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DATE: November 15, 2011

SARASOTA'S FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR NEW THEATRE BUILDING AND RENOVATION PROJECT

***Acclaimed South West Florida Theatre to Double Number of Renovated Stages &
Create Unprecedented Economic Impact on City's Downtown Area***

(Sarasota, FL) — At a press conference on Tuesday, November 15, Florida Studio Theatre announced a multi-year capital improvement campaign to renovate the 6,000 sq. foot Gompertz Theatre and construct an 18,000 sq. foot addition with two new theatre spaces. The \$5.6 million dollar campaign is the largest capital program in the 37-year old theatre's history and will double the number of renovated stages on the theatre's campus located in Sarasota's historic downtown.

Designed by Potvin Architects in collaboration with C. Alan Architect PA and Contractors, Florida Studio Theatre will break ground in January 2012 on the new complex. The renovated Gompertz Theatre will have a soft opening in July 2012, and have a grand opening in December 2012. The Gompertz Theatre is located at the corner of First Street and Coconut Avenue.

It is Florida Studio Theatre's mission to make theatre affordable and accessible to as many people as possible. With that goal in mind, FST has successfully grown its audience to be one of the largest in the country* reaching more than 160,000 people each year through its six major programs. Over the years, FST has grown to accommodate this ever-expanding audience - but, today, FST's audience is being capped at that number. With 11,000 subscribers in the Mainstage series and 8,700 subscribers in the Cabaret series, FST's theatres are at capacity with little room to grow.

"When Florida Studio Theatre purchased the adjacent property where the current Gompertz Theatre stands about ten years ago, we began dreaming of what FST would one day become," said Artistic Director Richard Hopkins, who has been with the theatre for 31 years. "This is the opportunity to expand and extend the reach of our current programming; we will grow the Mainstage series audience, we will grow the Cabaret series audience, and grow our other programming, including Improv, Education, Children's Theatre and New Play Development. We have spent years examining our core and what we do well, and The New Gompertz Theatre campaign will allow us to keep doing that."

The New Gompertz Theatre project will allow FST to meet the demands of its programs and to reach even more of Sarasota's broadening audience. Those demands could take FST's audience and impact from 160,000 people to a projected 200,000 people per year. It will also allow for exciting new artistic ventures because of the expansion and addition of two new theatre spaces.

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*according to TCG; Theatre Communications Group 2011 survey of professional American Theatres

THE NEW GOMPERTZ THEATRE CAMPAIGN

The New Gompertz Theatre is designed by Potvin Architects in collaboration with C. Alan Architect PA and Contractors.

The \$5.6 million construction campaign includes:

- \$3 million for renovation of The New Gompertz Theatre
- \$1 million to pay for the property
- \$1 million for endowment
- \$633,000 for capital reserves

The construction project will include the following in the new 24,000 sq. foot facility:

- Expanded interior lobby space
- New large restrooms
- A full service cafe and bar
- Covered veranda seating and street-level seating
- Fully renovated Gompertz theatre auditorium featuring an increase in seating capacity to 230, increased accessible seating for handi-capped patrons, larger stage space and wing space
- A New Cabaret Theatre, seating 130 people on two levels
- A New Lab Theatre, seating 100 people
- A New Actors' Loft featuring new dressing rooms, restrooms, green room, and additional facilities.

FST's construction project has the following projected timeline:

- November 15, 2011: FST announces the renovation and construction of The New Gompertz Theatre
- January 4, 2012: Ground-breaking at the Gompertz Theatre
- July 11, 2012: Performances begin in the renovated Gompertz Theatre of the second play in FST's 2012 Summer Season
- November 2012: Grand opening of the New Gompertz Theatre, cafe, and lobby space [2012/2013 Season]
- January 2014: Grand opening of the new Cabaret theatre space [2013/2014 Season]
- January 2015: Grand opening of the new Lab theatre space [2014/2015 Season]

ABOUT THE GOMPERTZ THEATRE

FST first purchased the industrial 160-seat Gompertz Theatre in 2002, and opened its doors during FST's 30th season anniversary in 2004. This purchase changed the campus of FST, turning it into the three-theatre campus it is today (with the Keating Theatre and Goldstein Cabaret). The Gompertz Theatre has allowed for growth and expansion for Florida Studio Theatre, including the creation of the Stage III program, which presented a broad palate of theatre; from provocative plays like Edward Albee's *The Goat* or entertaining comedies like *Shear Madness*. Also, by presenting the Mainstage series in both the Keating and the Gompertz, it allowed FST to reach an unprecedented 10,000 subscribers during its 2010-2011 season and 160,000 total attendees through all six of its major programs.

ABOUT FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE

Known as Sarasota's Contemporary Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre was founded in 1973 by 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 three theatre venues: the Keating Theatre, the Goldstein Cabaret and its newest space, the Gompertz Theatre.

Even with its growth, Florida Studio Theatre remains firmly committed to making the arts accessible and affordable to a broad-based audience. Under Richard Hopkins, Artistic Director and CEO, 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.