

FROM: CHILLIWACK ARTS &
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High Resolution photo: [Freud's Last Session_Press.jpg](#)

Description: Richard Newman takes on the role of Sigmund Freud and Damon Calderwood portrays C.S. Lewis in this epic battle of wits.

Photo Credit: N/A

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***Freud's Last Session* – a battle of wit and wisdom debates the existence of the divine.**

CHILLIWACK, BC – The existence of God has been debated since the dawn of time and now two of the 20th century's brightest minds are taking a stab at the argument.

Freud's Last Session portrays the hypothetical situation of psychologist and well-known atheist Sigmund Freud and devout Christian and author of the Narnia Chronicles C.S. Lewis going head to head in a battle of wit and wisdom, and on **April 19 & 20** ACE Productions is bringing the play to the Chilliwack Cultural Centre.

Written by playwright Mark St. Germain and first produced in 2009, *Freud's Last Session* was inspired by Harvard psychiatrist Dr. Armand M. Nicholi Jr. The professor included Lewis' Christian beliefs into a course on Freud's atheism, and the contrast

worked better than anticipated. “St. Germain’s script brings his extensive research into the private lives of two very public figures with a compelling scenario: The world’s then most famous atheist, dying of cancer, needs to understand why a former atheist would convert to Christianity in his middle age – on the very day Great Britain declares war on Nazi Germany,” Chris Robson, the play’s director explained.

The play portrays the discussion surrounding the existence of God that likely would have happened if Freud and Lewis ever met, and although it is set in September of 1939, Robson noted that the topics it addresses are just as relevant today. “I am constantly hearing echoes of the script in global events – issues regarding intolerance, bigotry, sexual repression, and political manipulation all resonate loudly in the aftermath of the recent US election,” he said.

For Damon Calderwood, the actor portraying Lewis, taking on the role was an obvious choice. “I loved the play immediately when I read it, and I’ve always been a big fan of C.S. Lewis, so the chance to play him too was too delicious to pass up!” he said. “As a Christian, I am constantly questioning my role as a Christian, my beliefs, and the direction God has for my life, much as Lewis does in the play.”

Calderwood is joined by Richard Newman who is taking on the role of Freud. “I’m fascinated by the depth of the characterizations in the script, and I am in awe of the two actor’s work in inhabiting their roles,” Robson said. “I could not ask for a better cast; their work is so moving, subtle, and truthful. It’s a bonus that they also bear physical similarities to the two men!”

This isn’t the first time ACE Productions has produced *Freud’s Last Session* with the same team, and according to *Review Vancouver*, “Newman is brilliant as Freud – gruff, blunt, and satirical, yet revealing a subtle vulnerability. Calderwood impresses too, as the passionate, idealistic Lewis. His bearing – imposing and strangely loud – is a masterful interpretation of his reaction to the wartime experiences of his youth. Both actors shine in their roles.”

Despite the play's mainly religious theme, it doesn't take a stance but rather presents both sides equally. The *New York Times*' Sylviane Gold wrote that instead of swaying to one side of the argument, the play "is equal opportunity theatre. Atheists need not fear that they will be converted to faith by the warm blandishments of Lewis. And believers will not be tempted to apostasy by the hardheaded arguments of Freud. But everyone, from the God-fearing to the agnostic to the strictly scientific, can be entertained by this well-written clash of wit and egos in Freud's bookish London study."

However, that doesn't mean views shouldn't come with an open mind, ready to have their beliefs questioned and confronted. "There are some big concepts that have challenged philosophers and theologians for centuries," Robson said. "Ultimately, we want people to be moved by the message, that people can be compassionate and humane despite the differences in their beliefs."

Freud's Last Session is coming to the Chilliwack Cultural Centre's Rotary Hall Studio Theatre on **April 19 & 20 at 7:30 pm**. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$22 for seniors, \$20 for youth, and can be purchased at the Centre Box Office, online at www.chilliwackculturalcentre.ca, or by calling 604-391-SHOW(7469).

Freud's Last Session is sponsored by: the Chilliwack Players Guild, the Chilliwack Progress, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the British Columbia Arts Council, the Province of British Columbia, and the City of Chilliwack.

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For additional information and to arrange interviews, contact:

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Chilliwack Cultural Centre

Owned by the City of Chilliwack, the Cultural Centre houses two unique performance venues, an art gallery, music instruction studios, arts and crafts studios, meeting rooms, offices, and is home to the Chilliwack Academy of Music and the O'Connor Group Art Gallery. Since opening in 2010, over 290,000 tickets have been sold through the Centre Box Office, with a value exceeding \$4,280,000. The Centre is overseen by The Chilliwack Arts & Cultural Centre Society on behalf of the City.

Chilliwack Cultural Centre highlights:

- 597 seat performance theatre
- 168 seat recital hall / rehearsal space / dance studio / meeting space
- Chilliwack Art gallery (22-foot high display area)
- 21 music instructional rooms
- Arts, crafts and performance studios
- Storage and Archival Resource Room

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The Chilliwack Arts & Cultural Centre Society is registered under the British Columbia Society Act as a not-for-profit society (society number S-54973), and is a registered Canadian charitable organization under the Canadian Charities Directorate. (Charity number 805742897 RR0001)

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