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FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE WILL INSPIRE OVER 47,000 STUDENTS TO WRITE PLAYS THROUGH ITS AWARD-WINNING WRITE A PLAY PROGRAM

(Sarasota, FL) – Florida Studio Theatre (FST) will reach 47,000 children in over 45 schools across the state of Florida this year through its award-winning WRITE A PLAY program. Now in its 28th year, FST's WRITE A PLAY program is a year-round arts-in-education initiative, providing students with the example, the inspiration, and the skills to write their own original plays.

"Through this program, we have touched the lives of over one million children since the program's conception in 1991," said FST Director of Children's Theatre Caroline Kaiser. "In a time where education can become bogged down with test scores and bureaucracy, this enrichment program serves to remind students and teachers alike about the importance of creativity and arts integration in the classroom."

WRITE A PLAY is a three-part program designed to have multiple interactions with each student and educator throughout the school year. In the first of three parts, participants experience "The Play That Sets the Example." In this introduction, students will attend a professional play performed by FST Acting Apprentices either on Florida Studio Theatre's downtown Sarasota campus, or through a touring production at their own school. This year, "The Play That Sets the Example" running at Florida Studio Theatre is *Peter Pan* adapted by Douglas Irvine, and on tour, the magical tale of *Snow White* by Greg Banks. Pre- and post-show discussions and take-home study guides add a new level of understanding to what students have seen and heard.

In the second part of the program, students experience "The Play That Inspires." FST's team of "Playmakers" (Acting Apprentices) tour to classrooms throughout the state, where they perform a collection of award-winning plays by former students, this year titled "Imagination Rocks." Following the in-class performance, Playmakers lead workshops covering the four fundamental elements of a play: character, dialogue, conflict, and setting. Over the next few months, teachers will lead students in writing their own plays, which are invited to be submitted to FST's Young Playwrights Festival playwriting competition. FST receives more than 3,000 submissions each year, and each one is read at least twice by FST staff and a group of community leaders. About a dozen are selected for a full-scale production.

The third and final installment is "The Play That Celebrates Young Playwrights." Every spring, participants return to FST for a full theatrical production featuring that year's playwriting competition winners. This year, that play is titled *A 'Beary' Big Adventure & Other Winning Plays*.

The program culminates with FST's annual Young Playwrights Festival, where hundreds of students, their families, educators, playwrights, and prominent theatre artists travel from across the state and as far away as Russia, Scotland, and Israel to see and celebrate the outstanding plays created over the course of the year. In a final ceremony, winners are presented with a certificate and Medal of Honor for their participation in the program.

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“This year is truly a celebration of childhood wonder and imagination,” shared Kaiser. “Each show [in the WRITE A PLAY PROGRAM] is unique in its own way, but all of them showcase dynamic creativity and inspiring theatricality.”

Teachers and group leaders interested in having FST’s WRITE A PLAY program visit their school should contact FST’s Education Group Sales Associate, Hannah Bagnall, at hbagnall@floridastudiotheatre.org.

ABOUT THE PLAYS

Peter Pan

Adapted by Douglas Irvine
October 13 - November 3, 2018

Join Peter on his adventure to Neverland, a magical island where there are no parents, no chores, and fairies and pirates rule! Introduce your children and grandchildren to the characters you loved from J.M. Barrie’s timeless masterpiece: Wendy Darling, Tinker Bell, Captain Hook, the mischievous Lost Boys, Nana the dog, and – last but not least – a very hungry, ticking crocodile. This new and exciting adaptation of this classic story celebrates imagination and storytelling.

Snow White

By Greg Banks
January 12 - February 16, 2019

Join FST for a fresh look at the timeless classic that features a beautiful princess, her evil queen, a huntsman, one magic mirror, and the legendary seven dwarfs – all brought to life by TWO ACTORS! This creative adventure brings to life a fairytale world before your very eyes with the inspiring creativity and dynamic theatricality you’ve come to expect from Florida Studio Theatre.

Imagination Rocks

By Past Winning Playwrights
Begins October 16, 2018

Take the next step in the series with a play that will inspire your students to write plays of their own! In this interactive theatrical experience your students will learn the ingredients of a play and see a brand new play created with their ideas right before their eyes. More than just a performance, this show comes with up to eight in class workshops to get your students writing. All students are encouraged to submit their plays for FST’s 2019 Young Playwright’s Festival to be considered for a professional production in the spring.

A ‘Beary’ Big Adventure & Other Winning Plays

By 2018-19 Winning Playwrights
March 30 - April 20, 2019

Wise, heartfelt, and often hilarious this anthology of award-winning short plays highlights the most creative and imaginative writing from Elementary school students. Performed by a cast of professional actors, these authentic stories from the minds of children contain laughter, lessons, and learning for us all.

ABOUT CHILDREN’S THEATRE

FST offers two theatre programs for our younger audiences. The WRITE A PLAY program is celebrating its 28th year. Since its inception, the WRITE A PLAY program has impacted over one million children throughout Florida and beyond, inspiring students to open their minds, explore their imaginations, and then, write it down.

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During the course of a school year, professional artists encourage students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade to write their own original plays through the WRITE A PLAY arts in education initiative and submit to FST's annual Young Playwrights Festival. The Saturday Children's Theatre Series began in 2016. Designed for children and families to explore the world of theatre arts, audiences have the opportunity to ask questions about the show - how did it make them feel, what did they see? - all while spending quality time with family, for less than the cost of attending a movie.

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, 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. 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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