

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Presents Ari Axelrod in a Mic in Hand Celebration of Jewish Musical Theater on May 8

Axelrod returns to the Playhouse with his award-winning show in tribute to Broadway's Jewish composers Berlin, Bernstein, Sondheim, and King.

Westport Country Playhouse will present a Mic in Hand musical concert, "Ari Axelrod - A Place for Us: A Celebration of Jewish Broadway," on Wednesday, May 8, at 7 p.m. After last year's sold-out performance at the Playhouse, the internationally acclaimed, award-winning show honoring Jewish culture returns with even more songs and musicians.

"A Place for Us" explores the songs, stories, and crucial contributions to American musical theater of Jewish composers, such as Irving Berlin, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, and Carole King.

"Our history is not only about how we survived, but also about how we thrived," said Axelrod. "I've been doing this show for six years now, and every time, someone from the audience will come up to me afterward and say, 'We need this show now more than ever.' When the world feels dark, and it feels like there's no light to be found, Jews create light, whether it's the glow of Shabbat candles or Broadway's marquees. This show is a celebration of Jewish light."

"A Place for Us" is part of the Mic in Hand series, a spin-off of the Playhouse's popular Script in Hand series. Both series are curated by Mark Shanahan.

"I'm so happy to welcome Ari back to the Playhouse by popular demand to once again present his show on our stage," said Shanahan. "This time around, Ari's expanded the show with a larger band, building on the extraordinary show he presented for us last year."

Shanahan added, "There's a good reason Ari's show is so celebrated. It's joyous, funny, revealing and ultimately, an extremely moving evening of theatre presented by a master storyteller delivering some of the greatest songs ever written."

A post-show talkback with Axelrod and ADL Connecticut regional director Stacey Sobel will explore inspiration for the show and its relevance amidst increased levels of hate and antisemitism nationwide.

The Jewish Week named Ari Axelrod one of the 36 most influential Jews under the age of 36 in the United States. He received the 2022 Bistro Award for Best Theatrical Artistry in Song. His show, "A Place For Us: A Celebration of Jewish Broadway," began with a sold-out run at the historic Birdland Jazz Club, featuring six-time Emmy and Tony nominee Tovah Feldshuh. It has since grown to international acclaim, performing to sold-out audiences around the world, and garnered him a

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BroadwayWorld Award and a Manhattan Association of Cabarets & Clubs (MAC) Award nomination for Best Male Vocalist in 2020. His debut solo show, "Taking the Wheel," directed by Tony Award winner Faith Prince, and music directed by multiple MAC Award winner Alex Rybeck, has been performed in numerous cities around the country. Axelrod's work as a director has been seen at the Tony Award-winning Paper Mill Playhouse, Birdland Jazz Club, 54 Below, and The Green Room 42. His debut album, "Ari Axelrod Live at Birdland," is now available on all streaming platforms. ariaxelrod.com

Musicians are Mike Stapleton, piano; Nathan See, reeds; Mairi Dorman-Phaneuf, cello; Randy Landeau, bass; and Barb Merjan, drums/percussion.

More information on "Ari Axelrod - A Place for Us: A Celebration of Jewish Broadway" at: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/mic-in-hand-ari-axelrod-2024/>

Tickets are \$40. Running time is 90 minutes with no intermission.

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) and on YouTube (WestportPlayhouse).

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