13TH ANNUAL SARASOTA IMPROV FESTIVAL LINEUP ANNOUNCED

(Sarasota, FL) — Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is proud to announce the long-awaited return of the annual Sarasota Improv Festival, the premier Festival of its kind in the Southeastern United States. Founded by Rebecca Hopkins in 2009, the Sarasota Improv Festival has become a destination event, drawing thousands of people from across the state of Florida and beyond. After a three-year hiatus due to COVID, the Festival is back for its 13th year and will feature over 20 of the top improv troupes from across the country and as far as Canada and the United Kingdom. The 13th Annual Sarasota Improv Festival will be held on FST’s downtown Sarasota campus Thursday, July 20, through Saturday, July 22, 2023. A full Festival schedule is included at the end of this release.

“We are thrilled to be welcoming artists and audiences back to FST for this beloved festival,” said Will Luera, FST’s Director of Improvisation. “This event is so special and distinctive—not just to the Sarasota community, but within the larger improvisational world on a national scale. It’s truly become a destination event.”

Headlining the 13th Annual Sarasota Improv Festival is MC Hammersmith, a multi award-winning hip hop improvisor and comedian from the United Kingdom. Self-described as “a posh British boy” and “the world’s leading gangsta rapper to ever emerge from the ghetto of middle-class west London,” MC Hammersmith takes stories and suggestions from the audience, then raps about them at lightning speed with no preparation. Called “The world’s leading freestyle rapper” by The Advertiser and “A hip hop rap genius” by 1079 Life, MC Hammersmith will perform for the very first time in the United States as the Festival’s headliner.

Another international improv group will be joining the Festival: 2-MAN NO-SHOW. One of the most in-demand Canadian acts around, 2-MAN NO-SHOW is known for making bold physical choices, creating outrageous characters, and building ridiculous scenarios every time they take the stage. According to the Chicago Tribune, the group’s two members, Ken Hall and Isaac Kessler, “display the kind of restless intelligence, physical curiosity, and potent vulnerability that keeps the stakes high and the gags appealing.” The dynamite improv duo has been nominated for two Canadian Comedy Awards for Best Improv Troupe and Best Comedic Show, and was a critics’ pick at the New York, Chicago, and Toronto Comedy Festivals.

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This marks the sixth year that FST has welcomed artists from around the world to its Improv Festival. Introducing Festival audiences and performers to a wider array of improv styles and approaches has always been a priority to Festival Producer, Rebecca Hopkins, and Festival Organizer, Will Luera. Past Festivals have drawn international talent from Mexico, France, and Spain.

Returning for the Festival are several fan favorite troupes, including Available Cupholders (Austin, TX, and Los Angeles, CA), Big Bang Improv (Boston, Sarasota, and New York City), Dad’s Garage (Atlanta, GA), Parallelogramophonograph (Austin, TX), North Coast (New York City, NY), and of course, Florida Studio Theatre’s own resident improv team, FST Improv.

A total of nine troupes will make their Festival debut this summer. Hailed as “Nothing short of genius” by NPR, HERE: The (Improvised) Musical from Columbus, OH, will perform for the first time at the 13th Annual Sarasota Improv Festival. HERE is a two-person, fully improvised musical play spontaneously created by best friends Tara DeFrancisco and Rance Rizzutto, who are both highly skilled improvisers. HERE has performed in 24 countries and more than 80 cities worldwide.

Also making their Festival debut is Ripley, an all-female and non-binary improv collective based in Los Angeles that, through collaborative improvisation, weaves character driven stories on the spot. Founded in 2016, Ripley has performed genre and narrative improv at the Hollywood Fringe Festival, Magnetic Theatre, New South Comedy Festival, and the Asheville Fringe Festival.

Six Florida troupes—Impromptu, Improv U, Swan City Improv, Wallares, and Wet Bandits—will perform for the first time at the Sarasota Improv Festival as well.

Closing the 13th Annual Sarasota Improv Festival is the famous finale event, All Play, where all 80+ Festival artists squeeze themselves onto FST’s Gompertz stage for a raucous, completely unscripted performance of collaborative fun. A beloved Festival tradition, this showdown of improvisational play turns strangers into teammates and spur-of-the-moment ideas transform into art.

In addition to almost 30 performances, workshops led by Festival artists from across the country will be held on Saturday, July 22, for those who want to learn from some of improv’s top artists. Workshops will go on sale Friday, June 2, 2023.

Festival passes are now on sale and can be purchased at FloridaStudioTheatre.org or at 941.366.9000.

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FESTIVAL PASS PRICING:
Three Day Pass - $79
Two Day Pass - $69
Saturday Pass - $59
Friday Pass - $49
Thursday Pass - $20
Single Tickets will go on sale the week of June 19, 2023.

FULL FESTIVAL SCHEDULE
THURSDAY, JULY 20
7PM – Improv I-4Ever: Featuring FST Improv (Sarasota, FL), Swan City Improv (Lakeland, FL), and The Commodore (Ybor City, FL)
8:30PM – For Pete’s Sake: Featuring Treble in Paradise (Sarasota, FL), Wet Bandits (St. Petersburg, FL), and Wallares (Tampa, FL)
10PM – Tournament of Fools

FRIDAY, JULY 21
6PM – FST Improv (Sarasota, FL)
7PM – HERE: The (Improvised) Musical (Columbus, OH)
7PM – Parallelogramophonograph (Austin, TX)
7PM – Orange Tuxedo (Los Angeles, CA)
8PM – Available Cupholders (Austin, TX, and Los Angeles, CA)
8PM – Dad’s Garage (Atlanta, GA)
8PM – 2-MAN NO-SHOW (Toronto, Canada)
9PM – Big Bang Improv (Boston, MA, Sarasota, FL, and New York City, NY)
9PM – North Coast Improv (New York City, NY)
9PM – Ripley (Los Angeles, CA)
10PM – Musical All Stars: Featuring MC Hammersmith

SATURDAY, JULY 22
11AM – Festival Family Show
4PM – Sarasota Showcase: Early Bird Special, BUSTED!, and Impromptu (Sarasota, FL)
5PM – Ripley (Los Angeles, CA)
5PM – Orange Tuxedo (Los Angeles, CA)
6PM – Alligator Alley: Just the Funny (Miami, FL) and Improv U (West Palm Beach, FL)
6PM – Big Bang Improv (Boston, MA, Sarasota, FL, and New York City, NY)
6PM – 2-MAN NO-SHOW (Toronto, Canada)
7PM – North Coast Improv (New York City, NY)
7PM – Available Cupholders (Austin, TX, and Los Angeles, CA)
7PM – HERE: The (Improvised) Musical (Columbus, OH)
8PM – Parallelogramophonograph (Austin, TX)
8PM – SAK Comedy Lab (Orlando, FL)
8PM – Dad’s Garage (Atlanta, GA)
9PM – MC Hammersmith (United Kingdom)
10:30PM – All Play

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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