and put yourself wrong with the Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk."

"I wanted to tell you all this to let you know that your work really matters," Adrienne said. "FPA is accomplishing its mission."

Stories like this that emerge from a Fellowship production gets to the heart of what we do—theatre from a Christian worldview that engages the moral imagination. And responses like this, from Adrienne, take a measure of what happens when art, entertainment, faith and truth meet. "Thank you for a wonderful show ... and for so much more." ■

THEATRE FROM A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW ENGAGES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Research from the Barna Group shows six of 10 young people leaving the church permanently or for an extended period after high school. But a trip to the theatre offered one educator an opportunity to engage her students' minds with a Christian worldview.

Cheri Gregory, a California high school teacher, took a nine-hour field trip with her AP English Literature students to see *The Screwtape Letters*.

"The kids had just survived a busy week so it was no small thing that I robbed them of nine hours by requiring them to attend our

certain I'd ruined my students' chances of appreciating it."

Turns out Cheri need not have worried. *Screwtape* captured her students' attention and imaginations.

"They felt the stage challenged them to use their imaginations and their minds more," she said. "In a movie, everything is just given to them. A play demands more of them, gives them more responsibility to pay attention, to fill in the gaps, to agree or disagree."

Her students rose to the challenge and were rewarded with entertainment that made them think. "Stunning . . . amazing to watch," one student said. "It makes you really begin to question yourself," another wrote. "I

found myself being able to relate to almost all of it." (See sidebar for more student responses.)

The play not only captured the students' imaginations, it piqued curiosity, as shown by a Q&A

Continued on back page.

Students Respond to FPA Production

FPA's *The Screwtape Letters* captured the minds and imaginations of Advanced Placement Literature students from Monterrey, Calif. Here are a few of their responses to the show.

"Its demonic point of view is not only insightful, but spine-chillingly realistic."

"Toadpipe's actions, body language, everything about her was not only wildly entertaining, but profound in regards to the story itself."

"It makes me sad that Satan can take something as beautiful as love and use it to his advantage."

"Many of the points hit home for me, but the mood allowed me to laugh as well."

"I've found myself being able to relate to almost all of it, and I felt like I was a horrible person. Like I was being tempted by all the things the demons are trying to tempt me with."

"I realized we all think the complications in life happen without reason, but many things happen just to keep our eyes off the truth."

"Screwtape was perfectly evil, but amazingly relatable."

"The production from a visual standpoint was stunning...amazing to watch."

6 IN 10 YOUNG PEOPLE WILL LEAVE THE CHURCH. CAN THEATRE CHANGE THAT



LEWIS' WORK REACHES YOUNG AUDIENCES IN DEEPLY FELT WAYS.



field trip," she said. "To say our seats were plastered against the back wall of the theatre involves only slight hyperbole. Having seen the show from the 10th row, I was horrified when we sat down,

A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Getting a Fair Hearing in the Cultural Marketplace

Elton Trueblood, the Quaker theologian and former chaplain at Harvard, wrote, “The test of the vitality of a religion is seen in its effect upon culture.” These words guide our efforts at Fellowship for Performing Arts. What does it mean for us to produce theatre from a Christian worldview for a diverse audience?

In the arts Christianity is often marginalized. FPA’s challenge is to break through this stigma and produce theatre with excellence that engages the imagination. That is what it takes to get a fair hearing in the cultural marketplace. As a result, more than 400,000 people have seen *The Screwtape Letters* first in New York and then on national tour.

We also test the vitality of our faith by how we live and work within the theatre community of New York City. How does our work measure up against world-class artists, designers and theatre producing organizations? Their talent, resources, creativity and intensity of commitment impress us. Some of the best and the brightest people in the theatre industry helped make *The Screwtape Letters* the success that it is and helped launch our theatrical adaptation of C.S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce*. These artists may not share our worldview, but they respect our work and that provides opportunities for dialogue and friendship.

Too often the Christian worldview is experienced by what it is against. By creating high-quality theatre, we ignite the imagination so that people can see what Christians are *for*. Like one theatre director said after seeing *Screwtape* in New York: “It is almost shocking to see something so morally and ethically correct on stage.”

The quality bar for theatre in the marketplace is very high. Attach the name “Christian” to it and that



Joel Rainwater in a scene from *The Great Divorce*.



Brent Harris and Marissa Molnar in a scene from *The Screwtape Letters*.

bar rises. Our task is to produce works that express Christianity as imaginative, multi-layered and appealing, and execute them so they deserve to be seen

in the world’s best cultural venues.

Lastly, we ask friends like you to help us. That is why we are called Fellowship for Performing Arts. It is a fellowship of people who believe theatre and art from a Christian worldview can capture the moral imagination and impact culture. Your prayers and support are integral to our work. ■

FPA IN NEW YORK CITY

Continued from front

Christian worldview. FPA's season will offer a clear Christian voice among the many other voices being heard in New York's entertainment marketplace.

Fellowship's New York season has sparked exciting developments for the organization's existing works—*The Great Divorce* will be significantly reworked, making it a new experience; prepping

for New York, McLean again dons the red-and-gold brocade jacket of His Abysmal Sublimity Screwtape in productions in Irvine, Calif., and Houston; and *The Most Reluctant Convert*—a new play—dramatizes C.S. Lewis' spiritual journey.

"Whether our shows play in venues across the country or in the world capital of theatre, one thing remains unchanged," McLean said, "we cannot mount these productions without the partnership of our Fellowship Circle of supporters."

Opportunities like a full season in New York City help us break down stereotypes of what Christianity is and can be.

This is what drives Fellowship for Performing Arts. Consider joining our Fellowship Circle of supporters and becoming "culture makers" with us as we offer thought-provoking theatre that captures imaginations and makes a difference in people's lives. ■

I HOPE YOU'LL JOIN US...

STUDENTS RESPOND

Continued from page 3

after the performance with Fellowship for Performing Arts Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean.

"Several students specifically mentioned the Q&A session afterward as something that colored the entire experience," Cheri said. "My anti-theist loved Max's reply to the man who asked what he hoped an 'unbeliever' would take away from the play."

"They are here," Max answered. "Ask them. It's a good conversation to have."

FPA assumes audiences for its productions come from a variety of faith—or non-faith—experiences. Max's answer illustrated how shows like *Screwtape* and *The Great Divorce* can engage diverse crowds while avoiding an "us vs. them" paradigm.

The Fellowship Circle of FPA supporters makes it possible for theatre from a Christian worldview to engage seekers, students and the whole diverse array of audiences who attend productions of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*. Consider partnering with us as we strive to create theatre that is excellent, always entertains and then engages our audiences. ■

"STUNNING ...
AMAZING
TO WATCH."



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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