

# 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.*



## Dazzling Stagecraft Moves FPA's Mission Forward

PLUS

**More Great  
Photos Inside!**

- **Creating Paradise in New York City**
- **No Spring Break for FPA Campus Initiative**
- **On Discerning God's Will**

# Dazzling Stagecraft to Accomplish Our Mission

A reporter asked, “How do you create the fantastical heavenly landscapes Lewis describes in *The Great Divorce*?”

FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean replied, “A new, state-of-the-art LED curtain with dazzling, stagewide projections certainly helps.

“*The Great Divorce* takes audiences on a bus ride from a hellish ‘grey town’ to the foothills of heaven. Expressing the vividness and expansiveness of the heavenly realm is essential to capturing the imagination of our audiences.”

This revival of *The Great Divorce* led off FPA’s fifth New York season and then launched a national tour that kicked off with four sold-out performances in Charlotte, 12 sold-out performances in Washington, D.C. and a packed, standing-room-only event at the large Byham Theater in Pittsburgh.

*The Great Divorce* has continued to pack houses in Dallas, Houston and Tulsa with performances scheduled for Kansas City, Louisville, Atlanta, San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles/Irvine with more



cities being scheduled. FPAtheatre.com will always have the latest information on additional tour stops.

The new LED screen provides eye-popping visual elements – mountains, a talking waterfall, a paradise of a forest – in brilliant colors to support the memorable

scenes from the book such as the Lizard, the Bishop, the grumbler, Sarah Smith and George MacDonald to name a few.

And there’s a practical side to this investment. The LED screen simplifies the load-in and load-out process from the projection and screen system previously used while taking scenic design of *The Great Divorce* to an entirely new level.

“It was the generosity of our Fellowship Circle of supporters that allowed us to purchase this state-of-the-art screen,” Max said. “Our supporters understand the vital importance of articulating the Christian worldview with imaginative stagecraft to capture the imagination of a diverse audiences in great theatrical venues. And we are so grateful for their vision.”





**“Expressing the vividness and expansiveness of the heavenly realm is essential to capturing the imagination of our audiences.”**





# CREATING

## PARADISE LOST

In our fifth New York season, Fellowship for Performing Arts produced a world premiere of *Paradise Lost*, a modern retelling of the John Milton classic by award-winning playwright Tom Dulack.

“For this show to work, we were challenged to create both a ‘hell’ and a ‘paradise’ that set the right backdrop for the drama on stage,” said FPA’s Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean.

“Being based in New York enabled us to work with a crackerjack design team that took audiences from an eerie, hellish lake of fire, to a mesmerizing Garden of Eden, to the bleak ‘new world’ that followed Adam and Eve’s disobedience.”

Reviewer after reviewer praised the design work—sets, costumes, lighting, projections and sound. One writer who has seen many of our productions felt FPA had “reached a new level in scenic design.”

The *New Yorker* called it “thrillingly cinematic.” DC Metro Theater Arts found it “dazzling...stunning...an eye-catching take on Milton’s legendary work.”

We also had a cast of Tony Award nominees, Broadway veterans and New York actors bringing Tom Dulack’s words to life. It all added up to a premiere work that *First Things* said was “arresting...thrilling...the language and imagery of this beautiful chaos gets at the heart of the tale.”

“Our mission of creating theatre from a Christian worldview to engage a diverse audience requires us to produce at the highest level of excellence our budgets allow,” Max said. “It’s gratifying to see that effort by our creative team recognized.”



Eve (Marina Shay)

## ARRESTING...THRILLING

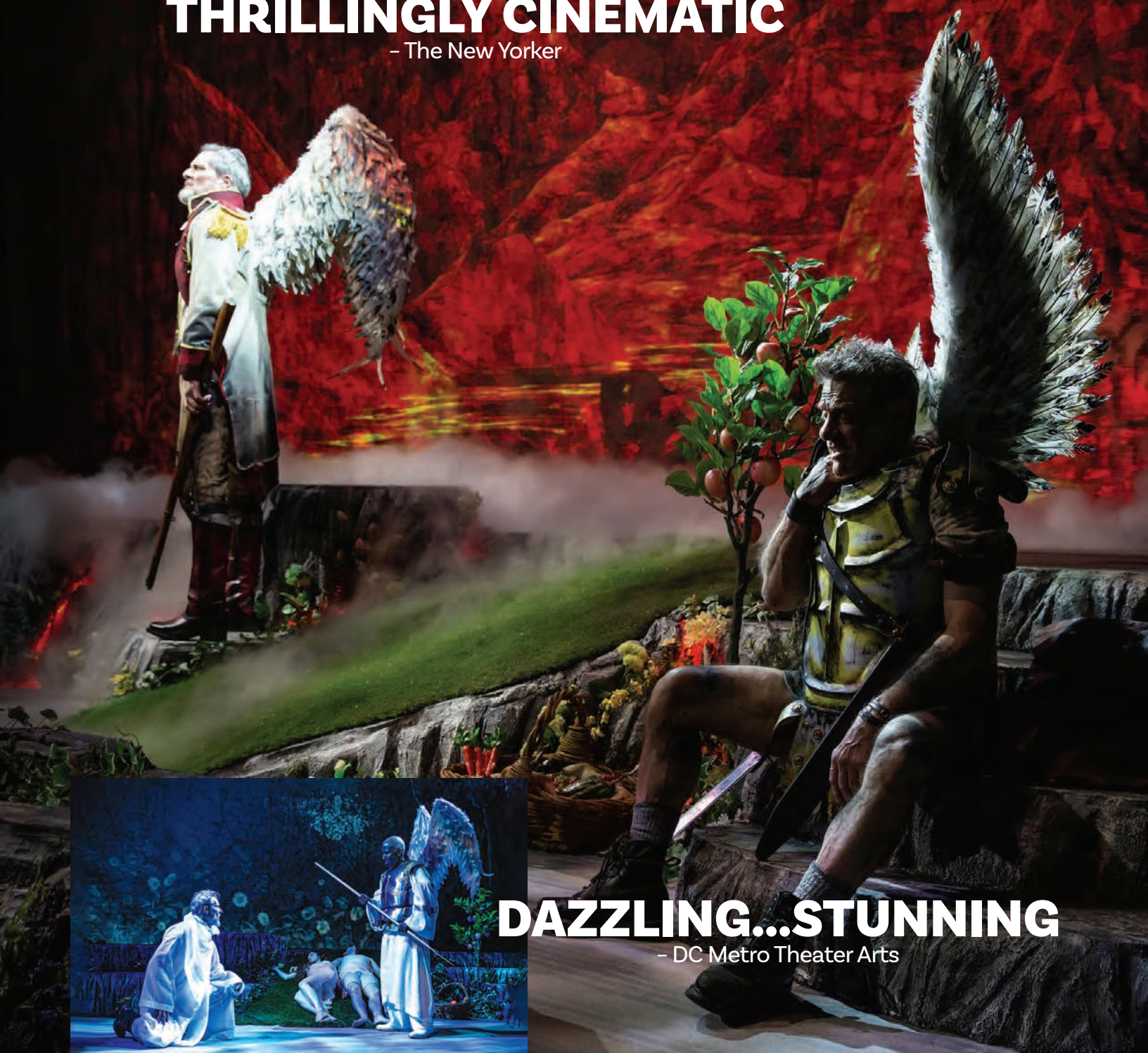
– First Things



# PARADISE

**THRILLINGLY CINEMATIC**

- The New Yorker



**DAZZLING...STUNNING**

- DC Metro Theater Arts

Lucifer (David Andrew Macdonald), Eve (Marina Shay),  
Adam (Robbie Simpson), Gabriel (Mel Johnson Jr.)

Photos: Jeremy Daniel

Lucifer (David Andrew Macdonald) and Beelzebub (Lou Liberatore)



# No Spring Break for FPA's Campus Initiative!

**F**ellowship for Performing Arts continues its Campus Initiative this spring with its production of *C.S. Lewis On Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert* at the University of Michigan, Northwestern and Rutgers.

"Those three universities enroll 136,000 students with a faculty of over 18,000," said FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. "I'm thrilled and humbled that God has opened a door for us to tell Lewis' conversion journey – in his own words. Here is a brilliant, imaginative mind who wrestled like Jacob against the reality of God and his son Jesus Christ. And most of the story happened during Lewis' formative college years. I'm amazed how well this story resonates with today's college students."

Max brings Lewis' story to life on stage in 80 lively minutes from the death of his mother at age nine to his conversion to Christianity at the age of 32.

Through the generosity of our Fellowship Circle of supporters, we can offer students tickets – typically \$5 – and steep discounts for faculty and staff as well. We've discovered that students take this event more seriously when they have to purchase a seat rather than it being a free event. Local residents not affiliated with a university can purchase standard-price tickets when seats become available.

Part of FPA's strategy is to partner with many local campus ministry groups. The objective is to rally groups together and to provide a high-profile event for them to invite friends.

The initiative continues to draw interest from other universities having built a good track record over the past two years with events at Brown, Princeton, UC-Berkeley, UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, Penn and UVA to name but a few. FPA is working to secure venues and dates at Michigan State, Ohio State and the University of Florida with several other possibilities in the pipeline. These are not scheduled yet, so watch [FPAtheatre.com](http://FPAtheatre.com), which will always have the most current information.

"College is a time when vulnerable students are exposed to many worldview alternatives," Max said. "I recall my college days at a large secular university. It offered limitless possibilities and unbound confusion. I'm grateful that God has given FPA an opportunity to add a nuanced, imaginative, entertaining and engaging artistic expression of the Christian worldview to the mix. Your support, prayers and partnership are a concrete way that God reveals he is in this and is opening a door of opportunity for us to walk through."



**"I'm amazed how well this story resonates with today's college students."**



Top: Campus ministry partners at Duke University share a post-show meal with Max.

Middle: A student holds up a "Thank You Max" poster as he meets with UNC-Chapel Hill students after the performance.

Bottom: Photo op with "C.S. Lewis" at Penn.



**“UNLESS THE  
LORD BUILDS  
THE HOUSE,  
THE BUILDERS  
LABOR IN VAIN.”**

Psalms 127:1

# ON DISCERNING GOD’S WILL

One of the life-changing benefits of living in New York City is the community of Redeemer Presbyterian Church founded by Dr. Tim Keller in 1989. Sharon and I started attending in 1999 and became members shortly thereafter.

I’ve sat under hundreds of Tim Keller sermons. The cumulative effect cannot be overstated. Case in point is that Tim quoted from C.S. Lewis regularly as a way of articulating Christian theology that could capture the imagination of post-modern New Yorkers. That certainly was a factor in FPA adapting several of CSL’s works from the page to the stage such as *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce* and *C.S. Lewis On Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert*.

Another result from sitting under Tim’s ministry was how he helped his congregation discern God’s will. He often referenced three factors to help us to do that. The shorthand he used was affinity, ability and opportunity.

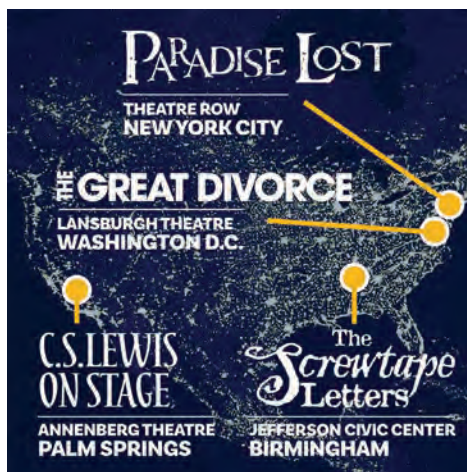
I interpret “affinity” to mean a built-in or natural liking, desire or disposition for something. It can be discerned by asking, “What are you passionate about?” Ability means talent or skill. “What are you good at?” Opportunity is the set of circumstances that line up to make an outcome possible, or, “Where has God opened doors?”

I’ve been thinking about this in light of a recent milestone. On Saturday, Feb. 8, FPA had four different productions in four cities with four different creative and production teams on stage at almost the same time.

*Paradise Lost* was in its fourth week in New York City, *The Great Divorce* was concluding 12 sold-out performances in Washington D.C., *The Screwtape Letters* was continuing its 15-month tour in Birmingham and *C.S. Lewis On Stage* was in Palm Springs for three performances. (I volunteered for that one.) That week FPA had the great privilege of presenting our work to over 6,000 people in four major theatrical venues from coast to coast.

Such an achievement would have been incomprehensible just a few short years ago given the logistics and the upfront budgets required to produce four complex productions. Not to mention the ability to attract so many people to attend a Christian theatre event in four distinctly unique cities. That milestone is the result of God’s providence.

FPA has assembled a team from varied backgrounds whom God has brought together for this purpose. Our board and staff are passionate about our mission. They have a clear vision of presenting theatre from a Christian worldview with excellence to a diverse  
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audience. We believe in the power of theatre to engage the imagination, and we work hard to accomplish this each day.

It's one thing to work hard. It's quite another to have the talent and ability to actually do the work. A Christian consultant once shared a thought that I've never forgotten. He said, "Those who know how will always work for those who know why." FPA's mission is the "why." However, FPA depends on the extraordinary talents of so many "how" people to help us accomplish the work. When you have a clear vision that you pursue with excellence, the talent will follow. The bios and resumes of our creative professionals abound with industry awards, nominations and experience at the highest levels of the professional theatre community.

Then there is opportunity. One example is the doors God has opened to play in colleges

and universities. To navigate the red tape required to produce on campuses takes remarkable diligence and patience from many key people on our team. Thanks to free speech and religious liberty we get the chance to present our worldview in skeptical environments. But for how long?

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**"Those who know how  
will always work for  
those who know why."**

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That remains to be seen. For the present, the door is open and because of that we have been able to present our work in places like Princeton, UC-Berkeley, Columbia, Duke, Penn, Brown, Northwestern, Rutgers and Michigan. We are grateful for that.

Another door that is opening for us are the overseas opportunities in the U.K., Europe, Asia and Australia. Make no mistake,

we get pushback. Recently a major theatre in the U.K. denied us because of our Christian worldview. But other places such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Sydney, Melbourne, Cambridge, Manchester and Liverpool are still open to us.

And there's you. You, too, are an expression of God opening doors. Without you, all of our passion and ability would be nothing more than a "light under a bushel."

Year after year our Fellowship Circle has walked with us on this journey, growing as we go. Theatre is costly to create and to produce. Excellence is mandatory. Ticket sales cover less than half of our budget and expenses. You stand in that gap and make the difference.

Thank you for providing the resources that allow us to let our "light shines before men, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

## FPA 2020 PERFORMANCE CALENDAR

As of March 3, 2020. New dates added regularly. Please check [FPAtheatre.com](http://FPAtheatre.com).

### THE GREAT DIVORCE

JAN 24-26 CHARLOTTE - Blumenthal Center  
JAN 30-FEB 9 WASHINGTON D.C. - Lansburgh Theatre  
FEB 15 PITTSBURGH - Byham Theater  
FEB 26-MAR 1 DALLAS - Eisemann Center  
MAR 3-15 HOUSTON - George Theater  
MAR 27-29 TULSA - Tulsa PAC  
JUNE 5-14 ATLANTA - Alliance Theatre  
JULY 8-12 LA/IRVINE - Barclay Theatre  
AUG 22-23 ASHEVILLE - Wortham Theatre

### C.S. LEWIS ONSTAGE THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT

FEB 1 SANTA BARBARA  
Granada Theatre  
FEB 7-9 PALM SPRINGS, CA  
Annenberg Theater  
FEB 23 ST. LOUIS  
Touhill Performing Arts Center  
MAR 4 NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY  
MAR 25 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
APR 1 RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

### The ScrewTape Letters

JAN 12 JACKSONVILLE  
Times-Union Center  
JAN 18-19 TAMPA  
Straz Center  
JAN 26 FT. LAUDERDALE  
Parker Playhouse  
FEB 8 BIRMINGHAM  
BJCC Concert Hall  
MAR 15 COLORADO SPRINGS  
Pikes Peak Center

### PARADISE LOST

JAN 15 - MAR 1  
NEW YORK CITY  
Theatre Row

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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