

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Tony Award® Winner André De Shields Is Symposium Guest at Westport Country Playhouse on Sunday, April 16**

**De Shields will discuss his role in the original Broadway cast of “Ain’t Misbehavin’” at free event, open to community, by reservation.**

André DeShields, Tony Award® winner for “Hadestown” and original Broadway cast member of “Ain’t Misbehavin’”: The Fats Waller Musical,” will be the guest at Westport Country Playhouse’s Sunday Symposium, following the 3 p.m. matinee performance of “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” on Sunday, April 16. In addition to his Broadway performance in “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” De Shields was in the 1982 NBC television broadcast of the Tony® Award-winning musical, for which he won a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement.

The Playhouse Sunday Symposium program is free and open to the public, by reservation at <https://tickets.westportplayhouse.org/5825/6121>. No performance ticket is necessary to attend the Symposium. Guests are invited to arrive at the Playhouse approximately two hours after curtain time; the Symposium will begin immediately after the performance, at approximately 5 p.m. Ticket holders for that performance will be automatically RSVP’d to the Symposium.

De Shields will discuss the significance and history of “Ain’t Misbehavin’” with Jeffrey L. Page, director and choreographer of the current Playhouse musical production. Mark Lamos, Playhouse artistic director, will moderate.

“André De Shields is an entertainment legend, pure and simple, let there be no doubt,” said Lamos. “He has spent a lifetime whipping audiences into a frenzy in just about everything in which he’s appeared. And he’s appeared in some of the most important shows of the last half-century. And you know what? He’s still going strong.”

Lamos added, “This will be a totally unique opportunity to meet a legend, a great dancer, singer, and performer as he lets us into the secrets of his craft, his longevity, and his extraordinary life. Drop everything. Be there!”

In a career spanning 55 years, André De Shields, at age 77, has distinguished himself as an unparalleled actor, activist, educator, and philanthropist. As actor, De Shields’ mission is to fill intimate spaces with enormous beauty. He defines intimate spaces as the hearts of humanity. As activist, he endeavors to restore majesty, elegance, and literacy to the Black thespian toolbox. His legendary career has resulted in a treasure trove of accolades, among them, Doctor of Fine Arts *honoris causa* from his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he founded The André De Shields

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Fund. His other marks of esteem include having been the triple-crown winner of the 2019 awards season, garnering Tony, Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, and Grammy awards for his universally acclaimed role as Hermes, messenger to the gods, in "Hadestown." De Shields transitioned from 2022 to 2023 with a paranormal portrayal as Ben Loman in the searing production of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," starring Wendell "The Lion" Pierce. Perennially known for his idiosyncratic, show-stopping performances in four legendary Broadway productions---"The Wiz," "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Play On!," and "The Full Monty"---De Shields has achieved the status of "Broadway Deity." [www.andredeshields.com](http://www.andredeshields.com).

Jeffrey L. Page, an Emmy Award-nominated director and choreographer, will lead the Symposium conversation. Page won an MTV Video Music Award for his work with Beyoncé, was the associate creative director for Mariah Carey's European tour, has been a featured choreographer on Fox Television's "So You Think You Can Dance," and was co-director and choreographer of the recent Broadway revival, "1776."

Symposium moderator Mark Lamos has helmed numerous Connecticut Critics Circle Award-winning productions at Westport Country Playhouse since 2008. Lamos' extensive New York credits include "Our Country's Good," for which he garnered a Tony Award nomination. He is the recipient of the Connecticut Medal for the Arts and the John Houseman Award.

Named a 2022 "Critic's Pick" in *The New York Times*, "Ain't Misbehavin'" plays April 11 through April 29. The five-member cast features a contestant from "X Factor" and "The Voice" and two finalists from "American Idol." The score of jazz, blues, and swing music of the 1920s and 1930s will provide insight into a vibrant time in American history and music, as well as energize, enlighten, and entertain.

More info on "Ain't Misbehavin'" at <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/aintmisbehavin/>  
Show trailer at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0DyGs3cqU0>

"Ain't Misbehavin'" 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.

The Sunday Symposium with André De Shields is sponsored by Teresa Nardozi. The Sunday Symposium Series is supported, in part, by the White Barn Program of the Lucille Lortel Foundation. "Ain't Misbehavin'" Corporate Production Partner is Bank of America. Production Partners are Athena and Daniel Adamson. 2023 Media Sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio. 2023 Marketing Sponsor is Haddad & Partners.

The Playhouse's three-production, 2023 season continues with a reimagining of "Dial 'M' for Murder," the suspenseful thriller of blackmail and revenge, running from July 11 through July 29; and "School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play," a buoyant and biting comedy exploring the universal similarities and glaring differences facing teenage girls across the globe, playing from October 24 through November 11. The complete schedule is available at [westportplayhouse.org](http://westportplayhouse.org).

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

For ticket information, visit [www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/box-office/](http://www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/box-office/) 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**

Founded in 1931, 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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