

THE CONTEMPORARY COMPANION

MAGDALENE

BY MARK ST. GERMAIN



DIRECTED BY ELENA ARAOZ

A WORLD PREMIERE

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for *Magdalene* by Mark St. Germain

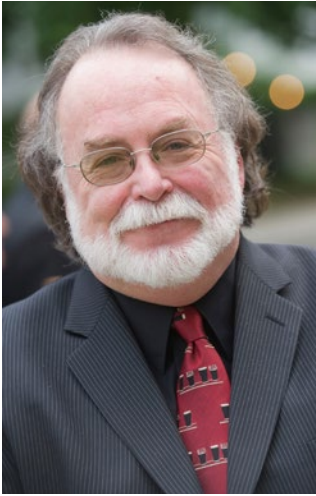
CREATED BY ALLISON BACKUS, DRAMATURG

THE CONTEMPORARY COMPANION is a dramaturgical component designed to enhance your **CATF** experience. We've designed Volumes to act as counterparts to the five BOLD, NEW PLAYS, in this year's Festival. You can sample, survey, or study these online offerings—with no fear of spoilers!

Each companion will give you—

- An introduction to the creative teams
- An exploration of the world of the plays
- A deep-dive into the themes and conversations surrounding the plays

Come and join us as we **thinktheater** and **talktheater** at CATF in 2025.



MARK ST. GERMAIN has written the plays *Freud's Last Session* (Off Broadway Alliance Award), *Forgiving Typhoid Mary* (*Time Magazine's* "Year's Ten Best"), *Becoming Dr. Ruth*, and *Scott and Hem in the Garden of Allah*. With Randy Courts, he has written the musicals *The Gifts of the Magi*, *Johnny Pye and the Fool Killer*, and *Jack's Holiday*. Mark's musical *Stand by Your Man, The Tammy Wynette Story* was created for Nashville's Ryman Theater. His play *The God Committee* has been made into a film with the same name. He directed and produced the documentary *My Dog, An Unconditional Love Story* featuring Richard Gere and Glenn Close, among others. Television credits include *The Cosby Show* and Dick Wolf's *Crime and Punishment*. His books include the comedic memoir *Walking Evil* and the thriller *The Mirror Man*. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild, the Writers Guild of America East, and an Associate Artist at the Barrington Stage Company. Barrington Stage named their second stage "The St. Germain Stage."

INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT **MARK ST. GERMAIN**

Conducted and edited by Sharon J. Anderson

CATF: You have said that you like to write about historical figures because you "love the idea of spending time with fascinating people." And you described your play about a conversation between C.S. Lewis and Freud as "a schizophrenic ping-pong match . . ." Is this what is going on between Mary and Peter in this play?

MSG: In terms of "ping pong," yes. I have to put myself in both of their heads. It can be difficult when you believe that one person is more on track than the other. So, you have to try to keep them as evenly matched as far as possible. I think it's pretty obvious in the play who I think is more on track.

You have said, "Anybody that I am interested in has to be inspirational in these times we live in." What are those times?

The times that we live in are certainly darker to me than they have been. We're in an age where a play like this could have little likelihood of being done because more people might think that it's controversial. For example, it's not something that could play in the Kennedy Center right now.

What's fascinating about Mary Magdalene to you?

I think she was "mansplained" forever, and mansplained away so she didn't exist. Then, when she did pop her head up, she was a prostitute. That was a way that men could have power over her. It's very clear in the Bible that she was the person who had money to help out Christ and the apostles. She seems to be explaining things—and I'm not talking about just the canonical gospels, but also the Gnostic gospels. She always explains things to people, and when I read through the Bible while researching this, the amount of times Christ has to stop and explain himself at least twice is amazing. He has to argue with people. With Mary Magdalene, he didn't have to do that every time he had a statement. The disciples don't seem to have a clue.

In your play, Peter comes to apologize to Mary; to ask for forgiveness.

Peter may have had some political reasons for doing this. Here is somebody coming into the apostle camp saying, "I'm an apostle and Christ made me one when I was struck off my horse by lightning, and now I'm going to make a big difference here."

The first thing the disciples did was send him out of Jerusalem, so I think from then on, Peter was very worried about his place. So, visiting Mary would be a logical way for him to get a stamp of approval. Even if all of the disciples were all behind him—which I imagined they might be—he knew that if he had that little “check mark” next to his name, it would be better for him.

What did you know about Mary and Peter before you wrote this play?

I went to Christian grammar school, high school, college, and graduate school. I had some training with the Christian Brothers, who were dedicated to education.

What triggered your writing of this play?

As early as grammar school, I remember thinking, “Why aren’t women priests? It really doesn’t make any sense.” Of course, there is never a logical reason for it. What cemented it for me was when my daughter was born—she’s 38 now—it became a personal issue to me. How dare you tell me that my daughter can’t be a priest? Should she want to, she would be wonderful. The inequity was there. A group of men was not going to be happy with somebody like Mary, whom Christ obviously adored, so they told and approved their own stories.

Mary finds Peter irritating, exasperating, and basically believes that he and the disciples had, as you said, no clue about Jesus. Is her antagonism towards Peter an expression of your antagonism towards the current “organized” Christian faith and maybe all organized faiths?

I don’t think it’s an active antagonism, but I certainly have the beliefs that Mary has, so yes, I share her frustration. I would be the squeaky wheel in the church if I was part of it because I am so unhappy with so much of it.

In *Magdalene*, Mary says, “Faith isn’t faith, Peter until it’s stronger than your doubt.”

I always have some doubt in everything.

How does it help you?

It doesn’t help or hurt. It is, however, an annoyance.

Eliza Griswold, in a *New Yorker* article (4/19/25) entitled, “Mistaking Mary Magdalene” describes Mary as the patron of outcasts who embodies uncertainty.

I’m not certain what they meant by uncertainty. “The patron of outcasts”—absolutely. I think Mary became very single-focused. If she was interested in being part of the church franchise, she could have had her own followers, but she never made that effort. She never made an active play for developing her stream of Christianity, so she just went on believing what she believed.

At the beginning of your play, you describe Mary as a woman who’s known great love and great tragedy. The “great love” is . . . and the “great tragedy” is . . .

Her great love is her love of Christ, and her great tragedy is to be there and watch him die in front of her eyes.

You describe Peter as an ordinary man struggling to fulfill extraordinary expectations; what extraordinary expectations?

Expectations that he was going to be able in any way to be a successor of Christ on earth. I don’t know what Jesus had in mind when he talked about his church and how literal he was. If you always took your marching orders from Christ and all of a sudden, you’re taking them from Peter, it’s a little less dramatic and more challenging for an ordinary man.

About Jesus and money, Mary says this in your play: “He never wanted a building or even a “home.” A home is an anchor—it becomes as needy as a child. You have to care for it with time and monies that can be better spent on real children and people just as needy. How can you ask money from the people who don’t have it?”

The amount of treasures that the Vatican has even in its basement is obscene. I remember taking a tour

and being told very proudly, “Oh, this is all nothing. There is so much more in storage.” I thought, “Why so much in storage? Why can’t things be sold? Why can’t you make something good out of them?” Once the church ties itself to a place, it is then responsible for the upkeep of the place and to make the place grander and grander and grander, you need more and more money, and where does it come from? Usually from the people who don’t have it.

In your play, Mary tells Peter that women and men now work as equals and the voices of women are welcome in leadership.

That’s in the play, but I don’t see it happening today.

What is truth?

Truth has to be an accurate representation or idea that is above challenge.

Why do you think Pontius Pilate asked Jesus that question?

I think he asked it to pass the buck. It was his way of saying, “Get him out of my house and take him somewhere else.”

Emily Dickinson said, “Tell the truth but tell it slant.”

Isn’t that great? It’s subversive, and I think that’s what humor does, too. I hope that in this play, I’m telling the truth but telling it slant.

What kind of conversations do you want audience members to have after seeing this play?

The conversations will be different based on how versed they are in the biblical characters. I had two large readings, and one was with a predominantly Jewish audience that really went well. They didn’t know a lot of these stories, but were accepting of it. I haven’t gotten any direct antagonism, but it’s only a start. Who knows what will happen? But I do stand behind Mary’s beliefs in this play.

What do you think of this line—a recurring theme—from Samuel Beckett’s novel, *The Unnamable*: “Words are all we have.”

Words are our only way of communicating our thoughts and feelings to another person; the only way to listen to them and get their thoughts and feelings. It does make two-way communication possible, otherwise life is a monologue. But in terms of words as answers . . . can anyone make a pronouncement on what life should be or if there is an afterlife? Or what I can do to lead a good life? It’s not something somebody can fully answer. Sometimes words aren’t there and, in many cases, they should be deeds anyway.

A CONVERSATION WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER HAROLD F. BURGESS II

What initially drew you to a career as a lighting designer?

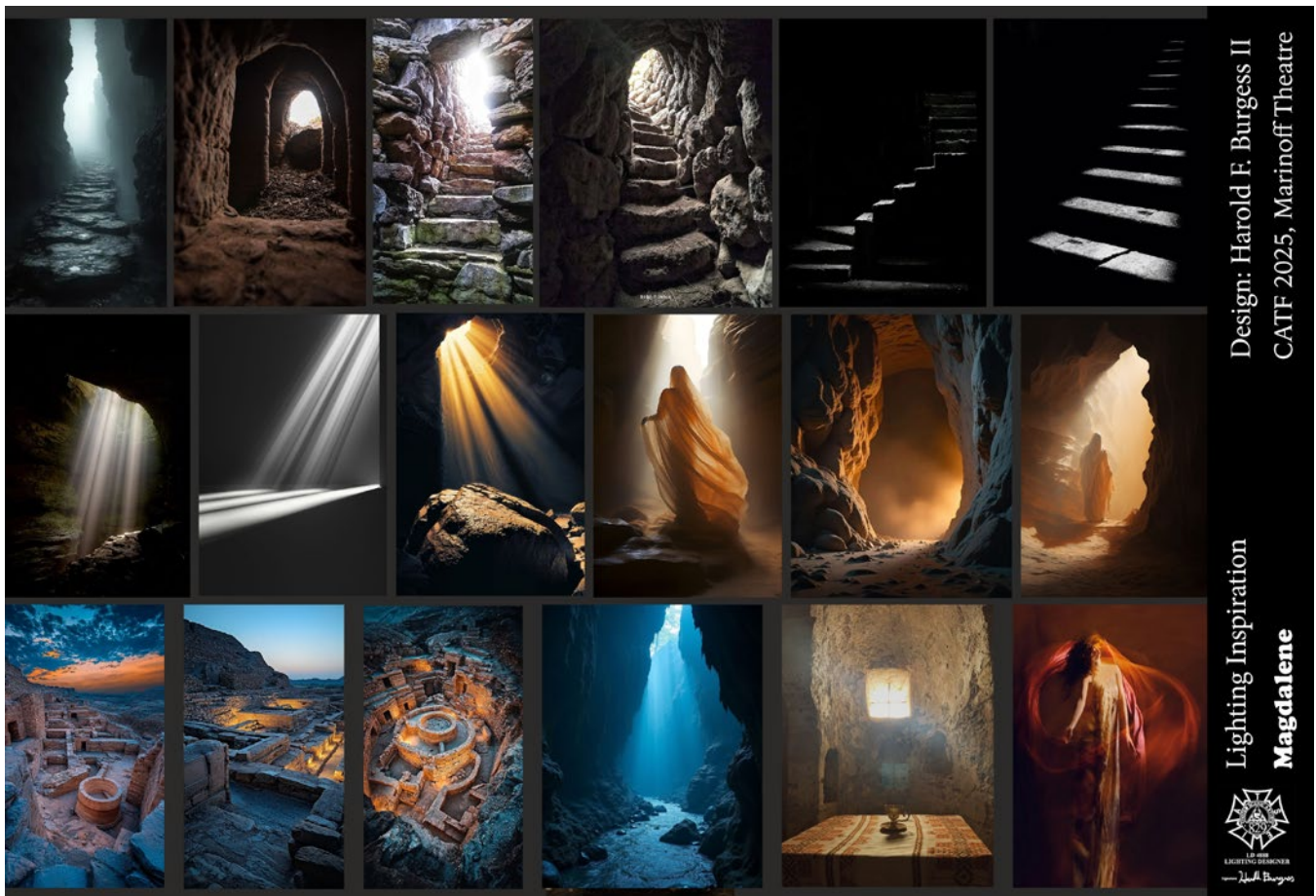
I think my pathway to theater is not very unique: it began with my participation in high school productions where someone needed to “light the stage,” so I thought, *that seems easy enough...* I quickly learned in college how very complex theater is and how perplexing lighting can be until you really have a handle on the aesthetics of light as a medium. And even now, after 25+ years in this industry, lighting is still perplexing at times, but that’s what keeps me humble and always open to learning new ways to see and experience theater through my design work.

One of the basic tenets of lighting design is to render light such that the audience can see the action onstage as well as hear the words spoken (or sung) by the performers. To better comprehend the visual

and auditory storytelling on stage requires lighting to direct focus and render mood and atmosphere in a manner that embraces the conceptual and thematic ideas intrinsic to the play and the given production. At its core, lighting design is the adhesive that bonds the other design and performance elements as one. I’ve always greatly respected this aspect of lighting and the responsibility that comes with it.

Generally, what is your process like? How do you prepare when starting on a new production?

If done well, good lighting design appears effortless and sometimes imperceptible when intricately woven into the other visual elements, staging, and performance. My general rule of thumb is to approach each design with a sense of curiosity (every production, even if of the same play, will be different), humility (the success of the previous design has no bearing on the outcome of the next),





and desire to support the other areas of design (costume, scenic, sound, projections) and elevate actors' performances without upstaging any of them. Almost every production has a pivotal moment (or a few) where the lighting should be visceral and "noticed," however, most of the time, I want to be sure that the design plays just underneath the performance, kind of like layers of underpainting found in fine art. No one is coming to see a play for the lighting; their expectation is to experience a live performance where they can see and hear a compelling story unfold before them. My goal is to always meet that expectation so that audiences leave talking about the performance and production as a singular experience, and hopefully, they will return for the next production.

Beyond reading the script and taking some initial notes about general ideas with respect to time, location, mood, environment, and style, my process

typically includes the collection of research material that consists of imagery (photos, paintings, sculpture, architecture, etc.) that might convey a particular mood, environment, texture, color or abstraction that "feels right" for the conceptual ideas within the play. Interwoven between reading the play and research are the all-important conversations with the director and design/production team, which is where I feel much of the "magic" of theater-making truly begins.

Do you recall what your feelings and impressions were upon reading Mark St. Germain's *Magdalene* for the first time?

Mark is a very gifted writer and storyteller whose deeply nuanced characters reflect the depth of his research and intellectual curiosity to find what makes them relatable, authentic, and human. Although I'm not a deeply spiritual person, reading this play felt very personal in seeing two characters

really grapple with the weight of their past while working to understand their differences in the present. The play certainly goes much deeper, both symbolically and emotionally, but it is a story that feels very close and tangible; it builds toward a sense of unexpected realization that I think will resonate very well with audiences.

What has served as inspiration during the design process?

Inspiration comes in so many forms and unexpected places in my experience as a designer. The play itself is, of course, perhaps the most important source, but I also draw upon the conversation with the director and designers, and supplemental research images to convey possibilities for the quality of light (color, texture, directionality, shape, intensity). Lastly, the curiosity factor I spoke of earlier really comes into play during the tech process, where I often discover new ideas or versions of an existing idea that help to propel the design forward in ways that I had not fully imagined or anticipated. For me, this is typically the most challenging and rewarding part of the entire process.

Can you share a bit about your collaboration process with the other designers on this production? Were there certain considerations that needed to be accounted for regarding the set design and the costumes?

Collaboration is key in any process, as so many ideas come about in conversations with the director, dramaturg, other designers, stage managers, and technicians. These conversations really begin with and are guided by the script, which also drives so much of the decision-making with respect to supporting the visual narrative. David Barber (Scenic Design) and I had a few early conversations with Elena Araoz (director) about the scope of the environment of the play, which is within a cave-like setting near the Sea of Galilee. The action of the play takes place in an isolated, candlelit room with very austere furnishings. The visual look of the show audiences will encounter is not meant to be a literal

translation of a cave; rather, it serves in part as a metaphor for a place of privacy, a place to retreat and reflect. The palette and texture of the costumes by Christopher Vergara will be particularly impactful from a lighting perspective as a continuation of the sparse scenic elements. The finely curated choices of silhouette and textiles in Christopher's design will aid me immensely in the composition of light through tone, texture, and volume that best complement the intersection of scenery, costumes, and performance.

As you mentioned, *Magdalene* is set in a cave, which Mary has made her home. How are you planning to depict this cloistered environment through lighting?

At the time of this interview, we've not yet begun the technical rehearsals, so I can only speculate on how this will actually be realized. The beginning of the play begins with Peter making his way down into the cave to find Mary—this will all be a visual journey supported by light with some potentially unconventional staging to suggest verticality and solitude. When Peter arrives and is greeted by Mary, the lighting will be suggestive of a cocooned space that is very intimate yet not completely closed in. There's a start anyhow...

Can you share a bit about your collaboration process with the director of *Magdalene*, Elena Araoz?

This is our first collaboration, so as with any relationship, it takes some time to develop a common language for how we perceive the show and its design, and stylistically, how we work as practitioners of theater. Our conversations around this play really stem from addressing some of the particular aspects of the script that impact staging and choices in how light can help render and support particular ideas. Elena is really engaged in the process of discovery, which, to me, is always a good sign that we will work through multiple possibilities that eventually lead to the best decisions, helping us move forward in realizing the potential of the production.

The Marinoff Theater is a multi-purpose, adaptable performance space that can be reconfigured to suit the needs of a given production. Are there challenges that arise when designing for an adaptable space like this?

I've not yet designed in any space that does not have both its own unique charm and challenges. The Marinoff is actually a delightful theatrical venue with its flexible seating and black box-like feel in terms of openness and versatility. I would call the Marinoff an "active" venue in that you will always be very aware of the architectural and mechanical elements surrounding or above the audience. Since these elements cannot be masked from view, they must be embraced as potential assets in some manner, and that is basically what we are aiming to do in this production.

***Magdalene* depicts the complicated, often contentious relationship between Mary Magdalene and Peter. Did the tension between these two characters drive any of your lighting design decisions?**

Yes and no. In any good narrative, there will be some form of tension introduced as a dramatic plot device. For *Magdalene*, the subtlety of the lighting will play into how we reveal Peter at the top of the show, to our first encounter with Mary on her own turf, all the way through the pivotal final moments of the play. Throughout, I think the lighting will strike a balance of skirting realism with some heightened moments of theatricality. The style of this play reads as realistic; however, there is also room for abstraction, which I'm keen to explore in the lighting. My aim is to utilize lighting to convey a middle ground, so to speak, that takes some conceptual cues in part from the performance of our two very capable actors, which in combination will invite the audience to really lean into their own instincts about Peter and Mary's exchanges and shared perspectives. We may find moments where that approach may change, and lighting (and likely sound as well) may become more nuanced and suggestive.

What's the best lighting design advice you've ever received? (or given?)

Best received: Always remember you are lighting for every seat in the house, not just the ones with the "best" view. This is particularly useful advice when lighting for performances in the round, or in our case, from three sides. The play should feel about the same from each location, even though it will look somewhat different due to the nature of the seating locations. This can be a challenge; however, I'm all in for the creativity it necessitates.

This isn't your first time working at CATF—you served as the lighting designer last year for Mark St. Germain's *The Happiest Man on Earth*. Do you have a favorite part about working at CATF?

Theater is such a small community, and as such, working with the production team and all of the staff at CATF is a great example of how theater truly is a team sport; we are all working toward the same goal to provide the best possible theater experience for our audiences across a diverse array of productions (and you can see all of them in the span of a weekend!).

What do you find most rewarding, exciting, or enjoyable about being a lighting designer?

Every play brings about new ideas, new relationships, and new obstacles to overcome; it's never boring, which keeps me motivated to contribute my creativity and artistry to this particular dynamic slice of live entertainment.

MAGDALENE DRAMATURG'S NOTE

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND Gnostic BIBLICAL TEXTS

The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John were written between 70 and 100 CE, 35 to 75 years after Jesus's death. While the content and style of these gospels differ, each recounts Jesus's life, ministry, crucifixion, and subsequent resurrection. In the fourth century, these gospels were compiled with the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation to create what is today recognized as the New Testament. These texts were compiled and chosen due to their widely accepted and largely cohesive accounts of early Christianity, which adhered to the views and doctrines of the dominant church authorities at the time. Written before the first century, these texts were also hailed as definitive accounts because they were written within 100 years of Jesus's death.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts the spread and growth of the Christian faith. Emboldened by the Holy Spirit, Jesus's disciples preach throughout the Roman Empire, converting people by the thousands. The Book of Acts portrays this rapid growth of the new religion as a relatively peaceful and straightforward process in which the apostles work in harmony to spread Jesus's life and words. However, as the historian Holland Lee Hendrix argues, historically, this was not the case. Early Christianity was "a highly variegated phenomenon" and not the

"unified coherent religious movement" depicted in the New Testament.¹

Early Christian texts excluded from the New Testament reveal the radical differences in how early Christian sects interpreted Jesus's life and ministry. Many of these first-, second-, and third-century texts adhere to what scholars refer to as "Gnostic Christianity." Derived from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*, Gnostic Christians believed in a strong divide between the flawed, sinful, physical world and the divine spiritual realm. Perhaps most notably, the Gnostic Christians believed that spiritual salvation was acquired through reflection, enlightenment, and personal faith, views that challenged the concepts of Petrine Primacy and unified church authority. Some Gnostic texts refute a literal reading of the virgin birth and Jesus's resurrection, and they prioritize Jesus's wisdom and his role as a teacher over his status as the Messiah. For this reason, Gnostic Christians were eventually branded heretical by the proto-Catholic and proto-Orthodox Churches. In the fourth century, possession of "heretical" Christian texts became a criminal offence under the rule of Emperor Constantine. Gnostic and other non-canonical biblical texts were either secretly hidden or burned.

SIMON PETER

Widely regarded as the first leader of Christianity and revered as the first pope by the Catholic Church, Peter, also known as "Simon," "Cephas," and "Simon Peter" in the New Testament, occupies a place of eminence within the biblical canon. Born with the name Simon, the man who became known as Peter worked as a fisherman alongside his brother Andrew in the Galilee region, where Jesus began his mission. Among the first apostles to join Jesus, Peter secured

himself a position in Jesus's inner circle with his fellow apostles, John and James. Depicted as the leader of the apostles, Peter's name is always first in lists of the apostles, and throughout the New Testament, he speaks more than the other apostles combined.

However, Peter's authoritative role in the New Testament is somewhat complicated by his characterization. Despite his devotion and faith, much of the New Testament portrays Peter as prone



Peter Saint Aloysius' Church/Glasgow

to arrogance, impetuosity, and inconsistency. While he is capable of articulateness, Peter occasionally displays a tendency to say the wrong thing, and he sometimes struggles to understand the more abstract metaphors in Jesus's teachings. In his greatest moment of weakness, Peter publicly denies knowing Jesus when Jesus is arrested, an event prophesied at the Last Supper, when Jesus declares that Peter will "disown" him three times "before the rooster crows" the next day.² Despite Peter's insistence that he would die before denying him, the prophecy unfolds as declared. Nevertheless, Peter is granted forgiveness upon repenting and affirming his love for the resurrected Jesus three times. With the words "feed my sheep," Jesus reinstates Peter's missionary charge and apostolic authority, designating him a shepherd responsible for tending and guiding innocent souls toward salvation. Peter undertakes this mission by delivering the first Christian sermon at Pentecost, and then preaching across the Roman Empire.³

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all attest that it was Jesus who gave the man once called Simon the name "Peter," "Cephas," or "Simon Peter." In the Gospel of Matthew, Peter is the first to acknowledge Jesus as the



St. Catherine's Monastery/Egypt

Messiah, and in turn, Jesus declares that it is "on this rock" that he will build his church.⁴ "Peter" is the masculine form of the Greek word *petra*, meaning "rock" or "stone," translated from the Aramaic word *cephas*, meaning the same. Jesus's assertion and the subsequent nicknaming of one of his first apostles provided the foundation for the so-called "Petrine Primacy," as well as the Papacy and the Catholic Church: Peter was chosen to lead Christianity by Jesus himself.

MARY MAGDALENE

There are perhaps few female religious figures more mysterious and renowned in the Western world than Mary Magdalene. Musings, interpretations, and misrepresentations of her life and character populate centuries of literature, art, drama, and religious tradition. She has been falsely depicted as a repentant prostitute, conflated and confused with other women in the Bible, and both revered and rejected as a crucial biblical figure among historians and Christians alike.

Despite the cultural obsession surrounding her, Mary Magdalene is only referenced in the New Testament 13 times. According to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Mary became a devoted follower of Jesus after he cast out "seven demons" from her.⁵ All other references to Mary in the New Testament occur in



Museum of Russian Icons

relation to Jesus's arrest, death, and resurrection. Mary is among the women who witness Jesus's crucifixion, and in all four gospels, she is the first to witness his resurrection, either alone or with other women. For playing this crucial role in the New Testament, the thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas dubbed Mary the "apostle of the apostles." The word *apostle* means "the one who is sent forth." While Jesus sends the twelve to spread his word, their ministries do not begin until Mary is sent forth to deliver the news of the resurrection. Biblical scholar Bart D. Ehrman takes this assertion further, writing that it was not Peter who started Christianity by preaching at Pentecost, but Mary, for "Christianity could not begin until someone proclaimed Jesus raised from the dead."⁶

While not accepted as canon by the Christian Church, Gnostic and apocryphal Christian texts provide a more well-rounded portrait of Mary, depicting her as Jesus's closest companion and most loyal follower. These texts

portray Mary as a woman of profound wisdom, who is frequently the first to understand and interpret Jesus's words, and the recipient of spiritual information which Jesus does not share with his other followers. For this, she is subject to both respect and rebuke from the other apostles. Some scholars dismiss the Gnostic and apocryphal texts as historically inaccurate because many were written later than most of the New Testament. However, other scholars consider Mary's recurring authoritative role throughout these texts to be an indication that her role in Jesus's life and ministry has perhaps been diminished by a church that championed Peter and other male apostles as the foundational leaders of Christianity.

Mary's title "the Magdalene" or "of Magdalene" has also been subject to scholarly debate. Since surnames were not readily used until the eleventh century, some scholars attribute Mary's title to her place of origin. In the first and second centuries, there were indeed numerous Roman Palestinian places named Magdala in Aramaic, or Migdal in Hebrew, which means "tower." As scholar Elizabeth Schrader Polczer articulates, the question asked by many is: "Does Mary come from a town called Tower? Or is Mary herself a tower?"⁷ St. Jerome, the third-century theologian responsible for translating Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic biblical texts into Latin, believed the latter. As evidenced by Jesus's tendency to nickname many of his apostles, Mary's title may very well declare her not a resident of Magdala, but a metaphorical tower of unwavering faith and fortitude—a characterization suggested in the New Testament, and strongly defended in the Gnostic Gospels.



Frans Floris/Statens Museum for Kunst

THE TOWER AND THE ROCK: MARY AND PETER AT ODDS

In the canonical Gospels, Mary and Peter interact directly only once. In the Gospel of John, upon finding the stone that had encased Jesus's tomb moved, Mary goes to tell Peter, who follows after her, to discover Jesus's empty tomb. Peter does not take this as a sign that Jesus has risen and returns to the other apostles, leaving Mary alone to witness the resurrection by herself. In the Gnostic Gospels, however, Mary and Peter are seemingly always at odds. In the Gospel of Thomas, Peter calls on Jesus to dismiss Mary, "for women," he says, "are not worthy of life."⁸ In Pistis Sophia, Peter openly complains to Jesus about Mary's readiness to share her thoughts, even after Jesus has praised her interpretations. By frequently speaking first, Peter says, Mary robs the other apostles of the opportunity to share their own insights. Mary hesitates before speaking again in this dialogue, saying that she is wary of Peter, who "hates our gender."⁹

In the Gospel of Mary, Peter acknowledges that Jesus loved Mary more than any other woman; however, when Mary recounts a recent vision of Jesus imparting knowledge about the soul's ascent, Peter expresses skepticism that Jesus would secretly impart this knowledge to Mary, a woman, instead of sharing it publicly with the male apostles. In the Gospel of Philip, Peter's disdain and jealousy of Mary are echoed by the other apostles, who ask Jesus why he loves Mary more than "all of them." In the words of Bart Ehrman, "this contest between Peter and Mary seems to go back to our oldest traditions."¹⁰

Many scholars interpret this strained relationship as a symbolic one: Peter represents church authority and Orthodoxy, while Mary represents the self-discovery, wisdom, and personal faith championed by Gnosticism. In this symbolic relationship, Peter strives to stifle the views held by marginalized Christian sects deemed heretical by the accepted authority of the church. However, historian Esther De Boer holds a different view. To her mind, Peter "represents an orthodox view, not with respect to a doctrine of faith but rather with respect to the liability of women." Peter's open antagonism toward Mary as a "person who could have something important to say about the teachings of Jesus," unfortunately, illustrates the dominant cultural view of the time: "Women were simply regarded as second-rate creatures."¹¹



Julian Elijah Martinez plays Simon Peter and Sam Morales plays Mary Magdalene



ENDNOTES

- 1 Holland Lee Hendrix, "Early 'Christianities' of the 2nd and 3rd Centuries," *The Diversities of Early Christianity* by Frontline PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/diversity.html>.
- 2 Matthew 26:31-35 (NIV).
- 3 John 21:17 (NIV).
- 4 Matthew 16: 18 (NIV).
- 5 Mark 16:9 (NIV).
- 6 Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, & Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend*, 255-256.

- 7 Pete Enns, host, *The Bible for Normal People*, podcast, episode 245 "Elizabeth Schrader Polczer—Resurrecting Mary the Tower," May 15, 2023, <https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/episode-245-elizabeth-schrader-polczer-resurrecting-mary-the-tower/>.
- 8 The Gospel of Thomas, 114.
- 9 Pistis Sophia, 72: 161.
- 10 Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, & Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 254-255
- 11 Esther A. De Boer, "Should We All Turn and Listen to Her? Mary Magdalene in the Spotlight," in *The Gospels of Mary: The Secret Tradition of Mary Magdalene, the Companion of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).

THE PRODUCTION TEAM

SCENIC DESIGN

DAVID M. BARBER

COSTUME DESIGN

**CHRISTOPHER
VERGARA**

LIGHTING DESIGN

HAROLD F. BURGESS II

SOUND DESIGN

NATHAN LEIGH

STAGE MANAGER

LORI M. DOYLE

CASTING

PAT MCCORKLE LTD.

FIGHT DIRECTOR

CARA RAWLINGS

MAGDALENE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ON MARY MAGDALENE

- ["Who Was Mary Magdalene?" by James Carroll](#)
- ["Mistaking Mary Magdalene" by Eliza Griswold in *The New Yorker*](#)
- [From the Introduction to *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* by Karen L. King](#)
- [*The Gospel According to Mary Magdalene*](#)
- [Episode 245 "Elizabeth Schrader Polczer—Resurrecting Mary the Tower" in the *Bible For Normal People* Podcast, hosted by Pete Enns](#)
- [Episode "Mary Magdalene" in BBC's *In Our Time* Podcast, hosted by Melvyn Bragg](#)

ON PETER

- ["Saint Peter: Quest for the Historical Apostle Peter" by Joshua Schachterle](#)
- ["The Disciple Peter in History and Legend" by Bart D. Ehrman](#)
- [The Documentary *The First Pope: The Story of St. Peter and His Holy Relics* by Timeline—World History Documentaries](#)

ON PETER AND MARY

- ["Peter and Mary Magdalene in Competition" by Bart D. Ehrman](#)
- ["Mary Magdalene and Peter: A Contest Between Disciples" by Laura Osigwe](#)

ON THE CANONICAL AND Gnostic GOSPELS

- ["An Overview of the Four Gospels of the New Testament" by Marilyn Mellowes](#)
- [Part II of the Documentary *From Jesus to Christ* by Frontline PBS](#)
- [From *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels](#)
- ["Gnostics and Other Heretics" by Elaine Pagels and Harold W. Attridge](#)

ON WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

- ["Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries" by Karen L. King](#)
- ["The Roles for Women" by Elizabeth Clark and Elaine Pagels](#)
- ["Women Apostles in Early Christianity" by Bart D. Ehrman](#)