



The *New Zealand Post*  Season of

The 25th Annual
Putnam County

Spelling Bee



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Welcome



Welcome to Auckland Theatre Company's final offering for 2008, the New Zealand Post Season of THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE.

Out in the real world, a lot of store is placed on competition. It's a deadly serious business. So it's a joy to discover a theatrical piece that deals with competition in such a generous, idiosyncratic and delightfully funny way.

When I first read it, it took me right back to the one and only time I was an onstage competitor as a finalist in a General Knowledge quiz at the Napier War Memorial Hall circa 1961.

What our glorious geeks are going through in SPELLING BEE manages to encapsulate exactly the torment and terrors I was feeling, knock-kneed and nervous on that stage in Napier.

If only I'd had songs and dances to relieve the tension back then, I might have won more than the token box of chocolates!

The music and lyrics in THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE are warm-hearted, witty and accessible – a delicious mixture of pop and theatrical melodies with smart and savvy lyrics. And it's peopled with wonderfully brainy, lovable misfits, all with their own vulnerabilities and complexities. It's easy to see why it was a Tony Award winner.

The inimitable Jackie Clarke heads this fabulously talented cast, many of whom are making their debut with Auckland Theatre Company. I'm sure you'll see more of them all in the future.

Congratulations to director Murray Lynch and musical director Grant Winterburn and their creative team for crossing the t's and dotting the i's so stylishly and delivering us a SPELLING BEE with accomplishment and panache.

Thanks, too, to the people who make this possible – the Auckland Theatre Company staff and production team, the SKYCITY Theatre staff and of course our Principal Partner New Zealand Post.

On behalf of everyone here at Auckland Theatre Company, my best wishes to you and your loved ones for the festive season. We look forward to bringing you many more thoroughly satisfying nights of theatre in 2009.

Life IS pandemonium – but hey, isn't it wonderful?

Enjoy!

Colin McColl

John Allen's Note



Spelling is important. From a young age, the ability to spell helps us to build words; to build sentences; to write our first love letter. For most of us we don't always think about the words when we spell them – it just happens.

But what if you're a finalist in a spelling competition? Will it come naturally if you're defending your title from the previous year? What if you find it hard to focus on words; or what if you're new to the concept of competitive spelling?

We at New Zealand Post are proud to be associated with the Auckland Theatre Company. Over the last year we've been working with them to help bring audiences to a provocative, entertaining and enriching season of work. Their latest play – THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE – is a light-hearted look at spelling.

And it's not hard for us to make the leap from spelling words to literacy. Literacy is fundamental to a successful society. It is at the heart of people connecting through

the written word. That is why New Zealand Post supports programmes such as the New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children & Young Adults; the donation of books to the Books in Homes programme; the National Schools Poetry Awards; and the sponsorship of the Mansfield Prize.

While literacy is a serious subject, I know you will enjoy this entertaining play with the quirky people that live in Putnam County.

John Allen

Chief Executive
New Zealand Post

New Zealand Post



The *New Zealand Post*  Season of
The 25th Annual Putnam County

Spelling Bee

Cast
Rona Lisa Peretti / Olive's mother *Jackie Clarke* Vice Principal Douglas Panch *Eryn Wilson*
Olive Ostrovsky *Christina Cusiel* Chip Tolentino *Cameron Douglas*
Willam Barfée *Sému Filipo* Leaf Coneybear *Kristian Lavercombe*
Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre *Madeleine Sami* Marcy Park *Esther Stephens*
Mitch Mahoney *Jason Te Patu*

Creative
Director *Murray Lynch* Musical Director *Grant Winterburn* Choreographer *Sacha Copland*
Set & Costume Design *John Parker* Lighting Design *Bryan Caldwell*

Band
Piano/Conductor - *Grant Winterburn* Percussion - *Barry Widerstrom* Cello - *Miriam Hartmann*
Reeds - *Jim Langabeer* Keyboards - *Terence Penk*

Production
Production Manager *Mark Gosling* Technical Manager *Bonnie Burrill*
Rehearsal Stage Manager *Carol Harding* Stage Manager *Mitchell Turei*
Assistant Stage Manager *Nicola Blackman* Lighting Operator *Robert Hunte*
FOH Audio Operator *Ratu Gordon* Onstage Audio *Jesse Abernathy*
Flymen *Bernie Brown, Ray Pafalani* Properties Master *Bec Ehlers*
Wardrobe Supervisor & Construction *Cathy Pope* Set Construction *2 Construct*
Volunteer Coordinators *Candice De Villiers, Glen Pickering, Lynne Cardy*

The New Zealand Post Season of THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE is the eighth Auckland Theatre Company production for 2008. The production was first performed at the SKYCITY Theatre on 6 November 2008. THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE is approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes long with no interval. Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.

Based on C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E, an original play by The Farm. The Barrington Stage Company workshop of THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE was originally co-directed by Michael Barakivi and Rebecca Feldman. Permission granted by ABRAMS ARTISTS AGENCY, 275 Seventh Ave/26th Floor, New York, NY 10001. All inquiries concerning rights to the Musical shall be addressed to the above.

Original Broadway Production Produced by David Stone, James L. Nederlander, Barbara Whitmas, Patrick Catullo, Barrington Stage Company and Second Stage Theatre.



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Director's Note

Murray Lynch

I enjoyed spelling when I was at school and I have continued to value spelling accuracy, even though the English language is full of absurdly constructed words.

When I first saw the Academy Award-nominated documentary SPELLBOUND, I admired the skill of the eight young Americans from very disparate backgrounds, spelling their way to the finals of the 1999 Scripps National Spelling Bee. Every year, 11 million students participate in the event, and 300 make it to the finals in Washington DC. Nerdy young kids now have their very own competitive sport! In recent years, New Zealand has held its own national spelling bee and the winner is sent to compete in the apotheosis of spelling at the American finals.

Two years ago, I read reviews of an Off-Broadway production fashioned around the spelling bee phenomenon. Composer and lyricist William Finn and author Rachel Sheinkin had taken an improvised play by a small theatre group and turned it into a delightful musical. The charm and integrity of the show has led to it becoming a long-running success, and tonight is your chance to experience the fun.

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with this brilliant team of designers, crew, musicians and cast to bring you what has been called "Survivor for Nerds" and "Chorus Line With Pimples". I hope you enjoy it as much as I do, and I challenge you to join in and measure your own spelling prowess. I'd say the show is a brilliant spelling bee s-u-c-c-e-d-a-n-e-u-m, but you might say that I'm full of r-o-d-o-m-o-n-t-a-d-e.

Only in English!

John Sutherland looks at the history of Spelling Bees and uncovers a contemporary linguistic maelstrom/malström...



The term “spelling bee” doesn’t ring much of a bell in the UK. In the US it does. Everyone knows what they are and most of the population have participated in them. And enjoyed them.

Spelling bees are contests in which school kids (typically) compete to see who can deal most expertly with the grotesque illogicalities of English orthography.

But why “bee”? It’s an interesting word dragging, as do many words in English, a story behind it. The principal meaning of bee is our busy little pollinating friend. That, however, is not what is strictly denoted in “spelling bee”. In the long New England winters, Puritan families would gather round the stove and quilt, gossip or discuss some peculiarly knotty injunction in the Book of Deuteronomy. They would keep their voices low, at mutter level, audible only to their interlocutor(s). The collective sound would be like that of a thrumming hive in autumn. When bible study palled – as it will, even for Puritans – they’d play games. The spelling game (“Who knows how to spell Deuteronomy, children?”) was a kind of boardless Scrabble. Jolly humming.

Nowadays every American school has its spelling bee, as do towns and states. And, of course, there is the big one: The Scripps National Spelling Bee. It’s held every May for eligible American schoolchildren in the eighth grade (aged 13 to 14) and under. The winner gets a cash

reward of 20 grand or more, a truck-load of dictionaries and headlines across the country. It’s Rocky Balboa for juvenile geeks.

The glory spills over on to sponsors as well – usually a (very) local newspaper. In May 2008 the winner was Sameer Mishra (sponsored by the Lafayette Journal and Courier) and the winning word was *guerdon* (ie, reward: contestants don’t have to know meanings, just the spelling).

Young Sameer’s name – pronounced Shameer – is, for Anglos like myself, itself rather hard. That’s often the case and it illustrates why the bee is so symbolic an institution in the US. For “New Americans” the melting pot’s principal solvent is the English language. And it’s the kids who take on the challenge of mastering it.

There was a charming film following the 1999 Scripps Spelling Bee, called *Spellbound*. The winner that year was Nupur Lala and the winning word – tougher than most, I think – was *logorrhoea*. It’s spelled *logorrhoea* over here, but Scripps follows Webster’s Americanised (“Americanized”) version.

American audiences loved *Spellbound*. Many turned up time and again to see it. At one showing in Pasadena, I heard old-hand members of the audience chanting out the spellings with the contestants.

Most nations couldn’t have a national spelling bee because in their languages it’s “what you see is what you hear”. The Germans, who like competition as much as any of us (and, bugger them, more often win), run instead

egregious

egregious

— adjective: more ordinary in some bad way, giving: flagrant; an egregious mistake; an egregious lie.

Origin: 1525–35, Latin

... out of season is bad enough.

pavonine

New Zealand Post

a "longest word of the year" contest. The 1999 winner I find particularly cute: Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz.

It means "beef labelling regulation and delegation of supervision law". There's something wonderfully Teutonic about that megasyllabic mouthful. But no German eight-year-old would have difficulty spelling it. Or, come to that, the German for logorrhea (Gesprächsdrang), which made young Nupur speller of the year. German spell-check programs have an easy time of it.

The Americans wouldn't have been able to have their beloved spelling bees themselves if their great lexicographer Noah Webster (1758-1843) had had his way. One of Webster's revolutionary missions was to liberate English spelling from its English shackles – to decolonise it, if only symbolically. Hence plow (plough), color (colour), center (centre), etc. He could never persuade his compatriots to go all the way. But Webster's mark remains indelibly on American English.

The utter irrationality of British spelling has been most recently attacked by John Wells, a professor of phonetics and president of the Spelling Society. Wells's proposal was, on the face of it, mild enough: "Let's allow people greater freedom to spell logically," adding, "Have we really nothing better to do with our lives than fret about the apostrophe?"

It's stirred the predictable hornet's nest. Lynne Truss, who would go to the stake for the English apostrophe, has come down on Wells like the proverbial ton (tonne?) of bricks.

Most critics assumed, in their fury, that what Wells was advocating was anarchy, with everyone being allowed their own spelling – the kind of "cacography" you see on pub walls. He wasn't. What Wells wants is a little more respect for his beloved phonemes. Bringing, that is, what the eye sees more in line with what the ear hears. A tad more Websterisation ("Websterization"), in other words.

Spelling reform is a culturally important quarrel. It raises hackles. The arguments for and against can be summarised as follows:

The Over My Dead Body Party

1) The English language is not just a semiotic sign system, like Morse code or semaphore. It's a museum. Change the spelling and you vandalise that museum. English words have history inscribed in their eccentric lettering. Websterise plough into plow and you lose a link to the Scandinavian-Viking origin of the word, plogr, and with it, a great chunk of Dark Age history. Change paedophile to pedofile (or "pedo", as the lynchers' placards do) and you lose the Greek origins of paedophilia.

2) The Orwellian argument links into the foregoing. Simplify, or rationalise, language and you impoverish thought. Simplified spelling would, as sure as night follows day, bring with it a simplified vocabulary: "Newspeak", as Orwell called it. Why do we need five words for stop (desist, refrain, cease, halt, etc)? We need them because they refine thought and create epistemic liberty – the kind of liberties that dictators, tyrants and bureaucrats love to iron out. In the above, for example, there's no reason for having both "Teutonic" and "German" available for the point being made. One word would handle the root meaning. But don't the words, in context, have subtly different flavours? And what if one went further and used "Hunnish" or "Kraut"? More words, more freedom.

3) English spelling is inherently lovely, and irregular spelling is part of its loveliness. What English skin doesn't crawl when passing under that huge Freeway sign on the I-210, outside Los Angeles, "Thru Traffic OK"? Could Shakespeare write in Esperanto? Enough said, change nothing.

Change Everything

1) George Bernard Shaw left part of his fortune to the reform of English spelling by means of a new English alphabet or phonetic system (what he called "sound writing"). It looks like Pitman shorthand: all curves and squiggles. Shaw's case rested

pulchritudinous

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pulchritudinous
(pul-kuh-rit-oo-din-oo-s)

— adjective: physically beautiful, comely

Origin: 17th-15; Americanism; from Latin pulchritudo

"Despite the early removal of flesh and permanent scarring, she was still pulchritudinous."

Jackie Clark
Author

on two passionately held beliefs. First, that traditional spelling wasted time, space and printer's ink. Second, that traditional spelling locked the English into pernicious nostalgias for their glorious past. It would be good for our souls to get rid of all that archaeological baggage. We'd travel more lightly into the future.

2) Nowadays, much of our conversation is with computers. They're intelligent machines but they're not always smart and they have a terrible time with English spelling, particularly if, as happens, the users themselves are poor spellers. Google searches, for example, don't bother with apostrophes. They'd lose millions of hits if they did. Spelling and punctuational simplification would lubricate our relationship with the chips that increasingly rule our lives.

3) As Wells points out, spelling and pronunciation anomalies perpetuate unpleasant snobberies in British life. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, is, by those of her own class, pronounced Jorjana. Anyone who does not know that the sound of her name is nothing like the letters is, clearly, an oick. The kind of oick who asks for "Cockburns" port. Or who calls Keira "Kyra".

4) Economy ("Haven't we something better to do with our time?") is Wells's strongest argument. It takes many months of a child's school education to master "correct" spelling. That time could be more productively spent than mastering the mysterious applications of "i after e, except after c".

5) Disabled Access. There are many of us – 10 per cent of the population, according to some estimates – who are dyslexic. They can't spell well and never will. They are not dumb (check out "famous dyslexics" on Google). Logical spelling would be for them what stairlifts and ramps are for the physically challenged.

Myself, I'm relaxed on the subject, as, I suspect, most of us are, though we can see the force of both the

traditionalists and the reformists. I think there is a case for a bit more Websterisation. And a strong case (are you listening, Independent?) for an English newspaper to follow its American counterparts and sponsor a National Spelling Bee. They're fun. 2012 would be a good year to kick off.

John Sutherland is Emeritus Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College London



Cast



JACKIE CLARKE

Jackie last appeared with Auckland Theatre Company in SWEET CHARITY. Her other theatre credits include A CHRISTMAS CAROL, MUM'S THE WORD, JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOUR DREAMCOAT, PORGY AND BESS, LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, THE UNDERWATERMELONMAN and THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND.

Television experience includes judging NZ IDOL and SHOWCASE, co-hosting SATURDAY LIVE, starring in SKITZ and THE SEMISIS and performing live in Coca-Cola's CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK. Jackie recently explored her Scottish heritage as part of the TV series HERE TO STAY and presented the documentaries ANZAC SONGS, WISE WOMEN AND SONG, and TWINS.

Jackie has performed in several revues including SIRENS (with Tina Cross), BROADWAY SONGBIRDS (with Ellie Smith) and LOVE HATE RELATIONSHIP (with Tim Beveridge and Penny Dodd).

Jackie is well known as part of WHEN THE CAT'S BEEN SPAYED, the kitsch Kiwiana trio that boasted two successful albums and several national tours. She released THE CICADA SESSIONS with her alt. country band THE DARLINGS last year and is about to release BLACK IS BLACK with her vocal group THE LADYKILLERS. She also sings in the acappella gospel choir, JUBILATION.



ERYN WILSON

Eryn graduated from Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School in 1994, and since then has enjoyed a varied and successful career as an industry professional.

His film works are THE FREEZER, WHEN STRANGERS APPEAR and THE FEATHERS OF PEACE. Television credits include THE LEGEND OF THE SEEKER, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, SHORTLAND STREET and ORANGE ROUGHIES.

Theatre appearances include THREE DAYS OF RAIN, THE TUTOR, THE BOOK OF FAME, LITTLE CHE, HOWIE THE ROOKIE, MARATHON, CLOSER and TRAINSPOTTING. He is also a voice-over artist, video editor and photographer.

About being in the show Eryn says, "*Spelling Bee brings my primary school days right back into sharp focus. I've always been a good speller. But some of the words in this show have had me stumped for sure!*"



CHRISTINA CUSIEL



Christina Cusiel is one of New Zealand's finest Jazz / Soul vocalists. Classically trained, she studied with several prominent vocal tutors including Malcolm McNeill, and while completing her Jazz Course at Christchurch Polytechnic, she started MIDAS TOUCH, a Manhattan Transfer-influenced showband.

MIDAS TOUCH became the first Kiwi band in over a decade to perform in Switzerland at the Montreaux Jazz Festival alongside world-renowned artists such as Betty Carter, Bobby McFerrin and Cassandra Wilson.

She also toured Noumea with reggae band RASBONTE, played support for Dionne Warwick and in 1996 was named Female Vocalist of the Year in the Wellington Music Awards.

From 1997 - 1998, Christina travelled to China to perform at the Hard Rock Café in Guangzhou. Upon returning to Wellington, she fronted the RODGER FOX BAND before forming LADY MARMALADE and jazz group CHRISTINA CUSIEL TRIO.

Performing her original songs, Christina joined well known television and radio personality Gary McCormick on his MILLENNIUM MAN tour. Her other credits include acting and singing in the Tommy Loungerillo Orchestra for the Laugh Festival and Nelson Festival of the Arts, presenting a sold-out concert at the Wellington Jazz Festival and performing in various arts festivals.

Christina is also part of the international entertaining girl group THE BEATGIRLS. She also played the musical roles of Elizabeth II in MONARCHY and Cleopatra in ROME.

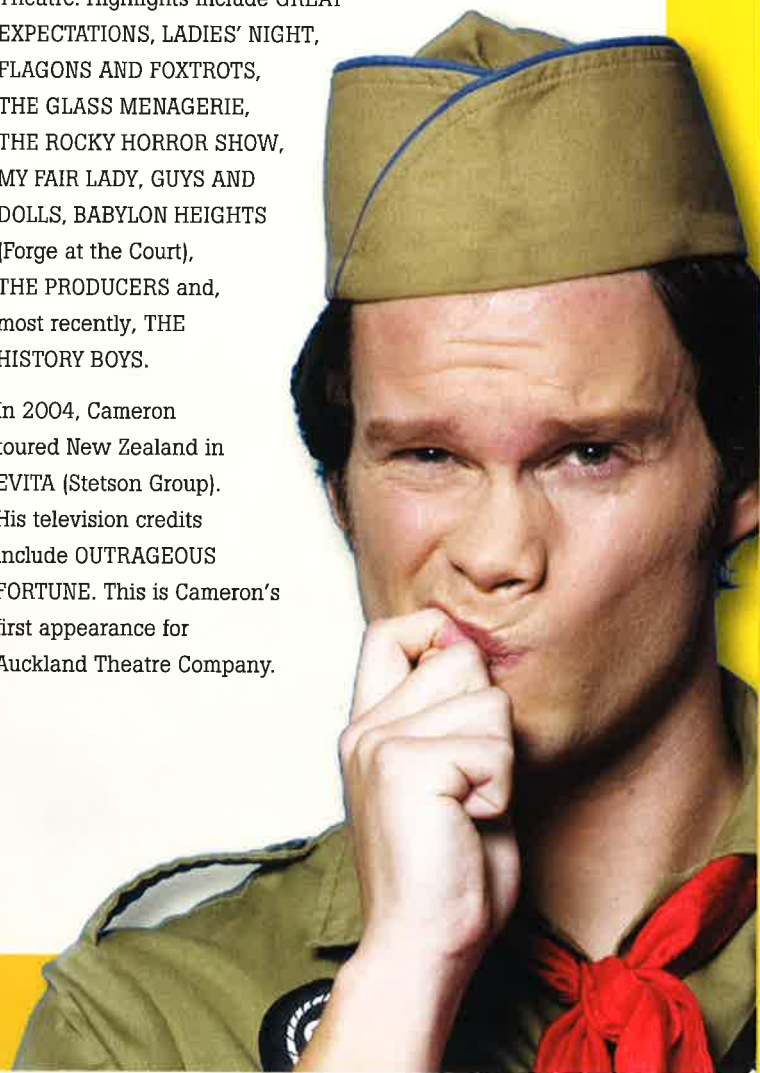
Original music is Christina's main focus with well over three albums' worth of material. She is currently working on her debut album.

CAMERON DOUGLAS



Cameron graduated from NASDA in 2002 with a Bachelor of Performing Arts. Since graduating, he has performed in numerous shows for Christchurch's Court Theatre. Highlights include GREAT EXPECTATIONS, LADIES' NIGHT, FLAGONS AND FOXTROTS, THE GLASS MENAGERIE, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, MY FAIR LADY, GUYS AND DOLLS, BABYLON HEIGHTS (Forge at the Court), THE PRODUCERS and, most recently, THE HISTORY BOYS.

In 2004, Cameron toured New Zealand in EVITA (Stetson Group). His television credits include OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE. This is Cameron's first appearance for Auckland Theatre Company.





SEMU FILIPO

Of Samoan and Tokelauan descent, Semu is amping at the opportunity to jump on board THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE express. A graduate of Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, Semu has appeared in various theatre and television shows.

His theatre credits include SONS, SIMI'S PLIGHT, PENUMBRA, ROMEO AND JULIET, PALANGI LOI, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, AND WHAT REMAINS, BASED ON AUCKLAND and TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE. Musical works are LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS and WEST SIDE STORY. In the SHORTLAND STREET television series, Semu is Grunter, the ambulance driver, and his debut performance in a feature film is in Anthony McCarten's SHOW OF HANDS.



KRISTIAN LAVERCOMBE

A graduate of NASDA, Kristian has worked for several theatre companies around New Zealand. He has performed in over 20 productions for the Court Theatre in Christchurch including ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD, LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE - ABRIDGED, THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, AMY'S VIEW, SKYLIGHT and MOTHER COURAGE.

In 2007, Kristian made his debut at Downstage Theatre in URINETOWN. His television credits include IVANHOE - DARK KNIGHT. Recently together with Rima Te Wiata, Kristian co-wrote and directed MATARIKI - FIRE AND ICE for Venture Southland.



MADELEINE SAMI



Madeleine began her professional acting career at the tender age of 18, with BARE for the Silo Theatre. She followed with the acclaimed solo show, NUMBER TWO. Both plays toured extensively throughout New Zealand and internationally.

Other theatre appearances include THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES, BADJELLY THE WITCH, SOME GIRL[S], RABBIT and WHERE'S NEW NET. Television and film credits include SIONE'S WEDDING, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO HAPPINESS and THE JAQUIE BROWN DIARIES.

This is Madeleine's second appearance for Auckland Theatre Company and her first professional role in a musical. Performing in a musical has been a lifelong dream so...yay for Madeleine! She also sings in a band with her sisters, THE SAMI SISTERS. They are cool! You should definitely come and see their next gig!



ESTHER STEPHENS



Esther graduated from UNITEC School of Performing and Screen Arts in 2006. During her time there she appeared on secondment in Auckland Theatre Company's production of TWELFTH NIGHT.

Other theatre works include MARAT/SADE, THREE SISTERS (UNITEC), 'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE and BASED ON AUCKLAND (Silo Theatre). Her musical theatre credits include CORAM BOY, PIPPI LONGSTOCKING, BLOOD BROTHERS (Peach Theatre Company) and, most recently, THE THREEPENNY OPERA (Silo Theatre/The Large Group).

Esther is also an established singer, performing in two Auckland bands and with a number of other artists, including Nathan Haines, Tama Waipara and Solaa.

JASON TE PATU



Currently based in Australia, Jason is thrilled to be back in New Zealand for his role in THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE. His previous Auckland Theatre Company productions include THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, HAIR and CALIGULA. Other works include: LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (Downstage Theatre), SMOKEY JOE'S CAFE (Marshall Stack) and the world tour of BOOGIE NIGHTS (QDos Productions).

After sharing the lead role of Maui in the national tour of MAUI – ONE MAN AGAINST THE GODS, Jason joined the Australia touring cast of MISS SAIGON. Choreography credits include the first two series of NZ IDOL, KARAOKE HIGH, THE GOOD MORNING SHOW and BODYJAM for Les Mills International. In Sydney, he is a highly sought-after jazz, hip hop and vocal performance teacher. Jason would like to thank Mike and his whanau for their continued support.

Creative



MURRAY LYNCH DIRECTOR

Murray has worked at nearly every major professional theatre in New Zealand since he began his career at Four Seasons Theatre in Wanganui in 1973. He was Artistic Director of Centrepoint Theatre in Palmerston North and Associate Director at Auckland's Theatre Corporate.

He formed Auckland based theatre-in-education company SPARE PARTS, was Artistic Director of the Maidment Arts Centre and went on to form the highly acclaimed TANTRUM THEATRE.

Murray later became Associate Director of Downstage Theatre (1991 – 1992) and was voted Best Director by Wellington critics for his production of THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

In 1993 he moved to Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School to tutor and subsequently headed the Acting and Directing Programmes there until his appointment as Artistic Director of Downstage from 2000 – 2005.

In 2006 he studied full time at Victoria University, graduating with a Masters in Theatre with distinction. Murray was a founder of the Masters in Directing programme which is jointly taught by Toi Whakaari and Victoria University.

Other directing credits include the NZ International Arts

Festival (1996) production of WAIORA, and in 2000 Murray was commissioned by the NZ International Arts Festival to co-write and direct BLUE SMOKE.

Recently, Murray directed Disney's HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL for Wellington Musical Theatre as well as productions for Fortune Theatre, Centrepoint Theatre and Circa Theatre.

He has been a project manager and assessor for the Arts Council of NZ and has served on many boards. Currently he is a trustee of the board of the New Zealand School of Dance.

JOHN PARKER SET & COSTUME DESIGNER



"I like Broadway shows, so having the chance to bring a lesser-known one that I admire to Auckland has been a gift.

I get off on research when working on a design. My set is an evocative stylisation of every gym in every American film from GREASE to HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL. I also enjoy creating back-stories for the characters when designing

Madison as Oliver's Dad



*white cotton striped shirt
Expensive
pinstriped
Sund*

costumes. The costumes become individual personalities that the actors can inhabit.

And of course it's great working with Murray again for the first time in Auckland since those golden Theatre Corporate days of HOOTERS, TRUMPETS AND RASPBERRIES."

John Parker is an award-winning set designer and is as well respected in the world of ceramics as he is in set design. He has a long history of designing for Auckland Theatre Company.

His set designs include END OF THE RAINBOW, SWEET CHARITY, DOUBT, MUM'S CHOIR, TAKING OFF, EQUUS, CALIGULA, THE BACH, MIDDLE AGE SPREAD, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, NOISES OFF, WAITING FOR GODOT, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTEIN ARE DEAD and INTO THE WOODS.

Other works include IL TROVATORE, TRUE WEST, THE THREEPENNY OPERA, CHESS, ROMEO AND JULIET, TITUS ANDRONICUS, TWELFTH NIGHT, F.L.L.T.H., ASSASSINS, WAIORA, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, DECADENCE, ON THE RAZZLE, CHICAGO, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, BARBER OF SEVILLE, COSI FAN TUTTE, EVITA and TRASH TO FASHION.

John has also designed for The Louis Vuitton Ball and The America's Cup Ball, Bendon's Next To Nothing, BellSouth Pharaohs, Precious Legacy and Peru: Gold and Sacrifice for Auckland Museum. He was awarded a Waitakere City Millennium Medal for services to the community.



BRYAN CALDWELL LIGHTING DESIGNER



"A comic musical - how much more fun can you have creating a show!"

BLACKBIRD was Bryan's most recent lighting design work for Auckland Theatre Company.

Other Auckland Theatre Company credits include the musical HAIR and WIT (both of which Bryan won the Audience Award for Best Lighting Design), THE PILLOWMAN, THE BLUE ROOM, ROSENCRANTZ AND GILDENSTERN ARE DEAD, WAITING FOR GODOT, STONES IN HIS POCKETS, THE GOD BOY, ART, CABARET, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, CLOSER, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, VITA AND VIRGINIA, JULIUS CAESAR, TWELVE ANGRY MEN, HONOUR, MASTERCLASS, ALL MY SONS, ARCADIA, MOLLY SWEENEY and UNCLE VANYA.

His recent work has seen him travelling the world lighting the 150th Birthday Parties for Louis Vuitton, revealing a waka in the dawn fog under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, creating a video installation luring Aucklanders into some of the darkest alleyways around Queen Street, and completing a PhD researching electrical activation in the heart.

Other recent theatre designs include SONS OF CHARLIE PAORA at the Royal Court Theatre in London, THE HOLY SINNER at the Wellington International Festival 2006 and Black Grace's AMATA.



GRANT WINTERBURN *MUSICAL DIRECTOR*

"THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY BEE is a refreshingly witty, clever production with wonderful characters and some terrific musical surprises.

The score has great variety with interesting syncopated rhythms to keep the musicians busy during the synchronised spelling routines. It is also very much an ensemble piece, with a large number of complex group vocal arrangements.

It has been a thrill to go on the journey from day one of rehearsals with a room full of people and a myriad of notes and to gradually build the musical layers towards the finished product on opening night.

Collaborating with Murray Lynch and such a talented cast, band and creative team has been an entertaining and gratifying experience.

As the song says: 'Until we meet again, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye'."

Grant Winterburn is one of New Zealand's leading keyboard players on both piano and organ and has many years' experience as a musical director, soloist, session musician and keyboard lecturer.

He was the Musical Director for Silo Theatre/Large Group production of THE THREEPENNY OPERA and is also the pianist and musical director for the critically acclaimed

shows FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN and THE LOOK OF LOVE starring Jennifer Ward-Lealand.

He regularly appears at festivals and concerts nationwide with some of this country's most established performers. For Auckland Theatre Company previously, Grant was the Musical Director for THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW and A CHRISTMAS CAROL and played keys on HAIR.

He also boasts an encyclopaedic knowledge of HAMMER HORROR films and vampire lore and if put on the spot could probably spell "acciaccatura" correctly.



SACHA COPLAND *CHOREOGRAPHER*

"Spelling Bee excited me initially because of the huge characters.

The heightened nature of each of the speller's quirks and charms lends itself naturally to movement. Their age has been a key provocation for the movement too. They are on the cusp of adulthood, precariously balanced between innocence and coming of age. Physically I found this fascinating; their childhood exuberance and instinctive relationships with their bodies sitting alongside the awkwardness of puberty and the need to be accepted.

The music is another driving force. The rhythms, the lyrics and the range of musical qualities has propelled the choreography. It's been incredible to see Grant and the cast bring the music to life with such colour and distinctive characterisation.

The final provocation was the set. I wanted to explore how the spellers could at times break down the formality of the space and allow their inner child to 'stir up the air'.

It has been a pleasure to work with Murray; for his vision, his attention to detail and his emphasis on integrating the choreography. It has been fantastic to be in the rehearsal room for the entire process and feed into the whole."

A New Zealand School of Dance graduate in 2002, Sacha is the founder of Java Dance Company. She has choreographed and produced major dance theatre works including ESPRESSO (2003), THE PLATINUM CONNECTION (2004), RUSH HOUR (2005), A BLAST FROM THE PAST (2006) and, most recently, ITCHY FEET, all to critical acclaim.

Sacha also choreographs for theatre, where her credits are A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT DREAM (Circa Theatre, 2005), MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (VUW Summer Shakespeare, 2005) and PERICLES (Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, 2004). Last year, she was commissioned to choreograph SWAP, a new work for the Vector Wellington Orchestra.

As a dancer and aerialist, she has performed in three seasons of MAUI – ONE MAN AGAINST THE GODS. Since 2004, Sacha has taught for the New Zealand School of Dance in addition to choreographing repertoire for the students. Her work was recently featured in the Tempo Dance Festival.



We'll begin with box, and the plural is boxes;
But the plural of ox should be oxen, not axes.
Then one fowl is goose, but two are called geese
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.

You may find a lone mouse or a whole lot of mice,
But the plural of house is houses, not hicc.
If the plural of man is always called men,
When couldn't the plural of pan be called pen?

If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?
If the singular is this and plural is these,
Why shouldn't the plural of kiss be nicknamed kesse?

I take it you already know
Of tough and bough and cough and dough?
Others may stumble, but not you
On hiccough, thorough, slough, and through?

And dead; it's said like bed, not bead;
For goodness sake, don't call it deed!
Watch out for meat and great and threat,
(they rhyme with suite and straight and debt)

And then there's dose and rose and lose –
Just look them up – and goose and choose.
And cork and work and card and ward,
And font and front and word and sword.

And do and go, then thwart and cart.
Come, come, I've hardly made a start.
A dreadful language? Why, man alive,
I'd learned to talk it when I was five!

Attempts have been made to secure copyright clearances
for published poetic material



Creative

The Farm was founded in 2000 by Rebecca Feldman, Artistic Director. It is a collective of writers and performers, including Jav Reiss, Dan Fogler and Sarah Saltzberg. The Farm's interest is in the role of improvisation and creating new work for the theatre. The Farm initially designates a two-week intensive period in which to discover, develop and rehearse a play from the impulses borne mainly out of the pressure of a deadline. Previous projects include "Super" (at Atlantic Theatre Studios), "Why I hate Florida" (workshop at White Wave in DUMBO), and C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E" (at the Present Company Theatorium in October 2002), on which "THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE" is based. The characters and original dialogues of "Beth Marguiles," "Vice-President Douglas Panch," "Mr Barfee," and "Logan Schwarzengrubinierre" were created by Rebecca Feldman, Jay Reiss, Dan Fogler, and Sarah Saltzberg, respectively.



WILLIAM FINN *COMPOSER/LYRICIST*

William is the writer/composer of *FALSETTOS* (two Tony Awards; Best Book of a Musical [with James Lapine] and Best Original Score). He has written/composed *IN TROUSERS* (L.A. Drama Critics Award), *MARCH OF THE FALSETTOS* (Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Musical, L.A. Drama Critics Award), *FALSETTOLAND* (two Drama Desk Awards and Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical), *ROMANCE IN HARD TIMES* (Public Theater), *A NEW BRAIN* (Lincoln Center/Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Musical) and *ELEGIES: A SONG CYCLE* (Lincoln Center). He graduated from Williams College, where he was awarded the Hutchinson Fellowship in Musical Composition, and currently teaches a weekly masterclass at NYU's Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program.



RACHEL SHEINKIN
BOOK

At the Guthrie: *LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE*; Theatre Broadway: *THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE*; Off-Broadway: *STRIKING 12* (in collaboration with rock trio GrooveLily, directed by Ted Sperling); Regional and International: *SLEEPING BEAUTY WAKES* (score by Brendan Milburn and Valerie Vigoda, director Jeff Calhoun); Deaf West, Center Theater Group; book and lyrics for *SERENADE* (music by Nils Olaf Dolven): Jaradoa Theater Company; book and lyrics for *BLOOD DRIVE* (music by Joel Derfner), Bridewell Theater London. Teaching Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, National Theatre Institute Awards: Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award, LA Stage Alliance Ovation Award; Fellowships/Commissions: Baryshnikov Dance Foundation, Manhattan Theater Club, Playwrights Horizons, Eugene O'Neill National Music Theater Conference, MacDowell Colony. Professional Affiliations: ASCAP, Dramatist Guild.

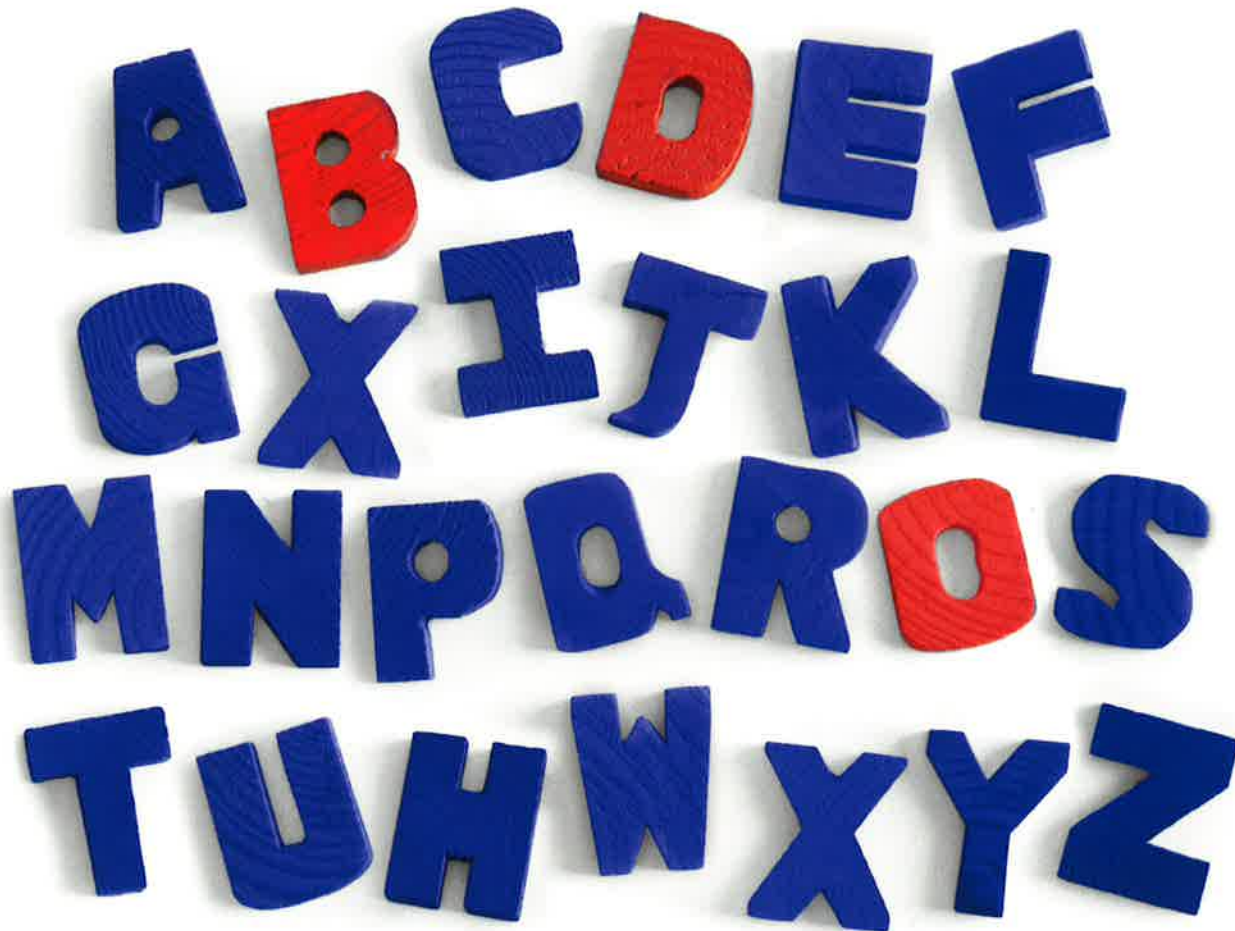


REBECCA FELDMAN
CONCEIVER

Rebecca conceived, directed and performed in *C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E*, the play upon which *THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE* is based, with her company The Farm. She worked on the development of *THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE* and directed the original production at Barrington Stage Company in the summer of 2004. She has directed and performed in New York and regionally for the past 10 years, including New York Fringe Festival (Best of Fringe '98), Soho Rep, *HERE*, Atlantic Theater Studios, Adobe Theatre, New Dramatists, Mabou Mines, Present Company Theatorium and other downtown venues.



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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS

By John Buchan

Adapted by Ross Gumbley

Maidment Theatre

12 February – 7 March, 2009

Our handsome all-action hero Richard Hannay encounters dastardly murders, double-crossing secret agents and, of course, devastatingly beautiful women, in a race against time to save the British Empire.

SILO THEATRE, Auckland

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED

By Douglas Carter Beane

Herald Theatre

24 October – 15 November

Go behind the scenes of a comical, celebrity obsession and poignant scandal-du-jour involving movie star Mitchell Green.

CENTREPOINT THEATRE, Palmerston North

THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP

By Charles Ludlam

8 November – 20 December

Poking fun at everything from B-grade horror films to Victorian gothic spinechillers, the show is a frenetic, high energy rollercoaster ride into madness and beyond!

DOWNSTAGE THEATRE, Wellington

THE LOOK OF LOVE

By Jennifer Ward-Lealand

8 December – 18 December

THE LOOK OF LOVE reunites Jennifer Ward-Lealand with Musical Director and pianist Grant Winterburn, bassist Aaron Coddell and lighting designer Andrew Malmo for a sophisticated and cosmopolitan night of song.

CIRCA THEATRE, Wellington

RED RIDING HOOD – THE PANTOMIME

By Roger Hall

15 November – 20 December

Be prepared for lots of fun, hilarious jokes and musical goodies in Red Riding Hood's basket as she sets off on her journey to entertain young and old with a marvellous magical treat.

COURT THEATRE, Christchurch

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES

By Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein

22 November – 14 February

Bon soir! Welcome to the pride of St. Tropez, the envy of the cabaret world, the jewel of the Riviera, La Cage aux Folles!

FORTUNE THEATRE, Dunedin

JACK & THE BEANSTALK – THE PANTOMIME

By Roger Hall

7 November – 6 December

Jack and his mother are in debt again! There's laughter, innuendo without end and loads of topical jokes.



To find out what else is going on in Auckland be sure to pick up the latest copy of citymix.

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

Artistic Director Colin McColl General Manager Lester McGrath

Literary Manager Philippa Campbell

Creative Development & Education Manager Lynne Cardy

Associate Director Production Mark Gosling

Senior Stage Manager Nicola Blackman Technical Manager Bonnie Burrill

Marketing & Communications Manager Michael Adams

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Operations Manager Brendan Devlin Ticketing & Box Office Supervisor Anna Nuria Francino

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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS PRODUCTION:

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12 March – 4 April



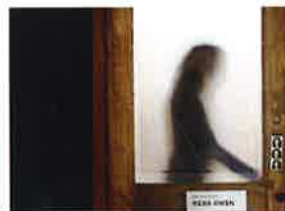
SHE STOOPS
TO CONQUER
Maidment Theatre
30 April – 23 May



FOUR FLAT
WHITES IN ITALY
SKYCITY Theatre
11 June – 4 July
Bruce Mason Centre
9 July – 11 July



GOD OF
CARNAGE
Maidment Theatre
23 July – 15 August



THE
POHUTUKAWA TREE
Maidment Theatre
3 – 26 September



OLIVER!
SKYCITY Theatre
29 October –
22 November

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