

PRESS CONTACT: CYNTHIA FLEMING | 801.363.7522 | cynthia@saltlakeactingcompany.org

August 17, 2017
For Immediate Release

Salt Lake Acting Company Presents
the National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere of
SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY
By Chisa Hutchinson

Salt Lake Acting Company (SLAC) opens its 47th season of brave, contemporary theatre with the National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere of **SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY** by **Chisa Hutchinson**, running **September 6 through October 15**. SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY is a funny, heartwarming story about how we show up for each other, even in the most difficult and unlikely circumstances.

In an under-funded public school in Newark, New Jersey, a motherless, Bible-toting boy with a photographic memory and a tender heart befriends the cantankerous woman who works in the cafeteria. Against all odds, they help each other deal with the struggles that come with a difficult home life, ailing health and loneliness.

Playwright Chisa Hutchinson grew up and currently lives in Newark, New Jersey. She said, "I've been able to plug into the community that's around me, right here, and it's vibrant and rich. I'm feeling a lot of local love, and I get to give back that love. The Newark community will see themselves reflected on stage and have their existence validated as significant and important. In the play, there are some poor folks, some black folks, some curmudgeonly folks, some old folks, some angry folks. You'll get a glimpse into the lives of people who are under-represented in theatre."

SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY is produced by Salt Lake Acting Company as part of a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere. Other partnering theaters are Writers Theatre of New Jersey (Madison, NJ) and Redtwist Theatre (Chicago, IL). For more information, please visit www.nnpn.org.

Hutchinson spent a week in Salt Lake City, where she sat in on rehearsals, making slight adjustments to the script and working with director Alicia Washington.

Hutchinson said, "I'm not gonna lie. When my agent told me about this production opportunity, my spoiled, New York-based self was like, 'There's theater in Utah?' And then more specifically to this play, 'There's black people in Utah?!' But man, the time I've got to spend out here has made a believer out of me. SLAC is on it."

This play presents some casting challenges here in Utah, calling for an all-black cast, including two school-aged characters. SLAC's all-local cast includes four young actors who will share the roles of Tino and Deja, alternating performances throughout the run.

SLAC Executive Artistic Director Cynthia Fleming says, "The process of choosing plays for a season can be a lengthy endeavor, and sometimes many plays are read before one truly resonates. Upon finishing SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY, I knew I wanted to see this play realized on SLAC's stage. The unlikely relationship between 12-year-old Tino and Bernadette, the feisty old lunch lady, demonstrates to us that even when experiencing overwhelming challenges, if we pay attention to each other and act with kindness, there can be healing. This timely message reminds us that the power to spark change begins with us."

WHO:

Salt Lake Acting Company

WHAT:

SURELY GOODNESS & MERCY

By Chisa Hutchinson

WHEN:

September 6 – October 15, 2017

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

Additional performances:

Tuesday, October 3rd @ 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 14th @ 2:00 p.m.

WHERE:

Salt Lake Acting Company – Chapel Theatre

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

Single tickets range from \$24 - \$43 depending on the performance.

Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more, Students, Seniors, and people 30 years old & young.

Subscribers always pay the lowest price.



Playwright Chisa Hutchinson (seated center) with members of SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY cast and creative team.

WHO'S WHO

PLAYWRIGHT

Chisa Hutchinson's socially probing plays, which include SHE LIKE GIRLS, SEX ON SUNDAY, THE SUBJECT, DEAD & BREATHING, and SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER among others, have been presented by such venues as City Parks' Summerstage, the Lark, the National Black Theater, the Contemporary American Theater Festival, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and Atlantic Theater Company. She's won a GLAAD Award, the John Golden Award for Excellence in Playwriting, a Lilly Award, a New York Innovative Theatre Award, the Paul Green Award, a Helen Merrill Award, the Lanford Wilson Award, and has been a finalist for the highly coveted PoNY Fellowship. She's also been a Lark Fellow, a Dramatists Guild Fellow, a resident at the William Inge Center for the Arts a New York NeoFuturist, a staff writer for the Blue Man Group, a Humanitas Fellow, and most recently, Resident Playwright at Second Stage Theater. In addition to venturing into screenwriting, Chisa is currently a proud fourth-year member of New Dramatists and a Creative Writing Professor at the University of Delaware. (B.A. Vassar College; M.F.A NYU - Tisch School of the Arts)

DIRECTOR

Alicia M. Washington is ecstatic to be making her directorial debut at SLAC. She is beyond blessed to be surrounded by a community that embraces the arts. Alicia along with her sister, Camille, opened Good Company Theatre in 2012. GCT is now in its fifth year of operation, bringing live theatre to Downtown Ogden. She received a Musical Theatre Degree from Weber State University, along with training from SITI Company and The Second City. Previous credits include: FENCES (Good Company Theatre), APPROPRIATE (Good Company Theatre), and THE MOUNTAINTOP (Good Company Theatre). Alicia is humbled to have the most supportive friends and family who continually encourage her to pursue her dreams. "From Aunt Eller to the Piazza"- My Mom

CAST

Michelle Love-Day (Alnessa) has been a resident of Utah for 12 years. She is excited to return to the stage after a three- year break. Her recent appearance as a "Church Lady" in Plan B's THE COLOR PURPLE was a memorable play. Her agency, TMG, keeps her acting spirit alive by casting her for commercials, modeling, and print material. Michelle has performed in theaters across the Salt Lake Valley , such as Hale Center Theater, Rogers Memorial Theater, The Grand Theater, Plan B, and People Productions. She has performed in productions of AIDA, KISS ME KATE, BYE BYE BIRDIE, THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE, CROWNS, THE TALENTED TENTH, FOR COLORED GIRLS, and worked as a Production Assistant in Hale Theater's THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE. Her favorite re-occurring role for the last 4 years, is the Lily Pad Princess, AKA, Princess Tiana with the company Magical Celebrations Utah. During the day, Michelle is working as Associate Director of Educational Equity and believes "education is the most powerful tool which you can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela) She wants to thank her husband, 5 kids, and amazing friends for their support, encouragement, and love as she "reclaims her time."

Yolanda Wood Stange* (Bernadette) is a Real Estate Agent and Investor by day and an Actress and Producer by night. A fixture in Utah's film and television scene she has guest starred in over 30 films. She has worked alongside Zac Efron, Diane Keaton, Danny Glover, John Hawkes, Anthony Anderson Octavia Spencer and many more. In her own words, "I could not be more excited to work on the SLAC stage again! To finally work with Alicia Washington and again with Dee-Dee Darby-Duffin is like a dream come true! Thank you SLAC!" Yolanda is a proud member of Actor's Equity (AEA) and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG).

Kiara Riddle (Deja - Cast A) is thrilled to be performing at Salt lake Acting Company. Previous performances include: SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS at Utah Children's Theatre as Snow White; LION KING at Eagle Bay Elementary as Mufasa; SEUSSICAL at Utah Children's Theatre as one the creatures; CATCH THE WIND at Canyon Creek Elementary as a villager. Kiara has a passion for Soccer and she has been playing on a competitive level for the last 5 years. She loves to play the Piano and the Viola.

Jenna Newbold (Deja - Cast B) is delighted to be making her debut with Salt Lake Acting Company. For the past few years Jenna has enjoyed playing the role of Princess Tiana during the annual Fairy Tale Festival with Centerpoint Legacy Theatre. She is currently a Senior at Roy High School and is planning to obtain a degree in elementary

education. For the past 8 years Jenna has been a student at Aranda's Karate Studio and is well on her way to her goal of earning a Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. Jenna enjoys working with the Larson family where she is a Nanny to their two beautiful children. She would like to share her gratitude to her mentor and friend, Mickie Larson. She also gives a big thanks to her parents for encouraging her to try something out of her comfort zone.

Devin Losser (Tino - Cast A) is excited to be performing in his first production with Salt Lake Acting Company. This marks his first time acting in front of a live audience and is very excited about the production. He has been acting and modeling since he was 4 years old. He has done many commercials here locally, and several print ads. He is a student at Herriman Jr High. In his free time, he loves to draw, play the piano, and is on his local swim team.

Clinton Bradt (Tino - Cast B) is ecstatic to be making his Salt Lake Acting Company debut in SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY. His latest performances include playing Cornelius in HELLO, DOLLY! (Intermountain Christian School), Prince Christopher in CINDERELLA (Intermountain Christian School), and singing and dancing for the chorus of JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT (Steamboat Springs High School). Clinton is originally from Uganda. He enjoys dancing, singing, playing soccer, and spending time with his family. He loves school, especially Speech and Debate, and English class. Clinton would like to thank Salt Lake Acting Company for this wonderful opportunity and his family for supporting him.

Samme Lydia James (Teacher) recently moved to SLC from NYC where she stage managed various new work for Red Fern Theatre Company. She graduated with a Bachelors in Theatre at Idaho State University appearing in RENT, INTO THE WOODS and YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU. She is excited for this to be her first production at SLAC.

James Jamison (Preacher) is very grateful to Alicia Washington for his first project with Salt Lake Acting Company. He has performed on numerous church plays and in his only full length play, FENCES at Alicia's Good Company Theater, playing the part of Troy Maxson. James has been seen in television shows including *Touched by an Angel*, *Promised Land*, *Everwood*, and *Cover Me* and in tv movies, *Minutemen*, *Everything You Want*, *Together Again For The First Time*, and several others.

Bijan J. Hosseini (Principal) would like to thank Alicia, the cast and crew, as well as Cynthia and the rest of the production team at SLAC for having me back. He was last seen here in THE EXIT INTERVIEW. Bijan has also worked at Sting & Honey, Plan-B, PYGmalion, Pioneer, and Salt City Radio Players, among many others. Bijan has a Bachelors in Mass Communication, a 2nd degree blackbelt in Muso-Kai under Grandmaster Shihan Arakaki, and makes a living as an LMT at the Yugen Wellness Center. Bijan is represented by TMG.

DESIGN TEAM

Assistant Director – Dee-Dee Darby-Duffin

Set Design – Thomas George

Costume Design – Katie Rogel

Lighting Design – William Peterson

Sound Design – Jessica Greenberg

Stage Manager – Jennie Sant*

Dialect Coach – Adrienne Moore

Assistant Set Design – Megan Branson

Assistant Sound Design – Kyle Lawrence

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

ABOUT SALT LAKE ACTING COMPANY

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). www.saltlakeactingcompany.org

ABOUT NATIONAL NEW PLAY NETWORK

National New Play Network (NNPN) is the country's alliance of non-profit professional theaters dedicated to the development, production, and continued life of new plays. Since its founding in 1998, NNPN has supported more than 200 productions nationwide through its innovative National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere program, which provides playwright and production support for new works at its Member theaters. Additional programs - its annual National Conference, National Showcase of New Plays, and MFA Playwrights Workshop; the NNPN Annual and Smith Prize commissions; its residencies for playwrights, producers and directors; and the organization's member accessed Collaboration, Festival, and Travel banks and online information sessions - have helped cement the Network's position as a vital force in the new play landscape. NNPN also strives to pioneer, implement, and disseminate ideas and programs that revolutionize the way theaters collaborate to support new plays and playwrights. Its most recent project, the New Play Exchange, is changing the way playwrights share their work and others discover it by providing immediate access to information on more than 9,500 new plays by living writers. NNPN's 30 Core and more than 75 Associate Members - along with the more than 150 affiliated artists who are its alumni, the thousands of artists and artisans employed annually by its member theaters, and the hundreds of thousands of audience members who see its supported works each year - are creating the new American theater. nnpn.org

###