

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Opens 2024-25 Season with “The 39 Steps,” Based on Hitchcock Film, from Oct. 22 – Nov. 9

Westport Country Playhouse will open its 2024-25 Season with “The 39 Steps,” a fast-paced frenzy of espionage and murderous mayhem based on Alfred Hitchcock’s 1935 classic film, with a dash of Monty Python’s zany humor, running from October 22 through November 9. This two-time Tony and Drama Desk Award-winning, laughter-filled treat is directed by Mark Shanahan, Playhouse artistic director.

“What a joy to bring this wonderful comedy to the Playhouse stage — the perfect show to launch our new season!” said Shanahan. “We’ll fill the theatre with laughter!”

“The 39 Steps” is about an international spy ring trying to steal British military secrets in the 1930s. Unflappable hero Richard Hannay goes on the run from dangerous enemy agents and femme fatales in a surprising and hilarious adventure that will keep the audience on the edge of their seats. The story is told through highly inventive stagecraft – a daring police chase over tops of high-speed trains, a frightening jump from a bridge, a thrilling plane pursuit in the Scottish highlands. Four actors play over 100 characters with rapid changes of costumes, wigs, mustaches, and accents.

The cast includes **Joe Delafield** as Richard Hannay (Westport Country Playhouse: “A Sherlock Carol,” “The School for Husbands,” Radio Theater’s “A Merry Little Christmas Carol,” Script in Hand playreadings of “Christmas at Pemberley,” “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd”; Broadway: “Tartuffe”; Off-Broadway: “Fashions for Men,” “Outward Bound,” “A Sherlock Carol”; Television: “The Sopranos”; MFA from NYU’s Graduate Acting Program); **Patrick Halley** as Clown 1, Professor Jordan (Westport Country Playhouse: Script in Hand playreadings of “Lombardi,” “Miracle on South Division Street,” “A Merry Little Christmas Carol”; New York: “The Misanthrope,” “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”; regional theatre: Alliance Theatre, Denver Center Theatre Company, People’s Light, four seasons with Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival; Bucknell graduate; www.patrickhalley.com); **Sharone Sayegh** as Annabella, Pamela, Margaret (Westport Country Playhouse: “A Sherlock Carol,” Script in Hand playreadings of “Mrs. Christie,” “As Bees in Honey Drown,” “Agatha Christie’s The Murder of Roger Ackroyd,” “Letters to Our Daughters”; Broadway: “Come From Away,” “The Band’s Visit,” “Mamma Mia!”; co-writer of new musical “The Game Boy”; Syracuse University; sharonesayegh.com); and **Evan Zes** as Clown 2, Mr. Memory (Westport Country Playhouse: “Around the World in 80 Days,” Script in Hand playreadings of “Mrs. Christie,” “Breaking Legs,” “Rent Control” as writer/performer; Broadway: “The Kite Runner”; Off-Broadway: “Incident at Vichy,” “Rent Control,” “Arms and the Man,” “Days to Come”; Television: “Only Murders in the Building”; Film: “The Street”).

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

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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.

Creative team includes **James J. Fenton**, scenic designer, resident of Ridgefield, CT; **Jeni Schaefer**, costume designer; **J. Dominic Chacon**, lighting designer; **Ryan Rummery**, sound designer; **Steve Pacek**, movement coordinator; and **Megan Smith**, production stage manager.

The family friendly work is produced by arrangement with **Firey Angel Limited**, adapted by **Patrick Barlow** from the novel by **John Buchan**, from the movie by **Alfred Hitchcock**, licensed by **ITV Global Entertainment Limited**, and based on a concept by **Simon Corble** and **Nobby Dimon**. Presented by arrangement with **Concord Theatricals** on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com.

Running time is approximately two hours, with one intermission. Appropriate for ages 10 and up. Single tickets for “The 39 Steps” start at \$35 and are subject to change based upon availability. Buy early for best prices. For information on special offers, including discounts for students, senior citizens, educators, military and first responders, Indigenous peoples, professional playwrights, and groups, as well as options for pay-what-you-will and library passes, visit www.westportplayhouse.org/visit/box-office/.

Performance schedule is Tuesday at 7 p.m., Wednesday at 2 and 7 p.m., Thursday at 7 p.m., Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 and 8 p.m., and Sunday at 3 p.m. (No Wed. or Sat. matinees during preview week). Special series include Taste of Tuesdays (October 22), Together at the Table (October 23), Pride Night (October 24), Opening Night (October 26), Sunday Symposium with director Mark Shanahan (October 27), Open Captions (November 3), Backstage Pass (November 6), and Thursday TalkBack (November 7).

Event Sponsors are Athena and Daniel Adamson. Corporate Production Partner is Cohen & Wolf, P.C. Opening Night Post-Show Reception Sponsor is RDM Financial Group at Hightower. 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.

For full details, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/the-39-steps/>

Westport Country Playhouse’s 94th season is named “The Season of Laughter,” with a slate of comedies, ranging from family friendly plays to old-fashioned romps, each offering biting and topical humor. Upcoming productions include “Native Gardens,” an outrageous comedy about well-intentioned neighbors who become feuding enemies, February 18 through March 8; and “Theatre People,” a throwback to the classic screwball comedies of yesteryear, March 25 through April 12. Two shorter-run productions round out the season: “A Sherlock Carol,” returning for its second year by popular demand, will offer a family friendly holiday show that is part mystery, part ghost-story, December 17 through 22; and “Broadway Scores at the Playhouse,” a concert of favorite Broadway show tunes, January 23 through 26. For 2024-25 season details, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/2024-2025-season/>

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

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