

Hermitage Announces New January Programs
Featuring Original Works in Progress from
Tony Award Winner Gavin Creel
and
Pulitzer Prize Winner Michael R. Jackson

*Tony and Oliver Award Winner and Hermitage Fellow **Gavin Creel** will share excerpts from his latest passion project on January 14th on the Hermitage Beach. Pulitzer Prize winner and Hermitage Fellow **Michael R. Jackson** returns to the Hermitage for a program at Selby Gardens on January 21st.*

November 23, 2021 (Sarasota County, Florida) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** (Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO) announced today that the Hermitage will present new public programs in January with acclaimed theater artists and Hermitage Fellows **Gavin Creel** and **Michael R. Jackson**.

On Friday, January 14th at 5pm on the Hermitage Beach, Tony and Olivier Award-winning performer **Gavin Creel** (*Hello, Dolly!*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Hair*) will share excerpts from his latest passion project. “Walk on Through” is a work in progress inspired by a commission from the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** (Limor Tomer, General Manager of Live Arts). This new piece, still in development, features Creel’s original songs inspired by the sights, sounds, and sense of wonder experienced at the Met.

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer-composer **Michael R. Jackson** (*A Strange Loop*, *White Girl in Danger*) returns to the Hermitage following his beachfront program last season. This time, Jackson puts his unique twist on the popular **Hermitage Sunsets @**

Selby Gardens series with “The Work,” offering candid conversation and samplings of his latest work. This event will be on Friday, January 21st at 5:30pm, presented at Selby Gardens’ Downtown Sarasota campus.

These outdoor programs are free and open to the public with a \$5/person registration fee. Due to capacity limitations and social distancing, **registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org.**

“We are incredibly excited to be welcoming these two extraordinary theater artists to share their works in progress with our community,” said Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. Sandberg was a producer of the Tony Award-winning revival of *Hair*, for which Creel received a Tony nomination as Best Lead Actor. “Many know Gavin as one of the great performers of our generation, and he is here at the Hermitage as a writer and creator, developing an exciting new piece inspired by a commission from our friends at the Met. And for those who don’t know the incredible Michael R. Jackson, he is truly one of the most exciting voices in the American theater today, and we’re looking forward to welcoming him back to the Gulf Coast!”

Gavin Creel received the Tony Award for his performance as Cornelius in the Broadway revival of *Hello Dolly!* starring Bette Midler. After making his Broadway debut in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, for which he received his first Tony nomination, Creel went on to star in the Broadway productions of *Hair* (second Tony nomination), *La Cage Aux Folles*, *She Loves Me*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *Waitress*. Creel received an Olivier Award for his portrayal of Elder Price in the London premiere of *The Book of Mormon* and also appeared on the West End in *Mary Poppins*, *Hair*, and *Waitress*. On television, Creel can be seen in *American Horror Story* and alongside Julie Andrews in *Eloise at*

the Plaza and *Eloise at Christmastime*. As a songwriter, he has released three original albums: *GoodTimeNation*, *Quiet*, and *Get Out*. A native of Findlay, Ohio, Gavin is a proud graduate of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, and Dance.

Michael R. Jackson is a 2021 Hermitage Fellow and the recipient of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in Drama. Jackson's Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critics Circle winning musical *A Strange Loop* (which had its world premiere at Playwrights Horizons in association with Page 73 Productions) was called "a full-on laparoscopy of the heart, soul, and loins" and a "gutsy, jubilantly anguished musical with infectious melodies" by Ben Brantley for *The New York Times*. In addition to *A Strange Loop*, Jackson also wrote book, music, and lyrics for *White Girl in Danger*. Awards and associations include the New Professional Theatre Festival Award, a Jonathan Larson Grant, a Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, an ASCAP Foundation Harold Adamson Award, a Whiting Award, the Helen Merrill Award for Playwriting, an Outer Critics Circle Award, a Drama Desk Award, an Obie Award, an Antonyo Award, a Fred Ebb Award, and a Dramatist Guild Fellowship. Jackson is an alum of Page 73's Interstate 73 Writers Group.

The Hermitage hosts artists on its Gulf Coast Manasota Key campus for multi-week residencies, where diverse and accomplished artists from around the world and across multiple disciplines create and develop new works of theater, music, visual art, literature, dance, and more. As part of their residencies, Hermitage Fellows participate in free community programs, offering audiences in the 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 theaters, galleries, concert halls, and museums around the world. These free and innovative

programs include performances, lectures, readings, interactive experiences, open studios, school programs, teacher workshops, and more, serving thousands in our regional community each year.

As with all of the Hermitage's recent programming this year – at the Hermitage Beach on Manasota Key, at Selby Gardens Downtown, and other venues throughout Sarasota County – these events will be presented outdoors and socially distanced.

The **newly announced** programs include:

- **“Walk on Through,” Friday, January 14, 5pm:** Tony and Olivier Award winner **Gavin Creel** (*Hello, Dolly!*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Hair*) has a new passion project in development. Spurred by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to create a piece inspired by their vast collection, he has spent countless hours absorbing the sights, sounds, and lessons of this self-contained universe. The working result, *Walk on Through*, captures the sense of wonder and impossible connection museums offer to humanity. Be among the first to hear selections of this work in progress, performed by Hermitage Fellow Gavin Creel himself, as he continues this new journey of creation. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org. The Hermitage Beach (6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood, Florida 34223)**
- **Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: “The Work,” Friday, January 21, 5:30pm:** Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and composer **Michael R. Jackson** returns to the Hermitage following his popular beachfront program last season. Since his critically acclaimed musical, *A Strange Loop*, premiered at Playwrights

Horizons, the theater-maker has continued the work with projects such as *White Girl in Danger* and *Accounts Payable*, a commission from Lincoln Center. Join Jackson as part of the “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” series and hear from the writer-composer whose work has been described by *The New York Times* as being driven by “curiosity, positivity, and humor – but also an irrepressible appetite for the possible.” *This event is presented in partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org. Marie Selby Botanical Gardens (Downtown Sarasota), 1534 Mound Street, Sarasota, FL 34236)***

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 14 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 **HermitagArtistRetreat.org**.

The Hermitage is supported by:

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