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**“Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park”
Kicks Off 2023-2024 Season with
Terry Guest and James Anthony Tyler**

*The first installment of three “Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park” programs in the 2023-2024 season will feature award-winning playwrights and Hermitage Fellows **Terry Guest** and **James Anthony Tyler**. Two additional dates have been announced at the beautiful venue of Nathan Benderson Park.*

September 28, 2023 (Sarasota County, Florida) — The Hermitage Artist Retreat announces a newly developed partnership with Nathan Benderson Park as a part of the Hermitage’s 2023-2024 season. Expanding on the success of the Hermitage programming at Selby Gardens and other venues throughout the region, the new **“Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park”** series launches this year following a popular Hermitage program at the park last season. That event featured award-winning composer and Hermitage alumna **Zoe Sarnak** and an ensemble of performers who shared Sarnak’s original songs as a part of the Ruby E. Crosby Alumni Music Initiative at the Hermitage. Each program in the “Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park” series will feature a celebrated Hermitage artist (or artists) to be announced. The outdoor series features performances and explorations of works-in-progress by Hermitage artists-in-residence and alumni.

“Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park” events are currently scheduled to take place by Benderson Lake near the Nathan Benderson Family Finish Tower (5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota, FL 34235). The first event in this series – scheduled for **Thursday, November 16th at 5pm** – features two of the most innovative voices working in theater today. “Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park: Theater on the Lake” showcases the talents of Hermitage Fellows **Terry Guest** and **James Anthony Tyler**. These two talents split the bill to share some of their latest work and discuss the creative process as the sun goes down over the lake. This first program in the new series is presented in partnership with Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, Urbanite

Theatre, and Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy. **Admission is free, but registration is required (\$5/person) at HermitageArtistRetreat.org.**

“As we continue to offer one-of-a-kind Hermitage programming throughout the region, we are excited to welcome Sarasota and Gulf Coast audiences to another fantastic venue where they can share a magical evening with Hermitage artists against the beautiful backdrop of Nathan Benderson Park’s lakefront location,” says Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. “We are thrilled to build upon the success of our first program at Nathan Benderson Park last spring. Much like our beach programs on Manasota Key and other locations throughout Sarasota and Manatee County, these hour-long events will offer our community the opportunity to experience a ‘sneak peek’ into these extraordinary artists’ creative process.”

"We are honored to partner with the Hermitage Artist Retreat to celebrate the arts at Nathan Benderson Park," added **Bruce C. Patneau**, Chief Operating Officer of Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy. "The artists coming to the Hermitage are some of the very best in the world. It is a unique opportunity to watch their creative performances and interactions with the audience. Hosting this event at the Park is one of the many ways we are pleased to bring creativity, diversity, and culture to the Sarasota County and Manatee County communities. We look forward to building a fantastic annual series of events."

Hermitage Fellow and award-winning writer-performer **Terry Guest** is the playwright behind Urbanite Theatre’s extended 2021 run of *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen*, their upcoming production of *Oak* in 2024, and the Hermitage’s 2023 presentation of *The Madness of Mary Todd*, which was part of the “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” series, also in partnership with Urbanite. Guest, a Chicago-based playwright, also recently shared selections from his work about Eartha Kitt, *A Ghost in Satin*, on the Hermitage Beach. His play *The Magnolia Ballet* has been performed all around the country and was the recipient of two Jeff Awards in Chicago, with Guest’s play *Marie Antionette and the Magical Negroes* winning three Jeff Awards. “We are thrilled to once again partner with the Hermitage in support of Terry’s remarkable work,” said Urbanite Producing Artistic Director **Summer Dawn Wallace**. “Sharing insight into Terry’s process at this scenic outdoor venue is the perfect way to get audiences tuned into this brilliant writer’s voice and excited for this season’s production of *Oak*.”

Hermitage Fellow **James Anthony Tyler**, the third annual recipient of the Horton Foote Award, has the distinguished honor of being one of the first playwrights commissioned by Audible to produce an audio play specifically for that platform, *Hop Tha A*, which Sarasota audiences will recall hearing selections from on the Hermitage Beach during Tyler’s last residency. “James’ works tell the kinds of stories we uplift at WBTT, those that promote and celebrate African-American history and experience,” added **Nate Jacobs**, Founder and Artistic Director of Westcoast Black Theater Troupe.

“We always enjoy partnering with the Hermitage to celebrate some of the nation’s most exciting new voices and playwrights.”

Confirmed 2023-2024 dates for this first official season of “Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park” include:

- Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 5pm
- Friday, February 2, 2024, at 5pm
- Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 6:30pm

These outdoor events are one part of many “Hermitage North” programs, series, and collaborations planned throughout the season, spanning Sarasota County and the surrounding region. The programs feature industry-leading and award-winning playwrights, visual artists, musicians, poets, choreographers, and more — all free to the members of our community with a \$5/person registration fee.

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: HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

See below for complete program details and artist bios.

FULL PROGRAM DETAILS

Newly Announced Hermitage Program:

- **Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park: “Theater on the Lake” with Hermitage Fellows Terry Guest and James Anthony Tyler, *Thursday, November 16th, 5pm*:** In the inaugural year of this new partnership, the Hermitage Artist Retreat and Nathan Benderson Park are excited to collaborate to bring groundbreaking works of art and performance to this scenic space. The series launches with two award-winning Hermitage Fellows, both returning to the inspirational shores of Sarasota. **James Anthony Tyler** is the third annual winner of the Horton Foote Award and one of the first playwrights commissioned by Audible to produce an audio play specifically for that platform, which Sarasota residents may recall hearing selections of on the beach during James’ last visit. Award-winning Chicago-based playwright **Terry Guest** is the playwright behind

Urbanite Theatre's extended run of *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen*, their upcoming production of *Oak*, and last season's exciting Hermitage presentation of *The Madness of Mary Todd* at Selby Gardens. Both will share selections of work and discuss their creative process as the sun goes down over the lake. *Presented in Partnership with Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, and Urbanite Theatre. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee) Nathan Benderson Family Finish Tower, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota, FL 34235*

Previously Announced Hermitage Programs:

- **NEW LOCATION** – “**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 and Fogartyville Community Meeting & Arts Center. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee) **NEW LOCATION** Fogartyville Community Meeting & Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Ct. Sarasota, FL 34236*
- **Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: “The Blurred Line Between Humor and Heartbreak: A Playwriting Workshop” 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 singular style has been seen on stage at such noteworthy venues as the Atlantic Theater Company, Playwrights Horizons, and Williamstown Theatre Festival, garnering *New York Times* Critics’ Picks amongst other accolades. Her most recent project as writer and showrunner for *American Horror Story — Delicate*, has been described as “fun, stylish, and ultimately terrifying” by series creator, Ryan Murphy. Known for her deft ability to move audiences to tears of laughter as well as sadness, join us at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens — Downtown for our first “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” program of the season. Audience members are encouraged to bring pen and paper or other preferred means of writing as this gifted writer and creator invites attendees to participate in the creative process. *Presented in Partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens and The Players Centre. 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***
- **“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. Presented in Partnership with Bookstore1. *Kristen Renee Miller's Hermitage Residency* generously sponsored by Robyn & Charles Citrin. **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***
- **HERMITAGE FALL BENEFIT – “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 tables/sponsorships, 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. Johann Fust Community Library in Boca Grande, 1040 10th St. W., Boca Grande, FL 33921***

ALL ANNOUNCED HERMITAGE PROGRAMS:

Friday, September 29th, 6pm, "Power in Paper: Celebrating Sarasota Artists," with John Ringling Tower recipients **Melanie Lavender** and **Kuniko Yamamoto**, **at a NEW LOCATION – Fogartyville Community Media & Arts Center (Sarasota)** *Presented in partnership Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County and Fogartyville Community Media & Arts Center*

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 and the Player Centre*
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*
Kristen Renee Miller's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Robyn & Charles Citrin.

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)
Christopher Theofanidis' Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Sondra & Gerald Biller

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, November 16th, 5pm, "Hermitage Sunsets @ Benderson Park: Theater on the Lake," featuring Hermitage Fellows **Terry Guest** and **James Anthony Tyler**, at The Nathan Benderson Family Finish Tower (Sarasota/Bradenton) *Presented in partnership with Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, and Urbanite Theatre*

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)

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 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

Review. 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* (Tatumoto Prize winner), *Esquire*, *n+1*, *The Iowa Review*, *Hobart*, and *The Gettysburg* 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.

James Anthony Tyler

Hermitage Fellow **James Anthony Tyler** is the recipient of the third annual Horton Foote Playwriting Award and an inaugural playwright to receive a commission from Audible. His plays include *All We Need Is Us* (Keen Company, currently streaming on all podcast platforms), *hop thA A* (currently streaming on Audible), *Artney Jackson* (World Premiere at Williamstown Theatre Festival, 2018 Edgerton Foundation New Play Award), *Some Old Black Man* (University Musical Society, Berkshire Playwrights Lab at St. James Place and 59E59 Theaters), and *Dolphins and Sharks* (LAByrinth Theater Company and Finborough Theatre in London). He has an MFA in Film from Howard University and an MFA in Dramatic Writing from New York University. He is also a graduate of The Juilliard School's Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program. He was a staff writer for the new OWN Network show *Cherish the Day*, created by Ava DuVernay, and is currently a story editor for a new Apple TV drama series.

Terry Guest

Hermitage Fellow **Terry Guest** is a Chicago-based playwright, actor, director, and teaching artist whose works include *A Ghost in Satin* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *The Magnolia Ballet* (2022-2023 rolling world premieres and recipient of two Jeff Awards), *Marie Antionette and the Magical Negroes* (recipient of three Jeff Award wins including Best Director and Best New Work), *The Madness of Mary Todd* (currently in development with Goodman Theatre), *Andy Warhol Presents: The Cocaine Play*, *OAK* (forthcoming at Urbanite Theatre), *Ghost Town* (Chicago Children's Theatre), and *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen* (The Story Theatre), which also enjoyed an extended run at Sarasota's Urbanite Theatre. As an actor, Terry has worked at regional theaters around the country including Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, Goodman Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Actors Express, and others. Terry is a governing ensemble member at The Story Theatre. Follow along on Instagram @terryexplainsitall or at TerryCGuest.com

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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Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy

The Nathan Benderson Park Conservancy is a not-for-profit 501c3 business created to manage Nathan Benderson Park, a community/public asset and world-class, multi-use sports venue. NBPC's mission is to improve the quality of life for our community and be an economic generator for our region. The Conservancy's primary purpose is to develop and promote the park as a world-class event center, team training site, and Sarasota County Park while providing outreach programs through recreation, safety training, education, and volunteering as a service to our community. See more at NathanBendersonPark.org.

HermitageArtistRetreat.org