

ISSUE NO. 3, SPRING 2020

INSIDER:

The Wallis Ambassadors Newsletter

Dear Friends,

We recognize that each person is going through a difficult time right now. Our primary concern is for the health and wellbeing of our Wallis Ambassador community and we hope that you and your loved ones are healthy.

We know the power of the arts to nurture our hearts, our minds and our souls. Our shared passion for the performing arts and the act of gathering as a community to experience music, theater and dance are a celebration of the very best in our lives. To that point, we want The Wallis Ambassadors and the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts to be a continued resource of creative discovery, community and engagement, even if that means bringing you content virtually during our closure.

While The Wallis campus remains closed, The Wallis Board of Directors, leadership and staff work daily to ensure that The Wallis remains resilient and a world-class arts destination for many years to come.

We send our best wishes and hope you are staying well. Again, we are most appreciative of your support and love sharing our passion for the performing arts with you.



Les Bider CO-CHAIR



Eunice David CO-CHAIR



Dear Wallis Ambassadors,

First and foremost, we miss you all greatly.

Like you, we've been forced to hit pause on our day-to-day programming and activities and to reflect, as a team, on how best to carry out our mission and vision to be a thriving cultural destination for arts lovers and arts learners. What has emerged from our team is an even greater desire to serve you and our community during our quarantine and after we reopen.

The need for our Wallis family members to remain connected with each other is even greater now as we deal with the outbreak of COVID-19. And while The Wallis campus may be closed, our creativity shines brightly. I am so proud to share with you that we are adapting to the best of our abilities to an unprecedented time and moving quickly to bring our education offerings online, create interesting online engagement opportunities and develop a space for innovative content to support our artists. We launched a virtual classroom to continue our GRoW @ The Wallis initiatives and we are moving forward with our plans to host a virtual master class with esteemed pianist and Wallis friend Ory Shihor. You all will be invited to join in live to watch this wonderful class.

We experience the performing arts personally and deeply. The power of music, dance and theater leads each of us on our own unique journey through our hearts and minds providing comfort, nostalgia, inspiration and growth. But it is our shared experience of a performance, the synergy between the artist and the audience that collectively transforms us and enriches our lives. To that end, we are very eager to reopen our theaters and education wing, welcome you back warmly, and resume compelling programming once the public health situation is resolved.

Please know how appreciative we are to our Wallis Ambassador community and the role each of you plays in supporting The Wallis through this very difficult crisis.

Fondly,

Rachel Fine
Executive Director & CEO

A portrait of Paul Crewes, a middle-aged man with short, light brown hair, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a light-colored, button-down shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with a staircase railing.

BEHIND THE SCENES

WITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PAUL CREWES

As we witness the historic calamity of COVID-19 and its widespread impact at home and around the world, it is quite possible our generation will be forever changed. Does this inform your philosophical approach to creating artistic programming while The Wallis campus is closed? And, looking forward, how do you plan artistically for the future in this kind of uncertainty?

The COVID-19 outbreak has certainly forced us to make some changes to The Wallis' programming this season and next. Our approach has been that we must plan boldly for the future and yet also be flexible, aware that no one can predict what the future holds. We've had to postpone shows until later this year and into 2021, some even until 2022. Looking forward to when we re-open our doors in the fall, I want to create a season that will bring a sense of hope for our audiences and celebrate the fact that we can start to enjoy live events together again.

The new 2020/21 season looks different now than it did just a couple of months

ago! As you can imagine we're dealing with some very complicated practical and logistical issues right now. An example of this is unfortunately losing out on a lot of international work and talent that we would have brought to The Wallis. It's simply impossible to plan around country travel bans and all the issues with long term visas for international artists.

We are looking to present many new exciting artists in the upcoming season starting in the fall. We'll also begin our produced projects after January 2021, as they need a longer lead time. We will potentially produce three pieces of work next year. I have no doubt that the world we are living in now will have an impact on what we and our remarkable artists create. One of the projects we're looking into next year takes place in the middle of a plague... believe it or not. That project and the characters we're exploring in it will undoubtedly be influenced and reflect the events

taking place now. It's interesting because I think during times of prosperity artists have had the luxury of exploring darker themes in their work. During times of hardship and change we as artists, may want to explore the work we make through a different lens. We may want to look at the world with a sense of hope for the future when faced with such bleak stories of the present.

I can't help but think back to the UK in the 1950's after the Second World War, where a cultural revolution in dramatic thinking took place that resulted in what's known as kitchen sink drama or realism. Artists were reacting to a new world and looking at it with an honesty that challenged the pre-war society of the 1930's. The cultural landscape changed completely in the 1960's. I think that style is most exemplified in work like John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger*, which I would highly recommend giving a read.

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B.T.S. CONTINUED



Dec 31, 2019 closing night of *Love Actually Live*. Paul Crewes and the cast of the show (top photo) ringing in the New Year with a celebratory toast with the entire audience (bottom photo)!

Have you steered an arts organization through crisis in the past? What was your approach and what wisdom did you take away from the experience?

During the 2008 economic downturn I was the CEO of a company called Kneehigh Theatre which is based in Cornwall, England. We were bold and believed we had to work our way through it, creating more work in response to what was going on in our country and world during that time. That said, the situation we're in right now is unprecedented and I'd be cautious to draw comparisons between now and the crisis in 2008. Regardless, Kneehigh came through that crisis and I believe it launched them into their most successful decade. Kneehigh became very successful, and traveled the world with some amazing productions. The Wallis actually partnered with them to make their L.A. debut in 2014, with Noël Coward's *Brief Encounter*, which held the box

office record at The Wallis for about 4 years. So, that's just one example of a company coming out of a crisis successfully, and I have no doubt that we will come out on top as well.

Can you speak to your relationship with Los Angeles artists and the role The Wallis plays to support local artists?

When we produce work at The Wallis we always work with LA-based artists. We have such a wealth of amazing talent here in Los Angeles, it makes no sense to look beyond.

This season we only presented LA-based dance companies in our season, which was the first time we had done this. Again, LA has remarkable dance companies that are often better known nationally and internationally than they are in their own city. Our job is to support and present them and give them an artistic home. Our intention is to continue working this way and grow our relationships in this wonderfully creative community. We want The Wallis to be an artistic home for ALL our local artists.

Interestingly, it was at The Wallis Ambassadors event at Vibrato Grill where I met Charles Fox. I asked Charles how The Wallis can support him, and what emerged was the discussion to support a workshop of *The School for Scandal*.

Many of our Wallis artists are putting engaging, entertaining and innovative content online. Do you have any recommendations for our Wallis Ambassadors?

I must say the amount of content that is being shared online is overwhelming! Though, there is some wonderful material out there. If I were to recommend anything it

would be the artists that The Wallis has been sharing and supporting on social media. That includes violinists Johnny Gandelsman and Daniel Hope, as well as National Theatre Live which has some great work shown on their YouTube channel.

What books, plays, movies or albums do you keep in your well of inspiration that are helping you in this moment in time?

I find myself listening to everything between Bowie and Beethoven via Laurel Canyon in the 1960's. Certainly, music is being played consistently through my day. I also started watching National Theatre Live, which shows some remarkable NT and other London productions from recent years.

I have just started the novel *A Long Way From Home* by Peter Carey, the Australian novelist, who is a favorite of mine.

As far as movies are concerned, I recently went to the Film Independent Spirit Awards (our Live Reads event partner) and have been really inspired by some of the contemporary independent films being made. I would recommend checking out the awards winners and nominees from the Spirit Awards for a good list of films. Film Independent is also our official cinema partner and we have a great partnership with them. There is another wonderful film that came out of the UK recently called *Bait*, which won a BAFTA award for best debut. It deals with issues around the housing crisis and with gentrification in Cornwall, England. I know the director Mark Jenkin and some of the actors from my Kneehigh days. I am very proud of the work they have created. I would definitely recommend it!



PICTURED: Some of The Wallis Ambassadors inside an interactive photo op designed by photographer Mark Seliger, replicating one of the portrait sets found inside the Vanity Fair Oscar Party at The Wallis.

Please enjoy our continued conversation with Katie Hollander, Director of the Annenberg Space for Photography, who spoke with Wallis Ambassadors during their private tour of the *Vanity Fair: Hollywood Calling* exhibit in February!

Do you have suggestions on how we can support the creative sector and ensure that the arts remain a part of our lives?

These are really trying times for everyone and we're all adjusting to this new reality. We are also struggling with how we can be good and supportive citizens, while remaining at home and staying safe. The best thing you can do to support the arts is by becoming a member and making a financial contribution to the organizations you know and love, who in turn support so many incredible artists. And be sure to remind your friends of this as well. Humor, creativity, joy and beauty will help us through this crisis and bring us together, all critical to our humanity.

How are you staying personally connected to the Los Angeles arts community?

The Photo Space team is meeting daily and coming up with new and creative ways to stay connected to our community and offering opportunities for engagement. From making our audio tours available online, to providing educational resources and content to teachers, to launching some fun

opportunities to re-enact your favorite *Vanity Fair* covers all from the confines of your home!

You worked in New York in 2001 and in the aftermath of 9/11. How did the art and philanthropic community come together after such an unimaginable tragedy?

Although there are many similarities between our current situation and 9/11 the one major difference was that we weren't isolated from each other. This allowed for people to see art and our institutions became places for solace, reflection and coming together. Now art is being experienced virtually and in many ways institutions and artists are being even more creative. I love seeing the symphony coming together and playing music from their homes, or the dance parties that DJs are organizing. Artists too are sharing work from their studios and museums are giving audiences personal insights into their collections. This is a time for creativity and innovation and the arts are always at the forefront of history. Look at Italy and the singing from

the balconies that was so inspiring and moving, at a time when most people were feeling depressed and isolated. Music and art have the ability to bring people together, even if not physically.

Do you have any reading or listening recommendations for our Wallis Ambassadors?

Well, again the music from these home symphonies is incredible, also **BroadwayHD** is letting people watch musicals for free for a period of time, and the **MET Opera** is also streaming operas for free. I also recommend checking out **MCN's Guide to Virtual Museum Resources** which has a great list of virtual museum resources. There are also a ton of online classes so maybe now's the time to learn Spanish, or pick up an instrument or a paint brush! We should all get busy being creative!

What excites you most about the future of the Annenberg Space for Photography?

What excites me most is getting back together with my colleagues and opening the space up to our visitors. There's nothing better than speaking with and seeing people interact with the exhibits. Until then I'm looking forward to seeing our visitors re-enact and share their favorite *Vanity Fair* cover! I'm hoping it'll be a fun, creative and an active way for our audience to get engaged.

WELCOME TO OUR **NEW** AMBASSADORS!

We are thrilled to announce two new members to The Wallis Ambassadors! We look forward to welcoming them at our next annual meeting.



Jacqueline Applebaum



Dan Clivner

THE WALLIS STAFF NEWS

We are pleased to announce two new members of The Wallis Development team who will be working directly with you.



**DANIELLE
BEARDEN-MEAD**

Danielle joins The Wallis as the Director of Individual Giving. Prior to The Wallis, she served as the Associate Director of Development at UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television and the Director of Individual Giving at the Geffen Playhouse. A life-long performing arts and entertainment advocate, Danielle was a co-founder of the Garage Theatre in Long Beach, worked for four seasons on "Two and a Half Men," and trained at Boston Ballet and Lines Ballet. She received her B.A. in Theatre Arts from CSULB.

CONTACT: dbeardenmead@thewallis.org or 310.270.7319



NICK BECKER

Nick joins The Wallis as the Individual Giving Manager, and brings over 8 years of experience in the areas of membership engagement and fundraising for non-profits and political campaigns. Nick originally grew up in San Diego, CA and studied Political Science and Philosophy at San Jose State University, where he earned his B.A. He has lived in the LA area now for 4 years and is excited to become immersed in our thriving arts community.

CONTACT: nbecker@thewallis.org or 408.839.5250

Additionally, feel free to reach out to The Wallis development staff with questions regarding renewing your membership, upcoming Ambassador events, or any ideas or feedback you would like to share with us!

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Coy Middlebrook



Charles Fox

Q & A COY MIDDLEBROOK WITH AND CHARLES FOX

Coy Middlebrook has been involved with *The Wallis* since our inaugural season as a director on *Baseball Swing*. In his role as Associate Artistic Director Coy, alongside Paul Crewes, leads artistically on our produced projects, like *Sisters in Law*, *Frankenstein* and *The Sorting Room* presents *Magic Moments: An Evening Remembering Hal David*, with musician Billy Davis Jr. Coy also supports project development like Winnie Holzman's *Choice* and Charles Fox's *The School For Scandal*.

COY MIDDLEBROOK: What is helping you get by during this period of shelter-in-place?

CHARLES FOX: Other than being tuned in to the constant news which we're hearing every day that is very frightening and has caused all of us to stay in our homes, my life is pretty much the same. My studio is separated by a car length from our home and I spend hours everyday composing, playing the piano and catching up with correspondence. I've been working for the past year or two on a new, original musical with Alain Boublil who wrote *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon* and I'm enjoying a wonderful and fruitful collaboration.

I'm used to reading more than one book at a time and I'm currently enjoying Erik Larson's new book, *The Splendid And The Vile*, as well as the new biography of Toscanini. A couple of years ago Joan and I spent some time in Bologna, Italy and took day trips from there to neighboring cities. One day we went to Parma to visit the home of the legendary conductor, Arturo Toscanini, and that was a wonderful experience. It was a rainy day and Joan and I were the only ones in his home which is now a museum. The Bechstein piano in the living was filled with pictures of Toscanini and some of the great composers who were his

contemporaries and friends. The piano had a large "do not touch" sign on it. But the docent who was showing us around asked me if I'd like to play his piano, which of course I was eager to do. As I sat down in the front of the keyboard, there was a photo of the maestro looking at me and right next to that was a signed photo of Puccini. So with the two of them staring at me I paid my homage to them and played part of the opening scene of one of my favorite operas, *Tosca*.

CM: How has the global crisis impacted your creative work?

CF: It's very hard not giving in to listening to the horrible news reports

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Q & A CONTINUED

every day. I think we all have one mission now and that's for us to stay safely in our homes and hopefully this too shall pass much sooner and not be nearly as devastating as we're being told is possible. I'm very fortunate in my work that I am completely consumed by the music I'm writing, so that's how I manage to keep my distance from the news and look to the future.

CM: What was a memorable moment for you at the Vibrato Grill event?

CF: I must say, I very much enjoyed performing some of my songs and telling some of my stories to the Ambassadors and the creative team at The Wallis. They, "you" were a wonderful audience to perform for. Vibrato is a lovely room to play in and from the stage you can make eye contact pretty much with everyone in the audience. It was a lot of fun for me when people sang along with me, some even danced to my TV themes. I can tell you as a songwriter, there's nothing like performing for a room filled with smiling people singing your songs along with you. Hats off to the Ambassadors for that!

Also, thank you to my dear friend Eunice David for asking me to do that. When she called me and asked me if I would do an evening of my songs for the Ambassadors of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, she then added: "and please say 'Yes!'" How could I refuse that?

CM: Most memorable moment with Hal David? Eunice David?

CF: Hal David and I were working on a new musical together. We had written many songs together over the years. One day Hal called and said he'd like to get together with Joan and I for dinner and introduce us to someone who's become very important in his life. From that day on, Eunice and Hal



Eunice David hosts The Sorting Room presents *Magic Moments: An Evening Remembering Hal David*, with musician Billy Davis Jr.

together were very important in our lives. We shared lots of laughs, great conversations and wonderful musical evenings. It's hard to find a particular moment in our friendship to relate here, but I'll tell you this: for one of Eunice's birthday parties, Hal sang a song to her. He had written a loving parody based on "Love and Marriage," the song by Sammy Cahn and James Van Heusen. I still remember with a smile on my face, Hal singing with a loving, twinkle in his eye, "Eunice David, Eunice David" to the tune of *Love and Marriage*. Hal always had a wonderful twinkle in his eye for Eunice, not to mention, an unbelievable talent for finding just the right words in a song.

CM: How would you describe *The School For Scandal*?

CF: *School For Scandal* is a new musical that I wrote in collaboration with lyricist, Arthur Hamilton, (*Cry Me A River*) and book writer, Norman

Steinberg, (*My Favorite Year* and *Blazing Saddles*) It's based on an 18th century play of that name that's a fun, farcical play that deals with scandalous events, fake news, "ruin the other guy's life" news perpetrated by the characters and their tuneful, if evil, machinations all under the sway of Lady Sneerwell who is the puppeteer of the joyful, "School... For Scandal."

We've been working on this show for several years and the staged reading that we're looking forward to doing at The Wallis will be the first ever presentation for a public audience. Needless to say, we hope that day will not be far away, and I hope to see you all there.

MORE ON CHARLES FOX:
www.charlesfoxmusic.com
www.killingmesoftly.com

A message from Mark Slavkin, Director of Education

Here are some happy updates from GRoW @ The Wallis...

This week our partners at Broadway Dreams began free daily musical theater workshops online. The March 25 session featured three artists who were part of our Wallis production of *Spring Awakening*. Josh Castille taught the participants to use ASL to perform a song from the show. Kathryn Gallagher played guitar and led the vocals. Choreographer Spencer Liff taught how to use movement along with the ASL.



Danielle Bearden-Mead,
Director of Individual Giving at
dbeardenmead@thewallis.org
or **310-270-7319**.

TheWallis Ambassadors



Les
Bider
CO-CHAIR



Eunice
David
CO-CHAIR



Betty
Hayman
**HONORARY
CO-CHAIR**



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Sandra Z. Rapke
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Lee Silver
Lisa Sockolov
I. H. Sutnick
Karen Sulzberger and Eric Lax
Sue Tsao
Stephanie Vahn
Andrea Van de Kamp
Rayni Williams
Marc Zachary
May Ziman

As of April 6, 2020

If you have not yet had an opportunity to renew your Wallis Ambassador dues, please consider doing so to ensure The Wallis' ability to present world-class artistic programming and award-winning educational offerings for the City of Beverly Hills and the entire Los Angeles community.

We would like to personally thank the following ambassadors who have renewed their membership during the closure.

An extra big thank you to **Marc Zachary** who was able to double his impact with a corporate matching gift.

**Les Bider
Eunice David
Sonia Freedman
Robert Freedman
Karen Loewenstern
Walter Loewenstern
Marc Zachary**

Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts



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