

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The epic battle between Good and Evil continues with

The Devil and Billy Markham

A one-man show by Shel Silverstein featuring Jonah Weston

- WHO:** Artists Repertory Theatre in partnership with Action Talks Productions
- WHAT:** *The Devil and Billy Markham* featuring Jonah Weston
By Shel Silverstein
Directed by Jamie M. Rea
- WHEN:** November 19-21, 2015
- Thursday – Saturday at 9:30pm
- WHERE:** Artists Repertory Theatre, Morrison Stage
1515 SW Morrison, Portland OR 97205
- TICKETS:** \$20
- Buy Tickets: 503.241.1278 or www.artistsrep.org
- PHOTOS:** Attached.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Portland, Oregon | November 3, 2015. Artists Repertory Theatre in partnership with Action Talks Productions present a limited engagement of the shockingly funny, wryly disturbing larger-than-life tale of *The Devil and Billy Markham* for three late night shows, November 19-21 at 9:30pm. On the eerie set of *Broomstick*, Weston will again bring Billy back to life for Portland audiences. His portrayal was last seen locally in 2013 and was much-lauded by reviewers and audiences alike.

“With otherworldly, one-woman show *Broomstick* on stage with Vana O’Brien, Weston’s production was a perfect fit,” said Dámaso Rodríguez, Artists Rep’s Artistic Director. “The pairing of these solo storytelling shows that explore the fine line between good and evil, both darkly comedic and poking fun at human nature, will be a treat for audiences.”

Shel Silverstein’s *The Devil and Billy Markham*, tells the story of Billy Markham, an unforgettable character who never met a bet he didn’t take, including one for his very own soul. Billy journeys from Nashville’s Music Row down into the fiery pits of Hell and back again as he matches wits with God, the Devil and everyone in between. *The Devil and Billy Markham* first appeared as a six-part epic poem in the January 1979 edition of *Playboy* magazine and subsequently as a one-act play at Lincoln Center in 1989. *Run time 60 minutes. For Mature Audiences.*

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REVIEWS FOR *The Devil and Billy Markham* WITH JONAH WESTON

"In the role of the hell-bound country singer Billy Markham, actor Jonah Weston convinced me that if he ended up in a seedy dive with Markham, the two would swap stories, ingest bourbon in fountain soda-sized quantities, and Markham would say Weston was an "alright son-of-a-bitch"—that is to say, he's good." - Portland Mercury

"Weston's pleasure in reciting Silverstein's humorously witty and sometimes playfully raunchy poetry is apparent. Weston gives each character a physical reality as well as a distinct vocal quality. Whether kneeling on the floor as Billy throwing die in a fixed game of craps, writhing on a stool to capture Billy's discomfort while roasting on a spit in hell, or strutting around the stage as the cocky Devil tossing off orders to inadequate henchmen, Weston gives a concrete sense of the physical lives of the story's characters. Weston is an able entertainer, who knows how to engage and enchant his audience."

-Richard Wattenberg, *The Oregonian*

"When actor Jonah Weston comes onto the stage dressed like a regular guy and begins the remarkable tale of a man who bets with the devil, the feeling is that one of those great tavern storytellers around whom everyone naturally gathers just stepped into the room for a drink. Director Jamie Rea and performer Weston deserve credit for understanding the kind of art that people still need -- stories of life and love, and heaven and hell -- presented in a way that is funny and whimsical and that people can relate to." - Carol Wells, *Special to The Oregonian*

"Weston has a very strong presence and a grip on the story and its telling that grabs us by the throat and won't let go. The weight of this grand struggle for a man's eternal soul is embodied in the actor's movements, in his harsh and whiskey-soaked voice, and in the urgency of his telling. "The Devil and Billy Markham" is a fine piece of solo performance work. Weston is talented and accomplished and he owns this story in the way any great storyteller must own his story. I walked out of this little feeling like I had to find somebody and tell them about this guy I met in the bar, this guy who had the most incredible story about another guy who lost his life on a roll of the dice, and who regained his soul in the depths of Hell. If you're in Portland, or if Jonah Weston is back in town, make a point of seeing this show. It's a story you won't forget." -Jerry Kraft, *SeattleActor.com*

JONAH WESTON

Jonah is thrilled to be returning to Portland after a two year hiatus in New Orleans and Eastern Washington. Portland audiences may recognize him from his performances at Profile Theatre (*Fortinbras, The Young Man From Atlanta, Valentine's Day, The Sunshine Boys, Biloxi Blues*), Portland Playhouse (*The Brother/Sister Plays*), Post Five Theatre (*Macbeth*), NW Children's Theatre (*Willy Wonka*), Lakewood Theatre (*Arcadia*), CoHo Productions (*Live, Girls!, By The Bog of Cats*), Readers Theatre Repertory (*O'Flaherty VC, Long Ago And Far Away, Riders To The Sea, The Merchant Of Venice, Pete N' Petey, War Paint, The Penguins Of Ithaca*) Classic Greek Theatre (*Alcestis, Orestes, Oedipus The King, War Music*, and the world premiere of *What Mad Pursuit!*). Regional theatre credits include *A Streetcar Named Desire, Arsenic And Old Lace, Ah, Wilderness!, Wait Until Dark, The Foreigner, The Taming Of The Shrew*, and many others. Television credits include local favorites *Portlandia, Leverage* and *Grimm*.

In 2010, Jonah founded Action Talks Productions and THEATRE NOW, a 501c3 non-profit organization, and has produced a touring production of Yasmina Reza's *ART*, which played in six art galleries over six

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weekends in Portland's Pearl District, in 2012. He is perhaps best known to Portland audiences for his critically acclaimed performances of Shel Silverstein's *The Devil and Billy Markham*, which first played Portland in 2010 at Curious Comedy Theatre. For the last five years Jonah has been touring *The Devil and Billy Markham* from Portland to Seattle, Spokane, Coeur d' Alene, New Orleans, and soon Las Vegas and San Diego.

ACTION TALKS PRODUCTIONS

Action Talks Productions/THEATRE NOW is a 501c3 non-profit organization founded in 2010 by Artistic Director Jonah Weston. Our goal is to nurture emerging Actors, Directors, and Playwrights and to exploring the human condition through the production of new plays and socially relevant and politically provocative works. *The Devil and Billy Markham* is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. For the 2015/16 season Artists Rep will offer eight bold and entertaining plays written by internationally acclaimed playwrights and guided by esteemed directors. Artists Rep productions will feature the work of a core group of accomplished Resident Artists, each with a shared history and a shorthand for collaboration, working alongside guest artists from Portland and beyond. Artists Rep is also home to the ArtsHub, a program which offers residencies within Artists Rep's facility to smaller and emerging arts organizations with subsidized administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well other infrastructural services. The Artists Rep facility serves as a community arts center, where performance venues and other public spaces are continually buzzing with activity.

Artists Rep's mission is to engage diverse audiences in fresh, thought-provoking and intimate theatre. We are committed to world-class acting, directing, design and stagecraft that support new playwriting and aspire to embody great literature, moving audiences to truly feel — to *experience* — storytelling in a way that only the best live theatre can.

The 2015/16 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate and David and Christine Vernier. Other season support comes from the Regional Arts Culture Council, Oregon Community Foundation, Collins Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation and Work for Art.

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