

'The Screwtape Letters' Audio Production

Andy Serkis, who played Gollum in the Lord of the Rings  movies, leads a star cast in the Focus on the Family Radio Theatre (Tyndale House Publishers) audio book adaptation of C.S. Lewis' 1942 classic *The Screwtape Letters*. Lewis' stepson, Douglas Gresham, hosts the production, which was recorded in London with a world-class cast and original music.

We talked with the award-winning adapter/director Paul McCusker (right) about the new project, a four-CD set with a bonus, behind-the-scenes DVD.

Why do *The Screwtape Letters* remain so popular today?

Paul McCusker: I think because they're timeless. The "advice" from one demon to the other gets to the heart of our humanity, our rationalizations, our fallen-ness and the spiritual warfare going on around us. No matter what period of history we're in, the essence of what Lewis has written remains true.

The letters seem like a natural fit for audio; why has it taken so long for such a project to be realized?

McCusker: There have been "readings" of the letters over the past 30 years but, to my knowledge, no dramatization. I don't know why others haven't tried it before now. But it's always been on our wish-list of projects to do.

What was the greatest challenge in bringing the letters to life for audio?

McCusker: One challenge was to figure out how to dramatize the letters without seriously damaging or changing Lewis' words. I think we figured that out, by employing everything we've learned about audio drama over the past 20 years. I think only

two of the “letters” are actually handled as letters. The rest are dramatic scenes, with interaction between the various characters. The other challenge was to find the right actors—which I think we did in our cast, led by Andy Serkis as Screwtape.

How many liberties did you take with the original material?

McCusker: I tried to take as few liberties as possible. I wanted Lewis’ work represented thoroughly. I only changed what had to be changed to accommodate audio drama (rather than the experience of reading on a page).

If you could have added an extra letter, what would it have addressed?

McCusker: Actually, I’ve written an extra bit of correspondence for our Twitter/Facebook efforts, in which Screwtape and Wormwood are discussing the value of social networking in their schemes. I centered it around the idea of community.

You managed to assemble quite a cast

McCusker: Andy Serkis plays Screwtape—and he threw himself into the role with wonderfully surprising results. Though the “unsung hero” may be Bertie Carvel who played Wormwood. To play that character—and deliver those lines—with the believability he brought to them, is an amazing piece of acting. I also created characters that are only mentioned in the letters—the “patient” and his mother, the girlfriend, the social friends and the like. That way we could hear their interplay rather than be told about them.

Tell us about the extras.

McCusker: We have several behind-the-scenes video documentaries on the bonus DVD and a surround-sound version of

the entire drama.

Who's the main audience for this project?

McCusker: Anyone over 12, as far as we're concerned. Though we think there's a huge market with late teens and college students, who love *The Screwtape Letters* for its irony and satire.

What's next for Radio Theatre?

McCusker: We're exploring other projects. We'd love to do the rest of Lewis' fiction: The science fiction trilogy, *The Great Divorce* and *'Til We Have Faces*.

[Click here](#) to purchase the audio set. Visit to find out about more new releases.