



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lydia Baxter  
Public Relations Associate  
(941) 366 – 9017 ext. 338  
Lbaxter@floridastudiotheatre.org  
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### FST'S 2018 SUMMER CABARET SEASON CONCLUDES WITH *GILBERT & SULLIVAN UNPLUGGED*

(Sarasota, FL) —Florida Studio Theatre (FST) proudly presents the final production of its Summer Sidekicks Cabaret Series—the regional premiere of *Gilbert & Sullivan Unplugged*, an engaging musical revue celebrating the most beloved songs by the Victorian-era British composing duo. *Gilbert & Sullivan Unplugged* takes selections from the pair's "Big Three"—*HMS Pinafore*, *The Mikado*, and *Pirates of Penzance*—and gives them a fresh, new modern twist with musical stylings akin to Mumford & Sons, The Beatles, and Crosby, Stills & Nash. Single tickets are now on sale at (941) 366-9000 or [www.floridastudiotheatre.org](http://www.floridastudiotheatre.org).

With a funky new twist on a classic sound, this contemporary cabaret takes audiences back to musical theatre's roots while also bringing Gilbert & Sullivan's most popular operettas into the 21st century. "We are excited to introduce their music to more audiences in a form that appeals to the modern ear while remaining true to the spirit of its source," shared one of the cabaret's creators, Erik Schroeder. With arrangements by Matt Kahler, *Gilbert & Sullivan Unplugged* features lovingly loopy and joyfully irreverent renditions of some of the composing pair's most well-known songs, including "Modern Major General" and "When I Was A Lad."

Each cast member has been part of full-fledged Gilbert & Sullivan productions at theatres like the American Repertory Theatre and Actors Theatre of Louisville. They have the challenge of playing their own instruments, oftentimes while they (or their fellow cast mates) are singing Sullivan's complicated and clever lyrics. "In addition to singing all of this hard music, these performers are also playing it," said FST's Producing Artistic Director, Richard Hopkins. In doing this, the cast fills out the orchestrations that, in a typical Gilbert & Sullivan operetta, would be performed by a full orchestra. Hopkins added, "What the creators of this show are doing is distilling it [Gilbert & Sullivan's music] to its essence."

"The underlying content [of Gilbert & Sullivan's work] is universal," explained Schroeder. "No matter how many layers of absurdity are applied, no matter how convoluted the plot is, their work can be distilled to a joyful lampooning of human nature. Gilbert employed the same dramatic tools that are used today, paired with Sullivan's complicated and catchy tunes."

The cast of *Gilbert & Sullivan Unplugged* are all newcomers to FST: Mario Aivazian, Matt Kahler, Dana Saleh Omar, Shawn Pfautsch, and Lauren Vogel. Aivazian has performed across the country in several Gilbert & Sullivan productions, and has worked with Chicago Children's Theatre. Kahler adapted *The Yeoman of the Guard* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and has performed at Olney Theatre Center and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Omar recently starred in Theaterworks' production of *Amadeus* in Colorado and *Pirates of Penzance* at the Pasadena Playhouse and NYU's Skirball Center. At Miami's Adrienne Arsht Center, Pfautsch performed in *The House's Death & Harry Houdini*

and *The Sparrow*. Vogel is an American actress, comedy writer, and multi-instrumentalist who has performed at a plethora of Chicago theatres.

*Gilbert & Sullivan Unplugged* opens in FST's Court Cabaret on August 23 and runs through September 23. Single tickets are available by calling the FST Box Office at (941) 366-9000 or at [www.floridastudiotheatre.org](http://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 Gompertz Theatre, the Goldstein Cabaret, 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 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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