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August 28, 2015  
For Immediate Release

Salt Lake Acting Company's 45<sup>th</sup> Season Opens with  
**BLACKBERRY WINTER**  
By Steve Yockey

*"Because memories are the tiniest, most fragile of things, they hardly take up any space at all. But in just a raindrop full, lifetimes are held for the reminiscing."*

**Salt Lake Acting Company (SLAC), opens its 45<sup>th</sup> season of brave contemporary theatre with the National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere of BLACKBERRY WINTER by Steve Yockey.**

BLACKBERRY WINTER is a touching and heartfelt story about one woman's coming to terms with the disease that is claiming her mother. Years of success, meticulous planning, and an eye for detail have in no way prepared Vivienne Avery for her mother's slide into the grip of dementia. With her ever-present polite smile and hospitality, Vivienne leads the audience on a funny, emotional journey through insomnia-fueled baking, stories of her mother, and a childlike Alzheimer's creation myth. BLACKBERRY WINTER is an all-too-relatable story about loving and letting go.

**Playwright Steve Yockey says:** "The play explores one woman's journey navigating the landscape of her mother's failing health and coming face to face with grief. Sometimes that's funny because it has to be, sometimes it's also quite sad because it has to be. If nothing else, I hope it's unsparingly honest."

Salt Lake Acting Company is a proud member of the National New Play Network (NNPN), which is the country's alliance of nonprofit theaters that champions the development, production, and continued life of new plays. BLACKBERRY WINTER is receiving the Network's largest ever Rolling World Premiere, with its first production at Salt Lake Acting Company to be followed by another six productions nationwide: Actor's Express - Atlanta, GA - November 6-22, 2015 (co-production with Out of Hand Theatre); Capital Stage - Sacramento, CA - March 16 - April 17, 2016; New Repertory Theatre - Boston, MA - March 26 - April 17, 2016; Oregon Contemporary Theatre - Eugene, OR - April 15 - May 7, 2016; Kitchen Dog Theater - Dallas, TX - May 20 - June 25, 2016, Forum Theatre - Washington, DC - dates not yet announced. SLAC is very proud to be kicking off this unprecedented Rolling World Premiere.

**NNPN Executive Director Nan Barnett says:** "Steve Yockey has become one of National New Play Network's favorite playwrights as evidenced by the NNPN Rolling World Premiere of BLACKBERRY WINTER. With eight partnering theaters set to produce the play within the twelve months following its opening at SLAC, it has officially become the largest RWP in the history of the program, and, as it is Steve's fourth play to receive one, he has become our most produced playwright. Its smart, honest, startlingly funny look at the life of someone caring for a loved one with a deteriorating memory so moved NNPN's artistic leaders that the play was designated for a roll - created when three or more member theaters decide to work collaboratively with a playwright on separate and distinct productions of a new play - almost immediately following its reading at the 2014 National Showcase of New Plays. We believe that this work epitomizes the Network's dedication to the development, production and continued

life of new works and look forward to seeing it in the future as theaters across the country continue to produce it long after the roll is completed.”

SLAC’s production features a cast of local actors each making his or her Salt Lake Acting Company debut: April Fossen as Vivienne Avery, S.A. Rogers as Gray Mole, and Kalika Rose as White Egret. University of Utah professor Sandra Shotwell will direct the production.

In creating a magical world for Vivienne’s Alzheimer’s ‘creation myth,’ SLAC has enlisted the help of two puppet experts. Glenn and Linda Brown are former theatre professors at the University of Utah and recently returned after a worldwide adventure teaching puppetry and theatre. The Browns are thrilled to be the first puppeteers to bring shadow puppetry to SLAC. They will be presenting this ancient art form using old technology, in a new way.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Alzheimer’s Association of Utah**

SLAC is grateful to the Alzheimer’s Association of Utah and Nick Hutchinson for their assistance in the rehearsal process.

SLAC will be participating in the **2015 Salt Lake City Walk to End Alzheimer’s on September 12** at Salt Lake City Library Square.

### **Music and Memory<sup>SM</sup> Utah Coalition**

Throughout the run of BLACKBERRY WINTER, SLAC will be partnering with Music and Memory<sup>SM</sup> Utah Coalition, which was formed in Spring 2014 on the heels of the award-winning Sundance film *Alive Inside: The Story of Music and Memory* documenting the dramatic results of the Music & Memory<sup>SM</sup> program, created by Dan Cohen. Using personalized playlists of favorite songs loaded on iPods, this proven program reawakens memory in people suffering with Alzheimer’s, dementia and other cognitive and physical disabilities.

**SLAC will be launching the first of a city-wide iPod drop** - collecting gently used donated iPods throughout the run of BLACKBERRY WINTER. All donated iPods will go directly to residents in a Music & Memory Certified Nursing Home.

SLAC will also present **a free screening of *Alive Inside: The Story of Music and Memory* on September 28 @ 7pm** followed by a panel discussion featuring GERALYN WHITE DREYFOUS, ELLEN FISHER, MARY ELLEN GEIST, GERDA SAUNDERS, and ANNE E. PALMER.

### **Art Access**

SLAC maintains an active gallery to showcase and sell the work of local visual artists in rotating exhibitions inspired by productions on our stage. This season, SLAC is proud to partner with Art Access for our Green Room exhibitions. Art Access provides equal opportunities to inclusive arts programming for Utahns with disabilities and those with limited access to the arts. During the run of BLACKBERRY WINTER, audiences will have the chance to enjoy artwork created by patients and caregivers affected by Alzheimer’s disease.

## **WHO’S WHO**

### **PLAYWRIGHT**

**Steve Yockey** is a Los Angeles based writer with work produced throughout the country, Europe, and Asia. His plays AFTERLIFE, OCTOPUS, LARGE ANIMAL GAMES, CARTOON, SUBCULTURE, VERY STILL & HARD TO SEE, THE FISHERMAN’S WIFE, WOLVES, DISASSEMBLY, and NIAGARA FALLS & OTHER PLAYS are published and available from Samuel French. He was one of two writers selected for the US/Australia

playwright exchange in February 2013, sponsored by National New Play Network and Playwriting Australia. Steve holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He currently contributes issues to the Zenescope comic book series *Grimm Tales of Terror* and writes for HBO's *The Brink*.

#### DIRECTOR

**Sandra Shotwell** has an MFA in Acting from The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, an Advanced Diploma in Voice and Speech (ADVS) with Distinction from the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, and is a certified Laban-Bartenieff Movement Analyst (CLMA). She directed KEELY AND DU with Salt Lake Acting Company; the production was named one of the Ten Best Productions for '94 by the Dessert News and Best Production for 1994 by the Private Eye Magazine's Reader Poll. Last year she directed a staged reading of BULL SHARK ATTACK by Troy Deutsch. Also she has dialect coached MR. PERFECT, TWO STORIES, THE EXIT INTERVIEW, GOD OF CARNAGE, and THE PERSIAN QUARTER. She has performed for stage, film, and voice-over. Last fall she performed the title role in HECUBA with Westminster's Classical Greek Theatre Festival. Sandra is a Professor of Theatre at the University of Utah. She is overjoyed to be working with Salt Lake Acting Company and Steve Yockey in directing BLACKBERRY WINTER!

#### CAST

**April Fossen** was last seen at SLAC in the NPSS reading of BULL SHARK ATTACK. She has appeared locally in PILOT PROGRAM, NOTHING PERSONAL, SUFFRAGE, MESA VERDE, SHE WAS MY BROTHER, and MIASMA (Plan-B Theatre Company); AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY (Silver Summit/Utah Rep); THE RIGHTEOUS AND VERY REAL HOUSEWIVES OF UTAH COUNTY (Alligator Press Productions); COMEDY OF ERRORS, THREE DAYS OF RAIN, AN IDEAL HUSBAND, and ROMEO AND JULIET (Pinnacle Acting Company); LIVING OUT (Pygmalion Theatre Company); and RINGS (The Grand Theatre). Regional credits include work with Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the California Shakespeare Festival. April holds a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from UC Berkeley.

**S.A. Rogers\*** is very pleased to be making his debut at Salt Lake Acting Company with BLACKBERRY WINTER. He has most recently acted in a number of short films including *Down the Hole* and *The Architect*. Other local work includes Pioneer Theatre Company's productions of A FEW GOOD MEN as Commander Stone and OF MICE AND MEN as Slim. In Houston, Texas he performed with the Classical Theatre Company (CTC) as Telegin in UNCLE VANYA and Dimas in THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE. Prior to working with CTC, he performed at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, where his roles included Gascon/Ensemble in CYRANO DE BERGERAC, First Murderer/Ensemble in RICHARD III, Policeman in MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM, and Second Knight in KING LEAR. His audio book vocal recordings include Return Policy, The Almost True Story of Ryan Fisher, The End is Now, and Strength and Courage for Caregivers. S.A. is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

**Kalika Rose** was born and raised in Salt Lake City where she has been involved in theater all her life. She is currently in her senior year at the University of Utah in their Actor Training Program. Her previous credits include Celimene in THE SCHOOL FOR LIES (Studio115), Leedy in THE OWL GIRL (Studio115), and a Cagelle in the Grand Theatre's production of LA CAGE AUX FOLLES. In between class and rehearsal Kalika works at the Salt Lake Film Society where she gets to regularly indulge in her other love: the cinema. Her other hobbies include fishing, skiing, and golfing.

#### SHADOW PUPPET TEAM

**S. Glenn Brown** wears many hats; he has a BA in Art from Westminster College, and an MFA in Theatre Design from the University of Utah. His other talents include, puppetry, playwriting, animation, drawing, painting, set design, and Asian theatre. Additionally Glenn is a Bunraku puppeteer, having trained and taught in Japan with the Tonda Bunraku Troupe, of which he is still a member. He is happy to be working with Salt Lake Acting Company for the first time.

**Linda L. Brown** holds an MFA in Directing from the University of Utah. She has worked around the world as a director, animator, performer, puppeteer, and designer. Linda has worked with classical, and

contemporary works, as well as new play development for kids. This is also her first opportunity to work with Salt Lake Acting Company.

**DESIGN TEAM**

Set & Props Design - Keven Myhre  
Costume Design - K.L. Alberts  
Lighting Design - James M. Craig  
Sound Design - Jennifer Jackson  
Stage Manager - Jennie Sant\*

\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

**WHO:**

Salt Lake Acting Company

**WHAT:**

BLACKBERRY WINTER  
By: Steve Yockey

**WHEN:**

September 16<sup>th</sup> – October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Wednesdays – Saturdays @ 7:30 p.m., Sundays @ 1:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.

Additional performances:

Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> & October 20<sup>th</sup> @ 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup> & October 24<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00 p.m.

**WHERE:**

168 West 500 North  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103

**MORE INFO:**

Salt Lake Acting Company  
168 West 500 North, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84103  
Box Office: 801-363-7522  
Open 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Mon – Fri  
[www.saltlakeactingcompany.org](http://www.saltlakeactingcompany.org)

Single tickets range from \$15 – \$42, depending on the performance.

Student, Senior and 30 & Under discounts are available.

Discounts are also available for groups of 10 or more.

Subscribers always pay the lowest price.

\*Salt Lake Acting Company (SLAC)'s mission is to engage and enrich community through brave contemporary theatre. Founded in 1970, SLAC is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 professional theatre dedicated to producing, commissioning, and developing new works and to supporting a community of professional artists. SLAC has been nationally recognized by the Shubert Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Edgerton Foundation, among others. SLAC operates under a SPT Actors Equity Association contract and is a Constituent Member of Theatre Communications Group (a national organization for non-profit professional regional theatres), and the National New Play Network (a national alliance of non-profit professional theatres that champions the development, production, and continued life of new plays).