

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Stages “Scaredy Kat Presents”

The family play about social anxiety disorder marks the launch of the Playhouse Mobile Unit for ages 9 to 15

Westport Country Playhouse will stage “Scaredy Kat Presents,” on Sunday, March 5, at 2 p.m., for one performance only. The show is currently touring the area through April as the inaugural production of the Playhouse Mobile Unit. The family play captures the joys and struggles of adolescence while also attempting to destigmatize social anxiety disorder. Written by Janine Sobeck Knighton, “Scaredy Kat Presents” won the Purple Crayon Players PLAYground Festival in 2020. The author will participate in a talkback with the audience following the March 5 performance.

Director is Jenny Nelson, the Roz and Bud Siegel director of education and community engagement at the Playhouse. The show is geared to ages 9 through 15 and runs about one hour. Tickets are \$25.

“While the intent of the Playhouse Mobile Unit is to bring our traveling productions to schools, libraries, and other indoor spaces throughout the State of Connecticut, we are staging a performance at the Playhouse to officially unveil our new educational initiative to the public,” said Nelson.

In “Scaredy Kat Presents,” 11-year-old Kathryn’s social anxiety disorder has alienated her from her school classmates. She’s nervous, fearful, and panicky around them so they call her Scaredy Kat. After school, Kathryn retreats alone to her basement with her two passions: Alfred Hitchcock films and stop motion animation. When a new neighbor, Nadia, is forced to spend her afternoons at Kathryn’s house while her mom is working, Nadia’s keen interest in art could be the secret to Kathryn’s empowerment. The show trailer is available at: <https://youtu.be/n7upqec9a-0>

The cast includes Betzabeth Gonzalez as Kathryn (Connecticut-based actor, singer, and teaching artist; Westport Country Playhouse’s “New Works/New Voices”; credits with Play with Your Food, Fairfield Center Stage, Collective Consciousness Theater); Jacqueline Brown as Mom (performances on stages in Connecticut, New York, and film sets in Atlanta, GA; acting coach, writer); and Juliana Rivera as Nadia (Connecticut and New York City-based actress, singer, writer and visual artist; roles with Downtown Cabaret Theatre, Fordham Studio Theatre, Fordham Mainstage Theatre, Bridgeport Theatre Company).

Author Janine Sobeck Knighton is a dramaturg, playwright, screenwriter, story consultant, and educator. She is currently the associate professor of playwriting and dramaturgy and the associate department chair at Utah Valley University. She is the creator of JSK Stories, a production company and website focused on providing a platform for kids and teenagers to share their creative work in a safe, online environment.

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Director Jenny Nelson received her bachelor's degree in theater and master's degree in theater from the University of Arizona. She earned a second master's degree in education from Fairfield University. Nelson is the associate artistic director of Collective Consciousness Theatre, a social justice theater in New Haven. She worked as an artist and educator at theaters, including Long Wharf Theatre, Shubert Theatre, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Nelson was a nominee for the Tony Teaching Award of Excellence.

Following the performance on the Playhouse stage, the Playhouse Mobile Unit will bring "Scaredy Kat Presents" to area schools, libraries, churches, synagogues, and community centers now through April, with its professional actors, set, costumes, and special effects. After each touring performance, there is a Q&A with the actors about the play and its message. A study guide and curriculum are provided with classroom activities and games.

"Scaredy Kat Presents" is sponsored by Judy and Scott Phares and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Robert and Jan Anestis, Paige and Jodi Couture, Elizabeth and Matt Salem, The Scripps Family Fund for Education and the Arts, Barbara Streicker, and the Town of Westport's American Rescue Plan Funds. Education programming at Westport Country Playhouse is generously supported by Roz and Bud Siegel.

For more information and tickets to "Scaredy Kat Presents," visit:
<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/scaredykatpresents/>

To learn more about the Playhouse Mobile Unit or book a performance, contact the Playhouse education department at education@westportplayhouse.org or call Kendall Driffin, education and community engagement associate, at 203-571-1133.

For Westport Country Playhouse information and 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) 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.

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