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Paper Mill Playhouse
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Paper Mill Playhouse tackle's cyber-bullying with Virtually Me!

October 14th, 2010 9:36 am ET

By Rick Busciglio, Northern New Jersey Theater Examiner

Paper Mill Playhouse is doing its part to tackle the topic of cyber-bullying and technology abuse. On Tuesday, October 26th at 10:00am, the Millburn Theater will present Virtually Me! as part of its ongoing On-School Time Series. Virtually Me! tackles the issues surrounding technology today in a fun and entertaining way, reminding us all that "while these modern tools are totally awesome and keep us in the know, at the same time, they need to be used responsibly. After all, sometimes the most important part of logging on is knowing when to log off."

"Cyber-bullying, a hot topic in today's headlines, is a serious and sometimes dangerous subject that is often overlooked," says Mark S. Hoebee, Paper Mill Playhouse Producing Artistic Director. "Using theater as a tool to educate young people is an important piece of our mission at Paper Mill Playhouse." "We can engage students through acting, song and dance, while delivering an important message."

"In an age of computer savvy young people, cyber-bullying is a problem that impacts students regardless of race, disability, religion, sexual orientation or economic status," says Lisa Cooney, Paper Mill Playhouse's Director of Education. "This timely piece of theater is here to engage students in New Jersey and make a difference in our community."

Innovative technologies are developing so rapidly that kids are finding ways to use and abuse them faster than

their parents and teachers can react. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, blogging, texting, and gaming are changing the way kids interact with the world. While these modern innovations are a welcome means of efficient communication, unfortunately they can also be tools for a new kind of bullying: cyber-bullying. Now more than ever, our children need leadership and guidance from their parents and teachers in addressing the pros and cons of technology, but where do we begin?

Virtually Me! is the rockin' new musical that will help parents and educators all across the country foster a new dialogue with their students about technology in a fun and entertaining way. Appropriate for grades 4 - 9, this live musical production is filled with relatable characters, topical stories, inspiring songs, and high-energy choreography.

The lessons covered in this musical include:Cyber-bullying: Technology opens the lines for so many new forms of fast communication, but it also paves the way to a new form of bullying called cyber-bullying. Rumors have always spread quickly, but in today's 24/7 blogging, texting, emailing, and IM'ing world, rumors develop at a much faster rate. In this technology-driven time, now more than ever, it is important kids treat one another with respect and kindness. Cyber-bullying often starts with an innocent joke, but can then quickly snowball into something that hurts not only the victim, but everyone involved.
Texting: Texting can be a fun and informative way of keeping in touch with friends, but there is such a thing as too much, especially when it cuts into a students' studying time.

Social Networking: Creating your own social networking page, like Facebook or MySpace, can get you connected to a whole new set of friends instantly. You need to be true to your "virtual" self online or your new friends won't get the chance to know the "real" you.

Students Should Talk to an Adult: Adults may not always understand everything about the newest technology. A parent or teacher may not even know how to send a text message, but they definitely know a lot about life. If something happens, even if a student thinks an adult "won't get it," they should talk to a parent or teacher. They can help.
Taking place at Wi-Fi High in Anywhere, USA, Virtually Me! is an entirely original, educational musical for today's blogging, emailing, Facebooking, IM'ing, and texting generation. Directed by Jeremy Dobrish, Virtually Me! features music by Jeff Thomson, lyrics by Jordan Mann, and a book by Jeremy Desmon and Jeremy Dobrish.
With an ensemble including Aaron Catano, Graham Douglass, Ashley Tobias, Dara Hartman, and Wade Mowles, Virtually Me! features choreography by Wendy Seyb, musical direction by Aaron Jodoin, and orchestrations by Danny Larsen. Scenic design, Rob Odorisio; costume design, Bobby Pearce; projection/video design, Chris Kateff; production stage manager, Robert Glowacki; company manager, Becca Schneider; general manager, Matt Murphy Productions.
Virtually Me! launches its national tour September 27th in various cities throughout New York before moving on to Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Vermont, Georgia, and Kentucky.
There is limited availability for tickets. Please call Group Sales at 973-379-3636, ext. 2438, as soon as possible if your school group is interested in attending.

PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE, a not-for-profit arts organization, is one of the country's leading regional theaters. Paper Mill Playhouse programs are made possible, in part, by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, A Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support is provided by generous contributions from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. Paper Mill Playhouse is a member of Theatre Communications Group, the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, the Council of Stock Theatres, and the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.   (Mark S. Hoebee-Artistic Director, Todd Schmidt, Managing Director)

Tags: cyber-bullying, Virtually Me, Paper Mill Playhouse