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FST ANNOUNCES THE 2016-2017 WINTER MAINSTAGE AND CABARET SEASONS

(Sarasota, FL)- Florida Studio Theatre announces its 2016-17 Winter Mainstage and Cabaret Seasons. The Mainstage season opens with the electrifying Tony Award-Winning musical *Million Dollar Quartet*. Continuing the season are three REGIONAL PREMIERES: The witty, Joe DiPietro hit *Clever Little Lies*, the poignant drama *brownsville song (b-side for tray)*, and the smart contemporary comedy *Rich Girl*. On the Cabaret stages, *Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves* opens the season, and is followed by the dynamic and entertaining *Piano Men*, and the musical comedy revue, *Older Than Dirt*. A subscription to all four Mainstage shows may be purchased for as little as \$59. Cabaret subscriptions may be purchased for as little as \$39 to see all three shows. Tickets can be purchased online at www.floridastudiotheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at (941) 366-9000.

Kicking off the Mainstage season is TONY-AWARD WINNING Broadway hit, *Million Dollar Quartet*, opening on November 11 in the Gompertz Theatre. Inspired by the famed recording session at Sun Records, this electrifying musical tells the story of icons Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins. In 1956 Memphis, they came together to make music, and ended up making history. *The New York Times* praised the show's "Explosive vitality", and the *Washington Post* calls it "An extraordinary jam session."

"It's a gritty production," said Producing Artistic Director, Richard Hopkins. "You get a feeling of who these guys really are, what their root is – their core. It translates to the music they made. Audiences get a chance to see them before they were famous." Directing this powerhouse show is FST Associate Artist Jason Cannon, whose previous directing credits include FST's hit *Butler* and the World Premiere of *Relativity*.

In the second slot of the season is the REGIONAL PREMIERE of *Clever Little Lies* by Joe DiPietro, opening in the Keating Theatre on December 16. Set during an uproarious family dinner, secrets are exposed and clever little lies are crafted when a confidence shared between father and son escalates into an unexpected family disclosure that could change everything. *Clever Little Lies* is a story of long-term love and marriage...for better...and for worse. Directing this comedy that *The New York Times* calls "Good old-fashioned comfort food for theatregoers" is FST's Associate Director Kate Alexander. Alexander's recent FST directing credits include *The God of Isaac*, *Alabama Story*, *Outside Mullingar*, and the previous Summer production of *Over the River and Through the Woods*. Audiences will know DiPietro's work on the FST stages with hits like *The Last Romance*, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, and *Over the River and Through the Woods*.

Next up is the REGIONAL PREMIERE of *brownsville song (b-side for tray)* by Kimber Lee, opening on January 27 in the Gompertz Theatre. Set against the gritty backdrop of rundown Brooklyn, *brownsville song* is a vivid and uplifting story of one family's courage and endurance after a senseless act of gang violence alters a high school senior's dreams forever. Left to pick up the pieces, his family must find hope and resilience within their tight-knit Brooklyn borough. *The New York Times* describes it as "Moving" and "Lyrical", while *The Seattle Times* hailed it as "Starkly poetic."

When asked about the relevance of such a story in today's modern society, Hopkins states, "This play is very timely. It takes us into the heart of the good people living in violent circumstances." Managing Director Rebecca Hopkins elaborates further stating, "This is context for what is happening right now. You just see the stats and a 30 second bite on TV. In *brownsville*, you get to know the family. They are good people. These circumstances have a massive impact on their lives and abilities to control their destinies."

Finishing the season is the REGIONAL PREMIERE of Victoria Stewart's *Rich Girl*, which opens in the Gompertz Theatre on April 7. Based on Henry James' short novel *Washington Square*, *Rich Girl* is set in contemporary Central park and tells the story of hapless but wealthy Claudine. Her celebrity-financial-guru mother has obvious misgivings about her daughter's amorous entanglements with Henry -- an artist with rugged good looks. He's got just enough charisma along with a negative bank balance. *The New York Times* calls it "highly appealing" and *Talkin Broadway* says it is "a candidate for widespread success."

Richard Hopkins states, "It's a smart, intelligent, funny, and biting contemporary new play. It deals with controlling your life. The 'rich girl' is controlled by her mother. How much power does the rich girl have to control her own destiny? These are big moral and ethical questions. How engaged should parents be?"

Florida Studio Theatre's Cabaret Season kicks off with a trio of dynamic ladies in *Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves*, opening on October 7 in the Court Cabaret. From the 1970s to today, female artists have been pop pioneers; pushing boundaries and charting new musical territory. Featuring songs by powerhouse performers such as Cher, Tina Turner, Reba McEntire, and Peggy Lee, this production is directed by FST Associate Artist Catherine Randazzo. Audiences may remember Randazzo's direction of last year's hit cabaret *Yesterday*.

The cabaret's second slot is claimed by two talented musicians in *Piano Men*, opening in the Goldstein Cabaret on December 2. From honkytonks to magnificent concert halls, the men of *Piano Men* performed on a variety of stages, lived diverse lifestyles and most importantly, wrote about their experiences. A tribute to virtuosity and elegance, this cabaret features the works of the 20th Century's best pianists such as Billy Joel, Elton John, and Barry Manilow.

Rounding up the cabaret season is *Older Than Dirt*, which opens February 10 in the Court Cabaret. Getting old is not for sissies, but it sure is good for a laugh. This musical comedy

revue provides a witty and heartfelt 360 degree view of aging. Featuring songs by Shel Silverstein, Adam Sandler, and Neil Young, *Older Than Dirt* takes the audience on a journey through the pitfalls and perks of aging. Featuring songs such as "When I'm 64," "Don't Be Ashamed of Your Age," and "Forever Young."

Richard Hopkins describes the origins of this production stating, "This came out of the *For The Ages* project. It's the funny side of the street. Its got insightful and funny songs about the aging process. We've been collecting material now for years and we felt like we now had enough for a show. In gathering interpersonal snippets of stories from the community in the last three years, we have found that everyone has a different perception of aging."

Richard Hopkins sums up the season stating, "The thread running through this season deals with how moral a life we are living, not in a religious sense, but an ethical standard." Rebecca Hopkins also states "The season deals with truth and perception. The characters in these shows – they all think they know the truth. You have good people struggling against good people all trying to do what's right, and that's what's happening in the world right now. Things are getting grayer." From a slick Tennessee recording studio, to an elegant piano bar, to rundown Brooklyn and the Upper West Side, the 16-17 season is filled with theatre to challenge audiences as well as entertain them.

The Mainstage season opens November 11 and plays through May 26 on FST's Keating and Gompertz Stages (Downtown Sarasota). A subscription to all four plays can be purchased for as little as \$59. The cabaret season opens October 7 and plays through June 4 in FST's Court and Goldstein Cabarets and subscriptions can be purchased for as little as \$39 for all three shows. Tickets can be purchased online at www.floridastudiotheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at (941) 366-9000.

ABOUT FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE

Known as Sarasota's Contemporary Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre was founded in 1973 by Artist Jon Spelman. Starting out as a small touring company, FST traveled to places such as migrant camps and prisons. The company then acquired the former Woman's Club building, becoming the first permanent venue. Shortly after Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins arrived, the building was purchased and renamed The Keating Theatre. In the years that followed, Florida Studio Theatre established itself as a major force in American Theatre, presenting contemporary theatre in its five theatre venues: the Keating Theatre, the Gompertz Theatre, the Parisian style Goldstein Cabaret and John C. Court Cabaret, and Bowne's Lab Theatre.

Even with its growth, Florida Studio Theatre remains firmly committed to making the arts accessible and affordable to a broad-based audience. FST develops theatre that speaks to our living, evolving, and dynamically changing world. As FST grows and expands, it continues to provide audiences with challenging, contemporary drama and innovative programs.