

Andrews University

## Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Posters, Presentations, and Papers

Undergraduate Research

---

Summer 6-3-2015

### C. S. Lewis's The Great Divorce: An Adaptation for Reader's Theater

Olivia Ruiz-Knott  
*Andrews University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/student-works>



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Ruiz-Knott, Olivia, "C. S. Lewis's The Great Divorce: An Adaptation for Reader's Theater" (2015). *Posters, Presentations, and Papers*. 25.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/student-works/25>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Posters, Presentations, and Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

Blake  
wrote *The  
Marriage  
of Heaven  
and Hell...*  
I have  
written  
of their  
divorce.

## C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*: An Adaptation for Reader's Theater

### Abstract

This project—a Reader's Theater production of C. S. Lewis's short allegorical novel *The Great Divorce* (1946)—pursues the values of truth and beauty by relating the rich theological realities of Lewis's work through drama and voice. Reader's Theater differs from traditional theater in that the voice, rather than blocking and costuming, carries the drama. The script is read rather than memorized, resulting in a directed, well-rehearsed dramatic presentation. This project requires the creation of an abridged script together with a substantial introduction detailing the process of production, and all elements of production from inception to a final stage performance of approximately 90 minutes.

### Methodology

I have broken down this project into four stages: Research, Preparation, Logistics, and Performance. The first stage, Research, includes all necessary background investigation: reading other works by C. S. Lewis, about him, or about *The Great Divorce*; reading books about radio drama, oral interpretation, or Reader's Theater; and researching into existing/previous productions of this book. The second stage, Preparation, includes anything having to do with the performance itself, such as transcribing the book into script format, securing permissions, abridging the script, casting characters, scheduling rehearsals, holding rehearsals, and considering/arranging for sound effects and music. The third stage, Logistics, has to do with any extra-textual tasks, such as booking a venue, securing a sound system, promoting the event, and producing a playbill. The last stage, Program, is the final, live, stage performance, scheduled for April 5.

### Results

To date, I have read several other books by C. S. Lewis (*The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Till We Have Faces*) and selected secondary works about Lewis or *The Great Divorce*, as well as books about Reader's Theater and oral interpretation (see bibliography). I also attended a play production of *The Great Divorce* in Indianapolis this fall. I have

transcribed *The Great Divorce* (128 pages) into a script format of 80 pages, have nearly completed abridgment, and received permissions from Rachel Churchill, representative of The CS Lewis Company Ltd, Poole, UK, to carry out this project subject to my submission of the final script. I have been in contact with John Weiss, the local sound effects specialist from *Your Story Hour*, who is eager to help me with this project, and have secured a venue for the final performance of this work in April.

### Conclusions

I have chosen to study the disciplines of Communication and Religion because it is a high value to me that the Christian not only communicate religion clearly, but also movingly; effectively and affectively. This project seeks to uphold this personal value by conveying the rich theological truths of C. S. Lewis's work through drama and voice (mediums of high interest to me), while allowing me to further develop the skills of organization and production—skills that I hope to use in my career, throughout my life, and often in the service of Christianity. The majority of my time on this project has been spent abridging the book to a script that can be performed in 90 minutes. Through this process, I have had to wrestle with the messages of this book, referencing other works of Lewis's and Lewis commentators to determine which truths to keep and cut. The project will culminate with the final performance, scheduled for Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015.

### Bibliography

Bowen, E., Aggertt, O., & Rickert, W. (1978). *Communicative reading* (4th ed.). Salem, WI: Sheffield.

Ecroyd, D., & Wagner, H. (1979). *Communicate through oral reading*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lewis, C. S. (1946). *The great divorce*. New York: Macmillan.

Lewis, C. S. (1958). *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan.

McGrath, A. (2013). *C.S. Lewis: A life: Eccentric genius, reluctant prophet*. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House.

Scrivner, L., & Robinette, D. (1980). *A guide to oral interpretation: Solo and group performance* (2d ed.). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Pub.

Walls, J. (2010). *The Great Divorce*. In R. MacSwain & M. Ward (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to C.S. Lewis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.