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PHOTO RELEASE:

The Hermitage Presents *Casa de Mañana,* A New Play from Hermitage Major Theater Award Winner Naomi Iizuka, in Partnership with Chicago's Goodman Theatre

*The fifth recipient of the Hermitage Major Theater Award – **Naomi Iizuka** – shared the first presentation of her newly commissioned play at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. **Naomi Iizuka** was selected by an Award Committee that included **Susan V. Booth**, **Glenn Davis**, and **Chay Yew**.*

The **Hermitage Major Theater Award** (HMTA), presented by the **Hermitage Artist Retreat** and made possible with support from Flora Major and the Kutya Major Foundation, recognizes a theater artist with an unrestricted commission of **$35,000** to create an original work, as well as providing a residency at the Hermitage's beachfront campus on Florida's Gulf Coast, and an inaugural workshop of the newly created work in a notable arts capital.

Photo Link:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/4iftpruifykzx120nrns4/AP06YkyzEsAEfanlyNupl48?rlkey=evf7315ejvp1qqvtkk8bmqrsc&st=igmefcvs&dl=0

October 29, 2026 (Chicago, IL / Sarasota, FL) — **The Hermitage Artist Retreat** (Andy Sandberg, Artistic Director and CEO) today released photos from the workshop presentation of the newly commissioned play by **Naomi Iizuka**, the fifth recipient of the $35,000 **Hermitage Major Theater Award** (HMTA). On Friday, October 23, the Hermitage presented a Chicago workshop of Iizuka's newly commissioned play ***Casa de Mañana,*** in collaboration with Chicago's **Goodman Theatre**.

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 international, 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. Iizuka received a cash prize of $35,000, as well as a residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat (Manasota Key, Florida), plus a developmental workshop and reading in Chicago. The prize is intended to bridge the connection between the Hermitage, where the commission is born, and other leading arts and culture centers around the world,

including New York, Chicago, and London, where great theater is frequently developed and presented.

Naomi Iizuka's ***Casa de Mañana*** is a dark comedy that explores what it means to make art when your life and the world around you are imploding. This Chicago workshop reading was directed by **Lisa Portes**. The cast featured 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 **Barbara Robertson** (*Wicked, Angels in America)*.

HMTA winners are nominated and selected by a committee 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.

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, directed by Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO **Andy Sandberg**. Playwright **Anne Washburn** was announced last season 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 2027. The seventh recipient of the HMTA will be announced in the coming weeks.

For more information about the Hermitage, 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 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; 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.

UPCOMING 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)

HermitageArtistRetreat.org

Facebook / Instagram: **@HermitageArtistRetreat**