



## Florida Studio Theatre Opens Winter Season with 'That's Life,' 10/20

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by BWW News Desk



Frank Sinatra once stated, "May you live to be 100 and may the last voice you hear be mine." Florida Studio Theatre opens its Winter Cabaret Season

with *That's Life* on October 20th. Featuring stylish songs of the 50s and 60s supper clubs, including "New York, New York," "You're Nobody till Somebody Loves You," and "Only You."

The music of this classic era is brought to present day by three cool cats and one brassy broad. During the 50s and 60s, the teeny boppers had their bubble gum music and the grown-ups had their own unique and memorable style.

Succeeding the secretive speakeasies of prohibition, the new Supper Clubs became the nightlife entertainment of choice for adults during the fifties and sixties. The Copacabana Nightclub in New York City and The Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas were glamorous, sophisticated and a mecca for stars from Hollywood to Broadway. The star-studded rosters often included Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., Martin and Lewis, among others. The shows of these one-of-a-kind performers became known for their intimate delivery and solidarity.

"Audiences can expect to rediscover and celebrate the music from an amazing era of once in a lifetime performers, composers and song interpreters. This music affirms all that is life - up and down and over and out - a great camaraderie of love, laughter and tears," commented Director and Choreographer Dennis Courtney.

*That's Life* developed by Richard Hopkins, Rebecca Langford and Jim Prosser, features a marvelous range of voices by the New York and Broadway cast. Returning New York Actor Eric Collins, Broadway Actress Stacey Harris and New York Actors Arthur W. Marks and Jeff Pierce.

Receiving rave reviews for Frankie Valli's *Sherry* in 2009's *Hula Hoop Sha-Boop*, Eric Collins will portray Man #3. His credits include the Off-Broadway production of *The Wind and the Willows* at The New Victory Theater, which he also can be heard on the original cast recording, *Fishwrap* both in New York City (The New 42nd Street Studios) and the Regional production at the Aironack Theater Festival. Other Credits include *Grease*, *Into The Woods*, *The Who's Tommy*

and many other regional theatre productions.

Broadway Actress Stacey Harris will portray the brassy gal. Her roles include Gwynne in the Broadway production of *Bells Are Ringing*. She has toured with *Showboat*, *Cinderella* and *Dreamgirls*. Harris' numerous regional credits include *Lone Star Love*, *Chicago*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Gypsy* and many others. New York Actor Arthur W. Marks will play Man #2. His Off-Broadway credits include *Sidd at Dodger Stages*, *The Screams of Kitty Genovese* at the Theatre at St. Clements among others. His regional credits include *Honk*, also heard on the 1st American Cast Recording, *Aida*, *Chicago* and *Songs for a New World*.

Joining the Comrades is New York Actor Jeff Pierce as Man #1. Pierce performed in the first National Tour of *Miss Saigon*, his Off-Broadway and Regional credits include *Hillary* and *Monica* as *Bill Clinton*, *Bring Back Birdie*, *Our Town*, *Falsettos* and others.

Director and Choreographer Dennis Courtney returns for his 19th production at FST, having last staged *European Cabaret*. Based in New York City, Mr. Courtney recently staged a re-envisioned production of *Fiddler On The Roof* for the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv as the official production for the 60th Anniversary of Israel, for which he won the 2009 Israeli National Theatre Award. He has been the director/choreographer of over 150 stage productions including *Peter Pan* with Cathy Rigby, *Can-Can* with Leslie Uggams, the regional premieres of *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* and *Summer of '69*, the world premiere productions of *Ethel Waters: His Eye Is On The Sparrow* (FST), *Red Hot Mama*, *Beggar's Holiday* and *The Beethovens*.

Music Direction is provided by John Franceschina, who returns to FST after last seasons *Steppin' Out*. Franceschina has accompanied Judy Garland, Angela Lansbury, Nell Carter, Jan Peerce, Robert Merrill, Lotte Lenya, Paige O'Hara, Chita Rivera, and Gwen Verdon, and has conducted dozens of off-Broadway shows and national tours. Pianist Jim Prosser returns to the Cabaret for his thirteenth season, Lighting Designer Shawn Watkins and Sound Designer John Valines also join the production team along with resident Costume and Scenic Designer Marcella Beckwith.

*That's Life* opens the Cabaret Season October 20 - January 2, 2010 at the Goldstein Cabaret. Tickets are \$26 - \$29 and may be purchased from the FST Box Office in person, by phone (941) 366 - 9000 or now online at <http://www.floridastudiotheatre.org/>

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.

Even with its growth, Florida Studio Theatre remains firmly committed to making the arts accessible and affordable to a broad-based audience. Under Richard Hopkins, Artistic Director and CEO, FST develops theatre that speaks to our living, evolving, and dynamically changing world. As FST grows and expands, it continues to provide audiences with challenging, contemporary drama and innovative programs.

Florida Studio Theatre is grateful to The Womens Exchange, Dennis and Graci McGillicuddy and Jules and Sheila Rose for underwriting the 2009 - 2010 Cabaret Season.

In the photo: (Lto R) Eric Collins, Arthur W. Marks, Stacey Harris and Jeff Pierce

Photo Credit: Amy Steinmetz