

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Award-winning Contemporary Drama “Grounded” at Westport Country Playhouse from July 11 – 29

The 2016 Lucille Lortel Award-winning play, “Grounded,” a contemporary drama about a US Air Force fighter pilot who is grounded by an unexpected pregnancy, will be staged at Westport Country Playhouse, from July 11 through July 29.

Written by George Brant, the play also earned a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and was short-listed for the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award. Playing the role of The Pilot in the solo production is Elizabeth Stahlmann, a recent graduate of Yale School of Drama. Director is Liz Diamond, chair of Yale School of Drama’s Directing department and resident director at Yale Repertory Theatre.

“With the quiet stealth and precision of a Predator drone, George Brant’s ‘Grounded’ examines up close the moral cost of modern warfare,” said Diamond. “At the heart of the play is the Pilot, a vibrant, gutsy young woman whose spirit is shattered by her experience at the controls of a military drone. This role requires an actor with all the ‘right stuff’ of a fighter pilot and more - tremendous emotional range, warmth, and wit - Elizabeth Stahlmann, our Pilot, has it all.”

In “Grounded,” an ace F-16 fighter pilot finds her world flipped from top gun to top mom when an unexpected pregnancy results in her being grounded. Reassigned to the “chair force” as a drone pilot near Las Vegas, the realities of war and suburban comfort collide. The story offers a glimpse into one soldier’s struggle to define herself in the modern world.

“Grounded” has received over 100 productions in 18 different countries and has been translated into nine languages. Named a “Top 10 London Play of 2013” by both *The Guardian* and *Evening Standard*, “Grounded” has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera to be adapted into an opera with music by Tony Award winner Jeanine Tesori, and is being developed into a feature film starring Anne Hathaway.

Elizabeth Stahlmann, who portrays The Pilot, appeared at Yale University in “Clybourne Park” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” In New York, she has performed with The Acting Company. Regional theater credits include Guthrie Theater, Provincetown’s Tennessee Williams Festival, and Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival.

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Playwright George Brant's plays include "Grounded," "Elephant's Graveyard," "Marie and Rosetta," "Into the Breeches!," "Grizzly Mama," "Good on Paper," "The Mourners' Bench," "Salvage," "Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile," "Any Other Name," "Defiant," "Dark Room," "Miracle: A Tragedy," "Ashes," "NOK," "The Lonesome Hoboes," "All Talk," "One Hand Clapping," "The Royal Historian of Oz," "Lovely Letters," "Three Men in a Boat," "Borglum! The Mount Rushmore Musical," "Tights on a Wire," and "Night of the Mime."

In addition to the Lucille Lortel and Fringe First awards for "Grounded," Brant's scripts have received an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award, and the David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award from the Kennedy Center, among others. Writing fellowships include the James A. Michener Center for Writers, the McCarter Theatre Sallie B. Goodman Artist's Retreat, the MacDowell Colony, as well as commissions from the Metropolitan Opera, Trinity Repertory Company, and Cleveland Play House. Brant received his MFA in Writing from the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas at Austin and is a member of the Dramatists Guild.

Director Liz Diamond has taught at Yale School of Drama and served as a resident director of Yale Repertory Theatre since 1992. She has served as the chair of the Directing department since 2004. She has been awarded an Obie Award and Connecticut Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Direction. Among the more than 50 productions she has directed at Yale Rep and nationally are many US and world premieres. Productions of classical and modern works include Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale," Shaw's "Mrs. Warren's Profession," and Pinter's "Betrayal". She has also directed major new translations of Molière's "The School for Wives," and Strindberg's "Miss Julie."

Ms. Diamond has directed documentary theater projects in collaboration with Anna Deavere Smith at the Institute for the Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard University, the Yale School of Medicine, and the Lincoln Center Institute. She has taught directing at La MaMa Umbria, the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and the Shanghai Theatre Academy. After completing her MFA at Columbia University in 1983, Ms. Diamond worked as a freelance director and served as the resident director at New Dramatists in New York. In 1978, while serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Diamond cofounded the Projet de Théâtre Rurale Voltaïque, which grew into the Atelier de Théâtre Burkinabe and still thrives today.

The design team includes Riccardo Hernandez, scenic design, who also designed the Off-Broadway production of "Grounded"; Jennifer Moeller, costume design; Solomon Weisbard, lighting design; and Kate Marvin, sound design.

"Grounded" Production Sponsors are Judy and Scott Phares. Production Partners are Johnna G. Torsone and John McKeon.

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.

Westport Country Playhouse's 2017 Season continues with "Appropriate," a 2014-15 Obie Award winner for Best New American Play. The comic drama about family secrets is written by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins. When the Lafayette children gather to catalog their recently deceased father's Arkansas estate, they discover a shameful legacy. Directed by David Kennedy, Playhouse associate artistic director, the play runs August 15 through September 2.

"Sex with Strangers" is a look at a modern relationship in the digital age, written by Laura Eason and directed by Katherine M. Carter. 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. The play will be staged September 26 through October 14.

The 2017 season culminates with one of the greatest love stories ever told, "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare. The tale of two star-crossed teenagers, who fight to love each other in a violent world, will run October 31 through November 19, directed by Mark Lamos, who the *New York Post* said, "is among the finest Shakespearean directors in the world."

All play titles, artists, and dates are subject to change.

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.

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