

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Westport Country Playhouse Announces \$250K Matching Gift Challenge toward the Historic Theater's \$1.6MM Survival Fund Goal**

#### **Darien's Maureen and Edwin Schloss to match dollar for dollar now through July 4**

Westport Country Playhouse has received a pledge from Darien residents Maureen and Edwin Schloss to match every dollar raised up to \$250,000 between now and July 4.

"This magnificently generous matching gift from two longtime supporters of the Playhouse has really put the wind into our sails and lifted us up in terms of hope for the future and our ability to bring our audiences the currently postponed 2020 season next summer," said Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director. "The passion behind Maureen and Ed's generosity will, we are sure, be matched by our trustees, our community, our single ticket buyers, as well as loyal subscribers. All our hopes now rest on the generosity of people who will step up to this match as we head into our celebratory 90th anniversary season."

The Schloss' matching gift challenge extends the potential for the Playhouse's recently established Survival Fund to sustain the nonprofit theater through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Survival Fund's goal is to raise \$1.6 million by December 31, 2020. Tax deductible contributions may be made at [westportplayhouse.org/donate](http://westportplayhouse.org/donate) or by texting WCPMATCH to 71777.

Matching gift sponsors Maureen and Edwin Schloss have been long-time Playhouse donors and patrons. In 1969, Ed and his parents attended the world premiere of Leonard Gershe's "Butterflies Are Free" on the Playhouse stage with Blythe Danner as the young girl who falls in love with a blind boy, played by Keir Dullea. A success in Westport, the comedy transferred to Broadway, where it ran over three years, earning Danner a Tony Award.

"Attending the world premiere of 'Butterflies Are Free' at the Playhouse over 50 years ago was a truly memorable experience that only live theater can provide," said Mr. Schloss.

Referencing the song from the musical, "Hamilton," he added, "There's nothing like being in 'the room where it happens!'"

"Today, the Westport Playhouse is a sterling example of craftsmanship in an age of mass production and ersatz entertainment," Schloss noted.

To assist with the matching gift challenge, 30 members of the Playhouse's board of trustees have committed to raising \$10,000 each before July 4, with a competition among them to reach their individual goal.

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Gretchen Wright, the Playhouse's director of development, said, "Let the crowdfunding begin! A gift of any size makes a difference, and helps ensure that this nearly 90-year-old organization can continue to fulfill its vital mission into the future."

Due to the public health crisis, the historic, professional theater has been closed since mid-March. All Playhouse 2020 programming has been moved to 2021, including the season's five main productions, Script in Hand Playreading series, Family Festivities presentations, and the New Works Initiative. Since its founding in 1931, the Playhouse has been closed for only four seasons, from 1942 through 1945, during World War II. This year, the Playhouse is focusing on a wide range of online content to connect with its audience at home.

For more information on Westport Country Playhouse's fundraising efforts, contact Gretchen Wright, director of development, at [gwright@westportplayhouse.org](mailto:gwright@westportplayhouse.org) or 203-571-1131. Stay connected to the Playhouse at [westportplayhouse.org](http://westportplayhouse.org), on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), Twitter (@WCPlayhouse), and 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 of the highest caliber and the welcoming experience of the Playhouse campus. The not-for-profit Playhouse provides this experience in multiple ways by offering live theater experiences of the highest quality, under the artistic direction of Mark Lamos; educational and community engagement events to further explore the work on stage; the New Works Initiative, a program dedicated to the discovery, development, and production of new live theatrical works; special performances and programs for students and teachers with extensive curriculum support material; Script in Hand play readings to deepen relationships with audiences and artists; the renowned Woodward Internship Program during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; Family Festivities presentations to delight young and old alike and to promote reading through live theater; youth performance training through Broadway Method Academy, Westport Country Playhouse's resident conservatory program; and the beautiful and historic Playhouse campus open for enjoyment and community events year-round. Charity Navigator has recently awarded its top 4-star charity rating to the Playhouse in recognition of its strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

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