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**The Hermitage Artist Retreat Announces  
Playwright Deepa Purohit as the  
2024 Recipient of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize;  
Commission Increased to \$35,000**

2024 HGP Finalists: **Zora Howard, Daniel & Patrick Lazour, Britton Smith**

2024 HGP Jurors: **Rajiv Joseph, Diane Paulus, Ruben Santiago-Hudson**

*The 2024 Hermitage Greenfield Prize is presented to Deepa Purohit to create an original work of theater that will have its first public presentation in Sarasota in 2026. Purohit will also receive an extended residency to develop the new work on the Hermitage Artist Retreat's historic beachfront campus in Manasota Key, Florida.*

January 12, 2024 (Sarasota County, Florida) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** (Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO), in collaboration with the Philadelphia-based Greenfield Foundation, has selected playwright **Deepa Purohit** as the winner of the **2024 Hermitage Greenfield Prize** (HGP). Purohit is an award-winning playwright who made her Off-Broadway debut in the Atlantic Theater Company's 2022-23 season with the world premiere of her play *Elyria* (2023 Drama League Award Nominee for Outstanding Production of a Play, 2017 NEA Commission, and 2019 Jerome Foundation support with Ma-Yi Theater Company).

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is awarded annually, rotating between the fields of theater, music, and visual art. Purohit will receive a six-week Hermitage Fellowship and a \$35,000 commission to create a new work of theater, which will have its first public presentation in Sarasota in 2026. This year, the Greenfield Foundation and the Hermitage decided to increase the cash component of the award from \$30,000 to \$35,000. Purohit will be the first recipient of the HGP to receive this newly increased commission prize.

Purohit was selected by a distinguished jury that included Obie Award-winning playwright **Rajiv Joseph**, Tony Award winner and Artistic Director of A.R.T. **Diane Paulus**, and Tony Award-winning actor, director, and writer **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**. Past winners of this distinguished honor in the discipline of theater include **Aleshea Harris** (2021), **Martyna Majok** (2018), **Nilo Cruz** (2014), **John Guare** (2011), and **Craig Lucas** (2009).

“Amidst a truly extraordinary field of finalists, this remarkable jury faced an incredibly difficult task to select a single recipient. Deepa Purohit emerged as an ambitious and original theatrical voice who impressed the jury with her inspiring vision,” says Hermitage Artistic Director **Andy Sandberg**. “Her dedication to innovative storytelling embodies the mission of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize — to bring into the world works of art that have a significant impact on the broad as well as the artistic culture of our society. We thank our distinguished jurors for their dedication, and we congratulate all four brilliant finalists, whom we look forward to welcoming at the Hermitage. We’re excited to host Deepa in Florida for the Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner in April, and subsequently as a Hermitage Fellow in anticipation of the first public presentation of her new commission in Sarasota in 2026.”

**Deepa Purohit** was featured last year in the Atlantic Theater Company’s season with the Off-Broadway production of her play *Elyria*, earning Purohit a 2023 Drama League Award nomination for Outstanding Production of a Play. She co-founded and ran Rising Circle Theater Collective, a theater company centered on the stories of people of color. Deepa was recently announced as the Director of New Works at People’s Light Theatre. Based in Brooklyn, she studied acting at the Harlem Theatre Company in New York City. Her acting credits include *Sex and The City 2* and *The Sopranos*. Prior to focusing on playwriting, Purohit had a career in education as a Baltimore City middle school teacher, and she is an alumna of the Teach For America program.

Hermitage Greenfield Prize recipients and finalists are nominated and selected by a jury of nationally recognized arts leaders. The 2024 jury in theater included **Rajiv Joseph**, an Obie Award-winning playwright, Pulitzer Prize finalist, and member of the Hermitage National Curatorial Council; **Diane Paulus**, a Tony Award-winning Broadway director and Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University; and **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**, a Tony and Obie Award-winning actor, director, and writer.

Three finalists for the 2024 Hermitage Greenfield Prize include **Zora Howard**, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, writer, performer, and Hermitage alumna whose plays include *Stew*, *Hang Time*, *The Master’s Tools*, *Bust*, and *Good Faith*; **Daniel & Patrick Lazour**, brothers and musical theater writers who created the original musical *We Live in Cairo*; and **Britton Smith**, a writer, performer, and co-founder of the Tony Award-winning organization Broadway Advocacy Coalition. All three will receive a Hermitage residency, in addition to a prize of \$1,000.

“Deepa Purohit had a brilliant play at the Atlantic last season, and she has shown that she has the ambition and the talent as a playwright to be a real serious voice in the theater,” says **Rajiv Joseph**. “Deepa is definitely someone I look forward to seeing more from.”

“The experience of being a juror for the Hermitage Greenfield Prize was deeply inspiring, as we heard very engaging and innovative proposals from an incredible roster of finalists,” says **Diane Paulus**. “The winner, Deepa Purohit, is an artist whom I know will make a major contribution to the theater world, and through her project, to our understanding of the existential questions of how we live and die with dignity and care for our elders.”

“What an honor to be a member of the jury for the 2024 Hermitage Greenfield Prize,” added **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**. “Listening to the ideas bursting from the minds and hearts of four of the most dynamic theater artists of our time was a revelation. This whole process was a

wonderful confirmation that our theater is in great hands and the future is indeed very bright. That the Hermitage is here to support these exceptional artists is truly a gift. It gives me the greatest pleasure to say congratulations to all four finalists – Zora Howard, Daniel & Patrick Lazour, Deepa Purohit, and Britton Smith – all champions of this extraordinary life that has chosen us called the theater. We look forward to witnessing their fierce, brave, and beautiful stories unfold.”

“I’m humbled and deeply grateful to receive the incredibly generous Hermitage Greenfield Prize at this moment in my life. I’m honestly blown away,” says Purohit. “The support of the prize and the residency will provide me with the much needed space, time, and resources that I’ve been craving to not only create a new work, but also to grow and experiment in my craft in ways I hope will contribute to American theater and the cultural fabric of our society.”

Centering the stories of South Asian women, Purohit plans to explore a question we all must encounter in our lives — how does one die with dignity in a society that values a sophisticated medical system centered on a key tenet: to prolong life? Purohit aims to bring all her skills as a playwright and theatrical polymath to this new commission, blending various forms of theatrical expression including multimedia, installation performance art, and immersive theatrical happenings. Growing up with a father who immigrated to Ohio and built his career as a surgeon in the American medical system, and a mother who spent many years at the end of her life navigating the complex system as a patient, Purohit brings deep personal connections and insight to the story. In the face of an immense, multi-billion dollar medical and elder care industry, Purohit explores what she believes to be one of the most complicated and meaningful issues of our time — how to die with dignity.

Purohit will be celebrated at the **Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner on Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6pm** at Michael’s On East in Sarasota, Florida. Capacity will be limited, so early reservations are strongly recommended. *Tables and sponsorships now available; additional information can be found at [HermitageArtistRetreat.org](http://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).*

In addition to the Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner on April 14<sup>th</sup>, the Hermitage Greenfield Prize Celebration will include programs and talks with current and past HGP winners from April 12 to 15, 2024. These events will be presented on the Hermitage Beach and throughout Sarasota County with some also available online. Additional details about these programs will be announced at a later date. The Hermitage Greenfield Prize Celebration is presented in partnership with the **Greenfield Foundation**, with the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** serving as the Lead Community Sponsor.

In addition to the Hermitage Greenfield Prize, the Hermitage Artist Retreat launched the annual Hermitage Major Theater Award (HMTA) in 2021, established to recognize a playwright or theater artist with a \$35,000 commission to create a new, original, and impactful piece of theater. Recipients of the HMTA to date include playwright **Madeleine George** (*Only Murders in the Building* on Hulu) and theater maker **Shariffa Ali**, who both recently shared readings of their newly created commissions at MCC Theater in New York, as well as the most recent recipient **Imani Uzuri**, and a fourth winner to be announced in the coming weeks.

For more information about the Hermitage, the Hermitage Greenfield Prize, and upcoming Hermitage programs, visit [HermitageArtistRetreat.org](https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).

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***“An organization that does more for artists than any I have encountered.”***

—Craig Lucas, Tony Award Nominee & 2009 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

***“I hope the Hermitage continues to give artists an opportunity to do things that they haven’t done before. It’s such a great and benevolent thing that the Hermitage and the Hermitage Greenfield Prize exist.”***

—Trenton Doyle Hancock, Visual Artist, 2013 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

***“It was like someone opened the door and invited me to create a work that is responsive to this time, a work that can be reflective of this time... I am super grateful for that.”***

—Aleshea Harris, Playwright and 2021 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

***“To have space that is for you to do your own thing on your own terms — it’s really one of the best gifts an artist can receive.”***

—Vijay Iyer, Pianist, Composer, and 2012 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

***The Hermitage provides a much-needed opportunity to immerse myself in creating, to share my work with the community, and above all to reconnect with nature and my surroundings. It’s impossible to not go out and watch the sunset or listen to the crashing waves – a constant reminder of what’s out there, what’s always waiting for me when I decide to pause and listen, is essential.***

—Angélica Negrón, Composer, 2022 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

***“Organizations like the Hermitage are so critical to the cultural fabric of the United States. When you bring together artists from different disciplines, from various cities that span so many different histories, there are unexpected outcomes that you would never find on your own. Without the Hermitage Greenfield Prize, I would not have the same kind of freedom and support to experiment with space, financial resources, and the kind of intellectual communities that are being brought together here.”***

—Sandy Rodriguez, Visual Artist, 2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner

***“We all move in our own worlds, just figuring things out and never knowing who is watching. This prize affirms that it’s what you do, not what you say, that confirms who you are – and that’s the thing that moves me about dance and that this opportunity provides. And hopefully, thanks to the Hermitage Greenfield Prize, this piece I’m creating will be a part of provoking everyone to take action, getting down to the core of self, the core of humanity.”***

—Rennie Harris, Dancer and Choreographer, 2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner



## THE HERMITAGE GREENFIELD PRIZE

### **The Hermitage Greenfield Prize**

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize (HGP) is a transformative partnership between the Hermitage Artist Retreat and the Greenfield Foundation. Rotating between the fields of theater, music, and visual art, this prestigious national prize seeks to “bring into the world works of art that will have a significant impact on the broad as well as the artistic culture of our society.” The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is awarded annually and includes a Hermitage Fellowship, as well as a \$35,000 commission for a new and original piece of work to be created within a two-year time frame. A residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat on Manasota Key in Englewood, Florida, ensures time and space in which to do the work. Past recipients of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize include: Rennie Harris, choreographer (2023), Sandy Rodriguez, visual artist (2023), Angélica Negrón, composer/instrumentalist (2022); Aleshea Harris, playwright (2021); Helga Davis, composer/performer (2019); Martyna Majok, playwright (2018); David Burnett, photojournalist (2017); Coco Fusco, interdisciplinary artist (2016); Bobby Previte, composer/drummer (2015); Nilo Cruz, playwright (2014); Trenton Doyle Hancock, visual artist (2013); Vijay Iyer, composer/pianist (2012); John Guare, playwright (2011); Sanford Biggers, visual artist (2010); Craig Lucas, playwright (2009); and Eve Beglarian, composer (2009).

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### **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 or performance, 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](https://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 Community Foundation of Sarasota County.*

## BIOS:

### WINNER OF THE 2024 HERMITAGE GREENFIELD PRIZE (HGP)

#### Deepa Purohit

**Deepa Purohit** (she/her) is a Brooklyn-based playwright. She made her Off-Broadway debut in the Atlantic Theater Company's 2022-23 season with the world premiere of her play *Elyria* (2023 Drama League Award Nominee for Outstanding Production of a Play, 2017 NEA Commission, and 2019 Jerome Foundation support w/Ma-Yi Theater Company). She received the 2023 Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award for Excellence in Playwriting, and a 2022-23 Edgerton Foundation Award for *Elyria*. Plays: *Crushed Earth* with Sanjit De Silva (2017 People's Light Theatre: New Play Frontiers Commission) – 2023 audio play debut with People's Light, Theatre Horizon, and Hedgerow Theatre, *The In Between*, *Mxx/perience*, *A Valentine* (2016 Kilroys Honorable Mention), *Bones* (2017 Andrew Mellon Foundation Residency w/Ma-Yi Theater Company), *Have Sari Will Travel!* (Rising Circle Theater Collective), *Flight*, and *Mothering*: a collection of short form plays. Co-writing with Sanjit De Silva and Rising Circle Theater Collective: *Pulling the Lever*, *American Family Project*, *Grace*. Deepa is currently adapting *Elyria* into a TV series and working on a NYSCA new play commission from Atlantic Theater Company. She co-founded and ran Rising Circle Theater Collective (2000-2012), a theater company centered on the stories of people of color. A former Baltimore City middle school teacher and 1992 Teach For America alumna, Deepa has a BA in History from Northwestern University, Masters in Public Health from Columbia University, and an MFA in Playwriting from Brooklyn College. She is currently the Director of New Works at People's Light Theatre.

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### 2024 HERMITAGE GREENFIELD PRIZE FINALISTS:

#### Zora Howard

**Zora Howard** is a Harlem-bred writer and performer. Plays include *Stew* (2021 Pulitzer Prize Finalist; Page 73 Productions); *Hang Time* (The Flea); *The Master's Tools* (Under the Radar Festival; WTF); *Bust* (2022 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Finalist); and *Good Faith*. Her work has been developed at the Hermitage Artist Retreat, SPACE at Ryder Farm, The Lark, Brown Arts Institute, Ojai Playwrights Conference, and Cape Cod Theatre Project, among others. In 2020, her film *Premature* (2020 Film Independent John Cassavetes Award nominee), which she co-wrote with director Rashaad Ernesto Green, opened in theaters following its world premiere at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. Zora is the inaugural Judith Champion Fellow at Manhattan Theatre Club, a 2022 Lilly Award, and Helen Merrill Award recipient.

#### The Lazour Brothers

**Daniel Lazour** and **Patrick Lazour** are brothers and music theater writers. Their musical *We Live in Cairo* premiered at the American Repertory Theater in 2019, directed by Taibi Magar. Projects in development include a musical adaptation of Ritesh Batra's film *The Lunchbox* (Lincoln Center Theater commission) and their sing-along theater experiment about patients and caregivers, *Night Side Songs* (A.R.T. / Philadelphia Theater Company co-production). Their movie musical *Challenger: An American Dream* is being developed with Bruce Cohen Productions. Original songs by the Lazours can be heard on their independently released albums: *Freres*, *Flap My Wings (Songs from We Live in Cairo)*, *Beth's Homemade Cowboy Breakfast*, and *Lullabies*. They are Jonathan Larson Grant and Richard Rodgers Award recipients, MacDowell and Yaddo Fellows, and New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspects. Patrick holds a B.A. from Boston College, and Daniel holds a B.A. from Columbia University.

## **Britton Smith**

**Britton Smith** is an artist, activist, and Co-Founder/President of Broadway Advocacy Coalition. Founded in 2016, BAC has grown into a Tony Award-winning organization uniting artists with legal experts and community leaders to have lasting impact on policy issues including criminal justice reform, education equality, and liberation within the theatrical landscape. Smith is a proud co-creator of the organization's staple methodology, Theater of Change, and was invited into Columbia Law School as an adjunct professor. Smith is also the front man and songwriter of the funk liberation band "Britton and The Sting," which has been fueling the NYC music scene for years. Their shows feel like church in all of the best ways. Recently sold-out performances include the Apollo Music Cafe, Rockwood Music Hall, and Joe's Pub. Britton has been featured in *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *Fault Magazine*, and *The New Yorker*; Britton & The Sting was also featured in *Paper Magazine's* "Bops Only: 10 Songs You Need to Start Your Weekend Right" list, as well as a featured 2020 NPR Tiny Desk Submission Top Pick. Acting credits include the STARZ comedy series "Run the World" (Gotham Awards Nominee) as Zane, and the Broadway musical *Be More Chill*, *Shuffle Along!*, and *After Midnight*. He was a featured soloist in PBS' 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Great Performances (2023). [BrittonAndTheSting.com](http://BrittonAndTheSting.com) / [@brittonsmithworld](https://www.instagram.com/brittonsmithworld)

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## **2024 HERMITAGE GREENFIELD PRIZE JURY:**

### **Rajiv Joseph**

**Rajiv Joseph** is an award-winning playwright and a member of the Hermitage's National Curatorial Council. His play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* was a 2010 Pulitzer Prize Finalist for Drama and was also awarded a grant for Outstanding New American Play by the National Endowment for the Arts. He has twice won the Obie Award for Best New American Play, first in 2016 with *Guards at the Taj* (also a 2016 Lortel Winner for Best Play) and again in 2021 for *Describe the Night*. Other plays include *Archduke*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *Animals Out of Paper*, *The Lake Effect*, *The North Pool*, *Mr. Wolf* and *King James*, which recently had celebrated runs at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater, Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum, and Off-Broadway at Manhattan Theatre Club. Joseph has been awarded artistic grants from the Whiting Foundation, United States Artists, and the Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust. He has served as a board member of the Lark Play Development Center in New York City. He is currently an ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago, served for three years in the Peace Corps in Senegal, and now lives in Brooklyn, New York.

### **Diane Paulus**

**Diane Paulus** is the Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University. A.R.T.: *WILD*, *Gloria: A Life*, *Jagged Little Pill*, *ExtraOrdinary*, *The White Card*, *In the Body of the World*, *Waitress* (currently on US National Tour), *Crossing*, *Finding Neverland*, *Pippin* (Tony Award, Best Revival and Best Director), *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (Tony Award, Best Revival; NAACP Award, Best Direction), *Prometheus Bound*, *Death and the Powers: The Robots' Opera*, *Best of Both Worlds*, *The Donkey Show*. Other work includes Cirque du Soleil's *Amaluna*, *Invisible Thread* at Second Stage, and the Public Theater's Tony Award-winning revival of *HAIR* on Broadway and London's West End. As an opera director, her credits include *The Magic Flute*, the complete Monteverdi cycle, and the trio of Mozart-Da Ponte operas. Paulus is Professor of the Practice of Theater in Harvard University's English Department and Department of Theater, Dance & Media. She was selected for *Boston Magazine's* 2022, 2020, and 2018 lists of Boston's "100 Most Influential "People," the 2014 "Time 100," *Time Magazine's* annual list of the "100 Most Influential People in the World," and as one of *Variety's* "Trailblazing Women in Entertainment" for 2014.

## **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**

**Ruben Santiago-Hudson's** work has been seen all over the country. Highlights include: Directing on Broadway: August Wilson's *Jitney* (Tony, Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, NY Drama Critics Circle, Drama League), *Skeleton Crew* (Tony nomination, Obie Award), and his own *Lackawanna Blues* (Outer Critics, Drama Desk, Obie, Helen Hayes). Directing Off-Broadway: *Paradise Blue*, *The Piano Lesson* (Lucille Lortel, Joseph A. Callaway, Audelco, Obie), *Othello*, *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, *My Children My Africa*, *Seven Guitars*, and *The First Breeze of Summer*. Regional directing credits include A.C.T. (San Francisco), The Old Globe (San Diego), Two River Theater Company, Mark Taper Forum, McCarter Theater, Seattle Rep, City Center Encores, and The Kennedy Center. As a writer, his screenplay for his autobiographical *Lackawanna Blues* garnered numerous awards including The Humanitas Prize, National Board of Reviews, NAACP Image Award, The Christopher Award, and nominations for an Emmy, Golden Globe, and WGA Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. He most recently adapted August Wilson's award-winning *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* for Netflix. Ruben's professional acting career spans close to five decades. Broadway credits include *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Seven Guitars* (Tony Award), *Gem Of The Ocean*, *Lackawanna Blues*, and *Stick Fly*. Select additional credits include: *Winter's Tale*, *How I learned What I Learned*, *Measure For Measure*, *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, *A Soldier's Play*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*, among many others. Ruben holds an MFA from Wayne State University, a BA from Binghamton University, and an Honorary Doctorate Degrees from both Wayne State University and Buffalo State College.

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

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