

GULFSHORE PLAYHOUSE

Kristen Coury, CEO & Producing Artistic Director

PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO



WITH

BRIT BARNES
SAMANTHA BODDICKER
JILLIAN CINNAMON
JONATHAN CLOAD
LANTZ HEMMERT

ARIANNA SCHIPPER
MICHAEL SHELLEY
ADDISON SMITH
CAMILA TENORIO
ALAN ULM

Scenic Designer
KRISTEN MARTINO

Costume Designer
JENNIFER BRONSTED

Lighting Designer
ELIZABETH KNUDSON

Sound Designer
CORDARIOUS COX

Production Stage Manager
MEREDITH SINGLETON

Director of Production
RAY INKEL

Music Director
LISA FEDERICO

Choreographer
DANN DUNN

COO & Managing Director
JOEL MARKUS

CEO & Producing Artistic Director
KRISTEN COURY

Directed by
STEVEN CALAKOS

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ABOUT THE SHOW

SETTING:

A high school gymnasium, somewhere in America

Now

CHARACTERS:

THE SPELLERS:

Chip Tolentino: The reigning Putnam County Spelling Bee champion

Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre: The youngest Bee competitor, very driven

Leaf Coneybear: A second alternate, he never expected to compete today

Marcy Park: A perfectionist and over-achieving Parochial school student

William Barfée: A competitive and defensive student with few friends

Olive Ostrovsky: A word lover with often-absent parents

THE ADULTS:

Rona Lisa Peretti: Putnam's long-time spelling bee hostess

Vice Principal Douglas Panch: The substitute word pronouncer for the Bee

Mitch Mahoney: The Bee's "Comfort Counselor"

Olive's Mom: at an Ashram in India

Olive's Dad: at work

Dan Dad: Schwartzzy's laid-back father

Carl Dad: Schwartzzy's competitive father

Leaf's Family: Mom, Dad, Marigold, Brook, Pincone, Raisin, Landscape, and Paul

Joel: A long suffering custodian

DEITIES:

Jesus Christ: Invoked by a speller in need

GULFSHORE PLAYHOUSE

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Steven Calakos
Director

Steven Calakos (Director of Education) attended Rowan University and earned his Bachelor of Arts degrees in Elementary Education and Theatre: Child Drama. He is an award-winning teacher and theatre director having taught in Vineland Public Schools in New Jersey for over 11 years. He served as artistic director for several theatre organizations, and co-founded his own theatre production company in 2014. Steven is a recipient of the 2022 Tony Award Honorable Mention for Excellence in Theater Education, as well as, Greek America Foundation Forty Under 40 Award. Steven is also a professional actor, singer, and model with national credits, including being a member of Actors Equity Association, producing and performing in three solo concerts, and appearing in several television advertisements and feature films. www.stevencalakos.com

ABOUT GULFSHORE PLAYHOUSE EDUCATION

Gulfshore Playhouse Education is a vital component of the Playhouse's mission, providing programs aimed at enhancing the lives of children, teens, and students of all ages. Each offering provides real-life skills and learning experiences that are invigorating, nurturing, and readily accessible to every member of our community, thanks to our scholarships and reduced-price programming for our region's most deserving schools.

From in-school residencies and pre-professional theatre training to community partnerships, audience engagement, and student matinees – our goal is to inspire creativity, encourage self-expression, and support the blossoming of self-confidence, collaboration, and a deep appreciation for the arts.

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MEET THE CAST



Addison Smith
as
Mitch Mahoney (U/S
Schwartzzy)



Alan Ulm
as
Leaf Coneysbear



Arianna Schipper
as
Olive Ostrovsky



Brit Barnes
as
Douglas Panch



Camila Tenorio
as
Marcy Park



Jillian Cinnamon
as
Rona Lisa Peretti



Jonathan Cload
as
The Custodian and Jesus (U/S
Panch)



Lantz Hemmert
as
Chip Tolentino



Michael Shelley
as
William Barfée



Samantha Boddicker
as
Logainne
Schwartzandgrubenierre



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KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

• CAPY WANTS YOU! •

(TO JOIN THE 25TH ANNUAL
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE)

Each *Spelling Bee* performance needs four audience volunteers to participate in the Bee. If you are interested, be sure to sign up at the theatre before the show!




THE RULES:

- Don't "act," just behave normally
- Follow the directions of Rona Lisa Peretti and Doug Panch
- Spell each word to the best of your ability
- If you are eliminated, please report back to your seat after grabbing your complimentary juice box from the Comfort Counselor

• GULFSHORE PLAYHOUSE •

PRODUCTION HISTORY



The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee is based on an improvisational play called C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E, which was developed by an NYC-based improv comedy group called The Farm in 2004. After seeing the play, William Finn and Rachel Sheinkin began turning it into a musical, which was workshopped at the Barrington Stage Company. It transferred to Off-Broadway, then finally to Broadway in 2005. It was an immediate success, running for about three years on Broadway, and was nominated for six Tony Awards, winning two of them.

Since its conception, *Spelling Bee* has become very popular with schools and other teenage theatre troupes. The students in the Bee are similar in age to the teen actors and are facing similar struggles, such as self-confidence issues and bullying. The show even addresses more serious issues like child neglect and mental health. The characters and their issues are relatable, and the show itself is catchy, funny, and well-written.

Despite its popularity, *Spelling Bee* is one of several musicals and plays to be challenged or outright cancelled by school districts across the country. Most recently, a school district in Ohio made the decision to cancel their upcoming high school production of the show, citing issues with show's "vulgarity". The central complaints related to the characters' experiences with sexuality and their use of coarse language, as well as the appearance of Jesus Christ in the show. One of the characters, Scwartzky, has two dads, which was also subject to criticism.

Ultimately, the school board's decision sparked national outrage. Members of the original cast of *Spelling Bee*, namely Jesse Tyler Ferguson, took to social media to support the students. Later, the show's creators met with the school board to make changes to the script based on their specific complaints, which led to the school board rescinding their decision and the students being able to move forward with their performance.

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THEMES IN SPELLING BEE

costume renderings
by
Jennifer
Bronsted

NEGLECTFUL AND ABSENT PARENTS

In *Spelling Bee*, the character Olive Ostrovsky is dealing with parents who are largely absent from her life. Her father works and her mother is away in India. Because of this, Olive more or less has to take care of herself. Neglect is a form of child abuse that can have serious consequences that last through adulthood.

Children who have been neglected, whether physically or emotionally, can face a lifetime of negative side effects, such as depression, PTSD, and difficulty trusting others. If you suspect that a child is being neglected, call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 800-422-4453 for help accessing local resources.



PUBERTY

During puberty, a child's body grows and changes faster than any other point in their life except infancy. Puberty typically starts between the ages of 8 and 15.

In boys, a huge surge in the hormone testosterone causes most of the changes in their bodies. These changes are not only physical, but mental and emotional as well.

One of the spellers in the bee, Chip Tolentino, discovers new-found feelings that ultimately distracts him from the competition. For more information on what to expect during puberty and how to help young people during this time, visit kidshealth.org.

YOUTH ACTIVISM

In 1969, the Supreme Court ruled that students have a right to protest within their schools, protecting students' First Amendment rights to free speech.

Since then, the amount of student protests and demonstrations has grown. Students across the country like Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre are becoming more politically and socially aware and more eager to stand up for what they believe in. Gun violence in schools, the lack of inclusivity in core class subjects, and the treatment of minorities in schools have all led to student activism. For more information on students' rights, visit the [ACLU's website](http://aclu.org).



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THEMES IN SPELLING BEE

SELF-ESTEEM

Leaf Coneybear is a speller that marches to the beat of his own drum, despite the ways that his family may try to dim his light. Coneybear expresses himself through fashion, as Rona Lisa Peretti points out that he makes his own clothes. Over the course of the Spelling Bee, audiences watch as Coneybear learns to love all of his abilities, a crucial step that young people face in the journey of building their self-esteem. For more about fostering a healthy journey of building self-esteem, visit [Understood's website](#).



BURNOUT

Burnout is a state of mental, physical, or emotional exhaustion. Burnout in children happens when kids are faced with ongoing stress or frustration with no chance to relax and recharge. Marcy Park is one of many gifted students that experiences burnout as a result of juggling too many roles, having little control, and committing to perfectionism.

The [Davidson Institute](#) offers signs to look for concerning burnout in gifted students, as well as ways to overcome burnout.



BULLYING

As a young person, William Barfée was heavily bullied by his peers. As a result, he became defensive and unkind towards others, making him a bit of a bully himself. Bullying has been proven to have life-long effects on students that carry in to adulthood. As schools tried different approaches to prevent bullying, the importance of being an *active bystander*, someone who speaks up when they see bullying, became the most effective form of bullying prevention. For more information on helping your young person deal with bullying, [check out this report published by Harvard Medical School](#).



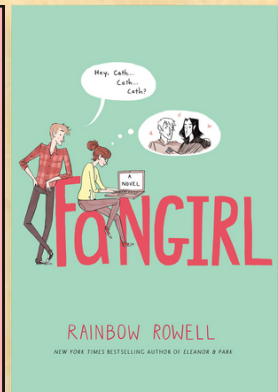
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BOOK CLUB (FURTHER READING)



Mosquitoland by David Arnold: After the sudden collapse of her family, Mim Malone is dragged from her home in northern Ohio to Mississippi, where she lives with her dad and new stepmom. Before the dust has a chance to settle, she learns her mother is sick back in Cleveland. So she ditches her new life and hops aboard a northbound Greyhound bus to her real home and her real mother, meeting a quirky cast of fellow travelers along the way. But when her thousand-mile journey takes a few turns she could never see coming, Mim must confront her own demons, redefining her notions of love, loyalty, and what it means to be sane.

Fangirl by Rainbow Rowell: Socially-anxious Cath and her outgoing twin sister Wren are both starting college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. While her sister easily makes friends and goes to parties, Cath struggles to make friends and adjust to her new life and instead spends all of her time writing fan fiction of her favorite book series. This book follows the sisters as they fight, make friends, and adjust to their new lives.



The Sunbearer Trials by Aiden Thomas: In this YA novel, the Sun's power must be replenished every 10 years. Ten teens are selected as the most worthy to compete in the Sunbearer Trials to see who will carry the Sun's light to all the temples. The loser of the competition is sacrificed to fuel the Sun's power. This story follows a teen named Teo as he fights for his life through a series of trials.



The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids by Alexandra Robbins: This novel is a work of nonfiction that follows the struggles of five American high school students as they struggle to balance all of their classes. It looks at perfectionism, and the dangers it can create for young people.



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Film Club

(Further Viewing)



Eighth Grade (Rated R)

Kayla (Elsie Fisher), an anxious girl navigating the final days of her eighth grade year, turns to YouTube to express herself, where she makes advice videos in which she pretends to have it all together. *Eighth Grade* encapsulates the awkwardness, angst, self-loathing and reinvention that a teenage girl goes through on the cusp of high school.

Though the film earned an R rating, writer/director Bo Burnham and critics alike argue that while the film does feature occasional profanity, it mirrors “the way kids this age truly talk,” and its lessons about social media and the internet could be very helpful for a middle schooler to see. Burnham bought out screenings in every state to allow students to see it without ratings enforced.



Little Miss Sunshine (Rated R)

A dysfunctional family travels from New Mexico to California in their yellow Volkswagen Van to fulfill their youngest child's dream of entering a beauty pageant. As they travel and their van falls apart around them, the family learns how to support each other, through loss, grief, and their own personal struggles.

Little Miss Sunshine is rated R for language, sexual content, and on-screen drug usage. As a film, the education team finds much value in the story and characters of *Little Miss Sunshine*, especially when viewed in conjunction with *Spelling Bee*.



Never Have I Ever (Rated TV-14)

Loosely inspired by Mindy Kaling's own childhood, Netflix's *Never Have I Ever* explores the ideas of grief, identity, friendship, teen romance, school life, and family relationships as 15-year-old Indian-American Devi Vishwakumar (Maitreyi Ramakrishnan) finds her footing in high school.

Seasons 1-3 of this People's Choice Award-winning teen comedy are streaming on Netflix now, with the fourth and final season arriving June 2023.

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