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FST ANNOUNCES NEW SUMMER PLAY READING WORKSHOPS

(Sarasota, FL) –Following a well-received Sarasota Festival of New Plays this past spring, Florida Studio Theatre (FST) announces an addition to its New Play Development program. Three new works will be staged throughout the month of August featuring some of the latest work by George Brant, Barry Harman and Keith Herrmann, and Sandy Rustin. "Good comedies with exciting stories are hard to find and we have found three well-crafted tales from various eras, points of view, and comedic angles," shared FST Associate Artist Catherine Randazzo. Talkbacks will follow each reading, giving audiences the chance to engage with each piece more deeply, while also giving playwrights valuable feedback. These readings are free and open to the public, though reservations are required.

Haunted Hotel, by Barry Harman and Keith Herrmann, will be staged in FST's Bowne's Lab Theatre at 3 PM on August 10. In FST's Keating Theatre, the staged readings of George Brant's *Into the Breeches!* will be held on Friday, August 17 at 2 PM, and Sandy Rustin's *The Cottage* will take place on August 31 at 3 PM. Reservations can be made online at www.floridastudiotheatre.org, by phone at (941) 366-9000, or by visiting the FST Box Office.

Haunted Hotel by Barry Harman and Keith Herrmann, the composing team of the hit musical *Romance/Romance*, kicks off the schedule of summer workshops. Based on a novella by Charles Dickens' contemporary Wilkie Collins—who is best known for *The Moonstone*, this hauntingly whimsical musical follows a countess and her English Lord of a husband who mysteriously dies during their honeymoon. With ludicrous lords and comical countesses, this quirky musical will have audiences gasping for breath at every bloody twist and turn. "Barry Harman has penned a book with classic comedy and heightened drama, and Keith Herrmann is a master at writing great lyrics and melodies to accompany the story," shared Randazzo. "The characters are rich and the story line is addictive. This well-crafted recipe is hard to find in a small cast, modern day musical."

Following *Haunted Hotel* is George Brant's *Into the Breeches!*, a captivating story of perseverance and solidarity in the face of adversity. Set in Providence, Rhode Island in 1942, when the world is at war and the town is shrouded in darkness, a group of women band together to bring a glimmer of light to their disheartened town by producing an all-female version of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. United by the anticipation of receiving word from their men at war, these women will have audiences weeping with tears of joy, hope, and laughter. *Broadway World* calls the play "An absolute delight" as well as "Thought-provoking and heartwarming."

Sandy Rustin's *The Cottage*, a rollicking farce inspired by the works of Noel Coward, concludes this summer schedule. Set in the English countryside in 1923, this tale of secrets, betrayal and, oh yes, love, unfolds when Sylvia Van Kipness decides to expose her love affair to her husband and her lover's wife. The true meanings of fate, identity, and marriage are called into question as a surprising web of intrigue unravels in this ridiculous—and potentially murderous—romantic comedy. "*The Cottage*...is both a send-up and update of the [Noel] Coward oeuvre," says the *Huffington Post*. "I'm happy to say the depiction

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of English upper crust in *The Cottage* gets funnier and funnier as you go, full of bravura performances and worthy of multiple bravos and bravas.”

As Sarasota’s Contemporary Theatre, FST is one of the country’s leading theatres dedicated to presenting the best new plays of our day. Overseeing FST’s New Play Development Program are Associate Artists Catherine Randazzo and Jason Cannon. When selecting plays for workshop readings, Randazzo and Cannon ensure that each play meets FST’s mission to challenge its audiences with as much gusto as it entertains.

Part of FST’s New Play Development program, these three workshops will take place in FST’s Bowne’s Lab and Keating Theatres on the afternoons of August 10, 17, and 31. Times will vary. This schedule of events is free of cost and open to the public, though reservations are required. Reservations can be made online at www.floridastudiotheatre.org, by phone at (941) 366-9000, or by visiting the FST Box Office.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS

George Brant’s plays include *Grounded*, *Elephant’s Graveyard*, *Marie and Rosetta*, *Into the Breeches!*, *Grizzly Mama*, *Good on Paper*, *The Mourners’ Bench*, *Salvage*, *Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile*, *Any Other Name*, *Defiant*, *Dark Room*, *Miracle: A Tragedy*, *Ashes*, *NOK*, *The Lonesome Hoboes*, *All Talk*, *One Hand Clapping*, *The Royal Historian of Oz*, *Lovely Letters*, *Three Men in a Boat*, *Borglum!* *The Mount Rushmore Musical*, *Tights on a Wire* and *Night of the Mime*.

Brant's work has been produced internationally by such companies as the Public Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, Atlantic Theater Company, Cleveland Play House, Alley Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory, City Theatre, Gate Theatre of London, Page 73, Studio Theatre, Unicorn Theatre, Traverse Theatre, Borderlands Theater, SF Playhouse, American Blues Theatre, Dobama Theatre, Red Stitch, Theatre 4, Premiere Stages, Trustus Theatre, Elemental Theatre Collective, Balagan Theatre, the Drama League, Disney Channel, Factory Theatre, StreetSigns Theatre Company, and zeppo theater company, among others.

Barry Harman is a multi-award-winning book writer, lyricist, and director for theater (2 Tony nominations, 4 Outer Critic Circle Awards, and 3 Drama Desk nominations), and a writer for television (2 prime time Emmy Awards and writer of an Emmy Award-winning family special for HBO). He also has an extensive background as a head writer, lyricist, and producer for educational children's programming. A graduate of Harvard, where he was an editor of *The Lampoon* as well as president and author of Hasty Pudding Theatricals, he is a member of The Dramatists Guild, SDC, Writers Guild of America, West and ASCAP.

Mr. Harman wrote and directed the 5-time Tony-nominated Broadway musical *Romance/Romance*, which was also produced in London's West End and around the world. Off-Broadway, he wrote and directed the Outer Critics Circle Award-winning musical *Olympus on My Mind*. He has several new projects in development including *Under Fire*, a new musical that will receive its world premiere in the upcoming 2018-19 season at St. Petersburg's Freefall Theater.

His work in prime time TV includes writing for classic shows like *The Carol Burnett Show*, *All in the Family*, *The Jeffersons* and for PBS, *Some Enchanted Evenings: A Salute to Oscar Hammerstein II*. His work in children's educational TV ranges from Sunbow's *The Great Space Coaster*, Nick Jr.'s *Allegra's Window* and Comedy Network's *Big Bag*, to animated shows, ranging from *Cyberchase* to *My Little Pony* to the cult favorite series *Jem*. Barry divides his time between New York and Florida. For more info, check out his website: www.barryharman.com.

Keith Herrmann is the composer of the Broadway musical *Romance/Romance*, for which he received a Tony nomination and won an Outer Critics Circle Award. The show, which received a total of five Tony nominations (including Best Musical Score and Best Show), has enjoyed many productions around the world, including London's West End (at the Gielgud Theatre), the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, and tours in Australia, Japan, and Korea.

Mr. Herrmann was previously represented as composer, vocal arranger, and musical supervisor of *Onward Victoria*, which ran both on and Off-Broadway. A longtime Broadway "resident", he was the musical conductor of *Cats*, and performed on its Grammy Award-winning cast album as pianist and synthesist. Other credits include: conductor of *Whoopee!*, and conductor and keyboardist of *The Magic Show* and *Godspell*. Mr. Herrmann has written numerous jingles, television scores, and original musical material for a variety of performers. He scored the ABC-TV After School Special, *Taking A Stand*, which resulted in an Emmy Award for its creators, and *Romance/Romance* for A&E, for which he received a Telly Award. He is also represented on the Tri-Star animated holiday video "Buster and Chauncey's Silent Night." As a performer, Mr. Herrmann has played for such notables as Joel Grey, Betty Buckley, Nell Carter, Andrea McArdle, and many others. On television, he has appeared on the Tony Award Show, and as Betty Buckley's conductor/pianist on *The Tonight Show*, *The Today Show*, and the Golden Globe Awards.

Off-Broadway, Mr. Herrmann served as composer and co-producer of the cult favorite *Prom Queens Unchained*. With collaborator Mark Cabaniss, he is prepping a new musical, *The Homework Machine*, for a national tour, after it enjoyed a sold-out run at the Boston Children's Theatre. With Barry Harman, his *Romance/Romance* co-creator, he is currently writing material for a brand new musical about Anne Morrow Lindbergh entitled *Last Time in the Sky*. Keith maintains an active teaching schedule and serves as a musical director at MPAC in Morristown, New Jersey.

Sandy Rustin is an actress and award winning playwright. Her comedy, *The Cottage*, was recently presented by Manhattan Theatre Club with Jason Alexander (*Seinfeld*) directing, and is in development for an upcoming commercial production in New York. Sandy is currently developing a stage version of the cult-hit film *Clue* for the Araca Group, Worklight Productions, and Lively McCabe Entertainment, with director Hunter Foster. She is also working with Mills Entertainment, STX Entertainment and Tony-nominated Choreographer/Director Denis Jones, to develop a live musical *Bad Moms* show, loosely based on the popular films. In addition, Sandy is working with Mattel and Mills Entertainment to develop a live American Girl musical.

Her sketch comedy musical, *Rated P ... For Parenthood*, opened Off-Broadway at the Westside Theatre and was optioned for TV development with ABC Studios, Kelly Ripa & Mark Consuelos. Sandy's play, *Struck*, enjoyed two recent, critically-acclaimed productions at NJ Rep and Theatre Raleigh. Her play, *Houston*, is the recipient of the New American Musical Award and after a recent workshop in NYC is currently in development for production. Sandy's newest comedy, *Elijah*, was recently presented as part of Midtown Direct Rep's 2017 "Theatre in the Parlor" Reading Series and is in development. She created, developed, wrote, and starred in her own show for Nickelodeon (Nick Mom) called *Overbooked*. Her web series, *It's Complicated*, was acquired by Stage17 TV. Sandy has two screenplays and two television pilots in development.

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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.

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