

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Patricia Blaufuss, Public Relations Manager
(203) 227-5137 x197 | (203) 571-1287 | pblaufuss@westportplayhouse.org
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Script in Hand Playreading of Romantic Comedy “Maytag Virgin” at Westport Country Playhouse on Monday, August 21

Westport Country Playhouse will present a Script in Hand playreading of the romantic comedy, “Maytag Virgin,” written and directed by southern regionalist Audrey Cefaly, on Monday, August 21, at 7 p.m. The play was voted “Best Comedy” in Atlanta by artsATL.com in 2018.

“It’s been a while since Script In Hand offered a good, old-fashioned romantic comedy,” said Mark Shanahan, Script in Hand curator. “I’m delighted to welcome Pulitzer Prize-nominated playwright Audrey Cefaly to the Playhouse to direct her own work alongside a truly wonderful cast. Audrey’s play is both hilarious and profoundly moving, expertly crafted with insightful, unflinchingly honest and humorous dialogue that will wring your heart.

“I know our Script In Hand audience will fall in love with these wonderful characters as Jack and Lizzy meditate on life, love, and joys of folding laundry.”

Two adjacent backyards—and an aversion to clothes dryers. Good fences make good neighbors—but can the same be said of a laundry-laden clothesline? In “Maytag Virgin,” when unflappable Jack moves in next door to endearingly energetic Lizzy, sparks begin to fly between the two schoolteachers. Over time, good-natured, neighborly nagging transforms into an unexpected friendship - and possibly more - as old secrets are revealed and long-standing emotional wounds are healed.

“Maytag Virgin” brims with witty, southern charm and poignant observations about the need for second chances and the courage it takes to move forward with an open heart.

The two-person cast includes Jeffrey Binder in the role of Jack Key and Carolyn Messina as Elizabeth “Lizzy” Nash.

Binder is an actor, playwright, and director. He has performed on Broadway, Off-Broadway, regionally, and London’s West End, as well as on television and in film, including performing in or directing over a dozen productions for Gulfshore Playhouse. His Broadway credits include “The Lion King,” the original Broadway cast of “The Lieutenant of Inishmore,” “Mary Poppins,” and “Side Man.” West End work includes the premiere of “Side Man.” In New York, he was in the U.S. premiere of “Music Hall,” the New York premiere of “Romance/The New Testament,” “Dr. Faustus,” and “Birth and After Birth.” He appeared on television’s “Damages,” “Law & Order,” and “Law & Order: Criminal Intent.” As a director, Binder’s credits include “Maytag Virgin,” “The Lady Demands Satisfaction,” and “In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play.” He has an MFA from NYU.

Messina serves as chief collaborator/dramaturg, and often, actor, for Audrey Cefaly’s plays, including “Maytag Virgin” (artistic director, world premiere, Women’s Voices Theater Fest), “Alabaster,” “The Gulf,” “The Last Wide Open,” “Love Is a Blue Tick Hound,” and most recently, “Trouble” at Alabama

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Shakespeare Southern Writers Fest, Barter Appalachian Fest of Plays and Playwrights, Florida Rep PlayLab, and Signature Theatre Sigworks. Off-Broadway credits include "The State of Tennessee." Off-Off-Broadway, she was the winner of best actress, Strawberry OAF for "Fin & Euba," and winner of Samuel French OOB for "The Gulf." Regional work includes "Charlotte's Web," world premiere of "Alabaster" at Florida Rep, "Maytag Virgin," "Superior Donuts," "August: Osage County," "Love Is a Blue Tick Hound," and "Split in Three." She is a graduate of William Esper Studio, NYC. www.carolyn-messina.com

Playwright and director Audrey Cefaly said, "I am thrilled to be directing two wonderful actors who both have a rich history with the play. So excited to finally bring my romantic comedy to Westport, a theater I've long admired. I know audiences are gonna love it!"

Cefaly's plays include "The Gulf" (Edgerton, Lammy, Charles MacArthur nominee), "Alabaster" (National New Play Network, record-breaking RWP, Kilroys, Calicchio Prize, and Pulitzer Prize nominee), "Maytag Virgin," "The Last Wide Open," "The Story of Walter," "Tell Me Something Good," "Trouble" (Blue Ink featured finalist), and "Love Is a Blue Tick Hound." Cefaly is a Dramatist Guild Foundation Traveling Master. She is published by Concord Theatricals and TRW and her plays have been produced by Cincinnati Playhouse, Florida Studio, Florida Rep, City Theatre, Penobscot Theatre, Gulfshore Playhouse, Merrimack Rep, Signature Theatre, Barter Theatre, Peterborough Players, Vermont Stage, and others. Her play "Alabaster" received a 10-city Rolling World Premiere, the largest in National New Play Network history.

Mark Shanahan, Script in Hand curator, was recently named Westport Country Playhouse incoming artistic director for 2023-24. He will assume the position in March 2024. Shanahan is the writer/director of *The New York Times* Critics' Pick "A Sherlock Carol" (Off-Broadway Alliance nomination, Best New Play 2021), playing two seasons in New York and annually at London's Marylebone Theatre. He recently directed his own adaptation of "Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd," in partnership with Agatha Christie Ltd., premiering this month at the Tony Award-winning Alley Theatre. He is the author of "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," "See Monsters of the Deep," the Off-Broadway and regional hit comedy "The Dingdong," as well as numerous radio plays as creator of the White Heron Ghost Light series, featuring Christopher Plummer, Judith Ivey, Rhonda Ross, and other notables. Shanahan has directed at stages around the country such as Alley Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Virginia Stage, Arkansas Rep, White Heron, Mile Square Theatre, Hudson Stage, Theatre Squared, Fulton Opera House, Weston Playhouse, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, Florida Rep, Penguin Rep, Merrimack Rep, The Cape Playhouse, and many more. As an actor, Shanahan has appeared on and Off-Broadway ("The 39 Steps," "Tryst," "The Shaugraun," and others) and at many celebrated regional theatres. Shanahan has appeared on the Westport Country Playhouse stage in "Journey's End" (2005) "David Copperfield," directed by Joanne Woodward and Annie Keefe, (2005), "Sedition" (2007), "Tryst" (2008), and "Around the World in 80 Days" (2009), and numerous Script In Hand readings. Shanahan is also the creator and curator of Westport Country Playhouse Radio Theater, in partnership with WSHU Public Radio, and served as writer/director of the Playhouse radio adaptation of "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," and as director of scripts commissioned for the series. mark-shanahan.net.

Stage manager is Megan Smith who has stage managed many Westport Country Playhouse productions and Script in Hand and New Works playreadings since 2005. Stage directions will be read by Emma Ruopp.

Tickets are \$25. Running time is approximately two hours, including one 15-minute intermission. The play contains mature language and content.

For full details on the Script in Hand playreading of "Maytag Virgin," visit:

<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/maytag-virgin/>

The Script in Hand Playreading Series is supported by Joyce Herganhan and the White Barn Program of the Lucille Lortel Foundation.

Upcoming Script in Hand playreadings are scheduled on Mondays, September 18, November 13, and December 11, titles to be announced. They offer intimate storytelling as professional actors bring the words

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to life without sets or costumes. For a video on Script in Hand, visit:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2eWDaF-JXA>.

A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at westportplayhouse.org. All play titles, artists, dates, and times are subject to change.

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), Instagram ([wcplayhouse](https://www.instagram.com/wcplayhouse)), and YouTube ([WestportPlayhouse](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8eWDaF-JXA)). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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