

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Westport Country Playhouse Presents Virtual Script in Hand Playreading of Comedy, April 26 – May 2**

**The Off-Broadway hit that asks, “To be, or Airbnb, that is the question.”**

Westport Country Playhouse will present a virtual Script in Hand playreading of “Rent Control,” the Off-Broadway hit comedy based on the true story of a struggling-to-survive actor in New York City who invents a moneymaking scheme that backfires. Written and performed by Evan Zes, and directed by Mark Shanahan, curator of the Script in Hand series, the broadcast premiere is set for Monday, April 26, at 7 p.m., and on-demand from Tuesday, April 27 through Sunday, May 2. Running time is 80 minutes.

Based on actor/playwright Evan Zes’ real-life experience, “Rent Control” is about a struggling actor who lucks into one of the few remaining rent-controlled apartments in NYC. He finds a way to survive the city and pursue his dream by turning the apartment into a lucrative Airbnb enterprise - that is, until his moneymaking scheme backfires and he falls prey to a world of internet scam artists and low-level gangsters. Zes portrays 25 characters in this wild-but-true cautionary tale of greed and redemption.

“I can’t wait for our Script In Hand online audience to spend an evening with Evan Zes’ madcap comedy, ‘Rent Control,’” said Mark Shanahan, director. “I first met Evan when he performed in the Playhouse’s production of ‘Around the World in 80 Days,’ and I still laugh recalling how he brought the house down with his unique comic gifts.

“In ‘Rent Control,’ Evan serves as both author and performer- a master storyteller relating a harrowing, hysterical, and surprisingly heartfelt account about navigating city life as an actor. It is truly a joy to watch Evan play over two dozen characters in an autobiographical tale which is as much a valentine to the theater as it is a story about the search for belonging, acceptance, identity, and ultimately, a place to call home.”

“Rent Control” had back-to-back sold-out runs beginning with its debut at the 2016 New York International Fringe Festival and following with the 2016 Fringe Encore Series at Soho Playhouse.

Zes was in Westport Country Playhouse’s “Around the World in 80 Days” in 2009. New York credits include The Signature Theatre, Mint Theater Company, Irish Repertory Theatre, and The Acting Company, among others. Zes has performed internationally at theaters in Athens, Costa Rica, London, and Moscow. Select regional credits include Hartford Stage, Goodman Theatre,

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The Old Globe, New York Stage and Film, La Jolla Playhouse, Arena Stage, Baltimore Center Stage, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Film and TV credits include "The Path," "Only Murders in the Building," "The Street," and "Last Night at Angelo's." Zes has an MFA from A.R.T/ Moscow Art Theatre at Harvard University.

Director and curator of the Script in Hand series, Mark Shanahan appeared at Westport Country Playhouse in "Around the World in 80 Days," "Tryst," "Sedition," "David Copperfield," "Journey's End," and over 20 Script in Hand playreadings. He recently wrote and directed the Playhouse's audio play, "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," and directed Playhouse Script in Hand readings of "Butterflies Are Free," with Blythe Danner and Jonathan Groff, and "The Greatest Gift" by Weston playwright David Wiltse. New York stage includes "The 39 Steps," "Small World," "Checkers," "Tryst," "The Shaughraun," "As Bees in Honey Drown," and "The Internationalist." His directorial work has been seen at Alley Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Virginia Stage, Hudson Stage, Theatre Squared, The White Heron, Fulton Opera House, Mile Square Theatre, Weston Playhouse, Florida Rep, Penguin Rep, Merrimack Rep, Hangar Theatre, The Cape Playhouse, and many more. He is the author of the Off-Broadway and regional hit comedy, "The Dingdong," and the writer and director of the White Heron Radio Theatre Ghost Light Series, featuring Christopher Plummer, Judith Ivey, and more. He is a graduate of Brown University (BA) and Fordham University (MA, faculty). [www.mark-shanahan.net](http://www.mark-shanahan.net).

Stage manager is Megan Smith.

Virtual tickets can be purchased as a \$20 Individual, a \$40 Pair, and as an \$80 Household streaming experience. Each purchase entitles the ticket buyer to one individual link.

Upcoming Script in Hand playreadings include "The Savannah Disputation" by Evan Smith, broadcasting on Monday, June 14 at 7 p.m., and on-demand Tuesday, June 15 through Sunday, June 20. Other Script in Hand playreadings will be in October and December.

The Script in Hand Playreading Series is supported by the Burry Fredrik Foundation and the White Barn Program of the Lucille Lortel Foundation.

All dates, titles, and artists subject to change.

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.

To purchase tickets to the Playhouse's virtual season, 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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