

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release: April 29, 2021

Westport Country Playhouse's New Summer Theater Camp for Middle School Students Opens Registration on May 3

CampWCP for playwriting and acting runs for four weeks in July

Westport Country Playhouse will launch CampWCP, a new, in-person, social justice theater camp for 10 middle school students (6th through 8th grade) with playwright José Casas and the Playhouse's Roz and Bud Siegel director of education Jenny Nelson. CampWCP will run from July 6 through July 30, Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the theater's rehearsal studio. Registration opens Monday, May 3, at noon. Licensing from the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is pending approval.

The four-week camp will be split into two classes: acting taught in the morning by Nelson, and playwriting/production taught in the afternoon by Casas. The 10 young artists will create original pieces focusing on the question: "What does home mean to you?," working with Casas to weave their collective stories into a play. In addition, Playhouse staff will give the campers insight on what happens behind the scenes at a professional theater. At CampWCP's conclusion on Saturday, July 31, students will share their original creations, in-person, at the Playhouse for an invitation-only event for their family and friends.

Casas believes that "this camp is the creation of a safe space so that youth feel free to express all their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. It is a collaboration and exchange where youth voices are acknowledged, listened to, and celebrated."

Casas is a playwright and assistant professor who heads the playwriting minor in the department of theatre and drama at the University of Michigan. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild as well as a board member of Children's Theatre Foundation of America. He has a BA in theatre arts from the University of California, Santa Barbara; MA in theatre arts from California State University, Los Angeles; MFA in playwriting from Arizona State University; and two years of graduate coursework in drama and theatre for youth and communities (DTYC) at the University of Texas at Austin. His plays have been performed across the country and included in anthologies. His plays, "la ofrenda" and "somebody's children," received both the Bonderman National Playwriting Award and the American Alliance of Theatre and Education's Distinguished Play Award. His book, "Palabras del Cielo: An Exploration of Latina/o Theatre for Young Audiences," was awarded the American Alliance of Theatre and Education's Distinguished Book Award.

Nelson 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

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

Fee for the four-week camp is \$750. To ensure that all young artists have equal access, scholarships and payment plans are available. Maximum camp capacity is 10 students. Registration will be online from Monday, May 3 through Tuesday, June 1 at <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/campwcp/>

Campers will receive a limited edition CampWCP t-shirt; a copy of instructor José Casas' play, "somebody's children"; and a bound copy of the play collectively created.

Masks will be worn by staff and campers at all times; social distancing and health protocols will be followed, including OEC and local Covid-19 guidelines.

CampWCP is sponsored by Paige and Jodi Couture; additional 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; Anna Czekaj-Farber; and Roz and Bud Siegel. WSHU is a 2021 Season Media Sponsor.

For Westport Country Playhouse tickets and information, visit westportplayhouse.org, call (203) 227-4177, or email at boxoffice@westportplayhouse.org. 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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