

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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SHOW SCHEDULE

SHADOWLANDS

The love story between C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman
inspired by Lewis' classic book, *A Grief Observed*.

NEW YORK CITY
FALL/WINTER 2017-18

MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL

500TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

NATIONAL TOUR
FALL 2017

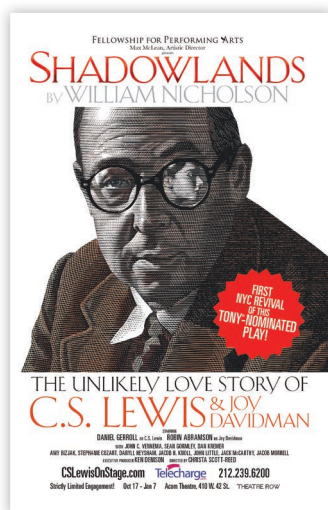
C.S. LEWIS ON STAGE THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT

NATIONAL TOUR 2018

Check FPAtheatre.com for updates.

'Shadowlands' Returns to New York!

*Tony-Nominated Play and
Stellar Cast Launch FPA's
3rd New York Season*



“PAIN,” C.S. Lewis famously said, “is God’s megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

In the play *Shadowlands*, author William Nicholson places that line early on, and it proves prophetic. Lewis utters it from his settled-in bachelor’s life.

Then he meets Joy Davidman—a brash, New York Jew, former communist and a convert to Christianity. From friendship to deep love to marriage, Lewis suffers the searing loss of his late-in-life love to cancer. And audiences journey with him, as ultimately, the experience deepens his faith.

Continued on page 2

LUTHER ON TRIAL. LEWIS ON TOUR. FPA ON THE MOVE.

Even as *Shadowlands* anchors Fellowship for Performing Arts' third New York season, *Martin Luther on Trial* continues its six-city, eight-week fall tour. At the same time, work progresses toward an extensive, nationwide 2018 tour for *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert*.

Welcome to a new era for FPA.

"Our mission is to engage audiences with theatre from a Christian worldview," said FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. "But it is a years-long process to take a work from idea to production. Now, the effort over the past few years, along with the support of so many in our Fellowship Circle, is paying off with multiple shows each with its own particular look at the Christian faith."

The timing was important to develop, premiere and tour *Martin Luther on Trial*. This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and offered the ideal time to take *Luther* across the country.

Remaining tour stops include Houston Oct. 19-29, Dallas, Nov. 3-4; Minneapolis, Nov. 11-2; and Tulsa, Nov. 16-19. The show is timeless—a trial set in the afterlife—so it also can tour past 2017.

"We'll be evaluating the possibility of additional tour stops for the coming year," Max said. "FPA's website, FPAtheatre.com, is always the place for the latest information."



C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert definitely will tour in 2018. Dates and locations still are being finalized; however, we look forward to presenting *Convert* all over the United States next year.

"*Convert* has demonstrated a remarkable ability to engage audiences," Max said. "It has sparked some of the most interesting post-show discussions I've experienced."

With *Convert*, Max typically begins his Q&As by encouraging skeptical opinions about Lewis' journey from vigorous debunker to the most influential Christian apologist of the 20th century.

"The questions are thoughtful and earnest," Max said. "Occasionally there is an odd response, such as when one person claimed that Lewis had not uttered 'one rational thought' throughout the play! Of course, that is more than balanced by the many who express gratitude for Lewis' struggle and how



Following New York debuts, *Martin Luther on Trial* (left) and *The Most Reluctant Convert* continue engaging audiences on national tour.

honestly he explored his doubts. The play certainly shows the 'hound of heaven' was in pursuit, and that Lewis was clearly running away. All that makes for compelling theatre. And it helps that the play uses Lewis' own words almost exclusively.

"We're presenting the Christian worldview in a theatrical context. The burden we feel is to select works of art capable of doing this in a way that is engaging, entertaining and moving. Through God's wisdom and your support, FPA is positioned to move forward with confidence."

For the most up-to-date information on all FPA productions, visit FPAtheatre.com.

SHADOWLANDS Continued from front

“It feels like such the right time for the first revival of *Shadowlands* in New York since its 1990 premiere,” said Fellowship for Performing Arts Artistic Director Max McLean. “It reflects on how real life tests our faith.”

Opening on Nov. 1, *Shadowlands* marks FPA’s third theatrical season in New York City, and it also marks a number of “firsts” for FPA.

It’s the first time FPA has revived a previously produced play.

“Our first productions were dramatic presentations of full books of the Bible such as *Mark’s Gospel*, *Genesis* and *Acts*,” Max said. “We then adapted works of Lewis for the stage including *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce* and *The Most Reluctant Convert*, and we commissioned our first original work—*Martin Luther on Trial*. But *Shadowlands* had its own illustrious production history on stage and screen before our revival.” (See story on next page)

The key is that *Shadowlands* fits uniquely in FPA’s mission to engage diverse audiences with theatre

from a Christian worldview. *Shadowlands* has been doing that with Lewis’ story for over 30 years.

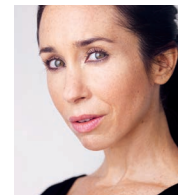
It’s also the first time FPA has produced a play of this scale. Previously, *Martin Luther on Trial*, with six actors, was the largest production. The child actors are another FPA first. It also includes two children playing the eight-performance-a-week schedule on alternating nights.

This is another first.

And it is an impressive cast.



Daniel Gerroll takes the role of C.S. Lewis. He was featured in the Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire*, did a comic turn as an obnoxious Brit on *Seinfeld* and has numerous Broadway credits. He also was honored with an OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence.



Robin Abramson, who plays Joy Davidman, is a stage veteran in Pittsburgh and Israel, a growing presence in New York and recipient of the Performer of the Year Award given annually by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. The paper cited her “extraordinary emotional range.”

The rest of the cast features actors with Broadway, Off-Broadway and extensive regional credits.

“Our goal is to hire the most talented actors and creative team that our budgets allow,” Max said. “With these actors and our director, Christa Scott-Reed, whom many remember from her



performance in *The Great Divorce*, we look forward to a first-rate cast delivering a first-rate play.”

It’s critical to FPA’s mission to be producing regularly in the heart of the New York theater district.

“We were pleased,” Max said, “when *TheaterMania* cited Fellowship for Performing Arts as bringing ‘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.”

One thing that is not a first—the vital role played by FPA’s Fellowship Circle of supporters.

“Our Fellowship Circle quite literally makes this production possible,” Max said. “And we’re so grateful for their partnership.”

Shadowlands is at *The Acorn Theatre at Theatre Row* through Jan. 7, 2018. For the latest information on tickets, visit FPAtheatre.com.

FROM SCREEN TO STAGE TO SCREEN TO STAGE

An Award-Winning Journey for a Remarkable Story

As Fellowship for Performing Arts’ revival of *Shadowlands* celebrates opening night, it marks the latest stage of a remarkable artistic journey. It’s also the latest evidence of the enduring power of C.S. Lewis—his life and works—to capture imaginations and engage minds.

Shadowlands, by William Nicholson, tells the bittersweet story of the love of Lewis’ life—his late-in-life American wife Joy Davidman—and his loss of her to cancer.

“*Shadowlands* is Lewis’ deeply personal journey from faith shaken to faith restored,” said Christa Scott-Reed, FPA’s Literary Manager, who directed the work. “It makes the point that the pain we’ve suffered is a part of the joy we can experience later, and it resonates deeply with audiences.”

In fact, it’s been resonating—and winning awards—for over 30 years on TV, the stage and movie screens.

Nicholson, who was nominated for an Oscar for the screenplay of *Gladiator*, first wrote *Shadowlands* as a 1985 teleplay for the BBC. He drew extensively from Lewis’ deeply personal account of the journey from

joy to pain to joy in the book *A Grief Observed*. *Shadowlands* won the British Academy of Film and Television Award for Best Television Single Drama and Best Actress for Claire Bloom.

Nicholson then adapted that for performance on London’s West End, where it won the Evening Standard Award for Best Play. Nigel Hawthorne

Lewis’ remarkable ability to
CONNECT FAITH AND LIFE
in a way that resonates broadly
MATCHES PERFECTLY WITH
FPA’S MISSION to engage diverse
audiences with theatre from a
Christian worldview.

was nominated for the Best Actor Olivier Award as Lewis, and Jane Lapotaire won the Olivier for Best Actress as Joy.

In 1990, *Shadowlands* debuted on Broadway and was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play, while Hawthorne received the Tony for Best Actor.

It then came full circle, back to the screen—this time the movie screen. The film *Shadowlands* starred

Academy Award winner Anthony Hopkins as Lewis and Debra Winger as his wife, Joy. It was nominated for Best Screenplay, and Winger was awarded the Best Actress Oscar.

Now, the circle continues for the play with the first New York revival since its Broadway debut.

“Two years ago, at a weekend gathering for FPA’s supporters, Christa directed a reading of just a part of *Shadowlands*,” said Max McLean, FPA’s founder and artistic director. “In a reading, there are no sets, no costumes and limited stage movement. Yet, the work absolutely captivated every one of us in that room. We knew we at least had to try to secure the rights to produce it in New York.”

Lewis’ remarkable ability to connect faith and life in a way that resonates broadly matches perfectly with FPA’s mission to engage diverse audiences with theatre from a Christian worldview.

“We’re particularly grateful to our Fellowship Circle of supporters,” Max said, “for what they do to keep *Shadowlands* making the vital connections that it does.”

FPA FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

Fellowship for Performing Arts presents theatre from a Christian worldview that engages a diverse audience. Our ability to mount such productions in leading theatrical venues across the country and in New York City rises from the generous support of our Fellowship Circle members. From all of us at FPA—Thank you for your partnership. To join our Fellowship Circle, visit FPAtheatre.com/support or call us at 212.582.2920 and ask for Melissa Mollner or Sarah Mills.

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DEUS EX MACHINA

One of the critiques of FPA's productions is that we rely on supernatural or improbable events to solve a play's main problem. In both *The Most Reluctant Convert* and *Martin Luther on Trial*, God comes in and changes the outcome. This device is known as deus ex machina. I didn't realize this has become a literary taboo.

The practice of introducing a god or some unexpected turn of events to resolve the plot dates from at least the 5th century Greek drama. Shakespeare used it, and it is often used in films such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Lord of the Rings* and almost all the James Bond movies, to save the lead character from doom.

To guardians of contemporary theatre, this literary device generates an eye roll. It might be OK for children, but educated people know that "real" life doesn't work that way. The world is naturalistic. There is no divine intervention.

Contemporary theatre tends to see the world with unresolved endings; the world just "is," and the most credible solution to every story is to accept your fate and make the best of a world that is ultimately mindless and absurd.

Last week, I was invited to meet with the theatre editor of *The New York Times*. In our meeting, I suggested that FPA's uniqueness is that we employ deus ex machina in a way that captures people's imagination. What sets the Christian worldview apart is

how the supernatural world interacts with our material world.

In *The Most Reluctant Convert*, one might disagree with Lewis' conclusions, but it is hard to dismiss the anxiety he experienced as God began to penetrate through his hardened heart. He had a vivid encounter with God that caused him to wrestle profoundly against his independent and rebellious nature. This led him to finally "give in" to God and, later, to Christ. The audience's intense engagement is clear evidence that Lewis' conversion story is dramatic and compelling.

One review of *Convert* described it this way. "We know going in how the play ends...but how the play gets there is the intriguing thing...purely as dramatic character arc, the conversion story in *C.S. Lewis On-stage* is captivating."

So, in each FPA production, you will see the transcendent, supernatural world presented as honestly as we know how. That is always a challenge and why this work is so hard to get right. Thankfully, because of your support, we can engage some

of the most talented producers, designers, directors and actors to help us create these stories. That is our mission. It doesn't cheapen or weaken the story. Rather, it reintroduces a reality that many have forgotten: that "God is there and He is not silent." We believe it makes for a far greater story.

Thanks for helping us create theatre that challenges skeptical opinions about the reality of a transcendent world. With your support we will continue to capture people's imagination as we produce theatre with excellence from a Christian worldview that reaches a diverse audience.



What sets the Christian worldview apart is how the supernatural world interacts with our material world.

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.)

Fellowship Circle is a publication of Fellowship for Performing Arts • Max McLean, Founder & Artistic Director
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