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## **Latvian Composer and Guitarist Matīss Čudars Wins the 2023 Hermitage Prize in Composition at Aspen Music Festival & School**

*Matīss Čudars, a composition student at the Aspen Music Festival and School, receives a residency and Fellowship at the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Sarasota County, Florida.*

August 14, 2023 (Sarasota County, Florida) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** and the **Aspen Music Festival and School** (Aspen, Colorado) announce that **Matīss Čudars**, a composition student at AMFS, has been selected as the recipient of the 2023 Hermitage Prize in Composition. Čudars is the tenth recipient of this annual award, which includes a residency at the Hermitage, along with a \$1,000 cash stipend. Čudars was selected by a jury that includes multiple Grammy Award winner **Robert Spano**, Music Director of the AMFS and the Atlanta Symphony and a past member of the Hermitage Curatorial Council; award-winning composer and celebrated arts administrator **Alan Fletcher**, AMFS President and CEO; and the composition faculty of the AMFS, including Grammy Award-winning Hermitage Fellow **Christopher Theofanidis**.

Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg** presented the award to Čudars at the Aspen Music Festival's Benedict Tent, alongside Fletcher, Theofanidis, and award-winning composer and Hermitage Fellow **Nico Muhly**. This unique initiative, launched in 2013 and now celebrating its tenth anniversary, reflects an invaluable partnership between AMFS and the Hermitage, designed to champion new and original works and to recognize exceptional talent in the field of contemporary classical music. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of this award, the Hermitage and AMFS produced a retrospective video featuring exclusive interviews with past winners, distinguished AMFS faculty members, and renowned thought leaders in music, which can be seen [here](#) (URL link below). The idea for the prize was first conceived when Robert Spano was in residence at the Hermitage and shared with his colleagues in Aspen how beneficial the retreat had been for him and his work. The Hermitage Prize in Composition was created to offer the same experience to young, talented composers just beginning their professional careers.

“We are thrilled to recognize Matīss Čudars as the winner of the tenth Hermitage Prize. He is a brilliant young composer and musician, and a welcome addition to the Hermitage family,” noted Sandberg. “We were delighted that the weekend’s festivities could be celebrated alongside fellow Hermitage alumni including Robert Spano, Nico Muhly, and Christopher Theofanidis.” Sandberg adds that the Hermitage Prize at AMFS is the only student residency awarded each year; all other Hermitage Fellows are accomplished working professionals and leaders in their field, selected by the Hermitage’s National Curatorial Council. “This provides the recipient of the annual Hermitage Prize in Composition the opportunity to share this unmatched Hermitage experience with leading artists from all around the world.”

Hermitage Fellows have included 15 Pulitzer Prize winners, multiple Grammy, Oscar, Emmy, and Tony winners, Poets Laureate, MacArthur 'Genius' Fellows, and more. Hermitage Fellows regularly describe their time at the Hermitage as "magical," "transformative," and "life-changing."

“I am deeply honored and filled with gratitude for being bestowed the prestigious Hermitage Prize in Composition,” added Čudars after learning the news of his recognition. “With fifty thousand creative ideas for new compositions, projects, and albums swirling within my mind, coupled with new commissions awaiting my attention, this prize has arrived at the most opportune moment. The nurturing embrace of the Hermitage, coupled with the breathtaking expanse of the Manasota Key landscape, presents an environment that promises to amplify my artistic endeavors. Engaging with fellow artists at the Hermitage and relishing in the privilege of uninterrupted concentration, I am excited to bring a multitude of these creative ideas to life.”

**Matīss Čudars** is a Latvian composer and guitar player. Čudars draws upon a diverse musical upbringing encompassing math-rock, jazz, classical music, and avant-garde improv. Matīss earned his master’s degree in music from Yale in 2023. He is a graduate of Amsterdam Conservatory with a bachelor’s in music for jazz guitar. With an insatiable creative drive, he transcends genres and aesthetics, constantly exploring new musical frontiers. Upcoming projects include the newly commissioned works for the 2023 Aspen Music Festival as a Composition Fellow and a new Helēna Sorokina work for soprano voice and bass clarinet. In 2024, Matīss will create a new opera for 16 voices, guitar and percussion for the Latvian Radio Choir as well as a new piano work for the Latvian Symphony Orchestra Chamber Group. *(Full bio below.)*

Previous residencies of AMFS Hermitage Prize recipients have led to exciting collaborations, lifelong friendships, and extraordinary new compositions. Past winner **Sid Richardson** (2018) notes that winning the Hermitage Prize has been “an affirmation of my musical explorations. I can’t think of a greater opportunity for a young artist than to be given time, space, and a community of like-minded individuals within which to work.” **David Clay Mettens** (2021) added: “My time at the Hermitage was such a gift – I found the natural beauty of the grounds to be rejuvenating and my interactions

with artists from other disciplines so artistically fulfilling. I can't imagine a better opportunity for a young composer than to be in the presence of creative luminaries in their respective fields." **Sofía Rocha** (2022) said of her time at the Hermitage, "Some of the most valuable experiences that I got out of my time at AMFS and the Hermitage were interacting with so many other wonderful artists. Aspen is filled with wonderful musicians, and Hermitage artists span so many different disciplines – and I find that incredibly fulfilling and inspiring." Previous Hermitage Prize recipients include **Patrick Harlin** (2013), **Thomas Kotcheff** (2014), **Phillip Sink** (2015), **Andrew Hsu** (2016), **Joel Thompson** (2017), **Sid Richardson** (2018), **Chelsea Komschlies** (2019), **David Clay Mettens** (2021), and **Sofía Rocha** (2022).

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, film, 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 galleries, concert halls, theaters, 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.

To learn more about the Aspen Music Festival and School and the current schedule of programming, visit [AspenMusicFestival.com](https://AspenMusicFestival.com). To learn more about the Hermitage and its upcoming programs, or to support this organization in its mission to champion artists and the creative process, visit [HermitageArtistRetreat.org](https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).

#### **Hermitage Prize Video Link and Landing Page:**

<https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org/HermitagePrizeAspen/>

For more information about the Hermitage and upcoming programs, visit: [HermitageArtistRetreat.org](https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).

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### **MATĪSS ČUDARS**

Latvian composer and guitar player **Matīss Čudars** is the winner of the 2023 Hermitage Prize in Composition, presented in partnership with the Aspen Music Festival and School. Čudars draws upon a diverse musical background encompassing math rock, jazz, classical music, and avant-garde improv. With an insatiable creative drive, he transcends genres and aesthetics, constantly exploring new musical frontiers. Inspired by Latvia's rich traditions in folk and choral music, Matīss' work embodies a quest for melodicism and beauty, often reflecting the sublime yet understated nature of his motherland. Holding a bachelor's degree in jazz

guitar from Amsterdam Conservatory, and master's degree in composition from Yale School of Music, Matīss currently resides in New Haven, Connecticut. His past mentors include David Lang, Martin Bresnick, Kurt Rosenwinkel, John Hollenbeck, Jesse Van Ruler, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis, Julia Wolfe, and Michael Gordon.

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### **The Hermitage Artist Retreat**

Sarasota County, Florida

Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO

The Hermitage is a leading national arts incubator and non-profit artist retreat located on Manasota Key, Florida. For more than two decades, the Hermitage has invited 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 and accomplished group of Hermitage alumni have gone on to renowned theaters, concert halls, and galleries throughout the world. Each year, the Hermitage awards the Hermitage Greenfield Prize for a new work of art, the 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:**

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#### **The Aspen Music Festival and School:**

Founded in 1949, the Aspen Music Festival and School is regarded as one of the top classical music festivals in the United States, noted both for its concert programming and its musical training of mostly young-adult music students. The typical eight-week summer season includes more than 400 classical music events—including concerts by five orchestras, solo and chamber music performances, fully staged opera productions, master classes, lectures, and children's programming—and brings in 100,000 audience members. In the winter, the AMFS presents a small series of recitals and music education programs for local youth and families.

**For more information, visit [AspenMusicalFestival.com](http://AspenMusicalFestival.com).**

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