

Drama and the SDA Church:

Appendix 33 & 34

“Student brings his adaptation of C.S. Lewis book to WWC stage”

Walla Walla Union Bulletin, May 9, 2001

by Aydrea Walden

SUMMARY: A Walla Walla College student will see his play based on C.S. Lewis’ “The Great Divorce” debuted Saturday.

Shimmering spirits and translucent ghosts debate the merits of their earthly life and the fundamentals of heaven and hell.

Bradley Nelson brings the characters to life with his adaptation of the C.S. Lewis’ book, “The Great Divorce.”

Lewis wrote the book in 1945 in response to William Blake’s book, “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” Blake said the roads of life are like the radii of a circle — that they all eventually lead to the center, or God. This theory says that evil will eventually transform into good.

Lewis wanted to prove this wrong. In his book, he uses himself as a traveler journeying through heaven and hell.

In heaven, people are solid and colors are bright. In hell, people as[sic] phantoms whose weight can’t even make an impression on the grass.

The imagery piqued Nelson’s interest and inspired his writing of the play.

“It’s going to be a multimedia experience,” he said.

The set is white, with the three stage walls making three screens where hell’s characters are projected.

Nelson said there was such a distinction between the characters in Lewis’ book that he wanted to make a “visual metaphor on stage.”

Nelson and director Marilynn Loveless filmed the actors in front of a blue screen[,] then filled the backgrounds with trees, brightly colored flowers and at one point, unicorns.

With some editing, the human characters appear to fade in and out of their backgrounds, timed with action on the stage.

Nelson has gone through four major script revisions since starting the project.

The first changes came at the behest of the C.S. Lewis Foundation in England. Nelson had to contact the estate to get an adaptation license.

“They were just trying to make sure I stayed true to the book itself,” he said.

Loveless, who has worked with Nelson from the first draft, said the student playwright held his ground with some of the changes, willing to compromise, but wanting to make his point.

“He’d argue with them,” she said.

Other versions are the result of Lewis’ highbrow language.

“When Lewis writes, he writes very richly and intellectually,” Nelson said. “Some of (the change) is just making sure the dialogue is accessible to everyone.”

Nelson said he tried to keep the core messages in the script while discarding some of the complicated philosophy.

In all, it took more than 50 people to produce the show, including a cast of 28 students.

“This whole thing is very much a collaborative process. The only thing I can really claim is the script itself,” Nelson said. “And even that is collaborating with C.S. Lewis.”

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By **AYDREA WALDEN**
Of the Union-Bulletin

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NELSON



U-B photos by GREG LEHMAN

A multimedia tour through heaven and hell, the Walla Walla College play "The Great Divorce" uses white screens and projected images. Keri Donaldson, left, plays a Spirit who tries to convince a young girl, played by Kristin Taylor, to allow her to destroy the Demon attached to her back, played by Kristin Smith, far right.

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Event Info

'The Great Divorce'

Where: 9 p.m., Saturday and May 19; 8 p.m., Sunday and May 20

When: Village Hall, Walla Walla College

Tickets: Tickets: \$7 general admission, \$5 students, \$4 with Walla Walla College ID card. Available at WWC Bookstore.



LOVELESS

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