

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Script in Hand Playreading of Political Satire, “The Outsider,” on Monday, June 10

Westport Country Playhouse will present a Script in Hand playreading of “The Outsider,” a timely comedy that skewers modern American politics and celebrates democracy, written by Connecticut-native Paul Slade Smith and directed by Mark Shanahan, Playhouse artistic director and Script in Hand series curator, on Monday, June 10, at 7 p.m.

“In anticipation of next season's full production of Paul Slade Smith's ‘Theatre People,’ we are delighted to present another one of Paul's masterful comedies, ‘The Outsider,’ as our next Script in Hand reading,” said Shanahan. “Paul's wickedly insightful play skewers the political landscape even as it reinforces a positive, heartfelt message sure to get everyone's vote. We've assembled a truly incredible cast of accomplished actors to kick off summer at the Playhouse with waves of laughter.”

“The Outsider” opens as a state governor is forced to resign due to a scandal. Ned Newley, the lieutenant governor, must step up. But although Ned has competently done the previous governor's work behind the scenes for years, the humble public servant is reluctant to be in charge. Not the typical politician, Ned is terrified of public speaking, his poll numbers are impressively bad, and he seems destined to fail. But if a special election is called, political consultant Arthur Vance sees things differently: Ned might be the worst candidate to ever run for office. Unless the public is looking for... the worst candidate to ever run for office. Will Ned be able to transition to head of state from being “The Outsider”?

Cast members include **Erin Noel Grennan** as Louise Peakes (Westport Country Playhouse Script in Hand playreading “Theatre People”; regional credits include Cincinnati Playhouse's “Reckless,” “Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help”; Laguna Playhouse's “The Angel Next Door”; Paper Mill Playhouse's “The Outsider”; eight seasons with Peninsula Players; Ireland's Gaiety Theatre; erinnoelgrennan.com); **Adam Heller** as Ned Newley (Broadway's “Some Like it Hot,” “It Shoulda Been You,” “Elf,” “Caroline, or Change,” “Victor/Victoria,” “Les Misérables”; Off-Broadway's “Merrily We Roll Along,” and others; Goodspeed's “Fiddler on the Roof” - Connecticut Critics Circle Award/Best Actor), “Rags”; other regional theatre includes “Chicago,” “1776,” “Gypsy,” “Falsettos,” “The Chosen”; NYU/Tisch); **John Rapson** as Dave Riley (Westport Country Playhouse's Script in Hand playreadings “Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd” and “Theatre People”; Broadway's 2023 revival of “Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street” as Beadle Bamford; first national tour of “A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder”; University of Michigan); **Rhonda Ross** as Paige Caldwell (former intern at Westport Country Playhouse; Playhouse Radio Theater's “Special Delivery”; singer/songwriter and Emmy-nominated actress; daytime television's “Another World” as Toni Burrell; Showtime's “Bessie Coleman: A Dream to Fly” as Bessie; NBC's “The Temptations”; film “Hook'd Up”; national tour of “The Vagina Monologues”).

Christopher Sieber as Arthur Vance (Broadway's “Shrek” – Tony, Drama Desk, Drama League, Outer Critics nominations, “Monty Python's Spamalot” – Tony nomination, “Company,” “The Prom,” “Matilda,” “Pippin,” “La Cage aux Folles,” “Chicago,” “Thoroughly Modern Millie,” “Into the Woods,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Triumph of Love”; daytime tv's “Guiding Light,” “All My Children,” “Another World”); **Alec**

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Stephens III as A.C. Petersen (Credits include 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle Rep, National Black Theatre, Virginia Repertory Theatre; "I Am the Third," Stephens' soul band, has played at iconic New York venues including The Bitter End; recently completed a playwriting residency; currently developing a solo play titled "The M.A.N."); **Sarah Stiles** as Rachel Parsons (Two-time Tony nominee for "Tootsie" as Sandy and "Hand to God" as Jessica; Broadway's "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever," "Avenue Q," "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee"; Paramount's "Transformers: Rise of the Beast"; Netflix's "The Crew"; Showtime's "Billions" as Bonnie; recording of Pasek and Paul's "James and the Giant Peach"); **Molly Cerne** reading stage directions (Regional credits include Gabriella in "Boeing Boeing," Jennifer Quinn in the debut stage adaptation of Elin Hilderbrand's "Winter Street," "Annie Get Your Gun," "Irving Berlin's White Christmas," "She Loves Me"; Broadway Tours of "Oklahoma!"; multiple national commercials and television; Oklahoma City University, degree in Dance Performance).

Stage manager is **Noam Lautman** (Broadway's "Shucked," "Moulin Rouge!," "Tootsie," "The Cher Show"; Off-Broadway's "The Lucky Star" (59E59), "This Space Between Us" (Keen Company); The Kennedy Center's "Tick, Tick... BOOM!," "The Music Man"; UNCSA alumnus).

Playwright **Paul Slade Smith** is an actor and playwright living in Brooklyn with his wife, actress Erin Noel Grennan. Smith's play, "Theatre People" was a Westport Country Playhouse Script in Hand playreading last November and will be a full production at the Playhouse in 2025. "Unnecessary Farce" is the winner of nine regional theatre awards, and has had over 325 productions throughout the United States, and in Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Switzerland, Iceland, Singapore, and Japan. His political comedy, "The Outsider," had a record-making 34 productions in 2022. Smith received a 2019 Helpmann Award nomination for Best Actor in a Musical for his performance as Willy Wonka in the Australian premiere of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." Stateside, his acting credits include the original Broadway casts of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "Finding Neverland," and the 2018 Lincoln Center revival of "My Fair Lady"; U.S. national tours of "My Fair Lady" (Jaime), "Wicked" (Doctor Dillamond), and "The Phantom of the Opera"; and productions at American Repertory Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, Geva Theatre Center, Asolo Repertory, and Theatre Under the Stars in Houston. His TV credits include NBC's "The Blacklist," and HBO's "The Other Two" and "The Gilded Age."

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 holiday season, and recently announced for December 2024, 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.

Tickets are \$30. Running time is two hours with one intermission. Appropriate for ages 13 and up.

For full details on the Script in Hand playreading of "The Outsider," visit:

<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/script-in-hand-the-outsider/>

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More Script in Hand playreadings are scheduled on Mondays at 7 p.m. on 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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