

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Westport Country Playhouse Announces 2023 Season Update

#### A.R. Gurney's "The Cocktail Hour" added to lineup of five productions; season ticket packages on public sale October 25

Westport Country Playhouse has added the delightful and witty comedy of manners, "The Cocktail Hour" by A. R. (Pete) Gurney, to its previously announced 2023 season schedule, including a musical, "Ain't Misbehavin'"; a thriller, "Dial 'M' for Murder"; a comedy, "School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play"; and a classic, "Antigone." 2023 season ticket packages for five productions go on sale to the public on Tuesday, October 25. Single tickets will be available early next year.

"The Cocktail Hour" is a funny and touching, quasi-autobiographical story about an author who writes a new play that presents an unflattering picture of his family. It will run August 29 through September 16, directed by Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director.

"Pete Gurney has been a Playhouse audience favorite for many decades," said Lamos. "My long association and friendship with him, both at the Playhouse and Off-Broadway, is making me eager and happy to be reunited with his genial work. I think 'The Cocktail Hour' is a good show to bring back some audience members who have been reluctant to return to the theater following the pandemic."

Winner of the Lucille Lortel Award as Best Off-Broadway Play, "The Cocktail Hour" is about John, a playwright, who returns to his family's house, bringing with him a new play which he has written about them. His purpose is to obtain their permission to proceed with production, but his wealthy, very proper parents are cautious from the onset. For them the theater is personified by the gracious, comforting era of the Lunts and Ina Claire, and they are disturbed by the bluntness of modern plays. And there is also John's sister, Nina, to contend with, although her reservations have to do with the fact that John has given her character such a minor role. Their confrontation takes place during the ritual of the cocktail hour, and as the martinis flow, so do the recriminations and revelations, both humorous and poignant. In the end it is evident that what John has written is closer to the truth than his family has heretofore been willing to admit.

Playwright A. R. ("Pete") Gurney (1930-2017) has had many of his plays produced by Westport Country Playhouse during the past four decades, including "The Dining Room," winner of several Connecticut Critics Circle Awards, "Love Letters," "Children," and "Sylvia."

With the addition of "The Cocktail Hour," the Playhouse's 2023 season, according to Lamos, "will offer five entertaining, moving, and thoughtful shows that we know will bring you joy."

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#### WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

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As previously announced, the season opener will be the Tony Award®-winning musical, “Ain’t Misbehavin,” celebrating in sassy song and dance the legendary jazz great Fats Waller, playing April 11 through April 29. An exciting new vision by director/choreographer Jeffrey L. Page, the production recently received a “Critic’s Pick” in *The New York Times*. The musical is conceived by Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr. Co-producers are Barrington Stage Company in Pittsfield, MA, and Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, NY.

A reimagining of “Dial ‘M’ for Murder,” the suspenseful thriller of blackmail and revenge, will be directed by Mark Lamos, from May 30 through June 17. Focusing on a devious husband, his wealthy wife, and her lover, the play by Frederick Knott is adapted by playwright and screenwriter Jeffrey Hatcher, who has created even more surprises and diabolic twists than in the celebrated Hitchcock film.

A world premiere modern translation and adaptation of Sophocles’ “Antigone” by Kenneth Cavander will play July 11 through July 29, directed by David Kennedy, Playhouse associate artistic director. More resonant today than ever before, this gripping drama explores the nature of power and resistance as a determined young woman bravely defies a tyrannical king.

The newly added comedy, “The Cocktail Hour,” written by A. R. Gurney and directed by Lamos, will follow from August 29 through September 16.

The 2023 Season will culminate with “School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play” by Jocelyn Bioh, from October 24 through November 11, 2023. This buoyant and biting, gossip-girl-inspired comedy explores the universal similarities — and glaring differences — facing teenage girls across the globe as those at an exclusive boarding school in Ghana set their sights on the Miss Global Universe pageant.

The performance schedule is Tuesday at 7 p.m., Wednesday at 2 and 7 p.m., Thursday at 7p.m., Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 and 8 p.m., and Sunday at 3 p.m. (No Wed. or Sat. matinees during preview week). Special series include Taste of Tuesdays, LGBTQ+ Night Out, Opening Night, Sunday Symposium, Post-Play Dialogue, Open Captions, Backstage Pass, and Thursday TalkBack,

For complete 2023 season details and season ticket information, visit:  
<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/2023seasontickets>

For updates on Covid-19 health and safety protocols at the Playhouse, visit  
<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/covid19safety/>

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

For more information and to buy tickets, visit [www.westportplayhouse.org](http://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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