

Jean Davidson named Executive Director and CEO of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

**Veteran performing arts leader and previously
President and CEO of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (2015-2023)
Most recently Executive Director of the National Symphony Orchestra
at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC**

Beverly Hills | 11:00 AM March 6, 2026. -- Daphna Nazarian, Chair, Board of the Directors of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts (The Wallis), announced today the appointment of Jean Davidson as Executive Director and CEO of The Wallis effective May 4, 2026. The Wallis, located in Beverly Hills, one of region's leading performing arts presenters, is now in its 13th year.

Davidson is widely known in the Los Angeles performing arts community having served as President and CEO of the Los Angeles Master Chorale at The Music Center from 2015 to 2023, where she introduced an international touring model, produced major recordings, and guided the Chorale through the pandemic, securing over \$2 million in federal and local support. During her tenure there, she increased contributed revenue by 48% in four years, led a successful strategic planning process, negotiated key labor agreements and advanced a comprehensive rebranding that repositioned the organization.

Just prior to joining The Wallis, Davidson was Executive Director of the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC from 2023 until the present. Under her leadership the NSO returned to international touring, released several acclaimed recordings and expanded innovative community and educational initiatives. Jean spearheaded an endowment campaign, securing \$25 million in gifts and pledges, and delivered a substantial increase in classical subscription sales while overseeing a surge of popular programming.

Davidson said, "The Arts are where a community sees itself, and where it imagines what's possible next. I'm honored to join the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Arts at this pivotal moment. Together, we will build on its strong artistic foundation, attract world-class talent, and ensure that The Wallis remains a premier destination for exceptional and inspiring work. I'm excited to partner with our artists, audiences, and supporters to propel The Wallis into its next era as a national leader in bold creativity and big ideas."

Daphna Nazarian, Chair, Board of Directors of The Wallis said, “We are thrilled to welcome Jean Davidson as the new Executive Director and CEO of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. She brings exceptional vision, strategic insight and a distinguished record of leadership that will elevate our organization and strengthen our community.”

She continued, “As a dynamic and accomplished leader, she offers a powerful and timely perspective aligned with our mission to uplift and inspire through the arts. The Wallis stands as a vital, cultural anchor where creativity fosters connection and understanding, and I am confident in her upcoming stewardship to guide us into our next chapter. Together we embrace a forward vision grounded in stability and excellence.”

Nazarian concluded, “We share a clear purpose, to strengthen our foundation, expand our outreach, and ensure The Wallis continues to make a lasting and meaningful impact for generations to come.”

Davidson succeeds Robert van Leer in this role; van Leer recently departed to assume his new position as the Performing Arts Program Director of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Christine Bernardi Weil is the Interim Managing Director and Coy Middlebrook is Acting Chief Programming Officer of The Wallis.

More about Jean Davidson

While President and CEO of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Jean served as an Associate Consultant for the DeVos institute of Arts Management from 2015-2018, where she advised seven cultural organizations in three major United States cities as part of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ multi-city Arts Innovation and Management program. She provided strategic counsel to arts leaders, helping them scale operations and strengthen organization sustainability.

As the founding Chief Executive Officer of New York Live Arts from 2011 to 2015, Jean led the merger between Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and Dance Theater Workshop. She executed a \$10 million fundraising campaign, oversaw branding and renovations, and commissioned dozens of new works and premieres.

Early on her career, Jean was the founding Managing Director of The Silk Road Project from 2001 to 2005. She negotiated multimillion-dollar partnerships, produced tours and residencies and commissioned new works. Jean also served in various roles at the American Conservatory Theater and American Dance Festival, contributing to technical theater production and finance and administration.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theater from Oberlin College.

About the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts (The Wallis) was lauded by *Culture Vulture*: “If you love expecting the unexpected in the performing arts, you have to love The Wallis.” Broadway legend Patti LuPone described the venue as “one of the best in the country, allowing for an unparalleled intimacy between [the artist] and the audience.”

Since its doors opened in 2013, The Wallis, located in the heart of Beverly Hills, CA, is a dynamic cultural hub and community resource where local, national, and international performers share their artistry with ever-expanding audiences. Distinguished by eclectic programming that mirrors the diverse landscape of Los Angeles and its location in the entertainment capital of the world, The Wallis has produced and presented nearly 500 theater, dance, music, film, cabaret, comedy, performance arts, and family entertainment programs, boasting nominations for 79 Ovation Awards and nine L.A. Drama Critics Circle Awards, as well as six architectural awards.

The breathtaking 70,000-square-foot facility, celebrating the classic and the modern, was named after philanthropist Wallis Annenberg, who’s original \$25-million-dollar donation was instrumental in transforming the beloved former 1934 Beverly Hills Post Office (on the National Register of Historic Places) into an arts complex.

Designed by acclaimed architect Zoltan E. Pali (SPF: architects), the restored building features one of two sets of eight towering original WPA frescos, these by Charles Kessler, remaining in the entire California Federal Building system. The Wallis’ lobby, now known as Jim and Eleanor Randall Grand Hall, serves as the theater’s dramatic yet welcoming entryway to the contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Bram Goldsmith Theater; the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater; an inviting open-air plaza for family, community and other performances; and GRoW @ The Wallis: A Space for Arts Education, where learning opportunities for all ages and backgrounds abound. Together, these elements embrace both the region’s history and its future, creating a performing arts destination for Los Angeles area visitors and residents alike.

###