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ENTERTAINMENT

Can you spell R-E-P-E-A-T?

By Chari Arespacochaga Updated May 29, 2009 12:00 AM



Spelling Bee, which will have a repeat from July 3 to 12, welcomes everyone to the madness and magic of being onstage.

MANILA, Philippines - Once upon a time, six and some years ago, I stood in the tiny hallway by the door that leads out into the audience of the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, dressed in a frou-frou lilac baby doll dress and donning a cotton candy pink Marie Antoinette wig. I had never felt so nauseous before a show nor been so anxious in my life. And it wasn't the outfit, too! I was playing Roxy, an unscripted character we had created to improvise along with our musical, *The Rocky Horror Show*. I had to lead the audience in the audience participation segments as a die-hard *Rocky Horror Show* groupie in love with the show's narrator. No script. Just an outline of things I had to do and hopefully, get the audience to do. Every night.

It was the worst of times in those last five minutes by the door before I had to go out and face the crowd. But once we got the ball rolling, it was the best of times. I danced along the aisles with audience members who came to watch in costume. I gave out wine. I was asked where the bathroom was. I had to steel myself against friends who sat right by me and kept trying to distract me. I was kissed (too enthusiastically, if you know what I mean) by an audience member apparently very grateful for his free wine. I got the crowd to admit to (or lie about) their virginity. And in one show, I finally got kissed by the narrator thanks to the constant prodding of his family who were all watching the show. The fun just multiplied 400 times because once the audience is in on the show, it is propelled to the exhilaration of uncertainty and the pure, unadulterated enjoyment of complete spontaneity.

We want you all to feel that exhilaration once again as we continue to celebrate 10 years of Atlantis Productions with a repeat run of *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. The multi-awarded hit Broadway musical, which recently took Manila by storm with a sold-out run last March, tells the story of six young people in the throes of puberty participating in a county spelling bee, overseen by grownups who barely managed to escape childhood themselves, learn that winning isn't everything and that losing doesn't necessarily make you a loser. The hilarious tale of overachievers' angst gets a different tailspin with every performance with the participation of two surprise celebrity guest spellers and two volunteer guest spellers from the audience.

Yes, every night brings a different set of people onstage to join our cast members. The recent run featured celebrity guest spellers Lea Salonga, Jett Pangan, Pinky Marquez, Cheska Ortega, Leo Rialp, Jon Santos, Rachel Alejandro, Frenchie Dy, Cherie Gil, Sen. Chiz Escudero, Sitti, Miguel Mendoza, Franco and Ayen Laurel, Gina Alajar, Christian Bautista, Isabella Gonzales, Geneva Cruz, Wency Cornejo, Rajo Laurel, Menchu Yulo, Nyoy Volante, Teresa Herrera, Aiza Seguerra and Raya Mananquil. For a good part of the evening the guest spellers will be just like the rest of the cast — competing for the championship trophy. The better the speller you are, the longer you will be staying in the show.

Rehearsing *Spelling Bee* was one of the happiest times we've had. But not so much for Joel Trinidad and Cathy Azanza, who play Doug Panch and Rona Lisa Peretti, the bee moderators who basically need to be on their toes for the entire show. Joel vouched for his anxiety during rehearsals by exclaiming, "I am already conducting spelling bees in my sleep!"

One thing I know for sure though — each and every show in this run will be worth watching if only to see who will be joining our spellers onstage and how having you all there at different nights will make each show special and unique.

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COLUMNS

The 'rhythm' of Kris & James



FUNFARE By Ricardo F. Lo

Like some expectant

mothers, Kris Aquino said she made Joshua, who has just turned 14, and James, who turned two years old last April, listen to (preferably) soothing music while they were inside her tummy.

Brothers with a conscience



DIRECTLINE By Boy Abunda

Unknown to many, two young

Filipino men who grew up in the US have been quietly making a difference in the lives of many children in Parañaque.

Girls of the new soul sound



SOUNDS FAMILIAR By Baby A. Gil

There is a new kind of female soul sound.

For our first offering on our 10th year at Atlantis, it was important to us to create the show with people who have been a part of our 10 years in one way or the other — from our cast, to our creative team, to our crew, to our musicians. Having you, our valued and beloved audiences share the stage with us completes the circle.

So we thank you for sharing 10 wonderful years with us and we welcome you back to the madness and the magic of being onstage in *Spelling Bee*.

You can watch. You can spell. Either way, you will have a wonderful time. Every time.

The limited repeat run of *Spelling Bee* is from July 3 to 12 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Makati.

For details, call 892-7078 or 840-1187.

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Trouble in Ruffa's love life



**FUNFARE
UPDATE By
Ricardo F. Lo**

When Ruffa Gutierrez showed up with daughters Lorin and Venice last Saturday afternoon at the Women Crisis Center of the East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City for an advance birthday *merienda* with her fellow domestic-violence survivors, those present hardly noticed that earlier that day, the local spokesperson for the Avon Speak Out Against Domestic Violence Campaign had just survived a minor domestic altercation with her mom, the feisty Annabelle Rama.

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