

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Comedy “Lettice and Lovage” Is 2017 Season Opener at Westport Country Playhouse from May 30 to June 17

The Tony Award-nominated comedy, “Lettice and Lovage,” will open Westport Country Playhouse’s 87th Season, written by Peter Shaffer, author of “Amadeus,” and directed by Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director. The play runs from May 30 through June 17. The cast includes Patricia Conolly, Mia Dillon, Sarah Manton, and Paxton Whitehead.

“I’m so happy that we’ll be opening our season with this life-affirming and wildly funny comedy by the master playwright Peter Shaffer,” said Lamos. “Written for the actress Maggie Smith, it opened in England in 1987 and then on Broadway in 1990 and has been entertaining audiences around the world ever since. Our cast includes a quartet of brilliant comic actors, all of whom are Playhouse veterans and audience favorites. One of them, Paxton Whitehead, is reprising his role in the original Broadway production--a special treat for me and, I know, you as well!”

In “Lettice and Lovage,” Miss Lettice Douffet is a tour guide at one of England’s historic homes. Faced with the fact that nothing of importance actually occurred in the home, Lettice uses her flamboyant style to embellish the stately mansion’s dull history with pure fantasy---much to the disapproval of her strict employer Lotte Schoen. When Lettice serves Lotte a cup of lovage, an herbal-based alcoholic drink, the two opposites develop a devilish friendship. Soon they engage in a series of capers to fight against society’s mediocrity, and live up to Lettice’s motto, “Enlarge! Enliven! Enlighten!”

Playing the role of Lettice Douffet is **Patricia Conolly** (Westport Country Playhouse’s “Tartuffe” and “Outward Bound”; Broadway’s “The Front Page,” “Is He Dead?,” “Enchanted April,” “Waiting in the Wings,” “The Sound of Music,” “The Circle,” “Judgment at Nuremberg,” and “A Small Family Business”; and previous collaborations with director Mark Lamos, including Cleopatra in “Anthony and Cleopatra” and “Kean” at Hartford Stage, and “Dear Liar” at The Guthrie).

Mia Dillon will portray Lotte Schoen (WCP’s “A Song at Twilight,” “Our Town,” “Angel Street,” “Speed-the-Plow,” “Return Engagements,” “Once a Catholic,” and several Script in Hand playreadings; 1982 Tony Award Nominee for Best Featured Actress in a Play for “Crimes of the Heart,” also Broadway’s “Our Town,” “Da,” “Hay Fever,” “The Miser,” “The Corn Is Green,” “Equus,” and “Agnes of God”).

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Sarah Manton is cast as Ms. Framer (WCP's "What the Butler Saw," "Bedroom Farce," and "Things We Do for Love"; Broadway/London's "One Man, Two Guvnors"; London's "The Coast of Utopia," "South Pacific," and Baby in "Dirty Dancing").

Paxton Whitehead will reprise his Broadway portrayal of Mr. Bardolph (WCP's "What the Butler Saw," "Bedroom Farce," "The Circle," "How the Other Half Loves," "Time of My Life," "Relatively Speaking," "A Bench in the Sun," and "The Crucifer of Blood," and a Script in Hand playreading of "Dial 'M' for Murder"; Broadway's "The Importance of Being Earnest," "My Fair Lady" (Helen Hayes Award), "Noises Off" (Drama Desk Award), "Camelot" (Tony Award nomination), and "Lettice and Lovage" with Maggie Smith).

Local actors appearing as tourists in the opening scene will be announced soon.

Playwright Sir Peter Shaffer is a Tony and Academy Award-winning British playwright of considerable range. His plays include "Five-Finger Exercise" (1960), "The Royal Hunt of the Sun" (1964), "Equus" (1973, filmed 1977), "Amadeus" (1979, filmed 1984), "Lettice and Lovage" (1987), and "The Gift of the Gorgon" (1992). Shaffer was knighted in 2001.

Director Mark Lamos has directed many plays at Westport Country Playhouse since 2008. His extensive New York credits include "Our Country's Good," for which he received a Tony Award nomination. A former artistic director at Hartford Stage, he earned the 1989 Tony Award for the theater's body of work. He was awarded the Connecticut Medal for the Arts as well as honorary doctorates from Connecticut College, University of Hartford, and Trinity College. Last year, Lamos directed a reading of "Lettice and Lovage" for The Acting Company Gala in New York City.

The design team includes John Arnone, scenic design; Jane Greenwood, costume design; Philip Rosenberg, lighting design; and John Gromada, sound design.

"Lettice and Lovage" Production Sponsor is Howard J. Aibel. Production Partner is Joyce Hergenhan. Corporate Production Sponsor is Bank of America.

Performance schedule is Tuesday at 7 p.m., Wednesday at 2 and 8 p.m., Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Special series feature Taste of Tuesday, LGBT Night OUT, Opening Night, Sunday Symposium, Open Captions, Thursday TalkBack, Together at the Table Family Dinner, Playhouse Happy Hour, and Backstage Pass.

Single tickets start at \$30; buy early for best prices.

For more information and to buy tickets, visit www.westportplayhouse.org or call the box office at (203) 227-4177, toll-free at 1-888-927-7529, or visit Westport Country Playhouse, 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport. Stay connected to the Playhouse on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), follow on Twitter (@WCPlayhouse), and 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 training program during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; Family Festivities presentations from December 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.

