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### Blog Post Four

Recently, I performed in Santa Clara University's mainstage production of *the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. A comedic musical with an important element of audience participation, it ultimately satirized the ways in which our hyper-competitive culture stresses, and damages to a certain extent, the kids who must grow up within it. Through songs like "Woe is Me," "I'm Not That Smart," and "I Speak Six Languages," the kids comedically tell their stories about everything they will do to feel confident and be seen. The show draws attention to the cultural world we have constructed for our kids, one in which "Life is Pandemonium," but the kids are expected to exhaust themselves over preparing for competition anyway.

In a show as chaotic as this one, some principles from Twyla Tharp's chapter on accidents in *The Creative Habit* are helpful, especially those that she writes about people. "People sometimes let you down," she writes (Tharp 123). In a show where four audience members are pulled onstage to participate for the first half, this is something we always had to prepare for. One show, an audience member misspelled "cow," and the entire cast and crew had to think on their feet to get her off the stage without throwing off the momentum of the story. We had to stay prepared for audience members to dance with us, to not sit down, or to try to be funny. Accidents happened every night in this show, and we had to be prepared for them.

Works Cited

Tharp, Twyla. 2003. Accidents Will Happen. In *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It For Life* (pp. 116-139). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.