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5552 E. LA PALMA AVE. ANAHEIM HILLS, CA 92807
Casey Long, Managing Director T (714) 777-3033 casey@chancetheater.com

NEWS

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West Coast Premiere of irreverent new comedy, *Jesus Hates Me*, opens Chance Theater's 2009 Season

Veteran TV writer Wayne Lemon's insightful and hilarious collision of faith and blasphemy will kick off the award-winning Chance Theater's second decade in Orange County

Anaheim Hills, CA (January 12, 2009) – Artistic Director Oanh Nguyen and Managing Director Casey Long are pleased to announce the upcoming West Coast Premiere of ***Jesus Hates Me* (Press Opening: January 31)**, the hilarious and provocative first stage work by television writer Wayne Lemon, which has already received staged readings and full productions at theaters around the country, including Chicago's renowned Steppenwolf Theater Company.

Irreverent, thought-provoking dark comedy by veteran television writer Wayne Lemon ("Grace Under Fire," "The Torkelsons"). Somewhere in South Central Texas is the "Blood of the Lamb" Miniature Golf Course. Ethan, an ex-high school football star, is desperate to find identity, sanity, faith and freedom under the gaze of a Wal-Mart mannequin transformed into Jesus on the cross at the 17th hole. Follow Ethan on an insightful, unpredictable and hilarious week as he tries to escape from his over-zealous/bi-polar mother, a suicidal dishwasher, a pot-smoking cop, a beer-swillin' good ol' boy, possibly the love of his life, and of course the J-man himself.

Chance Theater Artistic Director and director of *Jesus Hates Me*, Oanh Nguyen said, "The lasting impression and the relevancy of the play is in its characters' desperate need to find meaning and purpose in their lives while hiding behind their wit, dreams and perceived disappointments. There's a quote from Father Patrick Dorn of the Colorado Christian Drama Review on the first production at the Denver Center Theatre where he says that Wayne should be commended for speaking on behalf of so many people today who are struggling with the exact same world view. I agree wholeheartedly and am impressed by Father Dorn's ability to see pass the title and the exhalations of the characters and into the core of the play. This is a play about the struggle to find faith. It also happens to be outrageously funny!"

About *Jesus Hates Me* and Wayne Lemon

After productions at the Denver Center Theatre Company, Kitchen Dog Theater in Dallas, and the Emigrant Theater in Minneapolis, as well as staged readings by Steppenwolf Theatre, Hartford Stage and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, playwright Lemon is honored to have the Chance Theater presenting the West Coast premiere of his dark comedy, ***Jesus Hates Me***. "The Chance's involvement is proof that Jesus only mildly dislikes me."

Lemon began his career as a music and theater critic for the Austin Chronicle while attending film school at the University of Texas where he earned a Masters Degree in Film Production with a minor in Shakespeare. After having a handgun thrown at him while working with inner city youth in East Austin he relocated to Los Angeles, erroneously believing it to be safer. Lemon has developed screenplays for various studios as well as pilots for all the major networks. He has written for such critically acclaimed shows as *Grace Under Fire* and the Emmy winning *The Famous Teddy Z* as well as cult favorite *The Torkelsons*.

(more)

He has just completed his second play, *8 feet of water*, based on the true story of two African American young men who drown while in police custody.

Production Staff

The cast for ***Jesus Hates Me*** will include Chance Dean (Ethan), Timothy Covington (Trane), Karen Webster* (Annie), Jennifer Ruckman* (Lizzy), Dimas Diaz* (Boone), and Ben Green (Georgie).

Creative staff and designers include Starlet Jacobs (Scenic Designer), KC Wilkerson (Lighting Designer), Erika C. Miller* (Costume Designer), Michael Irish (Fight Choreographer), Tanae Beyer* (Stage Manager).

* Denotes Chance Theater resident company member

If you would like to arrange an interview with any of the creative team or cast or would like more information, reservations or complimentary press passes, please call Managing Director at Casey Long (714) 777-3033 or email him at casey@chancetheater.com.

About The Chance Theater

Voted “Best Theater Group” by *MyFoxLA* and “Best Small Theater” by *Orange Coast Magazine*, the Chance is proud to begin Season 11 as one of the leading ensemble based theatre companies in Southern California. A recipient of the 2007 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle’s (LADCC) Polly Warfield Award for Excellence, a vital component of the Chance Theater’s mission has always been to intimately present personally meaningful, uniquely engaging stories that promote dialogue within our community and provide a visceral experience for theatergoers. As a constituent member of Theater Communications Group (TCG), Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET), and the Los Angeles Stage Alliance (LASA), the Chance continues to bring national attention to Southern California theater through its recent achievements, which include a 2006 GLAAD Media Award nomination for Outstanding Los Angeles Theater.

Performance & Ticket Information

January 30 – March 1 (Press Opening: January 31)

Jesus Hates Me

By Wayne Lemon

Directed by Oanh Nguyen

Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 p.m., Sundays at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.; \$30-\$35.

The Chance Theater
5552 E. La Palma Ave
Anaheim Hills, CA 92807
www.chancetheater.com

Box Office Information:

Phone number: (714) 777-3033

Make secure reservation at www.chancetheater.com.

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Reviews about *Jesus Hates Me*

"Playwright Lemon needs only his pen to disarm the audience with pointed one-liners and thoughtful existential observations. Lemon has hit upon a genre that--as irreverent and at times as profane as rap, yet filled with pertinent issues and rebellious politics--will bring them (Gen-X) into the theater for cultural conversation."

-- Bob Bows, *Variety*

"*Jesus Hates Me* is a character study, a comedy, a dramatic statement, a fleeting discourse on religion, an exploration of belief, a brief treatise on predestination versus self-determination and a whole lot of fun."

-- Gary Zeidner, *Centerstage, Boulder Weekly*

"...an exquisite comedy, featuring dark black lines of intriguing thought, with some of the funniest lines ever to appear on stage. " -- Holly Bartges, *Colorado Back Stage*

"...the lasting impression of the play is pathos, as the audience helplessly watches the characters make a mess of their lives, longing for but not daring to hope for relief, crying out for mercy, compassion, acceptance and forgiveness without actually repenting, and projecting their self-loathing and guilt onto the only one who can rescue them. The Denver Center Theatre company should be commended for giving Lemon a chance to vent, as he speaks for many who are struggling to find meaning in their lives." -- Father Patrick Dorn, *Colorado Christian Drama Review*

"The irreverent attitude and immediate appeal of this piece will surely attract a new, younger caste of theater lovers hooked by the humor and impressed by its thematic depths." -- *Metroerspective*

"...black and bold new comedy...at times howlingly funny and unapologetically tasteless." -- John Moore, *The Denver Post*

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