

Portola's Puffs will have you spellbound  
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Over seven increasingly-eventful years in the hallowed halls of a Certain School of Magic and Magic, the hilarious hijinks of the bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, misfit Puffs reveal that true magic lies in found family, transformation, and compliance under U.S. Fair Use Laws.

Bounding onto the scene is Peter Cooke as Wayne Hopkins, legs bouncing with anticipation as he is sorted into the Puffs. Cooke smoothly cools this energetic gait into the gangly walk of a dorky pre-teen, the moody trudge of a brooding 15-year old, and finally, into the confident strides of a newborn leader as he stands up for his Puff family in their final battle.

When Zubin Bhatia enters as Narrator, he is calm, unhurried, and wields deadpan humor dryer than a chili pepper every-flavor bean— a complete foil to the wacky main cast. Bhatia's unwavering impartiality and clear British accent provide comedic contrast, standing impossibly still amongst the lively Puffs celebrating their new members.

The Puffs undergo a rewarding transformation from strangers to full-blown family. While initially they greet each other with awkward, albeit enthusiastic "Hiiiis!!", the Puffs soon form an inseparable crew. They are ready to assume position at any time— whether to fearfully assure potential danger, crouched in a point and wands thrust out in defense, that they! are not! a threat!-- or to simply break it down on the dance floor.

The Portola Costume Team led by Ivan Bascos, Oksana Catllier, and Gauri Agarwal, document Wayne's transformation into a leader through considerate and cohesive costume choices. Wayne begins his journey in a plaid yellow flannel, which he then sheds when he rejects his Puffness; however, when he remembers his found family, a clean-cut, yellow-striped button up is his choice of layer as he steps up as a leader.

The Puffs' high energy is equally matched by the lighting design (leads Ani Babu, Cori Dudley, Manpria Sandhu). Bold yellow lighting leaves the common room aglow as the Puffs come together in teamwork. High-stakes battles are met with perfectly-timed flashes of green and white, and vibrant rainbow lights serve as the backdrop at the dance. In each case, the lighting design matches and amplifies the energy of the actors.

While the Puffs may strive to be third or nothing, Portola's company aims much higher— through their commitment to the love and transformation found in every facet of the play, Puffs shines as a bewitchingly-heartwarming comedy.