

God's Love Makes Beautiful Things Happen



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LAUGH IF YOU LOVE JESUS

Church for All Nations Lutheran, an imposing Victorian edifice on West 57th Street in Manhattan, is not what it seems. Outside, the architecture, railings, even the old-fashioned letter board listing service times, suggest words like "stodgy," "uptight," "somber."

What's going on inside, however, can only be described as innovative, surprising, and (starting in two weeks) – hysterical.

CFAN is the home of Theater Forum, a seven-year-old ministry with a startling new concept: reaching out to performing artists by performing with them. Theater Forum started in 1999 as a venue for Christian and unchurched theater artists to work together as peers, creating opportunities to show God's love and share the Gospel. Executive Producer Ellen Seltz explains: "A wise man once said that 'imagination is the eye of the soul.' We want the world to see Jesus more clearly, so we're reaching out to the most imaginative people we know – artists, actors, writers, directors. **We're in the middle of New York City, a global center of culture and media. If we can reach artists with the Gospel, touch their lives with God's love, their influence will flow out to the whole world.**"

Seltz knows firsthand about the power of this so-called "relational ministry" – after acting in Theater Forum's 2001 production *Interference 10.5*, she married the technical director, Andrew Seltz. She states, "One friendship can change your whole life! That's the point of the work we're doing here. We're serving artists by showcasing their talent and making genuine friendships."

Theater Forum is expanding this year from one show per season to two. Their first production of 2006, Lanford Wilson's *Angel's Fall*, made a splash in the off-off Broadway community with its powerful staging and memorable performances. This fall, the company is changing gears to present *BAD DOG* by Rebecca J. Stokes, a surreal comedy that takes us inside a quirky world of dogs and the people who love them madly – and we mean madly. "I describe this play as a cross between "Best in Show" and "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown," says Seltz. "If you love your pets, if you've ever had a relationship drive you crazy, if you just love to laugh – you're going to love this show."

The "Forum" discussions for which the company is named, allow audiences to interact with the actors, production team and guest speakers. Forums will be held November 5, 6, 12, 13 and 19.

BAD DOG is directed by Russell Taylor, named "Outstanding Director" by the 2006 Backstage Bistro Awards, and features Sarah Gavitt, Annette Guarrasi, Randy Harmon, Tarek Khan, and Evan O'Brian.

BAD DOG runs October 27 – November 20 at 417 West 57th Street in Manhattan. Fridays-Saturdays 8pm, Sundays pm, Mondays 7pm. Tickets are \$18 (\$15 students/seniors) and may be purchased online at www.theatermania.com, by phone at 212-352-3101, or at the door. For reservations or more information, call 212-696-6467 or visit www.cfan.net.

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