

FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

WINTER 2018

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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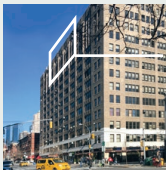
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WE'VE MOVED!

FPA has a new permanent
home in New York's
Theatre District.



630 Ninth Avenue
Suite 1409
New York
New York 10036

SHOW SCHEDULE

C.S. LEWIS

ON STAGE

THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT

WASHINGTON, D.C. • ORLANDO • MINNEAPOLIS
MILWAUKEE • GRAND RAPIDS
SANTA FE • ASHEVILLE • BOSTON

MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL

WASHINGTON, D.C. • INDIANAPOLIS
CHARLOTTE • ATLANTA
LA/ORANGE COUNTY • CHICAGO

Check FPAtheatre.com
for times and venues.

ON THE ROAD WITH C.S. LEWIS

*'The Most Reluctant Convert'
Tours Nationwide in 2018*

Throughout 2018 Fellowship for Performing Arts' production of *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert* takes to the stage in leading performance venues across the country with FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean in the title role.

What is it about C.S. Lewis that audiences find so attractive?

FPA begins each promotional campaign to a new city with the simple message "C.S. Lewis Is Coming," and interest surges immediately. Fifty years after his death, his books are more popular now than ever. His lectures on medieval and Renaissance literature made him the most popular professor at Oxford and Cambridge in his day. While his Narnia children's stories have enchanted millions for generations.

"Lewis had one of the great minds of the 20th century," Max said. "And he applied his formidable wit to engage audiences about his own experience of converting from atheism to Christianity."

It was not an easy journey. As a child, he lost his mother to cancer, had a strained relationship with his father and was extremely clumsy with his hands. As a result, he concluded that "the universe in the main was a rather regrettable institution." He believed religion was invented to explain things that terrified primitive man. And after witnessing the waste of life in the trenches of France during World War I, he concluded that "either

Continued inside



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SHADOWLANDS, FPA AND NEW YORK CITY

Fellowship for Performing Arts is no stranger to producing in New York City—in 2010 *The Screwtape Letters* ran over 300 performances at the Westside Theatre in the theatre district. But three years ago, we launched a new phase in our history—producing full theatrical seasons in New York each year. Our third season featured the first New York revival of the Tony-nominated play *Shadowlands*.

A legitimate question might be, “Why New York?”

For years, FPA has toured its shows successfully, presenting them in leading theatrical venues from Seattle to Miami, from Boston to San Diego and most points in between.

“Our decision to produce regularly in New York city comes out of the reality that this is where we live and work,” said FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. “I live in a small apartment in the Broadway theatre district. Our new offices in the Film Center Building are also in the theatre district.

“Living and working in New York’s theatre district is essential to our work. It brings us in daily contact with a community with huge cultural and social influence. Within the buildings where we live and work are hundreds of world-class artists, designers and theatrical companies creating art at the highest levels and exporting it across America and the world. They make us step up our game.”

And FPA’s presence here helps us fulfill our mission. We produce Christian worldview theatre for diverse audiences, and New York offers an ideal opportunity for that.

In 2015-16, we produced four shows over four months, including *Screwtape*, the New York premiere of *The Great Divorce* and workshop productions of *Martin Luther on Trial* and *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert*.

We followed that with three productions over seven months in 2016-17 with a return of *Screwtape* and full productions of *Luther* and *Convert*. And in 2017-18, we produced *Shadowlands*.

“Consistently producing in New York has helped establish us part of the theatrical landscape,” Max said. “We are a member of the Off-Broadway League and are regularly reviewed by leading critics. The Acorn Theatre on Theatre Row has become our producing home.”

In fact, in a review that praised FPA’s production of *Shadowlands*, the *National Review* said, “Fellowship for Performing Arts, the group behind this production, is a countercultural force.”

“Not sure the critic did us any favors in New York by calling us that,” Max said. “But I appreciate the recognition that we present a view of the world that is largely missing in the mainstream theatre scene. We want to fill that space with thoughtful, multi-layered theatre that captures

the imagination, entertains our audiences and leaves room for the Holy Spirit to do His work.”

We’ll be back in New York next fall, although the work we’ll produce is not selected yet, and FPAtheatre.com is the best place to stay abreast of that.

In the meantime, we continue touring extensively nationwide. *Convert* is on tour now, and *Martin Luther on Trial* starts touring again this summer.

“It’s the support of our Fellowship Circle that allows us to do our work in New York, across the country and even internationally,” Max said.

“FELLOWSHIP FOR
PERFORMING ARTS...
IS A
COUNTER-
CULTURAL
FORCE.”

- *National Review*



A National Tour for *Martin Luther on Trial*

Following a rousing response when it toured in 2017, *Martin Luther on Trial* takes to the road again with a 2018 national tour planned for Washington, D.C., Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Charlotte, Atlanta, LA/Orange County and Chicago. Check FPAtheatre.com for the latest information.

“*Martin Luther on Trial* generated the most electric reaction from audiences wherever it played last year,” said FPA Founder and Artistic Director Max McLean. “It’s an amazing evening of theatre with mind-boggling elements such as a trial sanctioned by God at Lucifer’s request, a reenactment of Satan’s rebellion and his failed enlistment of Michael the Archangel! All this along with a thorough examination of Luther’s controversial life. And did I mention how funny it is?”

The work is staged as a trial in the afterlife for the soul of *Martin Luther*. Satan is the prosecutor with Luther’s beloved wife, Katarina, defending and St. Peter on the bench. Witnesses include Adolf Hitler, Sigmund Freud, Rabbi Josel, St. Paul and Martin Luther King, Jr. We even ask Pope Francis to make an appearance in the play. It’s a witty, provocative exploration of one of history’s most explosive personalities.

“I am thrilled by how strongly Luther’s struggle connects with audiences,” Max said. “Regardless of preconceptions about Luther, patrons described the play as fair, intense, thought-provoking and funny.”

Sharlyn “Sam” Stare of Cincinnati agreed. Sam purchased 100 tickets to distribute to an extensive network of friends including international students at a nearby college. She even organized a pre-show



Martin Luther on Trial unfolds as a fantastical, thought-provoking and funny trial in the afterlife with the soul of Martin Luther hanging in the balance.

**“MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL
GENERATED THE MOST ELECTRIC
REACTION FROM AUDIENCES.”**

event at a nearby restaurant with a Luther scholar. Here is what she reported some of those who attended said about the play:

“So thought provoking that I couldn’t take it all in, would love to see it again.”

“I was overwhelmed.”

“Intense. Humorous. I learned so very much. It was amazing grace personified.”

“I sensed the grace, mercy and patience of the Lord on Martin Luther’s life.”

“The Chinese graduate students said they had never seen anything like the play before.”

“*Luther* is powerfully meeting FPA’s mission to produce Christian worldview theatre that engages a diverse audience,” Max said. “I’m so looking forward to taking the production on the road again this year.”

Of course, it’s FPA’s Fellowship Circle of supporters who make our work possible. Thank you for helping us take *Martin Luther on Trial* to new audiences in 2018.

ON THE ROAD *Continued from front*

there was no god behind the universe, a god who is indifferent to good and evil or worse an evil god.”

This changed while reading George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton among others. Friends such as

“I love this role,” Max said. “It’s a joy to tell Lewis’ story. The production has shown a remarkable ability to engage people no matter where they are on their own spiritual journey.”

Owen Barfield, Neville Coghill and J.R.R. Tolkien influenced him. Slowly he came to believe that naturalistic atheism originating out of unexplainable laws of physics and biochemistry could not account for logic and reason bringing forth indisputable truth or that our moral and aesthetic judgments are valid and meaningful.

This led first to a philosophical theism and then into believing that “God is God.” In Lewis’ case this bordered on Judaism: “My religion was like that of

the Jews.” Believing in God forced him to come to terms with the wickedness of his own heart. Within him he saw “a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds.”

The last step was to come to terms with Jesus. Did God become man? Is the Incarnation true? Is Jesus really the Son of God? That final step came as he was riding in the sidecar of a motorcycle on the way to the zoo. “When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” he said. “When we reached the zoo, I did!”

Lewis’ faith journey is both intellectually satisfying and delightfully entertaining. That is why *The Most Reluctant Convert* sits at the heart of FPA’s



FPA GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

‘Most Reluctant Convert’ on College Campuses

An exciting new chapter in the life of Fellowship for Performing Arts is opening with performances of *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert* on major university campuses.

“Lewis has long been popular with college students who enjoy his wit and insight and are challenged by his clear presentation of why Christianity is plausible,” said Max McLean, FPA’s founder and artistic director, who portrays Lewis.

And this “new” chapter actually picks up an FPA narrative from its earliest days. When Max was touring with *Mark’s Gospel* and *Genesis*, he made college campus tour stops. Now, going back to school, FPA is working to bring *Convert* to UC-Berkeley, Princeton, Co-

lumbia, Brown, Dartmouth and Duke.

“It is a logistical challenge to produce a theatre production on campus,” Max said. “Most outside events are guest lecturers who require only a light and a mic. We require a fully-equipped theatre or performing arts venue with an experienced crew who can load in our sets, lights, sound and projection designs in an eight-hour window.”

The few venues that can accommodate us are fully booked, so we have had to postponed two spring events (Berkeley and Brown) to the fall for this reason.

“This generation of college students is described as the least Christian generation in American history,” Max said.

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“We want to attract a diverse audience with a ‘C.S. Lewis is coming to campus’ campaign and introduce them to Lewis’ engaging personality and profound faith struggle. His spiritual journey began as an Oxford undergrad.”

The generosity of FPA’s Fellowship Circle makes the *Convert* college tour possible. We so value your support of this new initiative and the opportunities it presents. To partner with FPA in the college tour, use the reply card enclosed with this newsletter, or visit FPAtheatre.com/support.



Post-show discussions at *Most Reluctant Convert* performances offer audience members the opportunity to process C.S. Lewis' spiritual journey with Max.

mission to produce theatre from a Christian worldview that engages a diverse audience.

"I love this role," Max said. "It's a joy to tell Lewis' story. The production has shown a remarkable ability to engage people no matter where they are on their own spiritual journey."

One woman wrote us to share that her son had recently declared himself an atheist. He accepted her invitation to see *Convert*.

"He really loved it and was the first person in the audience to ask a very deep, philosophical question during the Q&A after the production," she wrote.

"He saw it again in Columbus," Max said. "We chatted briefly afterwards, and I gave him my card and invited him to stay in touch to talk anytime he wanted."

This is why we are particularly excited to be returning to college campuses. (See story page 3.)

FPAtheatre.com is the best source for the latest on tour stops for *Convert*. Columbus, Nashville, Kansas City, New Orleans, Jacksonville and Houston have already hosted productions. And Washington, D.C., Orlando, Minneapolis and Milwaukee are up next.

Our Fellowship Circle of supporters makes the 2018 *Convert* tour possible.

"All of us at FPA are so grateful for your partnership," Max said. "Going on the road with C.S. Lewis is a privilege and a wonderful opportunity to engage the imaginations of our audiences."

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS & THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST *Continued from back*

is fine as long as you keep it to yourself."

One of FPA's convictions is that art and theatre provide wiggle room to express challenging ideas. Through the window of story, we can authentically address notions of God, atheism, world religions, the historicity of the gospels and the divinity of Christ within an engaging theatrical experience in the form of a brilliant man wrestling with the person of Christ.

We believe that a well-executed story helps folks see

the Christian worldview as a plausible connection to a supernatural reality that we all believe exists. And

if expressing the divinity of Jesus requires a brief departure from politically correct doctrine, a choice must be made.

Thank you for standing with us as we do this. In the theatre world, the accepted orthodoxy is that Christians have nothing to add to the cultural conversation. We beg to differ. With your help, we will continue to provide

thoughtful, provocative, multi-layered stories that capture the imagination of diverse audiences.



One of FPA's convictions is that
ART AND THEATRE provide wiggle room
to express **CHALLENGING IDEAS.**



Political Correctness and the Divinity of Christ

As FPA presents *The Most Reluctant Convert* to tens of thousands of people around the country, there is one moment in the play that attracts more attention than any other.

The moment comes after Lewis' conversion to theism but, "not Christianity. I knew nothing of the Incarnation. The God to whom I surrendered was not human." A few moments later, Lewis tells J.R.R. Tolkien that though he now believes in God, he is not a Christian because he "cannot believe something he does not understand. How can the life and death of someone else, whoever he was, 2,000 years ago help us here and now?"

To answer this question, Lewis had to read the gospels and come to terms with the outrageous claims Jesus made about himself. "That he always existed." "That he will come again to judge the world." "Before Abraham was, I AM." "I and the Father are one." These statements made by a mere man are patently ridiculous. This of course is the root of Lewis' famous Liar, Lunatic or Lord trilemma.

The controversial moment is set up when Lewis (quoting G.K. Chesterton) says that no "great, moral leader ever claimed to be God. Not Mohammed, not Plato or Moses or Buddha. Not one." Lewis reinforces the point by imagining a conversation with Buddha and Socrates and asking them if they were Brahma or Zeus. Each would have thought the question ludicrous.

Then Lewis poses the same hypothetical question

to Mohammed and asks, "Are you Allah?" He concludes that, "Mohammed would first tear his clothes, then cut your head off."

This comment has generated letters and emails encouraging me to take the line out. I decided to keep it in because Lewis did say it. It comes from an essay in *God in the Dock* called, *What are we to make of Jesus?* Second, theatre is by nature provocative. Third, the historical record supports Lewis' assertion. The Prophet Mohammed was a 6th century world-shaping moral leader; a warrior general who vigorously protected the integrity of Allah.

The reason I kept it in is because the play is about the roadblocks on the way to a brilliant man's conversion from atheism to Christianity. At this point in the play, Lewis recognizes that the Incarnation

of the Son of God is the singular point that separates Christianity from all other religions.

The assertion that God became a man is offensive to Jews and Muslims. Mohammed would have found the claim that God became a man blasphemous. The gospel narrative points to this assertion as the reason for Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion.

There is another reason for the reaction. Our culture wants to mitigate religious differences. Hence an argument like the one Lewis makes counters the notion that all religions are basically the same. Relativism makes it possible for us to say, "You have your truth. I have mine. And whatever you believe

Continued inside

...the Incarnation of the Son of God is the singular point that separates Christianity from all other religions.

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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