



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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San Jose Repertory Theatre is Proud to Present the Tony® Award-Winning Musical Comedy, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee! “Can You Spell ENTERTAINING?”

SAN JOSE, CA. (April 30, 2009) — San Jose Repertory Theatre is proud to conclude its 2008-2009 season with the smash hit **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee**. The Tony® award-winning musical comedy – one of Broadway’s most talked about hits – is in attendance at San Jose Rep. This hilarious tale of six adolescent outsiders vying for the Spelling Bee title is directed by **Timothy Near**. **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee** begins previews on **May 9**, opens on **May 15** and closes **June 7**. **Press Opening is Friday, May 15 at 8:00 p.m.**

Tickets are available at the San Jose Rep Box Office at 101 Paseo de San Antonio or can be purchased online at www.SJRep.com or by calling (408) 367-7255.

“I love ‘Spelling Bee’ because it is a joyful celebration of courage in children. The story of these “outside-the-box” kids is charming, funny and moving,” Near remarks. “I think of this production as my loving farewell to the Rep audiences. I will miss their enthusiasm, inspirational insights in response to our plays and their commitment to support great theatre in San Jose.”

“This show is the perfect way for the Rep to end this season, and it is wonderful to have Timothy Near direct this celebratory, fun and devilish musical, the last show she selected for the Rep,” adds Artistic Director **Rick Lombardo**. “We are especially delighted to be one of the first regional productions of the show after its very successful Broadway run, and I know our audience will have a delicious night at the theater when they attend our ‘Bee.’”

A sassy musical comedy, **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee** follows six young people in the throes of puberty. Overseen by grown-ups who barely managed to escape childhood themselves, they learn that winning isn’t everything and that losing doesn’t necessarily make them a loser. The show’s Tony® award-winning creative team has created the unlikeliest of hit musicals about the unlikeliest of heroes: a quirky, yet charming cast of outsiders for whom a spelling bee is the one place where they can stand out and fit in at the same time. At each performance, four audience volunteers are selected and invited onstage to participate in the “Bee,” making each performance a unique experience.

Based on **C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E**, an original play by The Farm improv group in New York City, NY, **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee** was created, workshopped and developed by the Barrington Stage

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Company, Pittsfield, MA, where it had its world premiere in 2004. The musical opened off-Broadway at Second Stage Theatre where it was an instant hit, prompting it to move to Broadway's Circle in the Square Theatre. Nominated for six Tony Awards® including Best Musical - it took home two 2005 Tony Awards® for Best Book of a Musical and Best Featured Actor in a Musical. After over 1,200 performances, the Broadway production closed on January 20, 2008.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee has music and lyrics by **William Finn**, who was nominated for the 2005 Tony Award® for Best Original Score. He was also the writer and composer of *Falsettos*, for which he received two Tony Awards®, Best Book of a Musical (with James Lapine) and Best Original Score. The book is by **Rachel Sheinkin**, who received the 2005 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Book of a Musical and 2005 Tony Award® Best Book of a Musical for "Spelling Bee." The story is conceived by **Rebecca Feldman**, who was awarded a Lucille Lortel Award, Drama Desk and Tony Nomination for Best Musical for "Spelling Bee." She directed its world premiere at Barrington Stage Company in 2004.

Timothy Near directs this award-winning musical comedy. During her 21-year tenure as Artistic Director of San Jose Rep, she directed many memorable productions including *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Major Barbara*, *Bad Dates*, *Wintertime*, *By the Bog of Cats...*, and 'ART.' Now a freelance director, Near was recently awarded Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle awards, including Best Director for *Uncle Vanya*, which was produced at California Shakespeare Theater in the summer of 2008. She has staged plays and operas for the Guthrie, the New York Shakespeare Festival, Union Square Theatre in NYC, the Alliance Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., Intiman, A Contemporary Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, L.A.'s Tiffany Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, Center Rep, Portland Center Stage and Opera San Jose. Near has earned numerous honors including an Obie Award for her performance in *Still Life* by Emily Mann, Woman of Achievement Award in the Arts given by the Mercury News and the Women's Fund, The Janet Gray Hayes Award for Women in Leadership and Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle awards.

Music direction for **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee** is by **Dolores Duran-Cefalu**. She collaborated with the Rep on *Making Tracks* and *Thunder Knocking on the Door*. She has performed with San Francisco's Teatro Zinzanni and for San Francisco productions of *The Producers*, *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia!* and *White Christmas*. **Duran-Cefalu** was awarded the Kennedy Center Meritorious Achievement Award for orchestral work in *Cole*. She is the Music Director at California's Great America. Movement on stage is choreographed by **Amanda Folena**. She has earned many awards including a Jack Nicholson Award for Best Actress, the USC Dance Award for Best Choreographer and the National Irene Ryan Award at the Kennedy Center ACTF National Competition in Washington, D.C. **Folena** is currently on the artistic staff at City Lights Theater Company in San Jose.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee features a cast of some of Bay Area's favorite actors. **Molly Bell** (Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre) has been seen in the Bay Area as Susan in *Snapshots*, Mary in *Merrily We Roll Along*, Amelia in *The Little Princess* and Shelley in *Bat Boy: The Musical*, all at TheatreWorks. She is the producer of the successful *Divas For Life* concert series. **Marc de la Cruz** (Chip Tolentino) appeared in the Rep's *Making Tracks* as Frankie/David. His tour credits include *Disney's High School Musical* (first national) and the Asian tour of *The Wedding Banquet*. **Alison Ewing** (Rona Lisa Peretti) has performed on Broadway at Studio 54, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company and Playhouse West. Her other credits include *Ally McBeal* and *Six Feet Under*. **Mark Farrell** (William Barfee) has performed in the Rep's productions *Around the World in 80 Days* and *The Haunting of Winchester*. He has also worked with The Reduced Shakespeare Company, Center Rep and SF Playhouse. **Berwick Haynes** (Mitch Mahoney) has performed at the California Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Stage Company, Chicago Shakespeare Festival and the Goodman Theatre. **Steve Irish** (Douglas Panch) was Froggy LeSueur in *The Foreigner* at San Jose Rep earlier this season. He has appeared in the feature films *Just Like Heaven* and *The Darwin Award*. **Dani Marcus** (Olive Ostrovsky) has been seen performing in the Bay Area at TheatreWorks and Center REP. She received a Kevin Kline Award nomination for her role as Harriet in a co-production of *Emma* with Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. **Sophie Oda**

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(Marcy Park) has performed in various Bay Area theatres, including American Musical Theatre San Jose, Alameda Civic Light Opera and California Shakespeare Theater. She can be frequently seen on Disney Channel's, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* as the character, "Barbara Brownstein." Due to health reasons, Alex Moggridge will not be able to continue in the role of Leaf Coneybear. **Clifton Guterman** replaces Alex Moggridge in the role of Leaf Coneybear. Guterman appeared in the 2008 regional premiere co-production of "Bee" at Barrington Stage and North Shore Music Theatre, both in Massachusetts. Last year, he also made his New York City debut off-Broadway in *Deathbed*.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee was collaborated on by a team of talented and creative designers. **Robert Broadfoot** (Scenic Designer) received the Bay Area Critic's Circle Award in scenic design for *Musical of Musicals* at Center Repertory in 2008 and *Bot* at The Magic Theatre in 2007. Broadfoot regularly assists prominent Broadway designers Douglas W. Schmidt and John Iacovelli on national productions. **Shigeru Yaji** (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for nine productions at San Jose Rep. He is the recipient of seven Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards and a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award. **David Lee Cuthbert** (Lighting and Projection Designer) has done design work for several Rep productions, and his other Bay Area credits include Opera San Jose, TheatreWorks and Shakespeare Santa Cruz. He designed Billy Crystal's *700 Sundays* on Broadway and its U.S., Canadian and Australian tours. **Jeff Mockus** (Sound Designer) served as Resident Sound Designer for San Jose Rep from 1994-2007. He has recently done sound design for California Shakespeare Theater, Center Repertory Theatre and Davies Symphony Hall, and he is the recipient of Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards and Dean Goodman Choice Awards. The stage manager is Laxmi Kumaran.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee is sponsored by **Santa Clara University Leavey School of Business, KPMG, McManis Faulkner, Hawgs Seafood Restaurant** and supported, in part, by a **Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San Jose**.

About the Rep

San Jose Rep is the premier non-profit, professional theatre company in the South Bay, presenting six main stage productions each year. As a major contributor to South Bay's cultural community for 28 years, the Rep's mission is to engage, entertain and inspire people. The Rep produces innovative theatrical performances that offer fresh perspectives into the human condition, educational programs that promote life-long learning, and outreach initiatives that benefit our diverse community. For more information, visit www.SJRep.com.

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FACT SHEET

WHAT: The Tony award-winning musical hit *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.

WHO: Music and lyrics by **William Finn**
 Book by **Rachel Sheinkin**
 Conceived by **Rebecca Feldman**
 Additional materials by **Jay Reiss**
 Directed by **Timothy Near**
 Musical direction by **Dolores Duran-Cefalu**
 Assistant Director/Movement consultant **Amanda Folena**

Set Designer	Robert Broadfoot
Costume Designer	Shigeru Yagi
Lighting/Projection Designer	David Lee Cuthbert
Sound Design	Jeff Mockus
Associate Lighting and Projections Designer:	Seamus Stahan-Mauk
Stage Manager	Laxmi Kumaran

CAST:

Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre	Molly Bell
Chip Tolentino	Marc de la Cruz
Rona Lisa Peretti	Alison Ewing
William Barfee	Mark Ferrell
Leaf Coneybear	Clifton Guterman
Mitch Mahoney	Berwick Haynes
Douglas Panch	Steve Irish
Olive Ostrovsky	Dani Marcus
Marcy Park	Sophie Oda

DATES, TIMES & PRICES: **Previews:** May 9th-May 14th, 2009
Opens: May 15th, 2009
Closes: June 7th, 2009
Price range: \$33-\$62

PERFORMANCES		MAY			JUNE		
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
10 2pmD 7pm	11	12	13 11amD 8pm	14 8pm	15 8pm OPENING NIGHT	16 3pm D 8pm	
17 2pmD	18	19 7:30pm	20 11amD 8pm	21 8pm	22 8pm	23 3pm D 8pm	
24 2pmD	25	26 7:30pm	27 8pm	28 8pm	29 8pm	30 3pm D 8pm	
31 2pmD	1	2 7:30pm	3 8pm	4 8pm	5 8pm	6 3pm D 8pm	

D = Post-show Discussion
 ASL = American Sign Language Interpreted Performance
 Saturday, June 6 at 3pm.

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 HAWGS (HAWKS AND WARRIORS)
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