

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 22, 2024

Westport Country Playhouse Presents “Kayfabe” Puppet Wrestling, a Barnstormer Event, on Saturday, March 30, at 2 p.m.

Geared to age 13 and up, the project received a 2024 Jim Henson Foundation Production Grant.

“Kayfabe,” where table-top puppetry meets pro wrestling meets a rock show, will launch Westport Country Playhouse’s new Barnstormer Series in the Lucille Lortel White Barn Center, on Saturday, March 30, at 2 p.m. “Kayfabe” is a semi-autobiographical, meta-fictional love letter to professional wrestling written, directed, and designed by aspiring wrestler and inspired puppet artist Josh Rice. “Kayfabe” puppet wrestling is geared toward ages 13 and up.

The work-in-progress showing is the recipient of a 2024 Jim Henson Foundation Production Grant and a New York State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Grant.

“‘Kayfabe’ explores how the ritual of performance bleeds into reality and how reality bleeds into performance,” said Rice. “Expect the unexpected when form meets function, when reality and fantasy collide, when the lines between real and fake blur—this is ‘Kayfabe.’”

The show kicks off Barnstormer, a series of small events in the Lucille Lortel White Barn, located adjacent to the Playhouse. From cabaret to playreadings, Barnstormer provides an opportunity for artists, many of whom are from the local community, to exercise their creative muscle in a cozy and intimate setting.

Josh Rice is a multidisciplinary theatre artist specializing in puppetry and improvisation. He makes work that is at once playful, absurd, and tragic, incorporating simple performer-driven spectacle, puppetry, live music, improvisation, and audience interaction. His work is heavily influenced by his life-long fandom of professional wrestling, comedy, and his training as an improviser. Original puppetry work includes “The Marooned” at New York State Puppet Festival and Dixon Place Puppet BloK; “The VaudeVillains” and “Composite Portrait” at La MaMa Puppet Slam; and “The Tempest,” directed at Shake on the Lake and Sarah Lawrence College. He adapted, designed, and directed Shake on the Lake’s puppet-infused “A Christmas Carol.”

Rice is the founder and producing artistic director of the New York State Puppet Festival (NYSPF). Since 2018, the biennial festival of puppetry in his rural hometown of Perry, NY, has programmed national and international artists for performances, exhibitions, film screenings, and workshops. Additional curating credits include NYSPF@Home Streaming Puppetry Series and Puppet BloK at Dixon Place. He is the founder and host of “The Puppet Pod!,” an interview-based podcast with puppetry artists. Rice is on the full-time faculty at the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science at Stony Brook University. He had an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. joshriceprojects.com

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25 POWERS COURT WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT 06880

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Puppeteers are Madeleine Dauer, Andy Manjuck, and Emma Wiseman. Wiseman, originally from Weston and married to Rice, was in Westport Country Playhouse's production of "The Member of the Wedding" in 2005, and is the daughter of Eileen Wiseman, former artistic director of Westport Arts Center.

Tickets are \$20, seating unreserved. Running time is 60 minutes, no intermission. For full details, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/kayfabe-by-josh-rice/?sourceNumber=6595>

A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/whats-on/>. 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), and YouTube (WestportPlayhouse). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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