@THE STRAZ

HAND TO GOD

BY ROBERT ASKINS

Hello Friends,

We don't know how you're doing with 2021 resolutions but between a Super Bowl victory and leftover Valentine's candy, February has been a delightful and delicious disaster for our goals.

Hand to God, we're going to get back on track.

That not-so-subtle reference to the latest Jobsite Theater offering, *Hand to God*, may not be the divine intervention we need, but we're certain the laughter it will prompt will keep the blush on the new year.

The irreverent comedy about Jason, a shy student, who finds a creative outlet in a Christian puppet ministry only to slip his hand into the puppet Tyrone, who has a foul-mouthed bedeviled personality, is a shock to the system.

The cast is eager to hear every belly laugh through your face mask.

In April, Jobsite will reboot Shakespeare's *Henry V,* setting the timeless tale to an original, blistering industrial score and a high-def video design that will transform the Bard's work into a modern, mesmerizing spectacle.

And leave room on your calendar for the drama Opera Tampa will bring March 19-21 with *Troubadour's Tale*. This abridged take on Verdi's *Il Trovatore* promises a blood-and-thunder story soaked in revenge with the hope of everlasting love. Now, those are goals to reach for.

Thank you so much for coming to tonight's show. If you would like to show additional support for The Straz, please consider giving to our Raise the Curtain recovery fund that sustains our education and community engagement initiatives and our virtual and on-site performances.

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FEB 24 – MAR 14
JAEB THEATER

jobsite
and
THE STRAZ
present

HAND TO GOD

By Robert Askins

Direction and Sound
David M. Jenkins

Set Design
Brian Smallheer

Lighting Design
Jo Averill-Snell

Costume Design
Katrina Stevenson

Puppet Design
Linda Roethke

FEATURING

Evan Fineout, Nick Hoop, Brian Matthew Shea, Kara Sotakoun and Katrina Stevenson

As part of The Straz safety protocols, we ask that you wear a mask at all times while on our campus, including during the performance.

THANK YOU.

Jobsite actors and crew are following strict Straz Center and CDC safety protocols regarding COVID-19 during rehearsals and performances. Those including a daily wellness/building entry survey, temperature scan, mandatory mask wearing when off-stage, separate dressing rooms, no sharing of costumes, wigs or makeup and no interaction with patrons, including social distancing of 12 feet from the audience. For more specifics on Straz safety precautions go to strazcenter.org/safety.

PLEASE silence and stow all electronic devices before the performance starts.

The taking of photographs and/or use of other recording equipment is strictly prohibited during the performance. You are welcome to snap shots when the house lights are still up. Tag us on Instagram, etc., @JobsiteTheater and/or use #JobsiteH2G.

Jobsite is a proud member of Theatre Communications Group, the league for professional American theater and Theatre Tampa Bay, the area's professional theater alliance. Thank you for supporting regional artists! Enjoy the show, and please let us know what you thought: comments@jobsitetheater.org.

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

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THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Jason/Tyrone ..... Nick Hoop
Margery ..... Katrina Stevenson
Timothy ..... Evan Fineout
Jessica/Jolene ..... Kara Sotakoun
Pastor Greg ..... Brian Matthew Shea

HELP US MAKE OUR 2021 GOAL!

We'll be honest, the way things are right now and with all we are doing to keep everyone safe, there's no way that we can produce and cover basic expenses. We need your help to navigate to the other side of this pandemic so that we can continue entertaining and inspiring more than 15,000 regular audience members a year, including more than 3,500 middle and high school students. Please become part of the family by joining our annual campaign! Our 2021 goal is $85,000, which will allow us to continue offering affordable access to the arts while continuing to increase the quality of our shows and work toward a living wage for all our artists. You can learn more by visiting us at jobsitetheater.org/annual-campaign. We also would be happy to speak with you directly if you call 813.476.7378.

Thanks again for being with us tonight. Enjoy the show, and please let us know what you thought: comments@jobsitetheater.org.

TIPS APPRECIATED!

If you would like to drop a tip for tonight, hit Jobsite through Venmo @JobsiteTheater or select the "Other" option at JobsiteTheater.org/donate. Please tip the Straz Center through your app!

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Digital content and information on upcoming live performances available at JobsiteTheater.org or find us on your favorite social media platform.

Who's WHO

EVAN FINEOUT (*Timothy*) Evan has spent the past 10 years developing a sincere fondness for playing characters and being professionally goofy in the Tampa Bay area. He articulates his crippling self-awareness via standup comedy and works as a videographer for a crime scene cleanup company. Previous credits include *And Then There Were None, Noises Off, Laughing Stock, 12 Angry Men.* He dedicates his performance to his late betta fish, Karamo.

NICK HOOP (*Jason/Tyrone*) Trained at Point Park University and the University of South Florida, Nick also serves as an artistic associate for TampaRep and is currently developing a platform to share resources to connect regional artists from across the country through a new application. Previous credits include *Twelfth Night, Silence: The Musical, Speech and Debate, The Flick* (Jobsite Theater) *The Fantasticks* (freeFall Theatre) *I And You, A View From The Bridge, Stupid F***ing Bird, The Iceman Cometh* (Tampa Repertory Theatre) *Popcorn Falls* (Walnut Street Theatre) *A Few Good Men* (Stageworks Theatre) among others.
For Tyrone.

BRIAN MATTHEW SHEA (*Pastor Greg*) is pleased to be returning to the stage with incredible Jobsite Theater. A four-time recipient of *Creative Loafing*'s "Best Of The Bay" in performance, his previous Jobsite credits include *Dancing and Lughnasa, A Skull In Connemara, The Tempest, The Lonesome West, The 39 Steps, Dracula* and many more. He dedicates his performances to his beloved late parents, Peter and Pat Shea.

KARA SOTAKOUN (*Jessica/Jolene*) is a Chicagoland native who is overjoyed to help bring this play to life. She has played with Jobsite before in last season's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She's also worked in the area with American Stage and Think Tank, as well as in several commercials and short films. She trained in acting at the University of Illinois and has a deep love for making music.

KATRINA STEVENSON (*Margery, Costume Design*) most recently appeared onstage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Puck, *Othello* as Emilia, *Edgar and Emily* as Emily Dickinson, *Dancing at Lughnasa* as Maggie and *The Tempest* as Ariel. She also appeared in *Cloud Nine* as Ellen/Lin/Mrs. Saunders, *The Great Gatsby* as Myrtle, *Psycho Beach Party* as Marvel Ann, *The Maids* as Claire, in the title role of Sarah Ruhl's *Orlando* and as Mrs. Van Buren in *Intimate Apparel* with American Stage. An award-winning costume designer, her work has been seen onstage in *The Tempest, The Threepenny Opera, Gorey Stories, The Underpants, Return to the Forbidden Planet, The Hound of the Baskervilles, The 39 Steps* and many more. Her previous directing projects include *The Hound of the Baskervilles, The 39 Steps, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, What the Butler Saw, All the Great Books (abridged), The Complete History of America (abridged), The Bible: The Complete Word of God (abridged)* and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*. Katrina holds an M.F.A. in acting from the University of Florida and a B.A. in theater arts from the University of Northern Colorado. When not at the theater, Katrina loves flying on aerial silks and running after her dogs, Tink and Sherlock.

DAVID M. JENKINS (*Director, Sound*) is Producing Artistic Director and co-founder of Jobsite. He holds a Ph.D. in Communication

(Performance Studies) from the University of South Florida, an M.F.A. in Acting from the University of Florida and a B.A. in Theater Performance, also from USF. He has additionally studied with Moscow State University, the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (GITIS) and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. In addition to his full-time work for Jobsite, David teaches interdisciplinary coursework in the Judy Genshaft Honors College at USF. He has recently directed productions of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello, Edgar & Emily, Hedwig and The Angry Inch, Dancing at Lughnasa, HIR, The Tempest and The Threepenny Opera* for Jobsite, *Always … Patsy Cline* and *A Tuna Christmas* for the Straz Center and *The Aliens* for Stageworks Theatre. He has been recently seen in *DOUBT: A Parable* (Father Flynn), *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised], 1984* (O'Brien), *Cloud Nine* (Betty/Edward), *A Skull in Connemara* (Tom Hanlon) and *Time Stands Still* (James). *Creative Loafing* Best of the Bay Award: Best Stage Director (2020, 2019, 2014), *Creative Loafing* Best of the Bay Best Award: Best Artistic Director (2013, 2008, 2006), Theatre Tampa Bay Award: Outstanding Director (2017), Theatre Tampa Bay Award: Outstanding Featured Actor (2017), Theatre Tampa Bay Award: Outstanding Sound Design (2011), *BroadwayWorld* Regional Award: Best Actor (2015), *BroadwayWorld* Regional Award: Best Director of a Musical (2014). David has published articles in the scholarly journals *Text & Performance Quarterly, Liminalities* and *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research*. He lives in Tampa Heights in a neat old house with his rad wife and a mess of critters.

CHLOE MASTRO (*Scenic Painter*) got her scenic artist start with Scott Cooper at St. Petersburg College and is forever grateful to SPC for giving her opportunities in acting and art. Through Scott, she met the all-knowing Rebekah Lazaridis, who she credits for her participation in this show. She sends love to her family, her soulmate Ian and to her heavenly father!

JO AVERILL-SNELL (*Lighting Design*) is delighted to light *Hand to God*. Audience members may have previously seen her lighting designs in *Always … Patsy Cline, Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus, SHOUT! The Mod Musical, A Tuna Christmas* here at the Jaeb, in some of Jobsite Theater's performances in the Shimberg, or at Stageworks, Tampa Rep, freeFall and Urbanite Theatre.

MATTHEW RAY (*Stage Manager, Associate Producer*) has been with Jobsite since 2012, when he came on board as the company stage manager. He has worn many hats through the Bay area including stage management (Jobsite, Stageworks, A Simple Theatre), directing (*Almost an Evening,* Stageworks: Tampaworks, TampaRep: TampaWright, *Musings of a Postmodern Romantic*) and designing (Jobsite, TampaRep). He would like to thank his friends and family for their continued support throughout the years and is continually thankful to David Jenkins for his unwavering support and encouragement.

TEA ROBERTS (*Scenic Painter*) is excited to have contributed to this show. She has missed the theater and is excited about its reopening. Tea would like to thank Rebekah Lazaridis and Chloe Mastro.

BRIAN M. SMALLHEER (*Set Design*) received his education from Harrison Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, Polk Community College (Visual Arts) and University of South Florida (Theatre Design). He has been an Artistic Associate and designer for Jobsite since 1999. As a designer for Jobsite, his work has received two Best of the Bay awards; Best Lighting Design for *Einstein's Dreams* (2011) and Best Local Set Designer (2014). He also received *BroadwayWorld*'s Best Set Design for *Time Stands Still* and *Return to the Forbidden Planet.* Other select design credits include *DOUBT: A Parable, A Skull in Connemara, LIZZIE, Lebensraum, Annapurna, Orlando, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, Mindgame, Picasso at the Lapin Agile, boom!, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, The March of the Kitefliers, Gorey Stories, subUrbia* and *Dracula.* In what little spare time he has, Smallheer pursues his passion for visual arts by doing photography and painting. More info at his website bms-designs.com.

An exclusive from *Caught in the Act,* the blog of the Straz Center

PUPPETS TAKE CENTERSTAGE WITH SOME STRINGS ATTACHED

With its roots in ancient culture, including ivory and clay figures found in Egyptian tombs, puppetry has long been employed in storytelling including the theater.

Both Aristotle and Plato in ancient Greece, referenced puppets in their writing and many historians believe puppets were "actors" long before humans stepped onto the stage.

From hand puppets, rod puppets, shadow puppets and marionettes, the art of puppetry in the theater has evolved and appeared in every culture from medieval Italy and France where they were used in Christian morality plays to China where light was cast on translucent paper to create dazzling shadow shows; and 17th century Great Britain, where *Punch and Judy* showcased the comical – and violent – antics of a married couple. Originally marionettes, the characters later became hand puppets because the fighting movements kept tangling marionette strings.

The evolution also includes Bunraku, nearly human-sized wooden puppets revered in Japanese culture, to papier-mache marionettes that are part of mid-20th century Mexican folklore. Taking a more modern turn, puppets found popularity on Broadway in starring roles, most notably Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors* and multiple character in Disney's T*he Lion King.*

Jobsite Theater, on Feb. 24 – March 14, will try its hand at puppetry when it presents the irreverent *Hand to God,* about a young man who joins a Christian puppet ministry and contends with Tyrone, a puppet with a mind and mouth of its own.

The show, chockfull of off-beat humor, was on Broadway in 2015 and nominated for a Tony Award® for Best Play. *Hand to God* is just one of several plays and musicals where the puppet characters found the spotlight on Broadway. Here they are, with a few strings attached:

***Carnival!* (1961)** – Puppets are key to the storytelling in this musical about an orphan, Lili, who joins a traveling carnival. She is befriended by a puppeteer, who because of injuries, can only interact with Lili through his puppets. The love story between the two plays out through his multiple hand puppets that each express a part of their operator's psyche.

***The Lion King* (1997)** – Based on the popular animated Disney movie, *The Lion King* is now the longest running musical to utilize puppets. Tony® winner, director and visual artist Julie Taymor and her crew designed masks and puppets that brought to life the lions, gazelles, hyenas, cheetahs, giraffes, birds and a very large elephant of The Pridelands. Zazu, the uptight hornbill who is caregiver to young Simba is a hand puppet. And adapting Bunraku techniques that keep the performers camouflaged but visible, Timon the meerkat puppet, for example, attaches to the actor in three places, allowing movement of the character's mouth arms and feet.

***Little Shop of Horrors* (2003)** – Audrey II is the completely diabolical, blood drinking, alien Venus Flytrap-type plant that likes to consume humans for breakfast, lunch and dinner, much to the chagrin of Seymour who is charged with keeping her fed. To bring a giant plant to the stage, producers turned to puppeteer Martin Robinson who is best known for being the man inside Mr. Snuffleupagus among other characters from Sesame Street.

***Avenue Q* (2003)** – They may have a look similar to Sesame Street's Bert and Ernie, but the rod and live-hand puppets living on *Avenue Q* are foul-mouthed and every day's letters are S, E, and X. A spoof of the children's show, the 2004 Tony®-winning musical did provide lessons in "adulting" and received accolades for its treatment of homosexuality, racism and pornography.

***War Horse* (2011)** – This Best Play Tony® winner tells the story of a young man and his beloved horse who are separated when each is called to serve in World War I. Obviously unable to have a live horse on stage, Joey, the title character, is portrayed from foal to adult by up-to five visible puppeteers, made by the Handspring Puppet Company of South Africa. The puppet and puppeteer in tandem were so masterful, including lifelike ear and tail twitches, the audience was able to fully emotionally connect to Joey.

***Frozen* (2018)** – This popular Disney movie turned stage musical reimagined two of its characters as puppets – Olaf the snowman and Sven the reindeer. Olaf, too, is a bunraku-style puppet with its operator in full view of the audience. The key to making this style work is for the performer to seamlessly blend with its character as he stays busy using triggers to operate his feet, mouth, eyes and arms. Sven appears as a full-blown reindeer with the actor completely hidden inside the eight-and-a-half-foot long puppet. Sven doesn't speak but he still emotes through his eyes and ears from levers and controls worked from inside the costume.

***King Kong* (2018)** – According to *Entertainment Weekly,* at a preview of the musical *King Kong* in 2018, the standing ovation went to the 2,000-pound puppet. The animatronic creation stood 20-feet tall, weighed 2,400 pounds and took a curtain call with the 10 actors/puppeteers who operated its limbs with a pulley system plus three off-stage "voodoo operators" who controlled other robotics off stage. The show ran 399 performances, after the ape got decent reviews, but the musical around it had a monkey on its back – it just wasn't good.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager/Associate Producer ..... Matthew Ray
Puppet Construction ..... Suzanne Cooper Morris
Scenic Artists ..... Chloe Mastro, Tea Roberts
Online Producer ..... Shawn Paonessa
Jobsite Producing Artistic Director ..... David M. Jenkins

SPECIAL THANKS

The Alliance Theatre, Atlanta. Everyone at Straz Center for their belief in our vision and their unyielding support. Jobsite's board of directors and our mighty ensemble – for keeping this ship afloat. All of our fantastic season sponsors who are helping us realize our dreams. Most importantly, thanks to YOU for joining us here tonight.

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Colleen Cherry
Amy E. Gray
David M. Jenkins
Michael C. McGreevy
Spencer Meyers
Shawn Paonessa
Paul J. Potenza
Matthew Ray
Brian M. Smallheer
Nicole Jeannine Smith
Katrina Stevenson

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We'd love to hear from you!

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Program information and artist biographies provided by the cast and/or production company.

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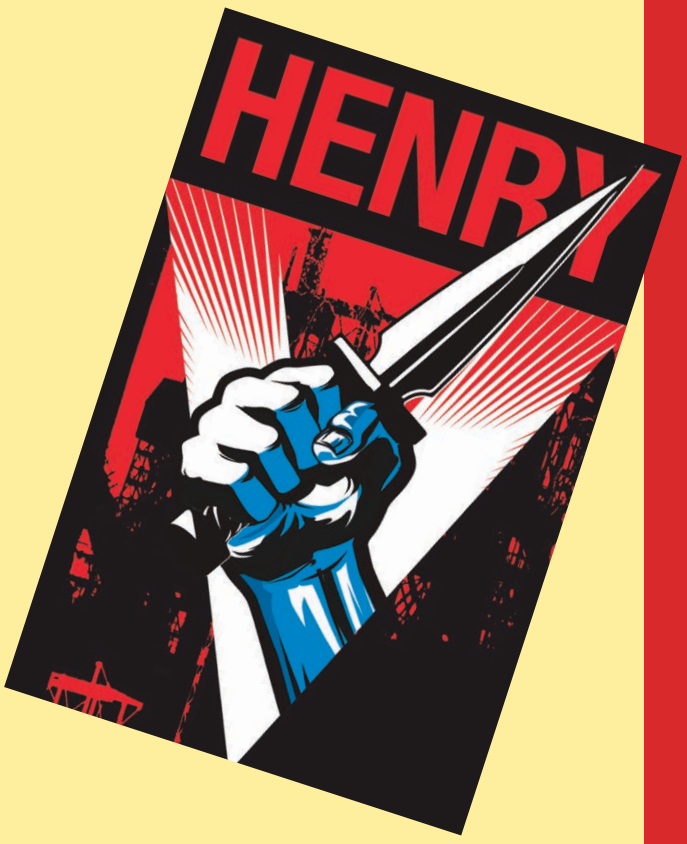

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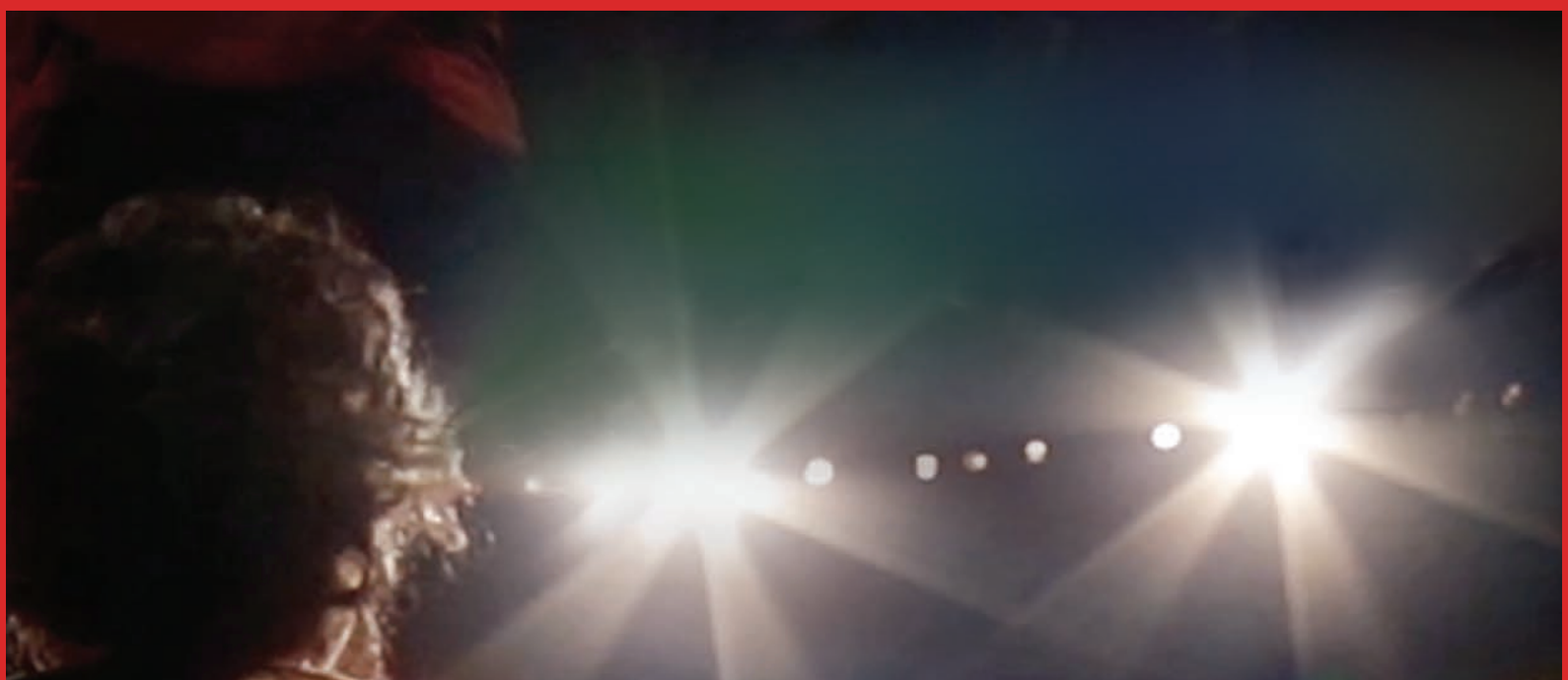

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