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**FST PRESENTS TRUE STORIES OF THE  
WRONGLY CONVICTED IN *THE EXONERATED***

(Sarasota, FL) – *The Exonerated* tells the haunting stories taken from interviews as well as from the actual court transcripts and interviews of forty former death row inmates. All were eventually proven innocent and released after spending as much as twenty two years behind bars. FST's Stage III production of *The Exonerated* adapted by Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen will play from April 19 - 23, in the Keating Theatre. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.floridastudiotheatre.org](http://www.floridastudiotheatre.org) or by calling the Box Office at (941) 366-9000.

Imagine spending days, weeks, or months in a space that is cold and unfamiliar, with concrete walls and floors, and bars that keep you from going where you want. Jails are not welcoming, nor are they meant to be. Imagine spending years in one, especially if you are not guilty of the crime for which you've been convicted. *The Exonerated* reveals true stories of exonerated prisoners from interviews and court transcripts, some of whom spent as many as twenty two years behind bars. Critics have weighed in on this emotional and thought-provoking play. *The New York Times* calls it "Intense" and "Deeply affecting."

FST Associate Director and Director of *The Exonerated*, Kate Alexander, speaks to the reality presented in this production that most never even comprehend. "The stories in this play are true. The words are the true words of men and women who have lived the unimaginable; Years behind bars, years of a life extinguished - and they are innocent! Is there a way to reconcile? We need to listen to these stories of grit. FST is also partnering with the community's own Public Defender, Laurence Eger. He will lead the Forum committee planning and also the discussions. This is of particular importance because of his passion and drive to protect the accused. Mr. Eger led the initial discussions when we produced this play years ago, and he has been a champion on the forums ever since."

According to Eger, "The topic of Exoneration is just as relevant and important now as it has always been. The issue of the death penalty has nothing to do with mercy. It also does not act as a deterrent or create closure for the family of the victim. It only serves the lowest part of our humanity and one purpose - revenge. I'd like to think as a culture and a species that we have evolved past this need."

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The play is comprised of 10 characters including returning FST company members, Susan Greenhill, Bob Mowry, Jeffrey Plunkett, and Katherine Tanner. Audiences may recognize Greenhill from her moving and memorable role of sex therapist, Dr. Ruth Westheimer in *Becoming Dr. Ruth*. According to Greenhill, "I am so pleased and honored to be involved with this production of *The Exonerated*. I recall so vividly seeing a production in NYC and being deeply moved by these true stories personified by wonderful actors. I am grateful and a little trepidatious, as I always am playing someone who actually exists. A while ago, it was Dr. Ruth and now it will be Sunny. But mostly I am just very happy to be a participant in this theatrical event with the audience at FST who I value so highly after all these years."

FST is also partnering with The Innocence Project of Florida for this production. Executive Director, Seth Miller states, "The Innocence Project of Florida has been finding and freeing innocent people in Florida for fourteen years and, in that time, we have seen a growing awareness of the problem of wrongful conviction. With almost 2,000 exonerations nationwide since 1989, our movement has made significant progress in leveraging what we have learned about wrongful convictions into meaningful reforms to prevent them from occurring in the future. I hope that this production can be a catalyst for those who attend to help us continue to progress towards a more just society."

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#### 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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