



# HIS ART HELPS TO TRANSFORM LIVES

Internationally acclaimed performer is opening minds and hearts to the power of divine love

BY SANDY REYNOLDS

Not everyone was open to a dramatic presentation actually being the message



It happens far too frequently. After a performance in a local church, individuals will make comments like, “If I knew you were that good I would have brought a friend!” It’s an indication of the low expectations people have for dramatic arts in the Church.

And it is something that professional actor, award-winning filmmaker and communication coach Jason Hildebrand finds frustrating and motivating at the same time.

Hildebrand *is* good. He doesn’t mind pointing that out when speaking to pastors who are interested in having him perform for their congregations. He is not being arrogant. He works hard at his craft. Excellence is paramount to him.

When Hildebrand graduated from university his goal, like many young actors, was to perform at venues such as the Stratford or Shaw Festivals or perhaps to make a name for himself in film or TV. But God had other plans. He was leading him to do a

one-man show on the life of David.

“I went into working with the Church kicking and screaming,” said Hildebrand in a recent interview. During a year of procrastination, God removed all other options in his life and brought him to a place where he had nothing left to do but surrender to that call.

After creating the show, Hildebrand began cold calling churches. It was often a tough sell. Churches that were using drama were mostly into the Willow Creek model of a topical skit that led into the sermon.

Although their intentions might have been good, the weakness was they were often using dated scripts created for a different context, hoping it would somehow translate and be relevant in their own churches. Not everyone was open to a dramatic presentation actually being the message.

Since *The Life of David*, Hildebrand has developed



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monologues or one-man shows based on the life of Job, A.B. Simpson, Herod and the prodigal son. A departure for him came when he adapted the bestselling book, *Blue Like Jazz*, into a solo multimedia theatrical performance. The project was heartily endorsed by the book's author, Donald Miller.

His drive to push the boundaries has more recently led into the realm of film. The Prodigal monologue is based on the Luke 15 parable of Jesus in the Bible. After performing it on stage for eight years, he felt it was time to make it into a movie.

*The Prodigal Trilogy* film is a cinematic adaptation of his solo performance monologue. The film is scored by acclaimed Canadian composer and musician, Michael Janzen.

After the film's completion, Hildebrand prayed for direction. Based on the overwhelmingly strong feedback at the premiere, he began submitting the movie to film festivals. Since then, he has received affirmation that has been a testimony to the production quality, strong musical score and timeless story that transcends religious boundaries.

His film was one of 25 semi-finalists nominated from 250 submissions at the recently held San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival. He was also given honorable mention at The Accolade Film Festival—a festival recognized by *MovieMaker Magazine* as one of the top 25 film festivals to enter.

Hildebrand and his wife, Sarah, have four children. He is committed to his local church, serving as an elder at Toronto Alliance Church, an inner city work that ministers to the marginalized.

For someone who once resisted working with the Church, those doors continue to be opened to

him. BlueFish TV is partnering with Hildebrand to turn *The Prodigal Trilogy* into a small group resource. Each section of the film will be accompanied by a teaching time. They are in the midst of working out a distribution deal which should be in place by the time this article is in print.

Actor, filmmaker and communication coach are three distinct hats and yet there is a definite theme that runs throughout everything Hildebrand does. It all comes down to communicating a message that burns so brightly it hits the back of the room.

"I long to see people live in the fullness of what God created them to be. People are desperately trying to hear from God and I long to help them get in touch with what is going on inside of them. God has allowed me to be part of epiphany moments with people.

"God uses art to transform lives. As Christians we should be on the forefront of the most creative things. If God gave us our lives and he is *the* creator then we should make the best art out there."

To learn more about Jason Hildebrand or order copies of his work, visit [www.jasonhildebrand.com](http://www.jasonhildebrand.com)

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### THE PRODIGAL TRILOGY WINS 2009 JUBILEE AWARD

*The Prodigal Trilogy* was awarded the top honour in the "Best Dramatic Short" category during the closing ceremonies at the fifth annual San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival (SAICFF) on January 10, 2009.

Jason Hildebrand received the Jubilee Award and gave his acceptance speech in front of an enthusiastic crowd of more than 2,400 people.

The SAICFF is the premiere Christian Film Festival in the world. It exists primarily to encourage and reward Christian filmmakers who artfully communicate a distinctively biblical worldview through their film production.

