

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Hermitage Media Relations; (941) 475-2098, Ext. 8

Communications@HermitageArtistRetreat.org



**“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens”
Series Continues on November 30th with Visionary Arts Leaders
Nataki Garrett, Tom Kirdahy, and More
Discussing the “State of The Arts in Florida”**

*The second installment of this season’s “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” series will take place on Thursday, November 30th at Selby Gardens’ Historic Spanish Point campus with a panel discussion featuring Hermitage National Curatorial Council member **Nataki Garrett**, Tony and Olivier Award-winning producer **Tom Kirdahy**, and President of the Manasota Chapter of ASALH **David Wilkins**.*

October 16, 2023 (Sarasota County, Florida) — The Hermitage Artist Retreat announced today that a distinguished panel of arts and cultural leaders will discuss the myriad of challenges facing the arts in Florida and our country in the newly announced program “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: State of the Arts in Florida.” This event will take place on Thursday, November 30th at 5pm at Selby Gardens’ Historic Spanish Point campus. Hermitage Curatorial Council member **Nataki Garrett**, who recently served as Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Tony and Olivier Award-winning producer **Tom Kirdahy**, a Sarasota resident and friend of the Hermitage, will participate in a discussion with the President of the Manasota Chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), **David Wilkins**, in a conversation moderated by Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**.

No matter where you get your news, it is a given reality that America – and Florida, in particular – feels more divided now than at nearly any point in our history. How does this impact the artists who call Florida home or who come here to make work? What challenges does this create for our state’s cultural economy? These esteemed professionals will share their experiences and thoughts in a candid and wide-ranging discussion on the arts community and the artists creating work in the state of Florida and beyond.

As a leading theater director and administrator who recently served as Artistic Director of the prestigious Oregon Shakespeare Festival, **Nataki Garrett** has first-hand experience of

the challenges arts leaders face in a polarized nation. Tony Award-winning producer **Tom Kirdahy**, active in both the Florida community and the national arts scene, has shared his candid views on the state of the arts with the Hermitage in previous programs. Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg** will moderate the conversation, which will also feature the insight of **David Wilkins** from Manasota ASALH. Audience members will have the opportunity to engage with these local, national, and international experts in a frank and open discussion on the state of the arts in Florida and beyond.

“**Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens**” is now in its fourth year as part of the Hermitage’s 2023-2024 season. The outdoor series — a continuing collaboration between the **Hermitage Artist Retreat** and **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens** — features performances, conversations, and explorations of works-in-progress by Hermitage artists-in-residence and alumni.

“We are excited to now be in our fourth season of ‘Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens,’” says Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. “It has been a joy to bring rich arts and cultural experiences to both of Selby Gardens’ beautiful waterfront locations, giving audiences the chance to experience one-of-a-kind performances and ‘sneak peeks’ into the creative process of leading national artists. We know this event with Nataki, Tom, and David will be a particularly compelling and candid conversation that’s relevant to all who appreciate and value the arts in our community.”

Remaining dates for this fourth season of “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” include:

- Thursday, November 30, 2023 @ 5pm, Historic Spanish Point
- Thursday, January 25, 2024 @ 5pm Downtown Sarasota
- Thursday March 28, 2024 @ 6:30pm Downtown Sarasota
- Thursday, May 2, 2024 @ 6:30pm Historic Spanish Point

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

A leading national arts incubator, the Hermitage is the only major arts organization in Florida’s Gulf Coast exclusively committed to supporting the development and creation of new work across all artistic disciplines. 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,

conversations, 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 @ Selby Gardens: State of the Arts in Florida” with Hermitage Curatorial Council member **Nataki Garrett**, Tony Award-winning producer and friend of the Hermitage **Tom Kirdahy**, and Manasota Chapter President of ASALH **David Wilkins** Thursday, November 30th, 5pm:** No matter where you get your news, it is a given reality that America – and Florida in particular – feels more divided now than at nearly any point in our history. How does this impact the artists who call Florida home or who come here to make work? What challenges does this create for our state’s cultural economy? Leading theater director, administrator, and Hermitage National Curatorial Council member **Nataki Garrett** has first-hand experience of this polarized climate. She brings her knowledge into conversation with Tony and Olivier Award-winning producer **Tom Kirdahy**, a Sarasota resident and frequent friend of the Hermitage, as well as President of the Manasota Chapter of ASALH, **David Wilkins**. In a candid conversation moderated by Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**, hear from these local, national, and international experts on the state of the arts in Florida and beyond. *Presented in Partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org (\$5/person registration fee). Marie Selby Botanical Gardens – Historic Spanish Point Campus, entrance at 401 North Tamiami Trail, Osprey, FL 34229***

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.

The Hermitage is supported by:

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

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens provides 45 acres of bayfront sanctuaries connecting people with air plants of the world, native nature, and our regional history. Established by forward thinking women of their time, Selby Gardens is composed of the 15-acre Downtown Sarasota campus and the 30-acre Historic Spanish Point campus in the Osprey area of Sarasota County, Florida. The Downtown Campus on Sarasota Bay is the only botanical garden in the world dedicated to the display and study of epiphytic orchids, bromeliads, gesneriads and ferns, and other tropical plants. There is a significant focus on botany, horticulture, education, historical preservation, and the environment. The Historic Spanish Point (HSP) Campus is located less than 10 miles south along Little Sarasota Bay. The HSP Campus, one of the largest preserves showcasing native Florida plants that is interpreted for and open to the public, celebrates an archaeological record that encompasses approximately 5,000 years of Florida history.

All Announced Hermitage Programs

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, HERMITAGE FALL BENEFIT – “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 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 30th @ 5pm, “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: The State of the Arts in Florida,” featuring friend of the Hermitage **Tom Kirdahy**, Hermitage Curatorial Council member **Nataki Garrett**, and Manasota Chapter President of ASALA **David Wilkins**, at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens – Historic Spanish Point Campus (Osprey) *Presented in Partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.*

Thursday, November 16th @ 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 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*

ARTIST BIOS

Nataki Garrett

Nataki Garrett recently served as Oregon Shakespeare Festival's sixth Artistic Director. She is a member of the Hermitage National Curatorial Council and previously served as a juror for the 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize. Garrett is currently leading the charge to mobilize theatre organizations across the nation to procure long-term federal government support to ensure the theatre industry's reemergence post-pandemic. Dare to Dream, OSF's emergency relief campaign that included a first-ever virtual Gala celebration, was conceived and launched by Garrett with a significant portion of the with a significant portion of the revenue generated going to organizations doing front-line work with underserved communities. Garrett's forté and passion is fostering and developing new work, including those that adapt and devise new ways of performing the classics. She has directed and produced the world premieres of many well-known and important playwriting voices of our time. Garrett served as the acting Artistic Director for Denver Center for Performing Arts Theatre Company. Additionally, she was former associate artistic director of CalArts Center for New Performance. Garrett has served on nominating committees for the MacArthur Award, the Kilroys, Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust Distinguished Playwright Award, Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship panel, Mellon Foundation Playwrights Award Panel, the Hermitage Greenfield Prize (2021), the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, several NEA panels, and countless juries supporting artists around the world. Garrett is a recipient of the first-ever Ammerman Prize for Directing, given by Arena Stage. She also received the National Endowment for the Arts and Theatre Communications Group Career Development Fellowship for Theatre Directors. She is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and a member of the board of directors for Theatre Communications Group, a company member at Woolly Mammoth, and an advisory board member for Mixed Blood Theatre. Garrett is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts with an MFA in directing.

Tom Kirdahy

Tom Kirdahy is a Tony and Olivier Award-winning producer whose projects have spanned Broadway, off-Broadway, the West End, national and international tours. A Longboat Key resident and a champion of the Hermitage, Kirdahy is currently producing the Broadway smash-hit *Hadestown* (8 Tonys, incl. Best Musical) and its tour; the off-Broadway revival of *Little Shop of Horrors* (Drama Desk Award, Best Revival); and *Here We Are*, Stephen Sondheim's final musical with a book by David Lives and directed by Joe Mantello. He recently produced the first Broadway revival of August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (Drama Desk, Best Revival) starring Samuel L. Jackson and directed by LaTanya Richardson Jackson; the new musical *New York, New York* from legendary songwriting team John Kander and Fred Ebb, featuring additional lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda, an original story by David Thompson with Sharon Washington, and direction and choreography by Susan Stroman; and the new play *Grey House* by Levi Holloway, starring Laurie Metcalf, Tatiana Maslany, and Paul Sparks, with direction by Joe Mantello. Select Broadway: *The Inheritance* (4 Tonys, incl. Best Play); Terrence McNally's *Frankie & Johnny in the Claire de Lune* starring Audra McDonald & Michael Shannon (2 Tony noms. incl. Best Revival); *Anastasia*; *It's Only a Play* starring Nathan Lane & Matthew Broderick; *The Visit* starring Chita Rivera (5 Tony noms.). Select West End: *The Inheritance* (4 Oliviers, incl. Best Play), *The Jungle*, Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*. Select Off-Broadway: world premiere of *The White Chip*, *The Jungle*, *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* (all *NY Times* Critic's Picks). Additional Tony noms: *Mothers and Sons*, *After Midnight*, *Ragtime*, *Master Class*. Recipient, Robert Whitehead Award for Outstanding Achievement in Commercial Theater Producing. Recipient, Miss Lilly Award, a prize in recognition of his advocacy for women in a male-dominated industry. Recipient, 2023 Medal of Honor, Entertainment Community Fund. Recipient,

NYU Distinguished Alumni Award. Kirdahy serves on the Broadway League Board of Governors, the Executive Board of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, and is a member of the Harry Ransom Center Advisory Council at the University of Texas. As an attorney he spent nearly two decades providing free legal services to people living with HIV/AIDS and served for many years on the Executive Committee of the NYC LGBT Center. Graduate, New York University School of Law, NYU CAS.

David G. Wilkins, Esq.

David G. Wilkins is the current President of the Manasota chapter of ASALH (Association for the Study of African-American Life and History). Wilkins retired from The Dow Chemical Company in March 2014, after twenty-five years as a lawyer and human resource leader. In his last role for Dow, Wilkins served as an Associate General Counsel and as the company's Director of Ethics and Compliance. Previous roles included Vice President and General Counsel of the Union Carbide Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dow, Director of Diversity for Dow, Division Counsel for Dow's North American Operations, Assistant General Counsel and Assistant Secretary for Dow Agrosiences, and a variety of other legal and human resource roles across Dow's U.S. Operations. Wilkins also served as Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer for the American Red Cross from 2003 to 2005. Following his retirement from Dow, he served as Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer at SNC-Lavalin Group, Inc., in Montreal Canada, from April 2014 until November 2015. Wilkins joined Dow in 1987 after ten years of private law practice in Chicago with the firm of Strauss, Sulzer, Shopiro and Wilkins. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, Magna Cum Laude, from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Illinois School of Law. He attended the Babson College Executive Education program in 1991. He served on the Board of Trustees of Illinois Wesleyan University until January 2018, and is a member of the Bar of the United States Supreme Court and an Emeritus member of the Michigan State Bar Association. Wilkins and his wife, Lois Bright Wilkins, have four adult children and one granddaughter. David and Lois reside in Sarasota, Florida, where they both are active members of ASALH, and Wilkins volunteers at the African-American Cultural Resource Center, located at the North Sarasota Library.

HermitageArtistRetreat.org

Facebook / Instagram: @HermitageArtistRetreat