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**Visual Artist Sandy Rodriguez and Dancer-Choreographer Rennie Harris Honored at the 2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner, Celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> Year of the Prize and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season of the Hermitage**

*The annual gala raised more than \$240,000 in support of the Hermitage's mission, in addition to \$150,000 from the Greenfield Foundation, with special live performances and appearances from Broadway star **Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer**, dancer **Phil S. Cuttino Jr.**, and past Hermitage Greenfield Prize winners **Sanford Biggers** (2010, visual art), and **Angélica Negrón** (2022, music).*

April 18, 2023 (Sarasota County, Florida) — The annual Hermitage Greenfield Prize (HGP) Dinner on Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup> honored dancer-choreographer **Lorenzo ‘Rennie’ Harris** and visual artist **Sandy Rodriguez**. This was the culmination of a weekend-long celebration of events, hosted by the **Hermitage Artist Retreat** (Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO) in partnership with the Greenfield Foundation. To commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season of the Hermitage and the milestone 15<sup>th</sup> year of this distinguished national honor, the Hermitage presented two awards – one in the discipline of visual art and a special award in the field of dance and choreography. The evening of celebration was presented outdoors by the Ringling Museum’s Ca’ d’Zan and featured inspiring performances from Broadway star and Lucille Lortel Award winner **Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer** (*Beetlejuice*), hip-hop dancer **Phil S. Cuttino Jr.** (Rennie Harris Puremovement), violinist **Samantha Bennett** (EnsembleNEWSRQ), and special appearances from past Hermitage Greenfield Prize winners **Sanford Biggers** (2010, visual art), and **Angélica Negrón** (2022, music). The annual gala raised more than \$240,000 in support of the Hermitage’s mission in addition to the Greenfield Foundation’s ongoing annual gift of \$150,000. The festive evening was

chaired by **Sherry and Tom Koski**, with honorary co-chairs **Steven High** (The Ringling Museum), **Nate Jacobs** (Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe), **Virginia Shearer** (Sarasota Art Museum), and **Iain Webb** (Sarasota Ballet). Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg** served as master of ceremonies and announced that the **Ringling Museum** will be collaborating with the Hermitage as the presenting partner for the premieres of both Sandy Rodriguez and Rennie Harris' commissions in Sarasota in 2025. Harris and Rodriguez will each receive a \$30,000 commission, along with an extended residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat.

The evening opened with a performance from Philadelphia-based dancer **Phil S. Cuttino Jr.**, a core member of **Rennie Harris Puremovement**, who kicked off the event with a tribute to hip-hop and street dance. Sandberg took the stage as master of ceremonies, and introduced a video documenting fifteen years of Hermitage Greenfield Prize recipients, jurors, and presenting partners. Broadway star, Lucille Lortel Award winner, and Drama Desk Award nominee **Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer** enthralled the crowd with a performance of Stephen Sondheim's "Finishing the Hat," from the musical *Sunday in the Park with George*, as a tribute to the creation of art. The program continued with **Anne Patterson**, one of this year's visual art jurors and a Hermitage alumna artist, introducing a video of **Sandy Rodriguez's** work and process. Two of this year's dance jurors, **Michael Novak** (Artistic Director of Paul Taylor Dance Company) and **Charmaine Warren** (Founder and Artistic Director of "Black Dance Stories") introduced selections of **Rennie Harris's** extraordinary body of work. 2022 HGP recipient **Angélica Negrón** thanked the Hermitage for this opportunity and introduced her original violin and electronic music piece, "A través del manto luminoso." The piece was performed by ensembleNewSRQ's **Samantha Bennett**; enSRQ will be serving as the presenting partner for Negrón's HGP commission, which will have its premiere in April of 2024 (further details to be announced). The evening continued with a surprise appearance from internationally renowned artist **Sanford Biggers**, the first-ever Hermitage Greenfield Prize winner in visual art (2010) and a current member of the Hermitage Curatorial Council. Biggers shared what the Hermitage and this award meant to his artistic practice, how the impact of this opportunity shaped the trajectory of his impressive career, and how important it is to pay that forward. To close out the

event and celebrate the perfect weather, **Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer** returned to the stage for a showstopping rendition of “Don’t Rain on My Parade.”

“This was an extraordinary evening and a joyful celebration of this truly one-of-a-kind prize,” said Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. “It was an honor to celebrate Rennie Harris, Sandy Rodriguez, and their immeasurable talents, and we can’t wait to introduce their new works of art and dance to our Gulf Coast community. It was thrilling as well to hear live performances from Leslie Kritzer and an original piece by Angélica Negrón on the beautiful grounds of the Ringling Museum, along with inspiring remarks from the one and only Sanford Biggers. We are so grateful to the Greenfield Foundation, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, and all of our sponsors and donors for their belief in our mission and the support of new work.”

The annual Prize Dinner was the culmination of a series of events celebrating the impact and legacy of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize. This year’s HGP Weekend also included the first look at a brand-new play from 2021 HGP recipient and celebrated playwright and theater maker **Aleshea Harris**. This first public presentation of Harris’ newly developing commission was presented on Friday evening in a workshop reading directed by Harris at the Asolo Rep/FSU Conservatory. The cast included Tony Award nominee **Kara Young** (Hermitage Fellow Lynn Nottage’s *Clyde’s*; Hermitage Fellow Martyna Majok’s *Cost of Living*), **Beau Thom** (*The Skin of Our Teeth* on Broadway; Aleshea Harris’ *What to Send Up When It Goes Down*), with **Lionetta M. Gaines**, **L. James**, and **Donovan Whitney**. On Saturday, the Hermitage hosted a presentation and artist talk with **Sandy Rodriguez** and 2023 visual art jurors **Christine Kuan** (Executive Director, Creative Capital) and **Anne Patterson**, a Hermitage alumna artist whose new work will premiere at Sarasota Art Museum in 2024; followed by a beach program with **Rennie Harris**, who was joined by 2023 dance jurors **Joseph V. Melillo** (Executive Producer Emeritus, Brooklyn Academy of Music) and **Charmaine Warren** (“Black Dance Stories”).

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is presented in partnership with the Philadelphia-based **Greenfield Foundation**, who launched this initiative with the Hermitage in 2009. The **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** served as the lead community sponsor for this year’s festivities.

**Sandy Rodriguez** plans to use her commission to create a site-specific panoramic exhibition – the centerpiece of which will be a new large-scale map that depicts the southeastern topography and coastline marked by stories of resistance from the colonial period to the present. Created with hand-processed local mineral pigment watercolors on amate paper with an accompanying audio installation, the effect will be reminiscent of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century style panorama in the round. This is a further exploration of a series of exhibitions for which she has been celebrated, which maps the ongoing cycles of violence on communities of color by blending historical and recent events; this will be her first in this region.

**Rennie Harris'** intended commission will focus on a new dance piece titled "Losing My Religion," a personal reflection on his own journey that weaves in thoughts on the world's collective dilemmas. Harris is known for challenging what has come to be expected of street dance and hip-hop culture and the degenerative social norms and beliefs that ground the struggles of our time. As part of the work, he plans to incorporate a reimagining of his renowned solo "Endangered Species," an autobiographical work recounting his experience of being chased and shot down in Kingston, Jamaica while touring as a U.S. ambassador for President Reagan's 'American Embassy Tour.' The solo's inclusion in the work completes a story of systemic racism and revolt, shifting away from what was to what is and what can be.

**Angélica Negrón's** commission seeks to engage the senses and encourage listeners to resist distractions with a composed work timed with the setting sun and inspired partly by the sun's low-frequency sounds as captured by scientists. Her composition of strings and electronic music will feature slowly evolving musical textures, shifting patterns, natural sounds, and changes in scale and dimension that play with the unfolding gradations of light and color on the surrounding land, water, and sky – serving as a gentle reminder to surrender to moments of inspiration.

To learn more about the Hermitage or to register for upcoming Hermitage programs, visit **[HermitageArtistRetreat.org](https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org)**.

## **The Hermitage Greenfield Prize**

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is a transformative 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 the artistic culture of our society. Now in its fifteenth year, 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 **Rennie Harris**, Dance & Choreography (2023), **Sandy Rodriguez**, Visual Art (2023), **Angélica Negrón**, Music (2022), **Aleshea Harris**, Theater (2021); **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).

## **The Hermitage Artist Retreat**

Sarasota County, Florida

Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO

Now celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, the Hermitage is a non-profit 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 15 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](http://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).**

### **The Hermitage is supported by:**

*Hermitage programs are supported, in part, by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax Revenues; the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts; as well as the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.*

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## **Sanford Biggers (2010 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner)**

Sanford Biggers is a past Hermitage Fellow, a current member of the Hermitage Curatorial Council, and the 2010 winner of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize. Biggers has achieved international prominence over the last decade with a diverse body of work that explores themes of identity, race, American history, and spirituality, often blending installation and performance. Sanford Biggers (b. 1970) was raised in Los Angeles and currently lives and works in New York City. He is the recipient of numerous awards. Most recently, he was appointed the 2021-2022 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Visiting Professor and Scholar in the MIT Department of Architecture. In February

2021, he received Savannah College of Art & Design's deFINE Art Award; in 2020, he was awarded a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship and appointed Board President at Sculpture Center; in 2019, he was inducted into the New York Foundation for the Arts Hall of Fame; in 2018, he received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award. In 2017, he was presented the 2017 Rome Prize in Visual Arts. *Codex*, the exhibition resulting from Sanford Biggers' Hermitage Greenfield Prize commission, probes the themes of identity, race, American history, and spirituality through painting on historical quilts, many of which were gifts to the artist from descendants of slave owners. In creating this work, Biggers was inspired by the use of quilts as signposts along the Underground Railroad, signaling "stations" or safe houses. Biggers knits these multivalent themes together by applying to each quilt a complex system of imagery that includes star maps, dance notations, and the Buddhist lotus flower, whose petals are each formed by the image of a cross-section of a slave ship. Suspended among the quilts, cloud forms made of raw cotton not only refer to the institution of slavery, but also evoke the theme of transcendence, reminding the viewer of the power of the human will to overcome oppression.

### **Aleshea Harris (2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner)**

**Aleshea Harris** is the 2021 recipient of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize, awarded in the discipline of theater. Her play *Is God Is* (directed by Taibi Magar at Soho Rep) won the 2016 Relentless Award, an OBIE Award for playwriting in 2017, and the Helen Merrill Playwriting Award in 2019. It 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 New York City premiere in 2018, and was nominated for a Drama Desk Award, with additional productions in 2021 at BAM and Playwrights Horizons. Her play *On Sugarland* recently premiered at New York Theater Workshop (Lortel nomination for Best Play). 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 Skirball Center in Los Angeles. In addition to being a Hermitage Fellow, she is a two-time MacDowell Fellow and has enjoyed residencies at Hedgebrook and Djerassi.

### **Angélica Negrón (2022 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner)**

Puerto Rican-born composer and multi-instrumentalist **Angélica Negrón** is the winner of the 2022 Hermitage Greenfield Prize. She writes music for accordions, robotic instruments, toys, and electronics as well as for chamber ensembles, orchestras, choir, and film. Her music has been described as "wistfully idiosyncratic and contemplative" (WQXR/Q2), while *The New York Times* noted her "capacity to surprise." Negrón has been commissioned by the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Kronos Quartet, loadbang, Prototype Festival, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, Sō Percussion, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, and the New York Botanical Garden, among others. Negrón received an early education in piano and violin at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico where she later studied composition under the guidance of composer Alfonso Fuentes. She holds a master's degree in music composition from New York University where she studied with Pedro da Silva and pursued doctoral studies at The Graduate Center (CUNY), where she studied composition with Tania León. Also active as an educator, Negrón is currently a teaching artist for New York Philharmonic's Very Young Composers program. She has collaborated with artists like Sō Percussion, Lido Pimienta, Mathew Placek, Sasha Velour, Cecilia Aldarondo, Mariela Pabón, Adrienne Westwood, Tiffany Mills and has written music for films, theater and modern dance. She was recently an Artist-in-Residence at WNYC's The Greene Space working on *El Living Room*, a 4-part offbeat variety show and playful

multimedia exploration of sound and story, of personal history and belonging. Recent and upcoming premieres include works for the Seattle Symphony, LA Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra and NY Philharmonic Project 19 initiative and multiple performances at Big Ears Festival 2022. | AngelicaNegron.com

### **Lorenzo ‘Rennie’ Harris (2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner)**

**Lorenzo ‘Rennie’ Harris**, winner of the 2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize in Dance and Choreography, was born and raised in an African American community in North Philadelphia. In 1992, Harris founded Rennie Harris Puremovement, a street dance theater company dedicated to preserving and disseminating hip-hop culture through workshops, classes, hip-hop history lecture demonstrations, long-term residencies, mentoring programs, and public performances. Harris founded his company based on the belief that hip-hop is the most important original expression of a new generation. With its roots in the inner-city African American and Latino communities, hip-hop can be characterized as a contemporary indigenous form, one that expresses universal themes that extend beyond racial, religious, and economic boundaries, and one that can help bridge these divisions. Harris’ work encompasses the diverse and rich African American traditions of the past, while simultaneously presenting the voice of a new generation through its ever-evolving interpretations of dance. Harris is committed to providing audiences with a sincere view of the essence and spirit of hip-hop. Harris was voted one of the most influential people in the last one hundred years of Philadelphia history. Among his awards are honorary doctorates from Bates College and Columbia College. *The London Times* wrote of Mr. Harris that he is “the Basquiat of the U.S. contemporary dance scene.”

### **Sandy Rodriguez (2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner)**

Sandy Rodriguez (b. 1975, National City, CA) is the recipient of the 2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize in Visual Art. She is a Los Angeles-based artist and researcher, and first-generation Chicana raised on the US-Mexico border. Her *Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón* is made up of a collection of maps and paintings about the intersections of history, social memory, contemporary politics, and cultural production. Rodriguez earned her BFA from California Institute of Arts. She has exhibited her works at the Denver Art Museum, The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Garden, The Amon Carter Museum of American Art and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Busan, South Korea. Her work is in the permanent collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX, The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Garden, San Marino, CA and others. She was awarded the Caltech-Huntington Art+Research Residency, Creative Capital Award and Migrations initiative from Mellon Foundation Just Futures Initiative and Global Cornell. Rodriguez and her work have been featured in *BBC News: In the Studio*, *Hyperallergic*, *LA Weekly*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Spectrum News/NY1*, and on several radio programs and podcasts.

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