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THE ARTS

'Flip Side' laughs at oddities of life

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Life is strange, and the people around us are even stranger.

That's the fun-spirited attitude evident in the bright and funny new Florida Studio Theatre Cabaret production "The Flip Side."

Unlike many of the original revues created for the Goldstein Cabaret, "The Flip Side" has a clear point of view. It's a collection of songs about curious things that happen all around us by such songwriters as Jerry Reed, Ray Stevens, John Forster, Randy Newman and, best of all, Shel Silverstein. They're thoughtful and witty in the best spirit of parody and social commentary.

Silverstein is best known as an author of children's books, but he also wrote about 800 songs. A handful of them are featured in the show, and most are outright hilarious, particularly as they're performed by the energetic cast of Stephen Hope, Craig Laurie and Richie McCall.

In "Killed by a Coconut," Laurie sings about the strangely sad endings of a variety of people, while McCall dances around him, maracas in hand, offering comical asides and comebacks. McCall also sings "She'd Rather be Homeless," about a rich man lamenting that his wife would rather be living on the street (in her mink coat) than sharing his luxurious life.

And the entire cast sings (several times) Silverstein's "Still Gonna Die," in which we are reminded that even if we give up fried foods, drugs, smoking, drinking and other vices, we're still bound to die. It's a rousing anthem that encapsulates the spirit of the show.

Other writers get in their digs as well. Stevens has the cast asking "Would Jesus Wear a Rolex?" The tongue-in-cheek song looks at bejeweled televangelists who ask poor people for money to make themselves richer.

Stevens knows how to tell a story in his songs. In "The Bricklayer's Song," Hope plays an Irish construction worker who tells his boss all the painful details of an accident that will keep him out of work today.

Hope has become a specialist at rapid-fire lyrics, as he demonstrates in "I Ain't Going Nowhere," Rick Moranis' spoof of the Geoff Mack classic "I've Been Everywhere." During the song, he rattles off long lists of the things he's doing indoors and the prescription drugs that are making him happy to be there.

The three cast members sound terrific together, producing vibrant harmonies under musical director Michael Sebastian.

The show, created by a team at the theater and directed and choreographed with a lot of

Review
The Flip Side

Developed by Florida Studio Theatre. Directed and choreographed by Dennis Courtney. Reviewed March 30 at FST Goldstein Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Through June 10. Tickets are \$26 to \$29. Call 366-9000.

energy by Dennis Courtney, has its excesses. Hope does his own version of Victor Borge's phonetic punctuation routine, in which commas, dashes and exclamation points are given vocal sound effects.

It's fun during "Night and Day," but an audience sing-along later on doesn't add much to what is otherwise a fun show.
