

September 20, 2022

For Immediate Release

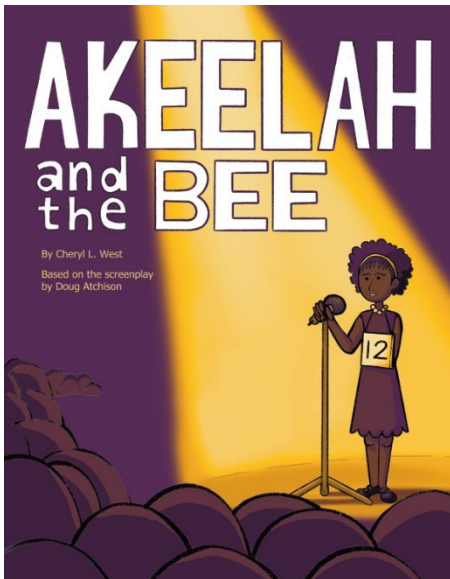
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The Coterie Opens
2022/2023 Season with
Inspiring Stage Adaptation
of Popular Film
Akeelah and the Bee

OVERVIEW:

WHAT: *Akeelah and the Bee*

By Cheryl L. West

Based on the screenplay by Doug Atchison

WHEN: **September 20-October 16, 2022**

Press / Opening Night: Friday, September 23, at 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: The Coterie, Level one of Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO

PRICE: \$12.00 for youth under 18, students, and seniors 60 and older;

\$15.00 for adults;

\$6.00-\$8.00 for groups of 20 or more

INFO / RESERVATIONS: The Coterie Box Office

Phone: (816) 474-6552

Online: www.thecoterie.org

Kansas City, MO – The Coterie opens its 2022/2023 Season with *Akeelah and the Bee*, adapted for the stage from the popular feature film. Directed by Teresa Leggard, *Akeelah and the Bee* will be performed live on The Coterie's mainstage located in Crown Center, September 20-October 16, 2022.

ABOUT THE PLAY

In ***Akeelah and the Bee***, a young girl with natural spelling talent from the South Side of Chicago, Akeelah Anderson, is forced to expose her hidden smarts when her principal pushes her to participate in the school spelling bee. At first fearful of being mocked as a “brainiac,” Akeelah eventually agrees to be coached by reclusive and strict Dr. Larabee. Plus, her mother doesn’t see the pulchritude - a new word audiences will learn - of spelling an amazing word. To make it to the finals of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, Akeelah will need to make some hard choices and find all the help she can get.

Akeelah and the Bee is adapted for the stage by Cheryl L. West based on the screenplay of the popular 2006 feature film by Doug Atchison, which starred Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett. The film received numerous awards and nominations, including the Black Reel Awards, Black Movie Awards, and the NAACP Image Awards, where Doug Atchison won Outstanding Writing in a Feature Film/Television Movie. Film critics highly praised the movie for avoiding African American stereotypes commonly found in Hollywood films. Reviews also lauded the story for its inspiring journey with *The New York Times* hailing the story’s ability to capture the “innate suspense and charm of the spelling bee... a tale that manages to inspire without being sappy,” and *Los Angeles Times* calling it, “genuinely sweet and determinedly inspirational.”

The Coterie’s production of ***Akeelah and the Bee*** will run approximately 70 minutes with no intermission and will be best appreciated by families with ages 9 and older.

THE ARTISTS

Akeelah and the Bee is directed by Teresa Leggard. The cast features Anjaneé Canady (as Akeelah), Walter Copping (as Dr. Larabee), Alexandria Radford (as Georgia), Thomas Tong (as Dylan), Robin Robles (as Javier), Tahraji Millsap (as Ratchet Rhonda), Elizabeth Breshears (as Trish), James Hawkins (as Reggie), SyKnese Fields (as Gail), Ai Vy Bui (as Principal Welch), Cynthia Hardeman (as Batty Ruth), Eric Palmquist (as Dylan’s Father), and JT Nagle (as Radio DJ/Bee Emcee). Understudies for the production are Ellianna Hishaw, Shamika Franklin, Frank Dodson, Russ McKenzie, Evana Kumar, Cameron James, Wesley Chen, Leila Sufi, and Yordanos Miller. The artistic and production company includes Jeff Church (co-director), Steve Emerson (production stage manager), Marc Wayne (technical director/master carpenter), Kelli Harrod (scenic designer), David Kiehl (sound designer), Gianna Agostino (composer/associate sound designer), Jarrett Bertoncin (lighting designer), Georgianna Londré Buchanan (costume designer), Eric Palmquist (properties designer/set dressing), Brodie Rush

(projections designer), Pam West (production assistant/deck manager), and Jason Coats (COVID safety manager).

SHOW DATES, TIMES & TICKETS

The Coterie, named “One of the Five Best Theaters for Young Audiences in the U.S.” by *TIME* magazine, will begin ***Akeelah and the Bee*** on September 20 and run through October 16, 2022, in The Coterie Theatre, located on level one of the Crown Center Shops in Kansas City, MO. Press Night will be held on Friday, September 23, at 7:00 p.m. The performance runs approximately 70 minutes with no intermission and will be appreciated by families with ages 9 and older. All tickets are on sale now through The Coterie’s box office at **816.474.6552** or www.thecoterie.org.

- **Individual Tickets:** Tickets are \$12.00 for youth under 18, students, and seniors 60 and older; \$15.00 for adults.
- **Group Pricing:** The Coterie offers groups of 20 or more special rates ranging from \$6.00 - \$8.00 per person, depending on performance date.

NOTABLE PERFORMANCE EXTRAS

During the run of *Akeelah and the Bee*, The Coterie will offer these special performances:

- **Opening Night** - Friday, September 23 at 7:00 p.m.
- **Sensory Friendly performance** for neurodiverse audiences featuring technical adjustments, sensory supports, house lights on and flexible audience expectations - Thursday, October 6 at 11:45 a.m. and Friday, October 7 at 7:00 p.m.
- **Interpreted performance** in American Sign Language - Saturday, October 8 at 2:00 p.m.

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR AKEELAH AND THE BEE

SEPTEMBER 20 - OCTOBER 16, 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		20 9:45 am	21 9:45 am	22 9:45 am	23 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	24 2 pm
25 2 pm	26	27 9:45 am	28 9:45 am 11:45 am	29 9:45 am 11:45 am	30 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	1 2 pm
2 2 pm	3	4 9:45 am	5 9:45 am 11:45 am	6 9:45 am 11:45am	7 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	8 2 pm
9 2 pm	10	11 9:45 am	12 9:45 am 11:45 am	13 9:45 am 11:45 am	14 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	15 2 pm
16 2 pm						

CALENDAR LEGEND



Opening Night



Interpreted performance in American Sign Language



Sensory Friendly Performance for neurodiverse audiences featuring technical adjustments, sensory supports, house lights on and flexible audience expectations

THE COTERIE

The Coterie Theatre was designated by *TIME* magazine in the top three theaters for young audiences in Nov. 2004, calling it “groundbreaking... one of the nation’s most respected.” The Coterie, located in Kansas City, Missouri, has been at the forefront of commissioning new works or adaptations that contribute to the field of theatre for young audiences. More than 50 world or

American premieres for all ages have been produced by The Coterie over the last 25 years, during Artistic Director Jeff Church’s tenure, including hosting multiple major Broadway composers and lyricists to shape quality musicals for youth and families. The Coterie is interested in intergenerational conversation, and consistently includes teen programming in its season and outreach efforts. The Coterie’s community programming redefines traditional notions of work for young audiences with its unique dramatic writing programs (Young Playwrights' Roundtable), teen LGBTQ work (Project Pride), and mental health workshops in a dramatic format (Project Daylight), all free of charge, as overseen by Executive Director Joette Pelster and a dedicated staff. All these components serve an average of 97,000 per year through over 350 performances. The Coterie Theatre School has locations throughout greater Kansas City. Donate at www.thecoterie.org.

OUR FUNDERS

The Coterie is funded, in part, by National Endowment for the Arts, Missouri Arts Council, The Shubert Foundation, Muriel McBrien Kauffman Family Foundation, and Theater League.



THE 2022/2023 SEASON

Following *Akeelah and the Bee*, The Coterie’s 2022/2023 Season continues with the return special engagement of *Tell-Tale Electric Poe*, October 20-30, 2022; the beloved holiday classic, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, November 15-December 31, 2022; the world premiere of a new play inspired by overlooked Kansas City history, *Only One Day a Year*, January 31-March 5, 2023; the fun family musical, *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!*, April 4-May 21, 2023; and the world premiere of the youth and family version of *Doctor Dolittle*, based on the popular movie musical, June 27-August 6, 2023.

Production photos will available online at www.thecoterie.org/press-room.

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Due to the nature of live theatre, play selection, performance schedule and casting are subject to change.

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