

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Patricia Blaufuss, Public Relations Manager
(203) 227-5137 x197 | (203) 571-1287 | pblaufuss@westportplayhouse.org

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Westport Country Playhouse Partners with WSHU Public Radio for Playhouse Radio Theater's "A Merry Little Christmas Carol"

Free-of-charge audio play, featuring Paxton Whitehead as Scrooge, airs for second consecutive year

In the spirit of the holiday season, Westport Country Playhouse Radio Theater, a free-of-charge broadcast series, will reprise from last year the inventive audio play, "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," airing on WSHU Radio on Saturday, December 25, at 3:06 p.m. (following the national news), with a rebroadcast on Sunday, December 26, at 3:06 p.m. Radio station frequencies and locations are listed at wshu.org. "A Merry Little Christmas Carol" will also be accessible on the Playhouse's website, westportplayhouse.org, from Monday, December 20 through Sunday, January 2.

"A Merry Little Christmas Carol" is written and directed by Mark Shanahan, adapted from his play of the same name, and based on "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. Shanahan is curator of Playhouse Radio Theater in addition to curating the Playhouse Script in Hand playreading series.

"During the pandemic, The Playhouse embraced new ways of reaching its audiences, including the creation of our Playhouse Radio Theater in partnership with WSHU," said Shanahan. "We're pleased to once again present our inaugural radio play, 'A Merry Little Christmas Carol,' featuring our artistic director Mark Lamos narrating alongside some of our most beloved Playhouse actors.

"With the remarkable Paxton Whitehead as Scrooge, Dickens' masterpiece charges us to recall that we are all responsible for the wellbeing of our brothers and sisters---an idea which rings true now more than ever," he noted.

"Our merry little audio play invites those who cannot be with us in person at the theater to close their eyes and imagine they are once again nestled into their cozy red seats at the Playhouse, experiencing a remarkable story filled with laughter, tears, and holiday cheer," Shanahan added.

"A Merry Little Christmas Carol" brings to life the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge, the curmudgeon everyone loves to hate; the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future; the festive Fezziwigs; and the darling Cratchit family with the ever-hopeful Tiny Tim. Part ghost story, part celebration, "A Merry Little Christmas Carol" features original music and sound effects to propel this classic tale of human transformation.

Paxton Whitehead will play the role of Ebenezer Scrooge. Whitehead was in Westport Country Playhouse productions of "Lettice and Lovage," "What the Butler Saw," "Bedroom Farce," "The Circle,"

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25 POWERS COURT WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT 06880

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE T (203) 227-5137 F 203.221.7482 | BOX OFFICE T (203) 227-4177 F (203) 454-3238

westportplayhouse.org

“How the Other Half Loves,” “Time of My Life,” “Relatively Speaking,” “A Bench in the Sun,” and “The Crucifer of Blood,” and a Script in Hand playreading of “Dial ‘M’ for Murder.” His Broadway credits include “The Importance of Being Earnest,” “My Fair Lady”---Helen Hayes Award, “Noises Off”---Drama Desk Award, “Camelot”---Tony Award nomination, and “Lettice and Lovage” with Maggie Smith.

The cast includes Playhouse alumni and friends Brian J. Carter as Bob Cratchit, Joel de la Fuente as Fred, Sana ‘Prince’ Sarr as The Street Urchin/Peter Cratchit, Triney Sandoval as Jacob Marley, Mia Dillon as Mrs. Dilber, Geneva Carr as The Ghost of Christmas Past, Mark Shanahan as Mr. Creakle, Pearl Sun as Fan, Richard Henry as Old Fezziwig, Joe Delafield as Dick Wilkins, Danielle Davenport as Belle, Britney Coleman as The Ghost of Christmas Present, Sarah Manton as Mrs. Cratchit, Catherine Shanahan as Martha Cratchit, Theo Adamson as Tiny Tim, John Gromada as The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, and Mark Lamos, Westport Country Playhouse artistic director, as The Narrator.

Director/playwright/adaptor 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.” 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 premiered 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.

The Playhouse’s production team includes Anne Keefe, casting and artistic administration; Joel David Abbott, associate sound designer; Erin Joy Swank, stage manager; David Dreyfoos, associate producer and director of production; and RJ Romeo, technical director and associate director of production. For WSHU, staffing includes A. Rima Dael, station manager; Tom Kuser, program director and “Morning Edition” host; and Julie Freddino, production director.

Following each of the two acts in “A Merry Little Christmas Carol” on the WSHU broadcast, behind-the-scenes interviews will be hosted by Tom Kuser, WSHU’s program director and “Morning Edition” host, with guests Mark Shanahan, writer and director; John Gromada, composer, sound designer, and audio producer; A. Rima Dael, WSHU station manager; and Mark Lamos, Westport Country Playhouse artistic director.

Run time is approximately two hours; appropriate for ages 6 and up. For full details visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/merrylittlechristmasradio>

The production was recorded for audio broadcast under strict COVID-19 protocols, with actors recording remotely from their own homes. All dates, titles, artists, and formats subject to change.

“A Merry Little Christmas Carol” production sponsors are Mary Ellen and Jim Marpe, and Judy and Scott Phares. 2021 Season Sponsor is the Eunice and David Bigelow Foundation. 2021 Season Media Sponsors are Mofly Media and WSHU Public Radio.

For more information, visit www.westportplayhouse.org, email boxoffice@westportplayhouse.org, or call the box office at (203) 227-4177, Tuesday through Friday, 12 to 6 p.m. Stay connected to the Playhouse at westportplayhouse.org, on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), follow on Twitter (@WCPlayhouse), and on YouTube (WestportPlayhouse). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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 worth talking about* 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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