

Portraying a 12-year-old Spelling Bee Contestant Brings Back Fond Memories of Growing up in St. Charles

By: NobleFoolTheatricals

04/13/10 03:27 PM 72 hits



Ian Paul Custer

Ian Paul Custer was excited to land a role in Noble Fool Theatricals production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* playing at Pheasant Run April 22 through June 13. In this Tony Award-winning new musical comedy, six of Putnam County's quirkiest and nerdiest spelling titans want nothing more than to be the B-E-S-T. These loveable spellers, played by adults, fiercely battle it out for the title only to learn that winning isn't everything and losing doesn't necessarily make you a loser. This comical competition comes alive with a cornucopia of spelling words, a plethora of sharp humor, and intelligent interaction with help from only the best spellers in the audience.

Custer is no stranger to St. Charles, having grown up here and attending Wild Rose Elementary, Thompson Middle School, and St. Charles North High School. He studied theatre under Anne Voigtman Hunt, Donna Steel, Ryan Colton, and Dale Morgan, performing in school plays and in the St. Charles Arts and Music Festivals.

Custer plays 12-year-old Barfee, an extremely determined young student obsessed with winning the Bee who struggles with echolalia and a rare mucus membrane disorder. Custer, along with all of the five contestants, are all hilariously portrayed by adults. And while this brings on many laughs, there's also touching lessons every character learns throughout the contest.

"Working on the character has definitely triggered great memories from growing up in St. Charles," says Custer. "It reminded me how everything seems so huge when you're young and small, and how you want to be as big as the world around you. So even the smallest

mistakes we make can be earth shattering to our 12-year-old lives. Everything that happens when you're young is the most important thing that has every existed - because that's all you know."

Custer is enjoying his first production with Noble Fool. "There is such a great energy from everyone associated with the production. Kevin Bellie and Peter Storms have such positive, fun attitudes and allow so much creativity from everyone in the cast in hopes to make a warm show. There's no stress, only playfulness which is important to have in the rehearsal room when mostly everyone's playing 12 year olds!"

The cast of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* features (in alphabetical order): Samantha Dubina (previously in NFT's *The Taffetas*), Chie Isobe, Liza Jaine, Randolph Johnson, Erik Kaiko, Cara Rifkin, Jack Sweeney, and Michael Weber (previously in NFT's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Form* and directed *Mid-Life! The Crisis Musical*).

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee opens on Thursday, April 22, 2010 and runs through Sunday, June 13, 2010. Show times are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. Thursday performances are available on April 22 and 29 at 8 p.m.; May 6, 13, 20 and June 3 at 2 p.m; May 8 at 4:30 p.m. The show is rated PG-13 due to mature situations and language.

Pheasant Run Resort is located at 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles, IL. For tickets, call the Pheasant Run Box Office at 630-584-6342, or visit www.ticketmaster.com. Additional performance information may be obtained at www.noblefool.org.

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