

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse and WSHU Public Radio Partner for Playhouse Radio Theater's Halloween Play "Spectres and Spirits"

Free-of-charge audio play's broadcast premiere on Saturday, October 30

In the spirit of the Halloween season, Westport Country Playhouse Radio Theater, a free-of-charge broadcast series, will present an original audio play, "Spectres and Spirits," airing on WSHU Public Radio on Saturday, October 30, at 12:06 p.m. (following the national news), with a rebroadcast on Sunday, October 31, at 4:06 p.m. Radio station frequencies and locations are listed at wshu.org. "Spectres and Spirits" will also be accessible on the Playhouse's website (westportplayhouse.org) from November 1 – 21. Playwright and lead performer is Richard R. Henry. Director of the play and curator of Playhouse Radio Theater is Mark Shanahan, who is also curator of the Playhouse's Script in Hand playreadings.

"From the wonderfully macabre mind of frequent Playhouse collaborator Richard R. Henry, comes 'Spectres and Spirits,'" said Shanahan. "With a little nod to Orson Welles' classic 'War of the Worlds' broadcast, which sounded so real audiences believed it to be a true news broadcast, Henry's radio play perfectly mimics the format and sound of a modern podcast, allowing us to eavesdrop on a fun-filled tale of ghostly horror.

"Along with John Gromada's pitch perfect and immersive original sound design and an expert cast joining our wonderful writer/performer, 'Spectres and Spirits' delivers a neat trick and a chilling Halloween treat which our Playhouse Radio Theater listeners are sure to love," added Shanahan.

In "Spectres and Spirits," Jeff Switzer is the host of a popular and quirky ghost-hunting podcast. The play dramatizes the supposedly lost audio recordings from the last episode Switzer hosted before he went missing.

The cast includes the playwright himself, Richard R. Henry as Jeff Switzer (Westport Country Playhouse's "Room Service"; Off-Broadway's "Two Gentlemen of Verona-The Musical"; Yale Repertory Theatre's "Assassins"; and Goodspeed Musicals' "Oliver!" www.richardhenrynyc.com); Erin Elizabeth Clemons as Helen Davis (Broadway's "Les Misérables," "Hamilton"; National Tours of "Hamilton," "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical"); and Tina Johnson as Rose Miller (Broadway's "State Fair," "Damn Yankees," "She Loves Me," "South Pacific," "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas").

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Director 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, and directed readings of “Butterflies Are Free,” with Blythe Danner and Jonathan Groff, and “The Greatest Gift” by Weston playwright David Wiltse. He is the creator and curator of Westport Country Playhouse Radio Theater and writer/director of the Playhouse radio adaptation “A Merry Little Christmas Carol.” He is also curator of the Playhouse’s Script in Hand Series. New York acting credit 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, Arkansas Rep, White Heron, Fulton Opera House, Weston Playhouse, Florida Rep, Penguin Rep, Merrimack Rep, The Cape Playhouse, and many more. He has written numerous radio plays for White Heron’s Ghost Light Series (featuring Christopher Plummer and Judith Ivey, among others), and is the author of the Off-Broadway and regional hit comedy, “The Dingdong”; “A Merry Little Christmas Carol”; “A Murder at Fernly Hall”; and “A Sherlock Carol,” which premieres this fall Off-Broadway at New World Stages. www.mark-shanahan.net

John Gromada, sound design and original music, is a composer and sound designer for theater, film, television, and dance. He has been on the production team for 10 Westport Country Playhouse shows, including “Of Mice and Men.” Best known for his theater music for plays, he has written scores and designed sound for many critically acclaimed, award-winning Broadway productions. Gromada received a Tony nomination for his work on “The Trip to Bountiful” and has also received three Drama Desk Awards, and the Lucille Lortel, Obie, Henry Hewes, Drama-Logue, EDDY, and Connecticut Critics Circle awards. www.johngromada.com.

Megan Smith is production coordinator.

Following the audio play will be a brief discussion with playwright and director of “Spectres and Spirits.”

The audio play runs approximately 30 minutes. Appropriate for ages eight and up. Complete details at <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/spectresandspirits>

“Spectres and Spirits” marks the Playhouse’s third play commission for terrestrial radio and online audio platforms, in collaboration with WSHU. Productions are recorded for audio broadcast under strict Covid-19 protocols, with actors recording remotely from their own homes.

The Playhouse’s 2021 Season continues with “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. A complete schedule is available at westportplayhouse.org.

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

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

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

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; 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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