















— SUN VALLEY —  
WRITERS' CONFERENCE

# Currents of Change

*Saturday, July 18–Monday, July 20, 2026*

## SATURDAY, JULY 18 OVERVIEW





TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	EXTRAS
9:00 AM–12:15 PM	Typewriter Rodeo	Pavilion Lawn	
11:45 AM–12:15 PM	Ellipsis Rare Books Exhibition Tour	Pavilion East Terrace	
11:45 AM–12:15 PM	Art & Words Exhibition Tour	Pavilion West Terrace	
12:15–1:30 PM	Robert Macfarlane with Jenny Emery Davidson	Pavilion	  
2:00–3:00 PM 1st Breakout Sessions	Susan Choi with Jeffrey Brown	Limelight Room B/C	
	Sebastian Mallaby	Pavilion	  
	Julian Brave NoiseCat with Martha Williams	Tent C	
	Susan Orlean with Anne Taylor Fleming	Opera House	
	Abby Phillip with Todd S. Purdum	Tent A	
3:30–4:30 PM 2nd Breakout Sessions	Liaquat Ahamed	Limelight Room B/C	
	Theo Baker with Vinson Cunningham	Tent B	
	Virginia Evans & Shelley Read with Anne Taylor Fleming	Pavilion	  
	Peter Godwin with Andrea Elliott	Tent A	
	Michael Pollan with Todd S. Purdum	Opera House	
	Gary Shteyngart with Sarah Lyall	Tent C	
5:00–6:15 PM	<i>2026 Writer in the World</i> Ken Burns with Rick Atkinson	Pavilion	  

### LIVESTREAMING

For livestream info please visit:  
[svwc.com/livestream](https://svwc.com/livestream)

Program schedule is subject to change.

### EXTRA WAYS TO WATCH

-  Individual Pavilion Passes
-  Free Lawn Seating
-  Free Livestreaming
-  Argyros Live Watch Party

# Day One

*Saturday, July 18*

# Typewriter Rodeo

9:00 AM–12:15 PM | PAVILION LAWN

## Lunch

See pocket schedule for time and location.

# Ellipsis Rare Books/Art & Words Exhibition Tours

11:45 AM–12:15 PM | PAVILION EAST/WEST TERRACES

# Robert Macfarlane with Jenny Emery Davidson

THE RIVERS OF ROBERT MACFARLANE

12:15–1:30 PM | PAVILION

We convene our 2026 gathering with the magical voice of **ROBERT MACFARLANE**, a man who has been called the greatest nature writer of this generation. No one writes with more knowledge, passion, and lyricism about the natural world and how we can be better stewards of all its bounty. That theme underlies his globally-acclaimed books, including most recently *Is a River Alive?*, the moving story of three imperiled rivers around the world and the intrepid people who have fought to reclaim them. In conversation with **JENNY EMERY DAVIDSON**, Executive Director of The Community Library in Ketchum, Macfarlane will talk about his adventures, literal and literary, and reflect on our beautiful, fragile planet, and the rivers that run through it.

# Susan Choi with Jeffrey Brown

SHINING A LIGHT ON MEMORY AND LOSS

**2:00–3:00 PM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | LIMELIGHT ROOM B/C**

What happens when an ordinary life is shattered by an extraordinary event? National Book Award winner **SUSAN CHOI** joins us to discuss her 2025 novel, *Flashlight*—a haunting story about a father’s disappearance on a walk with his young daughter one summer night and the decades-long aftermath for his family. The moving and intricate story explores how trauma endures. In this discussion with **JEFFREY BROWN** of the PBS *NewsHour*, Choi explores the cross-cultural tensions of Korean-Japanese history, the unreliability of memory, and her own “elliptical” process of writing a mystery that spans generations.

# Sebastian Mallaby

THE QUEST FOR SUPERINTELLIGENCE

**2:00–3:00 PM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | PAVILION**

The question everyone keeps asking is: Will AI save humanity or doom it? **SEBASTIAN MALLABY** goes to the heart of that question in his important new book, *The Infinity Machine: Demis Hassabis, DeepMind, and the Quest for Superintelligence*. Through his intimate portrait of Hassabis, one of the key players in the AI race, Mallaby provides a riveting and colorful story about how AI developed and how it is remaking the world with breathtaking—and sometimes alarming—speed. The author of six previous books, Mallaby will talk about Hassabis, his intellect, philosophy, and ambition, and how the quest for superintelligence is driving a technological and profit arms race that is already surpassing the imaginings and ideals of its human creators, not to mention the rest of us.

# Julian Brave NoiseCat with Martha Williams

A MEMOIR OF INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL AND LOVE

**2:00–3:00 PM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT C**

With his first book, *We Survived the Night*, writer and filmmaker **JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT** introduces us to an important and original new voice. The book, a blend of memoir, journalism, and folktales, weaves a narrative of Indigenous survival with a deeply moving father-son story. It has a marvelous, fierce, and tender heart. NoiseCat's debut documentary *Sugarcane* was nominated for an Oscar, making him the first filmmaker indigenous to North America nominated for an Academy Award. He will talk with **MARTHA WILLIAMS** of The Community Library in Ketchum, about his memoir and about his dual passions for art and activism.

# Susan Orlean with Anne Taylor Fleming

SUSAN ORLEAN'S JOYFUL LIFE

**2:00–3:00 PM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | OPERA HOUSE**

We have come to know **SUSAN ORLEAN**'s unique voice in her many captivating pieces in *The New Yorker*, where she has been a staff writer since 1992, and in her nine nonfiction books, including *The Orchid Thief* and *The Library Book*. In her new memoir, *Joyride*, she turns her lens on her own life and work with the same honesty and curiosity she used in uncovering and telling the stories of others. The book vibrates with her exuberant interest in the world and her sheer joy at being alive and practicing a craft she loves. She will talk with SVWC Associate Director **ANNE TAYLOR FLEMING** about finding her creative calling and the hard work of building and sustaining that career and the joy—that word again—of her happy second marriage and motherhood.

# Abby Phillip with Todd S. Purdum

THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF JESSE JACKSON

**2:00–3:00 PM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT A**

Many of us know **ABBY PHILLIP** as the insightful and deeply prepared CNN anchor of *NewsNight with Abby Phillip*. Her journalistic gifts are much on display in her stirring new biography, *A Dream Deferred: Jesse Jackson and the Fight for Black Political Power*. Known for his soaring rhetoric, the flamboyant Jackson was a dynamic and sometimes controversial figure who played a pivotal role in American politics and the post-Dr. King civil rights movement in the late 20th century. In conversation with **TODD S. PURDUM**, a veteran journalist and acclaimed biographer, Phillip will talk about the many sides of the late Jesse Jackson and why she chose to write about him.

## Cocktails

See pocket schedule for time and location.

# Liaquat Ahamed

1873: THE WORLD'S FIRST GREAT DEPRESSION

3:30–4:30 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | LIMELIGHT ROOM B/C

We have all heard and read a lot about the crash of 1929. But there was an earlier global economic meltdown, the topic of **LIAQUAT AHAMED's** masterful and instructive new work of financial history, *1873: The Rothschilds, the First Great Depression, and the Making of the Modern World*. The book explains the contagion of speculative frenzy and greed that brought the world to its knees and offers intimate portraits of the bankers, politicians, and everyday citizens who were swept up in the boom—and bust. There are even cameos by Mark Twain and Karl Marx. Ahamed, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Lords of Finance* and Board Chair of the Sun Valley Writers' Conference, will talk about that first Great Depression, what fueled it, and about the dark reactionary politics that followed in its wake.

# Theo Baker with Vinson Cunningham

A STANFORD UNDERGRAD TAKES DOWN A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

3:30–4:30 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT B

In his debut book, *How to Rule the World: An Education in Power at Stanford University*, recent Stanford graduate **THEO BAKER** not only tells a dynamite and darkly funny story about the university's problematic culture but also reminds us of what first-rate investigative journalism looks like. A tip he received as a freshman journalist led him to unearth a scandal that resulted in the resignation of Stanford president Marc Tessier-Lavigne, a superstar neuroscientist and wealthy biotech executive, who was accused of research misconduct. In conversation with **VINSON CUNNINGHAM**, critic and staff writer at *The New Yorker*, Baker will talk about how he got the story and his commitment to uncovering the truth.

# Virginia Evans and Shelley Read with Anne Taylor Fleming

NEW VOICES 2026

**3:30–4:30 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | PAVILION**

It is a rare and thrilling event when a writer's first novel takes off and becomes an international phenomenon, ending up on bestseller lists around the world. That has happened for both of our New Voices Fellows, **VIRGINIA EVANS** and **SHELLEY READ**, and what a pleasure to introduce these magical storytellers and the quirky, resilient women at the heart of their stories. In *The Correspondent*, Evans gives us a prickly septuagenarian who writes brilliant, chatty letters and emails to family, friends, foes, and literary idols (the exchanges with Joan Didion are priceless) and reveals her own life story—and deep sorrows—along the way. In Read's *Go as a River*, a resourceful young woman growing up in rural Colorado learns to live with the painful repercussions of one chance encounter. In conversation with SVWC Associate Director **ANNE TAYLOR FLEMING**, Evans and Read will talk about the road to their first novels and their wild rides since—and they'll also tell us what's ahead.

# Peter Godwin with Andrea Elliott

EXIT WOUNDS

**3:30–4:30 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT A**

A mother is dying in London; a marriage is ending in New York. These are the elegiac threads—and two strong women—that run through **PETER GODWIN**'s aptly titled memoir, *Exit Wounds: A Story of Love, Loss, and Occasional Wars*, the story of a witty, wounded 60-something-year-old man reckoning with loss. The author of six celebrated nonfiction books and an intrepid war correspondent, Godwin was born in Zimbabwe and his evocative memoir vibrates with the original loss of his childhood homeland. He offers a moving self-portrait of a fiercely articulate, grieving male losing his strong, stiff-upper-lip “mum” and his strong, independent wife at the same time. Godwin will talk with Pulitzer Prize-winning author **ANDREA ELLIOTT** about his choice to write the memoir and his relationships with the women and places that shaped his life.

# Michael Pollan with Todd S. Purdum

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE MIND: A LITERARY JOURNEY

**3:30–4:30 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | OPERA HOUSE**

From the “anxiety of eating” to the “mind of plants,” author **MICHAEL POLLAN** has navigated some of the most compelling narratives of our time. In conversation with author **TODD S. PURDUM**, Pollan will trace his intellectual journey, starting with his investigations into the American food system and how we eat, and leading to his recent exploration of plants and consciousness in *This is Your Mind on Plants* and *How to Change Your Mind*. Join us for a fascinating discussion on the power of storytelling to reshape our perception of the natural world, our health, and ourselves.

# Gary Shteyngart with Sarah Lyall

VERA, OR FAITH: A TRAGICOMIC TALE OF CHILDHOOD

**3:30–4:30 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT C**

If you have read any of **GARY SHTEYNGART**'s essays in *The New Yorker*, like the one on his botched circumcision, you know he can be wickedly amusing. But if you have read any of his novels, like his most recent, *Vera, or Faith*, you know he can go very deep without losing his tart take on the absurdity and sorrows of human life. The new book is about a multi-heritage family—Russian, Jewish, Korean, and New England WASP—that is trying to hold on in a country coming apart, the story narrated by their hopeful and observant ten-year-old daughter. In conversation with *The New York Times*' **SARAH LYALL**, Shteyngart will talk about the new novel and the precocious young narrator at its heart, and where his own fiercely original voice comes from.

# Ken Burns with Rick Atkinson

2026 WRITER IN THE WORLD

5:00–6:15 PM | PAVILION















We are honored to award the 2026 Sun Valley Writers' Conference Writer in the World Prize, in person, to **KEN BURNS**. For almost half a century, he has told us the story of America through some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, *Jazz*, *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*, *The Vietnam War*, *Country Music*, and *The American Buffalo*. Each one has entertained and enlightened and often haunted us, none more so than his most recent, *The American Revolution*. Burns will talk about his passion for the documentary form and, in conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning military historian **RICK ATKINSON**, tell us about his latest project on the Revolution and about how, as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the country's founding, the idea of democracy moves him as it did the leaders and foot soldiers who gave their lives fighting and dying for it.

## Save the Dates for SVWC 2027!

**SATURDAY, JULY 17–MONDAY, JULY 19**

*Please Note: The views, opinions, and positions expressed by SVWC speakers and attendees at the Conference are the speakers' and attendees' own and do not necessarily reflect those of SVWC, its founders, board members, staff, or volunteers.*

## SUNDAY, JULY 19 OVERVIEW





TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	EXTRAS
9:30–10:30 AM Breakout Sessions	Susan Choi & Kiran Desai with John Burnham Schwartz	Tent B	
	David Gelles with Willy Walker	Pavilion	  
	Beth Macy with Andrea Elliott	Opera House	
	Simon Rich	Tent A	
	Derek Thompson with Liaquat Ahamed	Limelight Room B/C	
	Ilyon Woo with Martha Williams	Tent C	
11:00 AM–12:00 PM	Atul Gawande with Evan Osnos	Pavilion	 
12:00–1:30 PM	Lunch	Lunch Village	
12:00–1:30 PM	Typewriter Rodeo	Pavilion Lawn	
12:15–12:45 PM	Ellipsis Rare Books Exhibition Tour	Pavilion East Terrace	
12:15–12:45 PM	Art & Words Exhibition Tour	Pavilion West Terrace	
1:30–2:30 PM	Jill Lepore & David E. Sanger with Abby Phillip	Pavilion	  
3:00–4:00 PM	Michael Pollan with John Burnham Schwartz	Pavilion	  
4:30–5:30 PM	Amor Towles with Jeffrey Brown	Pavilion	  

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# Day Two

*Sunday, July 19*

# Breakfast

See pocket schedule for time and location.

## Susan Choi and Kiran Desai with John Burnham Schwartz

WHAT MAKES A GREAT NOVEL

**9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT B**

What does it take to write a great novel: what craft, what creativity, what commitment? Two of our most celebrated novelists, **SUSAN CHOI** and **KIRAN DESAI**, will address those questions in a deep-dive discussion about the challenges and joys of writing fiction. Their latest books, Choi's *Flashlight* and Desai's *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny*—both shortlisted for the Booker Prize—tell heart-gripping stories that span decades and continents. How do they craft such complex stories? How much research is involved? Do they know the ending before they begin? In a conversation with SVWC Literary Director **JOHN BURNHAM SCHWARTZ**, the two authors will each enlighten us about their life's work.

## David Gelles with Willy Walker

DIRTBAG BILLIONAIRE

**9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | PAVILION**

Many of us at some point have owned a jacket, a fleece vest, or a piece of outdoor gear from Patagonia. Now we have the fascinating story of the unique company and its complex founder. In his new book, *Dirtbag Billionaire: How Yvon Chouinard Built Patagonia, Made a Fortune, and Gave It All Away*, **DAVID GELLES**, reporter for *The New York Times*, profiles the maverick mogul and unwavering environmentalist who committed the company's future profits to fight the climate crisis. In conversation with **WILLY WALKER**, host of the *Walker Webcast*, Gelles will talk about Chouinard's extraordinary career and how Patagonia became a global leader in doing well by doing good.

# Beth Macy with Andrea Elliott

HOMETOWN GIRL: BETH MACY'S AMERICA

9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | OPERA HOUSE

In *Paper Girl: A Memoir of Home and Family in a Fractured America*, a deeply reported and moving memoir about her small Ohio hometown, journalist **BETH MACY** does an uncanny job of telling us the story of her own complicated family and also the story of the country itself and the cultural and economic fractures that are tearing it apart. It is a beautifully written must-read for anyone who wants to know the real struggles of heartland Americans. In conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter **ANDREA ELLIOTT**, Macy will talk about the poverty that marked her own childhood, her adamant empathy for the outsiders and underdogs, and what gives her hope for the future.

# Simon Rich

WRITING FUNNY

9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT A

It has been said that “writing funny” is harder than “writing serious” because you are always after a payoff: a laugh, a smile, even an amused, head-shaking grimace. Is that true? No one knows the answer better than Emmy Award-winning humorist **SIMON RICH**. A frequent short-story contributor to *The New Yorker*, he has written for *Saturday Night Live*, Pixar, and *The Simpsons*, and he is the ideal writer to tell us about the joys and burdens of writing funny and whether he leans funny in real life. In recent years, Rich has also adapted his stories into two Broadway shows, *All In: Comedy about Love* and *All Out: Comedy about Ambition*. He will talk about the differences and similarities between comedy and other genres like drama and horror (and the recent mash-ups of those genres) and what different storytelling muscles they require.

# Derek Thompson with Liaquat Ahamed

ABUNDANCE FOR ALL

**9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | LIMELIGHT ROOM B/C**

How refreshing to read a deeply reported and even-handed analysis of the country's difficult problems as is the case with *Abundance*, a probing, provocative, and ultimately hopeful book by author and podcaster **DEREK THOMPSON**. Co-written with *New York Times* columnist Ezra Klein, the book addresses the major underlying issues from health care to housing shortages and maintains that the country has simply not been building enough, a failure shared by both liberals and conservatives. In conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning financial historian **LIAQUAT AHAMED**, Thompson will talk about how the message of the wildly popular book has hit such a nerve and how we can overcome the entrenched barriers to progress and embrace a politics of plenty for all—not only embrace it, but also act on it.

# Ilyon Woo with Martha Williams

AN EXTRAORDINARY AMERICAN LOVE STORY

**9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT C**

The most compelling nonfiction authors are able to tell a scrupulously-researched true story that reads like a great novel. That is certainly the case with *Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom*, **ILYON WOO**'s stirring Pulitzer Prize-winning biography. It is the singular American love story of an enslaved married couple, Ellen and William Craft, who in 1848 made a perilous 1,000-mile journey from bondage in Georgia to the free states of the North by posing as master and slave. In conversation with **MARTHA WILLIAMS** of The Community Library in Ketchum, Woo will talk about the journey of the Crafts, who became famous abolitionists, and how they are truly American revolutionaries.

# Atul Gawande with Evan Osnos

THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

**11:00 AM–12:00 PM | PAVILION**

There are special voices that speak with a rare moral clarity, and one of those voices belongs to **ATUL GAWANDE, MD, MPH**, surgeon and author of *Being Mortal*. He is also a passionate advocate for providing health care to the less fortunate, here and around the world. In early 2022, he left his surgery practice in Boston to lead the global health efforts of the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.), an organization that is estimated to have saved 92 million lives—many of them children—over two decades, and has now been shuttered by the current president. In conversation with National Book Award-winning author **EVAN OSNOS**, Gawande will take us to the front lines of the countries now reeling with preventable diseases and deaths from the many maladies like malaria and malnutrition and remind us what it means to care—and the costs, literal and moral, of not caring.

## Lunch

**12:00–1:30 PM | LUNCH VILLAGE**

## Typewriter Rodeo

**12:00–1:30 PM | PAVILION LAWN**

## Ellipsis Rare Books/Art & Words Exhibition Tours

**12:15–12:45 PM | PAVILION EAST/WEST TERRACES**

# Jill Lepore and David E. Sanger with Abby Phillip

THE PRESIDENT'S POWER

1:30–2:30 PM | PAVILION

Can a president of the United States unilaterally take the country to war or unilaterally impose global tariffs as the current president has done? What are the limits of presidential power and where are the guardrails? Presidents have often chafed at limitations to their power, though Donald Trump seems willing to buck the constitutional constraints and make end runs around Congress and the judiciary system. We have asked two deeply-informed, admired writers to reflect on the topic from their different perspectives. **JILL LEPORE** is a Harvard Professor of American History and Law and author of *We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution*; **DAVID E. SANGER** is a Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* journalist who has known many a president up close. In a conversation moderated by author and CNN anchor **ABBY PHILLIP**, they will offer their analyses of the power of the presidency and the uncharted territory the country is in.

# Michael Pollan with John Burnham Schwartz

A WORLD APPEARS

3:00–4:00 PM | PAVILION

What does it mean to be conscious—of the world, of yourself—and where does consciousness come from? These are the fascinating questions author **MICHAEL POLLAN** explores in his wondrous new book, *A World Appears: A Journey into Consciousness*. For over three decades, we have been the beneficiaries of Pollan's indefatigable curiosity about everything from food and farming to mind-altering drugs. Now comes his provocative and personal look into consciousness itself and what makes us human. In conversation with SVWC Literary Director **JOHN BURNHAM SCHWARTZ**, Pollan will talk about the scientists and seekers he interviewed for the book and how, in our hectic lives, we need to clear space in our consciousness in order to perceive the world and our connection to it—and to each other.

# Amor Towles with Jeffrey Brown

THE CONSUMMATE STORYTELLER








**4:30–5:30 PM | PAVILION**

Since the publication of his first novel, writer **AMOR TOWLES** has been on everyone's list of their favorite novelists. The world immediately recognized the irresistible new voice of a natural storyteller, someone with an innate instinct for drama and a tenderness for the foibles of his all-too-human characters. His novels, including *Rules of Civility*, *A Gentleman in Moscow*, and *The Lincoln Highway*, have collectively sold more than six million copies and been translated into 30 languages. He will talk with **JEFFREY BROWN**, of the PBS *NewsHour*, about the genesis of the novels and his latest work of fiction, *Table for Two*, six stories based in New York City and a novella set in Golden Age Hollywood, all marked by his gift for acute observations of people and places.

## Cocktails

See pocket schedule for time and location.

# MONDAY, JULY 20 OVERVIEW





TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	EXTRAS
9:30–10:30 AM 1st Breakout Sessions	Theo Baker & Sebastian Mallaby with Derek Thompson	Tent B	
	Sarabeth Berman & Beth Macy with Erich Schwartzel	Tent C	
	Amy Bowers Cordalis	Opera House	
	Peter Godwin & Susan Orlean with Andrea Elliott	Tent A	
	Julia Lovell & David E. Sanger with Evan Osnos	Pavilion	  
	Gary Shteyngart & Amor Towles with Vinson Cunningham	Limelight Room B/C	
11:00 AM–12:00 PM 2nd Breakout Sessions	Amy Bowers Cordalis & Robert Macfarlane with David Gelles	Limelight Room B/C	
	Kiran Desai with Jenny Emery Davidson	Tent B	
	Jill Lepore with Evan Osnos	Pavilion	  
	Barbara Wansbrough with Paul Holdengraber	Tent C	
	Ilyon Woo with Jen Lee Koss	Opera House	
12:00–1:30 PM	Lunch	Lunch Village	
12:00–1:30 PM	Typewriter Rodeo	Pavilion Lawn	
12:45–1:15 PM	Ellipsis Rare Books Exhibition Tour	Pavilion East Terrace	
12:45–1:15 PM	Art & Words Exhibition Tour	Pavilion West Terrace	
1:30–2:30 PM	Ada Limón	Pavilion	  
3:00–4:00 PM	Simon Rich & Company	Pavilion	  
4:30–5:30 PM	Rick Atkinson	Pavilion	  
5:30–6:30 PM	Typewriter Rodeo	Pavilion Lawn	
5:30–6:30 PM	Closing Reception	Pavilion Lawn	

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# Day Three

*Monday, July 20*

# Breakfast

See pocket schedule for time and location.

## Theo Baker and Sebastian Mallaby with Derek Thompson

HOW TECH IS SHAPING THE WORLD

**9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT B**

What an exhilarating, if sometimes overwhelming, time to be a human as we watch technological advances change our lives on an almost daily basis. Those changes are bringing awesome innovations, but they are also leading to decisive disparities as some of the tech titans become stratospherically rich, giving them leverage over our lives and politics. We have asked two authors, **SEBASTIAN MALLABY** and **THEO BAKER**, to reflect on this high-stakes reality. In Mallaby's latest book, *The Infinity Machine: Demis Hassabis, DeepMind, and the Quest for Superintelligence*, he has written extensively about economics and the AI arms race, while Baker's new book, *How to Rule the World: An Education in Power at Stanford University*, focuses on the symbiosis between Silicon Valley and the school. In conversation with author and podcaster **DEREK THOMPSON**, they will talk about the culture of Silicon Valley and how tech is shaping our world.

## Sarabeth Berman and Beth Macy with Erich Schwartzel

WHY LOCAL NEWS MATTERS—AND HOW TO SAVE IT

**9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT C**

Who will tell the stories of our communities? By now, you've heard that local newspapers are closing at an alarming rate. Two vanish each week. But local news is surviving, reimagined by a new generation of news outlets taking root from Vermont to Texas to California. **BETH MACY**, author of *Paper Girl: A Memoir of Home and Family in a Fractured America*, and **SARABETH BERMAN**, CEO of the American Journalism Project, will talk with *The Wall Street Journal* reporter **ERICH SCHWARTZEL** about how the vital power of local news is rebuilding the food chain of trustworthy information.

# Amy Bowers Cordalis

UNDAMMED: SAVING THE KLAMATH RIVER AND AN INDIGENOUS WAY OF LIFE  
9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | OPERA HOUSE

The Klamath River runs through **AMY BOWERS CORDALIS**—through her Yurok ancestry, her legal career, and her lifelong fight to bring the salmon home. Join Cordalis for a screening of the short film *Undammed*, which captures her central role in the largest dam removal in American history, followed by a talk about her new book, *The Water Remembers: My Indigenous Family's Fight to Save a River and a Way of Life*. Together, film and reflection trace a multigenerational story of resistance, restoration, and reverence—an Indigenous reckoning with what we owe our rivers, and what they remember of us.

# Peter Godwin and Susan Orlean with Andrea Elliott

WRITING LIVES

9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT A

Join two master storytellers, **SUSAN ORLEAN** and **PETER GODWIN**, for an intimate conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist **ANDREA ELLIOTT** on the craft of capturing real lives on the page. From immersing themselves in the worlds of others to confronting the complexities of writing about their own experiences, they explore the delicate balance between observation and introspection. With insight, humor, and candor, Orlean and Godwin reflect on the ethical, emotional, and artistic challenges of portraying human lives—revealing how curiosity, empathy, and narrative shape the stories we tell about others and ourselves.

# Julia Lovell and David E. Sanger with Evan Osnos

THE NEW WORLD DISORDER

9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | PAVILION

We could not think of two more thoughtful and original minds to help us decipher the dynamics of the new world order—or indeed, the new world disorder—than **DAVID E. SANGER** and **JULIA LOVELL**. Sanger, a veteran *New York Times* correspondent, reports on the Trump Administration with a focus on foreign policy, and is the author of the essential new book, *New Cold Wars, China's Rise, Russia's Invasion, and America's Struggle to Defend the West*. Lovell is a British professor of Modern Chinese History and the author of *Maoism, A Global History*. In conversation with award-winning journalist **EVAN OSNOS**, they will discuss the major global shifts and perils, the physical and cyber wars, and the wily autocrats, and tell us what they see ahead.

# Gary Shteyngart and Amor Towles with Vinson Cunningham

FRIENDSHIP AND FICTIONAL MARTINIS

9:30–10:30 AM | 1ST BREAKOUT SESSION | LIMELIGHT ROOM B/C

Knowing that writers **GARY SHTEYNGART** and **AMOR TOWLES** are friends, it became irresistible to pair them in a wide-ranging and free-wheeling conversation about literature and language—and indeed, friendship. They have both enjoyed massive literary success with beloved novels like Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* and Towles' *A Gentleman in Moscow*, books that are stylish, entertaining, and deeply smart. In a conversation moderated by **VINSON CUNNINGHAM**, novelist and critic for *The New Yorker*, they will talk about the books they write and the books they love and whether, with time, writing gets easier or harder. And yes, they will tell us about those martinis—the ones that turn up in their stories and the ones they have shared.

# Amy Bowers Cordalis and Robert Macfarlane with David Gelles

THE WORLD'S MAJESTIC RIVERS

**11:00 AM–12:00 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | LIMELIGHT ROOM B/C**

No two writers could be more passionate about protecting the world's rivers than **ROBERT MACFARLANE** and **AMY BOWERS CORDALIS**. For his latest book, *Is a River Alive?*, Macfarlane traveled the globe to profile threatened rivers in Canada, Ecuador, and India. Cordalis did not need to look farther than the mighty Klamath River that flows through her Northern California homeland. In her stirring new memoir, *The Water Remembers: My Indigenous Family's Fight to Save a River and a Way of Life*, she tells the story of the struggle that resulted in the largest restoration and dam removal in history—and the return of the salmon. In conversation with **DAVID GELLES**, climate correspondent for *The New York Times*, the two authors will talk about their crusades and their causes for hope.

# Kiran Desai with Jenny Emery Davidson

A PROFOUND AND POIGNANT ROMANCE FOR OUR TIME

**11:00 AM–12:00 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT B**

There are novels, even long ones, you cannot bear to finish because the people and places in them have become so alive in your imagination. So it is with **KIRAN DESAI's** stunning novel *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny*, the story of two indecisive young lovers who meet and part across Europe, India, and the United States. In conversation with **JENNY EMERY DAVIDSON**, Executive Director of The Community Library in Ketchum, Desai, winner of the 2006 Booker Prize, will talk about Sonia and Sunny and the forces of race, class, and family that tug at them and how she kept faith with a novel that took almost 20 years to write.

# Jill Lepore with Evan Osnos

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ARTIFICIAL STATE

**11:00 AM–12:00 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | PAVILION**

With her highly original and ultimately optimistic forthcoming book, *The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State*, writer **JILL LEPORE** takes a brilliant, unexpected pivot. The prize-winning Harvard historian is known to many as a constitutional scholar. Her new book takes us into the heart of our artificial data-driven new world and offers an eye-opening account of how all this technology is threatening democracy. With her characteristic intellectual breadth, she examines everything from robot rights to Elon Musk's origins to what data centers cost wildlife. History, Lepore demonstrates, is driven by individuals and ideas, not machines. She will talk with award-winning journalist **EVAN OSNOS** about the rise of the artificial state and how we can loosen its grip on our lives.

# Barbara Wansbrough with Paul Holdengräber

LETTERS TO MY SISTER

**11:00 AM–12:00 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | TENT C**

Where do we seek solace and where do we find it? That question haunts **BARBARA WANSBROUGH**'s beautiful new book, *Wild Things*, a lyrical meditation on the loss of her beloved sister who died of cancer at age 59. Wansbrough took her wounded heart into the hills on daily hikes through Griffith Park in Los Angeles. Structured as 59 letters, one for each year of her sister's life, she interweaves memories of her sister and their shared chaotic childhood with vivid details of the natural world she encounters on her walks. The memoir is a mystical blend of beauty and grief, life and death. She will talk with her husband, well-known interviewer **PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER**, about the origins of the book and its original form, and how she found solace in those long walks.

# Ilyon Woo with Jen Lee Koss

AN ASIAN FATHER'S GIFT: PERMISSION TO FAIL

**11:00 AM–12:00 PM | 2ND BREAKOUT SESSION | OPERA HOUSE**

Author **ILYON WOO** dazzled readers and critics with her Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom*. But it wasn't a straight line to literary success. First there were academic struggles in high school, and later, when she turned in a partial manuscript for the book, she was told she had to start over from scratch. But as she wrote in a wonderful *Wall Street Journal* essay, her Korean-born father had given her an invaluable gift: the permission to fail. In conversation with her friend, entrepreneur and former concert cellist **JEN LEE KOSS**, she will talk about the value of failure as a starting point and in picking up the pieces and also share her thoughts on the meaning of achievement.

## Lunch

**12:00–1:30 PM | LUNCH VILLAGE**

## Typewriter Rodeo

**12:00–1:30 PM | PAVILION LAWN**

## Ellipsis Rare Books/Art & Words Exhibition Tours

**12:45–1:15 PM | PAVILION EAST/WEST TERRACES**

# Ada Limón

A POETRY READING BY THE FORMER POET LAUREATE

**1:30–2:30 PM | PAVILION**

It is rare for someone to be both: a poet's poet and a poet of the people. **ADA LIMÓN** is that rare writer, able to dazzle critics and readers alike. Over her seven books of poetry, she has woven a lyrical spell that is both sophisticated and also accessible. Her latest collection, *Startlement: New and Selected Poems*, from which she will read, includes radiant new poems and a selection of earlier ones. They remind us of her uncanny ability to trap a memory on the page, be it about youthful desire, the feel of a table, or the loss of love. But there is joy, so much joy, so much inhaling of the natural beauty of the universe. Separately and together, they are about time itself and how briefly we are here on this planet and our need to savor even our sorrows. To read Ada Limón's poems is magical. To listen to her read them is a gift.

# Simon Rich & Company

STORIES FROM 'ALL IN': A PERFORMANCE

**3:00–4:00 PM | PAVILION**

Get ready for smiles and belly laughs as Emmy Award-winning humorist **SIMON RICH** presents live excerpts from his smash hit on Broadway, *All In: A Comedy about Love*—staged readings from some of his previously published stories in *The New Yorker*. Four terrific actors, **MICHAEL J. FELDMAN**, **ZEKE NICHOLSON**, **MICHAEL RACHLIS**, and **MARY SOHN**, will bring the colorful characters in those stories to vivid life, using all their dramatic gifts to portray the shenanigans and silliness, the communication and miscommunication, and the romantic ups and downs that bedevil love. It is a chance to appreciate Rich's comedic gifts but also to marvel at just how much fun and feeling a talented quartet can stir up with script in hand.

# Cocktails

See pocket schedule for time and location.

# Rick Atkinson

THE MOMENTOUS FIGHT FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

**4:30–5:30 PM | PAVILION**

Our final voice of the 2026 Conference belongs to the Pulitzer Prize-winning military historian **RICK ATKINSON** and his majestic *The Revolution Trilogy*, specifically the most-recently released second volume *The Fate of the Day*, which covers the years 1777–1780 when George Washington's exhausted army struggled to hold on. Atkinson's dramatic and detailed account offers a vivid portrait of General Washington's crucial leadership and reminds us how brutally long the War for Independence actually was. Atkinson, who was featured in Ken Burns's most recent documentary, will take us on to the battlefields and introduce us to the courageous commanders who led the fight and the often ragtag young soldiers—White, Black, and Indigenous—who fought and died under their command.

# Typewriter Rodeo

**5:30–6:30 PM | PAVILION LAWN**

# Closing Reception

**5:30–6:30 PM | PAVILION LAWN**

We invite all Conference guests and writers to join us for a complimentary beverage immediately following the last presentation.

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