

# FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

SUMMER 2016

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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## 2016-2017 SCHEDULE

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

- San Francisco/Walnut Creek  
June 24-26
- Los Angeles/Orange County  
July 14-17
- Chicago  
July 22 - Aug 14

### MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL

- New York City  
Dec 1 - Feb 26

### THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

- New York City  
Nov 15-27
- London  
Dec 8 - Jan 7

### FPAtheatre.com

Current as of June 10, 2016. Check FPAtheatre.com for updates.

# 3 Shows, Three World Cities

*2016 Brims With Opportunity for FPA*



With two world premieres launched in Washington, D.C.; a summer tour in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago; a season of two plays in New York City; and Fellowship for Performing Arts' first production in London – 2016 is turning into the most productive year in our history.

"To produce one piece of art and theatre with excellence from a Christian worldview that is multi-layered, thoughtful and entertaining to a diverse audience is challenging enough," said founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. "To do four different productions in one calendar year is both amazing and humbling. We simply could not do it without our Fellowship Circle of supporters."

## C. S. LEWIS ON STAGE IN CHICAGO

FPA's two-production season at Washington's Lansburgh Theatre kicked off with *C.S. Lewis on Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert*. The play is adapted exclusively from Lewis' memoir and his private letters, along with excerpts from such popular books as *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *God in the Dock* and *The Weight of Glory*. Such source material made interest in the show very high from the start, and the entire 18-performance

*Continued on page 2*



### 3 Shows, 3 World Cities Continued from front

run played to near capacity audiences each night.

Lewis' journey from atheism to belief recalls the struggle many experience as they wrestle with God. The play allows the audience – regardless of background – to sit back and enjoy a world class thinker fighting with every fiber of his being against the pull of God's hand. Lewis fought until he could resist no longer and finally “gave in, perhaps, that night the most dejected, reluctant convert in all England.”

*The Washington Post* called the performance “Masterful...spiritually invigorating and hugely moving.” *DC Metro Arts* called it “one terrific piece of theatre...amazing moments on stage.” *The Catholic Herald* wrote that *Most Reluctant Convert* had “amusing wit...entertainingly telling the scope of Lewis' conversion while simultaneously making a compelling case for Christ.”

After a one-week engagement in San Francisco in June and Los Angeles in July, *Convert* is set to begin an 21-performance run at the Mercury Theater in Chicago on July 22. Max plans on doing a talk back after each show. “I'm so looking forward to Chicago theatregoers experiencing *The Most Reluctant Convert*.”



Katie Von Bora (Kersti Bryan), The Devil (Paul Schoeffler), St. Peter (John Michalski), Pope Francis (Mark Boyett) and Martin Luther (Fletcher McTaggart) in *Martin Luther on Trial*.

## MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL IN NEW YORK

Given that 2017 is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation (or revolt, depending on your point of view), FPA thought it a perfect opportunity to look deeply at the events that led to a divided church. We commissioned Chris Cragin-Day to write the script with the help of Max. Then FPA hired Broadway veteran Michael Parva to direct the production. After a two-year process of reading, labs, workshops and developmental productions, the show opened in D.C. following *The Most Reluctant Convert*.

Max McLean and Karen Eleanor Wight in *The Screwtape Letters*.

**“WICKEDLY WITTY”**  
**WALL STREET JOURNAL**





The results are in, and the audience response was enthusiastic. This paragraph from a gratifying review in *DC Metro Arts* sums it up well:

*"Martin Luther on Trial...joins the canon of great theatrical works about religious figures such as T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral about Thomas Becket and George Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan. Like those formidable forerunners, Martin Luther on Trial wrestles dramatically with heady matters of faith and ethics, of God and conscience...But this play goes them one better: Martin Luther on Trial is quite the divine comedy and it's funny as hell...The compelling performance [of Martin Luther] captures each nuance and epic passion in a way that scales the character's convictions and contradictions to Shakespearean dimensions. The scene when Luther comes upon the concept of grace and falls to his knees humbled and overcome was as powerful an epiphany as I've seen played onstage."*

The play begins with Satan bringing charges against Luther. Luther's wife, Katie, acts for the defense and St. Peter sits on the bench. Witnesses are called including Hitler, Freud, Rabbi Yosel, Martin



Luther King, Jr. and Pope Francis. The result was a deeply-moving, highly-entertaining evening of theatre that ended nightly with enthusiastic standing ovations.

*"Martin Luther on Trial* is intellectually stimulating. It brings alive the personal relationships involved in faith, philosophy and politics," said Joanne Kemp, wife of the late Rep. Jack Kemp. "It's a wonderful opportunity to think

about what really matters and be entertained the whole time."

*Luther's* controversial life story will headline FPA's second season at The Pearl Theatre in New York City this fall.

"Many treatments of Martin Luther end with his famous 'Here I stand,' speech. They avoid the divisiveness of some of his late life choices that carried huge consequences. We chose to look at both," Max said.

"We also created a supernatural after-life setting for the play," Max continued. "It emphasizes that 'division is the work of the Father of lies' and that 'He who is in me is greater than he who is in the world.'"



**"HUGELY MOVING"**  
**WASHINGTON POST**

**"TREMENDOUSLY DRAMATIC!"**  
**DC THEATRE SCENE**



The heart of *Martin Luther on Trial* is that ‘our battle is not against flesh and blood but powers and principalities in dark places.’ This could be the most important work of theatre that FPA has ever produced.”

## THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS IN LONDON

After two years of deliberation and negotiations Fellowship for Performing Arts will make its international debut at the Park Theatre in London when Max takes the stage as C.S. Lewis’ iconic Senior Tempter—His Abysmal Sublimity Screwtape in *The Screwtape Letters*. Prior to that, he will be in New York for a two-week tune-up before FPA’s first foray overseas.

“Playing Screwtape in London is a dream come true,” Max said as he anticipates his five-week, 35-performance run in one of the great theatrical cities in the world.



Max McLean as C.S. Lewis



PARK  
200

8 Dec – 7 Jan

— Times

Evenings  
Tue – Sat 19.30

Matinees  
Thu & Sat 15.00

— Prices

Previews £18.50  
Standard £29.50-£20

— Bookings

See website for  
ticket details and  
special offers –  
[ParkTheatre.co.uk](http://ParkTheatre.co.uk)

— Follow us

Twitter: @ParkTheatre  
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Recommended  
for ages 13+

Fellowship for Performing Arts Max McLean, Founder & Artistic Director  
in association with Park Theatre present the UK Premiere of

C.S. Lewis

## The Screwtape Letters

Adapted for the stage  
by Max McLean and Jeffrey Fiske

Set in an eerily stylish office in Hell, one of Satan’s senior tempters, Screwtape, schemes meticulously to capture the soul of an unsuspecting human on earth. In the London premiere of the smash New York hit, this stage adaptation of the C. S. Lewis classic novel creates a morally inverted universe that reveals unseen spiritual powers and principles in humorous, vivid and surprising ways.

“In a humorous and lively stage adaptation...the Devil has rarely been given his due more perceptively.”

The New York Times

“Wickedly Witty... It is, if I may say so, One Hell of a Good Show!”

The Wall Street Journal

“A Fine, Funny, Thoughtful production... Consistently Pointed and Amusing.”

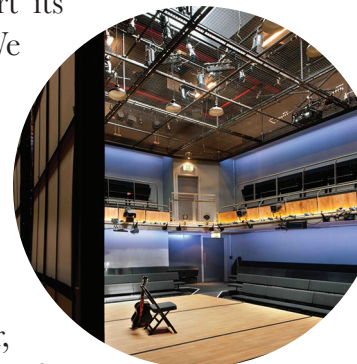
The New Yorker

The above spread is taken from London’s Park Theatre’s 2016-17 Season brochure.

London’s *Guardian* newspaper called the newly built Park Theatre “a stunning playhouse.” Its addition to London’s community of theatres was joyously celebrated by such luminaries as Sir Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart, Tom Stoppard and Benedict Cumberbatch.

“The London acting community turned out in force to support its construction,” Max said. “We are thrilled to work with the Park Theatre’s Artistic Director Jez Bond, noted West End Producer Lee Menzies and FPA’s Executive Producer Ken Denison of Aruba Productions. Together, we’ll bring the wit and wisdom of C.S. Lewis’ most notorious character, Screwtape, to the Park Theatre’s stage in London.”

What wonderful opportunities are in store for FPA in the second half of 2016! And it is only through partnership with our Fellowship Circle of friends that FPA is able to produce theatre with excellence from a Christian worldview for diverse audiences—across America and, soon, across the Atlantic! ■





# AN EMPTY SEAT...AND MUCH MORE...FILLED

*For one agnostic, C.S. Lewis' journey to faith became a journey for her, too.*

In Fellowship for Performing Arts' new production, *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert*, Max McLean takes audiences on Lewis' journey of faith—from vigorous debunker of Christianity to his eventual conversion.

But for many audience members—*Most Reluctant Convert* becomes a personal journey.

"I was in the back row of the theatre with my wife and daughter," said Executive Coach Johnny Karls, who looks for opportunities to share his faith. "There was an empty seat next to me."

A young woman—in her 20s, bright, smart—filled the seat.

"After the show, I struck up a conversation with her," Johnny said. "She'd come because the play was recommended; she didn't know anything about Lewis or what to expect."

"I'm not a Christian, far from it," the young woman said. "I'm an agnostic. I live with my boyfriend, and he's an atheist. This is something we've been wrestling with, and this show has really made an impact."

"I encouraged her to pursue truth and complimented her for being intellectually honest just as Lewis had been. I could sense the Holy Spirit at work," Johnny said.

After the show, in the lobby, Johnny saw the woman again.

"I suggested she talk to Max," he said. "They connected, and Max was able to recommend she read *Mere Christianity* to continue what the play had started. This woman came in as if she had the world figured out. After the show, I was watching her melt before my eyes. Without question, that night will impact her life."

It is to provide opportunities for moments of engagement like this that Fellowship for Performing Arts was formed—to see what can happen when we create the best theatre we can, do so from a Christian worldview and present it to diverse audiences. It's our Fellowship Circle of supporters that makes this possible, and we thank you for your partnership in this mission. ■

"I'm not a Christian, far from it."





## A CHRISTIAN VOICE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Recently I read an article in the Catholic journal *First Things* by art critic Randy Boyagoda lamenting the almost complete absence of a serious Christian voice in art and literature. Boyagoda's first sentence was quite provocative:

*"I'm sick of Flannery O'Connor. I'm also sick of Walker Percy, G. K. Chesterton, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, T.S. Eliot, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dostoevsky. These writers brilliantly attest to literature's place in...sustaining an appreciation of human life's value and purpose that corresponds to our inherent longing for the good, the true and the beautiful. But what else do they have in common? They're all dead"*

The author goes on to reflect that contemporary art is *"shorn of any reference to religiously informed understandings."* And that this *"represents a marked break from centuries of literary production informed by Christian beliefs, traditions and culture."* Today's elite arts institutions operate from a viewpoint of *"secular progressivism"* that is *"deaf, indifferent or antagonistic to religiously informed ideas."*

What drives Fellowship for Performing Arts' mission is an attempt to enter this contemporary world with art from the Christian worldview. In a culture where art and storytelling play a huge role in how we live, there ought to be a counterbalance to the *"polemically narcissistic, aggressively atheistic vision"* where there are *"no more masters, no more masterpieces."* There ought to be an alternative to artistic voices who counsel us to *"simply look into a mirror and...increase our love of ourselves, because there's no one else that matters."* At FPA, our desire is to be that alternative; to create art that engages the moral imagination by appeal-

ing to the heart's longing for virtue and character, to something greater than ourselves. "God has set eternity in our hearts." (Eccl. 3:11)

That's our mission; to put forth a vision of Christianity through artistic expression that is imaginative, multi-layered and convicting. We believe the imagination serves up the raw material of what we think about. Until an idea or worldview captures the imagination, a person is unlikely to engage the rational effort required to evoke intentional change.

Art hints at the deeper structures of reality—the supernatural world that is beyond our material world. Romans 1 tells us that we each have "the knowledge of God within us. But we suppress it." Art helps to "unsuppress" it. It helps people to see the Christian worldview as a legitimate connection to the supernatural reality that deep down we all know exists.

The acceptance bar for creating art like this is high. When it becomes known that a work

is rooted in a Christian ethos the bar gets higher. There's immediate pushback.

Defenses go up. That is why we must do our work in a way that, as C.S. Lewis says, "steals past the watchful dragons" of contemporary culture.

This requires us to execute at the highest level of excellence we can, and that is costly. Our Fellowship Circle of supporters clearly understands it. In fact, I was humbled and gratified when one donor offered a \$50,000 matching

gift for our spring appeal letter and it was quickly matched by many, many generous partners.

To the arts world Christians are seen as culture critics; not culture makers. The accepted orthodoxy is that Christians have nothing to add to the cultural conversation. With your help we will continue to provide thoughtful, provocative, multi-layered stories that capture the imagination and leave room for the Holy Spirit to do His work. ■



**TO THE ARTS WORLD  
CHRISTIANS ARE SEEN AS  
CULTURE CRITICS;  
NOT CULTURE MAKERS.**

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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