

D-I-R-E-C-T-E-D BY  
**BRIAN AVERY**

**ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL  
THEATER ENSEMBLE**  
PRESENTS

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY  
**SPELLING BEE!**



**MARCH 8-10, 2024**

SHOW CONTAINS MATURE CONTENT AND MAY  
NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUNGER VIEWERS.  
**PARENTAL ADVISORY IS ENCOURAGED.**



# THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

Music & Lyrics By  
**William Finn**

Book By  
**Rachel Sheinkin**

Conceived By  
**Rebecca Feldman**

Additional Material by  
**Jay Reiss**

Originally Directed on Broadway by James Lapine

Originally produced on Broadway by  
David Stone, James L. Nederlander, Barbara Whitman, Patrick Catullo  
Barrington Stage Company, Second Stage Theatre

Based on C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E, an original play by the Farm

The Barrington Stage Company workshop of THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE was originally co-directed by Michael Barakiva and Rebecca Feldman

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee  
Is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).  
All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.  
[www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com)

## THE FARM

The Farm was founded in 2000 by Rebecca Feldman, Artistic Director. It is a collective of writers and performers, including Jay Reiss, Dan Fogler, and Sarah Saltzberg. The Farm's interest is in the role of improvisation in creating new work for the theatre. The Farm initially designates a two-week intensive period in which to discover, develop, and rehearse a play from the impulses borne mainly out of the pressure of a deadline. Previous projects include "Super" (at Atlantic Theatre Studios), "Why I Hate Florida" (workshop at White Wave in DUMBO) and "C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E" (at the Present Company Theaterium in October 2002), on which "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" is based. The character and original dialogue of "Beth Marguiles," "Vice President Douglas Panch," "Mr. Barfee," and "Logan Schwarzengrubenieer" were created by Rebecca Feldman, Jay Reiss, Dan Fogler, and Sarah Saltzberg, respectively.

# NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to our production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*!

We are extremely proud and excited to be presenting our third show in our beautiful new auditorium. The growth from last year to this year has been incredible and we couldn't do it with your help and support.

While we are still in the infancy stages of this rebuild, I wanted to take a moment to say thank you to everyone who has been and will be a part of this process.

The Theater Ensemble is not just this musical. It is a community of people – staff, students and volunteers – who help in the classroom, with Drama Club and with these shows. We want you to continue on this journey with us, and we encourage you to support the arts, enroll in the classes and just come spend some time with us.

The amount of work these talented individuals have put into this process simply can not be described in a simple note but, know that their efforts and yours do not go unnoticed.

Please e-n-j-o-y the show!

**Brian Avery**

Theater Director  
Albany High School

 albanhightheaterensemble

# FACULTY ADVISERS

**Brian Avery**

Director,  
Choreographer &  
Set Design

**Rose Biggerstaff**

Crew Coordinator

**Amanda Weklar**

Producer

**Brendan Hoffman**

Musical Director

**John Halvorsen**

Orchestra Director

**Jahmere Holland**

Tech Director &  
Light Design

**Kim DeHart**

Costume Design

**Allison McArdle Avery**

Costume Design

**LaQuita Love**

Hair & Make-Up Design

**Kyle Albano**

Sound Design

**William DeSantis**

Rehearsal Accompanist

**Cheyenne Adams**

House Manager

# STUDENT CREW

**Katherine Myers**  
Stage Manager

**Karly Grant**  
Assistant Stage  
Manager

**Anadi Sarkar**  
Assistant Stage  
Manager

**Nina Scandurra**  
Student  
Choreographer

**Alex Steuer**  
Props

**Jo Wunderlich**  
Props

**Meski Kelle**  
Light Op

**Robert Berry**  
Stage Crew

**J'Anni Elfridge**  
Stage Crew

**Nathaniel  
Wheeler**  
Spot Light Op

**Nicholas Caesar**  
Spot Light Op

**Abigail Fowler**  
Costumes

**Kaddisha Findley**  
Costumes

**Rebecca Pender**  
Costumes

**Tasmia Athoi**  
Costumes

**Lucinda Hiles**  
Costumes

**Camden Allen**  
Costumes/Hair

**Celine Casasola**  
Hair/Make-Up

**Kierra Okine**  
Sound Op

**Jakob Kuhn**  
Sound Op

**Kaylan Watts**  
Sound Op

**Shanyah McNeil**  
Public Relations

**Ashanty  
Fernandez**  
Sound

**Shaelynn  
Sobolewski**  
Crew

# CAST

**Gelissa Phillips**

Rona

**Declan Chirlin**

Panch

**Iris Whalen**

Olive

**William O'Neill**

Barfee

**Nina Scandurra**

Marcy

**Rey Rodriguez**

Mitch

**Ray Blanken**

Chip

**Azia Sky Barao**

Logainne

**Ian Roach**

Leaf

**Julian Shepersky**

Carl Dad

# ORCHESTRA

**Tessa Weklar**

Flute/Oboe

**Renee Geraghty**

Flute

**Jonah Bouget**

Flute

**Cameron Volk**

Flute

**Margaret  
MacCallum**

Flute

**Gideon Rosenthal**

Violin

**Emmett  
MacCallum**

Cello

**Sonja De Piro**

Cello

**Rowan Hoehn**

Clarinet

**Andrew Eck**

Trumpet

**Sidney Blanken**

Trumpet

**Caleb Goldstein**

Trumpet

**Andrew Fish**

Trumpet

**Nora Gordon**

Alto Sax

**Danica Fish**

Saxophone

**Trent Minarich**

Bass

**Kailas Bouget**

Synthesizer

**Andre Speller**

Tuba

**Masami Surisawa**

Trombone

**Anna Baldes**

Trombone

**Freddy Lizardo**

Trombone

**Isabelle  
Scandurra**

Percussion

**Angeline  
Thompson**

Percussion

**Emilio Davis**

Percussion

**Nevaeh  
Pryall Best**

Percussion

**Juliana Blake**

Flute

**Julio Davis**

Tuba

# CAST & CREW BIOS

**Cheyenne Adams** (House Manager) is excited to be working with the AHS Theater Ensemble again! A cherished alum from the stages of the past, Cheyenne now navigates the box office with the same passion that graced past performances. With a friendly smile and a knack for ensuring every seat is filled, Cheyenne brings organizational prowess and an alumni's touch to the heart of their productions. Behind the scenes, they work tirelessly to ensure that every attendee becomes part of the ongoing story of our vibrant theater community.

**Kyle Albano** (Sound Design) is a musician and audio engineer here in Albany, and has been a music teacher in our district since 2017. He started the Music Technology Pathway at Albany High School where he teaches the recording arts and audio engineering. Albano owns his own professional audio company where he sound engineers local musicals. Through this company, Underfloor MUSIC, Albano also offers services as an event DJ.

**Camden Allen** (Costumes) is excited to be helping the AHS Theater Ensemble! Camden has participated in other shows as well, including *Sister Act* (Mary Lazarus) and the Short Play Festival (Clara). This is her first year being a crew member and it's a new and fun experience she never had thought of before.

**Tasmia Athoi** (Costumes) is a freshman at AHS. Previously, she was the head costumer in the student play fest, but this is her first year being a part of the musical at AHS. Growing up she was really into art and drawing, she never really thought she would ever willingly want to be involved in this sort of thing, but now that she



is she sees lots of new potential for her moving forward.

**Brian Avery** (Director/Set Design/Choreography) is excited to be returning with AHS Theater Ensemble. Brian has been a theater practitioner for over 20 years. He graduated with honors from Stony Brook University (B.A. Theater) and Saint Rose (M.S. Education.). He has worked on over 100 shows both locally and professionally. Some of his favorite directing credits include *All Shook Up* (CLT), *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Class Act), *Trestle at Pope Lick Creek* (ACT), *Little Women* (NSCP), *Company* (Class Act) and *Love Letters* (Spotlight). He is also a dialect coach, having worked on the Off Broadway musical *The Wrong Box*. He would like to thank the cast and crew for all their support!!

**Allison McArdle Avery** (Costume Design) is very excited to be a new addition to the Albany High Theater Ensemble. She can be found teaching young learners with diverse needs at a local elementary school throughout the week, and on stage at various community theaters on weekends. She thanks the cast, crew and staff for welcoming her into the fold.

**Azia Sky Barao** (Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre) is very excited to take part in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*! She is a freshman at Albany High School and can't wait to create an amazing show with an amazing cast. Azia has taken part in many other different shows including *Honk Jr.* (Ugly Duckling), *Moana Jr.* (Moana) and *Mean Girls Jr.* (Regina George). She is very thankful for the work of the cast and crew!

**Robert Berry** (Crew) is excited to be a part of this year's musical. He did crew for the Short Play Festival this year and he hopes you're super happy with this year's show!

**Rose Biggerstaff** (Crew Coordinator) Ms. Biggerstaff is a stage manager/director and first year theater TA at Albany High! She has a B.S in theater from SUNY Oneonta and is pursuing her MFA in directing.

She is hopeful that one day she will open her own educational theater/community center and teach directing at a collegiate level. Wishing broken legs to the cast and crew of *Spelling Bee*! Have the best run!

**Ray Blanken** (Chip Tolentino) is a little too excited (you'll see) to be performing in *The Bee*! This also isn't Ray's first rodeo with theater, having directed two short plays in Albany High's Short Play Fest and acted as Sweaty Eddie in *Sister Act* (including a ton of other shows with school/local theaters!) Speaking of, see Ray as Ernst in the upcoming production of *Spring Awakening* from Park Playhouse! Enjoy the show!

**Nicholas Caesar** (Crew) is an 11<sup>th</sup> grade member of stage crew and is excited to ensure a smooth and entertaining show. He worked as a member of the crew of last year's musical, *Sister Act*, and will be taking his first shot at lights this year!

**Celine Casasola** (Hair/Make-Up) is a freshman at Albany High School. Past shows that she's been in are *Moana*, *Elf*, *10 Ways to Survive the Zombie Apocalypse*, *Mean Girls Jr.*, and *Be More Chill*. Instead of acting in this show, she's working backstage and is very excited to experience it for the first time.

**Declan Chirlin** (Douglas Panch) is honored to be in this year's musical. Previously Mr. Chirlin directed two short plays in the fall for the AHS Short Play Festival and in 2023 played Ernie in the AHS production of *Sister Act*.

**Kim DeHart** (Costume Design) is a retired Family & Consumer Science Educator who taught at AHS, and has been working on theater productions since 2011. This year's play will be her second as lead costume designer. In years past, she has worked as a seamstress to create garments for the show's productions. It has been a pleasure to work with the cast and crew over the years.

**William DeSantis** (Rehearsal/Pit Piano) has

played piano for eight Albany High musicals and has been a music teacher in the district for 15 years. He has also worked extensively with other local theater groups including Schenectady Light Opera Company (SLOC), Young Actors Guild, Glens Falls Community Theater, and Park Playhouse.

**J'Anni Elfridge** (Crew) is super excited to be part of stage crew and thankful for this chance. It's her first time trying something like this, but she's totally stoked to give it a shot!

**Ashanty Fernandez** (Sound) would like to thank everyone involved for a wonderful production!

**Kaddisha Findley** (Costumes) is very happy to be a part of the costume crew as this is her second year in costumes and she hopes to have a future in theater and costume designs. She hopes you love the spectacular wackular fits! Thank you all for supporting the Theater Ensemble.

**Abigail Fowler** (Costumes) was a member of the Costume Crew for Albany High's production of *Sister Act* last year and is very excited to be a part of this year's play with this amazing cast, helpful crew members, and of course, her lovely mentor, Mrs. DeHart!

**Karly Grant** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a super hard worker with three years of stage crew experience and 14 more in dance and musical theater. She loves to be running the show from behind the scenes and helping everything happen smoothly and efficiently!

**John Halvorsen** (Orchestra Director) is in his 19<sup>th</sup> year in our district and is still blessed and privileged to work with your children every day.

**Lucinda Hiles** (Costumes) is very excited to help with *Spelling Bee* at Albany High School. She has been in a few productions outside of school and

was in this year's Short Play Fest. She is excited to be able to get the full theater experience now with also being a part of the crew for this production.

**Brendan Hoffman** (Musical Director) is the choral director at Albany High School, a position he has proudly held since 2004. In addition to conducting five vocal ensembles, he teaches vocal lessons, music theory and serves as music director for the Theater Ensemble. He is thrilled for the ensemble to be sharing this story on the stage at AHS. He is so proud of the talented and dedicated cast and crew of *Spelling Bee*!

**Jahmere Holland** (Lighting Design) is excited to be returning to the AHS Theater Ensemble. He is a graduate of Albany High and is the Varsity Cheerleading Coach and Technical Director. He is also the proud owner of Triple Threat Cheerleading. He would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work and dedication!

**Meski Kelle** (Light Board Op) is excited to work on the spelling bee. This will be her third show working lights for the AHS Theater Ensemble. Thank you to the cast and crew!

**Jakob Kuhn** (Sound Board Op) would like to thank everyone involved for a wonderful production!

**LaQuita Love** (Hair/Make-Up) is a proud product of the City School District of Albany, class of 1994. She is the proud owner of Safari NY Hair Studio since 2001 and Albany High School's Cosmetology Teacher and Coordinator since 2006. LaQuita holds a B.A in Human Services & Community from SUNY Empire, and is currently a graduate student at SUNY Empire, studying Curriculum and Instruction. In the past years, she has won numerous awards including; NYS Educator and Entrepreneur Award, the Women of Distinction Award by the Black Women's Association, the prestigious Golden Apple Award by the City School District of Albany, the Kazi Work Award by Ujima Journey INC. and the

TOP Teacher award, presented by Elaine Houston.

**Shanyah McNeil** (PR) would like to thank everyone involved for a wonderful production!

**Katherine Myers** (Stage Manager) is excited to be returning as Stage Manager for this year's musical. Her previous stage managing experiences include *Into the Woods Jr.* (2019) and *Sister Act* (2023). She'd like to thank the cast and crew for all their hard work this year.

**Kierra Okine** (Sound Board Op) would like to thank everyone involved for a wonderful production!

**William O'Neill** (William Barfeé) makes his third appearance in the AHS Theater Ensemble and is playing a character with the same first name as him. Will would like to thank everyone for coming to the show and for their continued support!

**Rebecca Pender** (Costumes) is happy to be a returning member of the costume team. She's worked on the school's production of *Sister Act* and appreciates her fellow crew that have helped her in the past and current production. She is excited to be working on this year's play.

**Gelissa Phillips** (Rona Lisa Peretti) is very ecstatic to be in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*!! She has dreamed of being Rona since she first heard the soundtrack! This is her second AHS Theater Ensemble project and hopes to do all of the next projects in senior year!

**Ian Roach** (Leaf Coneybear) is ecstatic to be back on stage at AHS! Previous credits include Chief Tui (*Moana Jr.*), and Hooker/Altar Boy (*Sister Act*). He recently wrote and directed shows for the AHS Short Play Fest about social media. Five words left, thanks family!

**Rey Rodriguez** (Mitch Mahoney) is excited to be

in another AHS Theater Ensemble production. As a senior this will be their last AHS spring musical. They have had such a lovely experience being a part of this Theater Ensemble and are very sad to be leaving. Notable roles at AHS include *Sister Act* (Pablo) and *The Short Play Fest* (Wyatt). Rey is thankful for everyone who worked hard to bring this musical to life and hopes everyone enjoys the *Bee!*

**Anadi Sarkar** (Assistant Stage Manager) is very honored to be working on this production! Anadi was in the AHS Short Play Fest earlier this year. In addition, Anadi has spent some time on stage in the past for Bengali folk dance and in the junior high orchestra as a violist. Her passions lie in spending time with her loved ones and pets. Anadi is very grateful for this opportunity and for being able to work with such wonderful people.

**Nina Scandurra** (Marcy/Student Choreographer) is ecstatic to be working with the AHS Theater Ensemble! Her past credits include nun in *Sister Act* and Opal in the Short Play Fest. She would like to thank all of the wonderful people that helped make this show happen and hopes that you enjoy the show!!

**Julian Shepersky** (Carl Dad) is thrilled to be making his second appearance on the Albany High School stage. He has previously been in *Into the Woods* (Narrator) and most recently, *Sister Act* (TJ.) He thanks everyone helping make this show happen, and hopes that you enjoy the show!

**Alex Steuer** (Props) had a lot of fun working on this show and would like to thank all who made it possible. Previous credits include the Short Play Fest (Lola and Mel) and *Moana Jr.* (Ensemble)

**Kaylan Watts** (Sound Board Op) is excited to be working sound for the Albany High School Theater Ensemble. Kaylan first experienced working behind the scenes with the sound department for AHS's

production of *Sister Act*. She enjoys working behind the scenes and seeing the production come together.

**Amanda Weklar** (Producer) has worked in the City School District of Albany for 20 years - most of them as a Social Studies teacher focused on civics engagement. Amanda has worked with the Theater Ensemble for the last 10 years as producer and digital art projection designer and runs the high school yearbook in addition to her classroom duties.

**Iris Whalen** (Olive Ostrovsky) is ecstatic to be working with the AHS Theater Ensemble once again! Her previous credits include Sister Mary Robert in *Sister Act* and Eloise in The Short Play Fest. She would like to thank her castmates (and her friend the dictionary) for helping her put on a wonderful show!

**Nathaniel Wheeler** (Crew) is excited to be a member of the show this year and wants to thank the cast and the crew for helping put together a great production.

**Jo Wunderlich** (Props) is excited to be working on *Spelling Bee*. This is her first ever experience with a theatrical production. She hopes you enjoy the show!

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	<p><b>REY RODRIGUEZ CLASS OF 2024</b></p> <p><i>"Be so good they can't ignore you."</i> - Steve Martin</p> <p>Way to go! Love you! ~~~~ Mom and all your siblings! ~~~~</p>
<p>GREAT JOB!! LOVE ~ GRANDMA</p>	<p>CONGRATS REY! WE ARE SO VERY PROUD OF YOU! LOVE ~ UNCLE JASON, TITI AND CALIANA</p>

	<p><b>120 Everett Rd, Albany, NY</b></p> <p>518-458-2632 artinmotiondance@yahoo.com</p>
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# CONGRATS TO THE CAST & CREW!!!



FROM THE ALBANY HIGH  
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION TEAM



APSTA wishes our students  
great success with the  
show, and congratulates you  
on your outstanding talents!

**Let your light shine for  
the whole world to see!**



# CONGRATS!

Congratulations to our talented students and faculty advisers for an outstanding production!

We are so proud of you all!



Best wishes from the City School District of Albany Board of Education!



# WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU!

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# SPECIAL THANKS

Brady McDevitt  
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Emily English  
Elana Pollak

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Eric Shovah  
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Kimlicko

Julia O'Neill  
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*Save the date...*

# *AHS End of the Year Gala*



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**Where: AHS 3rd floor - Outside the auditorium**

**Time: 6-8pm**

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