



Richard Hopkins
Producing Artistic Director

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CONTACT: Lydia Baxter
Public Relations Manager
(941) 366 – 9017 ext. 338
LBaxter@floridastudiotheatre.org
DATE: March 21, 2023

**FST PRESENTS WORLD PREMIERE COMEDY,
*VISIT JOE WHITEFEATHER (AND BRING THE FAMILY!)***

(Sarasota, FL) — **Florida Studio Theatre (FST)** is proud to present the World Premiere of ***Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)*** by award-winning playwright **Bruce Graham**. It's the 1970s in Beaver Gap, Pennsylvania, a small town with a problem. Tourism has declined and it doesn't look like there is any hope on the horizon. When a new resident joins forces with the bewildered city council, they devise a plan to rename the town to honor a dead, Native American war hero who had never visited the town before. It's a plan so wild and insane that it just might work. *Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)* begins playing April 5, 2023, in FST's Gompertz Theatre. Tickets range from \$25-39 and are now on sale at FloridaStudioTheatre.org or at 941.366.9000.

Florida Studio Theatre played a key role in the development of this World Premiere comedy. In the summer of 2020, FST commissioned Graham to write *Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)* as part of the theatre's Playwrights Project, an artistic initiative that employed more than 30 of the country's top writers to create new work for FST's five stages.

"As Sarasota's Contemporary Theatre, we are heavily committed to supporting the development of new plays," said **Richard Hopkins**, FST's Producing Artistic Director. "We do that in various ways—through commissions, like we have done with *Visit Joe Whitefeather*, by presenting staged readings of plays-in-progress for live audiences, and in giving works their World Premiere productions."

Visit Joe Whitefeather is inspired by real events. In the 1950s, a small town formerly known as Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, was renamed after Jim Thorpe, the first Native American to win a gold medal for the United States in the Olympics. The idea to rename the town after the late athlete came from civic leaders' efforts to strengthen the local economy. Today, Jim Thorpe is a popular tourist destination in the Pocono Mountains.

"I grew up thinking that Jim Thorpe, PA, was the home of Jim Thorpe," said playwright Bruce Graham. "It wasn't until I got to college that someone informed me that, not only was he not born there, but he'd also never visited when he was alive. The absurdity of this sat in the back of my mind for many, many years. Why would a town name itself after a dead Native American who never even drove through it?"

While audiences may find the idea of renaming a town after someone who has never stepped foot there humorous and absurd, the characters' intentions are innocent. They view it as an earnest effort to inspire economic development and bring new people to the area.

"The loveable, innocent, and charming people in this play are so deliciously misguided," said show director **Kate Alexander**. "And they so easily and deftly convince themselves of the worth of their proposal."

Eight actors bring this quirky comedy to life: **London Carlisle** (FST debut); **Anat Cogan** (*Handle With Care*, 2020); **Kim Crow** (Eight productions at FST, including *Doublewide* in 2018); **Britt Michael Gordon** (*The Legend of Georgia McBride*, 2022); **Ellie Mooney** (FST Associate Artist); **Jared Sellick** (FST debut); **Kraig Swartz** (*Something Rotten!* in 2023 and *The Legend of Georgia McBride* in 2022); and **Malka Wallick** (FST debut).

The production's creative team includes **Isabel A. Curley-Clay and Moriah Curley-Clay** (Scenic Design), **Mari Taylor Floyd** (Costume Design), **Ben Rawson** (Lighting Design), and **Thom Korp** (Sound Design).

FST's production of *Visit Joe Whitefeather (and bring the family!)* is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The production is also supported by Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax Revenues, and the Shubert Foundation. Thank you to our media sponsor, the Herald-Tribune Media Group.

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 200,000 live attendees each year across its diverse programs: Mainstage, Cabaret, Stage III, Children's Theatre, The FST School, New Play Development, and FST Improv.

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 where everyone is welcome to engage in the art of theatre.

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