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**"FINDING SANCTUARY"**

Upstart theater company Theater Forum will present Lanford Wilson's Tony-nominated drama, *Angels Fall*, opening April 21.

Lanford Wilson is widely referred to as "America's Chekhov", and producer Ellen Seltz believes *Angels Fall* reinforces that description. "On the one hand, you have compelling characters, drawn with such warmth and attention to detail that it's not enough to call them 'three-dimensional'. They're real people – they have eight or nine dimensions, at least. On the other hand, you have a lyrical sense of symmetry that transcends realism – these characters are not stereotypes, but archetypes."

This symmetry is reflected in every aspect of the production. One theme in particular stands out - "Sanctuary". A disillusioned college professor uses the word to describe his treasured Valium. All the characters are seeking shelter from a deadly radiation spill. And the venue itself is the Victorian Gothic sanctuary of Church for All Nations Lutheran (CFAN), on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. Technical Director Andrew Seltz admits: "It's not easy to turn a big marble barn like this, in the middle of Manhattan, into an intimate theater. And then turn that theater into a little adobe mission in the middle of nowhere. We're hanging acoustic blankets, drapes, blocking the windows. It will be quite a feat, and we're fortunate the church is supporting us so wholeheartedly."

Even though Theater Forum is a program of CFAN, designed to support artists, working on such an ambitious production hasn't always been easy. Co-producer Ann Bedtke, also the church's administrator, spends a lot of time juggling space bookings. "It's new – it's a change, and change can be uncomfortable. But the congregation and the pastor are enthusiastic about this ministry, and they're willing to be uncomfortable to help it."

Will all that enthusiasm pay off? Ellen Seltz gives the company's definition of success: "If we make good theater, we will have given our artists a worthwhile experience. If we make good theater, word will get out and people will come see us. I think we're making great theater."

*Angels Fall* is directed by Russell Taylor, named "Outstanding Director" by the 2006 Backstage Bistro Awards, and features Kathryn Barnhardt\*, Jeff Farber\*, Frankie Ferrara, June Flanagan\*, Tim Moore\*, and Andrew Reaves (\* member, Actors' Equity Association).

*Angels Fall* runs April 21-May 7 at 417 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. Fridays-Saturdays 8pm, Sundays 3pm, Mondays 7pm. Talkbacks follow the Sunday and Monday performances. Tickets are \$18 (\$15 students/seniors) and may be purchased online at [www.theatermania.com](http://www.theatermania.com), by phone at 212-352-3101, or at the door. For reservations or more information, call 718-907-3470 or visit [www.cfan.net](http://www.cfan.net).