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CONTACT: Lydia Baxter
Public Relations Associate
(941) 366 – 9017 ext. 338
Lbaxter@floridastudiotheatre.org
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A 'BEARY' BIG AVENTURE & OTHER WINNING PLAYS CONCLUDES FST'S CHILDREN'S THEATRE SERIES

(Sarasota, FL)— Florida Studio Theatre (FST) proudly presents *A Beary Big Adventure & Other Winning Plays*, a collection of plays inspired by the imaginations of children in sixth grade and below. *A Beary Big Adventure & Other Winning Plays* is presented as part of FST's WRITE A PLAY (WAP) program, an award-winning arts integration initiative that inspires and teaches young students the fundamentals of playwriting. Students use their skills to craft their own theatrical pieces, before submitting them to FST's annual youth playwriting competition. Winning playwrights have their work selected out of thousands of submissions from around the world, and presented as a professional production with skilled actors at FST. This year's compilation of winning plays is titled *A 'Beary' Adventure & Other Winning Plays*.

This production will play to school groups starting March 28 via FST's WRITE A PLAY program and to the public on Saturdays (and select Sundays) from March 30 to April 27 as part of FST's Children's Theatre Series. Single tickets are just \$10. For more information, please contact FST's Box Office at 941-366-9000 or visit the Children's Theatre page online at floridastudiotheatre.org. To book your school, please contact Hannah Bagnall at hbagnall@floridastudiotheatre.org.

Wise, heartfelt, and often hilarious, this anthology of award-winning short plays highlights the most creative and imaginative writing by elementary school students from around the world. Some of this year's exciting original works include *Murtle the Turtle in Dangerous Waters*, *The Loss I Had*, *Aquarium After Dark*, and *Peanut Butter & Me*. This year's play submissions to FST's WRITE A PLAY program reached as far as Italy, Israel, Scotland, and Russia. Every submitted play undergoes a thorough evaluation process, and is read at least twice by FST staff members and community volunteers.

When choosing winners, FST looks for plays with an imaginative plot and character, a strong sense of rhythm in the dialogue, innate wisdom, and diverse themes. Adam Ratner, FST's Young Playwrights Festival Coordinator and Lead Teaching Artist, said, "The plays that were submitted this year run the emotional gamut. From a heartfelt tale of understanding one's true purpose in *The Star Who Could Not Twinkle* to hi-jinx and hilarious shenanigans in *The Refrigerator Zone*. It is a banner year as over 6,000 young playwrights submitted plays showing that they were truly inspired to have the courage to create!"

Directing these touching original pieces is FST Associate Artist, Jason Cannon. Cast in *A 'Beary' Big Adventure* are FST Acting Apprentices: Emma Barishman, James McCormack, Jamie Molina, Erin Paxton, Ben Southerland, Liam Tanner, and Olivia Wilson. These actors have previously been seen in FST's productions of *Peter Pan*, *Snow White*, and *Deck the Halls: Home*

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for the Holidays. Cannon and the cast “Treat these young playwrights’ inspired works with same respect and consideration that [they] give to adult professional playwrights,” explains Ratner.

A Beary Big Adventure & Other Winning Plays will play on weekdays to school groups in FST’s WRITE A PLAY series and on Saturdays (and select Sundays) from March 30 to April 27 to the public as part of FST’s Children’s Theatre subscription series. Single tickets are \$10. For more information, please contact FST’s Box Office at 941-366-9000 or visit the Children’s Theatre page online at floridastudiotheatre.org. To book your school, please contact Hannah Bagnall at hbagnall@floridastudiotheatre.org.

ABOUT CHILDREN’S THEATRE

FST inspires young audiences both in the theatre and in the classroom through its weekend Children’s Theatre Series and award-winning arts-in-education WRITE A PLAY program.

Children’s Theatre Series

FST’s weekend Children’s Theatre Series is designed for children and families to explore the world of theatre arts. For less than the cost of a movie ticket, FST’s Children’s Theatre brings culturally enriching quality time to children and families throughout Sarasota, FL. Through pre-show activities and post-show talkbacks with the cast, young audiences have the opportunity to dive deeper into their theatre experience. Since its conception in 2016, series attendance has almost tripled, demonstrating the demand for high-quality family entertainment at an affordable cost.

WRITE A PLAY

Now celebrating 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. During the course of the academic year, traveling FST Teaching Artists lead in-class workshops in schools, teaching students in Kindergarten through 12th grade the fundamentals of playwriting: character, dialogue, conflict, and setting. FST Teaching Artists then lead students in developing their own original plays, which are submitted to FST’s annual youth playwriting competition. FST receives over 5,000 young playwrights each year from all over the world, and about a dozen plays are selected for a full-scale production, presented as part FST’s Annual Young Playwright’s Festival. Since its conception in 1991, WRITE A PLAY has impacted over one million children throughout the state of Florida, nationally in New Jersey, and as far as Russia, Scotland, Italy, and Israel.

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.

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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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