



An American Theatre: The Story of Westport Country Playhouse, 1931-2005

Richard Somerset-Ward

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For 75 years, Westport Country Playhouse has faithfully reflected the story of American theatre. Founded by Lawrence and Armina Langner in 1931, it has never been more than a summer stock theatre, yet it has an astonishing pedigree. George Bernard Shaw and Noël Coward gave world premieres there; so did Leonard Gershe and A. R. Gurney in more recent times. Playwrights Eugene O'Neill and S. N. Behrman were closely linked to it, and talents as diverse as Jane Wyatt, Gene Kelly, Stephen Sondheim, and Liza Minnelli performed there early in their careers. The aristocracy of the acting profession and the giants of Hollywood appeared—Ethel Barrymore, Helen Hayes, Paul Robeson, Groucho Marx, Tyrone Power, Olivia de Havilland. And the Playhouse can claim a role in the creation of two of the American theatre's greatest musicals—*Oklahoma!* and *My Fair Lady*.

This fascinating and lavishly illustrated book traces the entire story of Westport Country Playhouse from its beginnings in the midst of the Depression to its 75th-anniversary renovations and rejuvenation. Filled with colorful characters and lively anecdotes, it is a story that will appeal to everyone who has ever been enchanted by the magic of a live theatre performance.

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