

## DAPHNA NAZARIAN MAKES HISTORY AS FIRST WOMAN APPOINTED TO CHAIR OF THE BOARD AT WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



*(Photo Credit: Joe Silva Photography)*

**BEVERLY HILLS, CA** - May 2, 2024 — [The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts](#), the leading arts and cultural center in Beverly Hills, has selected Iranian-American Daphna Nazarian as the Chair of the organization's Board of Directors; effective April 18, 2024. Previously serving as Executive Vice Chair, Nazarian's shift represents a pivotal moment at The Wallis as she becomes the first woman to assume the role of Chair of the Board.

Daphna Nazarian has been a devoted member of The Wallis since 2016, and was selected as the Executive Vice Chair of the Board in October 2023. Notably, Nazarian has served as Co-Chair of the Development Committee, alongside Stephanie Vahn. Now, as the newly appointed Chair of the Board, she will help The Wallis navigate through a post-pandemic era and usher in a new wave of arts and culture. Previously held by Michael Nemroff since 2017, who will now be transitioning to Chair of the Executive Committee, the Chair (Nazarian) oversees a team of 34 board members across various

committees who, together with Executive Director & CEO Robert van Leer, will guide the organization as it steps into a new era of mission delivery to the Southern California region.

"I am deeply grateful to both this organization and to Wallis Annenberg herself, who serves as a true inspiration as one of the pioneering female leaders dedicated to philanthropy in the arts. The Wallis stands as a dynamic hub for various art forms, welcoming artists from diverse backgrounds," stated Daphna Nazarian, Chair of The Wallis. "Stepping into this role after the remarkable leadership of Michael Nemroff, who adeptly guided us through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, I feel humbled by the legacy before me. I am committed to following in his footsteps and leveraging my unique perspective to further enhance cultural connectivity through the arts education – fostering bonds within our local community, across the nation, and around the globe."

During her time on the Board, Nazarian has taken lead at numerous *The Wallis Delivers* galas, acting as co-chair for *Al Fresco Night* in 2021 and *DreamBuilders* in 2020. Additionally, she contributed to the host committee for various events, including *Mancini Delivered: A Musical Tribute to Ginny and Henry Mancini* in 2017, *A Tale of Two Sisters* honoring Debbie Allen and Phylicia Rashad in 2018, *An Evening of Wicked Fun* honoring Stephen Schwartz in 2019, and *An Evening with Shelli and Irving Azoff* in 2022.

"Having worked with Daphna for the past seven years, I have no doubt she will do great things as the new Chair of the Board. It is with the utmost confidence that I pass the torch to a devoted leader in the arts, fellow philanthropist and deeply valued friend. As I continue serving on the Board as Chair of the Executive Committee, I am excited to see what's to come in the next stage of The Wallis," said Michael Nemeroff, who served as Chair of The Wallis from 2017 to 2024.

Earlier this month, The Wallis announced the lineup for its 2024/25 season—marking its twelfth year—which promises to showcase the best of Los Angeles performing arts, alongside beloved national and international companies. This esteemed venue offers a diverse range of programming, including dance, contemporary and classical music, theater, film, and family-friendly programming. Additionally, the performing arts center has forged multi-year partnerships with renowned organizations to bring both new works and reimagined classics to the stage, including LA Opera, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Film Independent, Holocaust Museum of Los Angeles, MUSE/IQUE, L.A. Dance Project, BODYTRAFFIC, Los Angeles Ballet, Tonality, National Theatre Live, and the premiere season of the Scott Dunn Orchestra.

"This is a historic moment, as The Wallis Board appoints Daphna as the Chair of the Board of Directors. Having served as a board member since 2016, her dedication to the arts is truly remarkable," said Robert van Leer, executive director and CEO of The Wallis. "We are very grateful for Michael Nemroff's time as Chair of the Board, and are so proud to have a well-rounded Board of Directors that is committed to championing the arts in the greater Los Angeles area and look forward to Daphna stepping into this leadership role with fresh ideas, as we enter into a new programming season at The Wallis."

Born in Tehran, Iran, Nazarian and her family sought refuge in the United States amidst religious persecution during the 1979 Iranian Revolution. They found a new home in Beverly Hills, where they have flourished for over 40 years. After finding her passion within the arts, Nazarian pursued a higher education in Architecture, earning her degree from the University of Southern California and further enriching her studies at Syracuse University in Florence, Italy. Her continued involvement in charitable foundations, particularly those focusing on the arts and Jewish organizations, highlights her commitment

to giving back to her community and honoring her family's enduring values. Guided by her unwavering dedication to the arts and philanthropy, Nazarian was ultimately drawn to the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

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### **About Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts**

The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, located in the heart of Beverly Hills, CA, is a dynamic cultural hub and community resource where local, national, and international artists share their artistry with ever-expanding audiences. Distinguished by its 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 more than 400 theater, dance, music, film, cabaret, comedy, performance arts, and family entertainment programs, boasting nominations for 79 Ovation Awards and nine L.A. Drama Critic's Circle Awards as well as six architectural awards. Since its doors opened in October 2013, The Wallis has been committed to robust and distinctive presentations and education programs curated with both creativity and social impact in mind. Hailed as "au courant" (LaLa Magazine), The Wallis was lauded by Culture Vulture, which proclaimed, "If you love expecting the unexpected in the performing arts, you have to love The Wallis." Broadway legend Patti LuPone, who was The Wallis' 2015/2016 Season Artistic Advisor, described the venue as "one of the best in the country, allowing for an unparalleled intimacy between [the artist] and the audience." A recent patron survey produced audience comments about The Wallis ranging from "amazing, engaging, inspiring!" to "fun. entertaining. educational." The breathtaking 70,000-square-foot facility, celebrating the classic and the modern, was named after philanthropist Wallis Annenberg, whose original \$25-million dollar donation was instrumental in transforming the former Beverly Hills post office building into an arts complex. Designed by acclaimed architect Zoltan E. Pali (SPF:architects), the restored building features the original 1934 Beverly Hills Post Office (on the National Register of Historic Places), whose eight towering fresco murals are one of two sets of WPA frescos 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 the city's history and its future, creating a performing arts destination for L.A.-area visitors and residents alike. Daphna Nazarian is Chair of The Wallis' Board of Directors and Robert van Leer is Executive Director and CEO.

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