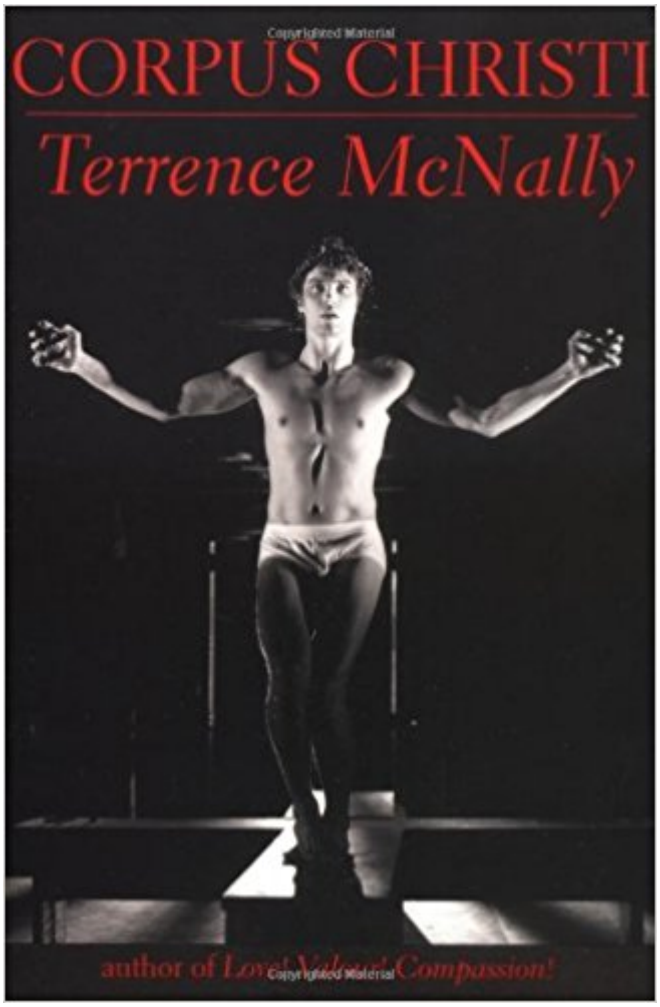
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Corpus Christi



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Synopsis

The New Yorker has called Terrence McNally "one of our most original and audacious dramatists and one of our funniest." He is the author of such critically acclaimed plays as Love! Valour! Compassion!, Master Class, The Lisbon Traviata, and Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune. In Corpus Christi, McNally gives us his own unique view of the story of Christ, and in doing so provides us with one of the most vivid and moving passion plays written. McNally’s controversial new play is an affirmation of faith and a drama of such power and scope that it has been called blasphemy by the religious right and hailed by audiences and critics alike as one of his best and most poignant works to date.

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Customer Reviews

Named one of the best plays of the year by Time magazine The New Yorker has called Terrence McNally "one of our most original and audacious dramatists and one of our funniest." He is the author of such critically acclaimed plays as Love! Valour! Compassion!, Master Class, The Lisbon Traviata, and Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune. In Corpus Christi McNally gives us his own unique view of the story of Christ, and in doing so provides us with one of the most vivid and moving passion plays written. McNally’s play is an affirmation of faith and a drama of such power and scope that it has been hailed by audiences and critics alike as one of his best and most poignant works to date. "One of McNally’s best, most moving and personal works . . . His updating of the Christ story is witty but not patronizing, as sober and cleansing as a dip in baptismal water."-Richard Zoglin,

Time "Corpus Christi provides a frequently fascinating experience. . . . [It] explores a quest for faith by a segment of the population-homosexuals-that has for centuries been excluded and condemned by the pious God-fearing."-Erik Jackson, Time Out New York "Terrence McNally's controversial new play is a moving, perhaps even spiritual experience."-Dick Schaap, ABC World News Terrence McNally won Tony Awards for Love! Valour! Compassion! and Master Class as well as Tony Awards for Best Book of a Musical for Ragtime and Kiss of the Spider Woman. In addition, Love! Valour! Compassion! won the Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and New York Drama Critics' Circle awards for Best Play. McNally has received two Guggenheim fellowships, a Rockefeller grant, and a citation from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

I am a big (ok, huge) fan of Chad Allen's and he just finished a run of Corpus Christi in Los Angeles. I live on the East Coast so couldn't make the performance, so to see what I missed I decided to purchase a copy of the script. I was very impressed at the way the script handled the controversial subject. The notion of a Christ-like character who happens to be gay is shocking to some sacrilegious to others to me it was simply the next step in bringing Christ to life. Before you condemn the play, or even criticize it try reading it with an open mind.

I did not purchase this play without expecting to be shocked. I found some parts of it to be extremely irreverent and downright blasphemous although I've always found the relationship between Judas and Jesus as depicted in straightforward (no pun intended) accounts of the passion play as having some subtext going on. Even in Jesus Christ Superstar, there seems to be a thread of jealousy on Judas's part that Jesus is spending more time with Mary Magdalene than the apostles. Of course, if as some scholars suggest, Jesus and Mary Magdalene were actually married, this would make Judas the third leg in an unrequited love triangle. What McNally has done has made (in the words of Joss Whedon) "the subtext rapidly text." If you can ignore the homosexual content (both implicit and explicit), the story still comes across and there is a sense of spirituality that pervades the text of the play. I would like to have seen the original New York production, just to say I saw it. McNally makes no attempt to disguise the homoeroticism between characters and has the all-male cast play both male and female roles throughout (with the exception of the actors playing Judas and Joshua/Jesus). Don't forget that even in Shakespeare's time, it was forbidden for women to act onstage so all of Shakespeare's heroines were originally played by men. Another interesting sidenote is how many actors in the original NY cast (Anson Mount played Joshua, Josh Lucas played Judas, Michael Hall of Six Feet Under and Ken Leung were apostles), have gone on to

bigger and better things. Obviously no one is holding having performed in this play against them. It bothers me that some individuals have written a review of this play without having either seen a production of it or took the time to read the play itself. One thing I've find useful is to keep an open mind. Don't dwell on the gayness of the play. The humanity of Joshua/Jesus and his disciples is what comes through in the long run.

For as much nasty publicity as this play has received, I expected a far more abrasive account of a gay passion play. If you are expecting anything remotely pornographic, you will be disappointed. This is a very intimate, touching portrait of playwright Terrence McNally, juxtaposed against the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ, all in the spirit of the playwright seeking a higher awareness of Christ's difficult life and great torments. The narrative is extremely straight forward, and an informed audience should have no problem discerning the differences between McNally's life and Christ's. McNally, no stranger to controversy, has created an entirely new Messiah; one that reflects contemporary human experience and its temptations from flawed, human perspective. Those who do not wish to see the human side of Jesus as an imagined homosexual should mind their business and go to church for their preferred depiction. Anyone interested in how one observant gay man views his own life in reference to Christs's suffering may see more of themselves in the play than they might expect. There is little high drama here, and the play straightforwardly warns against suspense. The storytelling is simple and patient, and worth the time if you have an open mind and especially an open heart.

I had read about this play in TIME mag. about two years ago, and when I read I expected something frustrating and that is what I got. I am so tempted to talk about my faith in comparison to the play and since I am an avid Christian I find it continually difficult to not write about, but instead I am going to tackle it from a theatre student's point of view. It is terribly original. After reading most of the contemporary playwrights I would have to say that McNally's plays are the best, because of his subtley abrasive tone, for one reason. I was constantly questioning whether or not I should consider this play sacreligous and after much deliberation I decided that only the reader/viewer can decide that for themselves. Is McNally mocking Christ's life? I don't know. Is he accurately pouring his emotions out onto the paper? Definetly. In my opinion this play is one of the best "philosophy meets religion" works out there which is testament to McNally's genius. In his preface he contrasts Christ's life to Matthew Shepard, which I thought was really cool. Then he also says "Jesus Christ died again when Matthew Shepard did"...so true. I think that this play really asks the question "what

would we do today?" Would we still persecute Him? Would we still laugh and jeer and call him "King of the queers"? Anyway I'm rambling...read the play and judge McNally with an open mind.

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