

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Staples High School Alumni and Current Staples Players Join Justin Paul, Staples '03, in Concert at Westport Country Playhouse

Staples High School alumni and current members of Staples Players will be part of Westport Country Playhouse's one-night-only benefit concert, "An Evening with Justin Paul & Friends with Kelli O'Hara and James Naughton," on Saturday, September 9, at 8 p.m.

In addition to being a Tony, Oscar, and Grammy award-winning composer, **Justin Paul** is a 2003 graduate of Staples High School and former member of Staples Players. The Westport native is best known for his work on "La La Land," "Dear Evan Hansen," and "The Greatest Showman." Paul's other credits include television's "Only Murders in the Building," season three.

Concert producer is **Ben Frimmer**, Staples class of 1987 and former member of Staples Players. He has been teaching theatre arts for the Westport Schools for the past 28 years and is artistic director of Coleytown Company at Coleytown Middle School. He resides in Weston.

Frimmer said, "Justin was in the first fifth grade class I ever taught. He then acted with Coleytown Company. I eventually hired him in his senior year to be the musical director for Coleytown Company's 'Footloose.'"

Another Staples grad lending his talents to the concert will be **Jacob Heimer**, '06. He was in Broadway's "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical." Frimmer said, "Jacob was an actor in Coleytown Company, eventually playing the title role in 'The Wiz.'" Heimer later joined Staples Players.

Concert director **Caley Beretta**, Staples class of 2010, is a former president of Staples Players. Today, Beretta is the senior manager of creative development at Disney Theatrical Group.

Twelve current Staples Players will be in the concert's opening and closing numbers, singing in the ensemble with two Broadway performers on lead vocals. The Staples Players are: **Yusef Abdallah**, class of '25; **Kaya Arava**, class of '24; **Henry Carson**, class of '24; **Finley Chevrier**, class of '24; **Cece Diyoka**, class of '25; **Samantha Edwards**, class of '24; **Ben Herrera**, class of '24; **Alyssa Lee**, class of '24; **Andrew Maskoff**, class of '25; **Imogen Medoff**, class of '24; **Cooper Sadler**, class of '24; and **Melody Stanger**, class of '23.

Others appearing in the benefit concert are Tony Award winners **Kelli O'Hara** ("The King and I") and **James Naughton** ("City of Angels," "Chicago"). They will be joined by **Greg Naughton**, founding member of folk-rock group The Sweet Remains

Also performing are friends from Paul's films, stage musicals, and other creative projects. They include **Loren Allred** (vocalist for the song "Never Enough" from "The Greatest Showman" soundtrack and

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film); **Andrew Barth Feldman** (Broadway's "Dear Evan Hansen" in title role); **Jessie Hooker-Bailey** (Broadway's "Waitress," "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical"); Grammy nominee **Mykal Kilgore** (NBC television's "The Wiz Live!," "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert"); Tony Award winner **Aaron Tveit** (Broadway's "Moulin Rouge! The Musical!"; television's "Schmigadoon!"); and **Jessica Vosk** (Elphaba in "Wicked," both on tour and in the 15th Anniversary Broadway company).

Other talents include Norwalk native **Raissa Katona Bennett** (Broadway's "Phantom of the Opera," "Chess in Concert"); **Ben Fankhauser** (Broadway's "Newsies"; Encores! "Mack & Mabel"); and Westporter **Stacie Morgain Lewis** (Broadway's "Wicked," "Sunday in the Park with George").

Music director is **Mat Eisenstein**, associate conductor/keyboard for the Broadway production of "Some Like It Hot."

Concert tickets, at \$300 (limited availability) and \$500 for performance only, may be reserved at <https://tickets.westportplayhouse.org/6164/6165> or by calling the Playhouse box office at 203-227-4177. Tickets for the post-performance meet and greet with Justin Paul and other artists, at \$1000, are sold out.

More information on "An Evening with Justin Paul & Friends with Kelli O'Hara and James Naughton" is at <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/an-evening-with-justin-paul-friends-with-kelli-ohara-james-naughton/>

Event sponsor is Barbara K. Streicker. Liquor for post-show event is donated by SoNo 1420 American Craft Distillers. 2023 Media Sponsor is Moffly Media.

Westport Country Playhouse is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. All proceeds from this fundraising event will support the professional theater, its work on stage and throughout the community.

A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at westportplayhouse.org. All 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), and YouTube (WestportPlayhouse). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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