
POSITION PROFILE

Artistic Director
Florida Studio Theatre

OPPORTUNITY

Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is seeking a talented theater professional to lead the planning and execution of the organization's core programming as Artistic Director. This newly conceived role will be part of a reimagined leadership team as FST's long-serving Producing Artistic Director transitions into retirement and top leadership of the organization transfers to an Executive Director, a role effectively defined as a chief executive officer leading a team that includes the Artistic Director and an incoming Managing Director. The purview of the Artistic Director will be to shape the programming for the plays and musical offerings that annually define FST's Winter and Summer Mainstage Series (seven productions), Stage III (three productions), Children's Theatre (four productions), and New Play Development. The Artistic Director will be skilled in creating seasons that respond to and extend FST's mission, engaging artistic and production talent to create in full alignment with FST's aesthetic focused in authentic and engaging storytelling that does not rely on outsized production spectacle. The Artistic Director will participate in the artistic life of FST through their own artistic practice as a stage director, actor, designer, or other individual artistic practice, but will fully understand that the primary responsibilities of the role are to serve as the overall producer of FST's principle theatrical offerings. Working closely with FST's Executive Director, the Artistic Director will balance artistic ambition with responsiveness to audience needs.

BACKGROUND

Florida Studio Theatre was founded in 1973 by artist Jon Spelman as an alternative touring group, reaching out to isolated and underserved audiences in nursing homes, migrant farms, and prisons. When Richard Hopkins was named Producing Artistic Director in 1980, he founded FST's Mainstage Series with a modest 103 subscribers. Today, FST reaches over 45,000 subscribers and an annual audience of more than 225,000 across its diverse programs, making FST the largest subscription theatre in the state of Florida. Now in its 53rd Season, FST is proud of its reach and impact across its five stages and through over 20 professional productions each year.

FST's Mission is:

- To make theatre affordable and accessible 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.

FST's campus is currently comprised of office, rehearsal, and production spaces and the following five performance spaces:

- *The Gompertz Theatre*, FST's largest performance space with 237 seats used for Winter and Summer Mainstage Series
- *The Keating Theatre*, a 173-seat space used for Winter and Summer Mainstage Series and Children's Theatre presentations
- *The Court Cabaret*, a 100-seat venue also providing dinner service to patrons one hour before performances in the Cabaret Series
- *The Goldstein Cabaret*, FST's second 100-seat venue for Cabaret Series performances also offering dinner service
- *Bowne's Lab*, a 100-seat venue that serves as home to FST's Stage III and Improv Series

The Green Room is also FST's full-service restaurant and bar open to the public for preshow dining experiences.

FST takes a service-oriented approach to live performance. The company has consistently listened to audiences in the region, taking its cue from patrons creating work that gives voice to ideas, experiences, and questions that may be present but not yet fully expressed and explored. To fully execute on their Mission, FST currently supports the following programs:

Mainstage Series. Now in its 53rd 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 the historic Gompertz and Keating Theatres, the Mainstage Series features seven annual productions that draw from new works, regionally produced works, and the latest off-Broadway and Broadway plays. The Mainstage Series embodies FST's mission "to challenge with as much gusto as we entertain" by embracing a diverse range of contemporary plays and musicals. Through these challenging and entertaining works, the Mainstage Series provides a platform for contemporary issues and ideas both on stage and within the community. The Mainstage has a subscription base of over 11,000 Winter and 4,800 Summer Subs.

Cabaret Series. Housed in the intimate Goldstein and Court Cabaret Theatres, the Cabaret Series was established to develop new audiences. Launched in 1996, this program celebrates the lyric poets of our age and presents social and political satire for today's audiences. Not simply a "chanteuse at a microphone," the FST Cabaret harkens back to its 19th Century Parisian origin - a rebellion against the institutionalization of theatre that confined artists instead of freeing them. The Cabaret Series has been integral in the creation of over 75 original musical revues. The Cabaret has a subscription base of over 14,800 Winter subs and 7,100 summer subs. *(Leadership of the Cabaret Series will be the responsibility of another individual than the Artistic Director, a role yet to be defined.)*

STAGE III. Dedicated to the presentation of socially significant productions, the Stage III Series stimulates attendees by presenting challenging content in a unique format. Featuring plays with grit, verve, and drive, FST's Stage III Series brings provocative work to the Sarasota contemporary theatrical landscape and is a home to all things experimental. The Stage III Series includes three productions in FST's Bowne's Lab Theatre. Stage III has a subscription base of over 2,700 subs.

Children's Theatre. The anchor of FST's Children's Theatre programming is its award-winning WRITE A PLAY (WAP) arts-in-education program, which engages more than 36,000 students in grades K-12 each year, with special emphasis on underserved youth throughout the State of Florida. More than 5,000 original plays are submitted to FST annually, with winning plays selected to be brought to life by professional theatre artists each spring and celebrated at the annual Young Playwrights Festival. Building on this foundation, FST's Children's Theatre Family Series presents four professional productions from October through May, reaching approximately 5,000 children and their families through weekend performances each year. Together, FST's Children's Theatre programs reach more than 40,000 young people and families annually.

FST Improv. Founded in 2001, FST Improve has expanded into one of the region's most vibrant and innovative year-round improv programs. Offering never-before-seen performances every week of the year, FST Improv highlights the full spectrum of improvisational disciplines. Performances go beyond traditional game-based short-form to include long-form improvisation, musical improv, and sketch comedy. In addition, FST is home to the Sarasota Improv Festival. Held in July, this multi-day event, brings the best in improvisation from across the country and around the world and is the premiere festival of its kind in the Southeast.

Education. Founded in 1982, FST School offers classes year-round for students of all ages in acting, music, dance, theatre writing, and improvisation. Led by FST's teaching staff of

theatre professionals. FST School is also home to both on campus and satellite programs including FST's VIP Program for students with behavioral, emotional, and developmental special needs, and the Haven program for adults with developmental special needs. Furthering FST's mission "to make theatre as accessible and affordable to as many people as possible," our Scholarship Program offsets the cost of enrollment for 15% of FST students.

New Play Development. New Play Development is the creative lifeblood of FST. The company is committed to nurturing new plays by established and emerging writers. New Play Development is a year-round endeavor that is fully integrated into each of FST's diverse artistic programs. Over the course of our 52-year history, FST has produced more than 45 world premieres and more than 60 regional premieres. FST's approach to new work focuses on developing the work for production on one of FST's 5 stages and supporting the continued life of the work. It is the intention to expand this program further in the next several years.

In addition to these signature programs, FST presents special events, symposiums, and community gatherings for members of the Sarasota community.

FST employs year-round professional staff of over 60 full-time administrators, artistic, and production staff and brings in over 200 guest artists annually. The work of the professional staff is augmented by over 40 Part-time employees, Interns, Apprentices, and Fellows in FST's Professional Training Program. Florida Studio Theatre operates on a LORT D contract and works with members of Actors Equity Association (AEA), American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA), United Scenic Artists (USA), and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSDC). FST's annual operating budget is approximately \$11 Million, with approximately a 70/30 ratio between earned and contributed revenue. FST's Board of Trustees is composed of 11 members, civic leaders within the Sarasota community. To learn more about Florida Studio Theatre, please visit: <https://www.floridastudiotheatre.org/>

THE FUTURE

After an extraordinary run as FST's Producing Artistic Director, Richard Hopkins has initiated a transition plan for new leadership. The organization will change its senior leadership team with the addition of this Artistic Director role and an incoming Managing Director role. Both of these new roles will be onboarded by the Fall of 2027 as Hopkins winds down his duties as the head of the company and FST's current Managing Director, Rebecca Hopkins, assumes the new role of Executive Director.

This new infrastructure also anticipates the need for more senior management coverage as FST moves into the creation of The McGillicuddy Arts Plaza. This new building project will significantly expand FST's campus in downtown Sarasota and increase FST's ability to produce work with the addition of three new stages. This exciting new venture will also include gracious housing for FST guest artists and affordable housing options for local artists. FST is nearing completion of a \$57 Million campaign for McGillicuddy Arts Plaza and construction has commenced with an eye to completion of Phase 1 by end of 2027 with subsequent completion of Phase 2 in the summer of 2028.

These changes in infrastructure and FST's physical plant are the next iteration of the organization's plan to execute fully on its mission to serve Sarasota as a premiere cultural destination, and the company is fully committed to continuing to produce in its own distinctive style, focusing first on dynamic storytelling that eschews overly elaborate production elements so audiences can focus on the spark of connection that comes from a celebration of words, ideas, and world-class artists.

SARASOTA, FL

The North Port–Bradenton–Sarasota Metropolitan Statistical Area is one of Florida's most dynamic and fastest-growing regions, with an estimated population of nearly 935,000 residents across approximately 1,300 square miles. Its five largest racial and ethnic groups are White (Non-Hispanic) (74%), Hispanic or Latino (14%), Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (6%), Two or More Races (4%), and Asian (Non-Hispanic) (2%). (Source: censusreporter.org) Census Reporter Data USA

Known as Florida's Cultural Coast®, Sarasota County is home to a remarkable concentration of arts and cultural offerings, including 13 performance stages within a one-mile radius of downtown and one of the nation's largest community theatres. Anchor institutions such as the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the Sarasota Orchestra, Asolo Repertory Theatre, The Hermitage Artist Retreat, and the Sarasota Opera form the foundation of a storied arts culture that ranks among the finest in Florida. The region also supports a vibrant visual arts community, an internationally recognized film festival, and a celebrated culinary scene shaped by its coastal setting and growing cultural diversity. Several colleges and universities call the Sarasota area home, including the Ringling College of Art and Design and New College of Florida.

Click here for more information: <https://www.visitsarasota.com/>
<https://www.edcsarasotacounty.com/arts-culture/>

POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Artistic Director will report directly to FST's Executive Director. Primary responsibilities and priorities of the Artistic Director are:

Artistic Curation and Programming

- Articulate an artistic vision for FST's Mainstage Series, Stage III Series, Children's Theatre, and New Play Development that advances FST's mission and values and aligns with FST's producing aesthetics
- Collaborate with the Executive Director and senior leadership team to design an annual artistic programming plan that offers ample opportunities for sustaining audiences and new audiences to find their path to FST's work
- Research and select production repertoire
- Identify and steward new work as is appropriate and speaks to FST's local audiences
- Ensure the artistic integrity of all artistic programming, offering input, suggestions, and mentorship to guest artists engaged to execute productions
- Serve as an advisor and mentor to FST's Interns, Apprentices, and Fellows in FST's Professional Training Program

Productorial Leadership

- Serve as Lead Producer on all productions, engaging fully with FST's production and artistic support staff on advance planning and strategic execution of the full Mainstage Series, Stage III, Children's Theatre, and New Play Development
- Identify and supervise stage directors for FST productions and/or serve as stage director or in some other artistic capacity within the annual season
- Oversee the Director of Production in the creation of production schedules and manage production budgets
- Supervise FST's Casting Director and work closely on planning for and securing top level talent for all FST productions, participating in seasonal and show specific auditions (now primarily held via Zoom)
- Be a thought leader to FST's Director of Children's Theatre and Director of Education, ensuring that FST's commitments to arts education remain a core value of the institution in all future planning

Collaborative Operational Leadership

- Collaborate with FST's Executive Director to align the artistic vision and annual programming within the company's operational strategy and resources
- Take an active role in the creation of FST's annual operational budget

- Represent the organization in relevant media activities (i.e. interviews, panel discussions, media appearances, etc.)
- Participate in relevant activities, events, and committees related to the theatre industry in particular and the performing arts in general
- Represent the organization at fundraising events, donor meetings, and in the creation of fundraising materials
- Create the artistic programming component of benefit and special events in collaboration with development staff
- Serve as the artistic voice inspiring FST's Board of Trustees and take an active role in Board education around programming

Qualified candidates should also possess the following qualifications, skills, experience, and traits:

- Deep experience as a practitioner in the professional theatre world as a practicing artist.
- Expert level knowledge of theatrical repertoire, both historical and contemporary, always understanding the unique needs of FST's patron community.
- Experience working with theatrical labor unions including AEA, SDC, and familiarity with the LORT contract.
- Obvious investment in arts education and personal values aligned with creating access to the arts for youth and underserved communities.
- A love of people that shows up through warmth, charm, and authenticity.
- A cheerleader for the celebration of gathering for the experience of live performance, someone who believes in the power of communal experiences.
- A highly collaborative nature, someone who gains energy working with others.
- A love of the Sarasota community and appreciation for its mix of year-round and seasonal residents.

COMPENSATION AND START DATE

FST hopes to make a hiring decision by Spring of 2027, with the selected candidate transitioning into the position sometime in the Fall of 2027. The salary range starts at \$160,000 annually and includes a full benefit package. FST is an equal opportunity employer that celebrates diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees. Any offer of employment will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of a background check and reference conversations.

HOW TO APPLY

Jonathan West and **Carlton Ford** are the consultants from Management Consultants for the Arts facilitating this search. Interested and qualified candidates should submit the following items for consideration:

- A current résumé
- Cover letter (no more than 1 ½ pages)
- Four professional references

Submissions should be made through Management Consultants for the Arts' website at: <https://www.mcaculture.com/artistic-director-florida-studio-theatre>

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