

MEDIA CONTACT

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The Hermitage Artist Retreat Presents:

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize

Celebration of Artistic Excellence

Live and Virtual Events

April 8-12, 2021

**Honoring 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner, Playwright and
Theater Artist Aleshea Harris**

*Events include a first look at a new work by 2019 winner **Helga Davis**; a sneak peek of a new play by 2018 winner **Martyna Majok**, a panel discussion with 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize jurors **Mandy Greenfield**, **Nataki Garrett**, and **Robert O'Hara**; an Artist Talk with 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize winner **Aleshea Harris**; the 2021 **Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner**; and a special **Virtual Celebration of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize**.*

(March 15, 2021) The Hermitage Artist Retreat, in collaboration with the Greenfield Foundation, presents its 13th annual Hermitage Greenfield Prize celebration, April 8-12, 2021. This year's events begin with a virtual first look at "Ocean Body," the prize-commissioned work by 2019 winner **Helga Davis** (Thursday, April 8, 7 p.m., via Zoom); a panel discussion with this year's Hermitage Greenfield Prize jurors and visionary

leaders in theater, **Mandy Greenfield, Nataki Garrett, and Robert O’Hara** (Saturday, April 10, 4 p.m., via Zoom); an Artist Talk with 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize winner **Aleshea Harris** (Saturday, April 10, 6 p.m., Hermitage Beach and livestream); the **2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner** (Sunday, April 11, 6 p.m., outdoors at the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art), and a special **Virtual Celebration of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize** (Sunday, April 11, available starting at 7 p.m). For details about these events and information on how to register, visit **HermitageArtistRetreat.org**.

The Schedule of Events:

- **Thursday, April 8, 7 p.m., Virtual Event: A First Look at “Ocean Body / Body Vessel,” the Prize Commission by 2019 Winner Helga Davis.** *Presented in collaboration with EnsembleNew SRQ and Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe.** A first look into this unique story of friendship told through music, sculpture, and Manasota Key. Helga Davis, along with her collaborators Shara Nova and Mark DeChiazza, will share excerpts and lead a robust discussion about the work’s composition, the development of the work’s visual language, and how this tale of friendship took on new life as the pandemic and larger societal issues of racial justice loomed around it. “Ocean Body” is a multi-screen, multi-channel sound installation that explores the potential of interracial coalition through the deep yet tenuous bonds of a decade-long friendship between Helga Davis and Shara Nova. Song, found text, conversations, and new compositions merge with original footage of the two women in the waters of the Gulf Coast, to create a multi-sensory experience of a place where sand, sun, and water surround intense communion and also profound isolation. With Davis and Nova interconnected in a dress woven for two, “Ocean Body” examines the

sometimes conflicting needs for union and autonomy with within a friendship, and how we continually discover each other in new and transformational ways.

- **Helga Davis** is a vocalist and performance artist with feet planted on the most prestigious international stages and with firm roots in the realities and concerns of her local community whose work draws out insights that illuminate how artistic leaps for an individual can offer connection among audiences. Davis was principal actor in the 25th-anniversary international revival of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass's seminal opera *Einstein on the Beach*. Among the collaborative works written for her are *Oceanic Verses* by Paola Prestini, *You Us We All*, by Shara Nova and Andrew Ondrejcek and *Faust's Box*, by Italian contemporary music composer Andrea Liberovici. Robert Wilson describes her as “a united whole, with spellbinding inner power and strength.” She also starred in Wilson’s *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, with libretto and score by Bernice Johnson Reagon; and *The Blue Planet*, by Peter Greenaway. She is the recipient of the 2014 BRIC Media Arts Fireworks Grant and completed her first evening-length piece, *Cassandra*. Current projects include *Silent Voices* with the Brooklyn Youth Chorus with text by Hilton Als, *Jomama Jones Blacklight* by Daniel Alexander Jones, *Requiem for a Tuesday* with bass-baritone Davóne Tines and dancer/choreographer Reggie Gray, *Yet Unheard*, a tribute to Sandra Bland by Courtney Bryan, based on the poem by Sharan Strange. She has conceived and performed *First Responder* and *Wanna* as responses to *Until* and *The Let Go* by multidisciplinary artist Nick Cave. She is artist in residence at National Sawdust, host of the eponymous podcast HELGA on WQXR/New Sounds, and is the 2018-21 visiting curator for the performing arts at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

**Please note: this is in place of a previously announced live event that was originally set for 4/12 in collaboration with EnsembleNew and WBTT. The live event will be scheduled for a future date next season.*

- **Saturday, April 10, 4 p.m.**, via Zoom: **“Amplifying Voices in Theater:” A Panel Discussion with 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Jurors.** Featuring **Mandy Greenfield**, artistic director of Williamstown Theater Festival; **Nataki Garrett**, artistic director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and **Robert O’Hara**, an award-winning director and playwright, a 2020 Tony Award nominee for Best Director (*Slave Play*) and recently named as an artistic advisor to New York City Center’s Encores series. *Moderated by Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO Andy Sandberg.*

- **Saturday, April 10, 6 p.m.**, Hermitage Beach (also available via livestream): **An Artist Talk with 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner Aleshea Harris, playwright and theater artist.**
 - Aleshea Harris’s play *Is God Is* (directed by Taibi Magar at Soho Rep) won the 2016 Relentless Award, an OBIE Award for playwriting in 2017, the Helen Merrill Playwriting Award in 2019, was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and made The Kilroys’ List of “the most recommended un and underproduced plays by trans and female authors of color” for 2017. *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* (directed by Whitney White, produced by The Movement Theatre Company), a play-pageant-ritual response to anti-Blackness, had its critically-acclaimed NYC premiere in 2018, was featured in the April 2019 issue of *American Theatre Magazine* and was nominated for a Drama Desk award. Harris was awarded the Windham-Campbell Literary Prize and the Steinberg

Playwriting Award in 2020. She has performed her own work at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Orlando Fringe Festival, REDCAT, as part of La Fête du Livre at La Comédie de Saint-Étienne, and at the Skirball Center in Los Angeles. She is a two-time MacDowell Fellow and has enjoyed residencies at Hedgebrook and Djerassi.

- **Sunday, April 11, 6 p.m.: 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner: An Outdoor Celebration of a Distinguished Theater Artist.** At the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota. Cocktail attire. Tickets start at \$500, with sponsorships available. Capacity for this event is extremely limited this year to accommodate safe social distancing.
- **Sunday, April 11, available starting at 7 p.m: Virtual Celebration of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize** (Virtual Presentation). This special video presentation is a tribute to Hermitage Greenfield Prize winners, past and present. Viewing access to the virtual celebration is available for a minimum contribution of \$50. (Access should be purchased before April 11, and viewing access for registrants will be available through April 25.)
- **Monday, April 12, 7 p.m., via Zoom: A Sneak Preview of the Prize-Commissioned New Play by 2018 Winner Martyna Majok.** *Presented in Partnership with Asolo Repertory Theatre.* Join the Hermitage Artist Retreat and the Asolo Repertory Theatre for a first peek of an excerpt from Martyna

Majok's Hermitage Greenfield Prize commission, performed by a special guest. (*The live presentation of Majok's work was delayed due to the pandemic, but is anticipated in Sarasota as part of the Hermitage's 2021-2022 season.*)

- Polish-born writer Martyna Majok is known for her plays about immigrants, women, the working class, and people with disabilities. "I think people are more alike than we are different. We all understand love and loss, betrayal, despair, hope," she told *Playbill* in 2018. Majok is the winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for her play *Cost of Living*. The Pulitzer board described her play as "an honest, original work that invites audiences to examine diverse perceptions of privilege and human connection through two pairs of mismatched individuals: a former trucker and his recently paralyzed ex-wife, and an arrogant young man with cerebral palsy and his new caregiver." Majok's major works include her 2016 drama, *Ironbound*, a portrait of an independent Polish immigrant searching for the American Dream and *queens*, which examines the sacrifices made by two generations of immigrant women living in New York City. Her honors include The Dramatists Guild's Lanford Wilson Award, The Lilly Award's Stacey Mindich Prize, Helen Merrill Emerging Playwright Award, Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding Original New Play at The Helen Hayes Awards, The Kennedy Center's Jean Kennedy Smith Award, New York Theatre Workshop's 2050 Fellowship, and the NNPN/Smith Prize for Political Playwriting. Majok earned her BA from the University of Chicago and MFA from the Yale School of Drama and Juilliard. Majok was a 2012-2013 NNPN playwright-in-residence and the 2015-2016 PoNY Fellow at the Lark Play Development Center.



THE HERMITAGE GREENFIELD PRIZE

About the Hermitage Greenfield Prize:

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is a groundbreaking partnership between the Hermitage Artist Retreat and the Greenfield Foundation. Rotating between the fields of music, theater, and visual art, this prestigious national prize seeks to bring into the world works of art that will have a significant impact on the broad as well as our artistic culture. The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is awarded annually and includes a Hermitage Fellowship, as well as a \$30,000 commission for a new piece of work to be created within a two-year time frame. A residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat on Manasota Key (Sarasota County, Florida), ensures time and space in which to conceive and complete the work. Winners include **Aleshea Harris**, Theater (2021); **Jennifer Packer**, Visual Art (2020); **Helga Davis**, Music (2019); **Martyna Majok**, Theater (2018); **David Burnett**, Photography (2017); **Coco Fusco**, Visual Art (2016); **Bobby Previte**, Music (2015); **Nilo Cruz**, Theater (2014); **Trenton Doyle Hancock**, Visual Art (2013); **Vijay Iyer**, Music (2012); **John Guare**, Theater (2011); **Sanford Biggers**, Visual Art (2010); **Craig Lucas**, Theater (2009) and **Eve Beglarian**, Music (2009).

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, reaching thousands of Gulf Coast residents and visitors each year with unique and inspiring programs. Hermitage Fellows have included twelve Pulitzer Prize winners, along with multiple Tony, Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and MacArthur Fellowship award winners. Works created at this beachside retreat by a diverse group of Hermitage alumni have gone on to renowned theaters, concert halls, and galleries throughout the world. Each year, the Hermitage awards the \$30,000 Hermitage 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 HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

The Hermitage is supported by:

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