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Going Out

BY SAM L. MARCELO, Reporter

Bee cool

Theater

The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee
by William Finn
Presented by Atlantis Productions
March 20 to April 4
Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium,
RCBC Plaza, Ayala Ave., Makati

A SPELLING BEE is both high drama and comedy gold. Those who have followed the televised finals over ESPN know what kind of nail-biting tension these contests can induce. Competitors — most of them geeky teenagers whose awkwardness would rival Napoleon Dynamite's — have fainted on stage, misheard "numnah" (a pad that goes under horse's saddle) for "numbnut," suffered giggling fits trying to say "sardoodledom" (a word synonymous to melodrama), and spasmodically screamed their way to glory.

Atlantis Productions opens its 10th anniversary season with *The 25th Annual*

Putnam Spelling Bee, a Tony Award-winning musical comedy by William Finn (*Falsettos*, *A New Brain*) that tells the story of six eccentric overachievers and their quest to become number one.

"It's about adolescent outsiders who find a place where they can be themselves. They're all a bunch of loveable misfits," said director Bobby Garcia, who became a spelling bee junkie while doing research for the show.

Tonight, audiences will get to meet Chip Tolentino (Felix Rivera), Boy Scout and defending champion whose puberty has the worst timing; Leaf Coneybear (Johan Dela Fuente), who comes from a family of ex-hippies and makes his own clothes; Olive Ostrovsky (Carla Guevara-Laforteza), a newbie who considers the dictionary her best friend; Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre (Pheona Baranda), the biracial, half-Jewish daughter of two gay men; Marcy Park (Thea Tadiar Everley), a polyglot who excels at everything and sleeps only three hours a night; and William Barfee (Rycharde Everley), who spells with his foot.

During every performance, two audience volunteers and two celebrity guests will compete alongside the cast. "This assures everyone that no two shows will be alike and that each show will have a lot of unexpected surprises," said Mr. Garcia. During a 2007 Broadway show, for example, Julie Andrews got the boot when she misspelled "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

Rounding out the characters are Mitch Mahoney (Noel Rayos), an ex-con who serves as "Official Comfort Counselor"; vice-principal Douglas Panch (Joel Trinidad), a judge who swears by high-fiber diets and Jungian analysis; and Rona Lisa Peretti (Cathy Azanza), returning moderator and former champion whose winning word was "syzygy," as she tells the audience in the opening number.

"Through this production, we hope to illustrate that winning isn't everything and that growing up is inevitable. I think people will find snippets of truth of their own life in the show. If not, it will be two hours of wonderfully funny musical comedy," said Mr. Garcia.

The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee opens tonight at 8 p.m. Tickets range from P515 to P1,339. For reservations, call Atlantis Productions at 892-7078 or 840-1187 or visit www.ticketworld.com.ph.



THE CAST of *The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee*

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