

WILKES UNIVERSITY THEATRE

**Offering degrees in:
Theatre Arts, BA
Musical Theatre, BFA
Theatre Design and Technology, BFA**



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WILKES
UNIVERSITY
THEATRE

2026

SPEECH



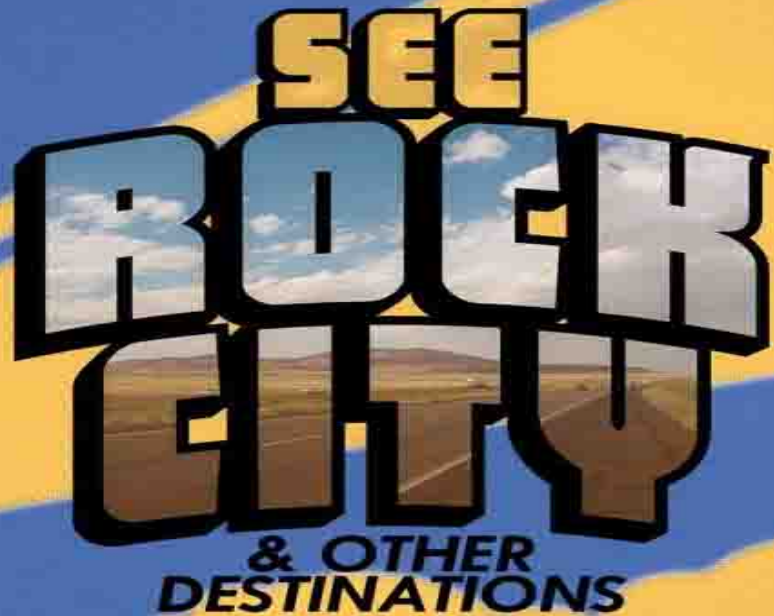
DEBATE

WRITTEN BY
STEPHEN KARAM

The Dorothy Dickson Darte Center for the Performing Arts

**October 8, 9, 10 at 8PM
October 10, 11 at 2PM**

Next up at the “Darte”



SEE ROCK CITY & OTHER DESTINATIONS

Fueled by a brilliant pop-rock score, *See Rock City & Other Destinations* ventures to tourist destinations across America, mapping out stories of sightseers who need to get a little lost in order to find themselves. From Coney Island to Mt. McKinley, the Alamo to Niagara Falls get ready to take the leap! Winner of the 2008 Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theatre.

November 19 - 22, 2026

From the Director

I was first introduced to Stephen Karam's work as an actor working on a production of one of his earlier works, *columbinus*, in undergraduate school. I immediately fell in love with his fast-paced dialogue, his fearless approach to difficult subjects, and, perhaps most importantly, the overwhelming sense of representation I found in his writing. It also felt familial in some ways, as Karam grew up in the same community of Scranton, PA, like I did. I saw pieces of myself in his writing, a young person navigating identity, sexuality, ambition, and a world that often felt much bigger and more complicated than I was prepared for.

In 2007, I had the opportunity to see the original production of *Speech & Debate* at Roundabout Theatre Company's Underground, a space created specifically to give new plays and emerging voices a home. I remember how immediate the play felt, young people speaking with an honesty, humor, and urgency that felt incredibly alive and important. Returning to the play nearly twenty years later is fascinating because, in some ways, it has become a time capsule. The language, technology, and ways these characters communicate immediately locate us in a very particular moment. And yet, beneath those markers of the early 2000's, very little about what these young people are searching for feels dated. They are trying to understand their identities and sexuality, trying to reconcile who they are privately with who the world expects them to be, and desperately searching for connection and a place where their voices matter.

That tension became central to our production. Rather than trying to update the play or smooth away the things that reveal its age, we have embraced them. Because while the tools young people use to communicate may change, the need to be seen, heard, accepted, and understood remains remarkably constant.

Speech & Debate captures that experience with humor, messiness, and tremendous heart. It asks us to spend time with young people while they are still becoming, before they have the right language, before they have all the answers, and while they are inevitably getting some things wrong along the way.

My hope is that we listen more closely to our young people, that we support them, challenge them, and give them safe and supportive spaces to explore, question, stumble, and fail. And that somewhere amid all the noise and chaos of figuring out who we are, we remember to leave room for joy. We must always leave room for joy.

Thank you for joining us.

Sean Patrick Gibbons, Director

About the Author

Stephen Karam is the Tony Award-winning author of *The Humans*, *Sons of the Prophet* and *Speech & Debate*. He is a two-time winner of the Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play, a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and a recipient of an OBIE Award for playwriting.

Stephen recently directed his first feature film, a version of *The Humans* for A24 films. He wrote a film adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull* starring Annette Bening, which was released by Sony Picture Classics. His adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* premiered on Broadway as part of Roundabout's 2016 season. Recent honors include the inaugural Horton Foote Playwriting Award, the inaugural Sam Norkin Drama Desk Award, two Outer Critics Circle Awards, a Lucille Lortel Award, Drama League Award, and Hull-Warriner Award.

Stephen is an Assistant Professor at The New School where he teaches playwriting. He is a graduate of Brown University and grew up in the Green Ridge section of Scranton, PA.

About the play: Karam's dark comedy *Speech and Debate* was first performed at Brown/Trinity Playwrights Repertory Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island, in July 2006. It was then co-commissioned by the Roundabout Theater Company of New York City, and ran Off-Broadway at Roundabout Underground from October 2007 to February 2008. The work was praised by both audiences and critics for its portrayal of adolescents coexisting with their newly discovered realm of adulthood.

This production runs 90 minutes
with no intermission.



Setting: Early 2000's
North Salem High School
Salem, Oregon

As a courtesy to our performers and those around you, we ask that you kindly turn off all noise-making and illuminating devices during the performance. And please, no food or beverages are permitted in the theatre.

Enjoy the show!

Originally Produced by Roundabout Theatre Company,
Todd Haimes, Artistic Director, as part of Roundabout Underground at
the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre. **SPEECH &
DEBATE** is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on
behalf of Dramatists Play Service.
www.concordtheatricals.com

The Cast

CHARACTER

ACTOR

HOWIE..... Elias Brix

SOLOMO.....Alby Lopuhovsky

TEACHER.....Abby Olander/Sarah Pugliese

DIWATA.....Cally Williams

REPORTER.....Elena Disciullo

OFF-STAGE VOICE ACTORS:

Ian Nestel, Luke Novak, Kamryn Breault,
Mairen Campbell, Ricky Carey

The Creative Team

Stage Direction: Sean Patrick Gibbons

Scenic Design: Ryan Houser, Caleb Gething

Lighting/Projection/Sound Design: Chester Loeffler-Bell

Costume Design: Bonnie Hall

Music Supervisor: Dr. Joshua Harper

Asst. Lighting Design: Ryan Starr, Sofia Mariano

Asst. Sound Design: Melissa Reyes

Asst. Projection Design: Krystal Crespo Clark, Melissa Reyes

Properties Master: Elena DiSciullo

Production/Crew

Technical Director

Ryan Houser

Assistant Technical Director

Caleb Gething

Production Stage Manager

Gabrielle Greffen

Asst. Stage Manager

Lydia Federici

Asst. Stage Manager

Annaleigh Deitke

Lighting Board Operator

Sofia Mariano

Sound Board Operator

Melissa Reyes

Fly Operators

Luke Novak, Sarina Rowe

Prop Lead

Charley Cain

Prop Run

Hope Jacobus

Wardrobe Lead

Carolynn Jewell

Wardrobe Run

Lucie Mitchell

Box Office/House Assistant

Antonio Torres

House Manager

Caleb Flannery

Ushers: Stella Byrne, Ella Villani, Caitlin Barton, Noah Dixon, Sarah Pugliese, Capri Pettinato, Ariana Gardner, Gabrielle Howe, Kaiden Harris, Jordyn Shovlin, Emily Barnhardt, Keely Zabresky, Kiomary Nieves, Sarah Pugliese, Ella Villani, Lydia Corvino, Noah Dixon, Ariana Gardner, Gabrielle Howe, Kaiden Harris

Social Media Coordinator

Anthony Kehs

Archival Videographer

Anthony Kehs

Box Office Manager

Jennifer Blaine

Set/Lights Crew

Caleb Flannery

Noah Dixon

Ella Villani

Stella Byrne

Theo Coyne

Kamryn Breault

Capri Pettinato

Luke Novak

Annaleigh Deitke

Ricky Carey

Anthony Kehs

Lydia Corvino

Sarina Rowe

Sarah Pugliese

Set/Lights Crew

Albert Lopuhovsky

Gabrielle Howe

Gabrielle Greffen

Lydia Federici

Ian Nestel

Emily Barnhardt

Kio Nieves

Caitlin Barton

Mia Cipriani

Melissa Reyes

Kaiden Harris

Ryan Starr

Abby Olander

Antonio Torres

Set /Lights Crew

Cecilia Ruyak

Jordyn Shovlin

Mairen Campbell

Sofia Mariano

Keely Zabresky

Sets/Props Crew

Elena DiSciullo

Charley Cain

Hope Jacobus

Costumes Crew

Elias Brix

Carolynn Jewell

Cally Williams

Ariana Gardner

Lucie Mitchell