



The Keating Mainstage
The Goldstein Cabaret
The Gompertz Theatre

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Florida Studio Theatre Remains Strong In Weak Economy.

(Sarasota, FL) – In a nationwide economic climate where many Arts organizations are falling faster than the curtains of their stages, FST remains stronger than ever. Thanks to the keen eyes of the organizations leadership and a unilateral tightening of the belt by the staff early on in the crisis. FST will have more performance this season with larger cast, and engage the highest number of patrons in its 36 year history all within budget. And even more impressively, there will be no sacrifices in the areas of talent or production values.

More than a year ago, FST made a conscious decision to refocus its efforts and resources by expanding its programs to engage the community more and increase its earned income percentage by *adding* rather than cutting back on its programming. This bold approach is proving successful thus far, which is evidenced by the increase in subscriptions sales, and single ticket purchases.

“The economy knocked us for a loop and we adapted. We jumped ahead of the curve in the summer of 2008, right-sizing the theatre and right-sizing our budget.” said Richard Hopkins. Those difficult choices set the pace for a trying, but excellent season. Last Season FST Box Office rejoiced in a record breaking season. Single ticket sales reached an all time high on many shows, our Summer Subscription Sales were up by 18%, and we ended the year in the black. All of this was accomplished in the midst of the biggest budget cuts in our history.

The year ahead will be no less challenging. We expect this year to see the crisis of Wall Street pay a visit to Main Street and that will bring a whole new set of challenges for FST to deal with. We have been anticipating this and we are adapting again. An ‘economic downturn’ is no time to turn down the lights in the theatre. Just the opposite: in times of turmoil, the theatre is a place where we can come together to find meaning, solace and common ground. In times of difficulty we need to come together more than ever. In times of difficulty we need theatre more than ever.

When asked if there were other factors that played into the success other than belt tightening, Mr. Hopkins response was, “We were successful amidst all the economic turmoil because of one fundamental reason: “Meaning.” We produced plays of Meaning. *Opus* had meaning to us all because it dealt with how we get along (or don’t) at work. This year’s *Bridge and Tunnel* will reveal to us the hopes and dreams of the 21st Century immigrants and how similar those dreams are to our own grandparents”.

“Last year, we produced plays that mattered to our audience and our community; plays that spoke to the hearts minds and souls of us all. *Black Pearl Sings!* rang the bell of truth on race and friendship in America. And in the year ahead we will see love conquer adversity in *Ruined* as we continue to hold true to our values. We will continue to produce plays that are accessible and affordable, plays that challenge with as much gusto as they entertain, and we intend to do so in a fiscally responsible way” said Hopkins.

“Our Education Programs are undergoing a remake that includes expansion in Adult Education, with added Acting Classes, Improv, and “True Speak”, as well as Behind the Scenes programming to give you an inside look at the making of a play. And last but not least, our new Play Reading Club is a big hit. Plus, Children’s Education is adding classes, most noticeably the Kids Komedly Club that will feature Saturday performances all winter long: think Saturday Night Live, only in the mornings for youngsters.”

FST will inaugurate an “Off-Center” Series of quirky, popular plays which otherwise might not be seen in any of the FST theatres. To kick off this series, FST will produce *Shear Madness*, the longest running non musical play in American Theatre history, celebrating 30 years in Boston and more than 20 years at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. *Shear Madness* is a comedy whodunit which has played to rave reviews around the country. It is a unique, one of a kind evening, with a different ending every night – decided by a vote of the audience.

Florida Studio Theatre is Sarasota's contemporary theatre. Located in the heart of the downtown arts district, FST is a nationally recognized LORT theatre with more than 12,000 unduplicated subscribers. According to Theatre Communications Group, this is the fifth largest subscription base of any TCG member theatre in the country. In accordance with its mission point “to make theatre accessible and affordable to as many people as possible,” Florida Studio Theatre serves over 160,000 attendees per year, through its 6 major programs. Florida Studio Theatre has a full time staff of 32 and employs over 100 additional seasonal staff consisting of actors, singers, musicians, designers, choreographers, and theatrical technicians.

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