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DATE: June 28, 2018

**FST ANNOUNCES SPECIAL EVENT FEATURING DICK
SMOTHERS OF THE SMOTHERS BROTHERS**

(Sarasota, FL) — Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is pleased to announce a special event that has just been added to the 10th Anniversary Sarasota Improv Festival lineup—*That’s My Song: An Intimate Evening with Dick Smothers*, a celebration of comedy legends Tommy and Dick Smothers, more commonly known as The Smothers Brothers. Remembered today as popular American comedians and musicians, The Smothers Brothers were among the first to perform improvised material onstage as part of their musical comedy performances. At this special event, Florida Studio Theatre will recognize the group’s artistic contributions to improv at its milestone Improv Festival. FST’s Managing Director Rebecca Hopkins will lead an in-depth interview with the one and only Dick Smothers, followed by a fully improvised hip-hop homage to the Brothers’ groundbreaking work performed by **North Coast**, New York City’s premier hip-hop comedy team. Single tickets are \$20 each for non-Festival pass-holders, or just \$10 for Festival pass-holders. Tickets are now on sale at (941) 366-9000 or www.floridastudiotheatre.org.

In 1959, comedy legends Tommy and Dick Smothers performed as a singing (and bickering) folk group in nightclubs and on various television shows, such as *The Jack Parr Show* (1961). Their act mixed sibling squabbles with music, and over the next decade, the brothers released twelve albums featuring their musical hilarity. “I can’t begin to express the impact that The Smothers Brothers have had on comedy,” shared FST’s Managing Director Rebecca Hopkins. “Their mix of taking folk music and combining it with comedy based on their relationship was brilliant. They were so quick-witted and would stop any song to go down the rabbit hole to mine the comedy. It was the feeling of their authentic relationship that made them so relatable.”

The pair’s talent captured CBS’s attention, and in February 1967, *The Smother Brothers Comedy Hour* aired for the first time on the network, showcasing the brothers’ rivalry and chemistry. *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* ended up becoming one of the most popular variety series of the 1960s and helped launch the careers of comedians like David Steinberg, Steve Martin and Rob Reiner. Unlike other shows at the time, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* captured the voice and thoughts of younger audiences. To maintain their audience, Tommy and Dick invited trendy comedians like George Carlin and controversial musicians like Pete Seeger and Joan Baez to star on their show. Soon the show’s content began to trouble CBS censors and executives. In 1969, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* was suddenly cancelled, but the series ended up winning an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing Achievement in Variety that year.

Dick Smothers, a Florida resident, has attended improv shows at Florida Studio Theatre and several Sarasota Improv Festivals in past years. “The first time Dickie [Smothers] showed up at an improv show, I nearly fell off the stage,” continued Hopkins. “To have one of your heroes in front of you is nerve-racking, but he was so giving to us all. Since then I have had the opportunity to get to know him and hear all of the amazing stories of The Smothers Brothers. They really were ahead of their time and

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paved the path for so many of us. Their act, at its heart, was based in improv, they just didn't realize it at the time. They called it ad-libbing. These stories are great and give you such insight, not only into comedy, but into its impact on our culture."

That's My Song: An Intimate Evening with Dick Smothers will take place as part of the 10th Anniversary Sarasota Improv Festival on Friday, July 13 at 5:00 pm in FST's Bowne's Lab Theatre. Festival passes and single tickets are available 941.366.9000 and www.floridastudiotheatre.org.

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 eventually settled down into a permanent home, acquiring the former Woman's Club building – now 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 Goldstein Cabaret, the renovated Gompertz Theatre, the 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. Under Producing Artistic Director and CEO, Richard Hopkins, 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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