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Producing Artistic Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FST ANNOUNCES FORUMS SERIES EVENTS FOR 2022-2023 WINTER SEASON

(Sarasota, FL) – **Florida Studio Theatre (FST)** announces the lineup for the 2022-2023 Forums Series, featuring three panel discussions inspired by the themes explored in the theatre’s productions of ***What the Constitution Means to Me***, ***Network***, and ***Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)***. Forums events are free to attend, but registration is required. To register, visit FloridaStudioTheatre.org or call FST’s Box Office at 941.366.9000. A full list and schedule of this season’s Forums Series follows the end of this release.

“For the last seven years, FST’s Forums Series have embraced the idea that open, honest, and unfiltered dialogue is the key to understanding each other,” said **The Honorable Charles E. Williams**, 12th Circuit Court Judge and Chair of FST’s Forums Steering Committee. “Please join FST as we continue the tradition of conversations without judgment as we navigate the issues of our day through this season’s contemporary plays.”

Kicking off the Forums Series is **The U.S. Constitution and America Today: Is it Flourishing or Floundering?**, a panel discussion exploring the power and purpose of the U.S. Constitution. Hosted by The Honorable Charles E. Williams, this conversation will examine such questions as, “Is the U.S. Constitution outdated, or is it simply being manipulated and interpreted in a way that was not anticipated when it was written?” and “Is the document being used as intended?” Panelists include The Honorable **Larry Eger** (Head of the Manatee County Division of the Public Defender’s Office), **Trevor Harvey** (President of the Sarasota NAACP), and **Matt Walsh** (CEO of Observer Media Group). This forum will take place Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 5PM in FST’s Keating Theatre.

The next forum is inspired by the themes presented in FST’s Regional Premiere of *Network* and will take place on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at 5PM in the Keating Theatre. Hosted by **Renee Gilmore** (Executive Producer of ABC 7’s *Empowering Voices*) and **Tom Tryon** (Former Opinion Editor for *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*), this event examines the challenges the media and consumers face. Titled **Walter Cronkite, Where Are You?**, this forum explores the role contemporary media plays in our lives—from platforms that lean right or lean left to the impact of today’s ever-expansive digital landscape. Attendees will discuss how the media has changed over the last few decades, along with what these changes mean for news outlets and the public as news consumers today. Panelists will include **Richard M. Lobo** (Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau from 2010-2013) and **Mercedes Soler-Martinez** (Co-Owner and President of Solmart Media).

Wrapping up the 2022-2023 Forums Series is **"I Didn't Mean to Offend!" – The Politics of Cultural Appropriation**, a dialogue about cultural appropriation within the context of the World Premiere of *Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)* by **Bruce Graham**. Hosted by The Honorable Charles E. Williams, this forum will explore the broader, often unintended, consequences of cultural appropriation in society today. This event will take place on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 5PM in FST's Keating Theatre.

FST's 2022-2023 Forums Series includes three panel discussions inspired by the themes explored in the theatre's productions of ***What the Constitution Means to Me, Network***, and ***Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)***. Forums events are free to attend, but registration is required. To register, visit FloridaStudioTheatre.org or call FST's Box Office at 941.366.9000.

FST'S 2022-2023 FORUMS SERIES

The U.S. Constitution and America Today: Is it Flourishing or Floundering?

Inspired by themes presented in *What the Constitution Means to Me*

WHEN Thursday, February 9 @ 5PM

WHERE FST's Keating Theatre

52% of American adults say they are not satisfied with the way democracy is working in the United States. Additionally, 85% of Americans say that the U.S. political system either needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed. Our Constitution, the fundamental basis of our government, is over 200 years old. Is it outdated, or is it simply being manipulated and interpreted in a way that was not anticipated when it was written? Is it being used as intended? This forum will explore these issues and more, in hopes of fostering discussion on how we should look at this document in today's world.

FEATURED PANELISTS

The Honorable Larry Eger, Head of the Manatee County division of the Public Defender's Office; Vice-Chair of the Jewish Children and Family Services; and Co-Founder and past President of the Sarasota School of Arts and Science

Trevor Harvey, President of the Sarasota NAACP

Matt Walsh, CEO of Observer Media Group

MODERATED BY

The Honorable Charles E. Williams, 12th Circuit Judge

Walter Cronkite, Where Are You?

Inspired by themes presented in *Network*

WHEN Thursday, March 9 @ 5PM

WHERE FST's Keating Theatre

Elon Musk buys Twitter. Jeff Bezos owns *The Washington Post*. If you have \$100, you can run your own news program! 52% of Americans today get their news from digital platforms. As polarized as our country is today, many believe news outlets—whether print, electronic, or digital—are more polarizing than ever before. How the news is presented is increasingly dependent on the political persuasion of the network's audience. This forum will explore this crisis in news information, why it

has persisted, what can be done to address it, and why it can be destructive to this country and our democracy if it is not fixed.

FEATURED PANELISTS

Richard M. Lobo, Co-Vice Chair for the Center for Public Integrity; Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting during Clinton administration; Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau during Obama administration; Former President and CEO of WEDU (PBS) Tampa/St. Petersburg/Sarasota; and Chairman of the Florida Public Broadcasting Service.

Mercedes Soler-Martinez, Co-Owner and President of Solmart Media.

MODERATED BY

Renee James Gilmore, Executive Producer/ABC7 WWSB/*Empowering Voices*

Tom Tryon, Former Opinion Editor for the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

"I Didn't Mean to Offend!" - The Politics of Cultural Appropriation

Inspired by themes presented in *Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)*

WHEN Thursday, April 20 @ 5PM

WHERE FST's Keating Theatre

The Washington Redskins. The Cleveland Indians. The Danville Braves. What's wrong with these names? Cultural appropriation is the inappropriate or unacknowledged adoption of an element or elements of one culture or identity by members of another culture or identity. This forum will discuss this phenomenon in the context of the play *Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)* and also explore the broader often unintended consequences of cultural appropriation in today's society. This panel will also take a look at the occurrence of gentrification in our rapidly changing Sarasota community.

MODERATED BY

The Honorable Charles E. Williams, 12th Circuit Judge

ABOUT FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE

Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is Sarasota's contemporary theatre. Founded in 1973, FST has grown to a village of five theatres located in the heart of downtown Sarasota. Each theatre is small in size and large in impact— providing intimate and engaging settings for high-quality, professional performances.

Today, FST has established itself as a major force in American Theatre. FST is the largest subscription theatre in the state of Florida and among the largest in the country, serving more than 200,000 live attendees each year across its diverse programs: Mainstage, Cabaret, Stage III, Children's Theatre, The FST School, New Play Development, and FST Improv.

Even with its growth, Florida Studio Theatre remains firmly committed to making the arts accessible and affordable to as many people as possible. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins, FST develops theatre that speaks to our living, evolving, and dynamically changing world. Hip and historical, entertaining and challenging, we are where everyone is welcome to engage in the art of theatre.

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