

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Presents Playreading of New Comedy by Connecticut Native on September 14

Westport Country Playhouse will present a Script in Hand playreading on Monday, September 14, at 7 p.m., of “The Next Best Thing,” a new comedy about an outspoken, wildly inappropriate grandmother and the impeccably polite android version her family builds to replace her when she passes on. Matt Hoverman, a native of Redding, Connecticut, is the playwright; director is Mark Shanahan, Playhouse artistic director and curator of the Script in Hand series.

“It’s a time to celebrate new work at the Playhouse!,” said Shanahan. “As we launch a season filled with new work on our mainstage, our Script in Hand series continues to celebrate new plays with Matt Hoverman’s ‘The Next Best Thing.’ This wild and wonderfully funny ride introduces us to a family any of us might recognize, while mixing outrageous comedy with smart observations about technology, family dynamics, and the very nature of what it means to be human. Matt has a soaring imagination and a singular wit, and I couldn’t be happier to welcome this Connecticut native to the Playhouse to share his terrific new comedy with our audience.”

“The Next Best Thing” asks the question: Should we embrace what’s difficult about the people we love – or settle for a more acceptable alternative – the next best thing? Jo is bold and brassy, and, at age 80, a hoot and a half. Her one goal? To make sure her impressionable nine-year-old granddaughter inherits her ferocity, strength, and courage. When Jo’s AI programmer son John offers to create a lookalike AI android to fill the void after her death, she agrees, eager for at least an echo of her irreverent perspective to stay behind to inspire her granddaughter.

But when it’s time to scan her personality, John secretly flips a switch. Instead of giving the robot an identical copy of his mother’s sassy personality, he produces the kinder, gentler, sanitized mom he has always longed for. This “optimized” robot accidentally activates while Jo is still alive, and, to Jo’s horror, charms her family and her granddaughter into preferring her! Thus begins a battle in which Jo uses every formidable trick in her bag to oust the synthetic usurper and save her granddaughter from a childhood free of the character-shaping conflict Jo believes she’ll need to face the world that awaits her.

Playwright Matt Hoverman is a TV writer/producer and playwright whose groundbreaking work in kid’s animation (“Arthur,” “Curious George,” “Fancy Nancy,” “Sofia the First,” “Firebuds,” “Batwheels,” “RoboGobo”) has been recognized with an Emmy, the Humanitas Prize and the Norman Lear Sentinel Award - as well as Annie, NAMIC and two GLAAD nominations. His grown-up farcical comedies for the theatre include “Puck’d: A Middle-Aged Summer Night’s Dream,” “The Glint,” “The Next Best Thing,” “Who You See Here,” “Thrillsville,” “In Transit,” and “Christmas Shorts.” His plays have won the FringeNYC Best Playwriting Award and the Samuel French OOB Short Play Festival. As a librettist, Matt co-wrote the book for The Transport Group’s “The Audience” (Drama Desk Award nom. for Outstanding New Musical) – and he wrote the book for “Disney Junior Dream Factory” (which ran for five years at

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westportplayhouse.org

Disneyland Paris) and TheaterWorks USA's national tour of "Clifford: The Big Red Dog: The Musical," coming to Westport Country Playhouse on September 19. Education: Brown University: BA in playwriting, University of California, San Diego: MFA in Acting. MattHoverman.com

Cast members will be announced soon.

Tickets are \$35. For full details, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/script-in-hand-title-september/>

The 2026 Script in Hand Playreading Series is supported by Joyce Hergenhan and the White Barn Program of the Lucille Lortel Foundation. 2026 Programming and Season Sponsor is Barbara Streicker. Media sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio. Westport Country Playhouse is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

The Script in Hand 2026 season continues on Mondays at 7 p.m., on October 5 and November 30; titles to be announced. Subscriptions to the Script in Hand series are available as well as single tickets.

Script in Hand playreadings offer intimate storytelling as professional actors use their skills to catapult the audience's imagination without benefit of scenery 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), and YouTube (WestportPlayhouse). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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