

MITCH MAHONEY [Actor also plays DAN DAD, and OLIVE's DAD in fantasy]

With a bouncer's physique and demeanor, Mitch appears an odd choice to be the bee's "comfort counselor," but it's part of his community service assignment. The outsider, who in a way gets to inhabit the audience perspective, he wonders about the wisdom of putting the kids through this at all. He has no idea how to offer comfort, but does increasingly find himself wishing he could find a way to make the kids feel better about losing, and perhaps place misspelling in wider perspective.

Mitch:

p.38

You can't comfort these damn kids. They don't yet know that the good don't always win, so there's nothing you can say to cheer them up when they lose. I want to tell them disappointment doesn't last—but from what I've seen disappointment lasts like hell. I want to tell them words don't matter; but from what I've seen words can get you killed. I just want to beat them up a little, so they understand that pain has degrees, and this is nothing—this is nothing, you little freaks. But that would violate my parole. So I do what I can. I give them a hug and a juice box. I'm here to give comfort.

OLIVE OSTROVSKY

A word lover, Olive has a fairly quiet life. An only child with often-absent parents, Olive spends a lot of her time alone. She fills some of that time reading the dictionary-the words bring her comfort, as does the idea of the vastness of the world the book contains. During the first half of the play, she often peers into the audience to see if her father, who is delayed at work, has made it yet. She starts enormously shy, and shyly blossoms.

Olive Ostrovsky

p. 14 – 15

(seeing someone taking chair she saved)

Oh, excuse me – ma'am/sir could you not sit in that seat –
I saved a chair for my dad in the eighth row; and it may take him a while but when he gets here,
that's his chair.

(getting caught up in her own memories)

'Cause my mother's in an ashram in India. I saved a chair for her too but it's merely symbolic as
daily she cleanses herself in the Ganges. And I live in a house where there's an oversized
dictionary that I read as a girl on the toilet.

(called back to spelling reality)

Boanthropy. Is that from the Latin root *bo* meaning ox, and the Greek root *anthro* meaning man?

VICE PRINCIPAL DOUGLAS PANCH of Lake Hemingway Dos Passos Junior High is frustrated with his life. He fell into education, less out of love than a general ability uncoupled to a particular passion. The drive of the young spellers is alien to him. He never found anything that important. Stuck in his current job, endlessly awaiting a promotion that isn't coming, he was not happy to get the call this morning that he was needed to substitute; but he starts the bee eager to do well, to redeem himself for past mistakes, and to impress the local hostess, Rona Lisa, who impressed him long ago.

Vice Principal Douglas Panch:

p. 8

Thank you Rona, and I would like to say as to the incident 5 years ago, I'm in a much better place now.

**[Ad lib note: Here, the actor reading for Panch has the option to ad lib some reference to "the incident" at his digression. As originally written, the line reads: "It's amazing what a change of diet can do for a man. Thank you." The original line would be a fine choice, but you have the option to change it]*

(Has always been a bit smitten by Rona)

And may I add, Ms. Peretti here is not only one of Putnam County's top realtors, she's also a former spelling champion herself. Beautiful.

And now for the Pledge of Allegiance led by our comfort counselor,
(Checks writing on the palm of his hand)

Mr. Mitchell M. Mahoney.

LEAF CONEYBEAR [actor also plays CARL DAD]

A second alternate, he never expected to compete here today. Home-schooled with his many siblings, everything about this public bee is an adventure for him, from meeting the other kids to showing off his homemade clothing, to each moment of unexpected attention. He may have severe Attention Deficit Disorder but delights in his own wandering focus. Leaf doesn't expect to win – or even to spell one word correctly – but he finds absolutely everything incredibly amusing. His mother has made him wear his protective helmet to the bee.

Leaf Coneybear

p. 11 – 12

(Phone rings. A flashback to the moment when he found out he's in.)

Thanks! I got it!

Hello, Leaf speaking. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Uh, huh.

You're kidding? I'm gonna represent the Basin in the bee? Wow, I can't believe it.

Mom, Dad, Marigold, Brook, Pinecone, Raisin, Landscape, Paul, - you're not going to believe this! I made the county finals in the spelling bee!

(LEAF'S FAMILY laughs.)

I know! but they just called and said the person who came in first has to go to their *bat mitzvah*, and the person who came in second...has to attend the *bat mitzvah*, so they want me to do it!

RONA LISA PERRETTI [Actor also plays OLIVE's MOM in fantasy]

Putnam's long-time spelling bee hostess, a local realtor, and 3rd annual Putnam County spelling champion. This is the Rona's day to be queen. From her perspective she keeps the bee running smoothly, upholds protocol, and conveys crucial information to the audience. Her interest in the competition is unflagging and drives it forward. She thinks of this as a complex cerebral sporting event, and she wants the audience to understand every twist and turn. If anything, in her life in general, she has to minimize the importance of this event to her, embarrassed that her own championship moment remains such a highlight. A little concerned when the substitute word pronouncer arrives, she knows she has to step up her game to make the day a success.

Rona Lisa Peretti

p. 7

Ladies and Gentlemen, all the children you see on stage are here because of their extraordinary ability and love of language—but only one of them can go on to compete in the National Spelling Bee! Hello, I'm Rona Lisa Peretti, and I'm pleased to be back for my 9th consecutive year as your host. Unfortunately, our usual word pronouncer, Superintendent Spriggs has [fallen ill]*, so please join me in welcoming Vice Principal Douglas Panch, returning to us after a five-year hiatus – so thank you Douglas for stepping in on such short notice

WILLIAM BARFEE

Has a host of health problems and a lot to prove. Loud and combative as a defensive posture, he is the fat kid who becomes a bully to avoid being picked on (though he often gets picked on anyway so gets into a lot of fights). His parents are divorced, his father remarried to a much younger woman; and William does not expect kindness from anyone but his mother. So friendship takes him by surprise. Still, he's noticed on the spelling circuit for his remarkable technique - spelling words out on the floor with his foot. Taken out of competition last year because of an ill-timed allergic reaction, he's here for vindication. The journey he doesn't expect is one of coming to care about someone else –when he sees outside his own needs for perhaps the first time, it shakes him fundamentally.

William Barfee

p. 44

(to a recently eliminated CHIP)

See you next year.

(CHIP throws a package of peanut M&Ms at Barfee.)

What are you nuts!

(sees what it is)

Nuts! You threw the yellow ones!

Will someone pick up the p – ? I can't be near the peanuts!

(OLIVE comes and picks up the package. Gives it back to Chip)

You could be disqualified for that – if you hadn't already been eliminated!

[CHIP: You know something, Barf: I may have lost, but you are the biggest loser here.]

Oh yeah? Well, that is a common misperception.

BARFEE shouts ad-libs at Chip as he exits [eg: Barfee—“This is a bully-free zone” from the original set, that had that sign visible on stage]

MARCY PARK

The ultimate over-achiever, Marcy has never been given another option. She comes from a family where excellence is expected and so simply produced. A parochial school student, she assumes God, too, expects perfection. She sees herself as a mass of problems but she keeps them to herself. Having moved often because of her parents' work, she knows she can beat the local competition. Her many talents include piano, dance, martial arts, baton twirling, and/or whatever special gifts you can find in your casting pool.

Marcy Park
p. 56 – 57

Camouflage.

(to herself)

Dear Jesus, can't you come up with a harder word than that?

(responding to JESUS's voice, which she hears clearly in her head)

Jesus? Hi! How are you?

Jesus... I was wondering what would happen if I didn't win today.

What I mean is, would you be disappointed with me if I lost?

You're saying it's up to me then?

(she returns to spelling)

Camouflage. C-A-M...O-U

(still deciding)

F-L...A...J

(and as soon as she dares miss the first letter, she takes more and more joy in getting it wrong)...

Z!!!...H!!! Camaflajzh!



CHIP TOLENTINO [actor also plays JESUS]

The reigning spelling champion of Putnam County, relatively athletic and social, he expects things to come easily to him. Lately though, he's been going through some weird changes, and things are slipping out of his control. (Be aware when casting his solo requires him to sing a lot of high notes a lot of times.)

Chip Tolentino:

p. 37 – 38

Tittup. T... I...

(reluctantly, but he knows it)

T... U – Oh wait. Two t's. You heard both, right? Backing up, T-I-T-T-U-P. Tittup

(Ding)

No, but, I wasn't sure if you heard both t's. I obviously know how to spell it...

That's not fair. I got it right. I can't get out on a word I spelled right.

Miss Peretti, can I have one more chance? Please?

LOGAINNE SCHWARTZANDGRUBENNIERE

Younger than most bee participants, she is driven by internal and external pressure – but above all by a desire to win to make her two fathers (from whom she takes her combined last name) proud. She lisps, is a little uncomfortable in her body, has some tics, but still manages to strike a strong presence with her political awareness and keen sense of justice. Having drilled words for hours a day, she is aware of everything that passes in the room.

Logainne SchwartzandGrubenniere

p. 59, 94

Doesn't anybody else here care about the rules?

(BARFEE and PANCH both raise their hands.)

This bee is about as [well-organized as]

(and seeing an opportunity she goes to the microphone and makes a political speech. The speech is re-written at least weekly, a topical ad-lib)

[Please either prepare a short, topical speech for the audition, or choose from one of Sarah Saltzberg's speeches from the original Broadway performances, included in the "Sides Appendix."—either is perfectly acceptable]

APPENDIX #3 Scwarzy Ad-Libs (examples)

From the authors: "Schwarzy's ad libs" are the most topical part of the script and must be rewritten to reference current and/or local news items. As you can see, whatever the topic, she frequently works in her two fathers. These were generally written by Sarah Saltzberg, and added to by subsequent Schwarzys.

This bee is as confusing for me as Father's Day! As the daughter of 2 gay dads, I'd like to know who scheduled Father's Day and Gay Pride weekend, within 7 days of each other?! Well anyway, to celebrate Gay Father's Pride week, which is what we call it in my family, we went to go see "Cinderella Man" - but it wasn't exactly what we were expecting.

This bee is about as misguided as the current administration! With the Patriot Act about to expire, President Bush was quoted in this weeks NY Times as saying "in times of terrorism, some civil liberties must be sacrificed. But I will do my best to protect them." As a progressive, half-Jewish, mixed race child of 2 gay fathers, I really don't think he's got my civil liberties in mind.

This bee is as confusing as George Bush seeing Brokeback Mountain. Thursday night is movie night in my house, and this past Thursday my dads and I, went to go see a special screening of Brokeback Mountain. My Carl-Dad said he couldn't see cowboys without thinking of George Bush, and then my Dan-Dad said he couldn't see gay cowboys without thinking of Karl Rove and George Bush. And then the man behind us said "yes, and isn't nice to see them screwing each other for a change!" We laughed...

This bee is nose-diving faster than Star Jones' career!! Star Jones' "resignation" from The View sent shockwaves through the Schwartzandgrubenierre household, until we realized - my Dan Dad would be a perfect replacement. They both lost a lot of weight doing pilates, they both have issues with Rosie O'Donnell, and they both married gay men! So Barbara, consider this-my Dan Dad would be an asset to your show, and as my Karl Dad says, he's more of a big black queen than Star Jones will ever be!!

This bee is about as shocking as Lance Bass coming out of the closet! Former N'Sync member Lance Bass literally rocked the nation earlier this week when he proudly came out of the closet- though as my dads pointed out, the highlighted hair tips have always been a little bit of a dead giveaway. Anyway, I applaud Lance for taking a stand and essentially bein' the anti-Bush poster boy-he's openly gay~ he's dating someone with a very foreign name and he wrote the song that I want to sing to President Bush when he finally leaves office-(with boy band choreography singing) - I wanna see you out that door - baby, bye bye bye!!!