



Richard Hopkins
Producing Artistic Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lydia Baxter
Public Relations Associate
(941) 366 – 9017 ext. 338
Lbaxter@floridastudiotheatre.org
DATE: July 15, 2019

FST PRESENTS THE REGIONAL PREMIERE OF *THE COTTAGE*

(Sarasota, FL) — Florida Studio Theatre (FST) proudly presents the regional premiere of Sandy Rustin's *The Cottage*, a ridiculous—and potentially murderous—comedy about the ins and outs of marriage and infidelity. Called "Alluring" and "Impressive" by *The New York Times*, *The Cottage* is a seductive riot full of surprises inspired by Noël Coward and Oscar Wilde's comedies. *The Cottage* concludes FST's 29th Summer Mainstage Season and begins July 31st in FST's Gompertz Theatre. Single tickets can be purchased at floridastudiotheatre.org or (941) 366-9000.

Set in the English countryside in 1923, *The Cottage* opens on Sylvia Van Kipness, a hopeless romantic who has decided to tell her husband about her annual passionate rendezvous with her lover, Beau. Beau knows nothing of Sylvia's plan to expose their tryst, so he's quite shocked when her husband appears on the cottage doorstep. What ensues is an absurd romantic mystery ride in which the true meanings of love and marriage are called into question.

In writing *The Cottage*, playwright Sandy Rustin was inspired by Noël Coward's comedic plays, like *Hay Fever* and *Relative Values*, and wanted to bring them into the 21st century. "What I love the most about *The Cottage* and the play's genre are the surprises, the thwarted expectations that exist, where audiences are expecting one thing to happen, and then comedy comes in and it doesn't happen," shared Rustin. "The biggest challenge in writing a play that is so fully steeped in physical comedy is ensuring that the play also has a strong component of thoughtfulness, which will challenge an audience on an emotional and intellectual level. I want *The Cottage* to be a great night at the theatre, but I also want people to think. I want to pose questions to audiences, and have them leaving the theatre with even with more questions than answers about love, fate, marriage, women, and empowerment."

The Cottage was presented by Manhattan Theatre Club in 2017, and over the past two years, FST has worked with Rustin to develop the play for the regional stage, including a public staged reading of *The Cottage* in August 2018. As a result of this process, FST audiences will be treated to a brand new, never-before-seen ending to the play.

Directing *The Cottage* is FST Associate Artist Jason Cannon, who recently directed *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, *Hand to God*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, and *Other People's Money*.

Bringing the playful and witty Sylvia to life is FST newcomer Hanley Smith, who just finished playing Cathy in Syracuse Stage's production of *The Last Five Years*. Smith has also performed in *In the Next Room (Or the Vibrator Play)* at Gulfshore Playhouse, *Major Barbara* at Portland Center Stage, and *The Glass Menagerie* at Pioneer Theatre Company.

Joining Smith onstage are three other FST newcomers: Greg Balla (Beau), Tracie Lane (Marjorie), and Casey Predovik (Richard). Balla starred in *A Christmas at Pemberley* at Pioneer Theatre Company, *You*

Can't Kiss a Movie at HERE Arts Center, and starred as a Blue Man as a part of the *Blue Man Group* for 6 years. Lane has performed in numerous productions at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, American Shakespeare Center, Stages Repertory Theater, and Houston Shakespeare Festival. Predovic has performed in several Off-Broadway productions, including *Orwell in America (59E59)*, and can be seen on television in *Blue Bloods*, *Elementary*, *Person of Interest*, and *The Good Wife*.

Returning to the FST stage to take on the role of Clarke, Sylvia's hilarious and bumbling husband, is Drew Hirshfield, who was seen in FST's recent productions of *Cherry Docs* and *Hand to God*. Anna Stefanic also returns to FST to play Deirdre after being featured in FST's hit *Winter Cabaret*, *Guitar Girls*, and playing the role of Girl in Mad Cow Theatre's production of *Once*.

The Cottage concludes FST's 29th Summer Mainstage Season, and begins June 31 in FST's Gompertz Theatre. Single tickets for *The Cottage* range from \$29-39, and can be purchased at floridastudiotheatre.org or at (941) 366-9000

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 eventually settled down into a permanent home, acquiring the former Woman's Club building – now 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 Goldstein Cabaret, the renovated Gompertz Theatre, 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. Under Producing Artistic Director and CEO, Richard Hopkins, 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.

###