

MEDIA CONTACT

Gulf Coast / Sarasota: Su Byron; 941-726-8468; SuByron@HermitageArtistRetreat.org

National / New York: Candi Adams; 917-776-1170; CandiAdamsNYC@gmail.com



**Hermitage Artist Retreat
Announces the Establishment of
The Hermitage Major Theater Award
Made Possible by an \$800,000 Gift**

From Flora Major and the Kutya Major Foundation

In addition to providing generous support to the Hermitage, this multi-year gift starting with a commitment of \$800,000 will champion new works of art and the establishment of the Hermitage Major Theater Award, annually recognizing a playwright or theater artist with a commission of \$35,000 to create an original work at the Hermitage.

(June 22, 2021) Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO of the Hermitage Artist Retreat, announced the establishment of the Hermitage Major Theater Award, a new annual prize that will recognize a playwright or theater artist with a commission of \$35,000 to create an original piece of theater. In addition to the commission, the recipient of this annual award will receive a residency at the Hermitage to develop the new work and will also receive a reading or workshop in a leading arts and cultural center such as New York, London, Chicago, or Los Angeles. This initiative is made possible by a multi-year gift from Flora Major and the Kutya Major Foundation to the Hermitage, starting with a commitment of \$800,000.

Like the Hermitage Greenfield Prize – which will soon be celebrating its 14th season and rotates annually between the disciplines of music, theater, and visual art – the winner of the Hermitage Major Theater Award (HMTA) will be nominated and selected by a jury of

nationally recognized arts leaders in the field of theater. The new work will be developed and created in Sarasota at the Hermitage's historic campus, and the commission will additionally receive a workshop or reading in a notable arts and cultural hub; it is anticipated that the first year will be in New York. The inaugural jury and HMTA recipient will be selected and announced in the coming months, and it is anticipated that the first commission will be completed in 2022.

In the spirit of the Hermitage's commitment to the arts across multiple disciplines, finalists for the Hermitage Major Theater Award will be encouraged to create a commission that directly or indirectly represents the role and impact of art – musical, literary, theatrical, visual, or otherwise – in our culture and society. This distinguished recognition is not an award for an existing work, but rather it is designed as a commission that shall serve as a catalyst and inspiration to a theater artist to create a new, original, and impactful piece of theater.

Further, the prize is intended to bridge the connection between Sarasota County, where the original work is created, and other leading arts and culture centers around the world. This continued involvement in the creative development of its artists' work beyond our region is a new step for the Hermitage, empowering this vital arts organization to strengthen relationships and build meaningful collaborations with leading cultural institutions in arts capitals worldwide.

"This award will be transformational for its recipients – providing not only significant funds and recognition, but also invaluable time, space, and inspiration at the Hermitage, as well as an opportunity to showcase their work," says Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO of the Hermitage. "Coming out of this period when the theater industry has been largely shut down, it is particularly exciting to be able to offer a gift and an opportunity like this to a theater artist. Moreover, it is a gift to the theatrical canon when you consider that each year, a brand-new work will be created as a result of this award."

Past Hermitage Fellows in theater have included Pulitzer Prize winners David Auburn, Jackie Sibblies Drury, Michael R. Jackson, Donald Margulies, Lynn Nottage, and Doug Wright, as well as dozens of extraordinary theater artists, including George Brant, Adam Gwon, Emily Mann, Carey Perloff, Zoe Sarnak, and Rona Siddiqui, among others. Past recipients of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize have included Aleshea Harris (2021), Pulitzer Prize winners Martyna Majok (2018) and Nilo Cruz (2014), John Guare (2011), and Craig Lucas (2009). Since its establishment in 2002, the Hermitage Artist Retreat has provided residencies and Fellowships to hundreds of artists spanning theater, music, visual art, literature, and more.

Additionally, in providing generous support for the Hermitage for its core operations and programs, Sandberg adds that this leadership gift by Flora Major and The Kutya Major Foundation is invaluable to building long-term, sustainable support for an organization committed to the creation and development of bold and impactful new works.

“It is exciting to support an organization that is so deeply committed to supporting new and original work,” adds Flora Major. “The Hermitage is reaching new heights under Andy’s leadership, and with a shared passion for the theater, I know that he will make something extraordinary out of this award. Anyone who values and appreciates the arts, across all disciplines, needs to invest in supporting artists in the earliest stages of their creative process – that is what the Hermitage does so well.”

Andy Sandberg, an accomplished director, writer, and Tony Award-winning producer who started as Artistic Director and CEO of the Hermitage in 2020, adds that the prize will build bridges between the Hermitage and Sarasota County, where the commissions will be born, and other leading arts and culture centers, including New York, London, and Chicago, where great theater is frequently developed and presented. “This award will offer the Gulf Coast community the chance to birth and introduce this new work of theater to the world, making a lasting impact on the broader artistic landscape, increasing the visibility of the

Hermitage's impact in other cultural centers, and emphasizing the global perspective of the bold new works being created on Manasota Key.”

Flora Major, founder and trustee of the Kutya Major Foundation, moved to Sarasota in 2005 and immediately became involved in the art and social life of the region. Originally from Hungary, Major was a successful entrepreneur in the telecommunication business in New York and in the textile industry in North Carolina. She has served on several not-for-profit boards through the years, including Duke University Eye Center, Duke University Museum of Art, North Carolina Museum of Art, the Advisory Board of Lenox Hill Hospital, Sarasota Orchestra, Asolo Repertory Theater, the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States, and the Designing Women's Boutique for Arts and Humanities. Major currently serves on the Foundation Board of Isothermal Community College, the board of the Ringling College of Art and Design, the advisory board of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, and the Council for the Arts at MIT. She has chaired numerous charity events, and she served as co-chair of the Hermitage Artist Retreat's 2020 Artful Lobster and the 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner.

“I have been so inspired by the Hermitage Greenfield Prize and have seen the transformative effects of the Greenfield Foundation's generous commitment to the Hermitage,” adds Major. “I hope this new initiative will inspire others who are passionate about the arts to recognize and support the important work that the Hermitage is doing.”

The Hermitage hosts artists on its Gulf Coast Manasota Key campus for multi-week residencies, where artists from around the world and across multiple disciplines create and develop new works of visual art, theater, music, literature, and more. As part of their residencies, Hermitage Fellows participate in community programs, affording audiences in our region the unique opportunity to engage with some of the world's leading artists and to get a “sneak peek” into extraordinary projects and artistic minds before their works go on to

major galleries, concert halls, theaters, and museums around the world. These free programs include performances, lectures, interactive experiences, readings, open studios, school programs, teacher workshops, and more, serving thousands in our regional community each year.

*For more information about the Hermitage, visit **HermitageArtistRetreat.org**.*

“An organization that does more for artists than any I have encountered.”

—Craig Lucas, Tony Award Nominee & Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

“Because of the Hermitage, some of the most beautiful plays have been written, and the most beautiful music has been made.”

—Emily Mann, Playwright, Director & Tony Award Winner

“A spark plug for ideas and collaborations: a miraculous co-mingling of music, literature, visual art, theater, nature, and wildlife.”

—Claire Chase, Flutist, MacArthur Genius & Avery Fisher Prize Winner

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, Poets Laureate, MacArthur ‘Genius’ Fellows, and multiple Tony, Emmy, Grammy, Oscar winners and nominees. 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:

Hermitage programs are supported, in part, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts; by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax Revenues; and by the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council of Arts and Culture and the State of Florida (Section 286.25 Florida Statutes), as well as the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.