

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Westport Country Playhouse Announces Spring Presentation of “The Pianist of Willesden Lane”

Westport Country Playhouse will present a spring production of the acclaimed musical memoir, “The Pianist of Willesden Lane,” starring Grammy-nominated pianist and storyteller Mona Golabek. The unique piece is about Golabek’s mother, who, as a young Jewish girl, escaped the Holocaust, holding on to her music to stay alive. Golabek intertwines the true story of family, hope, and survival with piano selections by Grieg, Chopin, Beethoven, Debussy, Bach, and even a little Gershwin.

“The Pianist of Willesden Lane” will have a limited, seven-performance engagement at the Playhouse from Wednesday, April 5 through Sunday, April 9. An advance 10% ticket discount runs through Friday, February 17.

“We are honored to present this internationally acclaimed artist in her mesmerizing and stunning theatrical event that has been a great success and riveted audiences in Los Angeles, San Diego, Boston, Chicago, New York, and London,” said Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director. “I have known about this powerful production for several years and I am delighted to finally have the chance to present it to Playhouse audiences.”

Based on the book “The Children of Willesden Lane: Beyond the Kindertransport: A Memoir of Music, Love, and Survival” by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, and adapted and directed by Hershey Felder, the play is set in Vienna in 1938 and in London during the Blitz. A 14-year-old piano prodigy finds her dreams of becoming a concert pianist threatened by the looming war in Europe. When her parents buy her a one-way ticket to England on the Kindertransport, the children’s survival train, a story of art preserving life begins.

American concert pianist Mona Golabek has appeared at the Hollywood Bowl, The Kennedy Center, and Royal Festival Hall. She is a Grammy nominee who has been the subject of several documentaries, including “Concerto for Mona” with conductor Zubin Mehta. Her recordings include “Carnival of the Animals” and Ravel’s “Mother Goose Suite” featuring Meryl Streep, both recorded with Mona’s sister, Renee Golabek-Kaye. Both daughters were taught by their mother Lisa Jura, who is the subject of Mona’s acclaimed book, “The Children of Willesden Lane.” Mona’s father Michele Golabek

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received the Croix de Guerre for his role in the French Resistance. Mona founded Hold On To Your Music, a foundation devoted to spreading the message of the power of music.

Director and adaptor Hershey Felder created and performed “George Gershwin Alone,” which played on Broadway and in the West End. His Composers Sonata — “George Gershwin Alone”; “Monsieur Chopin”; “Beethoven, As I Knew Him”; “Maestro Bernstein”; “Hershey Felder as Franz Liszt in Musik”; and “Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin” — has been presented at dozens of theaters across the U.S. and around the world. He created Eighty-Eight Entertainment in 2001; its newest division, Hershey Felder Presents, continues in the creation of new works of musical theater.

Tickets, regularly priced at \$35 and \$45, are available now through February 17 at a 10% discount. Groups of 10 or more receive a 15% discount at all times. Performances are on Wed., Apr. 5 at 2 and 8 p.m.; Thurs. and Fri., Apr. 6 and 7, at 8 p.m.; Sat., Apr. 8, at 3 and 8 p.m.; and Sun., Apr. 9, at 3 pm.

Media sponsors for “The Pianist of Willesden Lane” are the Connecticut Jewish Ledger and WSHU. For information on other sponsorship opportunities, contact Carole Southall, Playhouse director of development, 203-227-5137, ext. 122.

For more information or tickets, call the box office at (203) 227-4177, or toll-free at 1-888-927-7529, or visit Westport Country Playhouse, 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport. Tickets are available online 24/7 at [www.westportplayhouse.org](http://www.westportplayhouse.org). Stay connected to the Playhouse on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), follow on Twitter (@WCPlayhouse), or view Playhouse videos 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 during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; *Family Festivities* presentations from November 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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