



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE ANNOUNCES SPELMAN AWARD RECIPIENT AT *SHAKESPEARE'S SHINDIG* ON FEBRUARY 26

(Sarasota, FL) — Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is proud to announce this year's recipient of the Spelman Award: Arnold Simonsen. Named in honor of FST's founding Artistic Director, Jon Spelman, the Spelman Award is presented to an individual or corporate sponsor who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership by providing FST with spiritual, financial, and/or in-kind support.

President of FST's Board of Trustees, Dennis McGillicuddy explains, "The Spelman Award is given each year to a person or couple who have made a lasting impact on Florida Studio Theatre through their philanthropy and support. By providing the funding to purchase the property previously occupied by architect Guy Peterson, Arnold Simonsen has not only provided critical working space for our staff and additional parking, but this purchase completes our southern campus, giving us so much greater flexibility looking into the future. It is his vision and understanding of the strategic nature of the projects which he has supported that we so greatly appreciate."

Simonsen supported the capping of the Kretzmer Artist Residence and his generosity enabled FST to purchase 1234 1st Street, the building located next to the theatre's administrative parking lot. The Arnold Simonsen and Ronda Montminy Theatre Wing will provide vital space for FST's expanding production needs. Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins explained the significance of this new space: "This gift gives us a lot more artistic freedom. Theatres all across America are renting their houses and properties and that money comes out of their operating budget. We are in operation 51 weeks out of the year and we are not renting. Owning this building helps make everything we do possible."

Simonsen is an avid supporter of the arts. In an interview with the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, Simonsen described how captivated he was by FST's productions: "I saw what Florida Studio Theatre was doing and we were greatly impressed with the performances they put on. There are amazing people here."

The award will be presented during Florida Studio Theatre's annual fundraiser, *Shakespeare's Shindig: A Contemporary Renaissance*, on February 26. Attendees are invited to break out their best poet shirts, bodices, and feather caps for an evening filled with mischief and merriment. The celebration kicks off with a cocktail party featuring live performances by FST Improv, followed by an exclusive live performance by some of FST's much-loved artists in the Gompertz Theatre. The night concludes with a dinner "fit for the gods" in the Court Cabaret.

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Chairing the shindig is long-time FST supporter, Marie G. Kropp. Kropp has been integral to numerous FST events, like last year's rockin' Fifties Shindig. Sponsored by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, this year's event will feature the presentation of The Spelman Award, live entertainment, a seated dinner, and lots of revelry!

Additional sponsors for *Shakespeare's Shindig* include Patricia and Roger Courtois, Tom Wilson and Patrick Crimmings, Doug and Dianne DeLong, Anita and Kelly Devine, Wendy and Bob Grady, Barbara J. Lupoff, Jennifer Mitchell, Betty Schoenbaum, and Dorothy Waldron.

With sonnets and music abounding, *Shakespeare's Shindig* will unite bards with their supporters to celebrate FST. Tickets are \$250 per person with proceeds supporting the FST's Artist Housing Project. To reserve a seat, please call Samus Haddad, Development Associate at (941)-366-9017 ext. 316.

### 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 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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