

The logo features the text "The 25th Annual Putnam County" in a blue, handwritten-style font at the top. Below it, the words "SPELLING BEE" are written in a large, bold, blue, blocky font with a slightly distressed or stamped appearance. The entire logo is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

The 25th Annual Putnam County SPELLING BEE

Rocklin Community Theatre is bringing a bright new comedy to Finn Hall. *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* opened Off Broadway in 2005 to rave reviews. In a real-time stage version of a small-town spelling bee, six quirky adolescent spellers (played by an adult cast) compete for a chance to go to The National Spelling Bee and learn that winning isn't everything and that losing doesn't necessarily make you a loser.

Jeremy McCarter wrote in Arts & Letters about the original production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*:

"If Charlie Brown taught us anything, it's that trauma is funny, adolescent trauma is funnier, and sensitive, intelligent adolescent trauma is funnier still. With its lofty parental expectation, inconvenient priapism, and six-syllable words, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* is downright hilarious."

Terry Treachout wrote in The Wall Street Journal:

"Sometimes you can tell how good a show is going to be as soon as it starts. The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee was like that. The lights went down, the orchestra struck up, and an anxious-looking teenager walked on stage and sang: 'At the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee / My parents keep reminding me / Just being here is winning / Although / I know it isn't so.' Pow! All at once Second Stage Theater was filled with the warm, knowing laughter of a roomful of people who knew they were about to have their socks charmed off."

Charles Isherwood wrote in the New York Times:

"Can you spell irresistable? Drat! I mean, irresistible? Yea or nay, that's precisely the word for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, the lovably inconsequential, entirely adorable new musical that opened Off Broadway last night at the Second Stage Theater.

"A modest production that, unlike many of today's musicals, feels refreshingly handcrafted rather than manufactured by committee and market-tested, *Spelling Bee* brings to the stage the culture's current mania for celebrating that most revered of American virtues, the will to victory.

"Fictional though it is, the competition proceeds according to the strict rules of bees everywhere, which will be painfully familiar to anyone in the audience with a history, however brief, of bee participation.

"(Writer) Ms. Sheinkin displays remarkable ingenuity in exploiting the structure dictated by the rules for comic fodder. (Lyricist) Mr. Finn meanwhile provides the reflective interludes in which the kids reveal the insecurities and anxieties beneath the steely armor of ambition they wear for the competition.

"Although you know full well the ending is scripted and thus preordained, it's hard not to get caught up in the sweaty spirit of competition. In this and some other respects the musical uncannily recalls another, now-classic, show that also dissects the joys and despairs of ruthless competition: *Spelling Bee* is, in essence, *A Chorus Line* with pimples."

Richard Zoglin wrote in *Time* Magazine:

"One girl walks only in straight lines, talks like a lisping machine gun, and has pigtails pulled so tight she looks as if she's going to explode. Another kid is a portly know-it-all with a sinus condition and a special trick of spelling his words silently in advance - by tracing them on the floor with his foot.

"Broadway has had its share of nebbishy musical stars, from Seymour Krelborne in *The Little Shop of Horrors*, to Leo Bloom in *The Producers*. But it's fair to say that no stage has ever been so densely populated with wacky misfits as *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. The off-Broadway musical, a sleeper hit that is moving to Broadway next month, charts the angst of six nerdy and needy young people as they wrestle down words like *omphaloskepsis* in their efforts to win a trip to the national spelling bee finals.

"With witty, lightweight songs by William Finn, the show is, first of all, a funny spoof of the rituals of these contests - from the up-close-and-personal commentary, delivered in earnest half-whisper by the moderator ('Mr. Barfee has a sea anemone circus in his basement'), to the ridiculously unhelpful sentences meant to put the words in context ('Sally's mother told her it was her *cystitis* that made her special').

"Yet what's so winning about this show is how these dysfunctional teens grow on us through the evening and become poignant object lessons in the hazards and rewards of our driven, elimination-tournament culture."