

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **“Hamilton” Tony Nominee and Grammy Winner Jonathan Groff to Headline Westport Country Playhouse Gala**

#### **Groff replaces Matthew Morrison, bowing out due to scheduling conflict**

“Hamilton” Tony Award-nominee and Grammy Award-winner Jonathan Groff has stepped in to headline Westport Country Playhouse’s 2017 Gala on Saturday evening, September 9. Groff will replace previously announced Matthew Morrison who is no longer available to perform at this year’s Gala due to a scheduling conflict.

Groff ascended to Broadway royalty with his Tony Award-nominated and Grammy Award-winning performance as King George III in “Hamilton.” He is also known for roles in the film “Frozen,” television’s “Glee,” and his Tony-nominated role in “Spring Awakening.”

Groff last appeared at Westport Country Playhouse in a Script in Hand playreading of “Butterflies Are Free” with Blythe Danner in 2010.

New this year will be the Gala’s move to Saturday evening instead of Monday night as in past seasons. The Gala’s theme “Moonlight Over Venice” will evoke the romance and glamor of Italy on the canals. A cocktail party will begin at 5:45 p.m., followed by a 7 p.m. presentation of the Playhouse Leadership Award to Ann Sheffer, and 7:15 p.m. performance by Jonathan Groff. Dinner will be at 8:30 p.m. A silent auction will be on-going throughout the evening. Attire is festive; black tie and Venetian mask optional. Valet parking will be provided.

The 2017 Gala Committee co-chairs are Ania Czekaj-Farber and Athena Adamson. Committee members include Barbara Streicker (Board of Trustees chair), Mary Ellen Marpe (Development Committee chair), Karen Parrella (auction chair), Molly Alger, Vani Birnbaum, Deborah Bono, Paige Couture, Diane DelVecchio, Katia Friend, Patricia Goodrich, Kristen Haines, Marjorie Jacobson, Anne Keefe, Darlene F. Krenz, Maggie Lehnerd-Reilly, Elizabeth Marks, Maria Mendoza-Smith, Terry Nardozi, Judy Phares, Dana Rutson Robinson, Tricia Schwartz, Carol W. Seldin, Leslie Stetter, Diana Sussman, Nancy Tillson, Marietta B. White, Donovan Wildgoose, and Mindy Wolkstein.

The Honorary Gala Committee includes Maureen Anderman, Frank Converse, Mia Dillon, Keir Dullea, Jill Eikenberry, Daniel Gerroll, Joanna Gleason, James Earl Jones, Patricia Kalember, James Naughton, Kelli O’Hara, Christopher and Elaine Plummer, Chris Sarandon, and Michael Tucker.

Benefactor level tickets, at \$2,500 per person, includes red carpet welcome, silent auction and cocktail party with special guests, highest priority seating at performance, and a post-performance dinner with

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the artists. Patron level, at \$1,000 per person, includes red carpet welcome, silent auction and cocktail party with special guests, priority seating at performance, and post-performance dinner with the artists. Supporter tickets, \$500 per person, includes red carpet welcome, silent auction and cocktail party with special guests, and ticket to the performance with preferred seating. Friend tickets, \$250 per person, includes red carpet welcome, silent auction and cocktail party with special guests, and ticket to the performance.

Westport Country Playhouse is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation and contributions are tax-deductible, less the value of goods and services received, as provided by law. Estimated value of goods and services per person is \$190 at the Benefactor level, \$140 at the Patron level, \$100 at the Supporter level, and \$80 for the Friend level. All donations receive recognition in the evening's program and inclusion as a 2017 Gala donor in 2018 Season programs (at applicable giving levels).

Gala proceeds will benefit the non-profit, professional producing theater, now in its 87th season - its work on stage, with schools, and throughout the community.

For more Gala information or ticket purchases, contact Aline O'Connor, associate director of development, at 203-571-1138, or [aconnor@westportplayhouse.org](mailto:aconnor@westportplayhouse.org).

### **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 to 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* playreadings 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.

Included in the Playhouse's 87<sup>th</sup> season is "Appropriate," August 15 – September 2, a 2014-15 Obie Award winner for Best New American Play, written by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, and directed by David Kennedy, Playhouse associate artistic director. In the comic drama about family secrets, the Lafayette children gather to catalog their recently deceased father's Arkansas estate and discover a shameful legacy. "Sex with Strangers," September 26 - October 14, written by Laura Eason and directed by Katherine M. Carter, is a look at a modern relationship in the digital age, When Ethan, a young sex blogger, turned bestselling author, meets Olivia, a reclusive, thirty-something novelist, dating turns dark as self-reinvention is just a click away. "Romeo and Juliet," October 31 – November 19, written by William Shakespeare and directed by Mark Lamos, is the tale of two star-crossed teenagers, who fight to love each other in a violent world. All play titles, artists, and dates are subject to change.

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