

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Stages Romantic Comedy “Theatre People” Written by Connecticut Native Paul Slade Smith

Mark Shanahan directs fast-paced, funny, and fresh adaptation of a classic.

Westport Country Playhouse will stage the romantic comedy, “Theatre People,” from March 25 through April 12. Filled with romance, misunderstandings, and surprises, the plot focuses on a married playwright couple who are trying to concoct a surefire Broadway hit but create as much drama among themselves as on paper. Written by West Hartford native Paul Slade Smith, the play is an adaptation of Ferenc Molnár’s, “Play at the Castle.” Director is Mark Shanahan, Westport Country Playhouse artistic director.

“They sure don’t make them like ‘Theatre People’ anymore!,” said Shanahan. “And yet, Paul Slade Smith has managed to craft a wonderfully funny, new play that harkens back to the kind of romantic comedies Playhouse audiences have loved for generations. At the same time, he’s infused this fast-paced, laugh-filled romp with a sharp, modern energy that makes it feel entirely fresh. At its heart, this play is a love letter to all those who - just like you - call themselves ‘theatre people!’”

The witty comedy is set in 1948 in a Newport mansion populated with characters in love with theater: Charlotte and Arthur Sanders, a married playwright couple; Margot Bell, a celebrated ingénue; Victor Pratt, a narcissistic Broadway baritone; and Oliver Adams, a young, insecure novelist; as well as Olga, an unabashedly unhelpful housekeeper.

The cast includes **Erin Noel Grennan** as Olga (Westport Country Playhouse: Script in Hand playreadings of “Theatre People” and “The Outsider”; Regional: “Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help,” “Reckless” at Cincinnati Playhouse; “A Flea in Her Ear,” “The Man Who Came to Dinner” at Drury Lane; “Noises Off” at Totem Playhouse; eight seasons with Peninsula Players, two seasons with Gaiety Theatre, Ireland. TV: “The Other Two,” “Dr. Death,” “Bull”; umpteen commercials; the upcoming film, “Thoughts and Prayers”; erinnoelgrennan.com); **Isabel Keating** as Charlotte Sanders (Westport Country Playhouse: “A Sherlock Carol,” Script in Hand playreadings of “Mrs. Christie,” “Agatha Christie’s The Murder of Roger Ackroyd”; Broadway: Upcoming “Queen of Versailles,” “Doubt: A Parable,” “The Boy from Oz” – Tony, Drama League, Outer Critics nominations, Drama Desk and Theatre World awards; Regional: World Premiere “Queen of Versailles”; Television: Emmy Award-winning PBS American Masters “Judy Garland: By Myself”; @isabelkeating).

Michael McCormick as Arthur Sanders (Westport Country Playhouse: “Room Service,” “She Loves Me”; Broadway: 15 shows including “Wicked,” “1776,” “Kiss Me, Kate,” “Curtains,” “Chaplin”; National Tours: “The Producers,” “Les Misérables”; Off-Broadway: “Fly By Night,” “A Man Of No Importance” at Lincoln Center Theater; TV: “Blue Bloods,” “Brain Dead,” “Elementary,” “House Of Cards”; 18 Broadway and Off-Broadway cast albums; graduate of Northwestern University); **Mia Pinero** as Margot Bell (Broadway: “Sweeney Todd” as Johanna/Beggar Woman, “West Side Story” as Maria; Off-Broadway: “Welcome to the Big Dipper”; Regional: “Lend Me a Soprano” at Alley Theatre, World Premiere; “Songs for a New World” at Paper Mill Playhouse, “My Fair Lady” at PlayMakers Rep, “West Side Story” at Guthrie Theatre, “In The Heights” at

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Geva Theatre Center, "Oklahoma!" at Weston Playhouse; Television: "Law & Order: SVU"; Concerts: "Showboat," "Sweeney Todd"; IG: @miapinero).

Michael McCorry Rose as Victor Pratt (Broadway/Tours: "Wicked," "Anastasia," "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder," next season's "The Queen of Versailles"; Film: Universal Picture's "Wicked," "Disenchanted" for Disney+, "Snapshots"; Regional: Roles at Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Alliance Theatre, Yale Rep, Paper Mill Playhouse, Capital Rep, and Project Shaw in New York City; michaelrose.me); and **Rodolfo Soto** as Oliver Adams (Westport Country Playhouse: "In the Heights" as Usnavi, Barnstormer "An Evening to Celebrate Love," three Script In Hand playreadings, including "Theatre People"; Other: "Ring of Fire" at North Carolina Theatre, "In the Heights" at Broadway at Music Circus as Usnavi, TheaterWorks USA's tour of "The Lightning Thief" as Grover; BFA in Acting, BA in Writing for the Stage, Marymount Manhattan College).

Playwright **Paul Slade Smith** is an actor and playwright living in Brooklyn with his wife, actress Erin Noel Grennan, who is a member of the "Theatre People" cast. Smith's play, "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, and was presented at Westport Country Playhouse last year as a Script in Hand playreading. 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** is Playhouse artistic director and Script in Hand curator. In 2024, he directed "The 39 Steps," the Playhouse's inaugural production for the 2024-25 season, as well as the Playhouse's holiday offering, "A Sherlock Carol." He also 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.

Creative team includes **James Fenton**, set designer; **Annie Le**, costume designer; **Alyssandra Docherty**, lighting designer; **Jill Du Boff**, sound designer; and **Rebecca C. Monroe**, stage manager.

"Theatre People" running time is approximately two hours, including one 15-minute intermission. The play is appropriate for age 14 and up; some suggestive content. Single tickets start at \$40 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/.

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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 (Mar. 25), Together at the Table (Mar. 26), Pride Night (Mar. 27), Opening Night (Mar. 29), Sunday Symposium (Mar. 30), Open Captions (Apr. 6), Backstage Pass (Apr. 9), and Thursday TalkBack (Apr. 10).

“Theatre People” Production Supporter is Cherie Flom Quain. Corporate Supporter is The Shoreline Wealth Management Group at Morgan Stanley. 2025 Opening Night Post-Show Reception Sponsor is RDM Financial Group at Hightower. 2025 Together at the Table Sponsors are Paige and Jodi Couture, with generous support from Westport Rotary. 2025 Programming and Season Sponsor is Barbara Streicker. 2025 Media sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio.

For full details on “Theatre People,” visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/theatre-people/>

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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