

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Westport Country Playhouse Presents the Musical “Harry the Dirty Dog” as Part of Its Family Festivities Series on May 6**

Westport Country Playhouse will present the musical, “Harry the Dirty Dog,” as part of its Family Festivities Series for two performances on Sunday, May 6, at 1 p.m., and 4 p.m. Based on the bestselling book written by Gene Zion and illustrated by Margaret Bloy Graham, the one-hour production is produced by ArtsPower and appropriate for grades K through 2. Tickets are \$20.

Harry is a dog with a white coat, black spots, and a very loving family. He is, generally speaking, one of the happiest little dogs around. There aren't many things Harry doesn't like...but baths are certainly on the list! So when the time comes for his wash, Harry's only option is to bury his scrub brush and run away from home. He passes a marvelous day getting as messy as possible: he plays in dirt, in coal, in all the grimest places imaginable. Exhausted, he comes back home at last -- only to discover that his family doesn't recognize him! His efforts have turned him from a white dog with black spots into a black dog with white spots. Now what is Harry to do? Why didn't he think before how important his family was to him? And how can he show them who he really is?

“Harry the Dirty Dog” was adapted for the stage by ArtsPower’s artistic director Greg Gunning, who also wrote the lyrics and directed the production. Composer and orchestrator Richard DeRosa created the original Broadway-style score. Songs include “A Dog’s Life for Me,” “Take a Bath,” “Dirt,” and “Home.”

Mark and Gary Blackman founded ArtsPower in 1985 and have been steering its course ever since. ArtsPower has grown into one of America’s premiere producers of professional theater for young and family audiences. Its 27 professional touring productions have been seen by 12 million people nationwide, in the country’s top cultural centers, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and Lincoln Center in New York.

“Harry’s appeal is remarkably broad,” says ArtsPower executive producer Gary Blackman. “The story is very playful and lighthearted, but parents know it’s more than just silliness. Harry makes some very interesting points about inner and outer identity, asking kids to think about which is more important.”

On Saturday, April 28, at 2:30 p.m., one week before the Playhouse presentation of “Harry the Dirty Dog,” The Westport Library will offer a free-of-charge “Story Explorers” program, a collaboration between the Library and Playhouse, featuring an interactive book reading of “Harry the Dirty Dog,” and activities surrounding the book’s theme led by teaching artists from Broadway Method Academy, the Playhouse’s resident conservatory. The hour-long program promotes childhood literacy while also

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enhancing children's experiences of attending the Playhouse's Family Festivities shows. Presenting partners for "Story Explorers" are Westport Country Playhouse, The Westport Library, and Westport Young Woman's League. "Story Explorers" Corporate Sponsor is KPMG.

In conjunction with the Family Festivities Series, the Playhouse will once again host a book collection for Read to Grow, Inc., a statewide nonprofit organization that provides free children's books to families with limited access and to community resources that serve them. At each Family Festivities performance, bins will be located in the Playhouse lobby for donations of gently used and new children's books which will be given to families and programs in the greater Fairfield County area through Read to Grow. During last season's Family Festivities series, the Playhouse collected nearly 300 books.

Family Festivities Series Corporate Sponsor is Pitney Bowes. The Family Festivities Series is also supported by the Westport Young Woman's League.

Everyone in the audience requires a ticket. For more information or tickets, call the box office at (203) 227-4177, or toll-free at 1-888-927-7529, or visit Westport Country Playhouse, 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport. Tickets are available online 24/7 at [www.westportplayhouse.org](http://www.westportplayhouse.org). Stay connected to the Playhouse on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), follow on Twitter (@WCPlayhouse), or view Playhouse videos on YouTube (WestportPlayhouse).

#### **ABOUT WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE**

The mission of Westport Country Playhouse is to enrich, enlighten, and engage the community through the power of professionally produced *theater worth talking about* and the welcoming experience of the Playhouse campus. The not-for-profit Playhouse provides this experience in multiple ways by offering live theater experiences of the highest quality, under the artistic direction of Mark Lamos; educational and community engagement events to further explore the work on stage; the New Works Circle Initiative, a program dedicated to the discovery, development, and production of new live theatrical works; special performances and programs for students and teachers with extensive curriculum support material; Script in Hand play readings to deepen relationships with audiences and artists; the renowned Woodward Internship Program during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; Family Festivities presentations to delight young and old alike and to promote reading through live theater; youth performance training through Broadway Method Academy, WCP's resident conservatory program; and the beautiful and historic Playhouse campus open for enjoyment and community events year-round.

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