

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Tony Award-winning Broadway Star Nathan Lane Is Artistic Honoree at Westport Country Playhouse Annual Gala on Saturday, October 4

“At This Stage” benefit pays tribute to the Playhouse’s 95 seasons and presents Leadership Award to Anne Keefe, former co-artistic director.

Tony Award-winning Broadway star **Nathan Lane** will be Artistic Honoree at Westport Country Playhouse’s one-night-only fundraiser on Saturday, October 4. Broadway talents who have appeared in shows with Lane, including host **Danny Burstein** and performers **Nikki Renée Daniels, Santino Fontana, Cady Huffman, Christine Pedi, and Krysta Rodriguez**, will celebrate the honoree’s career. They will also salute productions that have been staged at the Playhouse during its 95 seasons since its founding in 1931. **Anne Keefe**, former Playhouse co-artistic director, will receive the 2025 Playhouse Leadership Award.

“Honoring Annie Keefe and Nathan Lane at this year’s gala is especially meaningful, as they are both dear friends to each other as well as to the Playhouse,” said **Mark Shanahan**, Westport Country Playhouse artistic director. “Nathan Lane is, of course, one of the American theatre’s great talents, and Annie Keefe has long been one of the beating hearts of the Playhouse, and someone to whom we all owe so much.”

The evening’s schedule includes a 7 p.m. curtain with live auction, presentation of honorees, and performance; and a 9 p.m. after-party in the Lucille Lortel White Barn Center. A 5:30 p.m. pre-show reception is sold out.

“Our gala is always a joyful celebration of music, storytelling, and community,” added Shanahan. “It also remains our most important fundraiser of the year, supporting the needs of our productions, programs, and operations year-round.

“This year, the gala also helps launch our new fall-to-summer season, making it the perfect moment to celebrate how the Playhouse continues to evolve to serve our audience year-round. We are deeply grateful to everyone who comes out to support our beloved Westport Country Playhouse and celebrate all that has happened at this stage—and all that is still to come.”

Honoree **Nathan Lane** is a Tony Award-winning actor, singer, and writer known for his roles in “The Birdcage” and “The Producers,” for which he won the Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and Tony Awards for Best Actor in a Musical. Lane is also known for having voiced the character Timon, a meerkat, in Disney’s 1994 film “The Lion King. Lane has appeared in television shows, including HBO’s “Sex and the City,” “Modern Family,” “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” and “30 Rock.” He received the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series for the Hulu series, “Only Murders in the Building.”

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Playhouse Leadership Award recipient **Anne Keefe** has been with Westport Country Playhouse in many capacities since 1973. She was part of the original group who in 1999 gathered to renovate the Playhouse. She served as the Playhouse artistic director with Joanne Woodward in 2008 and as associate artistic director from 2000 to 2006, also with Woodward, co-directing “David Copperfield” in 2005. Keefe initiated and curated the Playhouse’s Script in Hand playreading series, and currently serves on the board of trustees. She stage managed on Broadway and at regional theaters, and has been involved with the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Gala.

Host **Danny Burstein** has been in 20 Broadway shows, including “Gypsy,” “Moulin Rouge,” for which he received the Tony Award, and “The Drowsy Chaperone,” for which he received an Ovation Award nomination. He was an original company member of Tony Randall’s National Actors Theater for three seasons. **Nikki Renée Daniels** is an acclaimed Broadway actress and concert soloist who has done 12 Broadway shows, including “The Book of Mormon” and the recent revival of “Once Upon a Mattress.” She was featured in the PBS concert specials, “Broadway’s Brightest Lights” and “Black Broadway: A Proud History, a Limitless Future.” **Santino Fontana’s** Broadway credits include “Tootsie,” for which he won the 2019 Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, and Tony Awards, “The Importance of Being Earnest” (Clarence Derwent Award), and “Brighton Beach Memoirs” (Drama Desk Award). At Westport Country Playhouse, Fontana was in the Script in Hand playreading of “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd.”

Cady Huffman won a Tony Award for “The Producers” and received a Tony nomination for “The Will Rogers Follies” and an OCC nomination for “The Nance.” At Westport Country Playhouse, she appeared in “All About Us” and “Voices for Volunteers.” **Christine Pedi** was on Broadway in “Chicago” as Mama Morton, “Talk Radio” with Liev Schreiber, and “Little Me” with Martin Short. Off-Broadway, she was in “Forbidden Broadway” (Drama Desk nomination) and “Spamilton.” She will be in the Westport Country Playhouse production of “The Importance of Being Earnest” as Lady Bracknell, from Oct. 28-Nov. 15. **Krysta Rodriguez** was in eight Broadway shows including “Spring Awakening,” “The Addams Family,” and “Into the Woods.” Her list of television roles includes co-starring as John Lithgow’s daughter in the NBC series, “Trial & Error,” and her turn on the second season of NBC’s “Smash” as Ana Vargas.

Music supervisor is **Mary-Mitchell Campbell**, conductor, music director, orchestrator, composer, and arranger who crosses genres between Broadway, pop, and classical styles of music. Campbell’s Westport Country Playhouse credits include music directing many fundraising galas and PBS’ “Stars on Stage from Westport Country Playhouse.” Director is **JoAnn M. Hunter**, who has over 30 credits on Broadway, the West End, and Australia, as well as directing for Westport Country Playhouse “Native Gardens” and the 2024 Gala. Producer is **Kevin Duncan**.

Tickets for the performance and after-party are \$250. Tickets are sold out for the pre-show reception. A portion of ticket prices is tax deductible. Tickets may be reserved by calling the Playhouse box office at 203-227-4177; or online at <https://tickets.westportplayhouse.org/7042/7043>

All proceeds from this event will support Westport Country Playhouse, a non-profit performing arts center and professional, producing theater, its work on stage and throughout the community.

The 2025 Gala Committee includes **Kerri Joller**, Gala chair, **Athena Adamson**, **Ben Frimmer**, **Ivy Kramer-Gosseen**, **Jonathan Levy**, **Claudine Maidique**, **Judy Phares**, **Elizabeth Salem**, and **Alison K. Smith**.

Beverage Sponsors are Streicker Wines and C. Mondavi. Piano is provided by Falcetti Pianos. 2025 Programming and Season Sponsor is Barbara Streicker. Media sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio. Westport Country Playhouse is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

More information at: https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/at-this-stage_gala/

A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at [westportplayhouse.org](https://www.westportplayhouse.org). All play titles, artists, dates, and times are subject to change.

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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.

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