

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release: May 24, 2022

Westport Country Playhouse Offers Free-of-Charge Events Exploring Comedy “Straight White Men”

Programs with director, cast members, and other guest speakers are scheduled to “Dig Deeper” and enhance community insight

Westport Country Playhouse will present “Straight White Men: Dig Deeper,” a series of special events, free-of-charge and open to the community, surrounding the comedy, “Straight White Men,” playing May 24 – June 5. The events will enhance the community’s insight on the production and its themes.

No performance ticket is necessary to attend the programs. Guests are invited to arrive at the Playhouse approximately 90 minutes after curtain time; events will begin immediately after the performance. All attendees will be required to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination and wear a mask while indoors at the Playhouse. For updates on Covid-19 health and safety protocols at the Playhouse, visit <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/covid19safety/>

In “Straight White Men,” it’s Christmas Eve, and Ed has invited his three grown sons back home for pranks, Chinese takeout, and gossip. In between the male bonding rituals and conversations about money, work, and love, they are forced to face their own identities in this alternately hilarious and thought-provoking satire. The play contains strong language and mature themes.

A Sunday Symposium on Sunday, May 29, following the 3 p.m. matinee performance, will feature the entire cast of “Straight White Men” for an in-depth discussion about the show. The six-member ensemble cast includes Richard Kline as Ed (Westport Country Playhouse’s “And a Nightingale Sang” in 2015; television series regular Larry Dallas on “Three’s Company”; Broadway’s “Waitress,” “City of Angels,” “November”; National Company of “Wicked” as The Wizard; www.richardkline.tv); Bill Army as Jake (Broadway’s “The Band’s Visit,” “Act One,” and “Relatively Speaking,” an evening of one-acts by Ethan Coen, Elaine May, and Woody Allen; Off-Broadway’s “The Band’s Visit,” “The Changeling”; Hulu’s “Deadbeat,” YouTube’s “COHAB”); Denver Milord as Matt (Westport Country Playhouse’s “Tiny House” in 2021; Broadway’s “Oklahoma!”; Off-Broadway’s “Terms of Endearment,” “Meaningful Conversation”; regional theater’s “Cabaret”; films “Jack Reacher,” “The Last Witch Hunter”); Nick Westrate as Drew (Westport Country Playhouse’s “Don Juan” in 2019; Broadway’s “Bernhardt/Hamlet,” “Casa Valentina,” “A Moon for the Misbegotten”; Off-Broadway’s “The Boys in the Band” - Drama Desk nomination for featured actor; series regular for three seasons on AMC’s “Turn: Washington’s Spies”); Akiko Akita as Person in Charge (American Academy of Dramatic Arts; theater’s “Dog Sees God,” “Charlie Brown”; television’s “Gossip Girl,” “The Time Traveler’s Wife”); and Ashton Muñoz as Person in Charge (Broadway’s “The Inheritance,” Taylor Mac’s “A 24-Decade History of Popular Music”; Off-Broadway’s New York Theatre Workshop, The Public Theater; select works at The Guggenheim; dance

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credits with Marc Jacobs FW 2020, Rihanna; co-founder of Legacy: A Black Queer Production Collective).

The Sunday Symposium is hosted by David Kennedy, who is in his fourteenth season as Playhouse associate artistic director. He has directed Playhouse productions each season, including “The Invisible Hand,” which received the 2016 Connecticut Critics Circle (CCC) Award for Outstanding Production of a Play, and for which Kennedy won the CCC honor for Outstanding Director of a Play. He was previously with Dallas Theater Center, and was founding artistic director of The Lunar Society in Toronto and Milkman Theatre Group in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Other programs open to the community include post-play dialogues with the audience. The first will be a conversation with Mark Lamos, director of “Straight White Men,” and Westport Country Playhouse artistic director, on Thursday, May 26. Lamos has helmed many plays at Westport Country Playhouse since 2008, earning Connecticut Critics Circle Awards for his direction of “She Loves Me” (2010), “Into the Woods” (2012), “The Dining Room” (2013), “Man of La Mancha” (2018), and “Mlima’s Tale” (2019). Under Lamos’ artistic direction, the Playhouse was named “Theater Company of the Year” by *The Wall Street Journal* in 2013. Lamos’ extensive New York credits include “Our Country’s Good,” for which he received a Tony Award nomination. A former artistic director at Hartford Stage, he earned the 1989 Tony Award for the theater’s body of work. He was awarded the Connecticut Medal for the Arts as well as honorary doctorates from Connecticut College, University of Hartford, and Trinity College. In 2016 he was the recipient of the John Houseman Award.

The second post-play dialogue will feature Edson Rivas, executive director of the Triangle Community Center, leading a discussion on gender expectations on Friday, June 3. Rivas, with a double major in economics and international relations from the University of Connecticut, comes from a corporate background in proxy and investor relations. He joined the Triangle Community Center board in 2015 after being a volunteer at events. Since then, he has held many committee chair positions, served as vice president and president, and in July 2020 began running the day-to-day operations. As an immigrant from El Salvador, Rivas knows the importance of the services TCC provides and the impact they have on those who use them. He is a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community and a self-identified extroverted-introvert.

The post-play dialogues will be hosted by Liam Lonegan, assistant artistic director. Lonegan founded Egg & Spoon Theatre Collective in 2017. He received his BFA from Syracuse University, where he was the managing director of Black Box Players

Lonegan also hosts the Playhouse’s new podcast series, “Stories from the Playhouse,” on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Libsyn classic feed, and on the Playhouse’s website. The next podcast will feature “Straight White Men” cast member Nick Westrate, who played the title role in the Playhouse production of “Don Juan” in 2019. Other credits are Broadway’s “Bernhardt/Hamlet,” “Casa Valentina,” and “A Moon for the Misbegotten”; and Off-Broadway’s “The Boys in the Band,” for which he earned a Drama Desk nomination for featured actor. Westrate is a series regular for three seasons on AMC’s “Turn: Washington’s Spies.” The podcast will be released on Friday, May 27.

“Straight White Men” Production Sponsors are Athena and Daniel Adamson, Paige and Jodi Couture, Joyce Hergenhan, Mary Ellen and Jim Marpe, and Alison and Mark Smith. In-kind Sponsorship is provided by Parker Ear, Nose & Throat. 2022 Season Media Sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio.

Single tickets for “Straight White Men” start at \$30 during preview performances (May 24-27), and beginning May 28 Opening Night, tickets start at \$50 and are subject to change based upon availability. Buy early for best prices. For information on special offers, including discounts for students, senior citizens, educators, military and first responders, Indigenous peoples, professional playwrights, and groups, as well as options for pay-what-you-will and Westport Library pass, visit www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/box-office/.

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

For more information and to buy tickets, visit www.westportplayhouse.org, or call the box office at (203) 227-4177, toll-free at 1-888-927-7529, or visit Westport Country Playhouse, 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport. 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; 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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