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The Hermitage Partners with Chicago's Goodman Theatre to Present the First Workshop of New Play Commission from Hermitage Major Theater Award Winner Naomi Iizuka, *Casa de Mañana*

Naomi Iizuka *was previously selected as the fifth recipient of the* ***Hermitage Major Theater Award*** *by an Award Committee that included* ***Susan V. Booth****,* ***Glenn Davis****, and* ***Chay Yew****.*

Directed by ***Lisa Portes****, casting for the workshop reading of* ***Naomi Iizuka****'s new play* ***Casa de Mañana*** *includes* ***Vaneh Assadourian****,* ***Ayanna Bria Bakari****,* ***Kate Buddeke****,* ***Mi Kang****,* ***Polly Noonan****,* ***Adam Poss****, and* ***Barbara Robertson****.*

October 21, 2026 (Chicago, IL / Sarasota, FL) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** announced today that the Hermitage, in partnership with the **Goodman Theatre**, will present a Chicago workshop of the newly commissioned play ***Casa de Mañana***, written by **Naomi Iizuka**, the 2024-2025 recipient of the **Hermitage Major Theater Award** (HMTA). This will be the first Chicago HMTA workshop presented by the Hermitage, and the invitation-only presentation on October 23rd will be directed by **Lisa Portes**.

Naomi Iizuka is an award-winning playwright, educator, and theater maker based in California. Her body of work includes *Anon(ymous), 36 Views, Polaroid Stories, At the Vanishing Point, Language of Angels, Skin, Tattoo Girl*, and more. Her plays have been produced at theaters across the country, including BAM's Next Wave Festival, Berkeley Rep, the Goodman, Actors' Theatre of Louisville, the Guthrie, Cornerstone, Children's Theater Company, the Public Theater, and Campo Santo. Iizuka is an alumna of New Dramatists and the recipient of a PEN/Laura Pels Award, an Alpert Award, a Whiting Award, a Stavis Award from the National Theatre Conference, a Joyce Foundation Award, and a Hodder Fellowship. She was a Berlind Playwright-in-Residence at Princeton University. Iizuka has written for *The Terror: Infamy* (AMC), *Tokyo Vice* (HBO Max), *Bosch: Legacy* (Amazon), and *The Sympathizer* (HBO Max). Iizuka heads the MFA Playwriting program at UC San Diego.

As the fifth recipient of the Hermitage Major Theater Award (HMTA), **Naomi Iizuka**'s newly commissioned play is ***Casa de Mañana****,* a dark comedy that explores what it means to make art when your life and the world around you are imploding. Set in an assisted living facility, the play tells the story of an underemployed theater artist who's trying to make a play based on stories that the residents tell her about their lives – except the residents don't want to talk to her. And who can blame them? They have their own problems to deal with and their own agendas. Why should they tell stories to a stranger? *Casa de Mañana* asks what it means to tell the story of your life. How do you make sense of the craziness and mystery of the people around you? How do you tell the truth? And what choices do you make in the time you have left?

The **Hermitage Major Theater Award** was established in 2021 to recognize a playwright or theater artist with a substantial commission to create a new, original, and impactful piece of theater. This national, jury-selected award, established by the Hermitage with generous support from **Flora Major** and the **Kutya Major Foundation**, offers one of the largest unrestricted nonprofit theater commissions in the country. Iizuka receives a cash prize of $35,000, as well as a residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat (Sarasota County, Florida), plus a developmental workshop in a notable arts capital. The prize is intended to bridge the connection between the Hermitage, where the commission is born, and other leading arts and cultural centers around the world, including New York, Chicago, and London, where great theater is frequently developed and presented.

HMTA winners are nominated and selected by a jury of recognized arts leaders in the field of theater. The 2024-2025 Award Committee that selected Naomi Iizuka included **Susan V. Booth**, Artistic Director of Chicago's Goodman Theatre; **Glenn Davis**, an accomplished actor, producer, and Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company; and **Chay Yew**, an Obie Award-winning director and playwright who served as longtime Artistic Director of Victory Gardens Theater. "It is an honor to be working with Naomi Iizuka and the Goodman Theatre to present the first workshop of Naomi's newly commissioned play *Casa de Mañana*," said Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. "It has been thrilling to see the work that's come to life from past HMTA recipients Madeleine George, Shariffa Ali, Imani Uzuri, and Chris Bush. It is incredibly exciting to see Naomi's original play now coming to fruition. Naomi is an extraordinary talent, and it's a privilege to play a role in supporting her artistic journey. We must also thank Flora Major for making this opportunity possible, and our brilliant jury – Susan V. Booth, Glenn Davis, and Chay Yew – for introducing Naomi to the Hermitage."

"We are proud to be partnering with the Hermitage Artist Retreat in supporting the work of Naomi Iizuka, a singular and enduring voice in the American theater," added **Susan V. Booth**, Artistic Director of the Goodman Theatre. "The Hermitage has a

storied history of support for our country's leading artists, and it is a great honor to collaborate with them in this moment."

Casting for the first workshop of *Casa de Mañana*, directed by **Lisa Portes**, includes stage and screen actors **Vaneh Assadourian** (Hermitage Fellow Sanaz Toossi's *Wish You Were Here, Forget Me Not*); **Ayanna Bria Bakari** (*The Chi, Empire*); **Kate Buddeke** (*Superior Donuts, Death of a Salesman*); **Mi Kang** *(The Chinese Lady, Villette)*; **Polly Noonan** *(Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Dead Man's Cell Phone);* **Adam Poss** (*Patriots, Chicago Med); and* Jeff Award winner **Barbara Robertson** (*Wicked, Angels in America)*.

Upon announcing Iizuka as the fifth recipient of the HMTA, Award committee member and Goodman Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth** said, "Naomi Iizuka has been charting new territory in our practice for years and is still so untapped in terms of what's yet to come. It's hugely exciting to anticipate a new work from her, and I'm so grateful to the Hermitage for making this kind of investment in this transformational artist." Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company **Glenn Davis** added, "Naomi Iizuka is an exceptional artist with a vastly disparate collection of plays that speak to her multicultural background. I am thrilled that the Hermitage will allow her to create her next ambitious work." HMTA juror **Chay Yew** shared, "If theater is the live cultivation of civic discourse, expansion of conversation, and evocation of empathy in public spaces, Naomi Iizuka moves our field forward with her plays unlike any other writer. She fearlessly uncovers the stories we need now, in a voice that is uniquely hers, which clarifies and amplifies the urgent issues of our time. Always the passionate artist who reflects the myriad lives of our nation and world politically and socially, she chronicles and gives voice to the voiceless, and visibility to the invisible."

Past recipients of the Hermitage Major Theater Award include **Madeleine George** (2021), who was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for her play *The (curious case of the) Watson Intelligence*, and served as a writer and producer for Hulu's hit series *Only Murders in the Building*. George presented the first full-length reading of her new play ***The Sore Loser*** at New York's MCC Theater in 2023. Theater-maker and director **Shariffa Ali** was selected as the second recipient of the Hermitage Major Theater Award. Ali shared an in-process presentation of her newly devised work ***Hero*** for an invitation-only audience in late 2023, also at MCC Theater. **Imani Uzuri**, the third HMTA recipient, is a composer, vocalist, librettist, improviser, and lyricist. The Hermitage collaborated with New York Theatre Workshop in 2024 to present this concert reading of Uzuri's new musical ***Lighthouse of the Singing Birds***. UK-based playwright and librettist, **Chris Bush**, the fourth recipient of the Hermitage Major Theater Award presented her original play ***Orlando (FL)*** at London's **National Theatre** in the fall of 2025. Playwright **Anne Washburn** was announced in January as the sixth recipient of the Hermitage Major Theater Award. The Hermitage will present a workshop reading of her original

commission in New York in the fall of 2028. The seventh recipient of the HMTA will be announced in the coming weeks.

In addition to the Hermitage Major Theater Award commissions, the Hermitage Artist Retreat annually awards the jury-selected **Hermitage Greenfield Prize** (HGP), a distinguished commission that rotates each year between the disciplines of theater, music, and visual art. Past recipients in theater have included **Deepa Purohit** (2024) **Aleshea Harris** (2021), **Martyna Majok** (2018), **Nilo Cruz** (2015), **John Guare** (2012), and **Craig Lucas** (2009). A new HGP recipient in theater will be announced in early 2027.

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 <u>new</u> work across all artistic disciplines. The Hermitage hosts artists on its Gulf Coast Manasota Key home 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**.

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 20 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 <u>HermitageArtistRetreat.org</u>.

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; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Welles Murphy Fund at Gulf Coast Community Foundation; the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation; and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.

The Goodman Theatre

Chicago, Illinois
Susan V. Booth, Artistic Director

Since 1925, the Goodman has been more than a stage. A world-renowned theatrical home for artists and a gathering space for community, it's where stories come to life – bold in artistry and rich in history, deeply rooted in the city it serves. The Goodman counts as its greatest legacy the community it's built through productions, including nearly 200 world or American premieres, and nationally recognized Education and Engagement programs. Under the leadership of Walter Artistic Director Susan V. Booth and Executive Director John Collins, the Goodman dedicates itself to three guiding principles – Quality, Equity, and Community.

ALL ANNOUNCED HERMITAGE PROGRAMS:

Thursday, October 29 @ 5:30pm, "We Got the Beat: Poetry & Percussion," featuring Hermitage Fellows **Sarah Galdes** and **Robyn Schiff** on the Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)
Robyn Schiff's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Ellen & Richard Sandor
Sarah Galdes' Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Veronica Brady & Keith Monda

Monday, November 2 @ 5:30pm, The Hermitage Book Club: Emily Nemens' 2026 novel *Clutch*, at the Hermitage Englewood Art Center (Englewood)
Emily Nemens is the 2026 Norris-Berry Fellow at the Hermitage

HERMITAGE FALL BENEFIT! – Saturday, November 7 @ 11:30am
"The 2026 Hermitage Artful Lobster" at the Historic Hermitage Campus (Manasota Key)

Friday, November 13 @ 5:30pm, "Looking Back to Look Forward: An Evening of Theater & Music," featuring Hermitage Fellows **Talene Monahon** and **Tommy Lubben**, on the Hermitage Beach (Manasota Key)
Talene Monahon's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by The Terrence McNally Foundation
Tommy Lubben's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Gerald & Sondra Biller

Friday, November 20 @ 5:30pm, "Words Spoken, Words Sung: An Evening with Ricky Ian Gordon," featuring Hermitage Fellow **Ricky Ian Gordon** at Selby Gardens' Historic Spanish Point (Osprey) */ Presented in partnership with Selby Gardens and Sarasota Opera*
Ricky Ian Gordon's Hermitage Residency generously sponsored by Steve & Dale Adler

Friday, December 4 @ 5:30pm, "Finding Your Authentic Voice," featuring Hermitage Fellow **Jen Shyu** at the Hermitage Englewood Art Center (Englewood)

Naomi Iizuka

Naomi Iizuka is a California-based playwright and the fifth recipient of the **Hermitage Major Theater Award**. Her plays include *Anon(ymous), 36 Views*, *Polaroid Stories*, *At the Vanishing Point, Language of Angels, Skin, Tattoo Girl, Aloha Say the Pretty Girls, Citizen 13559,*

Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West, and *Sleep* (in collaboration with RipeTime). Her plays have been produced at theaters across the country including BAM's Next Wave Festival, Berkeley Rep, the Goodman, Actors' Theatre of Louisville, the Guthrie, Cornerstone, Children's Theater Company, the Public Theater, and Campo Santo. Iizuka is an alumna of New Dramatists and the recipient of a PEN/Laura Pels Award, an Alpert Award, a Whiting Award, a Stavis Award from the National Theatre Conference, a Joyce Foundation Award, and a Hodder Fellowship. She was a Berlind Playwright-in-Residence at Princeton University. In television, Iizuka has written for *The Terror: Infamy* (AMC), *Tokyo Vice* (HBO Max), *Bosch: Legacy* (Amazon), and *The Sympathizer* (HBO Max). Iizuka heads the MFA Playwriting program at UC San Diego, where she is continually inspired by the next generation of playwrights.

HermitageArtistRetreat.org

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