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FST ANNOUNCES ITS 2019 STAGE III SERIES

(Sarasota, FL) - Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is proud to announce the lineup for its 2019 Stage III Series, dedicated to presenting edgy new plays that are challenging in both content and form. FST's 2019 Stage III season offers one of the most varied lineups to date, with an irreverent puppet comedy, a crackling drama about hatred, and a charming exploration of the nature of celebrity.

"FST's Stage III Series continues to bring bold, contemporary work to Sarasota," shared FST's Producing Artistic Director, Richard Hopkins. "This season addresses topics that pervade our society today—religion, hate, and celebrity—and explores them in creative, compelling ways. Gritty and raw, our Stage III Series shares captivating stories that mirror what's happening in the modern world."

The Season opens on January 18 with ***Hand to God***, a dark comedy by Robert Askins, examining the startling fragile nature of faith, morality, and human connection. Called "Sensational" and "Explosively funny" by *The New York Times*, this play centers on Jason, a shy, inquisitive teenager who finally finds an outlet for his creativity and anxiety at his church's Christian Puppet Ministry. Things go awry when his hand puppet, Tyrone, assumes his own heinous and dangerous personality, threatening to corrupt Jason's relationships with everyone around him.

Next up is ***Cherry Docs*** by David Gow, a gripping drama examining hatred, intolerance, and the dangers of extremism. *The New York Theatre Wire* called it "An emotional mountain climb" that "Demands immediate attention," while *The Boston Globe* found it "Bracingly intelligent." Mike is a neo-Nazi skinhead accused of a racially motivated murder, and Danny is the Jewish lawyer from Legal Aid assigned to defend him. As the two work to develop a defense for Mike, the limits of Danny's own liberalism emerge, and Mike is forced to confront his real motivations for turning to violence. *Cherry Docs* is an unblinking examination of hatred and the hurdles we all face in efforts to eradicate it.

FST's 2019 Stage III Series concludes on a lighter note with ***Buyer & Cellar***, Jonathan Tolins' witty one-man-show about the price of fame, the cost of things, and the oddest of jobs. "This year for the first time, we're introducing a comedy into the mix. It's offbeat and eccentric, but still a comedy. So prepare yourself to NOT be shocked," added Hopkins. When Alex More, a struggling actor in Los Angeles loses his job at Disneyland, he is soon hired to work in the basement shopping mall of a celebrated megastar. The Lady of the House patronizes the

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shopping mall every so often to “buy” something or enjoy some frozen yogurt. Over time, the two begin to develop an unlikely bond. But as outside influences creep in, Alex begins to question the authenticity of their relationship, and how long it can last. Called a “Seriously funny slice of absurdist whimsy” that is “Irresistible” by *The New York Times*, ***Buyer & Cellar*** won the 2014 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Solo Show.

With its mission to “produce theatre that challenges with as much gusto as it entertains,” and to “make theatre accessible to the broadest possible audience,” FST offers all three challenging Stage III shows for as little as \$69. Subscriptions are now on sale at floridastudiotheatre.org or through the Box Office at (941) 366-9000.

SERIES AT A GLANCE

Hand to God by Robert Askins | January 16 – February 8, 2019

In the church basement of a little Texas town, something evil is afoot. Or, well, at hand. Shy, inquisitive teenage Jason finally finds an outlet for his burgeoning creativity at his church’s Christian Puppet Ministry. But soon his hand puppet, Tyrone, goes rogue, and takes on his own shocking and dangerous personality. As Tyrone’s influence over Jason steadily grows, *Hand to God* explores the startlingly fragile nature of faith, morality, and the ties that bind us.

Cherry Docs by David Gow | February 20 – March 15, 2019

A neo-Nazi skinhead is charged with murder, and Legal Aid has assigned him a Jewish lawyer. Over the course of developing a defense for the skinhead, his new lawyer is forced to examine the limits of his own liberalism, and its underlying demons. This drama is an unblinking examination of hatred, the explosive effect it has on our society, and the hurdles that confront us as we set about eradicating it.

Buyer & Cellar by Jonathan Tolins | March 20 – April 12, 2019

Alex More has a story to tell. A struggling actor in L.A., he takes a job working in the Malibu basement of a celebrated megastar. One day, the Lady Herself comes downstairs to play. It feels like real bonding in the basement, but will their relationship ever make it upstairs? *Buyer and Cellar* is a quirky comedy about the price of fame, the cost of things, and the oddest of odd jobs.

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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