

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Patricia Blaufuss, Public Relations Manager
(203) 227-5137 x197 | (203) 571-1287 | pblaufuss@westportplayhouse.org
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 19, 2023

Westport Country Playhouse Stages Family-Friendly Holiday Show, “A Sherlock Carol,” December 19 – 23

Playwright and director Mark Shanahan combines two classic tales into one new mystery for all ages.

Westport Country Playhouse will stage “A Sherlock Carol,” a family-friendly holiday production based on two classic tales, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” a classic Sherlock Holmes story, and “A Christmas Carol,” from Tuesday, December 19 through Saturday, December 23. The inventive plot of intrigue and suspense, infused with holiday cheer and music, features familiar characters from the literature of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Charles Dickens.

Nominated for a 2022 Off-Broadway Alliance Award for Best New Play and selected as a “Critics’ Pick” by *The New York Times*, the play is written and directed by Mark Shanahan, who is also Westport Country Playhouse incoming artistic director.

“A Sherlock Carol’ turns the tables on Dickens and Doyle’s characters, revisiting them in ways audiences have not seen before,” said Shanahan. “At its heart, ‘A Sherlock Carol’ is a tale of the resurrection of the spirit, in which Sherlock Holmes, in a fit of despair, struggles his way back from a dark place. He is guided by the spirit of Ebenezer Scrooge, who charges Holmes with becoming his best self and living up to his famed talents as the world’s foremost consulting detective.”

The play is set in 1894 London on Christmas Eve as a grown-up Tiny Tim asks Sherlock Holmes to investigate the peculiar death of Ebenezer Scrooge.

“A Sherlock Carol’ is a perfect show for young theatregoers and we hope it will invite them into a lifelong love affair with the theatre,” stated Shanahan. “It aims to be a smart, sophisticated, and warm-hearted comedy to share with a child or grandchild.”

Cast and creative team will be announced soon. “Our six actors play multiple roles, creating theatre magic with the flip of a hat or a quick costume change in the wings, entering and exiting as different characters in a matter of moments,” Shanahan added.

As a child, Shanahan became hooked on Sherlock Holmes stories. “I was that kid reading ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’ under the covers with a flashlight,” he said. “I really devoured those stories, and they stayed with me.” As an actor, Shanahan performed in a production of “Sherlock Holmes and The West End Horror,” and as a director, he helmed numerous Holmes’ plays on stages across the country, from serious takes to spoofs on the character.

“With all that in mind, eventually it came time for me to gin up a little bravery and try my own hand at writing a Sherlock Holmes story for the stage,” Shanahan noted. “Dickens and Doyle were essentially my inspiration

-more-

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

25 POWERS COURT WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT 06880
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE T (203) 227-5137 | BOX OFFICE T (203) 227-4177
westportplayhouse.org

and my collaborators - the angels on my shoulders. I'm only borrowing the characters that they invented through their genius, playing with them to create a fun, uplifting, new tale that stays true to the spirit of both of the authors' original works."

Shanahan completed writing "A Sherlock Carol" in 2019, with the first private reading at New Jersey's Mile Square Theatre in the fall of that year. Following a backers' audition in New York, the play found investors immediately and was scheduled for a holiday 2020 opening. Although the pandemic put a stop to that, the play was featured at Florida Rep's 2020 PlayLab Festival of New Works, and presented as a virtual Script in Hand playreading by Westport Country Playhouse in early 2021. The producing team, Fat Goose and Theatre Nerd Productions, forged ahead with a fall 2021 premiere off-Broadway at New World Stages. The play's success led to a remounting at the same theater in 2022. Word spread to DEM, a London-based producing team, who staged a run last year at London's Marylebone Theatre with a return planned for this holiday season. "A Sherlock Carol" will be staged this year at 10 theaters - nine across the U.S., and one in London.

"Bringing this fully staged production to Westport is a strong team effort," stated Shanahan. "What a thrill to see our entire Off-Broadway company, from actors to designers to producers, pitch in to make the show a reality at the Playhouse. With the help of our New York producers, we have raised funds to offset Playhouse costs. Similarly, our designers have contributed their work in support of the Playhouse and nearly all of our original actors have signed on once more to help celebrate the holidays at the Playhouse."

Production Partner is Claire Wilkes. Production Patrons are Laura Z. Barket and Yvonne Bokhour. 2023 Media Sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio.

Performance schedule is Tuesday at 7 p.m., Wednesday at 7 p.m., Thursday at 7 p.m., Friday at 2 and 7 p.m., and Saturday at 2 and 7 p.m. The play is recommended for all ages. Running time is 108 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

Single tickets start at \$35 and are subject to change based upon availability. Buy early for best prices. For information on special offers, including discounts for students, senior citizens, educators, military and first responders, Indigenous peoples, professional playwrights, and groups, as well as options for pay-what-you-will and library passes, visit www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/box-office/.

For "A Sherlock Carol" information and tickets, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/a-sherlock-carol/>

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

For more information and to buy 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), Instagram (wcplayhouse), and on YouTube (WestportPlayhouse).

###