



## 'Piano Men'-Tickling Ivories at Sarasota's FST Goldstein Cabaret

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by Beau Higgins

"In the Mood for A Melody"  
Florida Studio Theatre Presents  
Diverse Piano Music from the 20th Century

Are you in the mood for a melody? If so, the music of Piano Men might just be the way to ring in the new year. FST's newest Cabaret revue, which begins January 10, is a tribute to the virtuosity of the "piano men" of the last century. These men were a unique kind of musician. They raised some hell. Found some religion. And, most importantly, they wrote about it.



Billy Joel's song, "Piano Man," typifies the spirit of the show and is also the inspiration for the show's title. From the legendary Fats Waller to contemporary artists such as Elton John and [Barry Manilow](#), Piano Men focuses on the great songs of the popular "piano man" and the songs that a generation knew well, loved and found both meaningful and entertaining.

The roots of the "piano man" can be traced to jazz and blues. Scott Joplin's rags, popular around the turn-of-the-century, started the trend for the piano player/songwriter. From Joplin, the genre evolved into soul and R&B with Little Richard's famous wail which, in turn, inspired the rock 'n roll beats of Elton John and Billy Joel.

Piano Men not only traces these roots, but shows the similarities between the "piano men" of yesteryear and contemporary artists. The songs highlight the personal history and the journey shared by all piano men. Starting from humble beginnings, the piano finds and faces the excitement of adolescence before discovering the initial inspiration to create a song.

But the musical inspiration and passion that stirred the piano men's creativity also had a darker side. Experiencing success, while simultaneously struggling with doubt, the "piano man" was able to create some of his finest work and realize his full potential in songwriting. Told individually, these stories are the journey made by each "piano man". Collectively, the story is told in Piano Men.

[Dennis Courtney](#), who directed the season opener Ethel Waters: His Eye is on the Sparrow, returns to direct Piano Man. He is joined by FST Staffers Michael Sebastian (Musical Director) and Marcella Beckwith (Scenic & Costume Designer). Piano Men was created in-house by FST staff under the direction of Richard Hopkins.

The cast of Piano Men includes [Jannie Jones](#), who just finished a successful run in FST's production of Ethel Waters: His Eye is on the Sparrow. She has also appeared in the FST Cabaret productions of Too Darn Hot: A Tribute to Cole Porter and One-Hit Wonders. Ms. Jones will be joined by FST newcomers David Abeles and Scott Pearson. Mr. Abeles has appeared in Bus Stop and On the Razzle at Williamstown Theatre Fest and in Works of Shakespeare (Abridged) at the Reduced Shakespeare Company. Mr. Pearson has appeared in Carousel, The Who's Tommy and Miss Saigon at Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera and in Forever Plaid at West Virginia Public Theatre.

Piano Men begins January 10 and runs through March 25, 2006 in the Goldstein Cabaret. Tickets range from \$19 for previews (January 10 and 11) to \$26-29 for regular performances and may be purchased from the FST Box Office in person or by calling (941) 366-9000.

Known as Sarasota's Contemporary Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre was founded in 1973 by Jon Spelman. Starting out as a small touring company, FST traveled to places such as migrant camps and prisons. The company eventually settled down into a permanent home, acquiring the former Woman's Club building - now renamed the Keating Theatre. In the years that followed, Florida Studio Theatre established itself as a major force in American Theatre, presenting contemporary theatre in its three theatre venues: the Keating Theatre, the Goldstein Cabaret and its newest space, the Gompertz Theatre.

Piano Men  
Performance Schedule  
January 10 - March 25, 2006

Tuesday January 10 7:30 p.m. Preview  
Wednesday January 11 7:30 p.m. Preview  
Thursday January 12 7:30 p.m. Opening  
Friday January 13 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday January 14 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday January 15 4:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday January 17 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday January 18 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday January 19 7:30 p.m.  
Friday January 20 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday January 21 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday January 22 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday January 24 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday January 25 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday January 26 7:30 p.m.

Friday January 27 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday January 28 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday January 29 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday January 31 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday February 1 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday February 2 7:30 p.m.  
Friday February 3 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday February 4 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday February 5 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday February 7 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday February 8 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday February 9 7:30 p.m.  
Friday February 10 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday February 11 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday February 12 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday February 14 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday February 15 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday February 16 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday February 18 6:00 p.m.  
Sunday February 19 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday February 21 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday February 22 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday February 23 7:30 p.m.  
Friday February 24 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday February 25 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday February 26 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday February 28 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday March 1 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Thursday March 2 7:30 p.m.  
Friday March 3 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday March 4 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday March 5 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday March 7 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday March 8 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday March 9 7:30 p.m.  
Friday March 10 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday March 11 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday March 12 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday March 14 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday March 15 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday March 16 7:30 p.m.  
Friday March 17 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday March 18 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday March 19 2:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday March 21 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday March 22 2:00 p.m.  
Thursday March 23 7:30 p.m.  
Friday March 24 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday March 25 6:00 & 9:00 p.m.

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Currently spending his time between New York and Florida, Beau was born to a theatrical family in Brooklyn. He studied drama at the Lee Strasberg Theater Institute and at HB Studios. He studied theater singing with Julia Sperratore and Helen Gallagher. Beau later taught drama at the Lincoln Center Square for the Arts. It was at this time Beau began working with the Theater Development Fund and helped found New York's famed HALF PRICE TICKET BOOTH. Early in his career, Beau was screen tested and contracted for Warner Brothers. He co-hosted, an early cable variety series on Manhattan's Teleprompter channel. At this time he directed the Johnny Specca musical, SEX IS..? at the Lincoln Center Library Theater. Beau has performed Off-Broadway in FAT FELL DOWN, The Comic Strip Theater's LITTLE LULU AND THE INVISIBLE INK and WILL THE REAL ZOOPERMAN PLEASE STAND UP. Around the country he has delighted audiences with his performances in ANYTHING GOES, THE APPLE TREE, GUYS & DOLLS, and HELLZAPOPPIN! He sang for New York audiences at such cabarets as The Duplex and Upstairs at the Downstairs. He has had numerous television appearances but is most proud to have been a winning contestant on the game shows JACKPOT and THE \$20,000 PYRAMID.