



'Bee' unveils personal obstacles for contestants

Faust Theatre/KC Arts Asylum



By Bob Evans

Always a fun show to watch (or participate), “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” acquaints the audience with a slate of nine competitors all with high expectations of spelling successfully and claiming the trophy as count champion, yet, personal teenage situations thwart their best attempts.

Faust Theatre that focuses on younger performers and shows produced by younger thespians opened the “Spelling Bee” on Friday, Oct. 19 at The Arts Asylum near 9th and Troost in Kansas City, Missouri. The musical comedy brings together six

adolescent spellers and three audience members to participate in the spell-off. To keep things organized (well, sort of) are the hostess of the Spelling Bee, a former winner; and a school principal who serves as announcer and pronouncer. Also on hand, wearing his “ankle bracelet” presented to him on behalf of the local corrections facility as part of his community service deployment.



Vivian Nazzaro/The Arts
Asylum/Faust Theatr

As the show progresses, the audience learns of the trials and tribulations of the contestants. One is a perfectionist whose self-worth defines her need to excel—everywhere; a returning champion plagued by the unfortunate condition of penis-erectis at the most inopportune times; a certified “weirdo” who needs confidence that’s never been instilled in him or encouraged; a loner, desperate to find a path and a friend; a self-confident runner-up who possesses special talent through his “magic foot”; and a confident young lady with two dads who questions moral decisions when faced with a cheating situation.

In all, the show contains adult problems from an adolescent perspective. Problems not resolved or faced in younger ages can create awkward situations that most overcome with maturity. Still, the show lampoons the pains of each entrant but with humor. The show is a winner.

Vivian Nazzaro/The Arts
Asylum/Faust Theatre



Seth Golay directed “The 25th Annual Spelling Bee” for Faust Theatre and displays his eye for the detail to keep the show moving and keep the audience engaged. His characters display a chemistry amongst themselves and the audience, that helps keep the focus on the actors and the characters they portray.

Great acting and singing give a solid balance to this show. Not one character displays a weakness or break during the show. Also, sound which has been a problem in the past with this venue seems to be getting better and better with each production. All of “Spelling Bee” was clear and easily understood.



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“Spelling Bee” was written by Rachel Sheinkin, with music and lyrics by William Finn. Directing for Faust theatre, Seth Golay. The cast is: Margo Losey Mikkelson as Rona Lisa Peretti, Kipp Simmons as Douglas Panch, Max Brown as Mitch Mahoney, Connor Branson as Chip Tolentino, Darcie Hingula as Logainne SchwartzandGrubenierre, Tyler Rowe as Leaf Coneybear, Julia Masterson as Marcy Park, Zach Faust as William Barfee, Madison Elizabeth Dodd as Olive Ostrovsky. The production crew

is: Music Direction by Jason Bell, Choreography by Mandy Morris-Newman, Lighting Design by Zoey Davis, Stage Management by Matthew Koehler, Assistant Stage Management by Randy Jackson, Photography by Vivian Nazzaro.

Tickets can be purchased at the door or through the Faust Theatre website. "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" runs through Oct. 27.

Tags: The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Faust Theatre, Kansas City Theatre, The Arts Asylum, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment.