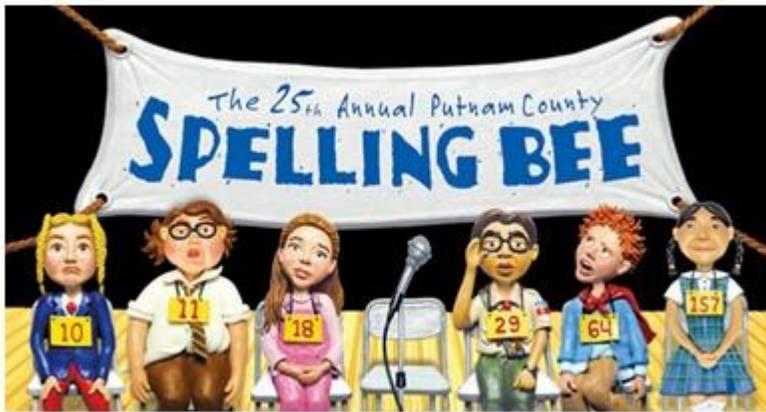




FCCMT Presents: The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Zoey Przekurat



After recent successes with musicals such as the colorful *Once On This Island* and the upbeat urban musical *In the Heights*, FCCMT is proud to tackle their next musical theater challenge in Monteverde: *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. The musical tells the story of a band of students brought together to compete in

the titular spelling competition. As the plot unfolds, the unlikely group develops and learns about their unique places within their community. A quirky comedy riddled with improvisation and character-audience interaction, *Spelling Bee* is expected to travel to various locations throughout Monteverde and Costa Rica spreading messages about identity and acceptance - with a humorous twist.

Kathleen Tissot, the returning director of *In the Heights*, expects everything to run smoothly as the production staff begins planning, conducting auditions, and organizing the cast and crew in the beginning of June. Kathleen is working alongside a dedicated and experienced team: music director Luis Dario Villalobos and executive producer Lisa Burns have participated in every FCCMT production to date; Erin Lafferty has worked on the staff of three previous musicals in Monteverde; and Zeke Blackwell and Jaclyn Kottman return after having worked on *Once on this Island* in 2012.

According to Kathleen, *Spelling Bee* "fits the group of actors and provides countless opportunities for improvisation and audience participation." Dario points out another advantage: since *Spelling Bee* had already been performed in Spanish, the team does not need to create their own translation. Instead, they can work with the translated version of the script and modify it to fit Monteverde's diverse audience and growing group of young actors.

Students are excited to be participating in the summer musical, which has become a consistent opportunity for Monteverde's youth over the past few years. Jose Pablo Salazar, one of FCCMT's many experienced young actors, continues to participate "in order to become a better actor and singer while working with my friends." FCCMT has built a positive reputation for musical theatre with a strong group of artists who continue to work with and learn from the organization year after year. Erin Lafferty notes that the musicals have "really become



a community event rather than an experience for a select group of students... People from all over town and the zone get involved to make our shows and programs the best they can possibly be."

As FCCMT grows and establishes a team of dedicated staff members and aspiring actors, singers, and dancers, the organization continues to spread its roots through the community. FCCMT's mission of exposing young artists to musical theatre through participation, planning, practice, and presentation of a piece, drives the organization to provide one of the best learning experiences in Monteverde. *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* will demonstrate excellence of cast and crew and mesmerize the audience with its interactive, upbeat style. This year's musical theatre production is not to be missed.

In a Word: Maravillosa! All About FCCMT's First Live Radio Drama

Christie Coran



Learning lines, practicing music, rehearsing tech-- putting on a live show is never easy, and this past December FCCMT did it all in just one week! *Es Una Vida Maravillosa*, FCCMT's very first live radio drama, was performed live at the Monteverde Friends Institute on December 28th and broadcast on Monteverde FM.

Featuring a cast of eleven local actors of all ages from the Monteverde community, *Es Una Vida*

Maravillosa (It's A Wonderful Life) told the classic Christmas story of everyman George Bailey's wonderful life. "Only one member of the cast had seen the original movie," director Kathleen Tissot said. "So we watched the DVD with Spanish subtitles together. When it was over, they all just said, 'Wow. What an amazing story.'"



Although assembling a show from start to finish in just one week was a challenge, Tissot said that once the show was cast, things quickly came together. "We all had a lot of fun together," Tissot said, "and I was surprised by how easily everything fell into place."

Using an abridged, 45 minute version of the movie that was translated into Spanish, the cast rehearsed for 2 or 3 hours every day. "A lot of the actors played multiple characters-- so they had to use different voices for each one," Tissot said. "That was a lot of fun."

The story spoke to young and old alike, perhaps because, as Tissot put it, "the message is so universal: that one person's life can affect so many others."

Farther Corners: FCCMT's First Steps Toward China

Michelle Boesch and Frances Wilson

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This year marks the beginning of a new project here at Far Corners Community Musical Theatre: we recently formed a committee to begin the work on a new Musical Theatre Connections program in China. Our plan is to send an exploratory committee to China in the fall, with the program beginning in the summer of 2015. So far, our committee has three members: Michelle Boesch, past staff member for FCCMT Monteverde and current board member; Frances Wilson, an online volunteer looking forward to participating

abroad; and Zoria Lu, who was a participant in the Far Corners production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in Jiujiang, China.

Currently, we're expanding our web of contacts in China, honing our proposal and message for the program, and exploring the practical steps needed to actually get us there. We're looking at second- and third-tier cities



in China, hoping to find NGOs or universities willing to partner with us to create an eight-week summer program culminating in a professional theatre show. As we craft this new program, considerations of location, resources, population, cultural sensitivity and exchange, time, financial support and potential partnerships all provide concerns for thought and discussion.

As China is one of the largest and fastest-growing superpowers in the world today, heading there presents an amazing opportunity for Far Corners to truly embrace its mission to create a global community. The bureaucracy of China, the language barrier and the sheer distance between us and the other side of the world can be intimidating, but the thought of this cultural collaboration we're embarking on, where we're bringing a new show to an entirely new community, creates palpable enthusiasm. We are on the brink of a new horizon, quite literally, and it's an incredibly exciting time to be a part of Far Corners!

The committee meets every two weeks, doing whatever we can to keep things moving on our journey to the west. As we work toward our first summer program in China, we are going to need lots of people to help in getting us there. Anyone with interest in or connections with China, contact us! If you are interested in participating or volunteering with our new China project, we would love to hear from you. You can contact us at china@farcornersmusicals.org.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee: A Veteran Staffer Gives Us the Buzz

Frances Wilson

FCCMT has presented seven productions in Monteverde since 2005, from *The Music Man* to *Urinetown* and, most recently, *In the Heights*. Luis Dario Villalobos, a Costa Rican Far Corners alumnus and current music director, has been there for all of them. He sat down with us to discuss the upcoming production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.

Why did you choose Spelling Bee?

I think that *Spelling Bee* is a really appropriate show for the Monteverde audience. The way that the show presents its ideas is especially going to be a hit, since it's been a while since we put on a



real comedy! Our past four productions have been pretty serious shows, addressing sensitive subject matter with a serious plot. Like *Urinetown*, the last comedy we put on, *Spelling Bee* does delve into sincere issues, but it's upbeat and hilarious!

How much of the musical will be in Spanish?

The entire thing will be in Spanish, which is so exciting for us! Kathleen Tissot, our program and theatre director, and I worked hard on getting a professional translation from the first company outside the USA to translate the show into Spanish and perform it. The translator was Enrique Arce and the original director was Ricardo Diaz--both extremely well known figures in the theatre scene in Mexico.

You're a long-term participant in FCCMT. What is the draw for you to come back every year?

This program means everything to me. Far Corners truly changed my life, and I want to help change other people's lives. I have a straightforward definition of wealth, and it's not about money or possessions. It's about glimmering eyes. The more they glimmer, the more you know you're doing something right. With Far Corners, the wealth of glimmering eyes surrounding me, where people are experiencing expression and passion, is huge.

What do you think the participants and community get out of a program like this?

Of course, the community gets exposure to new ideas and a foreign art form, but, really, they get the chance to just sit in the dark for two hours and escape to a new world... and it's magical. I got to watch the audience when I directed the music for *In the Heights* last season, and it was so cool to get comments like "I had no clue you had live music! I sat there and figured it out eventually, but didn't realise at first--and let me say that the combination is GENIUS!" and others, "Wow, music and theatre go so well together, who would've thought?" People aren't very familiar with the genre, and we get to show them what musical theatre is while they get to see their friend, son, daughter, cousin, brother or sister up on stage, which is itself pretty amazing.

What do you think the community will get out of Spelling Bee in particular?

The audience participation is going to be fantastic with this show, and I think that our participants will have a blast! *Spelling Bee* is really appropriate for our community because its whole theme is



about what it means to be successful. This will be a very rich topic to discuss with the cast, especially in a place so far away from the capital.

The Personal Touch: FCCMT Exceeds Fundraising Expectations

Jon White

In the final months of 2013, as the curtain closed on another year of FCCMT productions, the behind-the-scenes work of fundraising was only just beginning. At the end of each year, FCCMT's Board and staff members work tirelessly to raise funds for upcoming projects. This year, the fundraising bar was set at \$6,000 for the annual campaign, representing the full budget for this year's musical theatre camp in Costa Rica. While this may seem like a relatively small amount, it was the organization's highest fundraising goal yet. But how does a small organization, supported by individual donors, continue to thrive in a difficult economic climate?

To find out more, I spoke with Patti Lafferty, current treasurer of the Board of Directors. Raising money for a non-profit arts organization requires a specific knowledge of aspects both artistic and financial. Patti not only has a background in both, but her daughter, Erin, is a choreographer and active volunteer in FCCMT's work in Monteverde, making Patti perfectly suited for the job. Erin "volunteered in Monteverde in various capacities for the last four years and will be returning again this summer. I joined the board of directors 2 + years ago in the capacity of Treasurer. I felt that my years of accounting experience and running small businesses with my husband would give the board the expertise they needed from a business background," she explains.

Patti approached this year's fundraising campaign with a few major goals in mind:

- Reaching out to repeat donors: The number of repeat donors to FCCMT has increased steadily since 2008. This statistic is a powerful representation of the satisfaction among those who have donated to the FCCMT in the past, which certainly helps to gain the support of potential donors. More than that, repeat donors represent a worldwide "family" for FCCMT whose support is far more than just financial.



- Establishing a personal connection: Patti understands that every potential donor has their own fiscal responsibilities and it takes a certain amount of trust to choose to donate to a non-profit organization. According to Patti, reaching out and making personal connections is crucial to establishing that trust. "Personal involvement seemed to tip the balance for contributions."
- Utilizing social media: A wide range of publicity tools are essential to reaching a broader spectrum of future benefactors. "We definitely used Facebook to "share" fundraising milestones, and in one case, that elicited a donation from someone who wasn't on my original list." By sharing photos, videos, and testimonials from past productions, FCCMT can also let its donors "see the value and the importance of helping a fine arts organization because they understand the importance that it can have in a child's life."

In 2013, these tactics provided a solid foundation for the annual fundraising campaign. Despite a continued decline in funding for the arts nationwide, FCCMT has managed to buck the trend this year, surpassing their fundraising goal of \$6,000 for their most successful campaign yet!

Although the annual campaign was a success, fundraising is a year-round effort. As FCCMT seeks to expand to China and to establish year-round programs in Monteverde, the need for a strong financial foundation increases. Even as we look for ways to expand our donor base, the organization is seeking opportunities to attract international participants, apply for grants, and receive sponsorships for our work.



Volunteer Corner

Katherine Szocik



Greetings from the volunteer department! My name is Katherine Szocik and I have recently taken over the volunteer coordinator position. I have had a lot to learn, but I am getting the hang of it and I really enjoy assisting all the people who want to help out.

Far Corners came into my life through a Google search that my mom did in 2009. That summer I headed off to Costa Rica to participate in the musical Urinetown. I had always been interested in the Spanish language and theatre, and Far Corners was the perfect way to combine them. I continued with these interests and recently graduated from Oberlin College with a B.A. in Theater and Latin American Studies. After Urinetown, I went back to stage direct *Oliver!* in the summer of 2010, and then again to help out with *Little Shop of Horrors* in 2011. I am so happy to be back volunteering with an organization that has shaped my interests in community theatre.

We currently have wonderful volunteers who help us with everything from translation and writing and designing this newsletter, to producing a yearly musical in Costa Rica (and sometimes in other countries as well!). Past projects have included designing posters advertising the experience in Costa Rica, making a large plant puppet for a show, doing research online, and translation.

We are always looking to expand our volunteer base. If you would like to participate, either on-site or over the web, please email me at volunteer@farcornersmusicals.org. We have volunteers of all ages and from different countries (not just the U.S.) who work anywhere from a few hours a month doing cyber volunteer projects to 40+ hours a week on-site to put on the shows. Our projects require all sorts of different skill sets (internet research, translation, web design to name a few), which means that everyone is able to contribute something.



Support our programs!

FCCMT depends on the contributions of individual supporters around the world to make our programs possible. A donation of ANY amount makes a real difference in our ability to provide opportunities in the performing arts to youth in under-served communities.

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