

**WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS**  
**“Arts & Ideas: Conversations at The Wallis”**

**The Wallis Strikes Partnership with Writers Bloc, Los Angeles’ Reading and Conversation Series, to Present:**

**Leon Panetta in Conversation with Jessica Yellin**  
**Wednesday, October 15 at 7:30pm**

**Dick Cavett in Conversation with Paula Poundstone**  
**Thursday, November 6 at 7:30pm**

**Oct. 7, 2014 (Beverly Hills, CA)** – The Wallis Center for the Performing Arts (aka “The Wallis”) and Writers Bloc, Los Angeles’ acclaimed reading and conversation series founded by Emmy-nominated Andrea Grossman, are partnering to present **Leon Panetta in Conversation with Jessica Yellin** (Wednesday, October 15 at 7:30pm), and **Dick Cavett in Conversation with Paula Poundstone** (Thursday, November 6 at 7:30pm). The events are part of The Wallis’ ongoing new series, “Arts & Ideas: Conversations at The Wallis,” and will be held in the Bram Goldsmith Theater.

These two conversations mark the beginning of a collaboration between The Wallis and Writers Bloc Presents, currently in its 17<sup>th</sup> season. Tickets are available at [www.thewallis.org](http://www.thewallis.org) or by calling 310-746-4000, or in person at the Wallis Annenberg Center Box Office located at 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA 90210.

Said The Wallis’ Interim Artistic Director Patricia Wolff, “We are thrilled to be partnering with Writers Bloc, which is extraordinary in attracting so many of the world’s top writers, artists and thinkers. We could not ask for a more auspicious beginning than to have Writers Bloc included in our 2014-15 season, launching The Wallis’ inaugural Arts & Ideas series.”

Andrea Grossman, founder and curator of Writers Bloc Presents, said, “The Wallis has brought to Beverly Hills a new home for writers, directors, musicians, dancers and artists of every realm and discipline. We are proud to be part of its new series that aligns with our ideals in fostering dialogue on literary and cultural issues and ideas.”

**About Leon Panetta**

**Leon Panetta** served for several terms as a respected congressman and ultimate powerbroker in Congress. President Clinton recruited him as his budget czar and named him White House Chief of Staff. After a short retirement, Panetta ricocheted back to Washington, where he landed as Director of the CIA. It was under his watch that United States intelligence forces located and killed Osama Bin Laden. As if that wasn’t enough post-retirement activity, President Obama named Panetta U.S. Secretary of Defense, during a time when the US was involved in two wars. In his new memoir, *Worthy Fights*, Panetta lays out his moral conflicts and his great challenges, with unexpected humor and a fascinating view on the largest global events – and personalities – of our time.

It could be said that Leon Panetta has had two of the most consequential careers of any American public servant in the past 50 years. His first career, beginning as an army intelligence officer and including a distinguished run as one of Congress's most powerful and respected members, lasted 35 years and culminated in his transformational role as President Clinton's director of the Office of Management and Budget, and then White House chief of staff.

He then "retired" to establish the Panetta Institute for Public Policy with his wife of 50 years, Sylvia, to serve on the Iraq Study Group and to protect his beloved California coastline. In 2009, he accepted what many said was a thankless task: returning to public office as the director of the CIA. In the wake of bin Laden's death, Panetta became the U.S. secretary of defense, inheriting two troubled wars in a time of austerity and painful choices.

Like his career, *Worthy Fights* is a reflection of Panetta's values. It is imbued with the frank, grounded, and often quite funny spirit of a man who never lost touch with his roots: his family's walnut farm in beautiful Carmel Valley, California. It is also a testament to the kind of political leadership that favors progress and duty to country over partisanship. Panetta is a Democrat who pushed for balanced budgets while also expanding care for the elderly and sick, a devout Catholic who opposes the death penalty but had to weigh every drone strike from 2009 through 2011.

Panetta will be in conversation with Jessica Yellin, former Chief White House Correspondent for CNN. For 10 years, she provided breaking news and news analysis from the White House, Capitol Hill and the campaign trail for CNN and ABC News. She is a fellow with the Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership and Policy.

### **About Dick Cavett**

**Dick Cavett**, known as "the thinking man's talk show host," helmed *The Dick Cavett Show* for decades on a variety of television networks. A talk show like no other, then or now, it was a forum for entertainment, but also a place where the audience expected serious talk about serious issues.

*The Dick Cavett Show* is where John Lennon went to talk about his view of the world. It's where Norman Mailer butted heads with Gore Vidal, where Georgia governor Lester Maddox stormed offstage, offended that Dick called Lester Maddox's supporters "bigoted" (Maddox's exit didn't cause too much of a problem as Cavett's next guest was Truman Capote). It was where a young veteran named John Kerry, speaking out against the Vietnam War, debated the issue with a pro-Vietnam War vet named John O'Neill, who would later found *Swift Boat Veterans For Truth*. The historical ramifications of that particular Dick Cavett hour were profound. Cavett's stances on cultural and political matters infuriated President Nixon to such a degree that the president, as has come to light via his tapes, asked his aides how to best "screw" Cavett.

*The Dick Cavett Show* was where, on the day that Woodstock ended, Jefferson Airplane, David Crosby and Steven Stills joined Joni Mitchell for an all-music program (Jimi Hendrix would have been there but the festival ran late – and so did Jimi). Joni Mitchell's manager thought her appearance on the show so crucial to her career that he wouldn't let her attend Woodstock. So many of Cavett's shows actually created or defined momentous cultural milestones for the country.

In his new book, *Brief Encounters*, Dick Cavett reminds us of these moments, and provides his singularly witty commentary about his relationships with the most influential people of our time.

Cavett will be in conversation with **Paula Poundstone**, a stand-up comedian and favorite of Dick Cavett. She appears regularly on NPR's news quiz show "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me" and tours the country with her comedy. Paula disarms and charms audience with her insightful and hilarious take on the world – just when it seems it's about to fall apart.

## About Writers Bloc

Writers Bloc Presents is a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering the significance and importance of literature and the written word as an art form, enriching the general public's knowledge and awareness of the contemporary writers and thinkers who have made a significant impact on the cultural and literary landscape, and enhancing the general public's exposure and access to literary and cultural work, thoughts and ideas as represented in and by modern works of fiction and nonfiction. Writers Bloc seeks to expand the general public's access to and understanding of literature through community-based programs featuring writers, thinkers, public figures and others in conversation about fictional and nonfictional work, and to create and foster opportunities for dialogue and interaction between the general public and writers, thinkers, public figures or others about reading, writing, literature, the literary process, the role and relationship of literature to music, film and other media, and the relevance and impact of literature on modern society.

## About The Wallis

Located in the heart of Beverly Hills, the **Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** opened its doors in October 2013. This fall marks its second season as the first and only performing arts center in Beverly Hills. This new venue transformed a Beverly Hills city block into a vibrant new cultural destination in the heart of Los Angeles with two distinct, elegant buildings: the historic 1933 Beverly Hills Post Office (now the Paula Kent Meehan Historic Building) and the new, contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Bram Goldsmith Theater. Within the treasured Post Office, existing spaces are re-imagined into the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater, a theater school for young people, a gift shop (both scheduled to open Fall 2014) and a café. Together these two structures embrace the city's history and future, creating an arts lover's dream come true – all within walking distance of some of the finest dining, hotels and shopping in Los Angeles.

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## Writers Bloc and The Wallis present Leon Panetta

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9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA 90210

**Performance:** Wednesday, October 15 at 7:30pm

**Tickets:** **Price:** \$25  
**In Person** – Wallis Annenberg Center Ticket Services,  
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**By Phone** - 310-746-4000  
**Online** – [www.thewallis.org](http://www.thewallis.org)

## Writers Bloc and The Wallis present Dick Cavett

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