

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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AN OUTDOOR CELEBRATION!

**Grammy Award-Winning String Quartet ETHEL  
to Headline the Hermitage's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Artful Lobster:  
An Outdoor Celebration on November 11<sup>th</sup>!**

*The Grammy Award-winning string quartet **ETHEL** – featuring composer-performers **Ralph Farris** (viola), **Kip Jones** (violin), **Dorothy Lawson** (cello), and **Corin Lee** (violin), all Hermitage alumni – will headline the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Artful Lobster benefit, following the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season of the Hermitage. The event will also feature a performance by Hermitage Fellow **Emi Ferguson**, a widely celebrated flutist and composer. This popular gala on the Hermitage's Manasota Key campus raises valuable funds for the Hermitage's nationally renowned artist residency program.*

October 10, 2023 (Sarasota County, Florida) — The Hermitage Artist Retreat announces today that world-renowned and Grammy Award-winning string quartet **ETHEL** will headline the Hermitage's signature fall fundraising event, "The Artful Lobster: An Outdoor Celebration!" on **Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup>** from 11:30am to 2pm at the Hermitage campus on Manasota Key. This is the first time in many years that all four members of **ETHEL** – **Ralph Farris**, **Kip Jones**, **Dorothy Lawson**, and **Corin Lee** – will be reuniting at the Hermitage to celebrate this milestone anniversary of the event. This year's Artful Lobster will also feature a performance by new Hermitage Fellow **Emi Ferguson**, a celebrated flutist and performer.

Now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year and following the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season of the Hermitage, the **Artful Lobster** raises valuable funds for the Hermitage's nationally renowned artist

residency program, supporting the creative process of artists from around the world in the fields of music, theater, visual art, literature, dance, and more. This popular event, which takes place outdoors beneath a large tent on the Hermitage's beachfront campus, features a lobster feast catered by Michael's On East, in addition to live performances from renowned Hermitage Fellows. The co-chairs for the 2023 Artful Lobster are **Terry Brackett** and **Suzette & Tim Flood**.

Grammy Award-winning **ETHEL** has performed across the United States and worldwide. They champion the art of music today, forging human connections across sound and style. **ETHEL** has premiered more than 250 works, many of them commissioned by the quartet consisting of four Hermitage alumni: **Ralph Ferris** (viola), **Kip Jones** (violin), **Dorothy Lawson** (cello), and **Corin Lee** (violin). At the heart of **ETHEL** is a collaborative ethos — a quest for common creative expression, forged in listening and community. The quartet has a deep connection with the Hermitage Artist Retreat, both as individuals and as an ensemble, dating back to 2015 and including the premiere of *Circus: Wandering City* conceived at the Hermitage in collaboration with the Ringling Museum of Art, where it was presented in 2018 at the Historic Asolo Theater. The quartet recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a highly acclaimed performing ensemble. **ETHEL**'s upcoming residency and appearance at the Artful Lobster are generously underwritten by **Carol White Bold & Larry Bold**.

Hailed by critics for her “tonal bloom” and “hauntingly beautiful performances,” English-American flutist and composer **Emi Ferguson** stretches the boundaries of what is expected of modern-day musicians. Ferguson's unique approach to the flute can be heard in performances that alternate between silver flute, auxiliary flutes, and historical flutes, playing repertoire that stretches from the Renaissance to today.

*(Complete bios for artists can be found below.)*

“We are incredibly excited to welcome **ETHEL** back to the Hermitage to perform at our 15<sup>th</sup> annual Artful Lobster,” says Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. “All of **ETHEL** are extraordinary talents and have been great friends to the Hermitage. Though some members have been back to Manasota Key individually – most recently Ralph Farris and Dorothy Lawson – it is thrilling to welcome the full quartet back for this milestone occasion. We are honored that both **ETHEL** and the brilliant Emi Ferguson will be joining us to celebrate this special event, which helps to raise vital funds for our core residency program and the 50 *free* programs we offer throughout the community each year.”

Sponsorship levels for this fundraiser range from \$1,250 to \$10,000. Sponsorships may be purchased by contacting Hermitage Development Director Amy Wallace at (941) 475-2098, Ext. 2. The event has **limited capacity remaining**, so timely bookings are strongly recommended.

Community and media partners for the 2023 Hermitage Artful Lobster include Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Herald-Tribune Media Group, Key Agency, and

*Sarasota Magazine*. A full list of this year’s sponsors, benefactors, and partners can be found at **[HermitageArtistRetreat.org/ArtfulLobster](http://HermitageArtistRetreat.org/ArtfulLobster)**.

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](http://HermitageArtistRetreat.org)**.

### **The Hermitage Artist Retreat**

Sarasota County, Florida  
Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO

The Hermitage is a leading national arts incubator and nonprofit 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:**

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

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## **ALL ANNOUNCED HERMITAGE PROGRAMS:**

**Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 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 27<sup>th</sup>, 6pm, “Siddhartha: A Hermitage Collaboration of Words and Music,”** with Hermitage Fellows **Melissa Studdard** and **Christopher Theofanidis**, at Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

*Christopher Theofanidis’s Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Sondra & Gerald Biller  
Melissa Studdard’s Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Charlotte & Charles Perret*

**Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 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 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 11<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am, HERMITAGE FALL BENEFIT “The Artful Lobster: An Outdoor Celebration!”** at the Historic Hermitage Campus (Manasota Key)

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

**Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 5pm, “Hermitage Sunsets @ Nathan 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 14<sup>th</sup>, 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*

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## ARTIST BIOS

### ETHEL

Established in New York City in 1998, **ETHEL** celebrates 25 years of setting the standard for contemporary concert music: “indefatigable and eclectic” (*New York Times*), “vital and brilliant” (*New Yorker*), and “infectiously visceral” (Pitchfork). This irrepressible foursome of composer-performers — **Ralph Farris** (viola), **Kip Jones** (violin), **Dorothy Lawson** (cello), and **Corin Lee** (violin) — blends uptown panache with downtown genre mashup. Since its inception, **ETHEL** has released nine feature recordings; performed as guests on 50+ albums; won a Grammy Award with jazz legend Kurt Elling; and toured internationally with rock icons Todd Rundgren & Joe Jackson. Beyond their connection to the Hermitage as distinguished alumni artists, the quartet has performed across the United States and worldwide. At the heart of **ETHEL** is a collaborative ethos — a quest for common creative expression, forged in listening and community. The quartet designs productions that organically inspire engagement — programs such as *The River*,

featuring Taos Pueblo elder, flutist and storyteller, Robert Mirabal (*The River* [Innova Recordings] was nominated for a Native American Music Award); and *Signature Sessions*, a hyper-engaging survey of the quartet's 25 years of inspired music-making. ETHEL has premiered over 250 works, many of them commissioned by the quartet. As a collective of composers themselves, the ensemble has received commissions from The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Georgia Tech's School of Architecture, and the NEA. 2022 marked ETHEL's return to live performances on their celebrated weekly series as Resident The 2023-24 (the group's 25!) sees ETHEL return to Venice, Italy, for a live installation in collaboration with WXY, at the Biennale Architettura 2023; after which the quartet travels to The Netherlands for performances of the music of Bart van Dongen and Jacob TV; they then return to the US for a residency at University of Oklahoma. Late autumn brings a return (with Robert Mirabal) to the National Gallery of Art; and later-season highlights include appearances at the Wexner Center for the Arts (OH) and Denison University's TUTTI Festival. ETHEL has given master classes and workshops at The Juilliard School, Eastman School of Music, Berklee College of Music, and the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra. The quartet was a 2019/20 Creative-in-Residence at Brooklyn Public Library; a 2019 Levi Family Distinguished Visiting Artist at The Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University; and for 10 years, Quartet-in-Residence of the Grand Canyon Music Festival's Native American Composer Apprentice Project. The group is currently Ensemble-in-Residence at Denison University, where, in 2017, the members were awarded Doctorates of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*. ETHEL has been featured on Conan O'Brien, ABC Radio Australia, SiriusXM, John Schaefer's *New Sounds*, Fred Child's *Performance Today*, Randy Cohen's *Person Place Thing*, NPR's *Weekend Edition*, the soundtracks of *Dan In Real Life* and HBO's *Deadwood*, and at several TED conferences.

### **Emi Ferguson**

Hailed by critics for her “tonal bloom” and “hauntingly beautiful performances,” English-American performer, composer, and Hermitage Fellow **Emi Ferguson** stretches the boundaries of what is expected of modern-day musicians. Emi's unique approach to the flute can be heard in performances that alternate between the Silver Flute, Historical Flutes, and Auxiliary Flutes, playing repertoire that stretches from the Renaissance to today. Emi is very proud to be named a 2023 Avery Fisher Career Grant Awardee and can be heard live in concerts and festivals around the world as a soloist and with groups including AMOC, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Handel and Haydn Society, and the Manhattan Chamber Players. She has spoken and performed at several TEDx events and has been featured on media outlets including The Discovery Channel, Vox's *Explained* series on Netflix, Amazon's *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, and Juilliard Digital's *TouchPress* apps talking about how music relates to our world today. Her debut album, *Amour Cruel*, an indie-pop song cycle inspired by the music of the 17th-century French court was released by Arezzo Music in September 2017, spending four weeks on the Classical, Classical Crossover, and World Music Billboard Charts. Her 2019 album *Fly the Coop: Bach* debuted at #1 on the iTunes classical charts and #2 on the Billboard classical charts and was called “blindingly impressive... a fizzing, daring display of personality and imagination” by *The New York Times*. Emi was a featured performer alongside Yo-Yo Ma, Paul Simon, and James Taylor at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Ceremony of 9/11 at Ground Zero, where her performance of Amazing Grace was televised worldwide. Her performance that day is now part of the permanent collection at the 911 Museum. A passionate chamber musician of works new and old, Emi has been a featured performer at Marlboro, Lucerne, Ojai, Lake Champlain, Bach Virtuosi, and June in Buffalo festivals and has premiered works by many of today's leading composers, working most recently with composers Michael Hersch, Roscoe Mitchell, Emily Koh, Gabriela Ortiz, and Georgina Derbez. Upcoming projects include *Microcosms*, the music of Telemann and Ligeti, with Ruckus, *The Enchanted Dawn*, with harpist

Ashley Jackson (a fellow Hermitage Artist featured in the debut of the Ruby E. Crosby Alumni Music Initiative in 2021), and *Pastures of Plenty*, a program developed for Frankly Music that features music of Franz Schubert, Woody Guthrie, Harry T. Burleigh, and Thomas A. Dorsey. Emi is currently on the faculty of the Juilliard School, the Bach Virtuosi Festival, and has taught on the faculty of the University of Buffalo. Born in Japan and raised in London and Boston, she now resides in New York City.

[HermitageArtistRetreat.org](http://HermitageArtistRetreat.org)