

FST STAGE DIRECTIONS

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When Life Gives You Lemons, Tuck ‘Em

by Becca Jennings

Life for Casey, the Elvis impersonator, is about to get “All Shook Up.”

His rent check bounced (again). He just found out his wife’s pregnant with their first child. And to top it all off, he’s just been let go from his not-so-lucrative Elvis gig down at Cleo’s dive bar.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

And while Cleo’s dive no longer has a job for “The King,” they do have a brand new opening...for a “Queen.”

This April, FST is busting out all the heart, soul, wigs, and sequins to bring to comedic life a bedazzled tale of transformation and perseverance.

“It doesn’t get more fun than a broken down Elvis Impersonator, a run-down bar, and a hit drag show all combined!” said Kate Alexander, Director of *The Legend of Georgia McBride*. “The utter joy and abandon - it’s the American Dream story in a gilded flamboyant coach.”

Called “a stitch-in-your-side funny new comedy” by *The New York Times* and “one of those rare charmers” by *LA Weekly*, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* peeks under the wigs and over-the-top makeup of its irresistibly funny and flawed characters to see the heart inside.

“I selected the work because it is deeply human,” said Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins. “I think everyone will have their own view of the play, but for me the play is about accepting the other.”

Playwright Matthew Lopez says he was attracted to the notion of a straight man exploring the art of drag. “I got the idea of setting it in my hometown and telling the story of this down-on-his-luck straight white guy who is an aspiring Elvis impersonator, who has definitely got performing in his blood, but who has not yet fully actualized as an artist or a person,” he shared. “And Casey stumbles on this and blossoms as a result, and really comes into his own as an adult through this process.”

We meet a cast of lovably human characters along the way. There’s Jo, Casey’s newly pregnant wife who loves Casey to death, but would also like to not get evicted, please. There’s Eddie, the proud owner of Cleo’s dive, who appreciates Casey’s on-point Elvis impression, but would like to make a buck sometime this century. There’s Miss Tracy Mills, an elegant drag queen with a saucy, snappy quip and a vivacious vision for Casey’s

new act. And there’s Remy, aka Anorexia Nervosa, the not-so-elegant drag queen, armed with roller skates and a handle of vodka – and she knows how to use ‘em.

“*Georgia McBride* is about a group of people who don’t really fit in anywhere else,” said creator Matthew Lopez. “I call them my misfit toys, and they build a home together at the bar.”

“In a world where people often feel threatened by those who are different, this play celebrates those differences and encourages us to learn from each other,” said Alexander. “It’s a play for all of us.”



Director Kate Alexander



Playwright Matthew Lopez

Winner of the 2016 Lucille Lortel Award, Drama Desk Award, Hewes Design Award, and Outer Critics Circle Award, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* celebrates the freedom and friendships we find when we dare to keep singing (or lip synching) our own song. ■

The Legend of Georgia McBride

by Matthew Lopez

Beginning April 1
FST’s Gompertz Theatre

Born To Be Wild

by Benedict Burgess

They say art imitates life. Well, life in the ‘60s was pretty wild. Naturally, the decade’s music followed suit.

FST’s latest hit Cabaret, *Light My Fire*, celebrates the soundtrack of this tumultuous decade – one marked by a fight for Civil Rights, a war abroad, antiwar protests at home, a moon landing, multiple political assassinations, and the rise of rock.

“When you think about it, everything in the ‘60s caught fire,” said Lead Developer Rebecca Hopkins. “*Light My Fire*, is a celebration of cultural revolution, following, through music, the arc of major historical milestones that ignited a generation and ignited the world.”

Called “Poignant and Profound” by *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* and “Full Throttle” by *The Observer*, *Light My Fire* features music that speaks to a dynamically evolving world with such hits as “What’s Going On,” “Peace Train,” “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” But more powerfully, these songs are works of art that are able to live beyond the moment, transcending decades with their influence and universality.

“This music has stood the test of time,” said Hopkins. “Every generation since the ‘60s has rediscovered these songs, and they have the same emotional impact for

those generations as they did for the Boomers.”

In step with a rapidly changing world, the music world, too, was evolving – stretching out in sound, style, and technology.

“*Light My Fire* is alive,” said Music Director Darren Server. “In this particular Cabaret you’re going to hear electric music. You’re going to hear electric piano, electric guitar. Vocal quality can be rough, staccato, and clipped. The instruments each have a voice in telling the story through the music.”

Music wasn’t just a cultural response. It was also a call to action – a call to consciousness – a call to connect.

“It was a very charged time,” said Director Catherine Randazzo. “These songs were anthems that moved generations to continue to rally.”

“Artists found new ways to express the ideas and the emotions they experienced,” added cast member Dale Obermark. “Through their music, we can learn how to reconnect and, to quote my favorite group, ‘Come Together, ourselves.’”

Audience members can’t get enough of *Light My Fire* calling it “over the top wonderful,” “outstanding,” and several calling it “the

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From left: Seth Eliser, Alayna Gallo, and Dale Obermark. Photo by Matthew Holler.

Lost and Found:

by Alex Drinnen and Becca Jennings

Paralyzed

By Etan Frankel
Beginning March 18
FST's Bowne's Lab Theatre

It was behind the toilet. That's where she found it. A folded up note the color of crème brûlée stuffed behind the hotel room john. She never would have found it there if she hadn't been trying to fix that darn thing.

This is where our play starts—where we meet Leigh. What happens next sets two stranger's lives on a crash collision course. It just goes to show, for every noise you make in this world, there is always an echo.

"For me, the play is about the 'randomness of life.' How 'luck' can lead to both fortune and misfortune," said Artistic Director Richard Hopkins. "And, in the end, it's not about are we 'lucky,' but how we respond to the events in our lives."

Leigh and Lee are two strangers who have little in common other than their names. Leigh is a college-educated social justice advocate, looking for meaning in her life. Lee is an aggressive former athlete, wrestling with trauma from his past. As our characters' stories unfold, so do questions of morality, accountability, and whether any measure of absolution is possible for the wrongs we do in life.

"I chose this play because the characters both face significant challenges," Hopkins said. "They both find ways to work through them, hopefully to a better conclusion."

Our two characters share their stories, performed like dueling monologues—lyrical and interwoven. We believe these stories, moving in seemingly opposite directions, must connect in some way. But we don't yet know how. Our characters, too, move about the stage, almost colliding; always just missing the other in their orbit-like paths.

"It is as loud and as brave and as funny," said Director Meg Gilbert of *Paralyzed*, "just as it is quiet, dark, and wrenching."

Paralyzed by award-winning playwright Etan Frankel (*Friday Night Lights*, *Shameless*, *Gossip Girl*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Get Shorty*) marks FST's first World Premiere to be produced as part of its challenging Stage III series.

"A world premiere is always a risk because we have no idea how the audience will *really* react to the play," said Hopkins.

FST first took an interest in *Paralyzed* in 2006, presenting the work as part of FST's New Play Development program and giving it a chance to be heard through FST's Burdick Reading Series. From there, it was workshopped at a few more theatres across the country, including a reading in New York with actress Cynthia Nixon (*Sex*



Rachel Moulton (Leigh)



Alexander Stuart (Lee)

and the City) as Leigh. The work resurfaced again with an updated draft in 2012, and Richard Hopkins kept a close eye on it.

"We were involved in the development of this work and we worked with the author on this," said Hopkins. "He's been on the short list every season since then. Sometimes you just have to wait for the right time."

Bringing this world premiere to life are two actors who are both familiar with FST as well as each other. Rachel Moulton and Alexander Stuart portrayed a mother-son relationship in FST's production of the blockbuster hit play, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

Now, they return to FST, facing a new challenge: how to interpret a play that's never been done before.

"We see through Lee and Leigh's perspectives how they both actively seek to make things right," said Stuart. "This play is about guilt and responsibility, and how the two intertwine."

For Director Meg Gilbert, *Paralyzed* is challenging because in real life, it isn't always the "bad people" who do "bad things."

"Accidents happen, and a single moment can sometimes alter our paths in ways that are irreversible," said Gilbert. "The inability to act—the ability only to reflect—haunts these characters from start to finish." ■



Dale Obermark. Photo by Matthew Holler.

Born To Be Wild
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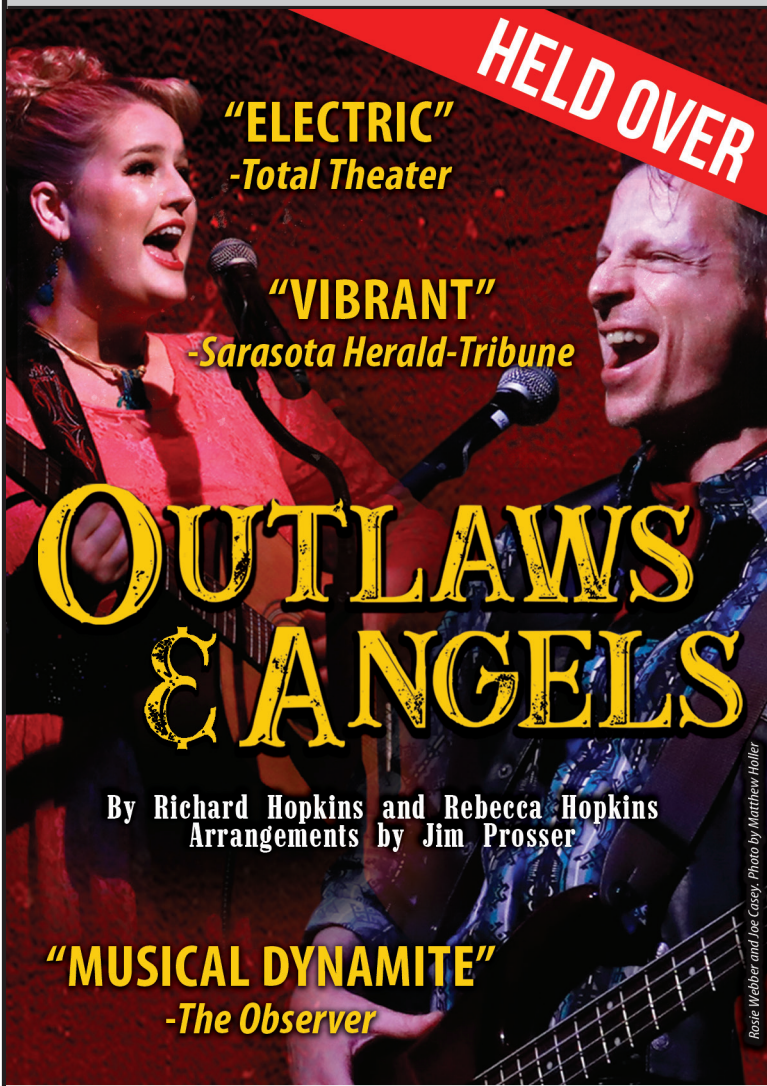
best Cabaret of the season."

"You have to remember these artists and that generation didn't know if things would work out," concluded Hopkins. "But the music showed they

believed it could. There were so many fires lit. The music acknowledges this, and it does so with hope." ■

Light My Fire

by Richard Hopkins and
Rebecca Hopkins with
Arrangements by Jim Prosser
Now Playing
FST's Court Cabaret



Rosie Weber and Joe Casey. Photo by Matthew Holler



Gaelle Barthold. Photo by Sarah Haley.

FST Presents 30th Annual Spelman Award

by Rachel Moulton

On February 24th, Florida Studio Theatre hosted its annual fundraiser, the Dangerous Ladies Shindig, in support of FST's Suffragist Project. At this year's event, FST was proud to present the 30th Annual Spelman Award to Season Underwriter Gaelle Barthold. Named in honor of FST's founding Artistic Director, Jon Spelman,

the Spelman Award is presented to an individual or institutional sponsor who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership through philanthropic support, stewardship, or service.

Mrs. Barthold's love of the theatre has translated into a steadfast commitment to all of FST's programming.

For the past four years, Mrs. Barthold has served on FST's Board of Trustees. Mrs. Barthold began Co-Producing in 2016 and in 2017 began Underwriting Stage III and in 2018 she began Underwriting the Mainstage. She currently is Underwriter of FST's Mainstage, Cabaret, and Stage III programs. Her passion and unrelenting support of the theatrical process is palpable. Mrs. Barthold regularly attends the Behind the Scenes Class, first read-throughs, tech rehearsals, opening night performances, and holds two subscriptions in order to see each production at least twice (and almost always in the front row). She embraces all of FST's guest artists, opening her home and hosting them for Thanksgiving dinner, and sharing her love of the theatre with them.

"Gaelle is certainly one of the most involved supporters of FST," said Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins. "It seems like she is at the theatre every day, seeing a play, watching a rehearsal, attending a Board Meeting, taking a class or checking out the Saturday Show for Children. I sometimes joke that Gaelle needs a cot so she can just sleep here. And when she's not at FST, she's in London seeing 23 Fringe shows in 14 days and returning with a blow-by-blow report on what's smart and what's not in London Theatre. In short, Gaelle Barthold genuinely loves the theatre. And more important, she loves Florida Studio Theatre and showers us with that love through a keen understanding of the art, with wise Board counsel from

her attorney's mind, and with considerable financial support from her pocket book. All-in-all, she's the kind of supporter every Artistic Director wants in their corner."

"I was originally drawn to FST by the pre-Stage III cutting edge plays in the (very) old Gompertz Theatre, said Mrs. Barthold. "I soon became an enthusiastic subscriber for virtually all FST theatre offerings. I applaud FST for its high quality and diverse programming, all at very affordable prices. It is my great pleasure to support the theatre in every way I can."

We are honored to present this year's Spelman Award to Gaelle Barthold, whose reverence for the theatre reminds us why creating art that is accessible, challenging, and entertaining is so impactful. ■