

Movies & More



Lovable bugs

A review of Center for Puppetry Arts' inspired "Adventures of Mighty Bug."

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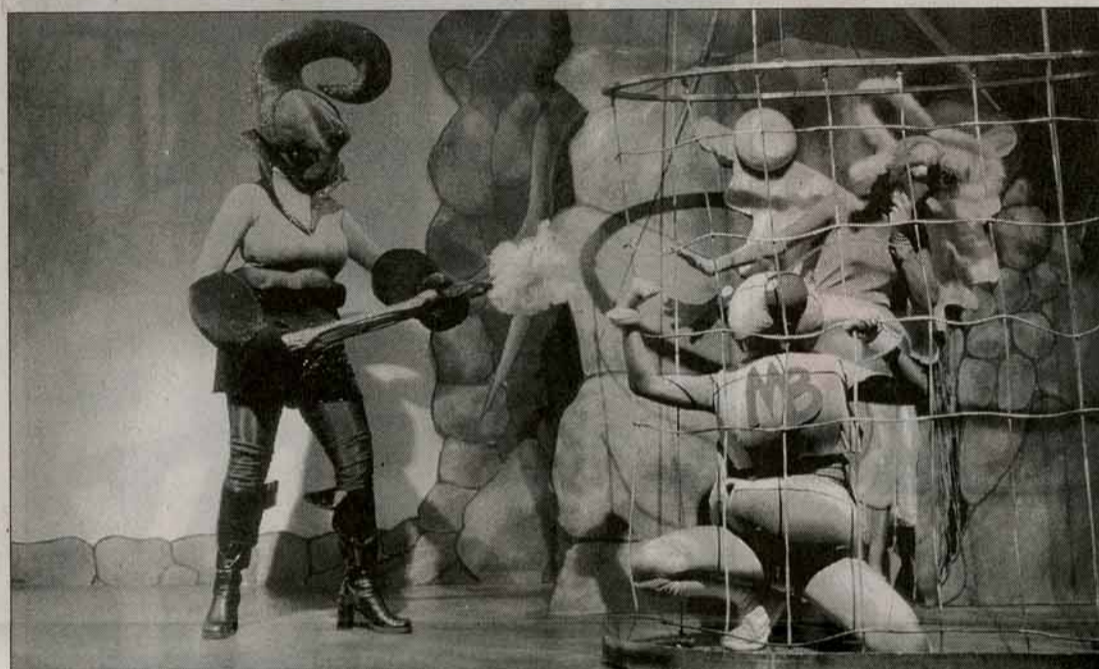


ON ACCESSATLANTA.COM



"Hello, gorgeous!": That's what critic Meridith Ford wanted to blurt when Bone's heavyweight steaks hit the table. A review.

THEATER / CALENDAR



Kathryn Kolb

Creepy villainess Scorpiana (Caroline Masplet) captures the insect world's greatest superhero, Mighty Bug (Luis R. Hernandez), and his love, Morpha Butterfly (Julie Dansby).

A crime-fighting bug's life buzzes with wit, whimsy

By WENDELL BROCK
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Ripped from the funny pages of fly papers, "The Adventures of Mighty Bug" is an action-packed epic with a cast of thousands and an army of extras. Who will save Bugville from the brink of ruin? Behold, his name is Mighty Bug.

A tiny caped crusader with green tights and bobbing red antennae, he's the Superman of the insect underground.

Looks like Jon Ludwig, the Center for Puppetry Arts' resident lord of the creepy-crawlies, is at it again. A molten blend of cartoon-inspired storytelling, science lessons and ingenious puppeteering, "The Adventures of Mighty Bug" is a blissfully entertaining episodic adventure for children, adults and families.

"Mighty Bug" stars Luis R. Hernandez as the daffy and irrepressible hemipteroid who buzzes from catastrophe to close encounter with the galumphing grace of an overstuffed honeybee.

Everyone knows that "the bug world's mightiest superhero," as the script pegs him, is destined for comely country crooner Morpha Butterfly ("I'm Buggy for You"). But first they must battle evil villainess Scorpiana, who ensnares them in her secret lair. Though his face is hidden by his costume, Hernandez brilliantly manipulates his

THEATER REVIEW

"The Adventures of Mighty Bug"

Today: 10 and 11:30 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 and 3 p.m. Saturday; 1 and 3 p.m. Sunday. Also, Tuesday-March 13: 10 and 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays-Fridays; noon and 2 p.m. Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays. \$12 includes museum admission and Create-a-Puppet workshop. Center for Puppetry Arts, 1404 Spring St. N.W., Atlanta. 404-873-3089, 404-873-3391, www.puppet.org.

The verdict: Crime and courtship in the insect underworld.

head, thorax and abdomen to convey his character's comic predicaments. Before his work begins, he must exercise, jog and brush his mandibles (a funny scene in which he scours his armpits with his toothbrush). He sashays, shakes his booty and preens like Austin Powers.

Mighty Bug aids his canine friend Rex with his flea and tick issue. He helps an ant colony hoist a heavy slice of pepperoni pizza but refuses to indulge because pizza is not on the "Ant-kins Diet." And he rescues a beetle engaged in a Sisyphean task involving a pile of dung.

Meanwhile, Mighty Bug's paramour, Morpha (Julie

Dansby), is a radio DJ with a wasp waist who sings in a Patsy Cline twang and dedicates her ditties to "the bug with the mug I love." She's accompanied by a combo including Gus the Grasshopper on violin, Ricardo the Cicada on drums and Chirpy the Cricket on horn. Chirpy, Morpha informs us, has "blown with every bug band from Baja to Bimini."

Professor Rhinoceros Beetle (Geoff Uterhardt) drops in occasionally to offer pompous commentaries on Mighty Bug's "amusing little farce," which turns dead serious when Scorpiana (Caroline Masplet) traps Mighty and Morpha in a steel cage.

"You stole it?" asks Mighty Bug, mistaking "steel" for "steal."

"Yes, it's stolen steel," quips his quick-witted captress.

As always, Ludwig supplies zingers that sail right over the wee ones' heads but keep the grown-ups giggling. Puppet and costume designer Katie George uses ancient artistry (shadow and rod puppets, rolling dioramas), which Ludwig couples with live video and slide projections. While Spencer G. Stephens narrates, Bryan Mercer has composed a rolling piano score that echoes the warp speed of the insect microcosmos.

All in all, it's a parade of marvels that will leave you agog.