

Florida Studio Theatre is one of the major cultural resources in the Gulf Coast region. Nestled in the heart of downtown Sarasota, Florida Studio Theatre serves more than 215,000 attendees per year through its six main programs: Mainstage, Stage III, Cabaret, Children's Theatre, Education, and New Play Development.



MAINSTAGE – Now in its 44th season, the Mainstage is FST's flagship program, producing the best in contemporary American theatre by presenting plays that speak to a living, evolving, and dynamically changing world. Housed in both the Keating and Gompertz Theatre, the Mainstage Series features seven annual productions that draw from new works, regionally produced works, and the latest off-Broadway and Broadway plays.



STAGE III – Stage III is dedicated to the presentation of socially significant productions, stimulating attendees by presenting challenging content and unique form. Featuring plays with bite and verve, FST's Stage III productions bring edgy new works to the Sarasota theatrical landscape.

CABARET – Housed in the intimate Goldstein Cabaret Theatre and the John C. Court Cabaret, this series was established to develop new audiences who might not otherwise participate in theatrical events. These productions celebrate the lyric poets of our time, as well as presenting social and political satire.



CHILDREN'S THEATRE – Last season, FST has launched a pilot Children's Theatre Saturday series that includes four productions for children and their families. The anchor of Children's Theatre, WRITE APLAY, impacts students in grades K-12, with a special emphasis on underserved youth throughout Florida, the Southeastern U.S. and beyond, as far as Israel, Russia and Scotland. Over the course of a school year, FST's tours inspire an average of 47,000 children and teens to write their own original plays.

EDUCATION – FST's Education program offers children and adults a wealth of opportunities to discover their creativity. Classes are offered each week to students aged 5-95 in theatre, dance and music. Accessibility is ensured through programming for financially disadvantaged, physically and mentally challenged youth, and nursing home residents.



NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT – New Play Development is to theatre what Research & Development is to a corporation. FST's new play development attracts playwrights, actors, directors, and designers from around the country to create, produce and present premiere productions. Over 3,500 play submissions are read by New Play Development Associates and Volunteers each year.

Florida Studio Theatre Mission

Theatre as we know it originated with the ancient Greeks. They held that the purpose of theatre is to explore man's relationship to self, man's relationship to other men, and man's relationship to god (nature). They believed that the theatre is a vital source for the community to rediscover self. Although times have changed and now the word 'man' includes woman, it is through theatre that we investigate and celebrate the extraordinary and subtle interplay of these relationships described by the ancient Greeks. In sharing these beliefs, Florida Studio Theatre holds the following mission:

- To make theatre accessible and affordable to as many people as possible.
- To present theatre that challenges with as much gusto as it entertains.
- To create a public forum for the issues of our day that will foster positive change in our community and beyond.
- To operate within and for the public trust.

Florida Studio Theatre History

In 1973, Florida Studio Theatre was founded by artist Jon Spelman as an alternative touring group, reaching out to isolated and underserved audiences in nursing homes, migrant farms and prisons. Today, the theatre serves as one of the major cultural resources for the West Coast of Florida, serving over 215,000 patrons each year. In 1977, FST acquired its current theatre in Sarasota's Historic Woman's Club building. With a modest subscription base of 103, FST struggled to create an artistic home for its dedicated company of resident artists.

Today, according to Theatre Communications Group (TCG), FST's 36,000 subscriber packages constitutes the largest subscription base of any TCG member theatre in Florida, and is among the top 5 in the nation, behind theatres in giant markets such as The Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles and The Roundabout in New York City. With 6 main programs, FST has remained committed to its mission of accessibility and affordability to all, striving to build artistic programming that reaches diverse audiences. Now in its 44th season, the theatre continues to strengthen and grow by staying focused on its mission and remaining true to its founding principles. Since 2012, FST has renovated its third theatre, the Gompertz Theatre and built two new theatres into the adjoining Hegner Theatre Wing: the John C. Court Cabaret Theatre and Bowne Lab Theatre, along with a second box office, public café, and artists' loft.



Wesley T. Jones and Catalina Grieco in *brownsville song (b-side for tray)*.
Photo by Matthew Holler.

MAINSTAGE

Now in its 44th year, the Mainstage is Florida Studio Theatre's flagship program. The Mainstage produces the best in contemporary American theatre, presenting plays that speak to a living, evolving, and dynamically changing world.

FST's Mainstage is housed in both the Keating and the Gompertz Theatre. The Keating, a historic building constructed in 1914, is listed in the National Register as the oldest cultural facility in Sarasota. The Gompertz Theatre, built in 1926, underwent a major renovation in 2012, including a new stage configuration, new roof, new HVAC system, increased seating from 160 to 237, new restrooms, and a second box office.

- FST's Mainstage has more than 13,300 subscribers. According to Theatre Communications Group (TCG), this is more than any other theatre its size in the nation.
- FST's Mainstage operates 11 months out of the year with 7 full productions.
- FST's Mainstage has produced over 100 World and Regional Premieres, many of which have gone on to New York and other regional productions.



Grant Alan Watkins, Paul Lincoln, Nick Lerangis, Lauren Wainwright, Chris Blisset, Sarah Hund, Emily Mikesell, and Seth Eliser in *Once*.
Photo by Matthew Holler.

Highlights include:

- **The Best in Contemporary Theatre** including: *The Best of Enemies* by Mark St. Germain, *Opus* by Michael Hollinger, *Golda's Balcony* by William Gibson, *Rabbit Hole* by David Lindsay-Abaire, *Permanent Collection* by Thomas Gibbons, and *Next to Normal* by Brian Yorkey.
- **Dedication to New Work** including: *Shotgun* by John Biguenet, *Black Pearl Sings!* by Frank Higgins, *Tom Jones* by Mark Brown, and *Inspired Lunacy* developed by Richard Hopkins, Rebecca Hopkins, and Jim Prosser.
- **Regional and World Premieres**
 - *The Bully Pulpit* by Tampa resident, Michael O. Smith, was developed and first produced at FST in 2004.
 - Regional premiere of *Race*, by Pulitzer prize-winning playwright David Mamet. Voted Best Professional Play of the 2010-2011 season by readers of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*.
 - Regional premiere of *Next to Normal*, the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.
 - 2012 National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere of *Jericho*.
 - Regional premiere of *Fly* which made its Off-Broadway debut at The Public Theatre in 2016.
 - The regional premiere of *Butler* was featured in American Theatre Magazine and the play made its Off-Broadway debut at 59E59 Theaters in 2016.

Total Annual Impact: 84,000+

CABARET

FST designed and constructed its second theatre in 1995 specifically to perform cabaret theatre. This has allowed FST to discover new ways of working and to explore new material in a unique setting. FST's Cabaret is not a chanteuse at a microphone. This Cabaret harkens back to its 19th Century Parisian origin, as an artistic outlet rebelling against the institution. FST adheres to these roots by making the Cabaret an artist-based series that differs from theatre only in its size. This program celebrates the lyric poets of our time, as well as presents social and political satire.

Housed in the 105-seat Ann and Alfred Goldstein Cabaret Theatre, the 110-seat John C. Court Cabaret Theatre, the Cabaret Series supports 3 in-house productions each year from October through June and 3 book-in productions from June through September. Offering food and beverage service, the Cabaret provides a relaxed, inviting atmosphere for people who are new to theatre. Its warm, welcoming space reduces social barriers to theatre and encourages communication and intimacy.



Jannie Jones in *Blue Suede Shoes*.
Photo by Matthew Holler.

- FST's Cabaret has more than 12,700 subscribers, which according to TCG, is more than any other theatre its size in the nation.
- FST's Cabaret has presented over 60 World Premiere productions.
- In 2013, FST opened up a second cabaret theatre, the John C. Court Cabaret, in order to accommodate increased demand and serve more of the community. Cabaret subscriptions have increased by 25% since the 2012 season.
- The summer of 2014 introduced a new Cabaret series to FST where the theatre booked outside groups to have month-long runs of their shows in the Court Cabaret.
- The 2018 production of *Blue Suede Shoes* became FST's longest-running production at 191 performances.

Exploring new theatrical forms, FST's Cabaret Theatre attracts patrons to *entertainment* in order to introduce them to *art*.

"Cabaret shows at Florida Studio Theatre are designed to be more than just collections of songs. They're created to tell stories through the songs..."

-Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Total Annual Impact: 62,000+

STAGE III

Theatre is like a library. A good library is obligated to place all the books on its shelf. In similar fashion, a good theatre is obligated to put the breadth of the human experience on the stage. In both cases, the public has a choice of what to read and what to see.

Stage III was introduced in 2005 to answer an increasing demand from local audiences for edgier plays that show an uncommon human experience, challenging previously held beliefs and values. It also gives subscribers an additional opportunity for plays outside of their subscription series. Last season, FST brought back the Stage III; consisting of three productions.

Dedicated to the presentation of socially significant productions, Stage III stimulates attendees by presenting challenging content and unique form. Featuring plays with bite, verve and drive, this program pushes the envelope of contemporary theatre and brings titillating works to the Sarasota theatrical landscape.



Chris Tipp and Alexis Hyatt in *Constellations*
Photo by Matthew Holler.

- FST's long-awaited Stage III opened to critical acclaim and public controversy with Edward Albee's ***The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?***
- The world premiere of ***Old Enough to Know Better*** (from FST's The People's Project) played to sold out audiences in July 2015 in FST's Bowne's Lab. The second production in The People's Project debuted in the Bowne's Lab in September 2016, entitled ***Last Rights***.
- FST produced the World Premiere of ***Relativity*** by Mark St. Germain as part of Stage III and NNPN's Rolling World Premiere Program in June 2016.
- FST's Stage III is also home to **FST Improv**, as well as the annual Sarasota Improv Festival, a three-day event drawing improv and sketch comedy artists from around the country. Both programs attract a younger adult audience to the theatre to see totally unscripted, audience-suggested improvisation.
- The re-launch of the Stage III series was in 2017 and included three productions: ***Stalking the Bogeyman*, *Gidion's Knot*, and *Grounded***.

STAGE III has allowed the theatre to hold true to its mission "*to challenge with as much gusto as we entertain.*"

"Florida Studio Theatre has achieved a well-earned reputation of being Sarasota's cutting edge theatre."
- Scene Magazine

Total Annual Impact: 6,700+

NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT

New Play Development is the lifeblood of FST. It feeds all 4 houses by seeking out the best new plays and musicals in America today. The program involves playwrights of all ages – from children to adults – and evaluates thousands of scripts each year. FST's New Play Development Program features 3 annual events each year under the banner **Sarasota Festival of New Plays**. Components are listed below:

- **The Festival of New Plays** features 3 fully staged Premiere productions from March through May. FST's philosophy of new play development is one that goes beyond the World Premiere. This is why FST frequently provides plays with their 2nd, 3rd or 4th productions. For example, the 2009 production of ***Black Pearl Sings!*** led to the show being one of the most produced in the 2009-10 season.
- **The Burdick New Play Series** features at least 3 full-length plays by contemporary American writers in workshop productions. Selected writers are invited to Sarasota each May to participate in rehearsals, performance and audience talkbacks. Sarah Bierstock's *Honor Killing* was a part of the 2017 Burdick New Play Series, and held its World Premiere at FST in 2018
- **The Young Playwrights Festival** encourages young voices to express their unique viewpoints, beliefs, ideas and

emotions. The festival, which is the culmination of FST's WRITE A PLAY program, received entries from over 3,000 children and teens in 2015. During the months of April and May, nearly 12,000 children come to FST to see *Under Six*, a compilation of winning plays written by children in grades K-6. In addition, over 400 people attend a series of recognition ceremonies for the top-winning playwrights. Past Awards Day speakers have included Edward Albee and John Guare.



Brooke Benson in *The Whole Shebang*.
Photo by FST

New Play Development at FST is more than festivals. The theatre continually develops new works through a series of commissions, closed-door readings, workshop productions, and development roundtables that create work on a year-round basis.

- **New Play Development has brought over 60 plays** to full production.
- **Plays and musicals developed at FST have gone on to over 70 productions** in theatres from Los Angeles to New York.
- **Over 50 plays and musicals written by Florida playwrights** have been produced in FST's Mainstage and Cabaret Theatres.
- **50 Cabaret productions were developed** at FST through closed-door readings and roundtable development.
- **To date over 100,000 young people have submitted plays** to FST's Young Playwrights Festival.
- **The Playwright's Collective** brings playwrights from around the nation in residence together in Sarasota at least 4 times over the year to create new work.

Total Annual Impact: 52,000+

EDUCATION

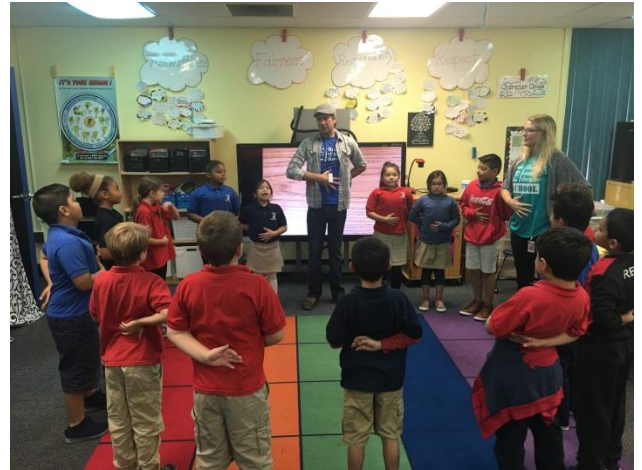
Florida Studio Theatre's Education Program is celebrating its 36th year of outstanding programming. From its modest beginnings of 11 students in 1982, the program now reaches over 1,500 students of all ages. The FST Theatre School staff is comprised of a core of theatre professionals trained to teach without personal biases.

Youth workshops target children and teens ages 5-18 and offer an original training method developed from over 2 decades of experience.

- 29 classes throughout the school year, offering acting, dance, improv, musical theatre, and sketch comedy. 18 summer camp courses, providing for everyone from the first-time student to those who have returned year after year, including the "VIP Performing Arts Program" for special needs youth.

Adult workshops offer a creative forum to explore their human and artistic potential.

- 34 classes held throughout the year, offering acting, voice, improv, storytelling and theatre appreciation.
- Master classes led by FST's guest artists – professional performers, playwrights and designers from around the country – held throughout the season in subjects such as acting, directing, sketch comedy writing and design.



Lead Teaching Artist and Young Playwright's Festival Coordinator, Adam Ratner, with students from Gocio Elementary.
Photo by FST.

Scholarships are offered to children and adults with financial need, as well as disabled youth. FST provided 86 scholarships to students in the 2016-2017 season, including 45 full scholarships to VIP Students.

"I really enjoy going to acting every Monday. I think it's really improved my acting abilities. Also it brings me and my sister closer together, and that's a good thing."

- Olivia, Theatre School Student

Outreach:

- An accredited theatre program at the Ringling School of Art and Design that offers critical liberal arts credits to the college's future animators and illustrators
- Programs for "at-risk" youth

With more than thirty classes held each week in a variety of theatrical disciplines, FST is able to touch the lives of students ages 5 to 95. In addition, workshops and classes have been presented in cooperation with other organizations across the country including: *Children's Museum of Manhattan, Sarasota County Library System, Brooklyn Children's Museum, YMCA of Sarasota, American Museum of Natural History, Woman's Resource Center, Police Athletic League, Boys and Girls Clubs of Sarasota County, Girls Incorporated, 92nd Street Y, Lincoln Center Library, Theatre Communications Group, Blue Star Families, and the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee.*

Total Annual Impact: 1,500+

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

In 2016, Florida Studio Theatre launched the inaugural season for a new Saturday Children's Series. This series is designed to create an affordable way for children and their families to experience the magic of live theatre. The first year included four productions: ***The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Deck the Halls!*, *Alice with a Twist!*, and *The Dragon vs the Hiccups and Other Winning Plays***. Total Annual Impact: 2,500+

In 1991, FST launched its **WRITE A PLAY Program** with the support of FAC and NEA Challenge funds. This program now inspires over 47,000 children each year throughout the State of Florida and beyond to write plays and submit them for inclusion in the *Young Playwrights Festival*.

WRITE A PLAY has proven to inspire creativity, promote literacy, strengthen communication skills, and instill an appreciation of the arts. In addition, data has shown an improvement in self-esteem, school attitudes, and overall academic achievement.

WRITE A PLAY components are:

- **Three professional productions** designed to inspire young writers:
 - **A Classic Children's play** (Oct. – Nov.) Bringing to life the work of established writers, providing an example for young writers of the future. Annual impact: 17,600+
 - **Playmakers** (Dec. – March) Statewide Tour.
A high-energy audience participation workshop designed to give children the tools they need to write plays. Annual impact: 25,000+
 - **Under Six** (April – May)
The winning plays of the Young Playwrights Festival are performed for children to experience the work of their peers. Annual impact: 12,000+
- **Workshops for students** in elementary and secondary schools:
- **Teacher trainings and materials** to support the hands-on experience of the WRITE A PLAY Program.
 - Intensive workshops in acting, improvisation and dramatic structure.
 - Study guides that coincide with the Florida State Standards for Theatre, Language Arts, Math and Science.



J Vance, Brooke Benson, and
Kihresha Redmond in *Under Six*.
Photo by Matthew Holler

“One of the most impactful programs I have seen is at Florida Studio Theatre...FST’s Young Playwright Festival and WRITE A PLAY program.”

-Teresa Eyring, Theatre Communications Group

Total Annual Impact: 49,500+