

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Westport Country Playhouse Partners with The Westport Library and Westport Young Woman's League for New Program "Story Explorers"**

Westport Country Playhouse, The Westport Library, and Westport Young Woman's League are partnering for a new, free-of-charge program, "Story Explorers," beginning in January, intended to promote childhood literacy while also enhancing children's experiences of attending the Playhouse's Family Festivities shows.

Before seeing Family Festivities musical presentations live on the Playhouse stage, families may attend interactive book readings of the stories on which the shows are based in the Library's Smilow Family Children's Department. Each "Story Explorers" will include fun activities surrounding the book's theme. Programs will be approximately one hour.

"Story Explorers' book readings, in conjunction with attending a theatrical performance of the story, stimulate developmental benchmarks under the nurturing umbrella of the arts," said Laura Porio Silence, curator of the Playhouse's Family Festivities Series. "Attending well-executed live theater can have a lasting impact on children – helping to improve childhood literacy, creativity, and critical thinking."

"Story Explorers" will kick off on Saturday, January 14, at 2 p.m., with an interactive reading and activities for "Biscuit," the modern classic with over 17 million books in print. The story is about a frolicking little puppy named Biscuit who loves exploring, making new friends, and even stirring up some mischief. Along the way, Biscuit learns about the joy of having a family. A musical production of "Biscuit" will be staged at the Playhouse a week later, on Sunday, January 22, at 1 and 4 p.m., produced by ArtsPower, and recommended for ages 4 to 8.

"Twinkle Tames a Dragon, The Musical," from Katharine Holabird, the author of the classic book series, "Angelina Ballerina," will be read at the Library on Sunday, January 29, at 2 p.m. The story tells of Twinkle, who has always wanted a pet and is thrilled when Fairy Godmother grants her wish. When her pet turns out to be a naughty dragon named Scruffy, Twinkle wonders if she can tame her dragon in time for Fairy Pet Day. A musical production of "Twinkle Tames a Dragon" will be presented at the Playhouse on Sunday, February 12, at 1 and 4 p.m., produced by Vital Theatre Company, and recommended for ages 2 to 7.

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“Dr. Seuss’ The Cat in the Hat” will be read on Saturday, March 11, at 2 p.m., at the Library. The classic tale begins with a tall, red-and-white striped hat appearing at the door. Sally and her brother soon know that the Cat in the Hat is the most mischievous cat they will ever meet. Suddenly a rainy afternoon is transformed by the Cat and his antics. The musical production will be at the Playhouse on Sunday, March 19, at 1 and 4 p.m., produced by Childsplay, and recommended for ages 3 and up.

“Pete the Cat” will be read on Saturday, March 25, at 2 p.m., at the Library, and presented on Sunday, April 2, at 1 and 4 p.m., at the Playhouse. The story finds Pete the Cat caught rocking out after bedtime. The cat-catcher sends him to live with the Biddle family to learn his manners – and boy, are they square! The minute Pete walks in the door, he gets the whole family rocking, except young Jimmy, the most organized second grader on earth. But, when Jimmy draws a blank in art class, Pete is the perfect friend to help him out. Produced by Theatreworks USA, the musical is recommended for ages 4 to 8.

Family Festivities tickets are \$20 each. Each production is approximately one hour.

In conjunction with the Family Festivities Series, the Playhouse hosts a book collection for Read to Grow, Inc., a statewide nonprofit organization that helps parents take an active role in their children’s literacy development by providing 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.

Family Festivities shows are presented on selected Sundays from November through April. Family Festivities Corporate Sponsors are Northern Trust and Pitney Bowes. Family Festivities Sponsor is Darlene Krenz. 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 Playhouse creates this relationship with the community and provides this experience in multiple ways by offering: Live theater experiences of the highest quality, under the artistic direction of Mark Lamos, from May through November; educational and community engagement events and opportunities to further explore issues presented by the work on stage; special performances and programs for students and teachers with extensive curriculum support material; *Script in Hand* play readings throughout the year to deepen relationships with audiences and artists alike; the renowned Woodward Internship Program during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; *Family Festivities* presentations from November through April to delight young and old alike and to promote reading through live theater; and the beautiful and historic Playhouse campus open for enjoyment and community events year-round. The value of the Westport Country Playhouse to all it touches is immeasurable.

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