

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

## NEWS RELEASE

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## Westport Country Playhouse Names Volunteers to Theatre Council

Westport Country Playhouse has named new members to its Theatre Council, an advocacy group supporting the artistic and community-building mission of the historic theatre, now in its 93<sup>rd</sup> year.

The Theatre Council of Westport Country Playhouse is a group of volunteer leaders from Fairfield County and beyond. Members serve as theatre ambassadors through the promotion of and advocacy for the Playhouse's artistic integrity, expansion of new patronage, and cultivation of a diverse and inclusive environment across its audiences and programming. The Council was initially formed in 2020, but became inactive during the global pandemic. It recently has been revived, under the guidance of Ben Frimmer, Playhouse trustee.

"I am so excited to bring the Theatre Council back to the Playhouse," said Frimmer. "The Theatre Council is an incredible 'friendraising' group that raises awareness of who we are and what we do. Our tremendous team of volunteers spend their time planning exciting, new events for our members and friends and also increase our audiences by bringing new people into our theatre community."

Frimmer is a producer, director, and theatre arts educator with over 60 productions and 30 years of experience. He is the director of Coleytown Company and holds a BFA in acting from Ithaca College and an MA in educational theatre from NYU. He serves as deputy chief of Weston EMS and is a Connecticut State EMS instructor.

Theatre Council members are educators, artists, community organizers, and other individuals who believe theatre, and the Playhouse specifically, to be a vital cultural institution in Connecticut and the performing arts at large. Participants are selected by application, adjudicated by members of the Playhouse board of trustees.

Westport Country Playhouse Theatre Council members are:

**Ari Benmosche** is the owner of Westport-based JACA Management and serves as president of JACA Entertainment Corp., overseeing the operation of a historic, single-screen movie and vaudeville theatre in Suffern, NY. Benmosche is currently serving as an elected official on the Representative Town Meeting for District 8 in Westport.

**Carin Freidag** holds a BA in theatre. Although she went on to a career in the corporate world, she has been involved voluntarily in local theatre as a performer and serving on the board of the Wilton Playshop for many years. Freidag was an original member of a previous iteration of the Westport Country Playhouse Theatre Council in 2020.

**Ivy Kramer-Gosseen** is a senior account executive at Winston Staffing in NYC. She holds a BA in both psychology and sociology from the University of Wisconsin and an MSW from NYU. She is currently on the executive board of AWARE-CT and the Federation of Greater Fairfield County. She was formerly president of Hadassah of Westport.

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**Jeff Gurner** has made a career in the arts for three decades, working as an actor, director, producer, musician, writer, and educator. He has performed on and off Broadway, regionally, on national and international tours, and in television series, and is an award-winning audiobook narrator. His theatre production company is Tequila Talking Theatrical.

**Kerri Joller** is an HR leader and executive coach with over 15 years of experience working with high-growth organizations in NYC. She graduated from The University of Delaware with a BA in business marketing and is a Certified Professional CoActive Coach (CPOCC). As a youngster, she volunteered at the Playhouse as an usher with her grandmother.

**Diana Mashia** has spent her career at the intersection of finance, strategy, research, and social impact. She manages operations and marketing for Mastercard Community Pass. She holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a B.A. from Barnard College in art history and economics.

**Carolina Mata** has led communication and stakeholder experience functions at organizations including IBM, Xerox, Pitney Bowes, Whirlpool, and Activision Blizzard, building campaigns and messages that resonate, engage, and inspire. She holds a BA degree in journalism from the University of New Hampshire and an MBA from the University of Notre Dame.

**Rachel Rosado Murray** is an entertainment attorney and performer. She received a BFA in acting from the University of Connecticut, where she was a three-time recipient of the UConn Fine Arts Talent Scholarship. She earned a J.D., cum laude, from New York Law School. Her extensive on-stage experience includes the outdoor symphonic drama, "The Lost Colony."

**Rabbi Zachary A. Plesent** serves as the associate rabbi at Temple Israel in Westport, and is an alumnus of Indiana University. Theatre has long been a love of his, and his rabbinic studies in New York allowed him to be a frequent theatregoer during his time at seminary.

**Sara Robbin** is a graduate of Cornell University and Emory Law School. After practicing law for many years at both a large NYC law firm and in-house at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, she found her true passion as a legal writing professor at Fordham Law School. She now has her own company assisting students with college and graduate school admittance essays.

**Elizabeth Salem** graduated from Vanderbilt University with a BA in music. She performed professionally on the New York stage, television, and in independent films, and co-founded a non-profit theater company. She owns Salem Productions, a production and investment company primarily focused on developing original work in NYC and London.

**Meredith Walker** is a seasoned theatre educator with over 15 years of experience in the field. She holds a BA in theatre studies from the University of Connecticut and an MA in theatre education from Emerson College. Currently, she serves as the director of admissions for the Norwalk Conservatory of the Arts, a new two-year college conservatory program.

**Claire Wilkes** began her career in non-profit theatre administration with the Women's Project, now the WP Theatre. As an actor, she appeared in multiple productions with The Westside Repertory and Third Eye Repertory. She is a proud alumna of Barnard College, and TRU's Producer Development and Mentorship Program.

Westport Country Playhouse 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.

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A complete schedule of Playhouse events is available at [westportplayhouse.org](http://westportplayhouse.org). All play titles, artists, dates, and times are subject to change.

For Westport Country Playhouse information and tickets, visit [westportplayhouse.org](http://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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