

Q & A

with GRoW @ The Wallis
Resident Artist & The Wallis Youth
Theater Company Artistic Director

MADELEINE DAHLM

Q: WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR DESIRE TO HAVE A CAREER IN THE ARTS?

A: Becoming a professional artist was the result of so many influences and guiding forces. I have always seen and experienced the world through some kind of creative lens, as a child I had a vivid imagination that was supported by my deep love of literature (at one time I thought I would most likely become a writer). I think the sense of life-long discovery, and the freedom of expression that an artistic life offered made it an absolute for me. A specific defining moment at the start of my career was seeing Trevor Nunn's *Macbeth*, starring Judi Dench and Ian McKellen. That production (seen on a school field trip) made a lasting impression on me, and for the first time as a young adult I experienced the truly visceral and empathetic nature of live theatre. Another early influence was studying with Martha Graham; she gave me a deep understanding of what it means to live in service of your art, and by what principles you want to be guided

in your artistic life. After retiring as a performer, the ground-breaking work of artists like Pina Bausch and Lloyd Newson inspired me to become an experimental theatre director and movement deviser.

Q: AS A WORKING ARTIST, WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO ALSO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE?

A: Growing up in a tough inner city London neighborhood in a single parent family that was enormously encouraging but lacked many practical resources, I know only too well the challenges faced by many young people in forging out a career in the arts. Artistic mentors and teachers played a crucial role in my early years, and so it feels very natural to me to work with young artists whenever I can. It is vital that we cultivate the next generation of creative thinkers and doers from diverse backgrounds, economic means and viewpoints, and that we pass on what has been given to us.

Q: WHAT SETS THE WALLIS APART FROM OTHER PLACES WHERE YOU HAVE WORKED?

A: There is a true sense of community at The Wallis, a feeling of possibility and being included, something that can be hard to find and maintain as arts organizations grow and expand. I enjoy being part of a vibrant and vital performing arts center, with programs that are innovative and initiatives that really value the local artistic community here in Los Angeles, as well as attract international artists and companies.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS AS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE WALLIS YOUTH THEATER COMPANY?

A: I grew up in a culture of youth theatre in the UK; an important rite of passage for many young performers - I have wanted to establish such a company in LA for many years, and I am so grateful to Mark Slavkin and The Wallis for the opportunity to finally do that. I would like the company to be a place for young actors to really experience being the member of an ensemble, with all the rewards and responsibilities that brings - a place to hone craft and work ethic, take artistic and personal risks, meet other professionals, and most importantly be part of a shared purpose in an artistic community with like-minded young people. It is also vital that our work is current, socially conscious, and speaks to the concerns and interests of the younger generation.

Q: WHAT MAKES THE WALLIS CHOREOGRAPHY PROGRAM UNIQUE?

A: The Art of Choreography is a Creative Lab that supports young emerging choreographers who want to truly experiment with composition, and create work that is 'outside the box' - pushing the boundaries of what dance is, where it happens and how it can be a dialogue for social change. We explore approaches that may be less familiar to young choreographers, but that are certainly driving the work of many choreographers in international dance companies today. This year our focus is on creating site-specific multi-media work, in a non-traditional performance environment.

GROW @ The Wallis

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