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THE HERMITAGE
artist retreat



Hermitage Announces First Wave of Fall and Winter Programs Featuring Award-Winning Artists and Performers in Theater, Music, Literature, Dance, Visual Art, and More

*The Hermitage fall season will span from Sarasota and Bradenton down to Englewood and Boca Grande. The diverse and expansive programs include previously announced events with composer and filmmaker **Hilan Warshaw**, and playwright-screenwriter-actor **Halley Feiffer**, plus newly announced events with many new and returning Hermitage Fellows including **Melanie Lavender**, **Kuniko Yamamoto**, **Kristen Renee Miller**, **Diane Cook**, **Carmina Escobar**, **Melissa Studdard**, **Christopher Theofanidis**, **Emily Nemens**, **Kirya Traber**, **Lizzie Hagstedt**, **Jessica Obiedzinski**, and **Cleyvis Natera**.*

August 23, 2023 (Sarasota County, Florida) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** announces the first wave of new public programs through the end of 2023, featuring acclaimed Hermitage Fellows in music, theater, dance, literature, visual art, and more – with additional events to be announced. These newly added programs are presented on the Hermitage’s historic beachfront campus, as well as venues throughout Sarasota County as part of the Hermitage’s ongoing collaborations with arts and cultural organizations spanning the Gulf Coast region, such as Asolo Repertory Theatre, The Bay Sarasota, Bookstore1, Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, Johann Fust Library Foundation, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Ringling College of Art and Design, Sarasota Contemporary Dance, Sarasota County Libraries, Sarasota Opera, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, and more.

A special September program celebrates the gifted artists who call Sarasota County home. Presented in partnership with the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County through the John Ringling Tower initiative, Sarasota artists **Melanie Lavender** and **Kuniko Yamamoto** combine talents for “Power in Paper: Celebrating Sarasota Artists” on Friday, September 29th at 6pm. As the sun sets on the Hermitage Beach, spoken-word poet, podcast host, and proud Booker High School alum Melanie Lavender shares selections of work resulting from her two-week residency at the

Hermitage. She is joined by Kuniko Yamamoto, an origami master and theatrical storyteller who participated in the Hermitage/JRT residency program last year just before Hurricane Ian.

On Thursday, October 12th at 6pm, the Hermitage partners with Bookstore1 in downtown Sarasota to present Hermitage Fellow **Kristen Renee Miller**, who will read from selected works and discuss the ecosystem of the modern literary world in this free community program. October programming continues with a return to the Conservation Foundation's Bay Preserve in Osprey, as Hermitage Fellows **Diane Cook** and **Carmina Escobar** explore the literary and sonic connection to the outdoors in this Hermitage program inspired by our collective roots in nature on Thursday, October 19th at 6pm. Hermitage events in October conclude on the Hermitage Beach with a pair of returning Hermitage Fellows who met on Manasota Key while in residence. Celebrated poet **Melissa Studdard** and Grammy Award-winning composer **Christopher Theofanidis** share selections of work from their oratorio inspired by Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* on Friday, October 27th at 6pm. This is a piece they are developing alongside Hermitage alumni **Patrick Harlin** and **Anne Patterson**, which is set to debut at the **Aspen Music Festival** in 2025. Hermitage audiences will be among the first to hear samples of this work and learn about its creative journey from the Hermitage Beach to one of the nation's leading stages.

Join Hermitage Fellow and *New York Times*-heralded author **Emily Nemens** as she reads from and discusses her debut novel, *The Cactus League* on Friday, November 3rd at 6pm on the Hermitage Beach. Anchored by an expert knowledge of baseball's inner workings, her novel is a propulsive and deeply human story that captures the essence of one of Florida's cherished pastimes: spring training. On Monday, November 6th at 3pm, Hermitage Fellow and award-winning librettist **Kirya Traber** shares her passion for music and offers an audience-engagement workshop for those interested in exploring an intuitive approach to songwriting. Explore how music and song are some of the most powerful tools for communicating stories in this participatory event. These events launch a new Hermitage partnership with Sarasota County Libraries and Ringling College of Art and Design to kick off the **Off the Page Literary Festival**.

On Saturday, November 11th, the Hermitage hosts its annual **Artful Lobster: An Outdoor Celebration**. Now celebrating its 15th year and coming on the heels of the organization's jam-packed 20th Anniversary season, this signature event raises valuable funds for the Hermitage's nationally renowned artist residency program. The Artful Lobster is the only Hermitage benefit to take place on the grounds of the historic Gulf front campus – outdoors from 11:30am to 2pm beneath a large tent – located at 6660 Manasota Key Road in Englewood. Michael's On East offers a luscious lobster feast, with performances from renowned Hermitage Fellows. Tickets for this fundraiser and sponsorship details can be found at **HermitageArtistRetreat.org**.

The Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative, now in its second season, is a new annual residency program focused on supporting the incredible talent of performing artists frequently featured on Sarasota stages. This year the program is represented by musician and composer **Lizzie Hagstedt**, whose work has been developed with Asolo Rep, and Sarasota Contemporary Dance Company member **Jessica Obiedzinski**. After two weeks on the Hermitage's historic beachfront campus, these two gifted creators will reunite to share selections of their new works and talk about how they utilized their residency time as the sun sets at The Bay – Sarasota's newest signature park along Sarasota Bay on Tuesday, November 14th at 5pm.

On Thursday, December 14th at 4pm, Hermitage Fellow **Cleyvis Natera** reads from and offers insight into her “refreshingly direct and declarative” (*NY Times*) debut novel, *Neruda on the Park*, and shares a glimpse into her writing process at the Johann Fust Community Library in Boca Grande.

Additional November and December programs featuring award-winning Hermitage artists and performers will be announced at a later date.

These newly announced artists and events from September through December join a previously announced August program. On Wednesday, August 23rd at 6pm, Hermitage Fellow **Hilan Warshaw**'s film *Secret Song* tells the gripping true story behind the creation of a 20th century musical masterpiece – weaving together dramatic reenactments, documentary, and vérité footage of legendary musicians Renée Fleming and the Emerson String Quartet. This special event will be presented at the Sarasota Opera House.

The Hermitage has also recently announced its 2023-2024 dates for the popular “**Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens**.” This five-event series launches with celebrated writer, actor, screenwriter, and new Hermitage Fellow **Halley Feiffer**. Feiffer's most recent project as writer and showrunner for “American Horror Story: Delicate” has been described by “AHS” creator Ryan Murphy as “fun, stylish, and ultimately terrifying” in a statement to *The Hollywood Reporter*. Audiences can expect a rare treat on Thursday, October 5th at 6pm as Feiffer shares more about the creative process that has led to her stage and screen success. Additional “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” dates include Thursday, November 30th, Thursday, January 25th, Thursday, March 28th, and Thursday, May 23rd, with artists and further details to be announced.

“On the heels of a whirlwind 20th Anniversary season, we are excited to introduce new and returning audiences to the dynamic range of the Hermitage's fall program line-up, which speaks to the extraordinary diversity and expansive creative talents of our renowned Hermitage Fellows,” notes Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. “Each one of these hour-long events offers a completely different experience, providing our community a rare glimpse into innovative works and the creative process behind them. We are grateful to our partners and collaborators

throughout the region, who help us continue to expand the geographic reach and impact of these one-of-a-kind Hermitage programs. We look forward to introducing the work of these visionary and celebrated artists from all across the United States to the Gulf Coast region.”

It was also recently announced that multiple works created at the Hermitage will be premiering at **Theatre Aspen** (Aspen, Colorado) as part of their popular *Solo Flights* series in September. Hermitage alumna and Golden Globe winner **Regina Taylor** performs in her new solo play *Exhibit*, developed at the Hermitage and directed by stage and screen legend **Phylicia Rashad**. Hermitage Fellows **Rona Siddiqui** and **Kirya Traber** have collaborated with **Zack Fine** and **Bryce Pinkham** on a new piece called *Dignity, Always, Dignity*. Lastly, Hermitage Fellow and American Ballet Theatre principal dancer **James Whiteside** will debut his play *Dead Center*, which he developed while in residence at the Hermitage. For more information on these three projects, visit TheatreAspen.org.

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.

For more information about the Hermitage and upcoming programs, visit: HermitagArtistRetreat.org.

[See below for complete program details and artist bios.](#)

FULL PROGRAM DETAILS

Newly Announced Hermitage Programs:

- **“Power in Paper: Celebrating Sarasota Artists” Featuring 2022 and 2023 John Ringling Tower’s Recipients Melanie Lavender and Kuniko Yamamoto, Friday, September 29th, 6pm:** The collection of artists who call Sarasota their home is simply remarkable. Join the Hermitage and the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County in celebrating two such artists who have both spent time on the Hermitage campus creating work. **Melanie Lavender** is a spoken-word poet, podcast host, and proud alum of Booker High School. **Kuniko Yamamoto** is an origami master and theatrical storyteller whose creations and performances have dazzled audiences across the country. See and hear

selections of their work and learn how the residency at the Hermitage impacted their process. *Presented in Partnership with the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County.* **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee) Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Rd., Englewood, FL 34223

- **“Write, Edit, Translate, Publish!” Featuring Hermitage Fellow Kristen Renee Miller, Thursday, October 12th, 6pm:** Hermitage Fellow **Kristen Renee Miller** has experience in practically every aspect of the writing and publishing industry. She is fluent in the international world of literature as a translator of award-winning poet Marie-Andrée Gill and a locally focused leader as director and editor-in-chief of Sarabande Books in Louisville. Her own essays and poetry have appeared in publications such as *Poetry Magazine*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *Best New Poets*. Hear from this literary renaissance author as she reads from selected works and discusses her career and creative process. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Bookstore1 (Downtown Sarasota), 117 S. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, FL 34236**
- **“Nature’s Voice” Featuring Hermitage Fellows Diane Cook and Carmina Escobar, Thursday, October 19th, 6pm:** Humanity has a primal connection to nature. Whether threatening our survival in a fiery blaze of heat or soothing frayed nerves with a beautiful sunset, being outdoors reminds us of the web of connections between organic life and our place within this world. Author **Diane Cook** explores these relationships in her works, such as *The New Wilderness* and *Man V. Nature*. Vocalist **Carmina Escobar** also finds inspiration from the flora and fauna that make our world vibrant. Hear from both of these Hermitage Fellows in their element on the beautiful grounds of the Conversation Foundation’s Bay Preserve in Osprey. *Presented in partnership with Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast.* **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Bay Preserve, 400 Palmetto Ave., Osprey, FL 34229**
- **“Siddhartha: A Hermitage Collaboration of Words and Music” Featuring Hermitage Fellows Melissa Studdard and Christopher Theofanidis, Friday, October 27th, 6pm:** “In the shade of the house, in the sunshine on the riverbank by the boats, in the shade of the willow wood and fig tree, Siddhartha, the handsome Brahmin's son, grew up with his friend Govinda.” So begins **Siddhartha**, Herman Hesse’s canonical work about the search for life’s meaning and spiritual fulfillment, which serves as the inspiration for this new collaboration between celebrated poet **Melissa Studdard** and Grammy Award-winning composer **Christopher Theofanidis**. Originally conceived at the Hermitage and developed in collaboration with two other Hermitage artists, be among the first to experience an early sharing of this oratorio, as well as insights into collaboration and the creative process from this exceptional duo of Hermitage Fellows as they return to the place where it all began. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Rd., Englewood, FL 34223**

- **“Baseball Fiction: The Cactus League in Grapefruit Country” Featuring Hermitage Fellow Emily Nemens, Friday, November 3rd, 6pm:** Join Hermitage Fellow and former Hermitage curator **Emily Nemens** as she reads from and discusses her acclaimed debut novel, *The Cactus League*. Anchored by an expert knowledge of baseball’s inner workings, the novel is a propulsive and deeply human story that captures the Arizona half of spring training (with many similarities and some notable differences to Florida’s own pre-season baseball). Nemens’ is a strange desert world that is both exciting and unforgiving, where the most crucial games are the ones played off the field. Before penning this *New York Times* Book Review Editors’ Choice, Nemens spent a decade as editor of notable literary publications, including *The Paris Review*, which won the American Society of Magazine Editors’ Award for Fiction under her tenure, and *The Southern Review*. Presented in partnership with Sarasota County Libraries and Ringling College of Art and Design as part of the Off the Page Literary Festival. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Rd., Englewood, FL 34223**
- **“Writing from the Bones: A Songwriting Workshop” Featuring Hermitage Fellow Kirya Traber, Monday, November 6th, 3pm:** Music and song are some of the most powerful and evocative tools for communicating stories. Whether you’re a writer who has always been curious about music, or a musician who wants to compose their own lyrics, this workshop offers an intuitive approach to songwriting. An award-winning writer and librettist, Hermitage Fellow **Kirya Traber** has been commissioned by notable New York arts institutions such as the New York Philharmonic, Morgan Library & Museum, Orchestra of St Luke’s, and La Mama, among others. In this participatory workshop, Traber will share her process for writing lyrics by surfacing the emotional truth of language, and our innate human connection to rhythm and melody to help spark participants’ creative process. There are no audience critiques during the workshop; rather, all writing prompts are seen as invitations to everyone in the room. No knowledge of theater or lyric writing is required – just an open mind and a willingness to explore the creation process. Presented in partnership with Sarasota County Libraries and Ringling College of Art and Design as part of the Off the Page Literary Festival. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Elsie Quirk Library, 100 W. Dearborn St., Englewood, FL 34223**
- **“Artful Lobster: An Outdoor Celebration!” Saturday, November 11th, 11:30am until 2pm:** The highly popular Artful Lobster is a signature fundraising event for the Hermitage Artist Retreat, and the only benefit to take place on our historic Gulf front campus on Manasota Key. With a luscious lobster feast catered by Michael’s On East and live entertainment featuring Hermitage Fellows, the Artful Lobster is anticipated as the season kick-off for many across our community. **To purchase Sponsorships/Tickets, please contact: Amy Wallace at Development@HermitageArtistRetreat.org or call (941) 475-2098 Ext., 2**

- **“Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative: Theater and Dance” Featuring 2023 Cross Arts Recipients Lizzie Hagstedt and Jessica Obiedzinski, Tuesday, November 14th, 5pm:** The Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative is an annual residency program focused on supporting the incredible talent of artists frequently featured on Sarasota stages. Now in its second year, the program is represented by **Lizzie Hagstedt**, whose music has been incorporated into several shows at Asolo Rep and whose in-progress musical *Sophie Blanchard’s High Flying Rock’n Roll Extravaganza* was a finalist in the Asolo’s virtual Making Musicals Competition, as well as Sarasota Contemporary Dance Company member **Jessica Obiedzinski**, who plans to develop and share a new dance piece. After two weeks on the Hermitage’s historic beachfront campus, these two gifted creators will share selections of their new works and talk about how they utilized their residency time as the sun sets at The Bay – Sarasota’s newest signature park along Sarasota Bay. The Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative is made possible with generous support from the Koski Family Foundation. *Presented in partnership with Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota Contemporary Dance, and The Bay Sarasota. Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org (\$5/person registration fee). The Bay Sarasota, 1055 Blvd of the Arts, Sarasota, FL 34236*
- **“The People and Places that Make Us” Featuring Hermitage Fellow Cleyvis Natera, Thursday, December 14th, 4pm:** Hermitage Fellow **Cleyvis Natera**’s “earnest and provocative” debut novel *Neruda on the Park* is “refreshingly direct and declarative” (*The New York Times*). Based in a Dominican community in New York City on the brink of the seemingly inevitable gentrification process, Natera’s novel charts the varied reactions to this new reality: some are willing to accept it, some may even benefit, but others are planning to risk everything to fight to keep their home. Offering no easy answers, the story ultimately asks: who are the people and where are the places that make us who we are? Hear the author read and discuss her work and gain insight into what’s up next for this much-praised writer. *Presented in Partnership with Johann Fust Library Foundation. Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org (\$5/person registration fee). Johann Fust Community Library in Boca Grande, 1040 10th St. W., Boca Grande, FL 33921*

Previously Announced Hermitage Programs:

- **“Secret Song: Unraveling the Mystery of Berg’s Lyric Suite” Featuring Hermitage Fellow Hilan Warsaw, Wednesday, August 23rd, 6pm:** Following last season’s groundbreaking program that surveyed a number of Hilan Warsaw’s films, the remarkable Hermitage Fellow and musician cum filmmaker is back for a deep dive into one of his greatest works. Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite for string quartet has long been hailed as one of the masterpieces of 20th-century music. But for decades, few suspected that behind this powerful music lies an explosive secret. *Secret Song* tells the gripping true story behind the creation of a 20th century musical masterpiece– weaving together dramatic reenactments, documentary, and vérité footage of legendary musicians Renée Fleming and the

1012 Emerson String Quartet. A Q&A with the creative mind behind this project follows the screening. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Sarasota Opera House, 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, FL, 34236**

- **“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: “The Latest from Halley Feiffer” with Hermitage Fellow Halley Feiffer, Thursday, October 5th, 6pm:** Hermitage Fellow **Halley Feiffer** is a self-described writer, actor, and flawed person based in Los Angeles, California. Halley’s work includes projects for MTC, Amazon, and Netflix. Her most recent project as writer and showrunner for “American Horror Story — Delicate,” has been described as fun, stylish, and ultimately terrifying by Ryan Murphy (“American Horror Story” creator) in a statement to *The Hollywood Reporter*. Join us at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens — Downtown for our first “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” program as Halley shares her recent and upcoming work and discusses her creative process. *Presented in Partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. Halley Feiffer's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Carole Crosby & Larry Wickless.* **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens – Downtown, 1534 Mound St., Sarasota, FL 34236**

ALL ANNOUNCED HERMITAGE PROGRAMS:

Wednesday, August 23rd, 6pm, “Secret Song: Unraveling the Mystery of Berg’s Lyric Suite,” with Hermitage Fellow **Hilan Warshaw**, at the Sarasota Opera (Sarasota)
Presented in partnership with Sarasota Opera

Friday, September 29th, 6pm, “Power in Paper: Celebrating Sarasota Artists,” with John Ringling Tower recipients **Melanie Lavender** and **Kuniko Yamamoto**, at Hermitage Beach
Presented in partnership Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County

Thursday, October 5th, 6pm, “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” “The Blurred Line Between Humor and Heartbreak: A Playwriting Workshop,” with Hermitage Fellow **Halley Feiffer**, at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens – Downtown (Sarasota) *Presented in partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.*
Halley Feiffer's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Carole Crosby & Larry Wickless.

Thursday, October 12th, 6pm, “Write, Edit, Translate, Publish!” with Hermitage Fellow **Kristen Renee Miller**, at Bookstore1 (Sarasota) *Presented in partnership with Bookstore1*

Thursday, October 19th, 6pm, “Nature’s Voice,” with Hermitage Fellows **Diane Cook** and **Carmina Escobar**, at Bay Preserve (Osprey) *Presented in partnership with Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast*

Friday, October 27th, 6pm, “Siddhartha: A Hermitage Collaboration of Words and Music,” with Hermitage Fellows **Melissa Studdard** and **Christopher Theofanidis**, at Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

Friday, November 3rd, 6pm, “Baseball Fiction: The Cactus League in Grapefruit Country,” with Hermitage Fellow **Emily Nemens**, at Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key) *Presented in partnership with Sarasota County Libraries and Ringling College of Art and Design as a part of the Off the Page Literary Festival*

Monday, November 6th, 3pm, “Writing from the Bones: A Songwriting Workshop,” with Hermitage Fellow **Kirya Traber**, at Elsie Quirk Library (Englewood) *Presented in partnership with Sarasota County Libraries and Ringling College of Art and Design as a part of the Off the Page Literary Festival*

Saturday, November 11th, 11:30am, “The Artful Lobster: An Outdoor Celebration!” at the Historic Hermitage Campus (Manasota Key)

Tuesday, November 14th, 5pm, “Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative: Theater and Dance,” featuring Hermitage Cross Arts Recipients **Lizzie Hagsteadt** and **Jessica Obiedzinski**, at The Bay Park (Sarasota) *Presented in partnership with Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota Contemporary Dance, and The Bay Sarasota*

Thursday, December 14th, 4pm, “The People and Places that Make Us,” featuring Hermitage Fellow **Cleyvis Natera**, at Johann Fust Community Library (Boca Grande) *Presented in partnership with Johann Fust Library Foundation*

COMPLETE ARTIST BIOS

(in chronological order of upcoming programs)

Hilan Warsaw

Hermitage Fellow **Hilan Warsaw** is a film director, and writer. His documentaries include *Through the Darkness* (ORF, SVT, YLE, and Medici TV), *Secret Song* (SVT, Allegro HD, EuroArts), *Wagner’s Jews* (PBS-WNET, and others), and *In the Key of Bach* (PBS-Georgia Public Broadcasting), *My Bolero* (Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, premiere screenings in June 2023), and the forthcoming *Mahler in New York* (SVT), and *Honorable Mr. Morgenthau*. As video director of the Atlanta Symphony orchestra, he has directed numerous televised concert films (including the *ASO Holiday Celebration*, recently nominated for a 2023 Southeast Emmy), and serves as host and musical commentator for the orchestra’s on-demand video concerts. He was a 2021–22 Hermitage Artist Retreat Fellow, and is an International Emmy Awards juror. He is currently developing a feature screenplay. Alongside his film and television work, Hilan has taught film courses at Barnard College and Western Carolina University, has lectured at numerous venues, and has written essays on film and music published in anthologies from Cambridge University Press, McFarland Press, and Königshausen & Neumann, and in periodicals including *The Wagner Journal*. He holds a B.F.A. and M.F.A. from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, and studied orchestral conducting at Mannes College of Music and the Aspen Music School. OvertoneFilms.com

Melanie Lavender

Melanie Lavender, the recipient of the 2022 John and Mabel Ringling Tower Grant, is a spoken-word artist and a proud Sarasota native. Educated in the Sarasota County school system and Newtown Community, Melanie is a wife, mother, and owner of Soul Adani Production, producing and hosting Soul of Tha Matter at 107.5 The Vibe and Community Conversations with Mel at WSLR 96.5 FM. In 2022 Melanie released her first book of poetry, *Psalms of The Elusive Black House Wife*. Melanie is also a TEDx Speaker; her goal is to impact the audience by delivering melodic stories of life.

Kuniko Yamamoto

A native of Japan and a recent recipient of the John Ringling Tower (JRT) Grant, **Kuniko Yamamoto** received her Bachelor of Psychology from Otani University of Kyoto, Japan in 1983, then started performing professionally in her hometown of Osaka where she grew up studying traditional dance, music and theater. In 1985, she received national exposure performing Japanese Storytelling at the Silk Road International Exposition and on Kansai National TV. The following year, Kuniko traveled to the United States to study with Tony Montanaro, a highly respected mime and actor. Three years later, she toured with Leland Faulkner Light Theater where she helped present lavish stage illusions and brought ancient tales to life with shadows and magic. For the next five years she performed in theaters, schools, colleges, and festivals across the country. In 1992, Kuniko left the Faulkner Light Theater troupe to move to Florida. She married Jon LeClair, a world-renowned magician whose books appear in magic shops worldwide. This helped her add subtle magic and mystery to her unique act. Kuniko has performed in numerous venues of note such as: The Kennedy Center (Washington DC), Disney Epcot Japanese Pavilion, Seattle's International Festival, International Children's Festival in Canada, and National Storytelling Festival. Over the last two decades, she has presented her programs throughout the United States. Her work has been recognized by the Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina State Arts Councils since 2000.

Halley Feiffer

Hermitage Fellow **Halley Feiffer** is a WGA, Drama Desk, Drama League, and Outer Critics Circle-nominated writer and actor. She is currently writing and showrunning Season 12 of Ryan Murphy's American Horror Story, starring Emma Roberts and Kim Kardashian. Feiffer has many additional TV writing and producing credits from Starz, Amazon, Showtime, FX, Apple TV+, Hulu, and Netflix. Plays include I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard (World Premiere Atlantic Theater Company, OCC Nom.), Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow (World Premiere Williamstown Theater Festival and MCC Theater, Drama Desk and Drama League Noms), The Pain of My Belligerence (World Premiere Playwrights Horizons), A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center of New York City (World Premiere MCC Theater, Edgerton New Play Award, NY Times Critics' Pick) and How To Make Friends and Then Kill Them (World Premiere Rattlestick Playwrights Theater). Her plays have been produced around the country and in the UK, and are published by Dramatists Play Service and Overlook Press. She is writing the book for the Broadway-bound stage adaptation of Thelma & Louise, with Neko Case composing.

Acting credits include the Broadway revivals of *The Front Page* and *The House of Blue Leaves* (Theater World Award) as well as numerous off-Broadway productions including *Tigers Be Still* (Roundabout, Drama League Nom.) and her own play *The Pain of My Belligerence* (Drama League Nom.). She also starred in the West Coast premiere of her play *A Funny Thing Happened...* at the Geffen Playhouse in LA. TV & film roles include HBO's *Mildred Pierce*, *Flight of the Conchords*, and *Bored to Death*, and the films *The Squid and the Whale*, *Gentlemen Broncos* and *He's Way More Famous than You*, which she also co-wrote. She is currently developing a film adaptation of her play *The Pain of My Belligerence* with Lena Dunham's *Good Thing Going* for her to direct. She lives in Los Angeles with her partner Tim, and tries - a day at a time - not to kill her houseplants. Halleyfeiffer.com

Kristen Renee Miller

Returning Hermitage Fellow **Kristen Renee Miller** is the director and editor-in-chief at Sarabande Books, a not-for-profit literary press focused on championing diverse voices and innovative forms. A poet and translator, she is a 2023 NEA Fellow and the translator of two books from the French by Ilnu Nation poet Marie-Andrée Gill: *Spawn* and *Heating the Outdoors*. In addition to her Hermitage Fellowship, she is the recipient of fellowships and awards from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, AIGA, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Gulf Coast Prize in Translation, and the American Literary Translators Association. Her work can be found widely, including in *Poetry Magazine*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *Best New Poets*. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

Carmina Escobar

Hermitage Fellow **Carmina Escobar** is an acclaimed experimental vocalist, improviser, and sound artist. Her practice — comprising installation, performance, and multimedia projects — focuses on sound, the voice, and the body. Her 2020 Grants-to-Artists award supported two ventures: *Howl Space*, an online radical vocal pedagogy hub and *Boss Witch Projects*, a production company focused on the interconnection of experimental scenic works, sound art, ritual performance, and video art within natural landscapes. In 2019, she received a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant to present *Mami* in the exhibition *Cantos Comunes/Common Chants* at The Blockhouse (Havana, Cuba). She has also presented her work in Europe, Mexico, and the United States, including Borealis Festival (Bergen, Norway), Cuban Art Factory (Havana), CTM Festival (Berlin), and New Music Encounters + International Music Festival (Brno, Czech Republic). Her work *FIESTA PERPETUA! a communitas ritual of manifestation* (2018) was included in *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA*, Los Angeles. Her work has been featured at the MexiCali Biennial (Pasadena), Machine Project (Los Angeles), MATA Festival (New York), REDCAT (Los Angeles), and World Dada Fair (San Francisco), among others. In 2016, Escobar received the Young Creators grant from the National Fund for Culture and Arts, Mexico and a grant from the National Center for the Arts, Mexico. Escobar holds an M.F.A. with a specialization in Voice Arts from California Institute of the Arts, where she is a professor.

Diane Cook

Returning Hermitage Fellow **Diane Cook** is the author of the novel, *The New Wilderness*, and the story collection, *Man V. Nature*, which was a finalist for the Guardian First Book Award, the Believer Book Award, and the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction. Her writing has appeared in *Harper's*, *Tin House*, *Granta*, and other publications, and her stories have been included in the anthologies *Best American Short Stories* and *The O. Henry Prize Stories*. She is a former producer for the radio program *This American Life*, and was the recipient of a 2016 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Melissa Studdard

Returning Hermitage Fellow **Melissa Studdard** is the author of five books, including the poetry collections *Dear Selection Committee* and *I Ate the Cosmos for Breakfast*, the poetry chapbook *Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings*, and the young adult novel *Six Weeks to Yehidah*. Her work has been featured by NPR, PBS, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Ms. Magazine*, and *Houston Matters*, and has also appeared in a wide variety of periodicals, such as *POETRY*, *Kenyon Review*, *Psychology Today*, *New Ohio Review*, *Harvard Review*, *New England Review*, and *Poets & Writers*. A short film of the title poem from Studdard's *I Ate the Cosmos for Breakfast* (by Dan Sickles of Moxie Pictures for Motionpoems) was an official selection for the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival, as well as winner of the REEL Poetry Festival Audience Choice Award. Other poems of Studdard's have won or placed in prizes such as The Lucille Medwick Memorial Award for a poem on a humanitarian theme from The Poetry Society of America, *The Penn Review* Poetry Prize, Jeffrey E. Smith Editors' Prize from *The Missouri Review*, the Tom Howard Prize from *Winning Writers*, The Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize from Munster Literature Centre, and *Aesthetica* magazine Creative Writing Award. Her book awards include the Forward National Literature Award, the International Book Award, the *Kathak Literary Award*, the Poiesis Award of Honor International, the Readers' Favorite Award, and two Pinnacle Book Achievement Awards. She received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and is a professor for the Lone Star College System.

Christopher Theofanidis

Christopher Theofanidis is a returning Hermitage Fellow and Grammy Award winner. His music has been performed by many of the world's leading performing arts organizations, from the London Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, and New York Philharmonic to the San Francisco Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, and the American Ballet Theatre. He is a two-time Grammy nominee for Best Composition, and his viola concerto recording won a Grammy for best solo performance; his work, *Rainbow Body*, is one of the most performed works of the new era, having been performed by over 150 orchestras worldwide. Mr. Theofanidis is currently the chair of composition at both Yale University and the Aspen Music Festival, where he serves on the faculty and helps to select the winner of the Hermitage Prize in Composition.

Emily Nemens

A returning Hermitage alumna and a past member of the Hermitage's National Curatorial Council, **Emily Nemens** is a writer, illustrator, editor, and educator. Her debut novel *The Cactus League* was published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in February 2020 and released in paperback by Picador in 2021. From 2018 to 2021, Nemens served as the editor of *The Paris Review*, the nation's preeminent literary quarterly. During her tenure, the magazine won the 2020 American Society of Magazine Editors' Award for Fiction, published two anthologies, and produced the second season of its acclaimed podcast. Previously, she coedited *The Southern Review*, a storied literary journal published at Louisiana State University. Stories published during her tenures at *The Southern Review* and *The Paris Review* were selected for the Pushcart Prize anthology, Best American Short Stories, the O. Henry Prize anthology, and PEN America Best Debut Fiction. In 2021 she joined the staff of *Stranger's Guide* as the sports/senior editor. Nemens grew up in Seattle and received her bachelor's degree from Brown University, where she studied art history and studio art. She completed an MFA degree in fiction at Louisiana State University. As an illustrator, she's collaborated with Harvey Pekar, published her work in *The New Yorker*, and her watercolor portraits of every woman in congress were featured across the web and on national TV. Her short stories have appeared in *Blackbird* (Tarumoto Prize winner), *Esquire*, *n+1*, *The Iowa Review*, *Hobart*, and *The Gettysburg Review*. She lives in New Jersey and remains a Mariners fan.

Kirya Traber

Hermitage Fellow **Kirya Traber** is a nationally awarded writer, performer, and cultural worker. Originally from Northern California, she now resides in Brooklyn. She is a collaborating artist with Ping Chong + Company and is Curator-in-Residence with Hi-ARTS. She was New York Stage and Film's 2020 Founders Award recipient. From 2015-2020, she was Lincoln Center's lead Community Artist in Residence. She is the recipient of a NY Emmy Nomination (*First Person*, PBS), Robert Redford's Sundance Foundation award for Activism in the Arts, a California Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, and an Astraea Lesbian Writers Fund Award for Poetry. She has been commissioned by notable New York arts institutions such as the New York Philharmonic, Morgan Library & Museum, Orchestra of St Luke's, and La Mama, among others. Throughout her ambitious performance and writing career, Traber has continuously utilized her art for social change as a cultural organizer. KiryaTraber.com.

Lizzie Hagstedt

2023 Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative Fellow **Lizzie Hagstedt** was a 2021 Jonathan Larson Grant finalist. Current projects include *Sophie Blanchard's High-Flyin' Rock'n'Roll Extravaganza* (Asolo Rep Ground Floor), *Hereville* (92Y Musical Theatre Development Lab, 2023 reading with Kids of Stage in San Diego, upcoming readings through the Lipinsky Family San Diego Jewish Arts Festival), *Oneida* (2022 reading at The Tank NYC, VoxFest at Dartmouth College, Pallas Theatre Collective Table Read Award Winner), and her newest, *Wild West Show*. Other credits include original scores for Asolo Rep: *Our Town*, *Lifespan of a Fact*, and four years of educational tours including an original musical adaptation of *The Odyssey* entitled *Looking for Ithaca*. Her musical *Misha Loves JaJa*

More Than Cheese received two readings at Theatre 40 in Beverly Hills, and *Rose Petals* received a NYMF reading. LizzieHagstedt.com

Jessica Obiedzinski

2023 Hermitage Cross Arts Collaborative Fellow **Jessica Obiedzinski** is a native sixth-generation Floridian and has been dancing for five consecutive seasons with Sarasota Contemporary Dance (SDC), acting as dance performer, choreographer, and rehearsal director. Jessica has presented works in the Tampa Bay area and most recently for the SCD season during “Voice’s: Rising Choreographers.” Jessica has a love for wellness practices and is exploring the topic of mental health and the roles that trauma plays on our physical bodies during these difficult times. She has been a company member with Elizabeth Streb, Susan Vencl, and Beth Soll’s companies in NYC and worked extensively with Lynn Simonson and Laurie DeVito on Simonson technique practices. She has a deep understanding of Pilates and Yoga and is a certified Simonson Dance Technique teacher. Jessica is expanding artistic practice through this collaboration thanks to Leymis Bolaños-Wilmot with Sarasota Contemporary Dance and the Hermitage Artist Retreat. Her inspiration comes from patterns in nature and the ways the body copes with life’s unexpected tides. Taking time to heal and listen internally through journaling, watercolor painting, and of course, dancing.

Cleyvis Natera

Hermitage Fellow **Cleyvis Natera** is an essayist, short fiction writer, critic and novelist. Her debut novel *Neruda on the Park* was named an “Anticipated Book of 2022” by *TIME*, *the Today Show*, *Good Morning America’s Zibby Owens*, *ELLE*, *Ms Magazine*, *Bustle*, *Goodreads*, *Book Riot*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Millions*, *Electric Literature*, *Lit Hub*, and *The Rumpus*. Upon publication, *Neruda on the Park* was selected as a May 2022 *New York Times Editor’s Choice* and as the June 2022 pick for Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai’s Fearless Literati Book Club. Natera was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in New York City. In addition to receiving a Hermitage Fellowship, she has received honors from PEN America, Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Voices of Our Nation Arts Foundation (VONA). She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Skidmore College and a Master of Fine Arts from New York University. Cleyvis worked a corporate job in insurance for two decades ascending to the executive level before pivoting her career to become a full-time writer. She lives with her husband and two young children in Montclair, New Jersey.

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.

The Hermitage is supported by:

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HermitageArtistRetreat.org