

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Script in Hand Playreading of Comedic Mystery, “Mrs. Christie,” on Monday, May 13

Westport Country Playhouse will present a Script in Hand playreading of the comedic mystery, “Mrs. Christie,” a fictional account of the unsolved 1926 disappearance of Agatha Christie, one of the most-read mystery writers, written by Heidi Armbruster and directed by Mark Shanahan, on Monday, May 13, at 7 p.m.

“Mrs. Christie’ is an imaginative adventure of self-discovery, delving into the enduring mystery of Agatha Christie’s personal life,” said Shanahan. “Filled with twists and turns worthy of the famed author’s best novels, Armbruster’s play is a humorous and often touching investigation of grief, love, and the mysteries of the human heart. I know the Playhouse audience will thrill to see the Queen of Crime come alive on our stage, as mysterious and alluring as any character she ever created.”

In 1926, Agatha Christie vanished, then reappeared 11 days later without explanation. Her abandoned car was found in some bushes; police suspected foul play. It was a tabloid sensation—a mystery that, nearly a century later, remains unsolved. Fast forward to today: More than a little lost herself, a Christie aficionado named Lucy makes the pilgrimage to the author’s estate. When she happens upon an unpublished diary written in Christie’s own hand, Lucy resolves to crack the case once and for all. In parallel storylines that blend past, present, and Poirot, “Mrs. Christie” proves that sometimes you need to disappear in order to find yourself.

“I’m terrifically excited to hear my play at the Playhouse, a theater that means a lot to me,” said the playwright, Heidi Armbruster. “I’m especially excited to join forces with Mark Shanahan, who gives me a run for my money as Number One Agatha Christie fan in the American theater.”

Cast members are: **Ally Bonino** as Lucy (Originated the role of Lucy Burns in the Off-Broadway, world premiere of “Suffs”; recently made her Broadway debut, reprising that role; Westport Country Playhouse’s 2012 gala honoring Terrence McNally; 50th-anniversary production of Leonard Bernstein’s “Mass” at The Kennedy Center; workshopped “The Jordan and Avery Show,” as Jordan, at Eugene O’Neill Theater Center; @allybo123; www.allybonino.com); **Michael Di Liberto** as Archie (Currently playing “Ruth” in Off-Broadway’s “Titanique”; Broadway’s “Wicked”; tours of “Wicked,” “Annie,” “Cinderella,” “Strike Up the Band”; regional theater’s “The Producers” - Helen Hayes nomination for Best Actor, “Titanic,” “Something Rotten,” “Spamalot,” “Sweeney Todd,” “Beauty and the Beast”; television’s “The Gilded Age,” “Evil,” @michaeldi_li); **Isabel Keating** as June (Westport Country Playhouse’s “A Sherlock Carol” and Script in Hand playreading of “Agatha Christie’s The Murder of Roger Ackroyd”; Broadway’s “Doubt: A Parable,” “The Boy from Oz” – Tony nomination, Drama Desk and Theatre World awards, “It’s Only a Play,” “Wicked,” “Hairspray,” “Spider-Man,” “Enchanted April”; Off-Broadway’s “A Sherlock Carol”; Emmy Award-winning PBS American Masters’ “Judy Garland: By Myself”; @isabelkeating); **Sarah Manton** as Agatha Christie (Westport Country Playhouse’s “Things We Do for Love,” “Bedroom Farce,” “What the Butler Saw,” “Lettice and Lovage,” and radio theater reading of “A Merry Little Christmas Carol”; Broadway’s “One Man, Two Guvnors”; National Theatre’s “Coast of Utopia,” “South Pacific”; West End’s

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"Dirty Dancing" as Baby; UK tours of "Romeo and Juliet," "The Rivals"; "New Amsterdam" on NBC; "Doctors," "Casualty" on BBC); **Sharone Sayegh** as Charlotte (Westport Country Playhouse's "A Sherlock Carol," Script in Hand playreadings of "As Bees in Honey Drown," "Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd," "Letters to Our Daughters"; Broadway's "Come From Away," "The Band's Visit," "Mamma Mia!"; co-writer of new musical "The Game Boy"; Syracuse University; sharonesayegh.com).

A.J. Shively as William (Broadway's "Paradise Square" - Tony, OCC, Chita Rivera noms., "Bright Star" - Drama Desk nom., "La Cage aux Folles"; Off-Broadway/New York's "A Man of No Importance - Lortel Award, OCC nom., "Philadelphia, Here I Come!" - Lortel nom.; television/film "Julia," "Bull," "Hunters," "Homeland" "Madam Secretary"; University of Michigan, RADA; **Lori Vega** as Nancy (Off-Broadway's Playwrights Horizons, Classical Theater of Harlem, Ensemble Studio Theater; regional theaters include The Guthrie Theater, Trinity Rep, Portland Stage Co., Lake Tahoe and Idaho Shakespeare Festivals; "Pretty Little Liars," "And Just Like That" on HBO; "Bull," "FBI" on CBS; "El Deafo" on Apple TV+; training at LAMDA and Cornell University); **Evan Zes** as M. Le Detective (Westport Country Playhouse's "Around the World in 80 Days" and Script in Hand playreadings of "Rent Control" as writer/performer, "Breaking Legs"; Broadway's "The Kite Runner"; Off-Broadway's Incident at Vichy," "Rent Control," "Arms and the Man," "Days to Come"; film and television's "Only Murders in the Building," "The Street"); and **Megan McDermott** will read stage directions (Westport Country Playhouse's Script in Hand playreading of "Ripcord"; regional theater's "Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson Apt. 2B," "Amadeus," "Learned Ladies," "Comedy of Tenors," "Laughter on the 23rd Floor," "Playboy of the Western World," "Glass Menagerie"; playwrighting includes 2022 Philadelphia Women's Theatre Festival).

Playwright **Heidi Armbruster's** "Mrs. Christie" has been performed at Theatreworks Silicon Valley, Dorset Theatre Festival, Primary Stages (workshop), and Orchard Project (residency). Her other plays include "Dairyland," "Scarecrow," and "Murder Girl." She was commissioned by Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival to adapt "Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd," which will premiere in their 2024 season. Armbruster was a member of the Working Farm at Space on Ryder Farm, Page 73 Interstate Writers, and a founding member and co-curator of Dorset Theatre Festival's Women Artists Writing. As an actress, she appeared at Westport Country Playhouse in "The Dining Room" (2013), a gala honoring playwright A. R. Gurney (2014), and a Script in Hand playreading of "The Mousetrap" (2014). Armbruster has extensive New York and regional theater credits, including "Time Stands Still" on Broadway, and Lincoln Center's production of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Disgraced." Film and TV credits include "Pose," "30 Rock," "House of Cards," "Michael Clayton," "Revolutionary Road," "Michelle on Darren Star's "Younger," Karen on Netflix's "Partner Track," and Noelle on "Manifest."

Director **Mark Shanahan**, Playhouse artistic director and Script in Hand curator, is the writer/director of *The New York Times* Critics' Pick "A Sherlock Carol" (Off-Broadway Alliance nomination, Best New Play 2021), playing three seasons in New York, annually at London's Marylebone Theatre, and for the 2023 and upcoming 2024 holiday season at Westport Country Playhouse. He recently directed his own adaptation of "Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd," in partnership with Agatha Christie Ltd., which premiered at the Tony Award-winning Alley Theatre. He is the author of "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," "See Monsters of the Deep," the Off-Broadway and regional hit comedy "The Dingdong," as well as numerous radio plays as creator of the White Heron Ghost Light series, featuring Christopher Plummer, Judith Ivey, Rhonda Ross, and other notables. Shanahan has directed at stages around the country such as Alley Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Virginia Stage, Arkansas Rep, White Heron, Mile Square Theatre, Hudson Stage, Theatre Squared, Fulton Opera House, Weston Playhouse, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, Florida Rep, Penguin Rep, Merrimack Rep, The Cape Playhouse, and many more. As an actor, Shanahan has appeared on and Off-Broadway ("The 39 Steps," "Tryst," "The Shaugraun," and others) and at many celebrated regional theatres. Shanahan has appeared on the Westport Country Playhouse stage in "Journey's End" (2005), "David Copperfield," directed by Joanne Woodward and Annie Keefe, (2005), "Sedition" (2007), "Tryst" (2008), and "Around the World in 80 Days" (2009), and numerous Script In Hand readings. Shanahan is also the creator and curator of Westport Country Playhouse Radio Theater, in partnership with WSHU Public Radio, and served as writer/director of the Playhouse radio adaptation of "A Merry Little Christmas Carol," and as director of scripts commissioned for the series. mark-shanahan.net.

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Stage manager is **Megan Smith** who has stage managed many Westport Country Playhouse productions and Script in Hand and New Works playreadings since 2005. Her NY credits include The Roundabout Theatre, Second Stage, Vineyard Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Manhattan Theatre Club, MCC Theater, and Signature Theatre.

Tickets are \$30. Running time is two hours, with one intermission.

For full details on the Script in Hand playreading of "Mrs. Christie," visit:
<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/script-in-hand-mrs-christie/>

The Script in Hand Playreading Series is supported by Joyce Hergenhan and the White Barn Program of the Lucille Lortel Foundation. 2024 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.

More Script in Hand playreadings are scheduled on Mondays at 7 p.m. on June 10, September 9, October 7, and December 2; titles to be announced. Script in Hand playreadings offer intimate storytelling as professional actors bring the words to life without sets 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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