Oscar-Winning Actress Mercedes Ruehl Returns to the Stage in ‘Collected Stories’ at LTV Studios

by ANGELA LAGRECA



The Academy Award- and Tony-winning actress talks to Spark Hamptons about finding her way back to acting, personal loss and a role that has reignited her passion for the stage.

Mercedes Ruehl is returning to the stage, and that is a good thing for the world of acting and the East End community.

The Academy Award- and Tony Award-winning actress (“The Fisher King,” “Married to the Mob,” “Lost in Yonkers,” “Gia,” “Frasier”) and longtime East Hampton resident is firing

on all four burners these days as she prepares to star in a one-night-only staged reading of “Collected Stories” at LTV Studios in Wainscott on Saturday, Nov. 28.

Donald Margulies‘ Pulitzer Prize-finalist play explores the complex relationship between Ruth Steiner (Ruehl), an accomplished author and teacher, and Lisa Morrison (Xanthe Acquah Storey), an ambitious writing student she reluctantly mentors. What begins as a teacher-student relationship evolves into a complicated contest involving friendship, trust, betrayal and the thorny question of who owns a story — and who has the right to tell it.

“This is a powerful role and a powerful story,” Ruehl told Spark Hamptons in a telephone interview. “It’s a strong, complex role with fumes of unexpected vulnerability — and what rises up between these two women is a complex dish of love that brings forth the love of friends, the love of a mother-daughter, the love of a mentor and student.”



Mercedes Ruehl on Broadway in “Torch Song Trilogy” 2018, signing autographs. Photo by Angela LaGreca

Ruehl’s enthusiasm and passion for the play are unmistakable. Her deep involvement in the nuts and bolts of the production presents an added challenge that she seems to be embracing wholeheartedly — from finding the right music to accompany certain scenes

and signing off on promotional materials to making sure the director and her co-star have housing and are well fed.

“I’ve got this show two days after Thanksgiving when I’m having eight people for dinner and trying to find housing for the cast,” Ruehl said with a laugh. “The success of any project depends on all decisions big and small made correctly.”

She knows what she’s doing. And something is clearly propelling her.

“I feel like I’m up periscoping again,” she said, with an almost gleeful fervor in her voice. “Suddenly I want to work again … I love this role and I really want to give it a shot.”



Mercedes Ruehl

Finding Her Way Back

The production has infused new life into Ruehl, who readily acknowledges she hasn't acted much in recent years, attributing her absence, in part, to "aging out of roles."

"There just aren't that many roles for women in their 70s," said Ruehl, 79.

And then there have been the profound losses: the death of her "beloved friend" and fellow actor Harris Yulin in June 2025; the passing of close East End friend Jane Stuart after a short illness in August 2025; and the sudden loss of her longtime partner, Springs artist David Geiser, in 2020.

"With the death of Dave, my life changed after that," Ruehl said. "I became more introspective, more of a hermit out here in the Hamptons."

A Reunion, a New Generation

She describes the opportunity to perform "Collected Stories" as "a funny kind of kismet" that reunited her with Josh Gladstone, executive director of LTV, with whom she worked many times at the John Drew Theater at Guild Hall. The two also collaborated on productions of "The Gin Game" and "Love Letters" with Yulin at the Suffolk Theater and LTV.

"I'm excited about the idea of doing this role and this play and to really get out there and sink my teeth into it … this kind of excitement only comes with fear."

“It’s a good scary,” she added. “What makes it less perilous is that I know Josh well for 30 years from the days at the John Drew. And now he has taken this moribund space at LTV and wonderfully morphed it, and blown new life into it to become a spinning place of its own.”

Gladstone is quick to return the compliment and is thrilled to welcome Ruehl back to the stage.

> “Through the years Mercedes has always impressed me with her brilliant mind, sophisticated choices and her theatrical instincts are without peer. She really has a love of plays, a love of the written word and a love of theater.

“She is truly an artist — and not someone who is an actor as a vanity project. I’m just happy that she loves working with us and I can be of service — we are aligned in her love of the art form. Kate [Mueth, Gladstone’s wife and an actress who has also worked with Ruehl] and I, we are lifers.”



Mercedes Ruehl at a Salon Night at LTV, 2018. Photo by Lisa Tamburini

The production is directed by Andrew Warner, who, like Ruehl's co-star, Xanthe Acquah Storey, studied with the actress at HB Studio in New York City.

Ruehl describes Acquah Storey as "exotically beautiful with a first-class mind and intellect that really distinguishes her." The 22-year-old British actress, who trained under Ruehl, is known for her role as Young Merle in the BAFTA-winning series Mr Loverman. Ruehl was pleased when her former student agreed to join the LTV production.



Xanthe Acquah Storey

“Teaching has been tremendously satisfying to some degree and has hastened that creative energy I’ve poured into acing all of my life,” said Ruehl, whose acting career began at 21.

Over the decades, Ruehl has earned acclaim from critics and peers for her versatility and her ability to portray strong, resilient women while revealing deep emotion and

vulnerability. She can deliver biting, sarcastic comedy one moment and devastate an audience emotionally the next.

Ruehl believes “Collected Stories” “could have legs beyond the one night.” Either way, she considers the experience valuable.



Andrew T Warner, director of “Collected Stories” at LTV on Nov. 28, 2026

Along with running lines and fussing over the particulars of the production, she is juggling a few unknowns, including the fact that her co-star lives in England and is preparing for final exams.

“Everything is delicate right now — so many factors,” Ruehl said. “If it all works together and those finals are well and done and she passes everything … I’m waiting to see if by some wonderful act of the muses we pull something together that is really interesting and evocative and makes people ask questions.”

In other words, it’s about a moral human dilemma.

“Yes,” Ruehl said emphatically. “Connecting humans … if it’s not about that, I don’t know what it’s about.”

IF YOU GO

“Collected Stories” — One-Night-Only Staged Reading

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m.

LTV Studios, 75 Industrial Road, Wainscott, NY 11975.

Tickets: $40 general admission ($43.45 including online fees); $75 VIP café table seating ($79.47 including online fees), which includes a drink ticket. Base ticket prices increase by $5 at the door.

Tickets and information: https://www.ltveh.org/

Written by Donald Margulies, Collected Stories stars Mercedes Ruehl and Xanthe Acquah Storey. Andrew Warner directs, and Gaylin Davey, LTV's studio operations manager, produces. The staged reading is presented by Playwrights' Theatre of East Hampton by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Dramatists Play Service.