

# Pre- Audition Notes

## Akeelah and the Bee



### 1. Production Policies

- a. Students must be enrolled in a Winter Session class before you can be scheduled for an audition time.
  - i. Once you have auditioned, you will not be eligible for a refund or credit for your class tuition.
- b. You must be age 8-18 on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 to be eligible audition or crew the show.
- c. You must have an appropriate crew credit.
  - i. After two shows as a cast member, you must crew a show before you can audition again.
- d. You may not miss any performances or tech week rehearsals.
  - i. Tech Week: Feb 25 12-6p, Feb 26<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> 4-8p, Mar 1<sup>st</sup> 5:30-9p
  - ii. Performances:

*Friday Mar 2 at 7p*  
*Friday Mar 9 at 7p*

*Saturday Mar 3 at 2p*  
*Saturday Mar 10 at 2p*

*Sunday Mar 4 at 2p*  
*Sunday Mar 11 at 2p*

- iii. School Day Performances:

*Wednesday Mar 7<sup>th</sup> 8:30a-2p*

- e. There is a \$95 Production Fee for cast members and \$50 for Crew Members. This pays for memory books, production and lobby photos, parties and receptions, director's gifts, etc.
- f. There are parent volunteer requirements that are great ways to get involved.

### 2. Audition Process

- a. Audition workshops are available prior to the week of auditions. Each workshop is a 20 minute, one on one session with a Junior Theatre teaching artist who will listen to your audition piece and offer suggestions for improvement. The cost for this workshop is \$25. Please call the office to schedule a workshop.
- b. Audition Dates
  - i. Auditions are by appointment only, and are held in one-half hour increments. Please arrive at least 15 minutes early to check in at Room 208.

*Tuesday January 9<sup>th</sup> 4-6p*

*Wednesday January 10<sup>th</sup> 4-6p*

- c. What to prepare for auditions
  - i. Come to auditions with the audition form filled out completely. Be honest about any conflicts! Include a recent headshot.
  - ii. Students should prepare a 1 minute monologue, poem or story. Do something you are comfortable with. A memorized piece is preferred, but not necessary.
- d. Call Backs Date

*Saturday January 13<sup>th</sup> 4-7p*

### 3. Rehearsals

- a. First rehearsal will be held Monday January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 4-6p. Everyone is called to the first rehearsal.
- b. Rehearsals will be Monday-Friday from 4-6p. From February 19<sup>th</sup> till 23<sup>rd</sup> rehearsals run Monday-Friday from 4-7p
- c. All actors will not be called to every rehearsal. A detailed rehearsal schedule will be handed out at first rehearsal

### 4. Questions

### 5. Director's Notes



## FROM THE DIRECTOR:

### James Saba

Junior Theatre is proud to celebrate our diversity with Akeelah and the Bee! We have been practicing non-traditional casting for 70 years. This means a student will always be considered for any role despite their race, gender, or ability. We also celebrate diversity by choosing culturally- specific plays and musicals that put the spotlight on cultural identity, such as Akeelah and the Bee. Every effort will be made to fulfill the vision of the playwright, but adjustments in gender and ethnicity might be necessary depending on our casting pool.

Break a L-E-G!

## SHOW SYNOPSIS

Akeelah Anderson, an 11-year-old spelling enthusiast, attends middle school in the southside of Chicago. She lives with her widowed mother Gail and her older brother, Reggie. Her principal suggests that she sign up for her school wide Spelling Bee. She follows his advice and wins. Soon after, Dr. Joshua Larabee, a visiting English professor and her principal's friend from college, tests Akeelah and decides that she is good enough to compete in the National Spelling Bee. Nevertheless, Dr. Larabee declines to coach her because she is rude to him. As a result, Akeelah studies on her own to prepare for the district spelling bee. Although Akeelah misspells her word during the final round of the bee, she qualifies for the regional bee when the other finalist is caught cheating. Akeelah also meets and befriends Javier Mendez, a 12-year-old Mexican American boy and fellow speller. Javier invites her to join the spelling club at his Woodland Hills middle school.

At Woodland Hills, Akeelah meets Dylan Chiu, a Chinese American boy who had won second place at the past two national spelling bees. Contemptuous, he asks her to spell "xanthosis". When she starts with a "z", he tells her she needs a coach. At the conclusion of the spelling club meeting, Javier invites Akeelah to his birthday party. At the party, Akeelah nearly beats Dylan in Scrabble. The boy is reprimanded by his father for nearly losing to "a little black girl". After the party, Gail is concerned about her daughter's grades and frequent truancy. As she finds out about Akeelah going alone to Woodland Hills, she subsequently forbids Akeelah from participating in the upcoming state bee. To circumvent this prohibition, Akeelah forges her deceased father's signature on the consent form and secretly studies with Dr. Larabee. During the state bee, Gail comes inside and interrupts her daughter before she can spell her word. Gail relents after a side discussion with Dr. Larabee and the principal. Javier protects Akeelah from disqualification by stalling until she can return. Dylan, Javier and Akeelah advance to the National Spelling Bee.

When Akeelah meets Dr. Larabee for coaching, he reveals that he is quitting being her coach because she reminds him of his deceased daughter. Instead, he gives Akeelah 5,000 flashcards to study. Without her coach, rejected by her best friend Georgia, and feeling the pressure from her neighborhood residents to make them proud, Akeelah loses her motivation. However, Gail tells her that if she looked around her, she would realize that she has "50,000 coaches". Akeelah recruits her family members, classmates, teachers, friends, and neighbors to prepare in earnest. After reuniting with Dr. Larabee, Akeelah goes to Washington, D.C. with him, along with Gail, Georgia, and her principal. Georgia rekindles her friendship with Akeelah after she invites her. During the competition, Akeelah becomes a crowd favorite. After all the other competitors are eliminated, only Dylan and Akeelah remain. The two finalists are allowed a break, during which Akeelah overhears Dylan's father harshly pressuring him to win. Akeelah attempts to intentionally lose by deliberately misspelling "xanthosis". Dylan, knowing that Akeelah knows this word, intentionally misspells it as well. Dylan tells Akeelah that he wants a fair competition, rejecting his father's obsession to win. The two then proceed to spell every word listed by the judges in the hopes of winning the championship together, with Dylan earning a share of it by correctly spelling "logorrhea", much to his father's delight. Akeelah spells the last word on the list, "pulchritude", and the two are declared co-champions amidst a cheering crowd.

## CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

**Akeelah Anderson-** Female, 11-15 African American

**Gail Anderson-** African American, Akeelah's mother

**Reggie Anderson-** about 20, African American, Akeelah's brother

**Dr. Joshua Larabee-** African American, Akeelah's spelling bee coach/teacher

**Georgia-** 11-15, Akeelah's best friend

**Batty Ruth-** African American, Akeelah's first floor neighbor

**Trish-** female, 12-15, any ethnicity

**Izzy-** female, 11-15, any ethnicity

**Mr. or Mrs. Chiu-** Asian American, Dylan's Parent (This role may be cast either male or female)

**Mr. Willie-** African American, Building superintendent

**JT-** 21, African American, neighbor

**Ratchet Rhonda-** female, 11-15, African American, Akeelah's nemesis

**Dylan Chiu-** male, 12-15, Asian American, Akeelah's spelling bee competitor

**Javier Mendez-** male, 12-15, Latinx

**Principal-** The principal of Akeelah's school. Any ethnicity or gender

**Other Roles:** There will be an ensemble for this production, playing a variety of roles. Gender and race is open to all.