

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Announces Plan to Transform and Save Historic Theater

Comprehensive transformation plan includes \$2 million fundraising appeal, a broad range of live performances, and a more sustainable cost structure.

Westport Country Playhouse today announced that its board of trustees has approved and begun implementing a comprehensive plan to ensure that the historic theater is able to continue to operate and overcome recent financial challenges. The transformation plan, entitled “Reimagined: Save Your Playhouse,” includes new and exciting programming for a broad audience, a major fundraising campaign, and a more sustainable and efficient cost structure.

Newly elected board chair Athena T. Adamson, who has served as a trustee since 2017, provided an overview of the plan. “This summer we are working to bring to life a new vision – one that features both first-rate theater productions and a wide array of innovative programming to engage new and existing audiences.”

Beginning this September and ramping up to full speed by early 2024, the Playhouse will present live performances including curated one-night-only shows featuring celebrities and top talent from the worlds of theater, comedy, music, and dance; a continuation of the popular Script in Hand playreading series, which offers intimate storytelling as professional actors bring the words to life without sets or costumes; and a speaker series, “In Conversation with...,” providing direct access to creators, business leaders, artists, athletes, philanthropists, and influencers in an intimate setting.

Adamson emphasized that in fall 2024, the Playhouse’s will resume its proud tradition of producing high-end theater and new works, and presenting next-generation children’s programming, which are essential to the theater’s ongoing mission.

To address the financial challenges the Playhouse has faced, the “Reimagined” plan includes a board and community “Save Your Playhouse” fundraising campaign with a goal to raise an immediate and necessary \$2 million by July 30, 2023. “Westport Country Playhouse has stood the test of time by staying true to its mission and continually evolving,” Adamson said. “More than 20 years ago, Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman inspired the Playhouse’s last, great, transformative campaign, chaired by Bob Wright, former head of NBC, and now there is another opportunity for our wonderful community to be part of shaping the Playhouse for future generations.”

To address the serious financial deficit resulting from the pandemic’s effect on ticket sales, earlier this year the Playhouse was forced to reduce its staff and cut its 2023 season from five productions to three. Last week, additional cost-cutting measures included cancellation of a third show, “School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play,” and a further staff reduction. Ticket holders for “School Girls” will be contacted regarding the cancellation.

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"Cancelling another production and losing more of our dedicated staff---these are the painfully hard decisions we had to make in the interest of fiscal responsibility and in order to survive," said Adamson.

"We have a structured plan that will allow the Playhouse to meet the desires of the next generation of theatergoers, but we need your immediate help," Adamson stressed. "Contributions to the 'Save Your Playhouse' campaign are fundamental to saving and evolving the legacy of Westport Country Playhouse."

"Join us! [Donate!](#) Talk to us!," Adamson said. "If you have suggestions about how we can deliver the best live performances right here in Westport, we want to hear from you." The public is invited to email ideas to Gretchen Wright, Playhouse interim managing director, gwright@westportplayhouse.org.

Adamson also encouraged the public to show support by attending Playhouse artistic director Mark Lamos's staging of a new adaptation of the classic, "[Dial M for Murder](#)," which will run from July 11-29, and additional events at the Playhouse this summer to be announced soon.

For Westport Country Playhouse information and tickets, visit westportplayhouse.org or call the box office at (203) 227-4177, toll-free at 1-888-927-7529. Stay connected to the Playhouse on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse) and on YouTube (WestportPlayhouse).

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