

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Patricia Blaufuss, Public Relations Manager
(203) 227-5137 x197 | (203) 571-1287 | pblaufuss@westportplayhouse.org
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 29, 2024

Westport Country Playhouse Announces New Leadership Team

Mark Shanahan appointed artistic director, Beth Huisking managing director, as historic venue transforms into year-round performing arts center while continuing to produce theater.

Westport Country Playhouse's board of trustees has appointed director, playwright, and actor Mark Shanahan as artistic director, and long-time Playhouse administrator Beth Huisking as managing director. Since last summer, Shanahan and Huisking have served as incoming artistic director and acting managing director, respectively, and now officially assume the positions.

"We are thrilled to have Mark and Beth at the helm," said Athena T. Adamson, chair, Playhouse board of trustees. "They both have a deep knowledge of and respect for this treasured theater, while still keeping an enthusiasm for the future and all that the Playhouse can become. The board is grateful to have such strong leadership as the Playhouse moves forward with its plan to become a year-round center for the performing arts while continuing with its proud tradition of producing world-class plays."

Shanahan will continue as curator of the Playhouse's Script in Hand playreading series. He is also the creator and curator of Westport Country Playhouse Radio Theater, in partnership with WSHU Public Radio, and served as writer/director of the Playhouse radio adaptation of "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," and as director of scripts commissioned for the series. He is the writer/director of "A Sherlock Carol," which was produced for the Playhouse's 2023 holiday season, and has played annually at London's Marylebone Theatre and three seasons in New York, where it received an Off-Broadway Alliance nomination for Best New Play 2021 and was named a "Critics' Pick" by *The New York Times*.

"I'm grateful and honored to continue my association with the Westport Country Playhouse as I step into the role of artistic director," said Shanahan. "Like so many in our audience, I love the Playhouse for its rich history, its standard of artistic excellence, and the sense of community that is always found when coming through our doors.

"As we usher in a new chapter for the Playhouse, I'm excited to work alongside our incredible, devoted staff and board members and contribute to the ongoing legacy of this cherished theatre. In recent months, we've felt a groundswell of support from the audience we serve, and I look forward to building on that trust and enthusiasm as we program more innovative, year-round events and plan a new season of outstanding productions beginning in the fall. It is a true privilege to be a part of this transformative moment as we imagine a vibrant future for the Westport Country Playhouse."

Beth Huisking joined the Playhouse in 2005 as marketing associate and in 2010 was named associate director of marketing. After eight seasons in the marketing department, she moved to the position of general manager in 2013, and in December 2023 was named managing director.

-more-

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

25 POWERS COURT WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT 06880
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE T (203) 227-5137 | BOX OFFICE T (203) 227-4177
westportplayhouse.org

"I started working at the Playhouse just before the 2005 reopening after the renovation," said Huisking. "It was a time of new beginnings, and I couldn't have been happier to be a part of the team that was making everything possible. And now I am honored to be helping to lead the dedicated team that is reinvigorating our beloved theater and introducing it to a whole new audience."

Shanahan and Huisking Backgrounds

Shanahan recently directed his own adaptation of "Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd," in partnership with Agatha Christie Ltd., which premiered at the Tony Award-winning Alley Theatre. He has directed at stages around the country such as George Street Playhouse, Virginia Stage, Arkansas Rep, White Heron, Mile Square Theatre, Hudson Stage, Theatre Squared, Fulton Opera House, Weston Playhouse, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, Florida Rep, Penguin Rep, Merrimack Rep, The Cape Playhouse, and many more.

As an actor, Shanahan appeared at Westport Country Playhouse in "Journey's End" (2005), "David Copperfield," directed by Joanne Woodward and Annie Keefe, (2005), "Sedition" (2007), "Tryst" (2008), and "Around the World in 80 Days" (2009), and numerous Script In Hand readings. On and Off-Broadway, he appeared in "The 39 Steps," "Tryst," "The Shaugraun," and others, and has performed at many celebrated regional theatres. He is the author of "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," "See Monsters of the Deep," the Off-Broadway and regional hit comedy "The Dingdong," as well as numerous radio plays as creator of the White Heron Ghost Light series, featuring Christopher Plummer, Judith Ivey, Rhonda Ross, and other notables. Each year, Shanahan is proud to participate as the writer/director of the annual gala for The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, a summer camp founded by Paul Newman to serve seriously ill children and their families. He is a graduate of Brown University (BA) and Fordham University (MA, former adjunct faculty). www.mark-shanahan.net.

Huisking was a marketing associate with Stamford Center for the Arts, where she began as a summer intern. She was also an event staff supervisor for the Bob Carpenter Center, Newark, DE, where she coordinated over 25 performances per season. A marketing major at the University of Delaware, she was a member of the American Marketing Association and of Gamma Sigma Sigma, the national community service sorority. She recently received a certificate in Human Resources Management from Cornell University.

A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at westportplayhouse.org.

For Westport Country Playhouse information and tickets, visit westportplayhouse.org or call the box office at (203) 227-4177, toll-free at 1-888-927-7529. Stay connected to the Playhouse on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), Instagram (wcplayhouse), and YouTube (WestportPlayhouse). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

###

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

25 POWERS COURT WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT 06880

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE T (203) 227-5137 | BOX OFFICE T (203) 227-4177

westportplayhouse.org