

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Virtual Conversation with Artistic Directors from Westport Country Playhouse and Hartford Stage on March 11

Westport Country Playhouse will present “Cocktails with Mark,” a virtual conversation hosted by Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director, on Thursday, March 11, at 7 p.m. Lamos’ guest will be Melia Bensussen, Hartford Stage artistic director. The free-of-charge event will be streamed on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), and YouTube (WestportPlayhouse), running approximately 20 minutes.

Bensussen began her tenure as the first female artistic director of Hartford Stage in 2019. She was about to present her first season of productions shortly before the pandemic forced a shutdown of all performing arts institutions. Lamos, who has been artistic director at Westport Country Playhouse since 2009, was artistic director at Hartford Stage from 1980 through 1997.

“Melia’s first professional job was at Hartford Stage when I served as artistic director there,” said Lamos. “She was director Emily Mann’s assistant on a production of Ibsen’s ‘A Doll House,’ in which I acted the role of Dr. Rank. I’m so proud of her subsequent career and her new leadership role at the Stage Company.

“We’ll be chatting about Melia’s complex and fascinating roots as part of what she calls ‘a typically complicated modern family’ and her move from Mexico to the U.S. as a teenager; her perspective on being a woman in the American theater; her study in Israel; and very much more. Please join us for what will prove a lively and enlightening cocktail hour.”

Bensussen is an Obie Award-winning director and artistic leader who has directed extensively at leading theaters across the U.S., as well as Puerto Rico, Asia, and Europe. Raised in Mexico City, Bensussen is fluent in Spanish and has translated and adapted a variety of texts, including her edition of the Langston Hughes translation of Federico Garcia Lorca’s “Blood Wedding.” Her acclaimed work with new plays has taken her to the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, New York Stage and Film, and other new play programs across the country. A graduate of Brown University, Bensussen currently serves as the chair of the arts advisory board for the Princess Grace Foundation and for the past 11 years has chaired the performing arts department at Emerson College. She also serves on the executive board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). <http://meliabensussen.com/>

Lamos has helmed many plays at Westport Country Playhouse since 2008, earning Connecticut Critics Circle Awards for his direction of “She Loves Me” (2010), “Into the Woods” (2012), “The Dining Room” (2013), “Man of La Mancha” (2018), and “Mlima’s Tale” (2019). Under Lamos’ artistic direction, the Playhouse was named “Theater Company of the Year” by *The Wall Street Journal* in 2013. Lamos’

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extensive New York credits include “Our Country's Good,” for which he received a Tony Award nomination. A former artistic director at Hartford Stage, he earned the 1989 Tony Award for the theater's body of work. He was awarded the Connecticut Medal for the Arts as well as honorary doctorates from Connecticut College, University of Hartford, and Trinity College. In 2016 he was the recipient of the John Houseman Award.

“Cocktails with Mark,” featuring conversations with theater artists and Playhouse favorites, will continue during the Playhouse’s 2021 season; future dates to be announced.

Due to the global pandemic, the Playhouse campus remains closed since March 2020. The 2021 Season is scheduled to begin in April, online and in-person. Playhouse management will be following the science and the State of Connecticut Department of Health guidelines in deciding when and how to safely open its buildings to the public.

For Westport Country Playhouse information, visit westportplayhouse.org, leave a message on the box office voicemail at (203) 227-4177, or email at 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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