

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Tony Award Winner Judith Ivey in Westport Country Playhouse Script in Hand Playreading of “The Pancake Club” on January 12

Westport Country Playhouse will present two-time Tony Award winner Judith Ivey in a Script in Hand playreading of “The Pancake Club,” on Monday, January 12, at 7 p.m. The new comedy is written by Charlotte Booker and directed by Mark Shanahan, Playhouse artistic director.

“I’m excited to begin a new year and a new season of Script in Hand readings with a brand-new comedy that’s funny, generous, touching, and full of heart,” said Shanahan. “Charlotte Booker, an accomplished actress herself, knows how to write for actors, and ‘The Pancake Club’ is a terrific ensemble piece. With an exceptional cast led by two-time Tony Award winner Judith Ivey, this reading feels like exactly the right way to start a new year of Script In Hand readings at the Playhouse.”

Judith Ivey plays Brenda, a waitress at a small-town diner where a group of senior men, calling themselves The Pancake Club, regularly meet. As Brenda struggles with the sudden death of her oldest friend, the Club members squabble over the eulogy, the widow refuses to grieve, a mysterious stranger threatens the town’s equilibrium, and Brenda’s only daughter teeters on the brink of a meltdown - forcing Brenda to face the question: Does anybody ever truly grow up?

Playwright Charlotte Booker said, “I am beyond delighted for my play ‘The Pancake Club’ to be part of the Script in Hand series at a theatre I’ve so long admired, and especially excited to hear Judith Ivey read Brenda. I set out to create fun roles for actors ‘of an age’ - and Judith is, without a doubt, the very best.”

Judith Ivey is a four-time nominated and two-time winner of the Tony Award, three-time nominated and two-time winner of the Drama Desk Award, three-time nominated and winner of the Lucille Lortel Award, Emmy nominated, and an Obie Award winner. Ivey has appeared in over 40 films, most recently in “Women Talking,” and starred in four television series, including “Designing Women,” and guest-starred in many more, “White Collar,” “Nurse Jackie,” “Law & Order: SVU,” “New Amsterdam,” “Sweet Magnolias,” and most recently, “Best Medicine.” She received an honorary Doctorate from her alma mater, Illinois State University, was inducted into the Texas Film Hall of Fame, received the Texas State Medal of Arts for Theatre, and was honored by Women in Film. Ivey last appeared at the Playhouse in 2018 in a New Works playreading of “Out of the Mouths of Babes,” and an International Women’s Day reading.

Additional cast members will be announced soon.

Playwright Charlotte Booker is an actor/playwright whose play, “The Bootheel,” was a semi-finalist at the 2021 O’Neill Playwrights Conference and the Garry Marshall New Works Festival. A monologue from her solo show, “She’s Alive!,” won the Alvin Epstein Solo Performance “Audience Favorite” Award in 2022. Since then, she has performed “She’s Alive!,” (based on the life and music of the Bride of Frankenstein herself, Elsa Lanchester), at Martha’s Vineyard Playhouse, the Laurie Beechman in NYC, and the Venus

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Cabaret in Chicago. Her other plays include "Crybaby Bridge" and "East Prairie" (two-thirds of the "Booheel" trilogy), "Bitch" (based on the autobiography of Lady May Lawford), "Big Lipstick Lady" (a solo piece), and "She Who Hesitates" and "The Age Thing" (both one-acts). She's currently working on a new piece called "The Haunting of a Former Moonshiner." As an actor, Booker understudied Madeline Kahn in the Broadway revival of "Born Yesterday," appeared Off-Broadway, and was Honey in the 90's cult series "Hi Honey, I'm Home."

Director Mark Shanahan is Playhouse artistic director and Script in Hand curator. In 2024, he directed "The 39 Steps," the Playhouse's inaugural production for the 2024-25 season, as well as the Playhouse's holiday offering, "A Sherlock Carol," and "Theatre People" last spring. He also 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 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. Shanahan has directed at stages around the country such as Alley Theatre, 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 has appeared on and Off-Broadway ("The 39 Steps," "Tryst," "The Shaugraun," and others) and at many celebrated regional theatres. Shanahan has appeared on the Westport Country Playhouse stage 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. Shanahan 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. mark-shanahan.net.

Tickets are \$35. Two acts; one intermission.

For full details, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/january/>

The 2026 Script in Hand Playreading Series is supported by Joyce Hergenhan and the White Barn Program of the Lucille Lortel Foundation. 2026 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.

The Script in Hand 2026 season continues on Mondays at 7 p.m., on February 9, March 2, May 4, June 8, September 14, October 5, and November 30; titles to be announced.

Script in Hand playreadings offer intimate storytelling as professional actors use their skills to catapult the audience's imagination without benefit of scenery or costumes. For a video on Script in Hand, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2eWDaF-JXA>

A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at westportplayhouse.org. All play titles, artists, dates, and times are subject to change.

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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