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DATE: October 20, 2017

FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE'S WRITE A PLAY PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW

(Sarasota, FL)— Florida Studio Theatre's WRITE A PLAY (WAP) program expands in its 27th season. In addition to the current 4 year partnership of WAP and the Chautauqua Institution in New York, the program now reaches even further to include the Holy Name School of Camden, NJ. Beginning on November 13, 2017 FST's WAP Tour will visit the Holy Name School to present a 2 actor version of the Playmakers Tour production.

First formed in 2014 out of the generous support of FST Board Member, Georgia Court and FST Associate Director At-Large, Kate Alexander, the Chautauqua Institution partnership is quickly growing to reach more and more students to inspire and educate in the world of live theatre and playwriting. "Unique to this programming is the ability for FST to personalize the curriculum and teaching methods to fit the needs of this specific group of students," says Caroline Kaiser, FST's Director of Children's Theatre.

The generosity of supporters, Bob and Wendy Grady allows for this expansion to now reach into Camden, NJ. "We became supporters of Holy Name School in Camden, NJ years ago," said Wendy Grady. "We learned about their exemplary work with children who need a focused, and safe, passageway to a better future. Once we were introduced to FST's WRITE A PLAY program last Spring, we knew this would be an exciting fit. We are very hopeful that the children of Camden may come to love the theatre as we do, and may visualize, for themselves, a theatre-involved future."

The program will now reach 170 Holy Name School students in grades K-5 as well as in-class Playwriting workshops with grades 6-8. This is in addition to the over 2,000 students impacted in Chautauqua, NY. Additionally, teacher training workshops will also be offered. Working in Camden, a low-income school district, will allow students that otherwise would not have an opportunity to experience arts education to participate in the WAP program and thrive using their own words as inspiration.

"How deeply gratifying it is to see this work in one of the poorest counties in New York and the poorest city in our country, Camden," says Alexander. "It also serves the hundreds of young artists who work on the program as teaching artists, offering them the opportunity to learn how art can be of deep service to community. Many say it is the profound experience of their early careers. Our commitment to children and the belief in the redemptive power of the imagination remains strong, a beacon that grows brighter with every school we add. I couldn't be more proud."

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Beginning on November 13, 2017 FST's WAP Tour will visit the Holy Name School to present a 2 actor version of the Playmakers Tour production. For more information on this growing partnership, please contact Caroline Kaiser at (941) 366-9017 ext. 332 or email at CKaiser@floridastudiotheatre.org.

ABOUT WRITE A PLAY

Since 1991, WRITE A PLAY, an arts-in-education initiative, has introduced thousands of students to professional theatre and provided them with the skills and motivation to create original plays. High energy, interactive performances, workshops and long-term residencies inspire children's creativity, bolster their communication and literary skills, and instill in them an appreciation of the arts. Students are encouraged to write from their own point of view and in doing so, they create diverse plays such as *Stick to Being Me*, an inspiring tale about dealing with peer pressure and finding the courage to be your true self.

Now in its 27th year, the WRITE A PLAY program reaches over 50,000 students each year in Florida, Scotland, Russia and Israel. Since the inception of WRITE A PLAY, this unique program has impacted more than one million children. Teaching children to write, FST's WRITE A PLAY program has not only inspired young creative minds, it has also increased reading and writing scores in the program's participants. The core of the WRITE A PLAY program is its three-play series: *Robin Hood* sets the example of a well-made play; the PLAYMAKERS Tour: *The Write Stuff!* travels across the state of Florida during the winter months teaching children to write plays; and *The Boy Who Like Pulling Hair & Other Winning Plays*: the compilation of winning plays submitted to FST's Young Playwrights Festival.

The WRITE A PLAY year culminates with a celebration of all the young playwrights' hard work and creativity with the Young Playwrights Festival in May. Last year, winning playwrights, honorable mention winners ages 6-18, and their guests, including educators, traveled from around Florida and as far away as Dunfermline, Scotland to view a special presentation of their original plays and receive their awards. Some came from big sprawling campuses with hundreds of students and others came from small one-room schools. Many came from big cities and some from small towns.

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.

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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