

arts & culture

The Studio Theatre Reveals Upcoming Mystery Musical

“The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” follows competitors as they strive for the championship.

By **LEAH SHEWMAKER**

Daily Sun Staff Writer

Patrons were on the edge of their seats after The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol announced a mystery musical a month ago.

Now the wait is over.

The theater recently revealed the show as “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.”

“I’m thrilled that it is finally announced and I don’t have to sit on this secret anymore,” said Nathaniel Niemi, director of the show. “We are all very excited about it.”

Patrons can attend opening night at 7 p.m. Aug. 4.

The show continues its run at 2 and 7 p.m. on select dates until Aug. 26.

The musical comedy follows an eclectic group of

preteens (played by adults) competing for the spelling bee championship, while candidly sharing hilarious and touching stories about their home lives.

Tickets are \$45 at thevillagesentertainment.com or any Villages Box Office location.

“This show is hysterical,” Niemi said. “There is a joy in the awkwardness of adolescent enthusiasm. And I love that there is audience participation — that’s really fun.”

During the show, a few volunteer audience members will get to be spellers.

“Because of the audience, every time we do the show, it will be different,” said Gary Powell, music director for the show.

Powell said the spellers’ inner monologues will resonate with audiences. He said he also was prompted into school spelling bees when he was a child.

“We can all relate to being a child under pressure, especially those of us who were forced into spelling bees,” he said. “And the music is very

MINI SUMMER VACATION SERIES AT THE STUDIO THEATRE TIERRA DEL SOL

“Unnecessary Farce”

- » \$35 at thevillagesentertainment.com
- » 2 and 7 p.m. on select dates June 9 to July 1
- » American Sign Language interpreted performance offered on June 27

“The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”

- » \$45 at thevillagesentertainment.com
- » 2 and 7 p.m. on select dates Aug. 4 to Aug. 26
- » American Sign Language interpreted performance offered on Aug. 15

truthful but framed in an innocent way.”

Niemi said audiences will leave with a smile on their faces.

“This is a light, summer show with beautiful music,” Niemi said.

Niemi said this show is a beloved musical theater

standard.

“There is a reason for that,” he said. “It’s joyous and rib-tickling with tons of energy. And there is a spirit of improv, so we’ll get to play with that in a way that we really haven’t (at The Studio Theatre) before.”

Niemi said the show will be very intimate in an alley-style configuration, with the audience on either side of the stage.

He said it fit with the show’s gymnasium setting.

“The action will unfold right in front of them,” Niemi said. “The energy is going to burst off the stage.”

“The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” will be the second show in The Studio Theatre’s Mini Summer Vacation Series.

“It feels great to have a summer where we just have some fun,” Niemi said. “The studio has such a rich mission, and our shows have all aligned with that. But with these shows, we get to let our hair down, laugh and be a little goofy — that is something we are all really looking forward to.”

Powell said it’s a fun and light approach to the summer season.

“It expands our already

stellar regular season,” he said.

The Mini Summer Vacation Series will kick off with “Unnecessary Farce,” at 7 p.m. June 9.

The comedy features an embezzling mayor who is supposed to meet with his accountant, Karen, while in the next room, two police officers are supposed to catch the encounter on videotape.

Confusion ensues and the characters are left reeling, trying to figure out who is in which room and why unexpected events continue.

The comedy runs through July 1.

“There were shows we talked about doing that didn’t quite fit in our previous themes,” Niemi said. “This is a chance for us to do those shows.”

Though the Mini Summer Vacation Series shows are lighthearted, there is some adult content.

Patrons can read about trigger and adult content warnings at thesharonstudio.com.

Staff writer Leah Shewmaker can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5228, or leah.shewmaker@thevillagesmedia.com.

Celine Dion Cancels European Tour Dates

The Associated Press

Celine Dion has canceled all her scheduled tour dates through April 2024 as she continues treatment for a rare neurological disorder.

“I’m so sorry to disappoint all of you once again,” the singer said in a statement on social media. “I’m working really hard to build back my strength, but touring can be very difficult even when you’re 100%. It’s not fair to you to keep postponing the shows, and even though it breaks my heart, it’s best that we cancel everything now until I’m really ready to be back on stage again.

A total of 42 European dates have been canceled, including stops in the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Austria, England, Scotland and Ireland.