



Richard Hopkins
Producing Artistic Director

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FST'S AWARD-WINNING WRITE A PLAY PROGRAM EXPANDS TO WOODSTOCK, IL

(Sarasota, FL) – **Florida Studio Theatre** (FST) is proud to announce that its award-winning arts-in-education initiative, **WRITE A PLAY**, is expanding into the Midwestern United States beginning this month. Now in its 30th year, WRITE A PLAY is a comprehensive arts integration program giving students the example, inspiration, and the skills to write their own plays. Thanks to support from donors **Tom and April Dougherty, John and Rebecca Hegner**, and **Arthur Ganson and Chehalis Hegner**, FST is inspiring the next generation of playwrights with the art of live theatre in more places than ever before.

"We are thrilled to bring WRITE A PLAY to the students of Woodstock, IL," said **Caroline Kaiser**, FST's Director of Children's Theatre. "COVID-19 has changed the way we think about theatre and creativity for the better. With conferencing platforms like Zoom and GoogleMeet, we are able to provide students from all over the country and around the world with a creative theatrical experience—and they never have to leave their classroom or home learning environment! This allows us to reach and inspire countless more children with the art of playwriting."

Since the program was founded in 1991, WRITE A PLAY has steadily grown to reach over 47,000 students across the state of Florida each year. Then, WRITE A PLAY expanded to reach young artists in Sarasota's Sister Cities of Dunfermline, Scotland; Tel Mond, Israel; and Vladimir, Russia. With support from donors **Bob and Wendy Grady**, FST was able to bring WRITE A PLAY to Holy Name School in Camden, NJ, in 2017. Now, FST is excited to bring WRITE A PLAY to the Midwest for the very first time.

"I learned about WRITE A PLAY through my parents, Richard and Betty Hegner, who have supported the program for many years," said **Chehalis Hegner**, one of the key sponsors helping bring WRITE A PLAY to Woodstock, IL. "I heard many moving stories about the program's power, but it wasn't until 2019 that I was finally able to see it for myself. My husband and I laughed, cried, and everything in between. When everything came to a close, we looked at each other and said, 'I wonder if FST would consider bringing WRITE A PLAY to students in our own community in Woodstock, IL?'"

Across six elementary schools within the Woodstock Community Unit School District 200, over 120 third grade students will experience **Zoom Into Playwriting**, a virtual theatre education program consisting of exciting theatrical performances, an interactive playwriting workshop, and the chance for students to write an original play together as a class.

"Our staff and students are so excited to stretch their creative and literary muscles through this unique program," said **Keely Krueger**, Assistant Superintendent for Early Childhood and Elementary Education in Woodstock, IL. "WRITE A PLAY is a great way to spark students' passion as they utilize what they've learned in school to create something of their own. We can't wait to see what they come up with!"

Each group play will be submitted to this year's 30th Annual Young Playwrights Festival playwriting competition, which receives submissions from more than 6,000 playwrights around the world each year. Individual students are encouraged to submit their work to the Festival as well. Every script is read at least twice by FST staff and community volunteers, ultimately selecting a dozen plays for a full-scale professional production by FST. The theatre has also provided teachers in Woodstock, IL, with additional video lessons that can be used in their classroom to get their students writing plays of their own to submit to the Festival.

Teachers, educators, and group leaders interested in FST's WRITE A PLAY program should contact FST's Director of Children's Theatre, [Caroline Kaiser](#) or call 941-366-9797.

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 230,000 live attendees each year across its six core programs: Mainstage, Cabaret, Stage III, Children's Theatre, Education, and New Play Development.

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 the theatre where the street meets the elite — where everyone is welcome to engage in the art of theatre.

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