

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse's 2021 New Works Initiative Season Begins Today

Developing new plays and nurturing writers is an instrumental part of Playhouse programming

Westport Country Playhouse's New Works Initiative (NWI) begins its 2021 season with a virtual workshop of "The Immaculate Perfection of F---ing and Bleeding in the Gender Neutral Bathroom of an Upper-Middle Class High School," written by Daniel Halpern and directed by Margot Bordelon, on Wednesday and Thursday, May 26 and 27.

The first of four plays in NWI's 2021 season, "The Immaculate Perfection..." revolves around the final year of high school for a group of students who spend their time smoking, crying, and touching each other in the gender neutral bathroom. After a trans-senior conceives a baby despite being a virgin, the adolescents are made to reassess their priorities, friendships, and what safety means to them.

"Immaculate Perfection...' expresses beautifully the joy, pain, and confusion of youth, of coming to terms with difference in a world that expects you to conform, and of finding your community at that moment in life where you're just starting to find yourself," said David Kennedy, Playhouse associate artistic director. "Daniel [playwright] explores the vulnerable teen years with wit, sagacity, and a remarkable tenderness. It's a work of extraordinary promise, and I'm pleased we can give them this opportunity to develop it."

The Playhouse's NWI provides an artistic home to writers and theater makers, offering the resources and support necessary to further the growth of their works. NWI gives playwright and director two days to dive into the world of the play, making any changes and edits that might further the play's development. On the second day of the workshop, the company rehearses for half a day, and later reads through the play for an audience of invited guests. NWI is presented under strict COVID-19 protocols.

Playwright Daniel Halpern (they/them) is a Canadian-based playwright and theatre artist. They are the co-founder and artistic co-director of the BodyCube Arts Collective, which has had work appear throughout Canada, New York, Germany, and the Netherlands. Some notable recent credits include writing and acting for "An Orchid and Other Such Lilies and Lies" (BodyCube) at the 2019 Toronto and Atlantic Fringe Festivals, and performing in "The Second Woman" (Harbourfront Centre) at the 2019 Brave Festival. They graduated from the University of King's College and Dalhousie University with a combined honors in Theatre Studies and Contemporary Studies, and are currently enrolled in the University of Alberta, pursuing an MA in Drama with a focus on performance-based activism.

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Director Margot Bordelon is a New York-based director who specializes in new work. Off-Broadway and New York credits include: "Wives" (Playwrights Horizons); "Something Clean" (Roundabout Underground), "Do You Feel Anger?" (Vineyard), "Eddie and Dave" (Atlantic), "Plot Points in Our Sexual Development" (LCT3), "Too Heavy for Your Pocket" (Roundabout Underground), "The Pen" (Premieres NYC), "A Delicate Ship" (Playwrights Realm), "Still" (Juilliard), "Wilder Gone" (Clubbed Thumb), "The Last Class: A Jazzercise Play" (DODO). Bordelon has directed productions regionally at ACT Seattle, Actors Theatre Louisville, Alliance, American Theater Company, Denver Center, Geffen Playhouse, Marin Theater Company, Steppenwolf, the Wilma, and Yale Rep. She has developed work at Ars Nova, Berkeley Rep, Cherry Lane, The Lark, Ma-Yi, MTC, New Dramatists, NYTW, P73, Portland Center Stage, Primary Stages, The Public, PWC, Rattlestick, Seattle Rep, and Woolly Mammoth. Upcoming: "...what the end will be" (Roundabout). BFA, Cornish College of the Arts; MFA, Yale School of Drama. www.margotbordelon.com

The cast includes John Cariani as Tory, Edmund Donovan as Jack, Jax Jackson as Alex, Marianne Rendón as Minnie, Ben Levi Ross as Cody, Murphy Taylor Smith as Nat, and Jamar Williams as Jacques.

David Woroner is assistant director/dramaturg; Bernita Robinson is stage manager.

Upcoming NWI plays include "Culture Shock" by Gloria Majule in July, about two African students, Zahra from Tanzania and Hawi from Kenya, who start school in an Ivy League institution; and two other new works TBD.

Throughout its 90 years, Westport Country Playhouse has been home to 60 world premiere productions of new plays and musicals, most recently, "Thousand Pines" by Matthew Greene, directed by Austin Pendleton, in 2018.

The New Works Initiative is funded by the New Works Circle, a group of individuals committed to the discovery and development of new theatrical work. Founding members are the late Howard J. Aibel, Stephen Corman, Czekaj Artistic Productions, Sandra and Neil DeFeo, Kate and Bob Devlin, Michele and Marc Flaster, Susan Jacobson and David Moskovitz, Judy and Scott Phares, Barbara and John Samuelson, Barbara and John Streicker, and Johnna G. Torsonne and John McKeon.

The Playhouse's 2021 Season includes two new virtual productions, "Tiny House," a timely new comedy, written by Michael Gotch, and directed by Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director, playing June 29 through July 18; and "Doubt: A Parable," the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning drama written by John Patrick Shanley and directed by David Kennedy, Playhouse associate artistic director, playing November 2 through November 21. Two HD video productions from the Playhouse archives will stream on-demand, beginning with the musical, "Man of La Mancha" (2018), from August 23 through September 5, and another TBA, from September 13 - 26. Three Script in Hand playreadings will include "The Savannah Disputation" by Evan Smith, from June 15 - 20, and two others TBA, October 19 - 24, and December 14 - 19. The complete schedule is available at westportplayhouse.org.

2021 Season Sponsor is the Eunice and David Bigelow Foundation. 2021 Season Media Sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio.

All play titles, artists, dates, and formats are subject to change.

Due to the global pandemic, the indoor portions of the Playhouse campus remain closed since March 2020. As the Playhouse resumes its in-person events, beginning on June 26 with "Cabaret in the Robards," Covid-19 health and safety protocols, including capacity restrictions and mask-wearing, will be observed.

For information and tickets, visit westportplayhouse.org, call (203) 227-4177, or email 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

Founded in 1931, Westport Country Playhouse is celebrating its 90th anniversary year. 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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