

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release: November 13, 2020

### Westport Country Playhouse Launches Two Advocacy Groups

#### Formation underway for Theater Council and Playhouse Youth Council to support the historic theater's mission

Westport Country Playhouse is launching two new advocacy groups, the Theater Council and the Playhouse Youth Council, to support the artistic and community-building mission of the historic theater which celebrates its 90th season this year.

The Theater Council of Westport Country Playhouse is a group of volunteer leaders from Fairfield County and beyond. They serve as theater ambassadors through the promotion of and advocacy for the Playhouse's artistic integrity, expansion and generating of new patronage, and cultivation of a diverse and inclusive environment across its audiences and programming.

Theater Council members are educators, artists, community organizers, and other individuals who believe theater, and the Playhouse specifically, to be a vital cultural institution in Connecticut and the performing arts at large. Participants are selected by application, adjudicated by members of the Playhouse board of trustees.

The Playhouse Youth Council will be comprised of high school students from across Fairfield County. Applications for the Playhouse Youth Council are currently being accepted through Friday, November 20. To complete an application form, visit [westportplayhouse.org](http://westportplayhouse.org).

"Our goal for the Youth Council is to provide a safe space for young people to share ideas and opinions that could, in turn, help shape the Playhouse of the future," said Jenny Nelson, director of education and community outreach. "In addition, the Youth Council authentically aligns with our education department's core values of Empathy, Collaboration, Literacy, and Activism. At the Playhouse, we have a seat at the table for everyone, and we are committed to giving voice to the young artists of Fairfield County."

The Playhouse Youth Council offers students in grades 9-12 a way to connect with young artists in their community and learn about the inner working of a non-profit, professional, regional theater. Members will meet, virtually, if need be, six times per year to learn about the Playhouse's mission, vision, and programming. They will serve as advocates in the community, in particular to help facilitate stronger partnerships with local schools. In addition, they will engage with working theater professionals through a speaker series, have behind-the-scenes access, attend board of trustees' meetings, and help create a community event at the Playhouse. Youth Council members will also contribute creative solutions on how the Playhouse can broaden its appeal to a more diverse community within Fairfield County and beyond. Compensation for Youth Council members will include complimentary tickets to Playhouse productions and events. Community services hours may be applicable.

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#### WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

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Four members of the Theater Council will serve as an advisory board to the Youth Council. They are Athena Adamson, vice chair of the Playhouse board of trustees; Adam Clemens, secretary of the Playhouse board of trustees; Rashana Graham, New Haven middle school teacher; and Dr. Peter Marghella, medical and public health preparedness and response authority. The advisory board will conduct the Youth Council interview and selection process, and act as mentors.

2020 Education Program Sponsors and Supporters are Stephen Corman, The David & Geri Epstein Foundation, Michele and Marc Flaster, Judy and Scott Phares, Roz and Bud Siegel, and The Westport Young Woman's League.

For more information on the Theater Council and the Youth Council, contact Jenny Nelson, director of education and community outreach, at [jnelson@westportplayhouse.org](mailto:jnelson@westportplayhouse.org) or 203-571-1149.

For Westport Country Playhouse information, visit [westportplayhouse.org](http://westportplayhouse.org), leave a message on the box office voicemail at (203) 227-4177, or email at [boxoffice@westportplayhouse.org](mailto:boxoffice@westportplayhouse.org). The Playhouse's physical box office is closed during the pandemic, but staff is working from home, returning phone messages and answering emails. Please understand with the high volume of inquiries, it may take up to 72 hours to respond. 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 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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