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FST ANNOUNCES ITS 2017-2018 WINTER MAINSTAGE AND CABARET SEASONS

(Sarasota, FL)- From Dublin to Dubai, Florida Studio Theatre takes audiences on a journey all over the world with its upcoming 2017-18 Winter Mainstage and Cabaret Seasons. The Mainstage season opens with the 8-time Tony Award-winning musical ***Once***. Continuing the season is the vibrant and emotionally-charged ***Heisenberg***, the culture clash comedy ***Native Gardens***, and the WORLD PREMIERE of the piercing and poignant ***Honor Killing***. On the Cabaret stages, ***Mack the Knife: The Bobby Darin Songbook*** opens the season, and is followed by the dynamic and entertaining ***Blue Suede Shoes***, and the tongue-in-cheek musical comedy revue, ***Shakespeare's Greatest Hits***. 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.

Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins speaks to the theme of these Winter productions stating, "Thematic throughout our whole season is the international flair of the shows. They are set all over the world. They present issues that force us to deal with the 'Other' and how we perceive other nationalities, especially seeing these plays from 'their' eyes."

MAINSTAGE

Kicking off the Mainstage season is 8-time Tony Award-winning hit ***Once*** opening on November 10 in the Gompertz Theatre. ***Once*** tells the enchanting tale of a Dublin street musician who's about to give up on his dream when a beautiful young woman takes a sudden interest in his haunting love songs. As the chemistry between them grows, his music soars to powerful new heights. Emotionally captivating and theatrically breathtaking, ***Once*** draws you in from the very first note, and never lets go. It's an unforgettable story about going for your dreams and the power of music to connect us all. *The New York Times* praises the show calling it "Distinctive and evocative." *Chicago Tribune* describes it as "Exquisitely crafted" and "Gorgeously resonant." At the helm directing this production is Jason Cannon. Audiences have most recently seen his work as Director of the 16-17 explosive hit, ***Million Dollar Quartet***.

"The movie has a cult following," says Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins. "The Broadway musical had a broad following and I think musicalizing that story helped to grow its audience even more.

In this show, there are all of these different nationalities and interesting people in this bar in

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Dublin. There seems to be something in the air right now that encourages thoughtful Americans to heighten their interest in other nationalities.”

The vibrant and emotionally charged production, **Heisenberg** follows **Once**, and opens in the Keating Theatre on December 14. Amidst the bustle of a crowded London train station, Georgie spots Alex, a much older man, and plants a kiss on his neck. This electric encounter thrusts these two strangers into a fascinating and life-changing game. **Heisenberg** brings to blazing, theatrical life the uncertain and often comical sparring match that is human connection. *The New York Times* calls it, “Soaring, suspenseful, thrilling.” The *Associated Press* echoes this sentiment calling it, “Unexpectedly rich” and “Sumptuous.”

Next up is the culture clash comedy **Native Gardens** by Karen Zacarias, opening on January 26 in the Gompertz Theatre. Friendly neighbors turn into feuding adversaries in this timely Mainstage production. Pablo, a high powered lawyer, and doctoral candidate Tania, his very pregnant wife, are realizing the American dream when they purchase the house next door to community stalwarts, Virginia and Frank. But a disagreement over a longstanding fence soon spirals into an all-out comic battle of taste, privilege, and entitlement. In this battle of the backyard, no one comes out smelling like a rose. *Timeout Chicago* describes **Native Gardens** as a “Carefully pruned comedy” that “Really blooms.”

The Mainstage season culminates with the WORLD PREMIERE of Sarah Bierstock’s **Honor Killing**, which opens in the Gompertz Theatre on April 6. Allisyn Davis, an American reporter for *The New York Times*, heads to Pakistan to cover the honor killing of a young woman. Through a series of cultural collisions, candid interviews, and dangerous encounters, she learns the details of this event, and faces her own demons and judgments. One culture mirrors the other, asking questions about forgiveness, self-worth, and justice.

Honor Killing first appeared on the FST stage during the Richard and Betty Burdick Reading Series as part of the 2017 Sarasota Festival of New Plays. Richard Hopkins expands on the choice to bring this show to the Mainstage stating, “It’s been in the development process for a couple of years now, and we feel it’s ready for prime time. It’s a big play that is on an international scale, starting in America, but then quickly going to Dubai, to Afghanistan, to different parts of the Mideast. It’s also a high tech show. There’s a lot of video and it’s fun to get to watch this reporter who’s a high-end educated investigative reporter dealing with an issue that’s close to her heart. It’s a good mystery and a good thriller. You don’t know whodunit. You don’t know who the bad guys are for sure. It’s very fast paced. You jump from Dubai to Washington D.C. to *The New York Times* office to a little village in Pakistan, you’re jumping all over the world in this play.”

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CABARET

Florida Studio Theatre's Cabaret Season kicks off with the original Bronx boy who made it big in ***Mack The Knife: The Bobby Darin Songbook***, opening on October 6 in the Court Cabaret. Bobby Darin was the original Bronx boy who made it big. Determined to be a legend by age 25, he conquered show business as a singer, songwriter, actor, and producer. Headlining everywhere from the legendary Copacabana to Las Vegas, Darin was a consummate showman.

Mack the Knife celebrates the spirited and immense talent of one of the great performers of the 20th century. Featuring his greatest hits such as "Splish Splash," "Beyond the Sea," "Dream Lover," and of course, "Mack the Knife."

Directing this cast is FST Associate Artist Catherine Randazzo. Her previous FST Directing Credits include last season's Cabaret hit, *Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves*, as well as the British Invasion audience favorite, *Yesterday*. Randazzo shares her perspective on this Darin stating, "Bobby Darin had a deep desire to be successful, he was determined to be one of the top performers of his time. His desire for success never stopped him from being a genuine performer from humble beginnings. His clever renditions of songs put him on the song charts at an early age. That is the heart of this cabaret. I think the cast will enjoy the discovery of their own unique style in order to emulate Bobby Darin's music."

The cabaret's second slot is claimed by six talented musicians in ***Blue Suede Shoes***, opening in the Goldstein Cabaret on December 1. In the 1950s, Rock 'N' Roll took America by storm. With roots in rhythm and blues, country western, swing, and doo-wop, this new sound would forever change the world of music. From the father of Rock 'N' Roll, Chuck Berry, to The King himself, Elvis Presley, this revue celebrates the birth of rock and roll with such great hits as "Rock Around the Clock," "Blue Suede Shoes," "Mustang Sally," and "Johnny B. Goode."

Rounding out the cabaret season is ***Shakespeare's Greatest Hits***, which opens February 11 in the Court Cabaret. "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" with the best of the Bard! This tongue-in-cheek musical revue is a collection of songs inspired by the world's greatest playwright. From relevant to irreverent, from soulful to sinful, from "Get Thee To A Nunnery" and "Othello's Rap" to "What A Piece of Work is Man" and "Tonight," when it comes to William Shakespeare all the world truly is his stage and his work will play on and on!

"This production is a reimagining of the original piece that we produced 20 years ago," says Hopkins of FST's Cabaret Season finale, ***Shakespeare's Greatest Hits***. "It was a hit back in 1999, but now in the 20 years that have passed, all of these other lots of other songs have been written that relate to Shakespeare like the Broadway production, *Something Rotten*, for example. There are lots of great Shakespeare songs and references in that show. There are few whose artistry can stand the test of time. Shakespeare is without a doubt one of them."

The Mainstage season

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opens November 11 and

plays through May 25 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 10 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.

SEASON AT A GLANCE

MAINSTAGE:

Once – November 8 – December 31 (Gompertz Theatre)

Emotionally captivating and theatrically breathtaking, *Once* draws you in from the very first note and never lets go; an unforgettable story about going for your dreams and the power of music to connect us all.

Heisenberg – December 12 – March 4 (Keating Theatre)

An electric encounter thrusts these two strangers into a fascinating and life-changing game. *Heisenberg* brings to blazing, theatrical life the uncertain and often comical sparring match that is human connection.

Native Gardens - January 24 – March 25 (Gompertz Theatre)

Stately Gardens and cultures clash turning friendly neighbors into feuding adversaries. In this battle of the backyard, no one comes out smelling like a rose.

Honor Killing – April 4 – May 25 (Gompertz Theatre)

Allisyn Davis, an American reporter for *The New York Times*, heads to Pakistan to cover the honor killing of a young woman. One culture mirrors the other, asking questions about forgiveness, self-worth, and justice.

CABARET:

Mack The Knife: The Bobby Darin Songbook – October 4 – February 4 (Court Cabaret)

Mack the Knife celebrates the spirited and immense talent of one of the great performers of the 20th century. Featuring his greatest hits such as "Splish Splash," "Beyond the Sea," "Dream Lover," and of course, "Mack the Knife."

Blue Suede Shoes – November 29 – April 1 (Goldstein Cabaret)

From the father of Rock 'N' Roll, Chuck Berry, to The King himself, Elvis Presley, this revue celebrates the birth of rock and roll with such great hits as "Rock Around the Clock," "Blue Suede Shoes," "Mustang Sally," and "Johnny B. Goode."

Shakespeare's Greatest Hits – February 9 – June 10 (Court Cabaret)

"Brush Up Your Shakespeare" with the best of the Bard! This tongue-in-cheek musical revue is a collection of songs inspired by the world's greatest playwright.

ABOUT FLORIDA

STUDIO THEATRE

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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.

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