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Media Contact:

Hermitage Media Relations; 941-475-2098, Ext. 8;
Communications@HermitageArtistRetreat.org

THE HERMITAGE
artist retreat



**“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens”
Kicks Off 2025 with Emmy and Drama Desk-Nominated Writer
Mark Sonnenblick, Fresh from His West End Collaboration
with Elton John on *The Devil Wears Prada***

*The “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” series continues its fifth anniversary season beginning the new year with award-winning writer, composer, lyricist, and Hermitage Fellow **Mark Sonnenblick** at Selby Gardens’ Downtown Campus.*

January 6, 2025 (Sarasota County, Florida) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat’s** popular series, **“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens,”** continues its fifth anniversary season and kicks off a brand-new year with **“Book, Music, and Lyrics,”** featuring Emmy Award and Drama Desk nominee **Mark Sonnenblick**. A Hermitage Fellow and recipient of a Jonathan Larson Grant, Sonnenblick will share stories and songs from his original works, and will preview some of what might be next for this rising star of the musical theater world. This Hermitage program will take place on **Thursday, January 30th at 5:30pm** at Selby Gardens’ downtown campus.

Fresh off the ‘heels’ of his collaboration with **Elton John** on the West End premiere of ***The Devil Wears Prada*** and celebrated for his talents as a lyricist, book writer, and composer, Hermitage Fellow **Mark Sonnenblick’s** work has been called “lushly romantic” by *The New York Times*, as well as “sly and unexpectedly subversive” by *The New Yorker*. With a career that already spans stage and screen, including songs on such hits as Apple’s *Spirited*, starring Ryan Reynolds and Will Ferrell, Searchlight Pictures’ *Theater Camp*, and Netflix’s *Lyle Lyle Crocodile*, Sonnenblick’s talents span multiple styles and genres. *Mark Sonnenblick’s Hermitage residency is generously sponsored by the Huisking Family Fund of Community Foundation of Sarasota County.*

See below for complete program details and artist bio.

“Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” is a celebrated collaboration between the Hermitage Artist Retreat and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, featuring performances and explorations of works-in-progress by Hermitage artists-in-residence and alumni. Events in this series are scheduled to take place at Selby Gardens’ Downtown Sarasota campus and the Historic Spanish Point campus in Osprey as a part of the Hermitage’s

2024-2025 season. Remaining dates for this fifth season of “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” (subject to change) include:

- **Thursday January 30, 2025, at 5:30pm**, Downtown Sarasota Campus
- **Thursday February 20, 2025, at 5:30pm**, Historic Spanish Point
- **Thursday, March 6, 2025, at 5:30pm**, Downtown Sarasota Campus
- **Thursday, May 1, 2025, at 6:30pm**, Historic Spanish Point

Admission for these events has no ticket cost, though early registration is strongly recommended as availability is subject to capacity limitations; advance registration is required (\$5/person) at [HermitageArtistRetreat.org](https://www.hermitageartistretreat.org).

Each “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” program features a celebrated Hermitage artist (or artists). The fifth season of the series launched when Hermitage Fellow **Britton Smith** gave a powerful and inspirational performance at Selby Gardens Downtown promenade in October, only a few days after the devastating impacts of Hurricane Milton were felt throughout the region. “Let the Music Set You Free” was a celebratory event and a much-needed moment of healing and resilience, particularly after the Hermitage’s historic campus was severely damaged from both hurricanes Helen and Milton. In early December, returning Hermitage Fellow and renowned flutist **Claire Chase** gave an awe-inspiring performance at Selby Gardens’ Historic Spanish Point as the sun set over the bay. “Solo Flute – The Destiny of Density” was a magical evening of music leading into the holiday season.

Last year’s “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” spotlighted the works and talents of celebrated mime and storyteller **Bill Bowers**, who shared the stage with internationally renowned composer and singer **Kavita Shah**; Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**, fresh from his production of *Operation Epsilon* in London; Hermitage Curatorial Council member **Nataki Garrett**, Tony Award-winning Broadway producer **Tom Kirdahy**, and then Manasota ASALH President **David Wilkins**, who offered an enlightening panel discussion about the State of the Arts in Florida; and award-winning flutist **Emi Ferguson** with classical composer **Jim Stephenson**, who delighted audiences with a flawless performance of one of Stephenson’s original compositions created at the Hermitage. Previous seasons of “Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens” have included Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winner **Michael R. Jackson**; award-winning Chicago playwright **Terry Guest**; Kleban Prize winner **César Alvarez**; world-renowned violinist and Beyoncé collaborator **Lady Jess**; acclaimed classical harpist **Ashley Jackson**; Hermitage Major Theater Award winner **Shariffa Ali**, celebrated cellist and Grammy Award-nominated ETHEL member **Dorothy Lawson**; and more.

“Following a memorable lineup of programs in the final weeks of 2024, we are excited to be kicking off 2025 with Mark Sonnenblick’s program at Selby Gardens,” says Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. “I’ve known Mark as a friend and collaborator for many years, and it’s a thrill to welcome him to the Hermitage. Despite

the challenges faced on campus due to the hurricanes, we remain committed to delivering world-class programs at partner venues throughout our region, introducing our resilient community to extraordinary writers, artists, and performers from around the world.”

Additional winter and spring Hermitage programs will be announced soon.

*Please note: due to the ongoing campus recovery and shifting residency schedules, some Hermitage programs this season will be announced on shorter notice than usual. Audiences are encouraged to keep an eye on **HermitageArtistRetreat.org**, where newly added events will be added as they open for registration.*

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.

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

FULL PROGRAM DETAILS

Newly Announced Hermitage Program:

- **Hermitage Sunsets @ Selby Gardens: “Book, Music, and Lyrics” with Hermitage Fellow Mark Sonnenblick, Thursday January 30, 2025 @ 5:30pm:** Fresh off the ‘heels’ of his collaboration with Elton John on the West End premiere of *The Devil Wears Prada* and celebrated for his talents as a lyricist, book writer, and composer, Hermitage Fellow **Mark Sonnenblick**’s work has been called “lushly romantic” by *The New York Times*, as well as “sly and unexpectedly subversive” by *The New Yorker*. With a career that already spans stage and screen, including songs on such hits as Apple’s *Spirited*, starring Ryan Reynolds and Will Ferrell, Searchlight Pictures’ *Theater Camp*, and Netflix’s *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*, Sonnenblick’s abilities span styles. An Emmy Award and Drama Desk nominee as well as a recipient of the Jonathan Larson Grant, Sonnenblick shares stories and songs from his work so far, and previews some of what might be next. *Presented in Partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. **Registration is required at HermitageArtistRetreat.org** (\$5/person registration fee). Marie Selby*

Botanical Gardens – Downtown Sarasota Campus, 1534 Mound Street, Sarasota, FL 34236. Mark Sonnenblick's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by the Huisking Family Fund of Community Foundation of Sarasota County

The Hermitage Artist Retreat

Sarasota County, Florida
Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO

The Hermitage is a leading national arts incubator and multidisciplinary 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 17 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.

The Hermitage is supported by:

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ARTIST BIO

Mark Sonnenblick

Mark Sonnenblick is an Emmy and Drama Desk-nominated songwriter for theater, film, and television. His projects include the current West End production of *The Devil Wears Prada* (starring Vanessa Williams, in collaboration with Elton John, Shaina Taub, and Kate Wetherhead), *Theater Camp* (with Ben Platt and Molly Gordon, Sundance Special Jury Award), *Spirited* (with Ryan Reynolds and Will Ferrell, Oscar shortlist), *Lyle Lyle Crocodile* (with Shawn Mendes and Constance Wu), *Harlem* (Amazon Prime), *The Good Whale* (podcast for Serial and *The New York Times*), *Midnight at The Never Get* (Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics' Circle nominations; *NY Times* Critic's Pick), and *Independents* ("Best Production" Fringe NYC, *NY Times* Critic's Pick). Mark collaborates with writers across multiple genres, including Elton John, Pasek and Paul, and The Black Label. He's won a Jonathan Larson grant (American Theater Wing), the Harold Adamson Award (ASCAP), a MAC Award ("Show of the Year"), and Best Production at the New York Fringe Festival; he has been nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award.

HermitageArtistRetreat.org

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