

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Hermitage Announces New Events for January and February
featuring Award-Winning Artists and Performers
in Theater, Music, Visual Art, and More**

*The Hermitage's year-round multidisciplinary programs offer audiences a one-of-a-kind look behind the curtain of the creative process. These newly announced programs in January and February are presented in partnership with national and regional arts and cultural organizations, including **The Town of Longboat Key, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Nathan Benderson Park, Asolo Repertory Theatre, and more. Nationally renowned artists sharing a 'sneak peek' into their creative process include Halley Feiffer, Anthony Hawley, Stephen Cole, David Evans, Jacquelyn Reingold, Joan La Barbara, Laura Kaminsky, James M. Stephenson, Emi Ferguson, Amir ElSaffar, Chris Ryan Williams, and Doug Wright.***

November 3, 2023 — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** (Sarasota County, Florida) today announced new programs throughout the months of January and February. Continuing its commitment to innovative year-round arts programming, these events will be presented throughout the Gulf Coast region, from the Hermitage's beautiful beachfront campus on Manasota Key to the heart of Sarasota's vibrant downtown arts scene in collaboration with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Nathan Benderson Park, and The Town of Longboat Key. Hermitage programs introduce world-renowned artists to Florida's Gulf Coast community and invite audiences across the country to experience candid and engaging conversations, open rehearsals, play readings, film screenings, and more.

Newly announced programs from Hermitage Fellows in January kick off on the Hermitage Beach with celebrated playwright, award-winning actor, and "American Horror Story" writer **Halley Feiffer**, who offers insight into her unique journey and her creative process. Feiffer's program will be preceded by an open-studio experience from the imaginative mind of multidisciplinary visual artist **Anthony Hawley**. Join us on Friday, January 5th starting at 5pm for this special program on the Hermitage campus, blurring the line between humor and heartbreak, fantasy and reality, past and present. This event is presented in partnership with **Asolo Repertory Theatre**.

On Friday, January 12th at 5pm, Hermitage alumni **Stephen Cole** and **David Evans** share musical theater selections from their Golden Age musical, *Merman's Apprentice*, on the Hermitage Beach. Twelve-year-old Muriel Plakenstein doesn't know that the 'golden age' of music is coming to an end, so she runs away from home to become a theater star and meets the Queen of Broadway, Ethel Merman. Hear selections from this musical fable and learn more about what inspired the musical's journey from this collaborative team.

On Thursday, January 18th at 5pm on the Hermitage Beach, three gifted Hermitage Fellows share how their voice and vision inform their artistic practice across disciplines. **Jacquelyn Reingold** is an accomplished writer for stage and screen; **Joan La Barbara's** groundbreaking vocal stylings have been heard across the country; **Laura Kaminsky** is one of the most-produced composer-librettists in contemporary opera. In a triffecta of innovative musical and theatrical creation, these artists represent a profound collective knowledge of the human experience and the multitude of ways it can be expressed in art.

Next up on Friday, January 19th at 5pm on Longboat Key, the Hermitage presents a cabaret of songs and stories from some of the most influential musical theater creators of our day. From **Jeanine Tesori**, **Adam Gwon**, **Michael R. Jackson**, and **Gavin Creel** to **Kit Yan**, **Zoe Sarnak**, **Rona Siddiqui**, and more, the Hermitage has provided space and time to some of the most exciting musical theater writers working today. Hear selections from some of these composers and lyricists, performed by Sarasota's finest talents at one of the area's newest and most beautiful outdoor stages, Town Center at Longboat Key. This event is presented in partnership with The Town of Longboat Key on their newly built Town Center stage.

Hermitage Fellows **James M. Stephenson** and **Emi Ferguson** make music that speaks to something universal in us all. On Thursday, January 25th at 5pm, this award-winning composer and celebrated flutist invite Sarasota audiences to hear selections and gain direct insight into their composition process. Each will share award-winning compositions that have been played across the county to great acclaim with audiences at Selby Gardens' downtown Sarasota campus as the popular "Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens" series continues its fourth collaborative season.

On Friday, February 2nd at 5pm, the Hermitage treats audiences to two gifted brass and jazz improvisors as they make music and 'talk shop' at Nathan Benderson Park. Hermitage Fellows **Amir ElSaffar** and **Chris Ryan Williams** will present an imaginative evening of sonic possibilities as the "Hermitage Sunsets @ Nathan Benderson Park" series continues.

(Full program details for all events are provided below.)

All of these Hermitage programs are free and open to the public (with a \$5/person registration fee), offering Gulf Coast audiences a rare chance to engage and

interact with some of the world's leading talent. Due to capacity limitations, **registration is required** at **HermitageArtistRetreat.org**.

As a special addition in February, Hermitage Fellow, Pulitzer Prize recipient, and Tony Award winner **Doug Wright** (*Goodnight, Oscar; I Am My Own Wife*) returns to Sarasota to shed light on the role of a librettist and the uniquely collaborative process of creating and adapting Broadway musicals like his *Grey Gardens*, Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, and *Hands on a Hardbody*. This Music Mondays event, "Hermitage Alum Doug Wright Writes Broadway," will feature two opportunities to hear from Wright: Monday, February 19th at 10:30am at the Church of the Palms in Sarasota, and again at 3pm at the Venice Presbyterian Church. Presented in partnership with the Sarasota Institute of Lifetime Learning.

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.

See below for complete program details and artist bios.

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

HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

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:

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.

FULL PROGRAM DETAILS

Newly Announced Program Descriptions (January and February):

- **“The Blurred Line: A Visual and Theatrical Experience” with Hermitage Fellows Halley Feiffer and Anthony Hawley, Friday, January 5, 5pm:** Hermitage Fellow **Halley Feiffer** is an acclaimed playwright, actor, and television writer based in Los Angeles, California. The brilliant mind behind the equally dark and thrilling *American Horror Story: Delicate* (FX, Hulu) offers insights into her process and talks about working on the hit series. Join us on the Hermitage Beach as Feiffer shares recent and upcoming work and discusses her creative process. Before Feiffer’s conversation, join multidisciplinary visual artist **Anthony Hawley** in an open-studio environment on the Hermitage campus, as he shares in-process works and selections of past creations such as his neon green and black-lit otherworldly work from his exhibition *Geograpologies*. The line between humor and heartbreak, fantasy and reality, past and present takes us on a wild adventure in this special Hermitage program. *Presented in partnership with Asolo Repertory Theatre. Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org (\$5/person registration fee). Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood, FL 34223*
- **“Merman’s Apprentice: Musical Theater’s Golden Age” with Hermitage Alumni Stephen Cole and David Evans, Friday, January 12, 5pm:** It’s 1970 and the “Golden Age” of musical theater is drawing to an end... but twelve-year-old Muriel Plakenstein doesn't know that! So she runs away from home to become a theater star and meets the Queen of Broadway, Ethel Merman. What ensues is a musical fable created by Hermitage alumni **Stephen Cole** and **David Evans** that recreates that magic nostalgia of the brightest stages in the country. Join this collaborative team on the Hermitage beach to hear selections of this original work and to learn more about what inspired the musical’s journey. *Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org (\$5/person registration fee). Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood, FL 34223*
- **“Songs from the Sand: A Hermitage Cabaret” featuring works by Hermitage Composers performed by some of Sarasota’s greatest talents, Friday, January 19, 5pm:** From **Jeanine Tesori**, **Adam Gwon**, **Michael R. Jackson**, and **Gavin Creel** to **Kit Yan**, **Zoe Sarnak**, **Rona Siddiqui**, and more, the Hermitage has provided space and time to some of the most exciting musical theater writers working today. Hear selections from some of these composers and lyricists, performed by Sarasota’s finest talents at one of the area’s newest and most beautiful outdoor stages, Town Center at Longboat Key. In addition to the works themselves, hear little known stories about the creation of some of New York theater’s recent success stories and insights into the creative

process. *Presented in Partnership with The Town of Longboat Key. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Longboat Key Town Center, 501 Bay Isles Road, Longboat Key, FL 34228***

- **“Voice, Vision, and Verbs” with Hermitage Fellows Jacquelyn Reingold, Joan La Barbara, and Laura Kaminsky, Thursday, January 18, 5pm:** In a trifecta of innovative musical and theatrical creation, three gifted Hermitage Fellows share how their voice and vision inform their artistic practice across disciplines. Jacquelyn Reingold is a writer for stage and screen whose works include *String Fever* (Ensemble Studio Theater, NY), “Smash,” “Grace & Frankie,” and “The Good Fight.” Composer and performer Joan La Barbara’s ground-breaking vocal stylings have been heard across the country and around for over four decades. Laura Kaminsky is one of the most-produced composer-librettists in contemporary opera whose work dives into the pressing matters of our time. Together, they represent a profound collective knowledge of the human experience and the multitude of ways it can be expressed in art. Hear some of these insights as well as selections of work spanning medium and style. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood, FL 34223**
- **“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: Music on the Wind” with Hermitage Fellows James M. Stephenson and Emi Ferguson, Thursday, January 25, 5pm:** Originally from the Chicago area, Hermitage Fellow **James Stephenson** earned his stripes over 17 seasons in the Naples Philharmonic to become a celebrated composer whose work has covered multiple genres, age groups, instruments, and oceans. From his award-winning compositions for the Marine Band to residences and world premieres with some of the best orchestras across the country, his music speaks to something universal in us all. Juilliard-trained Flutist **Emi Ferguson**, who is also featured at this year’s Hermitage Artful Lobster, redefines what it means to be a contemporary musician: mastering not only her instrument, but its history and impact on the broader artistic landscape. Hear selections from both gifted musician composers and gain direct insight into the composition process from the artists themselves at Selby Gardens’ downtown Sarasota campus. *Presented in partnership with Venice Symphony and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 1534 Mound St, Sarasota, FL, 34236***
- **“Hermitage Sunsets @ Nathan Benderson Park: Musical Moods” with Hermitage Fellows Amir ElSaffar and Chris Ryan Williams, Friday, February 2, 5pm:** Growing up in Chicago in a home where Arabic, Spanish, and English were all commonly heard as the Beatles played on the turntable, jazz trumpeter and multi-instrumentalist **Amir ElSaffar** has always been interested in the most expansive range of music possible. Exploring the complex forces shaping the simultaneous realities of trauma and power in all Black Americans, **Chris Ryan Williams’** multidisciplinary works have been seen across the United States and Europe. Both composers have a love for collaboration, improvisation, and experimentation and a deep interest in how music builds community. These two celebrated composers and performers will be sharing the ‘stage’ at Nathan Benderson Park. Join the Hermitage for an incredible evening of music and conversation with these internationally renowned talents. *Presented in partnership with Nathan Benderson Park. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). **Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota, FL, 34235***

- **“Music Mondays: Hermitage Alum Doug Wright Writes Broadway” with Hermitage Fellow, Pulitzer Prize, and Tony Award Winner Doug Wright, Monday, February 19:** One of the most lauded theater creators of our time returns to Sarasota to share insight into the creation process with iconic numbers from his acclaimed Broadway musicals, performed by some of the best talent in Sarasota. Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning Hermitage Fellow **Doug Wright**’s works on Broadway include *I Am My Own Wife*, *Grey Gardens*, Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*, *Hands on a Hardbody*, *War Paint*, and the recent smash comedy success *Goodnight, Oscar*. Alongside stellar performances, Wright will offer his perspective on the vital role of a musical librettist, diving into the uniquely collaborative process of bringing a musical to life and the nuances of the various musical styles he has used throughout his celebrated career. *Presented in Partnership with Sarasota Institute of Lifetime Learning*. Two presentations: **Church of the Palms, 3224 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota FL, 34239 @ 10:30am** **Venice Presbyterian Church, 825 The Rialto, Venice FL, 34285 @ 3pm**

Previously Announced Hermitage Programs (November and December):

- **“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*
- “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*
- “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***

- **“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: State of the Arts in Florida” with Hermitage Curatorial Council member Nataki Garrett, 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 that 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 and frank 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***

ALL ANNOUNCED NHERMITAGE PROGRAMS:

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 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 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, 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*

Friday, January 5th @ 5pm, “The Blurred Line: a Visual and Theatrical Experience,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Halley Feiffer** and **Anthony Hawley**, at Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key) *Presented in partnership with Asolo Repertory Theatre*

Friday, January 12th @ 5pm, “Merman’s Apprentice: Musical Theater’s Golden Age,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Stephen Cole** and **David Evans**, at Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

Thursday, January 18th @ 5pm, “Opera, Oratorio, and Off-Broadway: Writing and Performing across Mediums,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Jacquelyn Reingold**, **Joan La Barbara**, and **Laura Kaminsky** at Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

Friday, January 19th @ 5pm, “Songs from the Sand: A Hermitage Cabaret,” featuring the works of Hermitage Composers, at Longboat Key Town Center (Longboat Key) *Presented in partnership with The Town of Longboat Key*

Thursday, January 25th @ 5pm, “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: Music on the Wind,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **James M. Stephenson** and **Emi Ferguson**, at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens (Downtown Sarasota) *Presented in partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens and Venice Symphony*

Friday, February 2nd @ 5pm, “Hermitage Sunsets @ Nathan Benderson Park: Musical Moods,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Amir ElSaffar** and **Chris Ryan Williams**, at Nathan Benderson Park (Sarasota/Bradenton) *Presented in partnership with Nathan Benderson Park*

Monday, February 19th @ 10:30am, “Music Mondays: Hermitage Alum Doug Wright Writes Broadway,” featuring Hermitage Fellow **Doug Wright**, at Church of the Palms (Sarasota) @ 10:30am and again at Venice Presbyterian Church (Venice) @ 3pm *Presented in partnership with Sarasota Institute of Lifetime Learning*

ARTIST BIOS

(in chronological order of January and February programs)

Halley Feiffer

Hermitage Fellow **Halley Feiffer** is a WGA, Drama Desk, Drama League, and Outer Critics Circle-nominated writer and actor. She was the writer and showrunner for 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* (Atlantic Theater Company, OCC Nom.), *Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow* (Williamstown Theater Festival and MCC Theater, Drama Desk and Drama League Noms.), *The Pain of My Belligerence* (Playwrights Horizons), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center of New York City* (MCC Theater, Edgerton New Play Award, *NY Times* Critics' Pick), and *How To Make Friends and Then Kill Them* (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

Anthony Hawley

Hermitage Fellow **Anthony Hawley** is a New York City-based multidisciplinary artist whose hybrid practice spans video, drawing, installation, writing, sound, and performance. His work is driven by a fascination with the interplay between narrative, power, various technologies old and new, and the many roles language plays in our lives. He has exhibited nationally and internationally with notable solo projects presented by Lubov Gallery (NY, 2023), the Guggenheim Museum's Works & Process series (NY, 2020); The Salina Art Center (KS, 2018); Spazju Kreattiv (Malta, 2016); and Vox Populi Gallery (PA, 2014). In 2016, CounterCurrent, The Menil Collection, and Aurora Picture Show collaborated to produce his five-day multimedia performance work "Fault Diagnosis," engaging audiences across the city of Houston with live performance, projections, a 1985 Nissan Pulsar NX turned micro-cinema, and audio narratives via a GPS-triggered app. In addition to being a Hermitage Fellow, he has also been awarded residencies at MacDowell, VCCA, Art Farm, and Avaloch Farm and Music Institute, among others. Hawley is the author of two full-length collections of poetry, as well as several chapbooks, and the artist book *dear donald...* His writings on art and film appear frequently in *Art in America*, *Art Papers*, *Artforum*, *BOMB*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *CARLA*, *Frieze*, *Hyperallergic*, *MUBI notebook*, and his poems have been published widely in *The Paris Review*, *The New Republic*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Bennigton Review*, *Verse*, *The Colorado Review*, *VOLT*, *1913*, and many more. With violinist/vocalist Rebecca Fischer, he makes up the duo The Afield, which recently premiered works at The Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center, Carnegie Hall, and Residency Unlimited in Brooklyn. Hawley received his BA and MFA in Writing from Columbia University as well as an MFA in Art Practice from The School of Visual Arts.

Stephen Cole

Book writer, lyricist, and Hermitage alumnus **Stephen Cole** is an award-winning musical theater writer whose shows have been recorded, published, and produced from New York City to London to the Middle East and Edinburgh, Scotland. Cole's creations include *After the Fair*, *The Night of The Hunter* (Goodman), *Saturday Night at Grossinger's*, *Casper* (with Chita Rivera), *Dodsworth* (with Dee Hoty and Hal Linden) and *The Road to Qatar*. In 2014, Cole wrote and directed *Inventing Mary Martin*, which played Off-Broadway. Other produced shows include two family musicals commissioned by Walden Media: *Merlin's Apprentice* (Music by Matthew Ward) and *Rock Odyssey* (Music and Lyrics by Billy Straus). *Rock Odyssey* has been annually produced the last ten years. Cole is also a published author with four books to his credit including *That Book about that Girl* and *I Could Have Sung All Night*, the autobiography of the late Marni Nixon, and

Noel Coward and Charles Strouse's memoir *Put on a Happy Face*. In addition, Cole has written special material for Marlo Thomas, Phil Donahue, Liz Smith, Liza Minnelli, Michelle Lee, and Bernadette Peters, to name a few. He is honored to be the winner of the prestigious Edward Kleban Award for his musical *The Night of the Hunter*, written with the late composer Claibe Richardson. StephenColeWriter.org

David Evans

Hermitage alumnus **David Evans** received a Drama Desk Nomination for his score for *Birds of Paradise* (written with Winnie Holzman, directed by Arthur Laurents), which ran Off-Broadway in 1987 and has since had many regional productions. His Drama Desk nominated musical *Children's Letters to God* (written with Doug Cohen and Stuart Hample), completed an Off-Broadway run at the Lamb's Theater, and has had subsequent productions around the world. *Bye, Bye Big Guy* (written with Faye Greenberg and Michael Slade) was part of The New York International Fringe Festival. Another show, *Love Comics* (with Sarah Schlesinger) has had several regional productions since its premiere at the George Street Playhouse. He has presented a star-studded concert of his music at Lincoln Center, featuring Barbara Walsh, J.K. Simmons, Marybeth Peil, Jose Llana, and others. He has written songs for many Off-Broadway revues, including *A... My Name is Alice*, and for television shows, including *Sesame Street* and *Square One TV*; also scores for animated films, two shows for TADA, and nine shows for TheatreworksUSA. Current projects: *Super Sunday* (with Sarah Schlesinger), *Bed* (with Faye Greenberg), *Merman's Apprentice* (with fellow Hermitage alumnus Stephen Cole). A prominent musical director and conductor, Evans is currently Associate Conductor of *Wicked* on Broadway. His conducting credits include revivals of *Flower Drum Song* and *Bells are Ringing* on Broadway, *Marie Christine* and *Hello Again* at Lincoln Center, and *Hello Muddah*, *Hello Fadduh*, *Sills and Company*, and *As Thousands Cheer* Off-Broadway. He has conducted at major regional theaters around the country, with many shows at the Goodspeed Opera House and Sacramento Musical Theater. He is the Artistic Director of ASCAP's Marvin Hamlisch Broadway Conductor's Program and Co-Artistic Director of Broadway Triple Threat, a musical theater summer program.

Jacquelyn Reingold

Hermitage Fellow **Jacquelyn Reingold** writes for theater and television. Her plays, which include *Kiss Me Somewhere Else*, *String Fever* (starring Cynthia Nixon and Evan Handler), *Acapulco*, *I Know, A Story About a Girl*, *Girl Gone*, *A Very Very Short Play*, *2B (Or Not 2B)*, and *Freeze Tag*, have been seen in New York at Ensemble Studio Theatre, Naked Angels, The Working Theater, MCC Theatre; at the Actors Theatre of Louisville; Portland Center Stage, Oregon; Theater J, Washington DC; PlayLabs, Minneapolis; and in London, Dublin, Berlin, Hong Kong. Honors and awards include: Kennedy Center's Fund for New American Plays, New York Foundation for the Arts, EST/Sloan Foundation Commissions, New Dramatists' Whitfield Cook Award, finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Oscar Reubhausen Commission, plus MacDowell, Ucross, and Hermitage Artist Retreat Fellowships. Her work has been published in two *Women Playwrights: The Best Plays*, several *Best American Short Plays*, and by Samuel French, Vintage Books, and Smith & Kraus. She wrote the Forward to Applause Books' *10 Minute Plays by Women+ over 40* and *100 Monologues by Women+ over 40*. A collection of her one-acts *Things Between Us* is published by DPS. Four of her short plays have been recorded for radio/podcast by *Playing On Air*. In television, Jackie was a Writer/Executive Producer for Paramount+'s critically acclaimed *The Good Fight*. Other TV writing includes *Best of Both Worlds*, a pilot for John Wells, *East New York*, *BrainDead*, *Grace and Frankie*, *Smash*, and all the *Mia* episodes for Emmy nominated Gabriel Byrne and Hope Davis for HBO's *In Treatment*. A member of Ensemble Studio Theater, an alum of New Dramatists, Jackie is also a founding member of *Honor Roll!* an advocacy group for women+ playwrights over 40, whose goal is inclusion in theater. She has taught dramatic writing at NYU, SUNY Stonybrook-Manhattan, Columbia University, and has been a guest TV or Playwriting teacher, often. She is currently a mentor with Laura Cahill's Playwriting Workshop for Ukrainian teens, writing about the war.

Joan La Barbara

Composer/performer and Hermitage Fellow **Joan La Barbara** is renowned for her unique vocabulary of experimental and extended vocal techniques (her "signature sounds": multiphonics, circular singing, ululation, glottal clicks), influencing generations of composers and singers. Awards and prizes: Foundation for Contemporary Arts' John Cage Award (2016); DAAD-Berlin Artist-in-Residency; Civitella Ranieri,

Guggenheim and 7 NEA Fellowships; numerous commissions for chamber ensembles, theater, orchestra, chorus, interactive technology, soundcores for dance, video and film, including an electronic/vocal score for Sesame Street. Her multi-layered textural compositions premiered at Festival d'Automne à Paris, Brisbane Biennial, Lincoln Center, MaerzMusik Berlin, Warsaw Autumn, and many other international venues. Exploring ways of immersing the audience in her music, La Barbara placed the American Composers Orchestra around and among the audience in Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, building her sonic painting "in solitude this fear is lived", inspired by Agnes Martin's minimalist art. Her music from "Erin" features prominently in the score co-composed with Jóhann Jóhannsson for the feature film "Arrival" (2016). "Eyes of an Eagle; Ears of a Hawk: In the Vortex" for voice, chamber ensemble and fixed media, commissioned by The New York Philharmonic Project 19, premiered in The Appell Room, Jazz @ Lincoln Center, NYC, February 10, 2020. Artist faculty member of NYU and College of Performing Arts/Mannes/The New School. www.joanlabarbara.com

Laura Kaminsky

Possessing "an ear for the new and interesting" (*The New York Times*), Hermitage Alum and Trustee Emeritus **Laura Kaminsky** frequently addresses critical social and political issues in her work with a distinct musical language that is "full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff." (*American Record Guide*). Her first opera, *As One*, (2014; co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed) is among the most produced contemporary operas since its 2014 premiere with 50+ productions to date in the U.S., Europe, Canada, South America and Australia. The *As One* team has since been commissioned twice—by Houston Grand Opera for *Some Light Emerges* (2017) and Opera Parallèle/American Opera Projects for *Today It Rains* (2019). *Hometown to the World* (libretto: Reed; Santa Fe Opera) premiered in 2021, *Finding Wright* in 2022 (libretto: Andrea Fellows Fineberg; Dayton Opera). She is co-librettist (with novelist Lisa Moore) and composer for *February*, commissioned by Newfoundland's Opera on the Avalon for 2023. Awarded the 2016 Polish Gold Cross of Merit (Złoty Krzyż Zasługi RP) by the President of Poland for exemplary public service or humanitarian work, Kaminsky has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts, Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Opera America, Chamber Music America, USArtists International, CEC ArtsLink International Partnerships, Likhachev-Russkiy Mir Foundation Cultural Fellowship, and has received six ASCAP-Chamber Music America Awards for Adventurous Programming. Head of composition at Purchase College Conservatory of Music, and a composer mentor for the Juilliard School Blueprint Fellowship program, she leads The American Opera Project's Artistic Advisory Council and sits on the boards of Opera America and the Hermitage Artist Retreat. Her music is recorded on the Affeto, Albany, Bridge, BSS, Cedille, CRI, Capstone, Mode, MSR, and Navona labels and is published by Bill Holab Music. Kaminsky is a BMI composer.

James M. Stephenson

Hermitage Fellow and acclaimed Chicago-based composer **James M. Stephenson** has had his work presented by leading American orchestras, instrumentalists, and wind ensembles around the world. *The Boston Herald* raved about "straightforward, unabashedly beautiful sounds," adding that "Stephenson deserves to be heard again and again!" A formal sense of melody and tonality characterize his music, embedded in a contemporary soundscape. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered Jim's "astonishingly inventive" (*Musical America*) bass trombone concerto in June, 2019, with Charles Vernon as soloist. Also in 2019, Jim's *Symphony #3 - VISIONS* premiered at the University of Miami, and was subsequently recorded by the Lake Forest Symphony. Stephenson has been commissioned by the San Francisco Ballet for a new 30-minute piece which premiered in 2021, and he was named "Musical Collaborator" with the Grand Rapids Symphony for the 20-21 season, which includes the creation of a special concert with violinist Joshua Bell and soprano Larissa Martinez. Upcoming commissions include the Portland Youth Philharmonic, Cincinnati Pops, and Buffalo Philharmonic. Jim originally hails from the Greater Chicago area, as does his wife Sally. In 2007 the couple, along with their four children, returned to the region to pursue the life they now share.

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. Ferguson is 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. Emi was a featured performer alongside Yo-Yo Ma, Paul Simon, and James Taylor at the 10th Anniversary Memorial Ceremony of 9/11 at Ground Zero, where her performance of “Amazing Grace” was televised worldwide. She has premiered works by many of today’s leading composers and has been a featured performer at Marlboro, Lucerne, Ojai, Lake Champlain, Bach Virtuosi, and more festivals. 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.

Amir ElSaffar

Returning Hermitage Fellow, composer, trumpeter, santur player, and vocalist **Amir ElSaffar** is an important voice in an age of cross-cultural music making. He has been described as “one of the most promising figures in jazz today” (*Chicago Tribune*). A recipient of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award and a 2018 US Artist Fellow, ElSaffar is an expert trumpeter with a classical background, conversant not only in the language of contemporary jazz, but has created techniques to play microtones and ornaments idiomatic to Arabic music but not typically heard on the trumpet. Additionally, he is a purveyor of the centuries old, now endangered, Iraqi maqam tradition, which he performs actively as a vocalist and santur player. As a composer, ElSaffar has received commissions from the MAP Fund, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), Newport Jazz Festival, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Chamber Music America, Jazz Institute of Chicago, and was composer-in-residence at the Royaumont Foundation in France. Described as “an imaginative bandleader, expanding the vocabulary of the trumpet and at the same time the modern jazz ensemble” (*All About Jazz*).

Chris Ryan Williams

Hermitage Fellow **Chris Ryan Williams** is an interdisciplinary artist, musician, and educator based in Brooklyn and is most at home collaborating with contemporary improvisers and experimentalists. He has toured extensively throughout the U.S. and Europe. His work explores the dyad of ancestral trauma and power existing in all Black Americans. Williams has been commissioned by WasteLAnd and International Contemporary Ensemble and has been in residence or with BANFF Centre for the Arts, Foundation of Contemporary Arts, Atlantic Center for the Arts, Musik Installationen Nürnberg and others. He has collaborated with creators including Hermitage Fellows Fay Victor and Luke Stewart, as well as Eyvind Kang, Joanna Mattrey, Miriam Parker, Patrick Shiroishi, Bennie Maupin, Nicole Mitchell, Wendy Eisenberg, Pink Siifu, and Marjani Forte-Saunders.

Doug Wright

Hermitage Fellow and Trustee **Doug Wright** is a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning playwright. He is a proud Hermitage alumnus and also served as a juror for the inaugural Hermitage Major Theater Award in 2021. He has remained an engaged and active member of the Hermitage alumni community. Most recently, his play *Goodnight, Oscar*, starring Sean Hayes opened at the Goodman Theater in Chicago under the direction of fellow Hermitage alum Lisa Peterson before transferring to Broadway. Wright’s play *Quills* premiered at Washington, D.C.’s Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in 1995 and subsequently had its debut Off-Broadway at New York Theatre Workshop. *Quills* garnered the 1995 Kesselring Prize for Best New American Play from the National Arts Club and, for Wright, a 1996 Village Voice Obie Award for Outstanding Achievement in Playwriting. In 2000, Wright wrote the screenplay for the film adaptation of *Quills*, which starred Geoffrey Rush. Wright’s play *I Am My Own Wife* was produced Off-Broadway by Playwrights Horizons in 2003. It transferred to Broadway where it won the Tony Award for Best Play, as well as the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 2006, Wright wrote the book for the stage musical adaptation of *Grey Gardens*, which opened on Broadway to critical acclaim. He has adapted the Disney film *The Little Mermaid* as a Broadway musical, which opened in 2007. In 2009, he was commissioned by the La Jolla Playhouse to adapt and direct *Creditors* by August Strindberg. In another La Jolla commission, he wrote

the book for the musical *Hands on a Hardbody*, with the score by Amanda Green and Trey Anastasio. The musical had a run on Broadway in 2013 after premiering at the La Jolla Playhouse in 2012. He has also written the book for the musical *War Paint*, with a score by Scott Frankel and Michael Korie, and starring Patti LuPone and Christine Ebersole. For television, Wright worked on four pilots for producer Norman Lear and teleplays for Hallmark Entertainment and HBO. In film, Wright's credits include screenplays for Fine Line Features, Fox Searchlight, and DreamWorks SKG. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild, where he served as President for many years. In addition to his role as a Hermitage trustee, he also serves on the board of New York Theatre Workshop. He is a recipient of the William L. Bradley Fellowship at Yale University, the Charles MacArthur Fellowship at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, an HBO Fellowship in playwriting, and the Alfred Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University. In 2010, he was named a United States Artists Fellow. Mr. Wright lives in New York City with his partner, songwriter David Clement.

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