**** News Release

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March 21, 2017

For Immediate Release

Salt Lake Acting Company Presents

the Utah Premiere of

***Hand To God***

By Robert Askins

Salt Lake Acting Company (SLAC) brings to its stage the dark and hilarious new comedy that took Broadway by storm and is now the most produced play in the 16/17 theatre season nationwide**, HAND TO GOD by Robert Askins**. Running **April 12 – May 14**, HAND TO GOD is a slightly profane and truly profound story of morality, faith, love and loss. Nominated for five Tony Awards including Best New Play, HAND TO GOD is sure to thrill Salt Lake City’s most adventurous audiences.

In the basement of a church in Cypress, Texas, we meet Marjorie, a woman struggling to keep it together after the death of her husband by teaching arts and crafts to her son Jason and a few of his misfit friends. They are creating sock puppets to put on a show for their congregation, but Jason’s puppet Tyrone begins to take on a bombastic, bawdy life of his own, landing Jason in hot water with his mom, friends and Pastor.

HAND TO GOD is funny, provocative, has a lot of heart and was once described as “Sesame Street meets The Exorcist” by The New Yorker. It will leave audiences with plenty to think and talk about as they leave the theatre. In an interview with SLAC Marketing Director Erika Ahlin, Askins said: “As a playwright, I do anything I can to force people do to hard things to delight the audience. I think it makes us all grow. I am all for the complexity of Chekhov and the poetry of Shakespeare, but we are in a room together, and actors want to do special things and have the audience see something amazing.”

SLAC is partnering with the **Dramatists Guild Fund’s Traveling Masters program** to bring in playwright Robert Askins for the opening weekend of the production. Askins will participate in master classes with students, local playwrights, and meet and greet audience members on opening night.

This production heightens SLAC’s relationship with the University of Utah community. HAND TO GOD is directed by Head of the Actor Training program Chris DuVal, set designed by Theatre Department Chair Gage Williams and sound designed by Instructor Jennifer Jackson. Alexandra Harbold, who plays Margery in the production, is an Adjunct Lecturer, and University Professional Theatre Program students Ava Kostia (Assistant Director/Assistant Fight Director), Mary-Helen Pitman (Assistant Puppet Designer), Aaron Hoenig (Assistant Sound Designer) and actor Nathan Vaughn (Timothy) are all current students at the University of Utah.

Spring at SLAC means subscription renewals. Before and during intermission of each performance of HAND TO GOD, SLAC staff will be in the Chapel Theatre with information on the exciting and ambitious 17/18 season of plays. Audiences are encouraged to come early to renew their subscriptions or learn about becoming a subscriber.

**WHO:**

Salt Lake Acting Company

**WHAT:**

HAND TO GOD

By Robert Askins

**WHEN:**

April 12th – May 14th, 2017

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

Additional performances:

Tuesday, May 2 @ 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 13 @ 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.

**WHO’S WHO**

PLAYWRIGHT

**Robert Askins** was born in Cypress, Texas. His Tony-nominated, Obie Award-winning play HAND TO GOD finished its run on London’s West End (Olivier-nominated for Best New Comedy) after it opened on Broadway in April 2015, following two critically-acclaimed runs at Ensemble Studio Theatre and MCC Theater, where it was named a NYTimes Critics’ Pick and called “the most entertaining show of 2014.” His newest play PERMISSION made its world premiere off-Broadway in spring 2015 at MCC Theater. His play FISH DISPLAY was part of the 2012 Ojai Playwrights Conference and PERMISSION was part of the 2014 conference. Rob has received two EST/Sloan grants, the Helen Merrill Emerging Playwrights Award, and an Arch and Bruce Brown Award for Playwriting. Rob is an I-73 and Youngblood alum and a graduate of Baylor University.

DIRECTOR

**Christopher DuVal** is an Associate Professor and the incoming Head of the Actor Training Program at the University of Utah. He has additionally worked as a professor, guest teacher, AEA actor, and fight director at universities, training programs and regional theatres throughout the country - including 17 years at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where he acted or fight directed in 40 productions including Noises Off, Comedy of Errors, Twelfth Night, Henry V, Henry VI Parts 1 - 3, Hamlet, Love’s Labor’s Lost, Othello, Cyrano De Bergerac, Cherry Orchard, Three Sisters, Winter’s Tale, As You Like It, Dead Man’s Cell Phone, Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler, The Heart of Robin Hood, Merchant of Venice, Room Service, Present Laughter, Troilus and Cressida, and many others. He has also worked at such theatres as the Dallas Theatre Center, Sacramento Theatre Company, Grand Theatre, Utah Opera, Laguna Playhouse, Shakespeare Orange County, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Idaho Repertory Theatre, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, and at South Coast Repertory which included appearing in the World Premiere of Wit. He serves as the Resident Fight Director at Pioneer Theatre Company. Chris is recognized as a Master Teacher with Dueling Arts International, a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors, an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework, and holds a 2nd degree black belt in Aikido. He is the author of “Stage Combat Arts: an Integrated Approach to Acting, Voice and Text Work + Video", published by Bloomsbury Methuen. www.stagecombatarts.weebly.com

CAST

**Alexandra Harbold \*** (Marjorie) is thrilled to return to Salt Lake Acting Company. Previously at SLAC, she acted in TWO STORIES, CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION, SIX YEARS, and ICE GLEN, and directed last season's TRIBES and CLIMBING WITH TIGERS (SLAC, Flying Bobcat, & the Red Fred Project), in addition to the premieres of (a man enters), and THE PERSIAN QUARTER. Recent projects include dramaturging THE LAST SHIP and AN INSPECTOR CALLS (Pioneer Theatre Company) and directing SELF DEFENSE, OR DEATH OF SOME SALESMEN (U of U Studio 115) and PICNIC (The Grand). Upcoming: directing ION (The Classical Greek Festival 2017). Alexandra is an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Utah and the Co-Founder/Co-Artistic Director of Flying Bobcat Theatrical Laboratory.

**Amy Ware\*** (Jessica) graduated from Westminster College in 2015 with her degree in Arts Administration. She is very excited and honored to be performing at Salt Lake Acting Company again in this provocative and hilarious piece. Previous performances include; PICNIC at the Grand Theatre as Millie; TRIBES at Salt Lake Acting Company as Sylvia; STRANGERS, LOVERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS as part of the Great Salt Lake Fringe Festival as Annie/Joan; GODSPELL at Westminster College as Amy (Learn Your Lessons Well); TEMPEST at Westminster College as Spirit; HECUBA with the Classical Greek Festival as Polyxena; THREE SISTERS at Westminster Collage as Irina; FAME at the Grand Theater as a dancer. She would love to thank her family and friends for always supporting her in her endeavors.

**Daniel Beecher** (Pastor Greg) attended the actor training program at the U of U. SLAC audiences may remember him from COURSE 86 B IN THE CATALOGUE, and THE CARETAKER. He has most recently been seen locally in STAGE KISS with Wasatch Theatre Co., TWELFTH NIGHT at Salt Lake Shakespeare, AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY with Utah Rep and Silver Summit, and at the Grand Theater in NOISES OFF, OUR TOWN, and DEATH OF A SALESMAN. Other local credits include PETER PAN, MACBETH, KING LEAR, and ROSENCRANZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD at Pioneer Theatre Company, and many others.

**Nathan Vaughn** (Timothy) is an Ogden born actor, newly relocated to Salt Lake City after a short stint of living out of a van in California. He is currently a freshman in the Actors Training Program at the University of Utah. "Hand to God" is Nathan's first show with SLAC, and he's extremely excited to be a part of this all-star cast. Some of his credits include: Link Larkin, HAIRSPRAY (Ziegeld); Roger, RENT (Weber State) Bouley, DAMN YANKEES (Weber State); Jack, INTO THE WOODS (Ziegfeld); Bobby, CABARET (Utah Rep); Ensemble, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN (Ziegfeld); Ensemble, DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS (Centerpoint); and Ensemble, SPAMALOT (Ziegfeld). Special thanks to his dear friends, who have always unwaveringly supported the pursuit of his passions. Thank you for coming, and enjoy the show.

**Riley O’Toole\*** (Jason/Tyrone) this is Riley's first production with Salt Lake Acting Company, and he looks forward to getting to know audiences in Salt Lake City. Regional credits include Guthrie Theater: THE LION IN WINTER, JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK; Minnesota Jewish Theatre: THE WHIPPING MAN; Montana Shakespeare in the Parks: RICHARD III, THE COMEDY OF ERRORS; Arizona Theatre Company: OF MICE AND MEN; Milwaukee Repertory Theater: OF MICE AND MEN, REP LAB, A CHRISTMAS CAROL, DREAMGIRLS; Upcoming: Montana Shakespeare in the Parks: MACBETH, YOU NEVER CAN TELL. Riley is a graduate of the University of Minnesota/ Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program.

DESIGN TEAM

Set Design – Gage Williams

Costume Design – Philip R. Lowe

Lighting Design – James M. Craig

Composer/Sound Design – Jennifer Jackson

Stage Manager –Justin Ivie\*

Dialect Coach – Adrianne Moore

Puppet Design – Steven Glenn Brown & Linda L. Brown

UPTP Assistant Director – Ava Kostia

UPTP Assistant Sound Design – Aaron Hoenig

UPTP Assistant Puppet Design – Mary-Helen Pitman

\*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).

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