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Hermitage Artist Retreat “Doubles Down” on Safe and Expanded Outdoor Programming for 2021-2022

Following a successful season of live outdoor events in 2020-2021, the Hermitage is expanding its outdoor programming in 2021-2022, as well as introducing new collaborative ventures and virtual offerings, and continuing its commitment to safety and social distancing.

(September 6, 2021) The Hermitage Artist Retreat has been one of the nation’s earliest and most successful adapters to offer a safe new model for live events and performance over the past year. Today, Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO Andy Sandberg announced that its live and virtual programs in theater, music, visual art, literature, and more will continue to be held entirely outdoors and socially distanced throughout the 2021-2022 season, at venues across Sarasota County including, but not limited to, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, The Bay Sarasota, The Ringling Museum, Asolo Rep, and the Hermitage Beach.

“All of us at the Hermitage are incredibly excited for the season ahead,” notes Andy Sandberg, now entering his second full season as Artistic Director and CEO of the Hermitage, following his appointment in December of 2019. “Our programs are designed to offer audiences a unique and authentic look into our extraordinary artists’ creative process. This does not require us to be indoors, so as we push into the 2021-2022 season, we are doubling down on our commitment to safe and inspiring outdoor programming, as well as expanded virtual access to reach audiences and communities we might not otherwise be able to engage.”

Last season, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Hermitage safely and successfully presented over 50 live outdoor events – all free to the community – featuring

leading artists from around the world. This was in addition to its ongoing virtual programming which is available to audiences around the country.

“We are in one of the most beautiful places in the world, with so many extraordinary outdoor venues and partners,” adds Sandberg. “Artists and audiences come to the Gulf Coast to experience the rich arts and cultural scene, but also to enjoy the beautiful sunsets – our programs offer both at once.”

The Hermitage has already presented multiple outdoor events this summer to kick off the season. The Hermitage has been offering socially-distanced, live outdoor programming since October of 2020, with new health and safety measures in place. Audiences have consistently noted feeling extremely comfortable with the organization’s safety protocols and spacious outdoor seating arrangement. As various arts and cultural institutions face new challenges surrounding how to safely resume indoor performances, the Hermitage is reinforcing its commitment to safe, outdoor events.

Until further notice, all Hermitage programs will continue to be outside or online. Moreover, as concerns surrounding the spread of COVID-19 continue in our region, these outdoor arts and cultural experiences provide a level of comfort to artists and audiences alike. “Anyone who has attended a Hermitage program in the past twelve months knows how seriously we take the health and wellbeing of everyone in attendance,” says Sandberg. “Our incredible staff, crew, and volunteers work tirelessly to ensure these events are safe and enjoyable for all.” At every outdoor Hermitage event – each approximately an hour in length – audiences are socially distanced, with clear signage and ropes to delineate seating blocks. All guests are encouraged to wear masks (provided for anyone who needs one), individual hand sanitizers are distributed to each member of the audience, and artists use separate microphones. “In addition to the health and safety of our audiences, we have to factor in the concerns of our artists who are coming to the Hermitage from different states and countries,” adds Sandberg. “For many, this is their first or only time performing in a live setting in over a year, so they rely on us to ensure a safe and worry-free experience,” adds Sandberg.

Hermitage audiences and artists alike have frequently noted that these experiences have been a highlight of their cultural experience in our community. “The Hermitage programs have been our lifeline over the past year,” says one Hermitage patron. “More meaningful than you could ever imagine.”

“This experience of creating new work in this magical place, and sharing space with a live audience... this is something I will never take for granted again,” said a recent Hermitage artist during her performance. “Thank you for finding a way to move forward.”

“We recognized early in the pandemic that we had both a responsibility and an opportunity to find a safe and creative way to share bold and inspiring new works with the members of our community,” adds Sandberg. “We intend to continue doing just that – only bigger and better – in the season ahead.”

The Hermitage recently announced the 2021-2022 dates for its popular “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” series, which had its debut on August 27. Virtual programming continues with “UnScripted,” a collaboration with the Van Wezel Foundation, as well as the newly announced “Artists and Thinkers: A National Conversation Series,” featuring candid conversations between members of the Hermitage’s National Curatorial Council and accomplished alumni artists from across the United States. New offerings this season will include collaborations with Art Center Sarasota, The Bay Sarasota, Booker High School, and Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, among others, as well as continuing longstanding partnerships with Asolo Rep, Bookstore1, Florida Studio Theatre, New Music New College, Ringling College of Art & Design, The Ringling Museum, Sarasota Art Museum, Selby Gardens, Urbanite Theatre, The Van Wezel, West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, and more to be announced.

In addition to its expansive program offerings, the Hermitage introduced a new national theater commission this summer, the Hermitage Major Theater Award. Presented with generous support from Flora Major and the Kutya Major Foundation, this recognition will provide an annual \$35,000 commission and residency at the Hermitage to create a new and original work of theater. The inaugural recipient will be announced later this year. This is in addition to the annual Hermitage Greenfield Prize, which offers a \$30,000 commission for an original work of music, theater, or visual art; the fourteenth annual Hermitage Greenfield Prize will be presented in 2022 in the discipline of music; the popular Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, April 10, 2022. The Hermitage’s annual fall fundraiser, The Artful Lobster: An Outdoor Celebration, will be held on Saturday, November 13, 2021, following the same health and safety guidelines that were introduced in 2020.

The Hermitage hosts artists on its Gulf Coast Manasota Key campus for multi-week residencies, where diverse 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 free community programs, offering audiences in our region a unique opportunity to engage with some of the world's leading artists and to get an authentic "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 and innovative 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, or to register for upcoming programs, visit **HermitageArtistRetreat.org**.*

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 12 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, the newly announced \$35,000 Hermitage Major Theater Award for an original theater commission, and the Aspen Music Festival's Hermitage Prize in Composition. **For more information, visit HermitageArtistRetreat.org.**

The Hermitage is supported by:

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