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theater works

### from the director

**HAND TO GOD** has experienced a meteoric journey from its beginnings in a tiny off-Broadway theater to its success as a Tony-nominated Broadway hit to its current status as one of the most-produced plays in the country. What is it about this irreverent comedy set in a Lutheran church in Cypress, Texas that has so captured the hearts and minds of the American theater-going public?

Playwright Robert Askins drew from his own life in creating HAND TO GOD; he grew up in Cypress and was a devout Lutheran whose mother ran a puppet ministry for the church and whose father passed away when he was a young man, just like the protagonist, Jason. But within that very specific autobiographical world, Askins also explores some big questions about the power of faith, the nature of morality, the challenges of family dynamics and the effects of grief. Audiences can engage with these universal themes no matter their faith, age or background. Can't we all relate to the desire to let our inner id free from the restraints of polite society and be outrageous? Haven't we all struggled with the task of being good, moral and generous when it seems like the bad guys have all the fun?

**HAND TO GOD** has been lauded across the globe for its hilarious lines, original characters and madcap situations, but perhaps the real secret to its success is the truthful heart at its core, proving that the very best comedy comes from the most honest places.

Tracy Brigden

Producing Partner John and Kelly Hartman Foundation

Cover design by WondriskaRusso Photo by Lanny Nagler

 <sup>+</sup> Associate Member of SDC, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.
<sup>\*</sup> Member of Actors' Equity Association, Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the U.S.

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### #HandToGod

#SpeakOfTheDevil



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by Robert Askins directed by Tracy Brigden<sup>+</sup>

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Jason/Tyrone	NICK LaMEDICA*
Margery	LISA VELTEN SMITH*
Jessica	MAGGIE CARR*
Timmy	MILES G. JACKSON*
Pastor Greg	PETER BENSON*

Scenic Design/Projections Costume Design Lighting Design Sound Design Puppet Design Fight Choreographer Casting

Assoc. Scenic Design Production Manager Stage Manager LUKE CANTARELLA TRACY CHRISTENSEN MATTHEW RICHARDS ELIZABETH ATKINSON STEPHANIE SHAW ROBERT WESTLEY CAPARELLIOTIS CASTING LAUREN PORT, CSA

LIANNE ARNOLD BRIDGET SULLIVAN KATE J. CUDWORTH\*

HAND TO GOD was developed by The Ensemble Studio Theatre/Youngblood Program at Southampton Arts in July 2011 and received its world premiere production at The Ensemble Studio Theatre in October 2011.

> Off-Broadway Premiere at the MCC Theater March 10, 2014 Artistic Directors: Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey & William Cantler Executive Director: Blake West

Originally produced on Broadway by Kevin McCollum Broadway Global Ventures CMC Morris Berchard Mariano V. Tolentino Jr. Stephanie Kramer LAMS Productions DeSimone/Winkler Joan Raffe & Jhett Tolentino Timothy Laczynski Lily Fan Ayal Miodovnik JAM Theatricals Ensemble Studio Theatre MCC Theater

> HAND TO GOD is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

TheaterWorks is celebrating its 32nd season as a non-profit, professional theater company. Founded in 1985.

HAND TO GOD is the 5th production of the 2017-2018 Season.

TheaterWorks • 233 Pearl Street • Hartford, CT 06103 • 2018



**PETER BENSON** (Pastor Greg) is pleased to be making his **TheaterWorks** debut. Most recently, he appeared in *The Sting*, with Harry Connick, at Paper Mill Playhouse. Broadway: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Harvey, Promises, Promises, To Be or Not To Be, Boeing/Boeing, The Pajama Game* 

(Outer Critics Circle Nomination), Wonderful Town, Cabaret, Little Me, An American Daughter and State Fair. He has recorded eight original Broadway cast albums. Off Broadway: Distracted (Roundabout), Birth & Afterbirth (Atlantic), The New Moon (City Center), The Country Club (Drama Dept. & Long Wharf) Urban Dictionary Plays (twice at Ars Nova), and many others. Recent Television guest star roles include Louis CK, Horace & Pete, Banshee (season 4), Elementary, The Americans, Blue Bloods, and Blacklist. He lives in New York City and Wethersfield, CT with his wife and two children.



**MAGGIE CARR** (Jessica) couldn't be happier to be making her **TheaterWorks** debut! Off Broadway/NYC: *Hot Mess* (Jerry Orbach Theatre); *Walken On Sunshine* (FringeNYC); *The Angel of Allegheny County* (New Wave Theater Collective). Regional: *The Villains' Supper Club* (Merrimack Rep); *Hand to God* 

(City Theatre); First Date, Judge Jackie Justice, Kopit and Yeston's Phantom (Pittsburgh CLO); Country House (The REP). Readings and workshops: Dry Bones, Nomad Motel, The Consequences, You Are What You (City Theatre); Xanadu, First Date, Judge Jackie Justice (Pittsburgh CLO). Film/TV: Gone (NBC), Help Me First (Drafthouse). Web: Maggie vs. Evil Dead, Conversations w/ My Ex (Fifty2&Nine Productions). NYC Producer: Walken On Sunshine. Maggie vs. Evil Dead, Sweeney Todd (Carrnivale Theatrics),... Spelling Bee and Dog Sees God (Black and White Theatre Co.).Writing: Open House, The Sisters Sorella, Maggie vs. Evil Dead. Maggie has also been a contributor to HorrorFuel, iamgeek, and FanFest. She loves her husband Billy very much. Instagram: @maggiecar Twitter: @Magthecar



MILES G. JACKSON (Timmy) is excited to be making his TheaterWorks debut in this insane play. Recent stage credits include *Typhoid Mary, Tribes* (Barrington Stage Company), *Miss Bennet...Pemberley* (The Rep of St. Louis), *My Name is Asher Lev* (George Street Playhouse), 4000 Miles (Capital Rep),

and *Mad Forest* (Williamstown). TV/Film: *In Reality* (dir. Ann Lupo), *Flora* (dir. Sasha Vukovic), and *The Last O.G.* on TBS opposite Tracy Morgan. Thanks to every single person involved. Sorry mom and dad. milesgjackson.com



**NICK LaMEDICA** (Jason/Tyrone) is excited to be making his **TheaterWorks** debut. Recent favorite credits include the regional premiere of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis/ Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park) *Hand to God* (City Theatre Company), *How I Learned* 

*to Drive* (Cleveland Play House/Syracuse Stage), *War Horse* (1st National Tour & Tokyo), As You Like It (Denver Center), *Benediction* (World Premiere Denver Center), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Two River Theatre). He has appeared on television in *Mysteries at the Museum* and in various commercials for Hasbro, Krispy Kreme, Microsoft, and Planned Parenthood. Nick is a graduate of Marymount Manhattan College's BFA Acting and Musical Theatre programs and a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.



**LISA VELTEN SMITH** (Margery) is thrilled to be reprising the role of Margery at **TheaterWorks** after a fantastic run at City Theatre in Pittsburgh. A recent transplant to Pittsburgh, other credits include Pittsburgh Public Theatre's productions of *Equus* and *Disgraced* and City Theatre's productions

of Nomad Motel and Oblivion. Broadway: After Miss Julie (Roundabout Theatre). Off B'way: Spirit Control (Manhattan Theatre Club), Antony and Cleopatra, All's Well That Ends Well (Theatre for a New Audience). Other select credits include Greedy (Clubbed Thumb), Silent Heroes (Roundtable Ensemble), FUBAR, Love/Sick (Project Y Theatre), Rabbit Hole (Premiere Stages), Paris Commune (La Jolla Playhouse), Bash (About Face Theatre), Absolution (Steppenwolf Garage). TV/Film: Gone, White Collar, Law and Order, Law and Order: Criminal Intent (recurring), Early Edition, Feast of the Seven Fishes, Proxy, In Our Nature, 100 Towels, What Are You Having? among others. BFA: The Theatre School at DePaul University, MFA: University of California, San Diego. Lisa is an artistic associate of Project Y Theatre in New York City and teaches voice at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama. Love to my family.



**ROBERT ASKINS** (Playwright) was born in Cypress, Texas in 1980. He moved to New York in 2005. His Obie Award winning, Tony nominated play **HAND TO GOD** was a smash hit on Broadway after a 2014 run at MCC and three sold-out runs at Ensemble Studio Theater in 2011-12. In 2009, his play *Princes* 

of Waco was produced by EST/Youngblood. His one-act play Matthew and the Pastor's Wife was a part of Marathon 2010 at EST, and The Love Song of the Albanian Sous Chef won a Dallas Outer Circle Critics Award in 2011. Askins is proud to be an alumnus of I-73, Youngblood, and a member of the Ensemble Studio Theatre. He has received two EST/ Sloan grants, an Arch and Bruce Davis Award, and is one of the 2012 recipients of the Helen Merrill Award for emerging playwrights.



**TRACY BRIGDEN** (Director) is thrilled to be back at **TheaterWorks** where she has directed *Midsummer (a play with songs)* and *Art. Midsummer* was nominated for four Connecticut Critics Circle awards: Best Production, Director, Actor and Actress. Tracy served as Artistic Director at City

Theatre Company in Pittsburgh for 16 years directing over 50 productions of new plays including world premieres by Christopher Durang, Keith Reddin, Adam Rapp, Jeffrey Hatcher and many others. Recent work includes *Ironbound* by Pulitzer-winner Martyna Majok, *The Guard* by Jessica Dickey, and *Hand to God* (at City), *An Act of God* by David Javerbaum (at Bucks County Playhouse), and *Heisenberg* by Simon Stephens (at Pittsburgh Public Theater). Upcoming productions include *The Roommate* at Cincinnati Playhouse, *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath at Arden Theatre Company and the American premiere of *Oil* by Ella Hickson at The Olney Theater Center. Prior to City Theatre, Tracy served on the artistic staffs of Manhattan Theatre Club and Hartford Stage Company. Tracy thanks the team and artists at City Theatre for all the work on the Pittsburgh production of **HAND TO GOD**, which inspired and informed this production.



**ROB RUGGIERO** (Producing Artistic Director) has been part of **TheaterWorks** artistic leadership for 25 years. He has directed over 50 shows, including *The Legend* of Georgia McBride, Constellations, Next to Normal, Relativity, Sex with Strangers, Christmas on the Rocks, The Other Place and *Time Stands Still*. His Broadway credits

include Looped (starring Valerie Harper in a Tony-nominated performance) and High (starring Kathleen Turner). Off-Broadway, he conceived and directed the musical revue Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn (Nominated for Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards). Rob conceived and directed Ella, a musical portrait of Ella Fitzgerald, which has been seen at 24 regional theaters and on National Tour. His work has received multiple awards in Connecticut and around the United States. In his tenth collaboration with Goodspeed Musicals, Rob directed Rags. He also directed highly successful productions of La Cage aux Folles, Fiddler on the Roof (Connecticut Critic's Circle Award for Best Direction), The Most Happy Fella (Connecticut Critic's Circle Award for Best Direction), Carousel (Broadway World Award), Annie Get Your Gun, Camelot, Big River and 1776. His adaptation of Show Boat is now being licensed by the Rogers & Hammerstein Organization. robruggiero.com

LUKE CANTARELLA (Scenic and Projection Design) TheaterWorks: The Call, Buyer & Cellar, Good People, Woody Sez, The Other Place, Time Stands Still, The Understudy, This, Broke-o-logy, Speech and Debate, Blackbird, Driving Miss Daisy, Chesapeake, Lobby Hero, Spinning into Butter, Ten Unknowns, Blue/Orange, The Last Five Years, The Exonerated, Rabbit Hole and Dinner with Friends. NYC: Sex Tips for Straight Women from a Gay Man, Berenstain Bears Live, Atlantic Theater Company. Regional: American Repertory Theater, Cleveland Play House, MUNY, Goodspeed Musicals, Seattle Rep. Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Repertory Theater of St. Louis, Yale Rep, Pittsburgh Public, Northlight, Prince Music Theater, RedCAT, Berkshire Theater Festival, Barrington Stage, People's Light & Theater. Opera: Curtis, Peabody/Baltimore Lyric Opera, Wolftrap. Upcoming: *Gypsy* (MUNY) and *Evita* (St. Louis). lukecantarella.com

**TRACY CHRISTENSEN** (Costume Design) is pleased to return to **TheaterWorks** after designing *The Call* in 2016. Tracy recently designed the Broadway revival of *Sunset Boulevard* starring Glenn Close, *Candide* at Carnegie Hall with John Lithgow, and *Carousel* for London's English National Opera. Also: *Mamma Mia* for the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, the premieres of *Anne of Green Gables* at the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse and Kate Hamill's adaptation of *Pride*  & Prejudice off Broadway, Sweeney Todd starring Emma Thompson, Souvenir (Broadway), Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill (film for HBO with Audra McDonald), and Oklahoma! (Goodspeed Musicals). 10 seasons: Chautauqua Theatre Company. Faculty member: SUNY Purchase for costume design. tracychristensen.com

MATTHEW RICHARDS (Lighting Design) TheaterWorks: The Invisible Hand, Shakepeare's R&J, American Buffalo, Souvenir, Speech and Debate, Seafarer, Driving Miss Daisy, Doubt, Woman Before a Glass. Broadway: Ann. Opera: Macbeth at L.A. Opera. Off-Broadway: Is God Is at Soho Rep; Absolute Brightness..., and The Curvy Widow at Westside Arts; The Killer, Tamburlaine, and Measure For Measure at Theatre for a New Audience; A Funny Thing ... at MCC. Regional: Actor's Theater of Louisville; Arena Stage; Baltimore's Center Stage; Cincinnati Playhouse; Cleveland Play House; Dallas Theater Center; Ford's Theatre; The Goodman; Hartford Stage; The Huntington; La Jolla Playhouse; Long Wharf; The Old Globe; Shakespeare Theatre; Westport Playhouse; Williamstown Theatre Festival; Yale Repertory Theatre.

**ELIZABETH ATKINSON** (Sound Design) is delighted to be back working with **TheaterWorks**. Liz is currently based in Philadelphia, after many years in Pittsburgh where she was Resident Sound Designer at the City Theatre Company. Her freelance career includes regional theatre credits at Applied Mechanics, InterAct Theatre, The Wilma, Walnut Street Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage, Quantum Theatre, and Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette named her sound designer of the year in 2003, 2006, and 2007. She is a faculty member at Swarthmore College, and previously at Point Park University and Carnegie Mellon University. Liz has also had the honor of exhibiting at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 Prague Quadrennials.

**STEHANIE SHAW** (Puppet Design and Construction) received her BFA in Theatre Design and Technology from WVU and her MFA in Costume Design and Technology from Purdue University. She has served as costume shop manager and costume technologist for Purdue University, The University of Maryland, Weston Playhouse, Texas Shakespeare Festival, North Shore Music Theater, Des Moines Metro Opera, the City Theatre Company of Pittsburgh, as well as the Instructional Assistant Professor of Costume Technology for the University of Mississippi, Ole Miss. Thank you to TheaterWorks for this opportunity.

**ROBERT WESTLEY** (Fight Choreography) has choreographed movement for award winning theatre productions, acclaimed operas and film, developing unique and exciting performances of dance, clowning, aerial acrobatics, puppetry and martial art. Broadway: Gettin' The Band Back Together; A Bronx Tale: The Musical; Hand to God. Off-Broadway: Teenage Dick (The Public Theater); Important Hats of the Twentieth Century (MTC); Things of Dry Hours (New York Theatre Workshop); Verité (LCT3); Butcher of Baraboo (Second Stage Theater). Regional: The Honeymooners (Paper Mill Playhouse); The Sting (Paper Mill Playhouse); Romeo & Juliet (Utah Shakespeare); Bedroom Farce (Westport Country Playhouse); The Game's Afoot (Asolo Repertory Theatre); Wait Until Dark (Great Lakes Theater/Idaho Shakespeare Festival). Film: The Key Man; Victoriana; Eyeborgs.

### CAPARELLIOTIS CASTING/LAUREN PORT, CSA

Upcoming Broadway: Les Liaisons Dangereuses, The Front Page and The Glass Menagerie. Recent and Select Broadway/ Off-Broadway: Blackbird, The Father, An Act of God, Fish in the Dark, It's Only a Play, Airline Highway, Disgraced, Sex with Strangers, Lost Lake, The Country House, Casa Valentina, Holler if Ya Hear Me, The Trip to Bountiful, Dead Accounts, The House of Blue Leaves, Grace, Seminar, Lend Me a Tenor, Fences. Also: MTC, 2nd Stage, Atlantic, LCT3, Ars Nova, The Old Globe, Goodman, City Theatre, McCarter and others. Film/television: American Odyssey, (NBC), How to Get Away With Murder pilot (ABC), Ironside pilot (NBC), Steel Magnolias (Sony for Lifetime).

**BRIDGET SULLIVAN** (Production Manager) is enjoying her third season with **TheaterWorks**. Her experience includes production and project management, as well as many years in the world of props. Head of production for the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company in Vermont for 7 years, Bridget's past work also includes managing celebrity concerts at North Shore Music Theatre and Project Manager for Barbizon Lighting Company for several years. Highlights of her props and management credits also include City Theatre Company in Pittsburgh and the Santa Fe Opera. A proud graduate of Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, VA., Bridget has a BA in Theatre Arts and hails from Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

**KATE J. CUDWORTH** (Production Stage Manager) has enjoyed four seasons and 29 productions with **TheaterWorks** including *The Invisible Hand, The Legend of Georgia McBride, The Wolves, Fade, Next to Normal, Sunset Baby, Relativity, Midsummer, Woody Sez* and *Becoming Dr. Ruth.* Off-Broadway: *Freud's Last Session, [title of show].* NY/Regional: Barrington Stage Company (8 seasons including *Freud's Last Session; Dr. Ruth, All The Way; Joe Iconis' The Black Suits),* Atlantic Stage Company, Hartford Stage, Manhattan School of Music (4 seasons), Yale Opera, York Theatre Company, Bronx Opera Company, Fringe NYC, NYMF.

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**props/paint assistant** Erin Sagnelli

charge artist Jess Ploszaj

scenic assistant Sean Sanford

**electricians** Chris Labik Megan O'Brien Josh Peterson Anthony (TJ) Spinnato

stage management intern Scott Burrows

foh interns Samuel Boushee Claudia Emmanuele Megan Gwyn Gia Curran-Lopera Lydia Pettigrew Rachel Sparks

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