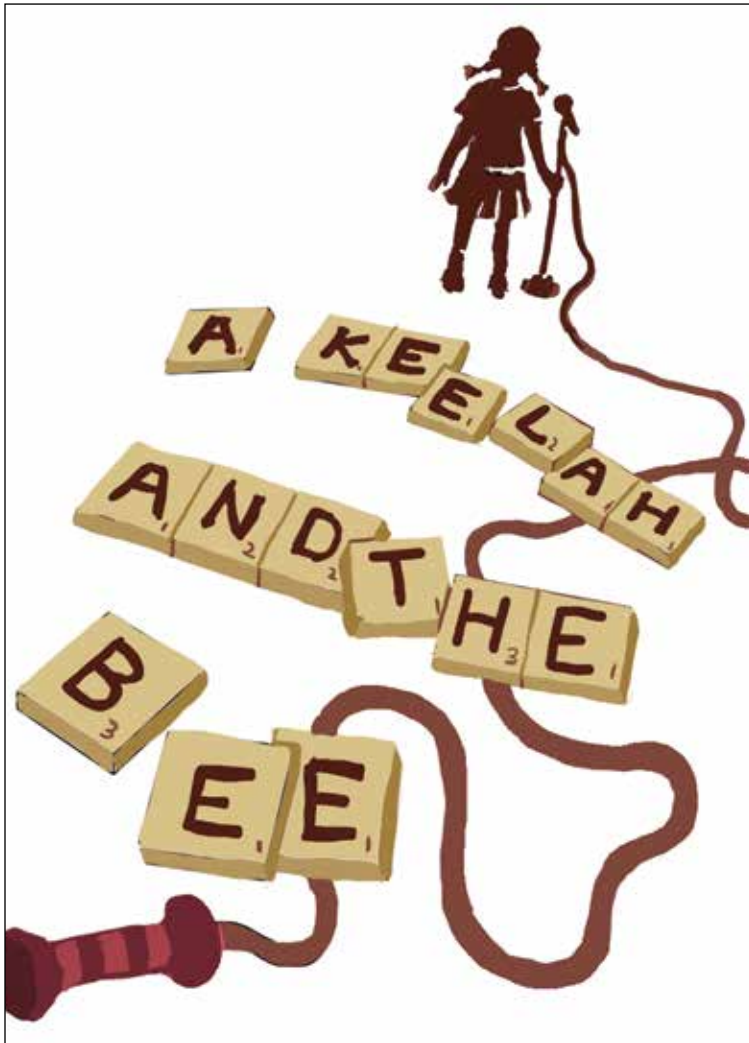


**SENSORY-
FRIENDLY
PERFORMANCE**



PARENT'S GUIDE

Sunday, February 16 at 7 p.m.



Akeelah and the Bee

By Cheryl L. West

Based on the screenplay by Doug Atchison

About the show

Life for 11-year-old Akeelah Anderson isn't easy, especially after losing her father and growing up in a tough neighborhood in Chicago. Akeelah finds school boring and doesn't apply herself even though she's academically gifted. Through the encouragement of teachers and the coaching of a special mentor, she conquers the regional bee and sets her sights on the Scripps National Spelling Bee. But will she overcome her own self-doubt and the pressures of her personal life to bring home the prestigious honor? This uplifting, family-centric story celebrates "winning" in more ways than one.

Show sponsors

Cam Newton Foundation, SPX, Robinson Bradshaw, Kristin Black & Todd Day, Ashley & Matthew Joseph, Florence & Edward Kim, and Anita & Bruce LaRowe

Special thanks



to Julie Higginbotham of Precious Developments. Julie has worked as our consultant in the creation and preparation of our sensory-friendly performances. We're grateful for this valued partnership.

What to expect at a sensory-friendly performance

Sensory-friendly theatre is an approach to the audience experience that "softens" the environment. What does that mean exactly? In general, we make the theatre available to everyone, including those who may need more flexibility to help manage all of the sensory experiences that come along with attending a performance. Below are some of the adjustments Children's Theatre of Charlotte is making to create a more sensory-friendly environment tailored to each show:

- Lights in the theatre will stay low during the show, instead of turning all the way off.
- We will lower the sound levels when needed.
- We sell fewer tickets for the sensory-friendly performances so families have more room to move as needed.
- We provide fidgets, headphones and weighted toys to help children feel more organized and settled.
- Someone will be at the front of the stage with glow sticks to help give families a warning when sensory-rich moments are nearing. Raising one light means there's a smaller sensory moment coming up (like a loud sound or a change in lighting). Raising two lights means a more intense sensory-rich moment is about to occur.
- We provide a quiet room if children need to leave the theatre to feel more settled or regroup during the show.

Support materials for you

We provide several guides to help prepare your family for your visit:

The **visit guide** that walks your family through our facility.

The **child guide** goes with each performance.

The **parent guide** like this one helps parents support their children's learning and experience in the theatre.

We want you to have the opportunity to enjoy the theatre with your family, so with that, please enjoy the show!

Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments in *Akeelah and the Bee*



Meet Akeelah Anderson and her family! They take care of each other, especially when life gets tough.

How do we help children feel safe and loved?

Sensory-rich moments:

The show opens with a moment of simulated police lights and sirens, vehicle audio, brief gunshot audio, and brief shouting. There is a second siren moment further into the scene. The characters are also discussing tough life circumstances. Scene transitions throughout this production include various types of music to go along with set changes.



Akeelah lives in a building with so many wonderful people - they're all so different, but they come together to make a great village for each other!

How do we help highlight each other's strengths and come together as a village?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains moments with neighbors shouting to each other, some singing, and some music playing from a stereo. They also speak unkindly to each other at times. There is a school bell that transitions into the next scene.



Uh-oh, Rhonda isn't exactly a friend to Akeelah, is she? What do you think about her behavior when the principal shows up?

How do we help kids stand up for themselves and encourage positive interactions with each other?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains bullying with very unkind language, as well as a brief physical fighting moment. Music transitions us with a little chaotic movement into the next scene.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



It's time for the first spelling bee. How do you think Akeelah is feeling about it?

It's hard to use our talents when we're being bullied because of them!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a few moments of microphone feedback that will be turned down, as well as some continued bullying, cheers, and group chanting. There is also a moment of implied cursing. It ends with a school bell transition into the next scene.



Miss Ruth really takes care of the girls, doesn't she? She's so happy to hear about Akeelah's spelling bee win, too!

How do we surround our children with people that will help encourage them to be their best?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains music to transition into the next scene.



Akeelah is getting curious about these spelling bees. Let's see what she can find out from the videos....

What tools do we use to help keep kids interested and engaged in new activities?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains some shouting and stressed discussion about how Akeelah's father passed away. There is a classical music transition into the next scene.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Well, Akeelah is going to meet with Dr. Larrabee to see what he can do to help her with spelling bees. It doesn't exactly go the way she thinks it's going to go....

It's so hard to let down our guards to try new things!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains discussion of various stereotypes and some tense conversation. Music transitions us into the next scene with a news audio recording about a shooting.



It's back to the spelling bee research for Akeelah.

Balancing interests with responsibilities is no easy task!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene transitions into the next with a verbal audio recording.



The heat is on to find out who gets to go to the state spelling bee tournament. The students are about to learn some important lessons about competition, and Akeelah makes some new friends.

How do we help kids understand that failing is part of succeeding?

Sensory-rich moments:

In this scene, an actor comes out into the audience to watch the spelling bee, and his "baby" also cries briefly. There is some conflict and celebrating, and the set makes some noise as it changes.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Akeelah has some great news, but not everyone is ready to hear it right now.

Remembering good times sometimes comes with feelings of sadness.

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains implied criminal activity and some shouting. It transitions into the next with scene softly.



Akeelah and Georgia go to a party with Akeelah's new friends, but it's not what they're expecting at all.

How do we present the most authentic version of ourselves, no matter where we go?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a somewhat tense competition moment and transitions into the next scene with soft music and lighting shifts, as well as brief traffic sounds.



No one knew Akeelah was going to that party with Georgia, and now everyone is worried about them.

How do we help children understand why we worry about certain things so we can keep them safe?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains some tension and tough love. It transitions into the next scene with classical music.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Akeelah goes back to see Dr. Larrabee and tries really hard to show him a different, softer side of herself. But what do you think about the decision she makes to keep herself in the state spelling bee tournament?

How do we keep our authentic selves and still work on making positive changes within ourselves?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a transition from outside to inside the house. There is also a questionable decision moment that takes us into intermission with music.



It's time for a quick break! Get ready to settle in for the rest of this story right after a brief intermission.....

Enjoy a stretch break while we get ready for the rest of the show! We'll bring you back into the start of the second act so you'll be ready for it.



Wow, Akeelah has been working really hard! Now, Dr. Larrabee needs to help her learn how to compete with the other students.

What's the difference between learning something and knowing something?

Sensory-rich moments:

The second act opens with classical music and contains discussion around racial differences, some banging sounds, brief shouting, and a musical transition into the next scene.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



All this spelling bee work is changing Akeelah's relationships with her village. It's also changing her perspective on a lot of other things. But life seems to be turning around for her and her family.....

When we change, it doesn't mean that others change with us. How do we help our children grow through change?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains some celebrating and some music that continues into the next scene.



Akeelah is back to work with Dr. Larrabee, but she needs help with more than the words she's learning to spell.

Children need adults to help them talk through their worries and help them understand life from their perspectives.

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains discussion around emotional topics and transitions with music into the next scene.



Akeelah's mother still doesn't know that she has continued on with the spelling bee training. Things get harder for her family again, and her secret is getting harder to keep.

Helping children understand honesty is never easy at any age!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains implied criminal activity, a verbal audio recording, and tense moments before transitioning into the next scene with a verbal audio recording.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



The state spelling bee tournament is finally here! The competition is tough, but the challenges today include more than spelling words.....

The longer we keep secrets, the harder it can be when the truth finally comes out.

Sensory-rich moments:

There is an actor in the audience for part of this scene, and there is some applause and a moment with camera flashes that are not aimed at the audience.



After Akeelah's triumph, the family gets some bad news.

It's hard to understand that consequences for our actions really can happen.

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a stressful moment with some shouting. It transitions into the next scene with classical music.



Akeelah has some more big questions, but is Dr. Larrabee ready to help her talk through them again?

We become more vulnerable as we get closer to the children who need us.

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains an emotional discussion, shouting, and a transition scene that contains some singing practice.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Akeelah and her mother are trying to work through a lot of really tough things together, and Akeelah is finally ready to share the rest of her secrets.

Children can work through so many things if we can listen to them and fill in some of the bigger picture with them.

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains an emotional discussion, a brief scary moment with gunshot audio, and a quick set change to transition into the next scene.



The countdown is officially on, and Akeelah is in the final stretch of her training to get ready. Her whole village is ready to help her study, but wait until you see who is included in that team.....

We don't have to know everything about our children's interests to be helpful and supportive!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains soft lighting changes through the timeline to the tournament with some brief moments of shouting. There is also some music and dancing that transitions into the next scene.



Akeelah goes to see Dr. Larrabee one more time before she heads to the national spelling bee competition. She has a lot to say to him - how do you think he will react?

We can do a lot to try to understand each other's perspectives and strengthen our relationships.

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene transitions into the next with traffic audio, and music.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



It's finally here - the national spelling bee competition! We won't ruin the surprise - keep watching to see what happens when the students go head to head for the title!

There are multiple ways to succeed, but it should always include doing our best!

Sensory-rich moments:

This final scene contains video features, cheering, actors in the audience, and some tense moments throughout the competition. There is also a quick lighting shift at the end of the competition.

Thanks for joining us at Children's Theatre of Charlotte for this special performance.

Learn more and buy tickets to other sensory-friendly performances at ctcharlotte.org.

Click on **Shows & Tickets** and look for **Accessibility & Inclusion**.

Upcoming sensory-friendly performances include:

GRIMMZ Fairy Tales

Sunday, March 8 @ 4 p.m.

Dragons Love Tacos

Sunday, April 26 @ 4 p.m.



ctcharlotte.org