

# Akeelah and the BEE

**October 21 –  
November 20, 2016**



**Nov. 17, 18 & 20**





**CHARLES D. BAKER**  
GOVERNOR

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**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON, MA 02133  
(617) 725-4000

**KARYN E. POLITO**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

October 2016

Dear Friends:

Dear Dr. Chard and the Wheelock Family Theatre Community,

It is my great pleasure to welcome Dr. Chard as the 14<sup>th</sup> President of Wheelock College and to thank the College and Wheelock Family Theatre for your shared mission of improving the lives of children and families.

Since 1981, Wheelock Family Theatre has played an important role in the Commonwealth by providing inclusive, professional theatre experiences for close to one million people of all generations. WFT has been a leader in colorful casting, and providing open captioning and ASL interpretation for people with disabilities.

This exciting 36<sup>th</sup> season line-up of *Akeelah and the Bee*, *Billy Elliot the Musical* and *Charlotte's Web* offers something for everyone. Each tells the stories of young people who follow their hearts and inspire communities, much like the founders of the Theatre itself.

With all our best wishes for a great season,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Baker".

**CHARLES D. BAKER**  
GOVERNOR

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karyn E. Polito".

**KARYN E. POLITO**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

October/November 2016

Dear Wheelock Family Theatre-goers,

As the third show of our 35th season, we're thrilled to be producing Robert and Willie Reale's musical *A Year with Frog and Toad*, based on the beloved books by Arnold Lobel. Written for early readers, Lobel's stories about friendship have been enjoyed for many generations by people of all generations. *A Year with Frog and Toad* was originally performed at Children's Theatre Company and on Broadway by an ensemble of five adult actors. WFT continues to demonstrate its commitment to inclusive professional theatre experiences by casting 21 young thespians to perform alongside seven professional adult actors.

WFT also has a strong commitment to accessibility and affordability, and provides tickets and tuition assistance for over 8,000 children, families, and organizations annually with our Theatre for All Fund. At a special benefit performance on April 30, we present the 2016 WHEEL Award – which celebrates individuals who share our commitment to children and families, and belief that the arts transform lives – to Willie Reale.

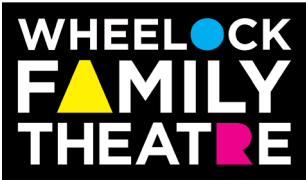
Penning the book and lyrics of *A Year with Frog and Toad* is but one of Willie Reale's contributions. In 1981, the same year our founders established WFT in Boston, Reale founded the 52nd Street Project to bring children from NYC's Hell's Kitchen together with professional theatre artists to create original plays. He was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in recognition of his ingenuity in creating theatre education programs for young people in 1994. Willie Reale and WFT shared another milestone in 1998 when we both received "Coming up Taller" Awards in a ceremony at the White House. The name for the award, in fact, was drawn from Reale's remarks about how live theatre can transform lives:

*There is no way to fast forward and know how the kids will look back on this, but I have seen the joy in their eyes and have heard it in their voices, and I have watched them take a bow and come up taller.*

Last, but hardly least, we are so excited to announce our upcoming 2016-2017 season – ***Akeelah and the Bee*, *Billy Elliot the Musical*, and *Charlotte's Web*** – three stories about determination and dreams, family and friendship, that are bound to inspire. We look forward to saving you a seat at WFT, which -thanks to your support -will be newly installed this summer!


Sincerely yours,  
Linda Chin, *Producing Artistic Director*

*and the staff of WFT: Jamie Aznive, Kay Arden Elliott, Matthew T. Lazure, Marjorie Lusignan, James Williston, Craig A. Zemsky*



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**Mail:** 200 Riverway, Boston, MA 02215-4176    **Web:** [www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org](http://www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org)



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For more information, check out our Actors' Spotlight  
[www.WheelockFamilyTheatre.org/our-actors](http://www.WheelockFamilyTheatre.org/our-actors)

**Ramona Lisa Alexander** (*Gail Anderson*) is excited to make her WFT debut. She recently received an Elliot Norton Award nomination for her portrayal of Myrna in *Milk Like Sugar* with the Huntington. Theatre credits include *Breathe Boom* (Huntington); *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning* (Lyric Stage); *The Boys from Syracuse* (Commonwealth Shakespeare & Boston Landmarks Orchestra); *Arabian Nights*, *Harriet Jacobs*, *Ti-Jean & His Brothers*, and *Moon for the Misbegotten* (Central Square); *Seven Guitars* (The Artist Rep, Portland, OR); *The Brother/Sister Plays* and *King Hedley II* (Portland Playhouse, Drammy Award); *Intimate Apparel* (W.H.A.T.); *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Montana Rep, National Tour); *A Christmas Carol* (Berkshire Theatre Festival); *Postcards from Earth* (Guthrie GEx11); *103 Within the Veil* (Company One, IRNE Award); *In The Continuum* and *Joe Turner's* (Up You Mighty Race, IRNE Award); and *In the Blood* (Zeitgeist). Her film credits include *Knock Around Kids* (adekoje-filmworks). Ramona currently leads creative place-making and arts organizing work with Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. She holds an MFA from Brandeis.

**Kadahj Bennett** (*Pronouncer*) is glad to make his WFT debut! Recent credits include *The T Party*, *An Octoroon*, *Dry Land*, and *How We Got On* (Company One), as well as a feature role in *The Halls* web series (Beyond Measure Productions). A Posse Scholar and graduate of both Hamilton College and the Boston Arts Academy, Kadahj is currently a Teaching Artist in the Boston area. When not acting, he serves as the writer/lyricist/vocalist for two bands: Dancelujah (Boston) and the Downbeat Keys (Brooklyn).

**Seth Bodie** (*Costume Designer*) is a freelance costume designer and theatre educator with a penchant for beautiful things. He has worked in NE as a designer, director, and performer for 15 years. Originally from the Hudson Valley, Seth spent his formative years acting in youth companies and working backstage at any theatre he could. His passion for knowing everything about the craft led him to a BFA from Emerson and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. While living in Boston, Seth taught for Boston Arts Academy, NE Conservatory, and Suffolk. He has repeatedly worked with Yale Cabaret, Commonwealth Shakespeare, Actors' Shakespeare, SpeakEasy, Lyric Stage, Stoneham, the Boston Early Music Festival, Handel and Haydn Society, and Opera Boston. Now a resident of Brooklyn and beyond, Seth is fascinated by old textiles, MGM movies from the past, and the symbiosis between crows and wolves.

**Jazmyne Burgess** (*Assistant to the Director*) is very excited to be alongside mentor Maura Tighe as her assistant director for the first time. She has had previous directing experiences in high school (Senior Showcase; *Inner City Blues*). Stage credits include Abuela Claudia in *In the Heights* and the Nurse and Gregory in *Romeo and Juliet*. Jazmyne has completed one year in Chicago at Roosevelt University: CCPA. She hopes to continue her college career here in Boston, pursue directing opportunities, and be on SNL one day.

**Letitia Nadine Bynoe** (*Sign Performer*), a graduate of Northeastern's ASL/Interpreting program, has been working in various settings as an ASL interpreter since 2008. She is pleased to return to WFT, where she interpreted *Shrek the Musical* and *Alice*, and collaborated on *The Taste of Sunrise*.

**Melissa Campo** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is no stranger to theatre, making her stage debut in 2004 in *Annie* (title role) and continuing to act throughout high school. When she entered Wheelock College, she discovered life behind the scenes working as a crew member on several shows. She is very excited to be part of this production as an ASM. Thanks to the backstage team—Craig, especially, for his support and for giving her this opportunity—and to Robin, for changing her life by introducing her to the world of crew.

**Ben Choi-Harris** (*Air Speller*) is thrilled to return to WFT, where he was recently seen in *A Year with Frog and Toad* and *The Trumpet of the Swan*. Other credits include the Candy Man in *Willie Wonka*, Mr. Bundles in *Annie* (Creative Arts), and Sketch in *Hairspray* (Acting Out). Ben enjoys WFT classes and is grateful to his fantastic instructors. He is happy to take part in this great production with such a talented cast and crew.

**Giovanni Clark** (*Air Speller*), known as Gio, is a 7th grade student at a local independent school. He is pleased to appear in his first professional production. Gio began taking acting classes at WFT when he was 6 years old and has performed in plays at his school for the past 2 years. He loves reading, video games, playing with his almost-3-year-old sister, spending time with friends, and listening to music.

**Cori Couture** (*Audio Describer*) has described content for WGBH's Descriptive Video Service, WFT, the Huntington, Open Door Theater, and Liars and Believers. She teaches for WFT and creates "Social Stories" to help patrons on the autism spectrum prepare for coming to the theatre. Also, as the Theatre's Education Support Specialist, she provides individualized attention to WFT students, especially those on the autism spectrum.

**Johnny Lee Davenport** (*Dr. Larabee*) is making his 3rd appearance on the WFT stage (*The Little Mermaid* and *It's a Wonderful Life*). He has been named *Boston Magazine's* "Best of Boston" Best Actor and has received the Elliot Norton Best Actor Award, 2 Broadway World Boston Awards, and DC's Helen Hayes Award. Johnny has performed with SpeakEasy, Lyric Stage, Stoneham, Actors' Shakespeare, Huntington, Company One, Commonwealth Shakespeare, New Rep, and Trinity Rep. Regional credits include Orlando Shakespeare, Alabama Shakespeare, ACT in Seattle, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Milwaukee Rep, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Arizona Stage, and American Players Theatre. For film and television credits, and contact info, please visit [www.johnnyleedavenport.com](http://www.johnnyleedavenport.com).

**Alice Fletcher** (*Mohawk Speller*) recently flew 10,529 miles from Melbourne, Australia and is excited to have the chance to act (and cry) onstage in her adopted city. She took acting classes at Stage School Australia, where her favorite role was Sophie in *The Lost King*. This summer, she had a blast at ImprovBoston's Comedy Clinic. Matilda, age 9, likes reading, making miniature food out of buttons, and pretending to be someone else on the stage. She's fond of a pun.

**Matilda Fletcher** (*Crying Speller*) has been a cat, Greek god, and post-apocalyptic fighter (among other roles) onstage in the USA and Australia. Before relocating to MA, she studied acting for a number of years at Stage School Australia. Alice is excited to work with WFT, especially since her role in this play involves making grumpy faces. She is a member of Central Square's youth ensemble and a freshman at Cambridge Rindge and Latin.

**Marshall Joun** (*Dylan*) is proud to be making his WFT debut. He has previously performed with Boston Children's Theatre (BCT) in *Cabaret*, the world premiere of *Caps for Sale*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *Fame*. He has also appeared in multiple shows with Arlington Children's Theatre. Marshall currently sings with BCT'S Theatre Show Choir.

**Ruth Celia Kahn** (*Audio Describer*) is thrilled to be describing with Cori Couture at WFT! Favorite past productions include *Mary Poppins* (WFT), *Urban Nutcracker* (Ballet Rox), *Mamma Mia* and *Death of a Salesman* (Weston Playhouse, VT), *She Loves Me* (Huntington), and *The Barber of Seville* (BLO). Ruth is also a Masters-level, Board-Certified Music Therapist.

**Elizabeth Keegan** (*Sign Performer*) is thrilled to return to WFT. Her previous credits here include *A Year with Frog and Toad* and *The Trumpet of the Swan*. A nationally certified interpreter, she has performed with Central Square, Clearwater Hudson River Music Revival, and Falcon Ridge Folk Festival. Elizabeth is a graduate of Laguardia Community College's Interpreter Education Program and the National Shakespeare Conservatory, both in NYC.

**Journey Ade King** (*Akeelah*) is thrilled to work with WFT, for the first time, on such an amazing show. Her credits include BCT's *Into the Woods, Jr.* (Cinderella) and *Fame, Jr.* (Carmen Diaz), as well as Thayer Academy's production of *Once on This Island* (Ti Moune). Journey thanks her Mom, Dad, Gamma, and this wonderful cast for supporting her along the way.

**Vincent Lian** (*u/s Dylan*) is an 8th grader at Weston Middle School. He has performed in many plays at school and is excited to be making his WFT debut. When not in school or on stage, Vincent likes to spend his time with his friends and reading books.

**Duncan Lonergan** (*Snorting Speller, u/s Javier*) is a 5th grader at the Haley Pilot School in Boston making his WFT debut. Outside of school, he enjoys Minecraft, Legos, graphic novels, and burritos. Duncan thanks his family for their support.

**Griffin Long-Sinnott** (*Javier*) first appeared on stage doing standup at his school's talent show when he was 6. He's been on stage ever since, appearing in numerous musicals with the Freelance Players. Last spring, he wrote and directed his first production, a dramatization of the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Griffin is an 8th grader at Boston Latin Academy, where he belongs to the Improv Troupe. He will be singing with the Handel & Haydn Society's Young Men's Choir beginning in January. This is his WFT debut.

**Jonathan Lopez** (*Chucky*) is a sophomore at Boston Arts Academy. He is thrilled to be making his debut at WFT. Jonathan has done many school plays (including *The Lion King* and *Fame*); he also created an original piece with his class called *Si or No*. He loves acting because he likes to play different characters and put on different shoes, learning about different people. He hopes to become a successful actor in the future. Jonathan thanks his friends and, especially, his family for supporting him.

**Marjorie Lusignan** (*Props Designer*) is glad to return for a 9th season at WFT. After a 25-year career as a technical illustrator, she is now a visual artist who lives, gardens, and makes art in the woods of RI.

**Sophia A. Mack** (*Ensemble*) is pleased to return to WFT where she was last seen in *Mountain...Moon*. Recent credits include Sarah Deagan in *Far from Heaven* (SpeakEasy). Sophia has also appeared in *Seussical* (Stage Door Manor), *Peter Pan* (French Woods Performing Arts Festival), and school productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Annie, Honk*, and *The Lion King*. She performed for many years in the *Nutcracker* with the Boston Ballet and Washington Ballet. Sophia dances jazz, ballet, tap, and modern; plays piano; and studies voice.

**Keith Mascoll** (*JT, Judge, DJ, TV Announcer*) was last seen as Buzz in the Lyric Stage's *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning* and as John in *The Whipping Man* at New Rep. He received a NY Critics Choice Award for his performance as Bradley in Paula Caplan's *The Test*, and a Best Actor Award for John Adekoje's one-man play *Love Jones*. Favorite credits include *Intimate Apparel*, *The Colored Museum*, *Six Rounds/Six Lessons*, *The Dutchman*, and *Hamlet*. Keith has been seen in numerous commercial and film projects. Look for him in the lead role in the movie *Confused by Love* (2017 release) and in *The Polka King* directed by Maya Forbes. Keith is also producing a one-man show next year and the short film *Argiles* with Triceptus Productions. A teaching artist with the Huntington, he also works with The Moffatt-Ladd House and high school students in Portsmouth, NH, on the Exploring the Issue of Slavery in the Era of American Revolution Project. He holds a BA in Theatre from the University of MA.

**Margaret McFadden** (*Mohawk Speller*) is thrilled to return to the WFT stage after appearing in *A Year with Frog and Toad* last spring. Other credits include Bubba in the world premiere of *Caps for Sale*, title role in *Pinkalicious the Musical*, and Kelsey in the world premiere of *The Homework Machine* (BCT); Jean Fordham in *August: Osage County* (MLT); and Toffee in *Zombie Prom* (Walnut Hill). Margaret has also performed at Stagedoor Manor in NY and with local community theatres. Special thanks to family and friends for their support.

**Janine Mendes** (*Rhonda, u/s Georgia*) is so happy to be part of this cast and show. She has been in love with acting since 4th grade. Becoming a character that she is not in real life—putting the character in her voice and body—is an amazing experience! Janine is in her 2nd year at Boston Arts Academy.

**James Milord** (*Principal Welch*) is a devoted thespian whose most recent work includes *Clybourne Park* (Longwood Players) and the premiere of *Splendor* (Company One). Other credits with Company One: *The Good Negro*, *The Emancipation of Mandy* and *Miz Ellie*, *Clockwork Orange*, and *103 Within the Veil* (Best Supporting Actor IRNE nom.). James appeared as Ochoosi Size in *Brother/Sisters Trilogy* (Best Actor IRNE nom.); the premiere of *Trajectories* (Chicago, IL); and Commonwealth Shakespeare's *The Emperor Jones*. He was the 2010 recipient of the David Wheeler Award for Best Emerging Actor. James has appeared in several productions with Boston's African American Theatre Festival. His film work includes the first episode of Showtime's debut series, *The Brotherhood*, as Principal Jamal Lynch. James currently works as a theatre educator and continues to chase his dreams professionally. All glory to the Matchless One, the Risen King.

**Jasper Milstein** (*Horse Speller*) is a 5th grader at the Pierce school in Brookline. This is her WFT debut. She has performed in many Artbarn productions and, when not on stage, she plays soccer and enjoys all things related to outer space. Jasper thanks her parents and her little brother Zoly for always being there and supporting her.

**Janathan Moore** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) studied theatre arts at Boston Arts Academy and has always loved stage management. His ASM credits include *Sleeping Weazel's* productions of *Doubles*, *Demons*, and *Dreamers and Talk to at Me*. Janathan also assistant stage-managed BAA's production of *Grimm* before stage managing his sophomore ensemble's short play *Terms & Conditions*, which went on to Emerson's Theatre Festival. His last SM credit for BAA was *In the Heights* at the Strand. Since then, Janathan has been working with different theatre companies around the city such as Israeli Stage and Bridge Rep. He is very excited to be working with WFT!

**Roger J. Moore** (*Sound Designer*), employed with CBS Radio – Boston for over 25 years, is currently the Assistant Production Director and commercial voice of 98-5 The Sports Hub. He also enjoys a variety of freelance video projects. Roger has worked as sound designer for the award-winning Gold Dust Orphans since 2004 and has been part of the WFT family since 2008.

**Ebubechukwu Sho Ndukwe** (*Sign Performer*) is delighted to return to WFT for the 7th time and to be part of telling (and spelling) this important story. Credits here include *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Hairspray*, *The Taste of Sunrise*, *Shrek the Musical*, *The Trumpet of The Swan*, and *Mary Poppins*. She has also had the privilege of working with BU Theatre, Central Square, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, and Broadway in Boston.

**Amelia Newstadt** (*Trish*) thanks the director, cast, and crew for making her WFT debut a fantastic experience! Favorite credits include 4-year-old Tommy in Turtle Lane's production of *Tommy*, Ado Annie in *Oklahoma* (Newton Youth Players), and as a soloist in *How to Eat Like a Child*. Amelia loves to sing and has trained and performed with Voices Boston and Youth Pro Musica. This one's for you Ginger!

**Gary Thomas Ng** (*Mr. Chiu*) is E-C-S-T-A-T-I-C to be back at WFT, where he was last seen in *A Year with Frog and Toad*. Other WFT credits include *Seussical* (Mayor), *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* (Baby Julius), *Peter Pan* (Smee), and *Beauty and the Beast* (Le Fou). Other favorite credits include *Miss Saigon* (Ogunquit and Foothills), *Children of Eden* (NSMT), *Sideshow* (Lyric Stage), and the Far East tour of Cole Porter's *Aladdin*. Gary is also a photographer, whose works include production photos for Ogunquit Playhouse, Gloucester Stage, and WFT.

**Damara Parks-Omolade** (*Georgia*) has always been a character. She hopes to pursue acting as a career. WFT credits include *Aladdin* and *The Little Mermaid*. This is the first big role Damara has taken on—and she is grateful for the learning experience and opportunity to further her skills.

**Amarjot Ranu-Laverdiere** (*Crying Speller*) makes her debut performance in *Akeelah and the Bee*. She is in Year 5 at the British International School of Boston in Jamaica Plain. Amarjot enjoys performing in school and summer camp productions, drawing, music, and fashion.

**Grace Schifilliti** (*Ensemble*) is a 6th grader at High Rock Middle School in Needham. She made her WFT debut in 2014 in *Mountain...Moon* as a monkey and appeared in *Alice* in 2015. Most recently she performed in *The Trumpet of the Swan*. She has acted locally in Needham and has been part of the WFT family since she was 3. Grace runs cross-country; she likes basketball, climbing, making electronics, and hanging out with friends.

**Jacqueline Scholl** (*Snorting Speller*) is a 10th grader at Wellesley High School. She is thrilled to return to the WFT stage after previously appearing in *A Year with Frog and Toad* and *Pinocchio*. Favorite roles include Little Becky Two Shoes (*Urinetown*), "Day by Day" soloist (*Godspell*), Robin (*Monkey Boogers*), and Jojo (*Seussical*). In her scarce free time Jackie enjoys dancing, performing with her high school's acting department, and participating in film projects. She thanks everyone at WFT and dedicates her performance to her Gramma.

**Vincent E. Siders** (*Willie*) is a theatre actor, director, producer, and educator. Notable acting credits include King Sharayhar in *Arabian Nights* and Pope Barberini in *The Life of Galileo* (Underground Railway); Lucius in *Jesus Hopped the A Train* (Company One); Rooftop in *Our Lady of 121st Street* (SpeakEasy); James in *Monticel* (Boston Playwrights'); and Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* (Lyric Stage). Vincent is featured

in John Adekoje's indie film *Knockaround Kids*, and in Federico Muchnik's indie film *This Killing Business*, as Detective Scott Humes. He is a theatre instructor for Underground Railway. Vincent has received two IRNE Awards for acting, an IRNE nomination for directing, and an Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Actor.

**Sydney Smiley** (*Ensemble*), age 10, is a native of Boston. Raised in Roxbury, she is a student of the METCO program and attends Joshua Easton School in Reading. Her hobbies include rough housing, baking, dancing, and creating Musical.ly clips and videos for YouTube. Sydney has enjoyed taking classes at WFT since the age of 7. This is her main stage debut.

**Zoë Stewart** (*Trish*) is honored to be returning to WFT. Her favorite credits include Tracey Atkinson (ballet girl) in NSMT's *Billy Elliot*; WFT's *A Year with Frog and Toad*; Curtain Call's *Camp Rock the Musical*; and Walnut Hill's *Once on This Island*. Zoë thanks everyone at WFT, her mentors, and all of her family and friends for their endless love, guidance, and support along this journey. [www.zoe-stewart.com](http://www.zoe-stewart.com)

**Ariella Taylor** (*Izzy*, *u/s Akeelah*), age 12, is excited to be making her professional stage debut alongside her mother Denise Marie. Her film credits include *Ancestry* (Nerissa Williams, director). With an aspiration to also sing professionally, Ariella is an ensemble member of Serious Shade. She credits her joy of performing to her mom; gives thanks for this incredible opportunity to her director, Maura Tighe, family friend, Naheem Garcia, and her fellow cast members; and acknowledges her blessings from God.

**Evander Teixeira** (*Reggie*) started theatre in the 5th grade with an improv session and was reintroduced to theatre in middle school where he found his talent. Past productions include *Prospect High: Brooklyn* (Devin) and *Othello* (Ensemble) at Boston Arts Academy. WFT is the biggest stage he's been on. He hopes to pursue acting in the future.

**Diane Thai** (*Rhonda*) is a sophomore theatre major at Boston Arts Academy. Previous credits include *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Wiz*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Grease*. Diane is so excited to be part of this experience: this is her first professional production and she feels a strong connection to her character.

**Maura Tighe** (*Director*) began her career as a theatre director in NYC, working with many new playwrights on original and experimental work. She eventually found a career as a casting director for films such as *Next Stop Wonderland*, *State and Main*, and *My Best Friend's Girl*, as well as numerous Independent films, commercials, and television series (*Zoom*, *Fetch with Ruff Ruffman*, *Design Squad*, *Knock First*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*). She also founded and ran a non-profit youth theatre company for 10 years. She is currently on the faculty at Boston Arts Academy. Maura is passionate about the work of creating theatre with young people, for the inner confidence and wisdom this process nurtures. Very special thanks to the amazing adult cast of *Akeelah* for their wonderful encouragement, support, and mentorship of our youth cast.

**Arthur Wheelock-Wood** (*Chucky*) is thrilled to return to WFT. Recent appearances include *A Year with Frog and Toad* as a Season; a Deaf student in *A Taste of Sunrise*; Da-Fu in *Where...Moon*; an orphan in *Oliver!*; and a munchkin in *The Wizard of Oz* (WFT); ice cream seller in *Brundibar* (Central Square); and *Kiss Me Kate*, *Hairspray*, *Seussical*, and *Pinocchio* (SSST). Arthur now attends Boston Arts Academy as a theatre major.

# Akeelah and the BEE

By Cheryl L. West Based on the book by Doug Atchison  
Originally presented by the Children's Theatre Company in the 2015-2016 season.

DIRECTOR  
**Maura Tighe**

SET DESIGNER  
**James Williston**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**Craig A. Zemsky**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**Seth Bodie**

PROPS DESIGNER  
**Marjorie Lusignan**

PRODUCTION  
STAGE MANAGER  
**Lisa Wondolowski\***

SOUND DESIGNER  
**Roger J. Moore**

SIGN PERFORMERS  
**Letitia Nadine Bynoe, Elizabeth Keegan,  
Ebubechukwu Sho Ndukwe**

AUDIO DESCRIBERS  
**Cori Couture  
Ruth Celia Kahn**

## THE CAST

Akeelah	<b>Journey Ade King</b>
Gail	<b>Ramona Lisa Alexander*</b>
Reggie	<b>Evander Teixeira</b>
Ruth	<b>Denise Marie Williams*</b>
Georgia	<b>Damara Parks-Omolade</b>
Willie	<b>Vincent E. Siders*</b>
J.T. / Judge / DJ / Bee Clerk / TV Announcer	<b>Keith Mascoll*</b>
Izzy	<b>Ariella Taylor, Sadie Young</b>
Rhonda	<b>Janine Mendes, Diane Thai</b>
Principal Welch	<b>James Milord</b>
Chuck	<b>Jonathan Lopez, Arthur Wheelock-Wood</b>
Dr. Larabee	<b>Johnny Lee Davenport*</b>
Dylan	<b>Marshall Joun</b>
Dylan's Dad OR Mr. Chiu	<b>Gary Thomas Ng*</b>
Javier	<b>Griffin Long-Sinnott</b>
Trish	<b>Amelia Newstadt, Zoë Stewart</b>
Snorting Speller	<b>Duncan Lonergan, Jacqueline Scholl</b>
Mohawk Speller	<b>Alice Fletcher, Margaret McFadden</b>
Crying Speller	<b>Matilda Fletcher, Amarjot Ranu-Laverdiere</b>
Air Speller	<b>Ben Choi-Harris, Giovanni Clark</b>
Horse Speller	<b>Jasper Milstein, Tim Zhilin</b>
Pronouncer	<b>Kadahj Bennett</b>

ENSEMBLE: Sophia A. Mack, Grace Schifilliti, Sydnee Smiley

UNDERSTUDIES: Vincent Lian (Dylan); Janine Mendes (Georgia); Duncan Lonergan (Javier); Ariella Taylor (Akeelah)

There will be one 15-minute intermission between the acts.

Ask the House Manager for individual sound enhancement devices.

**The taking of photographs and use of video or audio recording devices is strictly forbidden.**  
**Please turn off all electronic devices. Please, no eating or drinking in the theatre.**

*AKEELAH AND THE BEE* is presented through special arrangement with Plays for Young Audiences, a partnership of Seattle Children's Theatre and Children's Theatre Company – Minneapolis. 2400 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404.



\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors & Stage Managers in the United States. WFT is operating under the terms of a Developing Theatre's Program of Actors' Equity Association. The contract used is a Letter of Agreement.



Boston Cultural Council, a local agency which is funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and administered by the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the



massculturalcouncil.org



# Wheelock Family Theatre

## STAFF

Producing Artistic Director	<b>Linda Chin</b>
Administrative Director	<b>Kay Arden Elliott</b>
Director of Development & Communications	<b>Maryanne Serignese</b>
Director of Education, Outreach, and Community Engagement (as of 12/16)	<b>Peyton Pugmire</b>
Associate Artistic and Education Director (as of 12/16)	<b>Nick Vargas</b>
Audience Services Manager	<b>Jamie Aznive</b>
Audience Engagement Coordinator	<b>Marianne Adams</b>
Director of Artistic Sign Language	<b>Larry Stephen</b>
Technical Director	<b>James Williston</b>
Production Manager/Master Electrician	<b>Craig A. Zemsky</b>
Resident Designer	<b>Matthew T. Lazure</b>
Crafts Director/Props Mistress	<b>Marjorie Lusignan</b>
Costumer/Wardrobe Shop Manager	<b>Zoë Sundra</b>

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Assistant Stage Manager	<b>Janathan Moore</b>
Assistant Stage Manager	<b>Melissa Campo</b>
Assistant to the Director	<b>Jazmyne Burgess</b>
Captioning	<b>Jamie Aznive, coordinator</b> <b>Ruth Celia Kahn, compositor</b> <b>Sheelagh Cook, Evan Kersey,</b> <b>Elizabeth King, Cong Minh Nguyen,</b> <b>Ngoc Dung Tran</b>
Scenic Painters & Carpenters	<b>William Douglass, Jeff Gardiner,</b> <b>Elliott Purcell, Jerry Wheelock,</b> <b>Mac Young, Jenya Zhilina</b>
Electricians	<b>Matt Cost, Kevin Fulton,</b> <b>Julie M. Langevin, Aurelia Lyman,</b> <b>Elliott Purcell, Evelyn Swift Shuker</b>

## EDUCATION PROGRAM FACULTY

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## CREWS, WORK/STUDY STUDENTS, AND INTERNS

Christina Bebe, Iva Briggs, Halle Burns, Daniela Herrera, Mary Lula, Carina Lawrence, Carolyn Lopez, Kaylee Maher, Carishmar Moore, Laura Morgan, Anika Nayak, Rachel Otfinoski, Eliu Olmo, Rachel Otfinoski, David (DJ) Piper, Kiran Raza, Anthony Romero, Jessica Romero, Brionne Silcott, Jetta Smith, Shanelle Tayler, Kathryn VanSteenbergen, Isabella Vitti, Sierra White

## SPECIAL THANKS

Joanne Baez; Charles G. Baldwin; John Bay; Danny Bolton; Lindsay Clinton; Megan Doerr; Sanjeev Joshi; Danielle Lusignan; Kimberly Lusignan; Wendy Ramaci; Stephen Reinstein; Frank Romero and members of the Wheelock College Facilities staff; Roy Schifilliti; Nancy Viall Shoemaker; Jerry Wheelock; Tom Workman; Ezra and Jodi Leduc Zemsky

*We wish to thank all the people who have joined with us since the program went to press.*

**Denise Marie Williams** (*Ruth*) is delighted to return to the stage alongside her daughter Ariella. Broadway credits include Sarabi in *The Lion King*. Locally, she has appeared in *Othello* (Bianca/Montano), *Actors' Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale* (Emilia/Mopsa), *ART: As You Like It* (Amiens), *Commonwealth Shakespeare: King Lear* (Duke of Burgundy), *Company of Women*; *Mattie's Grill* (Jessica), *New Theater: Muses* and (*Fren/Gambler*), *Theater Offensive*. Film: *Ancestry* (Ima), *Roxbury Film Festival*. Denise gives thanks to the Most High for her blessings, and to family and friends for their loving support.

**James Williston** (*Set Designer*) previously created the sets for WFT's productions of *Peter Pan* and *Seussical*. Other credits include set design for *Take Me Out* at Worcester Foothills, and angel wings design for *Angels in America* at Boston Theatre Works. James first worked for WFT as an actor in 1997, and started as Technical Director in 2005.

**Lisa Wondolowski** (*Production Stage Manager*) is excited to be welcomed into the extraordinary WFT family. Recently she had the opportunity to stage manage *Blasted with Off the Grid*. She has also spent the last few seasons with Wellesley Rep, Ogunquit Playhouse, and Seacoast Rep. Lisa is a proud member of Actors' Equity. [donatelife.net](http://donatelife.net)


**Sadie Young** (*Izzy*) is thrilled to be making her professional debut in *Akeelah and the Bee*. Last summer, she participated in *Riotous Youth* at Shakespeare & Company, where she played Helena and Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A 5th grader at Park School, Sadie studies violin privately and also plays in an orchestra at NEC Prep. She loves basketball and is a big fan of the New England Patriots.

**Craig A. Zemsky** (*Lighting Designer*) is excited to design for the WFT stage again, where his work was last seen in *A Year with Frog and Toad*. He holds an MFA from Ohio U and a BA from the U of Denver, and he has performed in every state in the continental US. At the Barter in Abingdon, VA, he designed some of his favorite shows (including *Wise Women* and *Man of Constant Sorrow: The Story of Ralph and Carter Stanley*, original lighting design credit) and met his lovely wife Jodi. Craig dedicates this show to his wife and son, and thanks them for all their love and support.

**Tim Zhilin** (*Horse Speller*) is thrilled to return to WFT! He is an 8th grader at the Community Charter School of Cambridge. Tim has been dancing and performing since age 3. He finds that soccer, Krav Maga, and skiing give him confidence to be on stage and stamina for long hours of rehearsals. Heartfelt thanks to friends, family, and everyone at CCSC for their support!

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WFT's Advisory Board is a group of dedicated individuals from broad and diverse segments of the community who provide support and expertise to WFT's staff and artists on an ongoing basis. We are grateful for their insights and their enthusiasm.

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