



MEDIA CONTACT

Su Byron; subbyron@verizon.net

Hermitage Artist Retreat Presents

January Programs

Fridays @ Five:

“Saving the World Through Literature: Three Poets and a Diplomat”
Diplomat Christopher Merrill will speak about his life and work,
with poetry by Daniel Khalastchi, Erika Meitner and Elizabeth Powell

Friday, January 10, 5 p.m., Hermitage Palm House

PoetryMic at Bookstore1

Poet Christopher Merrill will read with local poets

Sunday, January 12, 2 p.m.

“The History of the Hermitage: From Nudist Colony to Artist Colony”

With Patricia Caswell, Hermitage co-founder and program director

Monday, January 27, noon, Manasota Beach Club

Fridays @ Five:

“When is the Last Time Someone Read You a Story?”

With Kirstin Valdez Quade and Sigrid Nunez

Friday, January 31, 5 p.m., Hermitage Palm House

(Sarasota County) The Hermitage’s free January programs include a Fridays @ Five event, **“Saving the World Through Literature: Three Poets and a Diplomat,”** with **Christopher Merrill** and poets **Daniel Khalastchi, Erika Meitner and Elizabeth Powell**, Friday, January 10, 5 p.m., at the Hermitage Palm House. The centerpiece of the program is Christopher Merrill, director of the International Writing Program at the

University of Iowa, whose talk will be bookended by three poems by writers in residence. Merrill's honors include a knighthood in arts and letters from the French government. A member of the U.S. Commission for UNESCO and the National Council on the Humanities, Merrill will speak about his job, travel adventures, and the creative process he has observed across 30 years and millions of miles.

"Whenever I introduce Christopher Merrill, I always begin by saying that his job is saving the world through literature," says Patricia Caswell, the Hermitage's co-founder and program director. "Flanked by these three distinguished poets, Christopher will highlight some of his creative literary discoveries throughout world travel and explain what he actually does."

Erika Meitner's poems have been anthologized widely, appearing in such publications as *Ploughshares*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Republic*, and *Tin House*. She was the U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Distinguished Scholar in Creative Writing at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's University Belfast. **Elizabeth Powell** is a 2016 *New Yorker's* "Books We Love" pick and a small press bestseller. Her work has appeared in *Pushcart Prize Anthology 2013*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Ecotone*, *Harvard Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Missouri Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Slope*, *Sugarhouse Review*, and elsewhere. She is the editor of *Green Mountains Review*. **Daniel Khalastchi** is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and his work has been published in a variety of publications, including *The Iowa Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *The Rumpus*. He is the co-founder and managing editor of Rescue Press. *Registration for this free event is required at www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.*

The January programs continue with PoetryMic at Bookstore1 in Sarasota with poet **Christopher Merrill**, a Hermitage fellow, Sunday, January 12, 2 p.m., at Bookstore1, 12 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Merrill is an American poet, essayist, journalist and translator. He serves as director of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Merrill led the initiative that resulted in the selection of Iowa City as a UNESCO City of Literature, a part of the Creative Cities Network. *For more information, visit www.sarasotabooks.com.*

“The History of the Hermitage: From Nudist Colony to Artist Colony,” with Patricia Caswell, Hermitage co-founder and program director, is Monday, January 27, noon, at the Manasota Beach Club, 7660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood. The 1907 cottage on the beach was rotted and rusted in the 1990s. It took a diverse team of caring folks to save it from the elements. Beach Club owner Buffy Crampton will add to the story as Caswell tells backstage tales—from pioneers to Pulitzers. The fee, which includes lunch, is \$25. For reservations, call 941-474-2614.

January’s Fridays @ Five series concludes with **“When is the Last Time Someone Read You a Story?”** with **Kirstin Valdez Quade and Sigrid Nunez**, Friday, January 31, 5 p.m., at the Hermitage Palm House. When we were children, we listened to stories read aloud. Has that ancient experience been lost? Emily Nemans, who sits on the Hermitage’s curatorial board and serves as editor of the *Paris Review*, reflected that Valdez Quade’s *A Night at the Fiestas* was one of the best story collections she’s read in years. Nunez, a titanic talent, may read from her National Book Award-winning *The Friend* or from something in progress. **Kirstin Valdez Quade’s *Night at the Fiestas***, won the John Leonard Prize from the National Book Critics Circle, the Sue Kaufman

Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a “5 Under 35” award from the National Book Foundation, and was a finalist for the New York Public Library Young Lions Award. It was a *New York Times*’ Notable Book and was named a best book of 2015 by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the American Library Association. Valdez Quade is the recipient of the John Guare Writer’s Fund Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome and a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer’s Award. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Best American Short Stories*, *The O. Henry Prize Stories*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. She was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University, where she also taught, and is an assistant professor at Princeton. **Sigrid Nunez** has published seven novels, including *A Feather on the Breath of God*, *For Rouenna*, *The Last of Her Kind*, and, most recently, *The Friend*, which received the 2018 National Book Award for Fiction and was a finalist for the 2019 Simpson/Joyce Carol Oates Prize. Her other honors and awards include four Pushcart Prizes, a Whiting Award, a Berlin Prize Fellowship, the Rome Prize in Literature, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Rosenthal Foundation Award. Nunez is also the author of *Sempre Susan: A Memoir of Susan Sontag*. Among the journals to which she has contributed are *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Paris Review*, *Threepenny Review*, and *Harper’s*. She lives in New York City.

The Hermitage hosts renowned authors, visual artists, musicians, playwrights, poets, and performers from around the world. As part of their residencies, each Hermitage artist offers free programs to members of the local community, allowing our neighbors to engage with some of the world’s leading artists. “We bring some of the greatest artistic minds and talents right here to Sarasota County and Manasota Key,”

says Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO Andy Sandberg. “What better way to celebrate this connection than by giving members of our community the opportunity to engage directly with these acclaimed artists. These audiences are given an insiders’ first look, often learning about the next wave of artists and great new works before they catch fire in New York or elsewhere.” In addition to the Hermitage’s public performances and readings, many artists participate in free outreach programs at area schools, colleges, and in collaboration with regional cultural organizations.

All programs are subject to change. Please check the Hermitage website or Facebook page for updated program status. The Hermitage Artist Retreat is located at 6630 Manasota Key Road in Englewood (though program venues vary for each event). For more information about these free community programs or the Hermitage, visit www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

About the Hermitage Artist Retreat:

The Hermitage is a nonprofit artist retreat located in Manasota Key, Florida, inviting accomplished artists across multiple disciplines for residencies on its beachfront campus, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Hermitage artists are invited to interact with the local community, touching thousands of Gulf Coast residents and visitors each year with unique and inspiring programs. Hermitage fellows have included nine Pulitzer Prize winners, along with multiple Tony, Emmy, Grammy and MacArthur Fellowship award winners. Works created at this beachside retreat by a diverse group of Hermitage alumni have gone on to renowned theatres, concert halls, and galleries throughout the world. The Hermitage awards the \$30,000 Greenfield Prize for a new work of art, and the Aspen Music Festival awards the annual Hermitage Prize in Composition. For more information about The Hermitage Artist Retreat, visit www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

The Hermitage is supported by:

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