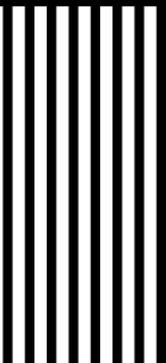


HAND TO GOD

BY ROBERT ASKINS



DRAMATISTS
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HAND TO GOD
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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 (William Carden, Artistic Director; Paul Alexander Slee, Executive Director) in October 2011. It was directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel; the set design was by Rebecca Lord-Surratt; the costume design was by Sydney Maresca; the lighting design was by Matthew Richards; the sound design was by Chris Barlow; the puppet design was by Marte Johanne Ekhougen; the fight director was Robert Westley; and the production stage manager was Michele Ebel. The cast was as follows:

JASON/TYRONE	Steven Boyer
MARGERY	Geneva Carr
PASTOR GREG	Scott Sowers
TIMMY	Bobby Moreno
JESSICA	Megan Hill

The Off-Broadway premiere of HAND TO GOD was presented by MCC Theater (Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, & William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director) on March 10, 2014. It was directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel; the set design was by Beowulf Boritt; the costume design was by Sydney Maresca; the lighting design was by Jason Lyons; the sound design was by Jill BC Du Boff; the puppet design was by Marte Johanne Ekhougen; the fight director was Robert Westley; and the production manager was B. D. White. The cast was as follows:

JASON/TYRONE	Steven Boyer
MARGERY	Geneva Carr
PASTOR GREG	Marc Kudisch
TIMMY	Michael Oberholtzer
JESSICA	Sarah Stiles

HAND TO GOD was produced on Broadway at the Booth Theatre, with the same cast and credits, by Kevin McCollum, Broadway Global Ventures, CMC, Morris Berchard, Mariano V. Tolentino Jr., Stephanie Kramer, LAMS Productions, Ashley DeSimone, Timothy Laczynski, Lily Fan, JAM Theatricals, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and MCC Theater, opening on April 7, 2015. It was directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel; the set design was by Beowulf Boritt; the costume design was by Sydney Maresca; the lighting design was by Jason Lyons; the sound design was by Jill BC Du Boff; the puppet design was by Marte Johanne Ekhougen; the fight director was Robert Westley; and the production supervisor was Brian Lynch. The cast was as follows:

JASON/TYRONE	Steven Boyer
MARGERY	Geneva Carr
PASTOR GREG	Marc Kudisch
TIMMY	Michael Oberholtzer
JESSICA	Sarah Stiles

CHARACTERS

JASON/TYRONE

MARGERY

PASTOR GREG

TIMMY

JESSICA/JOLENE

HAND TO GOD

Prologue

All is dark.

Then a light.

Then a puppet into the light.

The puppet is cute, cuddly. You've seen something like this before. I mean he looks Elmo-y and shit, but as he goes on you can tell there's something wrong with him.

He's weirder.

Darker.

Whatever ...

TYRONE. In the beginning there was no divide. We were too stupid to be anything but what we were. We didn't shave. We rutted as we chose, careless in the night. When you had to shit. You just let it drop. It was a golden age. Then some evil bastard figured out many together could kill larger things. Then the ladies figured out if you have more food from larger things less babies die. So we started camping. Together. That's where the trouble started. All of a sudden you couldn't just rut or shit or stare off for long periods of time. If some other took to your lady. He didn't just kill you or you him. Other things had to happen. To preserve the group. And some asshole. Probably the same one that figured out how to kill really big things in groups. He invented right and wrong. Right is for all of us. Wrong is for just you. Peace around the campfire. Good. You shitting in the middle of the sleeping place. Bad. Preservation of numbers, good. Stoning to death the guy with the really high voice that won't shut the fuck up in his sleep, bad. Families and babies and more and more, good. Extracurricular fucking bad ... but unavoidable. So the same motherfucker who invented the group

kill and team virtue, that ballsy piece of pig shit topped all his previous work and he invented ... The devil. When I have put myself ahead of the group. When I have acted badly, in order that I may stay around the campfire all I have to do is say ... The devil made me do it. (*The puppet laughs.*)

ACT ONE

Scene 1

*The lights come up on the basement of a church.
The basement of a church in Texas.
The basement of a church in Cypress, Texas.
There are posters. One has a rainbow of children holding hands and running towards a white-bearded Christ. There is a brightly colored rug. There are beanbag chairs.
There are four people in the room. One grown-up and three kids. The kids are played by actors that look young. But by no means the 15 – 17-year-olds that they are intended to be. Margery is standing in the middle of the room. She has a primish-looking lady puppet on her hand.*

MARGERY. Hey y'all my name's Rita and I love Jesus! Do you love Jesus? *(She laughs to herself. Enjoying her puppet voice. She looks around the room. Nobody seems to love Jesus. Nobody seems to want to be there. The boys are Jason and Timothy. The girl is Jessica. Jason is blond and slight and slightly afraid. Timothy is in all black. Jessica is dark-haired and thin. She is working on her puppet, a little hunched over in the corner.)* Well where's everybody at? Jessie you gonna finish your ...

JESSICA. Jolene.

MARGERY. You gonna finish Jolene today.

JESSICA. I guess. *(She pulls a load of stuffing out of the puppet supply bag. She maybe starts stuffing it under the puppet's shirt.)*

MARGERY. Whoa Jessie how much of that stuffing do you need?

JESSICA. You said I could make her look like I wanted.

MARGERY. Yes but what is all that for.

TIMOTHY. Puppet boobs.

JESSICA. Shut up Timothy.

TIMOTHY. It's not my fault you got no tits.

MARGERY. Hello Tim.

JASON. (*To Jessica.*) I think you look nice.
JESSICA. Umm thanks.
TIMOTHY. Dude I can see your boner from here.
MARGERY. Stop it Tim, that is enough.
TIMOTHY. What I'm the one that's being forced to look at a boner.
I'm the victim here.
MARGERY. Timothy, you cannot see his boner.
JASON. Mom.
MARGERY. Timothy. Tim ... T ... do you even have your puppet
Timothy.
TIMOTHY. Uhhh. No.
MARGERY. Why don't you have a puppet, Timothy.
TIMOTHY. 'Cause puppet are for faggots.
MARGERY. Timothy.
JESSICA. You are so ...
TIMOTHY. What?
JESSICA. Afraid.
MARGERY. Jessica.
TIMOTHY. Afraid of what?
JESSICA. Afraid you're gay.
MARGERY. Hey now.
TIMOTHY. What?
JESSICA. That's why you say that.
TIMOTHY. See if you can taste the gay when I nut in your mouth.
MARGERY. Timothy behave.
TIMOTHY. Or what?
MARGERY. Or I'll tell your mother.
TIMOTHY. If you can get her when she's sober. (*Beat.*)
MARGERY. Kids this can be really great. Really rewarding if you
just ... just ...
TIMOTHY. Just what.
MARGERY. Just took it seriously. (*To Jason.*) Hey show them
what you've been working on.
JASON. Moooooommmmm.
MARGERY. It's cool it's really cool. Rad even.
JASON. Please Mom don't say rad.
MARGERY. Why not?
JESSICA. Yeah why not? She can say rad.
MARGERY. I can say rad.
TIMOTHY. You can totally say rad Mrs. S.

MARGERY. See Jason. So now go ahead. Show them. Show them what you been working on. *(Jason stands and brings up his puppet, Tyrone, and starts a very faint and very self-conscious rendition of "Jesus Loves Me." He is not a bad puppeteer but he isn't selling it.)*

JASON. *Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so ... (Continuing over the chatter.)*

TIMOTHY. Jesus loves you in your buttohole.

JESSICA. You're so far back in the closet, you're in Narnia.

TIMOTHY. What?

MARGERY. QUIET. *(Jason continues.)* Why are you two here.

JESSICA. Well really I'm more into Balinese shadow puppetry, but I'll take what I can get.

TIMOTHY. 'Cause Mom won't leave me at home during her meetings.

JESSICA. What meetings.

TIMOTHY. None of your business you nosy bitch.

MARGERY. TIMOTHY. You can't ... that is ... *(Jason's still going.)*

Jason that's enough. *(Jason keeps going.)* Jason. *(And going.)* Baby stop.

JASON. Sorry Mom. *(Margery pauses.)*

MARGERY. Jason. Jessica. Will you leave me and Timothy alone?

JASON. Mom.

MARGERY. Just for a second, baby.

TIMOTHY. Awww. Little baby.

MARGERY. Shut up, Timothy. *(Beat.)* I'm ... I ...

JESSICA. Jason you wanna get a Coke? I know where Pastor Greg keeps them. *(Jason looks at Timothy and his mother.)*

JASON. Okay. *(They exit. Timothy and Margery are left alone onstage.)*

MARGERY. Do you hate me Timothy?

TIMOTHY. *(Suddenly quiet.)* No.

MARGERY. I can't keep doing this Tim. It is every week. Every week. I have had a hard year. I have had a hard year. *(Timothy doesn't say anything.)* I have one thing in my life that is keeping me together and that is my dedication to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and because I can't sing and I can't preach and my brownies taste like old tires I am trying to teach myself and you how to do puppet shows. Now if you don't want to come here you don't have to come here. Go smoke in the parking lot and I will tell your mother you are in here. But please leave me alone. I beg you to leave me alone. *(She hangs her head.)*

TIMOTHY. Why are you sad?

MARGERY. My husband died.

HAND TO GOD

by Robert Askins

3M, 2W

After the death of his father, meek Jason finds an outlet for his anxiety at the Christian Puppet Ministry, in the devoutly religious, relatively quiet small town of Cypress, Texas. Jason's complicated relationships with the town pastor, the school bully, the girl next door, and — most especially — his mother are thrown into upheaval when Jason's puppet, Tyrone, takes on a shocking and dangerously irreverent personality all its own. *HAND TO GOD* explores the startlingly fragile nature of faith, morality, and the ties that bind us.

"The fearsome critter [Tyrone], who takes possession of a troubled teenager's left arm in Robert Askins' darkly delightful play really inspires goose bumps as he unleashes a reign of terror ... But he's also flat-out hilarious, spewing forth acid comedy that will turn those goose bumps into guffaws."
—**The New York Times**

"Furiously funny ... Askins' most impressive talent is his ability to make us laugh while juggling those big themes that make life so terrifying: death, depression, alcoholism, sexual guilt, emotional repression, religious hypocrisy and the eternal battle between your good puppet and your bad puppet."
—**Variety**

"A scabrously funny scenario that steadily darkens into suspense and Grand Guignol horror, this fiery clash of the id, ego and superego is also an audacious commentary on the uses of faith, both to comfort and control us."
—**The Hollywood Reporter**

"I don't know which I want to do more: Sing Hallelujah — or wash its dirty little mouth out with soap. ... Clearly a singular vision is at work here, with playwright Robert Askins venturing successfully into territory — satire — rich with potholes."
—**Deadline**

"HAND TO GOD is so ridiculously raunchy, irreverent and funny it's bound to leave you sore from laughing. Ah, hurts so good."
—**New York Daily News**

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