

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

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NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse's Virtual "Story Hour with Jenny" Presents Live, Interactive Reading of Book in English and Spanish

Westport Country Playhouse's "Story Hour with Jenny," a live, virtual series to engage children, grades K-3, will present an interactive reading in English and Spanish of the picture book, "Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood," on Sunday, April 11, at 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. The book is written by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell, and illustrated by Rafael López, ©2016. Jenny Nelson, who is the Roz and Bud Siegel director of education and community engagement at the Playhouse, will lead the one-hour session via Zoom.

The book's main character, Mira, decides to paste her drawing of a sun on one of the dark walls of an alley on her way back from school just to bring brightness to the smiles of her neighbors. The force of that sun's attraction transforms those streets and the lives of their neighbors, forever. Based on the true story of the Urban Art Trail in San Diego, California, "Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood" reveals how art can inspire transformation, and how even the smallest artists can accomplish something big.

Jenny Nelson believes "this book is so special because it's based on a true story, and it illustrates the power of community and collaboration."

"Story Hour with Jenny" is a series of interactive readings of social justice picture books written and illustrated by BIPOC artists. Their themes center on the four pillars of the Playhouse's education department: Empathy, collaboration, activism, and literacy. "Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood" reflects the pillar of collaboration.

Upcoming books in the "Story Hour with Jenny" series are "Wings" on May 16, and "Lubaya's Quiet Roar" on June 6. "Wings," written and illustrated Christopher Myers, ©2000, represents the Playhouse pillar of education, empathy. The book asks the question: Are you brave enough to be your true self? "Lubaya's Quiet Roar" by Newbery Honor winner Marilyn Nelson, paintings by Philomena Williamson, ©2020, addresses the Playhouse's pillar of education, activism. It is a lyrical, impactful story that tells how every child, even the quietest, can make a difference in their community and world.

Jenny Nelson, who will lead "Story Hour with Jenny," hails from Arizona where she received her bachelor's degree in theater, master's degree in theater from the University of Arizona, and a second master's degree in education from Fairfield University. She is the associate artistic director of Collective Consciousness Theatre, a social justice theater in New Haven. She has taught at several universities, including City College of New York in the graduate program for theater professionals and educators. She has also worked as an artist and educator at several theaters, including Long Wharf Theatre,

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Shubert Theatre, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Recently, Nelson was a nominee for the Tony Teaching Award of Excellence.

Tickets for each “Story Hour with Jenny,” including picture book, activity packet, and crayons, start at \$10. All books were purchased by the Playhouse from People Get Ready, a Black-owned community book space in New Haven. <https://www.peoplegetreadybooks.com/> Enrollment is open three weeks prior to each session. Limited enrollment; first come, first serve. To register, visit <https://tickets.westportplayhouse.org/overview/storyhour>, call the Playhouse box office at (203) 227-4177, or email boxoffice@westportplayhouse.org.

2021 Education Program supporters include the Eunice and David Bigelow Foundation; The David and Geri Epstein Foundation; George A. and Grace L. Long Foundation; Adolph and Ruth Schnurmacher Foundation, Inc.; The Westport Young Woman's League; as well as Athena and Daniel Adamson; Paige and Jodi Couture; Anna Czekaj-Farber; and Roz and Bud Siegel.

Due to the global pandemic, the Playhouse campus remains closed since March 2020. The Playhouse management will be following the science, and guidelines from theater artists' unions and the State of Connecticut Department of Health in deciding when and how to safely open its buildings to the public.

For Westport Country Playhouse tickets and 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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