



Scot Denton – Artistic Producer
Melissa Stephens – Executive Producer

2024 Audition Information

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

The Birds & the Bees The Miracle Worker

Early Stages

An apprenticeship theatre program for young performers aged 10 to 14.
More about Early Stages on page 6

Please Note: We expect that all those cast in HSF productions will have been vaccinated against Covid-19. You are welcome to choose to wear a mask to the auditions (EXCEPT when you are auditioning).

Thank you for your interest in the Highlands Summer Festival's 2024 Season. We continue to celebrate our return to the stage with three entertaining and challenging productions. 2024 will be another exciting season for our patrons and all those involved onstage and off.

If you are new to the Highlands Summer Festival, or even new to live theatre, we encourage you to audition for a role.

You may wish to contact us about contributing in another capacity. We are committed to developing skills in all areas of theatre performance and production. Please consider taking part in the Festival in some capacity. Many individuals contribute by building sets and costumes, being part of the running crew or assisting with Front of House. The upcoming season should provide an opportunity for you to work with us in some capacity. This kind of contribution can be tremendously rewarding. Please consider joining us.

The Highlands Summer Festival is a regionally based community theatre with charitable status. We pride ourselves on producing theatre of the highest calibre. Our goal is to work hard to improve each year – in every facet of our operation. We are looking for people eager to help us achieve that goal again this season.

Please contact us directly if you would like more information about the Festival or the auditions:

Melissa Stephens **Executive Producer** **705-455-2366**

melistep@gmail.com

Scot Denton **Artistic Producer** **416-435-5008**

sdenton@sympatico.ca

Audition Information

The Highlands Summer Festival celebrates diversity and inclusiveness. All are welcome to audition. Note: Ages listed for a character may refer to the character's age in the script or the performer age range and serve as guidelines only. **Casting continues! Please see page 7 for audition information.**

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Music by William Finn, book by Rachel Sheinkin

Six awkward spelling champions learn that winning (and losing) isn't everything. An eclectic group of six mid-pubescents vie for the spelling championship of a lifetime. While candidly disclosing hilarious and touching stories from their home lives, the tweens spell their way through a series of words, hoping never to hear the soul-crushing, pout-inducing, life un-affirming "ding" of the bell that signals a spelling mistake. Six spellers enter; one speller leaves a champion! At least the losers get a juice box.

PLEASE NOTE: The tweens in the cast are played by older actors – late teens or young adults. You should audition regardless of your age.

Cast of Characters

The Kids

Chip Tolentino - Tenor

The reigning spelling champion of Putnam County, relatively athletic and social, he expects things to come easily to him. Lately though, he's been going through some weird changes, and things are slipping out of his control. (Actor also plays Jesus.)

Logainne SchwartzandGrubbeniere - Mezzo

Younger than most bee participants, she is driven by internal and external pressure- but above all by a desire to win to make her two fathers (from whom she takes her combined last name) proud. She lisps, is a little uncomfortable in her body, and has some tics.

Leaf Coneybear – Bari-tenor

A second alternate, he never expected to compete here today. Home-schooled with his many siblings, everything about this public bee is an adventure for him, from meeting the other kids to showing off his homemade clothing, to each moment of unexpected attention. He may have severe attention deficit disorder but delights in his own wandering focus. (Actor also plays Carl Dad.)

William Barfee – Bari-tenor

Has a host of health problems and a lot to prove. Loud and combative as a defensive posture, he is the heavy kid who becomes a bully to avoid being picked on. William does not expect kindness from anyone but his mother. So, friendship takes him by surprise. Still, he's noticed on the spelling circuit for his remarkable technique - spelling words out on the floor with his foot. Taken out of competition last year because of an ill-timed allergic reaction, he's here for vindication.

Marcy Park - Mezzo

The ultimate over-achiever, Marcy comes from a family where excellence is expected and so simply produced. A parochial school student, she assumes God, too, expects perfection. She sees herself as a mass of problems, but she keeps them to herself. Having moved often because of her parents' work, she knows she can beat the local competition. Her many talents include piano, dance, martial arts, baton twirling, and/or whatever special gifts this actor has.

Olive Ostrovsky – Mezzo with belt

A word lover, Olive has a quiet life. An only child with often-absent parents, Olive spends a lot of her time alone. She fills some of that time reading the dictionary - the words bring her comfort. During the first half of the bee, she often peers into the audience to see if her father, who is delayed at work, has made it yet. She starts enormously shy, and shyly blossoms.

The Adults**Rona Lisa Perretti - Mezzo**

Putnam's long-time spelling bee hostess, a local realtor, and 3rd Annual Putnam County spelling champion. This is the Rona's day to be queen. From her perspective she keeps the bee running smoothly, upholds protocol, and conveys crucial information to the audience. Her interest in the competition is unflagging and drives it forward. (Actor also plays Olive's mum in fantasy.)

Vice Principal Douglas Panch - Baritone

Douglas is frustrated with his life. He fell into education, less out of love than a general ability uncoupled to a particular passion. The drive of the young spellers is alien to him. He never found anything that important. Stuck in his current job, endlessly awaiting a promotion that isn't coming, he was not happy to get the call this morning that he was needed to substitute; but he starts the bee eager to do well.

Mitch Mahoney

With a bouncer's physique and demeanor, Mitch appears an odd choice to be the bee's "comfort counselor," but it's part of his community service assignment. The outsider, who in a way gets to inhabit the audience perspective, he wonders about the wisdom of putting the kids through this at all. He has no idea how to offer comfort but does increasingly find himself wishing he could find a way to make the kids feel better about losing. (Actor also plays Dan Dad and Olive's Dad in fantasy.)

***The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson**

Twelve-year-old Helen Keller lived in a prison of silence and darkness. Deaf, blind, and mute from an illness as a baby, with no way to express herself or comprehend those around her, she flew into primal rages against anyone who tried to help her, fighting tooth and nail with a strength born of furious desperation.

Then Annie Sullivan came. Half-blind herself, but possessing an almost fanatical determination, she would begin a frightening and incredibly moving struggle to tame the wild girl no one could reach...

Cast of Characters

Note: the age listed for a character is not necessarily the age of the actor.

Captain Keller (40s – early 50s) Helen's father. Stern but devoted to his wife and family. Struggles to connect with young Helen, but is loving, nonetheless. Learns to trust Annie.

Kate Keller (20s – early 30s) – the Captain's second wife and Helen's mother. Tormented by Helen's seemingly insurmountable disability. Tries to please Helen to avoid the tantrums and to compensate for her misfortune. Dedicated to her husband and a fiercely devoted mother as well. Determined to give Helen every chance she can get.

Helen Keller (11-13) - Is deaf, blind, and mute. Trapped in her own world but seems desperate to know more. Develops a strong relationship with Annie after initially refusing to cooperate. **See note below re ANNIE AND HELEN.*

James Keller (17-21) – the Captain's son by his first wife. Helen's half-brother. Somewhat apathetic and opinionated. Believes Helen is mentally defective and should be placed in an asylum. Learns to respect Annie and her work.

Annie Sullivan (20s – early 30s) – Helen's teacher. A strong and vibrant woman who is determined to connect Helen to her world. Undeterred by Kate and the Captain's interference, Helen's early responses, and numerous setbacks, she goes above and beyond, overcoming her personal demons along the way.

***ANNIE AND HELEN: the actors playing Annie and Helen will receive extensive, dedicated rehearsal time to find an understanding of the world Helen lives in and to be prepared for the physical challenges of the scene work.**

Aunt Ev – (40s – 50s) – Helen’s aunt, the Captain’s sister. Well-meaning, talkative, and opinionated. But Ev encourages the Kellers to connect with the Perkins Institute and eventually, Annie.

Dr Anagnos (45-70) – Annie’s counselor at the Perkins Institute. A dear and kind man – very fond of Annie and her journey. Serves as both her mentor and friend.

Viney (50-65) – A housekeeper for the Kellers. Cheerful and thoughtful. Loving towards the Keller children.

Martha – (8 – 12) - a playmate of Helen.

Percy – (8 – 12) - a playmate of Helen.

Six Girls – (between 8 – 14) – who attend the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston. They are extremely fond of Annie and can’t bear that she’s leaving.

The Doctor (50 – 70) – diagnoses Helen’s illness and predicts she will live.

The Birds and the Bees by Mark Crawford

Sarah, a turkey farmer, has split up with her husband and moved in with her mom, Gail, a beekeeper. Add in Earl, the flirty neighbour, and Ben, an eager young graduate student, and you have the perfect breeding ground for unlikely attractions. Set in adjoining bedrooms, **The Birds and the Bees** is a **Canadian** comedy about love, lust, beekeeping, and the artificial insemination of turkeys.

Cast of Characters

Sarah – 38 – a turkey farmer, Gail’s daughter. Having just separated from her husband, she is seeking a brief respite at her mother’s.

Gail – 62 – a beekeeper, Sarah’s mum. Divorced, self-repressed and traditional. Dealing with several issues of her own, including declining bee populations. Would love a grandchild.

Earl – 63 – a cash cropper, Gail’s neighbour, and rents farmland from her. Very supportive. Blunt and flirty.

Ben – 23 – a student of entomology. A hot scientist with lots to learn.

Early Stages

An Apprenticeship Theatre Program

Early Stages is an apprenticeship theatre program for young performers aged 10 to 14. Participants will take classes with Artistic Producer Scot Denton and instructors who are students or graduates of college performance programs. Classes will include voice and text, improvisation, acting and movement and will take place at St George's Anglican Church in Haliburton during the month of July. Classes will begin July 2 and run during the daytime Monday to Thursday (excluding July 1) for four weeks. There will be a presentation of work created at a suitable venue late in July. Early Stages began in 2014 – a number of the participants have gone on to take part in Highlands Summer Festival productions. The cost is \$250. There are a couple of bursaries available for Early Stages – please speak to Stella Voisin at 705-4524 if you would like more information.

If you are interested in Early Stages, please contact Scot Denton at 416-435-5008 or email sdenton@sympatico.ca to make arrangements.

Applicants interested in Early Stages should bring indoor shoes and wear comfortable clothing.

Dance experience and singing are not prerequisites for Early Stages.

Auditions for
The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,
The Miracle Worker & The Birds and the Bees

Casting continues!

***Please arrange for an audition by contacting:**

Melissa Stephens at 705-455-2366 or by emailing her at:
melistep@gmail.com

Audition Requirements

- Please complete and print the last page of this package (page 9 – the Audition Information Sheet) and bring it to your audition.
- Dress comfortably, bring indoor shoes, and wear a mask if you wish.
- For any questions, please contact Melissa at 705-455-2366
-

Those who are new to the Festival should be prepared to either perform a short monologue (maximum 2 minutes) or tell a short story. You may be asked to read “sides” (a short scene) – this may extend your audition time.

If you wish to audition for the musical (and are new to us), we will need to hear you sing. You can sing a cappella (without accompaniment), or you can sing with a backing track on a device (make sure it is a karaoke track—we want to hear you sing), or Melissa Stephens will accompany you playing **music which you provide**. Please sing something **which is NOT from *Spelling Bee***. We may only need to hear 16 bars of the song. If you have questions about singing at your audition, please contact Melissa Stephens – 705-455-2366

You are encouraged to be familiar with the plays and the musical. Some information about *Spelling Bee* is available online at Music Theater International – mtishows.com and you may find some of the songs elsewhere. The scripts of *Miracle Worker* and *The Birds and the Bees* may be viewed in e-copy. Please contact Scot Denton at sdenton@sympatico.ca or Melissa Stephens at melistep@gmail.com and we will send you a pdf.

Please note - The casting process takes time and is a critical part of each production – it may be several weeks before it is finalized.

Rehearsal Schedule

It is our expectation that a minimum of 100 hours of rehearsal time for each production will have been achieved prior to performance (120 hours for *Spelling Bee*). The weekly rehearsal schedule will be established by the director with the stage manager. However, each production rehearses every week on Saturday and Sunday during the day, beginning at the end of April or some time in May, depending on the date of the production's opening. **Actors cast in ensemble roles in the musical or supporting roles in *Miracle Worker* will not be required at every rehearsal.**

Please note: The Festival moves into the theatre towards the end of June. During the ten days to two weeks prior to each production's opening (see dates below), rehearsals will be more frequent, and will require everyone in attendance.

Performance Schedule

The 25th Annual Spelling Bee July 2, 3, 4, 5*, 7*, 8, 9, 10, 11

Miracle Worker July 15, 16, 17, 18, 19*, 21*, 22, 23

The Birds and the Bees July 28, 29, 30, 31, August 1, 2*

Curtain Times: Evenings at 7:30 PM * Matinees at 2:00 PM

The Commitment

Part of the mandate of the Highlands Summer Festival is to develop the talents and skills of people, especially young people, in the performing arts. And wherever possible, we prefer to utilize the talents of the residents of Haliburton County.

In attempting to achieve this goal, a commitment of time, talent and energy must be made by all involved. The expectation is that performers will be in attendance and on time for all rehearsals when they are called. It is further expected that performers will be willing to assist, within their skills, with move-ins and move-outs of Festival shows, especially their own. If you decide to audition, we hope you can make this commitment. We understand, of course, that some people will have work or previous family commitments. ***Please note these on your audition form.***

Audition Information Sheet

Please print this page, print your information legibly, and bring it with you to the audition.

Name _____

Address _____

Cell # _____

Other _____

Email _____

Age (if under 18) _____ email: _____

Parent email: _____

The above information will be used by the Festival to contact you and will be retained only if you are cast or you have indicated an interest in other aspects of the Festival. The contact information is shared only with others involved in the Festival.

If you are familiar with the musical or plays, you may wish to indicate which roles you are interested in auditioning for. **I am interested in auditioning for the role(s) of:**

I am interested in the Early Stages program. (please check box)

Stage Management, Crew, Set Construction, Painting, Costumes, Props, Front of House

The Festival depends on reliable backstage help from people with a strong work ethic and a desire to help bring our plays to life. Of extreme importance are assistant stage managers, crew and set, costumes, and prop builders. We offer support and training for all of these positions. Please let us know if you wish to contribute in any of these areas.

Please indicate specifically any conflicts you have with the rehearsal schedule:

Your signature (or parent's, if under 18):

_____ **Date:** _____, 2024

You may use the space on the back to summarize any experience and/or training you have which you would like us to be aware of, or you may attach a resume.