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CONTACT: Nicole Clayton

Public Relations Associate

(941) 366 – 9017 ext. 338

NClayton@floridastudiotheatre.org

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7TH ANNUAL POETRYLIFE AT FST FEBRUARY 19

(Sarasota, FL) — Florida Studio Theatre (FST) and BookStore1Sarasota present *PoetryLife* for its 7th consecutive year on Monday, February 19, a one-of-a-kind celebration of poetry and the power of creativity. This year's events feature special guest poets Juan Felipe Herrera, the 21st Poet Laureate of the United States, and award-winning poet Ocean Vuong. From thought-provoking coffee and conversation to an engaging evening poetry reading, attendees will come together at Florida Studio Theatre to celebrate the art of the written word. Proceeds benefit The *PoetryLife* Fund, a support for educators teaching poetry in the community. Tickets for all events can be purchased through the Box Office at 941-366-9000 or online at www.floridastudiotheatre.org/2018-poetrylife and poetrylife.org.

The event kicks off with *Coffee, Conversation, and Lunch: the Poetry of Activism* at 11AM where guest poets Herrera and Vuong will discuss the timely topic of immigration, and how poetry might come to bear on this important discussion. Later in the evening, Herrera and Vuong return to read from their own award-winning works at *PoetryLife Presents Live on Stage: Juan Felipe Herrera and Ocean Vuong* at 7PM in the John C. Court Cabaret.

"Political activism, especially related to immigration, is an important subject in America right now," said event organizer and owner of Bookstore1Sarasota Georgia Court. "Juan Felipe Herrera has been engaged in this issue for most of his professional life. I expect the conversation with our two poets on this topic to be lively and informative. Audience members will be encouraged to engage both Herrera and Ocean Vuong in answering the question, 'What role can a poet play in the political life of our country?'"

Juan Felipe Herrera was the 21st Poet Laureate of the United States, serving from 2015-2017, and is the first Latino to hold the position. From 2012-2014, Herrera served as California State Poet Laureate. His many collections of poetry include: *Notes on the Assemblage*; *Senegal Taxi*; *Half of the World in Light: New and Selected Poems*, a recipient of the PEN/Beyond Margins Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross The Border: Undocuments 1971-2007*. He is also the author of *Crashboomlove: A Novel in Verse*, which received the Americas Award. His books of prose for children include: *SkateFate*, *Calling The Doves*, which won the Ezra Jack Keats Award; *Upside Down Boy*, which was adapted into a musical for young audiences in New York City; and *Cinnamon Girl: Letters Found Inside a Cereal Box*. Herrera is also a performance artist and activist on behalf of migrant and indigenous communities and at-risk youth.

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Ocean Vuong is a recognized rising star in the poetry world. He is the author of *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* (Copper Canyon Press, 2016), winner of the 2016 Whiting Award. Vuong also has two chapbooks: *No* (YesYes, 2013) and *Burnings* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2010). A Ruth Lilly fellow from the Poetry Foundation, Ocean has received honors and awards from Poets House, the Elizabeth George Foundation, the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, the Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts, the Academy of American Poets, and a Pushcart Prize.

Past PoetryLife guests artists have included Edward Hirsh and Aimee Nezhukumatathil (2017), Robert Pinsky, Tracy K. Smith, and Richard Blanco (2016), Billy Collins and Marie Howe (2015), Mark Doty, Kevin Young and Sandra Alcosser (2014), Naomi Shihab Nye and W.S. Merwin (2013), and more.

The 7th Annual PoetryLife is made possible thanks to event sponsors BookStore1Sarasota, The Gulfcoast Community Foundation, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, UBS Financial Services Inc., and Art Ovation Hotel, as well as individual support from Carma Lloyd, Waldron Kraemer and Joan Lovell, and Sally Yanowitz.

EVENT LISTING:

Coffee, Conversation & Lunch: The Poetry of Activism

Monday, February 19 | 11AM

Tickets: \$35 (includes coffee during the conversation followed by lunch)

Florida Studio Theatre's John C. Court Cabaret

This thought-provoking conversation is especially relevant at this point in our nation's history. Many of us thought the difficult issues of immigration, underpinned with fairness for the immigrant population, were about to be solved. But those expectations now seem further away than they have been for decades. Our two featured poets, **Juan Felipe Herrera** and **Ocean Vuong**, are uniquely qualified to speak about how poetry can come to bear on this important topic.

PoetryLife Presents Live on Stage: Juan Felipe Herrera and Ocean Vuong

Monday, February 19 | 7PM

Tickets: \$35

Florida Studio Theatre's John C. Court Cabaret

This is your opportunity to hear the poetry of two of America's finest poets. One, Herrera, is a seasoned poet of activism. The other, Vuong, is a rising star, whose voice has become an important addition to the world of poetry.

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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