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THE HERMITAGE
artist retreat



**New Program Announcement:
2024 Hermitage Major Theater Award Winner
Chris Bush Visits the Hermitage June 7th for
“Standing at the Beach’s Edge: London to Sarasota”**

*UK playwright and theater artist **Chris Bush**, winner of the **2024 Hermitage Major Theater Award** and author of the hit West End musical “**Standing at the Sky’s Edge**,” visits Sarasota for the first time to speak about her creative process and her forthcoming Hermitage commission.*

“The Hermitage Major Theater Award is an incredible opportunity for an artist to develop their craft, and Chris Bush is a hugely talented playwright who has already demonstrated that big ideas can change the world.”

—Michael Grandage, 2024 HMTA Award Committee, Tony & Olivier Award-Winning Director

“Chris Bush is an artist the theater world cannot ignore, and this award from the Hermitage offers her the opportunity to make a work that is deeply personal. I know that Chris will make a really powerful play that we can’t wait to see.”

—Indhu Rubasingham, 2024 HMTA Award Committee, Director of the National Theatre (UK)

April 30, 2024 (Sarasota County, Florida) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** is pleased to announce “Standing at the Beach’s Edge: London to Sarasota” on **Friday, June 7th at 6:30pm**, presented on the Hermitage Beach. This newly added program features 2024 **Hermitage Major Theater Award** winner **Chris Bush**, an Olivier Award-winning playwright, lyricist, and theater maker based in the United Kingdom, in conversation with Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**.

Bush’s impressive body of work includes the hit musical **Standing at the Sky’s Edge**, which recently won her an **Olivier Award** and a UK Theatre Award for Best Musical. Following sold-out runs at the National Theatre and Sheffield Theatres, the acclaimed production transferred to the West End earlier this year and has been heralded as “the most exciting new British musical in years” (*WhatsOnStage*) and “a moving and resonant piece of popular entertainment — magnificent and meaningful.” (*The Times*) Bush has also received UK Theatre Awards for her shows *Fantastically*

Great Women Who Changed the World and *The Assassination of Katie Hopkins*, celebrated by *The Guardian* as “an intelligent, thoughtful, and often wryly enjoyable look at the polarization of public debate in the age of social media.” Raised in Sheffield, England, Chris Bush currently lives in London, and this will be her first trip to Sarasota.

Earlier this year, Chris Bush was announced as the winner of the **2024 Hermitage Major Theater Award**; she is the fourth recipient of this distinguished international honor. Bush will receive a cash prize of \$35,000 USD, an extended residency at the Hermitage, and a workshop presentation in London in 2025. Bush was selected by an Award Committee that included **Michael Grandage**, Tony and Olivier-Award winning director of stage and screen, former Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse, and current Artistic Director of the Michael Grandage Company; **Tessa Ross**, CBE and BAFTA Award-winning Co-CEO of House Productions; and **Indhu Rubasingham**, an Olivier Award-winning director, longtime Artistic Director of the Kiln Theatre, and newly announced as the incoming Director of the National Theatre. The Hermitage Major Theater Award is made possible with a generous multi-year gift to the Hermitage from **Flora Major** and the **Kutya Major Foundation**.

In this newly announced Hermitage Beach program on June 7th, Gulf Coast residents can enjoy a candid conversation with a celebrated UK playwright, librettist, and lyricist whom London theatergoers can't get enough of — **Chris Bush**. This rising star of the UK theater scene and recent winner of the **Hermitage Major Theater Award** will share thoughts about her career, making theater in the UK, and how she plans to reimagine Virginia Woolf's iconic novel *Orlando* for the 21st century. In describing her intended Hermitage commission, currently titled ***Orlando (FL)***, Bush has shared: “This original play will be a story of transformation, translation, and self-determination. The play will follow Lana, a trans woman living in Orlando, Florida, whose life is turned upside down by the arrival of a fantastical stranger. *Orlando (FL)* aspires to be a queer fantasia – a gloriously funny, angry, and defiant testament to the power of literature and the resilience of LGBTQ+ communities.”

Hermitage programs like this one 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. Running time for most Hermitage programs is 60-70 minutes. Due to capacity limitations, **registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org**.

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 year-round 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 Chris Bush's complete bio.

Additional summer programs will be announced soon.

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 nonprofit artist retreat located on Manasota Key, Florida. For more than two decades, the Hermitage has invited accomplished artists across multiple disciplines for residencies on its beachfront campus, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Hermitage artists are invited to interact with the local community, reaching thousands of Gulf Coast residents and visitors each year with unique and inspiring programs. Hermitage Fellows have included 15 Pulitzer Prize winners, Poets Laureate, MacArthur 'Genius' Fellows, and multiple Tony, Emmy, Grammy, Oscar winners and nominees. Works created at this beachside retreat by a diverse and accomplished group of Hermitage alumni have gone on to renowned theaters, concert halls, and galleries throughout the world. Each year, the Hermitage awards the Hermitage Greenfield Prize for a new work of art, the Hermitage Major Theater Award for an original theater commission, and the Aspen Music Festival's Hermitage Prize in Composition.

For more information, visit HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

The Hermitage Major Theater Award

The Hermitage Major Theater Award (HMTA) was established in 2021 to recognize a playwright or theater artist with a \$35,000 commission to create a new, original, and impactful piece of theater. The HMTA offers one of the largest non-profit theater commissions in the United States. HMTA winners and finalists are nominated and selected by a jury of established arts leaders in the field of theater. The annual recipient of this national, jury-selected award receives a cash prize of \$35,000, a residency at the Hermitage's historic beachfront campus to develop the new work, and a developmental reading or workshop in a leading arts capital such as New York, London, or Chicago.

The Hermitage is supported by:

Hermitage programs are supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts; 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.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Newly Announced Program Description:

“Standing at the Beach’s Edge: London to Sarasota” with 2024 Hermitage Major Theater Award Winner Chris Bush – Friday, June 7, 6:30pm: London theatergoers can’t get enough of 2024 Hermitage Major Theater Award winner **Chris Bush**’s latest musical *Standing at the Sky’s Edge*. After its premiere in the town where it’s set and this gifted theater maker hails from, Sheffield, the production moved to the National Theatre in London and is now running on the West End, garnering accolades and rave review along the way. Now, one of the show’s lead creative minds is coming to Sarasota. Hear from Hermitage Major Theater Award winner Chris Bush about her career, creating theater in the UK, and how she plans to reimagine Virginia Woolf’s iconic novel *Orlando* for the 21st century and set in Florida. *Chris Bush’s residency and Hermitage Major Theater Award are made possible with generous support from Flora Major and the Kutya Major Foundation. Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org (\$5/person registration fee). Hermitage Beach, 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood, FL 34223*

CURRENT AND 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*

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*

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 Marie Selby Botanical Gardens*
Bill Bowers’ Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Charlotte & Charles Perret

Friday, May 10 @ 6:30pm, “Waves: Movements that Shape Us,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Rebecca Crenshaw** and **Bess Wohl**, on the Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)
Bess Wohl’s Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Carol White Bold & Larry Bold

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

Thursday, May 23 @ 6:30pm, “Visualizing Culture,” featuring Hermitage Fellows **Diana Al-Hadid, Raven Chacon** (Pulitzer Prize winner), and **Candice Hopkins**, on the Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

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*

NEWLY ANNOUNCED! – **Friday, June 7 @ 6:30pm, “Standing on the Beach’s Edge: London to Sarasota,”** featuring 2024 **Hermitage Major Theater Award** winner **Chris Bush**, on the Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)

*The Hermitage Major Theater Award and Chris Bush’s residency are made possible with generous support from **Flora Major** and the **Kutya Major Foundation**.*

ARTIST BIO

CHRIS BUSH

A Sheffield-born playwright, lyricist, and theatre maker, **Chris Bush** is the 2024 recipient of the **Hermitage Major Theater Award**. Current and past work includes *Standing at the Sky’s Edge* (Sheffield Theatres/National Theatre – Olivier Award and UK Theatre Award for Best Musical, South Bank Sky Arts Award for Best Theatre), *Pericles* and *The Odyssey* (both National Theatre); *Rock/Paper/Scissors*, *The Band Plays On*, *What We Wished For*, *A Dream*, and *The Sheffield Mysteries* (all Sheffield Theatres); *Jane Eyre* (Stephen Joseph Theatre, New Vic Theatre); *The Doncastrain Chalk Circle* (CAST Doncaster/National Theatre); *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World* (Kenny Wax, UK Tour – UK Theatre Award for Best Show for Children & Young People); *Hungry* (Paines Plough); *Kein Weltuntergang/Not the End of the World* (Schaubühne, Berlin); *Nine Lessons and Carols: Stories for a Long Winter* (Almeida Theatre); *Faustus: That Damned Woman* (Headlong/Lyric Hammersmith/Birmingham Rep); *The Last Noël* (Attic Theatre/UK tour); *The Assassination of Katie Hopkins* (Theatr Clwyd - UK Theatre Award for Best Musical); *The Changing Room* (NT Connections); *A Declaration from the People* (National Theatre: Dorfman); and *Larksong* (New Vic, Stoke-on-Trent). Film includes *Mars* (dir. Abel Rubinstein).

HermitageArtistRetreat.org

Facebook / Instagram: **@HermitageArtistRetreat**