

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Presents Pop Singer Sophie B. Hawkins with Selections from Her New Musical “Birds of New York” on June 25

Westport Country Playhouse presents Grammy Award nominee, famed pop singer, and Westport, Connecticut resident Sophie B. Hawkins with a selection of songs and scenes from her new musical, “Birds of New York,” on Tuesday, June 25 at 7 p.m., as part of the Barnstormer Series in the Lucille Lortel White Barn Center, next to the Playhouse. Tickets are \$20; general admission; seating unreserved.

Hawkins will offer an intimate evening alongside an accomplished cast of Broadway performers as she shares a sneak peek into “Birds of New York,” currently in development. Hawkins will play Billie, a songwriter who returns home after 20 years of estrangement to heal herself and unite her family.

“Sophie B. Hawkins is known to her many fans as a beloved pop star,” said Mark Shanahan, Westport Country Playhouse artistic director. “With ‘Birds of New York,’ Sophie now dons the hat of playwright and lyricist as she puts her talents to writing a piece of musical theatre. Come join us for an inside look - and a rare opportunity - as this great recording artist shares insights not only about her new musical project, but her creative process, as well.”

Through the Barnstorm event, Hawkins said that she wants to learn “how the subject matter affects the audience on a personal level, if it hits home for some people, if the songs move them.”

Hawkins had to cut almost all the dialogue in order to make time for all the songs. “That’s a good pressure to edit,” she said. “I want to hear how the songs tell the story without the descriptive and more detailed story-telling device of speaking. There’s so much one takes for granted when working on something solo for so long. It will be like hearing the musical on another planet.”

Grammy Award-nominated **Sophie B. Hawkins** burst onto the international music scene with her 1992 platinum-selling debut album “Tongues and Tails,” which included the indelible hit song, “Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover.” The last three decades have brought multiple awards, sold-out concerts, memorable appearances on film and television, collaborations with the best-known names in the business, an acclaimed documentary feature, a critically lauded performance as Janis Joplin in the nationally touring play “Room 105,” and seven additional albums including “Whaler,” which featured the record-breaking, longest-running single in Billboard Adult Contemporary chart history, “As I Lay Me Down.” Released in 2023, her latest album “Free Myself,” embodies a bold, new chapter of artistic perseverance and independence, while featuring some of her most soul-stirring songs about love, resilience, and self-empowerment. Hawkins worked with Thomas Meehan in 2012 on her very first musical but “Birds of New York” is her first solo theatrical project. She is also in the process of recording her ninth album.

Much more than a singer, Hawkins writes all of her own music, is a multi-instrumentalist, and has been fully involved in every aspect of the production of her records. An enduring artist with a fierce

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commitment to her creative integrity, she is also a passionate activist, who is devoted to LGBTQ+ advocacy, animal rights, and environmental causes, as well as the support and promotion of her fellow female musicians.

In addition to Hawkins, the cast includes **Liz Larsen** (Broadway's "The Most Happy Fella - Tony Award nomination, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, LA Drama-Logue awards, "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical," "Hairspray," "Damn Yankees," "The Rocky Horror Show, "A Little Night Music"; Off-Broadway and tours of "Sunday in the Park with George" - Helen Hayes Award, "Baby" (Helen Hayes nomination); **Sarah Stiles** (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"); and other performers to be announced.

Music director is **Lon Hoyt** (music director/supervisor for "Hairspray" on Broadway, two National Tours, Toronto, Las Vegas, London, Johannesburg, and Cologne companies, the 2006 film "Hairspray," and the NBC "Hairspray Live" production; music director/vocal arranger for Broadway's "On Your Feet"; music supervisor for "Lennon"; music director and conductor on many other Broadway and Off-Broadway shows).

Tickets are \$20; general admission; seating unreserved. Snacks and beverages will be available for purchase by credit card or cash inside the Lucille Lortel White Barn Center before the start of the show. Appropriate for ages 14 and up. Running time is approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

For full details, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/sophie-b-hawkins-birds-of-new-york/>

The new Barmstormer series features small events in the Lucille Lortel Barn, located adjacent to the Playhouse. From music to playreadings, Barmstormer provides an opportunity for artists, many of whom are from our local community, to exercise their creative muscle in a cozy and intimate setting.

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.

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](https://www.instagram.com/wcplayhouse)), and YouTube (WestportPlayhouse). Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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