



## FST School Spotlight: Spoken Memoir

Have you ever been tempted to try your hand at playwriting, improvisation, or acting? From center stage to the writers' room to the rehearsal studio, the FST School offers theatre fans a wide range of opportunities to dive more deeply into the art form they know and love.

At the FST School, students learn from professional artists who customize their lessons to fit the interests and experience levels of each class member.

One of the most popular offerings at the FST School is Spoken Memoir, an eight-week class where students are given autobiographical

prompts to take a story from their lives and turn it into a piece of solo theatre. Along the way, Professional Teaching Artist Martha Velez-Reid gives students guidance on how to structure their piece and perform it with confidence and clarity.

Velez-Reid is an accomplished playwright and performer, herself. She played Sheila in the Broadway production of *Hair* and wrote an award-winning play titled *Power of the Powerless*.

"Teaching Spoken Memoir enables me to use all that I have learned in my long professional performing arts

career and share it with my students," said Velez-Reid. "The class is an opportunity for students to explore their personal history and examine who they are *now* based on who they *have been*."

Like most offerings at the FST School, Spoken Memoir keeps its class sizes small so each student gets specialized feedback and support.

"I love the feedback, followed by revising, replacing, and reimagining to develop a pithy story that resonates," said student Jane P. "Before taking Spoken Memoir, I had never thought of performing scenes from my life, but I

have discovered that I very much enjoy digging around in my memory to find stories that are personal yet somehow universal."

Regardless of a student's age or experience level, Velez-Reid always aims to ignite her students' imaginations through two expressive mediums: writing and acting.

"Finding stories from one's history is ageless and priceless," said Velez-Reid. "Everyone's story is valuable. There is no age limit for sharing the history of your life. Young or older, you have a Spoken Memoir in you."

Taking a class at the FST School also inspires students in their everyday lives.

"Taking Spoken Memoir makes me more observant in my day-to-day life as a way of adding texture and reality to whatever the story is that I want to share," added Jane P.

Session 3 of classes at the FST School, including Spoken Memoir, begin the week of February 12 and are now enrolling. For more information or to enroll, visit [FloridaStudioTheatre.org/fst-school/for-adults](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org/fst-school/for-adults).

*Pictured Left: Martha Velez-Reid. Photo by FST.*

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Carole King, one of the most prolific Brill Building songwriters, went on to have her own solo career skyrocket in the '70s, both because of the explosion of new music and her own re-interpretations of past hits from her days "up on the roof" in New York.

Some of the biggest hits from the Brill Building borrowed elements from different genres, like the bluesy tones in "Walk On By" or the Latin groove in "Spanish Harlem." Genre-mixing is also what gave '70s rockers such distinct sounds,

blending folk and country stylings with blues and rock beats.

Where the sweet and smooth era of the Brill Building ends in *Up on the Roof*, the long and infamous careers of '70s rockstars that further changed the music industry are just beginning with *Take it to the Limit*.

Whether you like East Coast pop or West Coast country rock, there's a little something for everyone in FST's Cabaret Series this season.

