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**Playwright and Theater Maker Deepa Purohit Honored  
at 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Hermitage Greenfield Prize Celebration;  
Performances Featured Tony Winner Rachel Bay Jones,  
Kavita Shah, and a World Premiere from Angélica Negrón**

*The annual celebration raised more than **\$300,000** in support of the Hermitage's mission, with special live performances and appearances from Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award-winning star of stage and screen **Rachel Bay Jones**, Broadway performer **Randy Redd**, singer and composer **Kavita Shah**, and a World Premiere concert by 2022 HGP winner **Angélica Negrón**.*

April 17, 2024 (Sarasota County, Florida) — The annual **Hermitage Greenfield Prize Dinner** on Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> honored playwright and theater maker **Deepa Purohit**. This was the central event of a three-day celebration, hosted by the **Hermitage Artist Retreat** (Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO) in partnership with the Greenfield Foundation. The gala evening was presented at Michael's on East and featured inspiring performances from Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award-winning star of stage and screen **Rachel Bay Jones** (*Dear Evan Hansen*, "Young Sheldon"), accompanied by Broadway veteran **Randy Redd**; original songs by internationally renowned composer and performer **Kavita Shah**; and an appearance from past Hermitage Greenfield Prize winner **Angélica Negrón**. The annual gala raised more than **\$300,000** in support of the Hermitage's mission, in addition to the Greenfield Foundation's increased annual gift of \$175,000. The festive evening was co-chaired by **Pauline Wamsler** and **Stephanie & Gene Jones**. Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg** served as master of ceremonies and announced that **Asolo Repertory Theatre** will be collaborating with the Hermitage as the presenting partner for the first public presentation of Deepa Purohit's commission in Sarasota in 2026. As this year's HGP recipient, Purohit receives a **\$35,000 commission**, along with an extended residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat.

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize (HGP) Dinner kicked off with an energetic performance from **Megha Vaid** and the **Indian Association of Manasota**. This was followed by a welcome video from Tony Award-winning actor, director, writer, and 2024 HGP juror **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**. "This whole process was a wonderful confirmation that the theater is in great hands and the future is indeed very bright," said Santiago-Hudson. "That the Hermitage is here to support these exceptional artists is truly a gift." **Andy Sandberg** then took the stage as master of ceremonies and spoke about the legacy and impact of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize before introducing his longtime friend and the evening's headliner – Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award-winning star of stage and screen **Rachel Bay Jones**. Jones won over the audience with a medley of "Something Beautiful" by Ben Rector and "If I Had a Boat" by Lyle Lovett, accompanied by her long-time collaborator and Broadway veteran **Randy Redd**. She spoke about how inspiring the Hermitage has been for her and Redd before earning a standing ovation with her powerful and emotional rendition of Stephen Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns."

The event carried on with a glimpse into the work from playwright and theater artist **Deepa Purohit**, featuring tributes from this year's three HGP jurors **Rajiv Joseph**, **Diane Paulus**, and **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**. The evening continued with remarks from 2022 HGP recipient **Angélica Negrón**, who spoke about her experience at the Hermitage and offered insight into her world premiere commission. This was followed by a special appearance from internationally renowned singer and Hermitage Fellow **Kavita Shah**, who charmed the audience with performances of her original song "Joia" from her new album *Cape Verdean Blues* and "Chaki Ben," a lullaby sung in her mother's native language of Gujarati and dedicated to Purohit.

Following Shah's performance, Sandberg presented **Deepa Purohit** with this year's Hermitage Greenfield Prize. "Thank you for being supporters of arts in America," said Purohit in her acceptance speech. "It's what we desperately need right now. This gift of time, space, and resources from the Hermitage and the Greenfield Foundation are the essentials that every artist needs to create work that comes from the soul – to create art that can weave dreams and visions into existence and then send it out into the world."

To close out this memorable night after an enthusiastic paddle raise, Rachel Bay Jones returned to the stage. "There's something special about the Hermitage," said Jones. "There are so few hours in the day that can be devoted to developing something *new*, often starting as just an idea or a desire. The Hermitage gives artists breath, space, and time... and something magical happens." She went on to earn a second standing ovation for her showstopping rendition of Sondheim's "Move On."

"This was truly remarkable evening and a joyful celebration of this incredible prize," said Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. "It was an honor to celebrate Deepa Purohit, and we can't wait to introduce her brand-new play to our Gulf

Coast community. It was thrilling as well to hear unforgettable live performances from Rachel Bay Jones and original songs by Kavita Shah, along with inspiring remarks from Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Angélica Negrón, and more. We are so grateful to the Greenfield Foundation, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, and all our sponsors and donors for their belief in our mission and the support of new work.”

The annual Prize Dinner anchored a series of events celebrating the impact and legacy of the Hermitage Greenfield Prize. The weekend commenced with two Saturday events on the Hermitage campus. The first was an in-depth conversation with 2024 HGP Winner **Deepa Purohit**, offering an introduction to her work and career, as well as insight into her plans for this new commission. Later that day, the Hermitage hosted an inspiring and enlightening sunset program with Purohit, alongside two fellow South Asian Hermitage artists and educators, **Kavita Shah** and **Nandita Shenoy**. This panel conversation, “South Asian Artists in America,” was moderated by **Andy Sandberg** and highlighted the rich diversity of South Asian culture and lived experience emanating from this region of the world.

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize Celebration culminated on Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> with **Angélica Negrón** presenting *Azul Naranja Salado*, the original composition resulting from her 2022 Hermitage Greenfield Prize. This **world premiere concert** set a new standard for embracing the Florida weather as part of the experience; this contemporary classical composition was performed live outdoors on the Hermitage Beach on Manasota Key. Negrón’s music was carefully synchronized with the setting sun for a truly unique symphonic experience, and the piece was masterfully conducted by **George Nickson**, Co-Artistic Director of the evening’s presenting partner **ensembleNewSRQ**. Blending a sixteen-piece string ensemble with one of the season’s most beautiful sunsets led to a moving and awe-inspiring performance unlike any other. Angélica Negrón delivered on her hope that this site-specific work would serve as a reminder to audiences to seek out and surrender to moments of inspiration.

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is presented in partnership with the Philadelphia-based **Greenfield Foundation**, who launched this initiative with the Hermitage in 2009. The **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** served as the lead community sponsor for this year’s festivities.

**Deepa Purohit** was selected by a distinguished jury that included Obie Award-winning playwright and Pulitzer Prize finalist **Rajiv Joseph**, Tony Award-winning Artistic Director of A.R.T. **Diane Paulus**, and Tony Award-winning actor, director, and writer **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**. Centering the stories of South Asian women, Purohit plans through this commission to explore a question we all must encounter in our lives, but often do not speak about publicly. In the face of an immense, multi-billion dollar medical and elder care industry, Deepa Purohit will examine what she believes to be one of the most complicated and meaningful issues of our time – how to die with dignity.

Past winners of this distinguished honor include **Rennie Harris**, choreographer (2023), **Sandy Rodriguez**, visual artist (2023), **Angélica Negrón**, composer (2022); **Aleshea Harris**, playwright (2021); **Helga Davis**, composer (2019); **Martyna Majok**, playwright (2018); **David Burnett**, photojournalist (2017); **Coco Fusco**, visual artist (2016); **Bobby Previte**, composer (2015); **Nilo Cruz**, playwright (2014); **Trenton Doyle Hancock**, visual artist (2013); **Vijay Iyer**, composer (2012); **John Guare**, playwright (2011); **Sanford Biggers**, visual artist (2010); **Craig Lucas**, playwright (2009); and **Eve Beglarian**, composer (2009).

To learn more about the Hermitage or to register for upcoming Hermitage programs, visit [HermitageArtistRetreat.org](https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).

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### **The Hermitage Greenfield Prize**

The Hermitage Greenfield Prize is a transformative partnership between the Hermitage Artist Retreat and the Greenfield Foundation. Rotating between the fields of music, theater, 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 the artistic culture of our society. Now in its sixteenth year, the Hermitage Greenfield Prize is awarded annually and includes a Hermitage Fellowship, as well as a \$30,000 commission for a new piece of work to be created within a two-year time frame. A residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat on Manasota Key (Sarasota County, Florida) ensures time and space in which to conceive and complete the work. Winners include **Deepa Purohit**, Theater (2024), **Rennie Harris**, Dance & Choreography (2023), **Sandy Rodriguez**, Visual Art (2023), **Angélica Negrón**, Music (2022), **Aleshea Harris**, Theater (2021); **Helga Davis**, Music (2019); **Martyna Majok**, Theater (2018); **David Burnett**, Photography (2017); **Coco Fusco**, Visual Art (2016); **Bobby Previte**, Music (2015); **Nilo Cruz**, Theater (2014); **Trenton Doyle Hancock**, Visual Art (2013); **Vijay Iyer**, Music (2012); **John Guare**, Theater (2011); **Sanford Biggers**, Visual Art (2010); **Craig Lucas**, Theater (2009) and **Eve Beglarian**, Music (2009).

### **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](https://HermitageArtistRetreat.org).**

**The Hermitage is supported by:**

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**SELECT BIOS**

**Deepa Purohit**

**Deepa Purohit** is the winner of the **2024 Hermitage Greenfield Prize**. A Brooklyn-based playwright and theater artist, she made her Off-Broadway debut in Atlantic Theater Company's 2022-2023 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). She received the 2023 Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award for Excellence in Playwriting and a 2022-2023 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 with Ma-Yi Theater Company), *Have Sari Will Travel!* (Rising Circle Theater Collective), *Flight*, and *Mothering*. 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 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.

**Angélica Negrón**

Puerto Rican-born composer and multi-instrumentalist **Angélica Negrón** is the winner of the **2022 Hermitage Greenfield Prize**. She writes music for accordions, robotic instruments, toys, and electronics as well as for chamber ensembles, orchestras, choir, and film. For her HGP commission, Angélica has composed a work synchronized to the setting sun, inspired by solar pulses captured by NASA. Her music has been described as “wistfully idiosyncratic and contemplative” (WQXR/Q2), while *The New York Times* noted her “capacity to surprise.” Negrón has been commissioned by the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Kronos Quartet, loadbang, Prototype Festival, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, Sō Percussion, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, and the New York Botanical Garden, among others. She has collaborated with notable artists from all around the world and has written music for films, theater, and modern dance. Recent and upcoming premieres include works for the Seattle Symphony, LA Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, Big Ears Festival, and NY Philharmonic Project 19 Initiative. [AngelicaNegrón.com](http://AngelicaNegrón.com)

**Rachel Bay Jones**

**Rachel Bay Jones** is best known for originating the role of ‘Heidi Hansen’ in the original Broadway cast of *Dear Evan Hansen*, and received a Tony Award, Emmy Award, Grammy Award, and Lucille Lortel Award for her performance. An actress acclaimed for her versatile ability to bring comedic, dramatic, and character roles to life, she has garnered praise for her performances in

Stephen Sondheim's *Here We Are*, Diane Paulus' Tony Award-winning revivals of *Pippin* and *Hair*, went on for Patti Lupone in the original Broadway production of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, wowed New York audiences in the critically acclaimed productions of Michael John LaChiusa's *First Daughter Suite* and *Hello Again*, and received rave reviews for her performance as 'Diana' in the Kennedy Center's revival production of *Next to Normal*, directed by Michael Grief. She can be seen on television in major roles on CBS' *Young Sheldon*, *The United States of Al*, and *God Friended Me*, ABC's *The Good Doctor*, *Modern Family*, Amazon's *Panic*, and *Why Women Kill* on Paramount+. On film, she starred in *Ben Is Back*, opposite Julia Roberts, in *Critical Thinking*, directed by and opposite John Leguizamo, as well as *Bob Trevino Likes It*, which recently premiered at SXSW. Her debut solo album *Showfolk* can be purchased on iTunes and Amazon.

### **Kavita Shah**

Returning Hermitage Fellow **Kavita Shah** is an award-winning vocalist, composer, researcher, and educator who makes work in deep engagement with the jazz tradition, while also addressing and advancing its global sensibilities. A lifelong New Yorker of Indian origin hailed for possessing an “amazing dexterity for musical languages” (NPR), Shah incorporates her ethnographic research on Brazilian, West African, and Indian traditions into her original music. Notable projects include “Visions” (2014), co-produced by Lionel Loueke, “Folk Songs of Naboréa” (2017), presented at the Park Avenue Armory, and “Interplay” (2018) in duo with François Moutin, which was nominated for France’s Victoires de la Musique for Jazz Album of the Year. Shah regularly performs her music at major concert halls, festivals, and clubs on six continents. She holds a B.A. in Latin American Studies from Harvard and a Master’s in Jazz Voice from Manhattan School of Music.

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### **SELECT UPCOMING HERMITAGE PROGRAMS:**

***SPECIAL EXHIBITION!*** – March 10 – July 7, “**Impact: Contemporary Artists at the Hermitage Artist Retreat,**” curated by **Dan Cameron** and featuring ten Hermitage Fellows: **Diana Al-Hadid, Sanford Biggers** (2010 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner), **Chitra Ganesh, Todd Gray, Trenton Doyle Hancock** (2013 Hermitage Greenfield Prize Winner), **Michelle Lopez, Ted Riederer, John Sims, Kukuli Velarde,** and **William Villalongo**, at Sarasota Art Museum (Sarasota) *Presented in partnership with Sarasota Art Museum*

***OPENING THIS WEEK – SPECIAL EXHIBITION!*** – April 21 – September 29, “**The Truth of the Night Sky:**” **A Hermitage Collaboration** featuring Hermitage Fellows **Anne Patterson** and **Patrick Harlin**, at Sarasota Art Museum (Sarasota)  
*Presented in partnership with Sarasota Art Museum*

**Wednesday, April 24 @ 3:30pm**, “**Annette Dignam State College of Florida Residency in Literature at the Hermitage: Writing for the Stage,**” featuring Hermitage Fellow **Sarah Gancher**, at State College of Florida, Venice Campus (Englewood)  
*Presented in partnership with State College of Florida*  
*Sarah Gancher's Hermitage Artist Residency made possible by the Annette Dignam State College of Florida Residency in Literature at the Hermitage.*

**Thursday, May 2 @ 6:30pm**, “**Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: Sound and Silence,**” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Bill Bowers** and **Kavita Shah**, at Selby Gardens' Historic Spanish Point (Osprey) *Presented in partnership with Selby Gardens' Historic Spanish Point*

**Friday, May 10 @ 6:30pm, “Waves: Movements that Shape Us,”** featuring Hermitage Fellows **Rebecca Crenshaw** and **Bess Wohl**, on the Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

**Wednesday, May 15 @ 6:30pm, “Seeing Oneself & Celebrating Identity,”** featuring Hermitage Fellow **Shayok Misha Chowdhury**, at the Koski Center (Sarasota)

*Presented in partnership with ALSO Youth and Asolo Reparatory Theatre and funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Florida Department of State Division of Arts and Culture*

**Friday, May 24 @ 5:30pm, A Piano Performance: “Sonata in Memoriam Lloyd Arriola,”** featuring Hermitage Fellow **Robert Pound** with a performance by pianist **Charles Hulin IV**, at Oak Street Stage (Sarasota) *Presented in partnership with Oak Street Stage*

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

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