

The Wallis in association with John Legend,
Get Lifted Film Company, Mike Jackson, Jackie Judd, The Private Theatre,
Eric Falkenstein, SimonSays Entertainment, Beth Hubbard, Jamie Cesa

Present the West Coast Premiere of

Emmy Award-Winner
JOE MORTON
of ABC's "Scandal" in

TURN ME LOOSE

A Play about Activist and Comic Genius Dick Gregory
By Gretchen Law
Directed by John Gould Rubin

Limited engagement extended through Sunday, November 12,
with Thursday night performances just added

Opening Night set for Friday, October 13;
Press Night set for Saturday, October 14

(Beverly Hills, CA September 18) **Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** (The Wallis) launches its 2017/18 theater season with the West Coast premiere of the Off-Broadway hit ***Turn Me Loose***, a comedic drama by **Gretchen Law**, produced by **John Legend** and **Mike Jackson**, about the life of trailblazing comedian and civil rights activist **Dick Gregory** who passed away last month at the age of 84. The production, under the direction of **John Gould Rubin**, will open in The Wallis' Lovelace Studio Theater, which will be transformed in part into a comedy club, on Friday, October 13 at 8pm. It stars Emmy and NAACP Image Award-winner **Joe Morton** (ABC's "Scandal") in a tour-de-force performance as the pioneering satirist. The play also features actor **John Carlin**, as well as an original song by Legend. The limited engagement runs Thursdays through Sundays and has been extended through November 12. *Turn Me Loose* is made possible in part by the generous support of The Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation.

Turn Me Loose explores the influential life of 1960s comic genius Dick Gregory, the first Black stand-up to make white audiences laugh at the absurdity of bigotry. The play reveals how the power of activism enticed Gregory from one of the most successful show business careers of the postwar era into a life

of sacrifice and danger alongside Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers and other Civil Rights leaders.

Wielding razor-sharp wit, Gregory hacked away at myths about race, poverty, war and politics, up until his passing in August 2017. In a recent interview, President Obama called Gregory one of his two favorite comics ever. The other was Richard Pryor who himself said, “Dick Gregory was the greatest and he was the first.”

A new generation of audiences will discover one of the most prophetic, committed, authentic and confrontational—and hysterically funny—public figures of our time. Gregory was one of the last living champions from a remarkable period of struggle for dignity and freedom, and his legacy and utterly unique brand of heroism lives on in *Turn Me Loose*.

“The Wallis is honored to both present this wonderful piece of theater and celebrate Mr. Gregory’s legacy, making sure that as many people as possible will be made aware of his life, his achievements, his involvement in the civil rights movement, his beliefs in social justice, and his comedy that revealed a wisdom and truth,” said Paul Crewes, The Wallis’ Artistic Director.

“Dick Gregory used every syllable, every metaphor, every joke, every march, every incarceration, every hour of his life, to embarrass this country into providing a more perfect, perfect union,” said Morton. “Dick Gregory will be greatly missed. Humbly, and in his stead, *Turn Me Loose* carries on to be his voice and his inspiration for all who wish to laugh at the absurdity of racism, and be enlightened by his spirit of justice.”

“When Dick Gregory left this life on August 19, national obituaries and television commentators across the country extolled his legacy, especially his decades-long devotion to social justice,” said the producing team of *Turn Me Loose*. “That morning, in the hospital room in which he died, a hospital orderly took it upon himself to alter the caregivers’ white board. Under the heading ‘What I would like you to know about me,’ he wrote a profound but simple and perfectly accurate testament:

- Health Guru
- Comedian
- Civil Rights Activist
- Legend.”

“Since the summer of 2009 when I first approached Dick Gregory about creating this project, it has been the main thrust of my career,” said director John Gould Rubin. “I discovered an insufficiently known hero whose prescience in the 60’s sounds like commentary on today’s news; he so accurately predicted the world in which we now find ourselves. No figure I have ever encountered wielded such hysterical humor so sharply juxtaposed to the most profound insight. I thought I knew who Dick Gregory was when I approached him, but then became amazed at this epic figure’s life, tragically just lost. I hope *Turn Me Loose* may create that same amazement in our audience so they may be equally awestruck at this unique figure’s life.”

“Mr. Gregory traversed a mystical territory as a performer of comic genius and a civil rights activist of unbridled courage,” said playwright Gretchen Law. “I was first introduced to him as an adolescent, playing his comedy club albums with my family and friends—the inextricable pain and humor resounded in me. His truth, albeit funny, was bitter. The path his life took—the way he shaped it—entreats us to listen to the universe for cues as to what it means to be responsive persons of action in messy and unconscionable human affairs. It's an extreme honor to have had this opportunity as a playwright.”

Single tickets are now available for \$60 and \$75. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit TheWallis.org/TML, call 310.746.4000, or stop by in person at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Ticket Services located at 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90210. Ticket prices subject to change.

The Wallis also offers three different options to subscribe to the 2017/18 season: the Premium Subscription Series; the Design-Your-Own option; and the new 3-show Flex Pass for \$99, created for busy young professionals—39 and younger—giving the most flexibility to join The Wallis family of subscribers. Learn more at TheWallis.org/Subscribe.

About the cast and creative team:

Joe Morton (Dick Gregory) is an Emmy Award and multiple NAACP Image Award-winning film, television and stage veteran. Most recently, Morton received the Lucille Lortel Award and the Off-Broadway Alliance Award for outstanding lead actor in play, for his portrayal of Dick Gregory in New York. Morton made his Broadway debut in Tony award-winning *Hair* and garnered a Tony nomination for his performance in *Raisin*. He also performed in *Art* on Broadway (and in London's West End) with Judd Hirsch and George Wendt, as well as David Hare's *Stuff Happens* at the National Theatre in London as 'Colin Powell.' Morton is widely known in film for playing the title character in the sci-fi film *The Brother From Another Planet*, the ill-fated scientist 'Miles Dyson' in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, and 'Captain McMahon' in *Speed*. The Broadway trained, decorated actor has over 40 years of experience in theater, television and film, and is best known for his dynamic Emmy-winning role as 'Rowan/Eli Pope' in the groundbreaking series "Scandal" on ABC.

John Gould Rubin (Director) is the Artistic Director of The Private Theater, noted for radical site-specific productions, and former co-Artistic/Executive Director of LABYrinth Theater Company with John Ortiz and Philip Seymour Hoffman, for whom he directed seven plays including premieres by John Patrick Shanley and Erin Cressida Wilson. His production in August of *American Buffalo* with Treat Williams and Stephen Adly Guirgis sold out at The Dorset Theater Festival, where he directed Outside Mullingar with equal success two seasons ago. He's directed throughout NYC and Europe at Rattlestick, Ma-Yi, Soho Theatre in London and The Public among others, notably *Peer Gynt* at The International Ibsen Festival in Oslo, Norway, *Playing With Fire* (a deconstruction of Strindberg's one-act about wife swapping, voyeurism and exhibitionism at The Box, the notorious sex cabaret,) *Queen For A Day* with David Proval and Vincent Pastore at St. Clements and *The Cherry Orchard* with Ellen Burstyn at The Actors Studio. Current projects: *Rocco, Chelsea, etc.* a devised project about the consciousness of conflict and the American Political Divide and an Afro-German production of *Hedda Gabler* in Berlin. Mr. Rubin is honored to have worked on developing and producing as well as

directing *Turn Me Loose* since first approaching Dick Gregory in 2009 and for which he was nominated by fellow directors of the SDC for the Joe Calloway Award as best Director, 2016.

Gretchen Law (Playwright) is the author of five full-length plays. *The Adventures Of A Black Girl In Search Of Her God* was adapted from a Bernard Shaw story of the same title and has been approved for production by The Society of Authors, who manage Shaw's literary estate. *Al Sharpton for President* was a semi-finalist in the Eugene O'Neill National Playwright's Conference, 2006. *Turn Me Loose* was workshopped by the Atlantic Theater Company in November 2013, at New York Stage and Film in the summer of 2014, at New York Theatre Workshop in September of 2014, and ran Off-Broadway at the Westside Theatre in the summer of 2017.

Additionally, her plays, including *History Lessons* and *Loving Charley Pride*, have been read at The National Black Theater Festival, The Players, The National Arts Club, the Harlem Theater Company, the LaByrnth Theater Company and The Dramatist Guild, of which she is a member. She is a practicing psychotherapist with degrees from Yale Divinity School and the Columbia University School of Social Work. In 1991 she founded the Parents' Foundation, 100 Broadway, in New Haven, CT, a residential community for adults with psychiatric illnesses.

The creative team also includes: Chris Barreca (Scenic Design); Susan Hilferty (Costume Design); Stephen Strawbridge (Lighting Design); Leon Rothenberg (Sound Designer); Erin Cass (Stage Manager); Jack Doulin + Sharky (NY Casting); Morgan Jenness (Dramaturg), Cheryl Dennis (NY General Manager) and Richard Kornberg & Associates (NY Press Agent).

For downloadable photos, please visit TheWallis.org/Press.

For more information about *Turn Me Loose*, please visit: TurnMeLoosePlay.com.

Like *Turn Me Loose* on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), and follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com).

For more information about The Wallis, please visit: TheWallis.org.

Like The Wallis on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), and follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com).


Join the conversation using [#TurnMeLoose](https://twitter.com/turnmeloose).

TICKET INFORMATION:

What: *Turn Me Loose*
Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
Lovelace Studio Theater
9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA, 90210

When: Friday, October 13 – Sunday, November 12, 2017
Performance Schedule: Thursdays – Fridays at 8pm; Saturdays at 2:30pm & 8pm; Sundays at 2:30pm

Tickets: Single tickets: \$60 and \$75 (prices subject to change)
Online – TheWallis.org/TML



By Phone – 310.746.4000

Box Office – Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Ticket Services
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