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Producing Artistic Director

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## FST ANNOUNCES ITS 2023-2024 CHILDREN'S THEATRE SERIES LINEUP

(Sarasota, FL)— **Florida Studio Theatre** (FST) is pleased to announce the lineup for its four-show Children's Theatre Series, providing families with outstanding theatre experiences on the weekend at an affordable price. From a touching adaptation of *The Velveteen Rabbit* to award-winning plays written by elementary school students from around the world, this year's lineup has something for children of all ages—and their favorite grownups. Subscriptions for FST's four-show weekend Children's Series are now on sale for ONLY \$20—that's just \$5 per show. Single tickets are also available for \$10 per ticket. Subscriptions and single tickets are now on sale at [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org) and at 941.366.9000.

"This Season, we really wanted to focus on the power of storytelling and its importance in all of our lives," said **Caroline Saldivar**, FST's Director of Children's Theatre. "Stories spark our imaginations, help us connect with one another, and shape our understanding of the world. So, we wanted to offer a variety of shows and stories that could speak to everyone. This year's lineup includes the heartwarming classic, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, our yearly holiday show, *Deck the Halls*, a comedy-filled retelling of a popular fairy tale with *Red Riding Hood*, and our annual production shining a light on children's creativity titled *The Power of Peanut Butter & Other Winning Plays*."

The Series kicks off with a new adaptation of *The Velveteen Rabbit* by **Patrick Flynn**, which plays select Saturdays and Sundays beginning September 17, 2023. Based on the book by **Margery Williams**, this play follows a young child who gets a toy rabbit as a gift and is, at first, disappointed. But as the pair quest and adventure through the child's storybooks, they both begin to grow, change, and care for each other. Over time, they discover that love is the greatest force in the universe and can make impossible things real. Called "Entertaining" and "Enchanting" by *BroadwayWorld*, Flynn's adaptation of the classic story was developed at The Kennedy Center and was a finalist for the 2020 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Original Play or Musical Adaptation.

Next is FST's annual holiday show for families, *Deck the Halls*, created by **Sarah Durham** and **Caroline Saldivar** with Musical Arrangements by **Jim Prosser**. This marks the seventh year that FST has presented *Deck the Halls*, and seeing the production has become an annual tradition for many local families. With all-new songs and sketches, *Deck the Halls* will get audiences ready to celebrate the holidays in true Florida style: decorating palm trees, swimming in the sea, and making snowmen out of sand. Highlighting what makes Christmas and Hanukkah in Sarasota special, this interactive family show begins playing select Saturdays and Sundays on November 25, 2023, in FST's Keating Theatre.

Following *Deck the Halls* is ***Red Riding Hood***, a fresh new take on the popular fairy tale by **Allison Gregory**. When the curtain rises on *Red Riding Hood*, audiences meet Wolfgang, a famous actor who is getting ready to deliver his one-man rendition of the famous story. But Wolfgang's performance is interrupted by a delivery person with a mysterious package. However, the show must go on and the Big Bad Wolf has to eat, one way or another. Two actors tackle all of the roles in this furiously fast and surprising adaptation of the famous fable, which asks audiences what it means to bravely write their own story. Full of classic comedy and physical humor, *Red Riding Hood* begins playing select Saturdays and Sundays starting January 7, 2024.

"I love the sense of humor that the playwright, Allison Gregory, brought to the play," said Saldivar. "In the show, two very different people tell the story of Little Red Riding Hood, but one of them keeps insisting that they don't have to strictly stick to the details of the classic tale. From there, hijinks ensue."

Bringing the Children's Theatre Series to a close is ***The Power of Peanut Butter & Other Winning Plays***, a collection of award-winning plays written by elementary school students from around the world during the 2023-2024 school year. For 33 years, this beloved annual production has shined a light on the magic of children's creativity. Celebrating the stories that young writers will imagine this school year, *The Power of Peanut Butter & Other Winning Plays* begins playing select Saturdays and Sundays in FST's Keating Theatre on March 30, 2024. Winning plays submitted to this year's youth playwriting competition will be announced in Spring 2024.

Families can enjoy FST's Children's Theatre Series on select weekends throughout the year, starting September 17, 2023, with *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Subscriptions to the four-show Children's Theatre Series are available for ONLY \$20—just \$5 per show per person. Single tickets are also available for just \$10 per person. Subscriptions and single tickets are now on sale at [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org), and at 941-366-9000.

#### **CHILDREN'S THEATRE SCHEDULE\***

***The Velveteen Rabbit – A Toy Story***: September 17 and 23 as well as October 1, 7, and 15.

***Deck the Halls***: November 25 and 26 as well as December 2, 3, 10, 16, and 24.

***Red Riding Hood*** January 7, 13, 21, and 27 as well as February 4.

***The Power of Peanut Butter & Other Winning Plays***: March 30 as well as April 7, 14, 20, and 28.

*\*Additional performance dates may be added later in the season*

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

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