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Dramatic Publishing

*Winner of the 2011 Macy's
New Play Prize for Young Audiences*

What's Bugging Greg?



Comedy
by
Darrah Cloud



“Darrah Cloud has turned the dark and twisted world of Franz Kafka inside out to create a fantastically funny exploration of what it means to be different—really different—in our unforgiving world. I’m not sure who’s going to enjoy it more, the kids or the adults,” said [Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park] Director of Education Mark Lutwak.” — *Broadwayworld.com*

What’s Bugging Greg?

Comedy. By Darrah Cloud. Cast: 2m., 2w., 1 to 4 either gender. Thirteen-year-old Greg Samsa wakes up one morning to discover that he has turned into a giant cockroach. His mother, in a panic, dials 911, thus beginning his adventures as they search for a cure for his “disease.” What will he tell his friends? How can he face his schoolmates? Can he still perform the lead in his school play? Will his mom ever hug him again? Or is he doomed to be a science exhibit for the rest of his life? Prodded by doctors, studied by a scientist, laughed at, screamed at and run from by his classmates, Greg copes with the changes—and the possibilities—in his new body. In this riotous comedy inspired by Franz Kafka and Shakespeare, Greg comes to understand not only what true friendship is but also who he is. Premiered at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Recipient of the Macy’s New Play Prize for Young Audiences, 2011. Recommended for age 7 and up. *One set. Approximate running time: 1 hour. Code: WG1.*

Photo: Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cincinnati, Ohio, tour featuring (l-r) Mark St. Cyr and Greg Mallios.

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The world premiere of *What's Bugging Greg?* took place on September 29, 2001, at the Cincinnati Zoo. It was produced by Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Ed Stern, Producing Artistic Director; Buzz Ward, Executive Director; with the following artists of the Bruce E. Coyle Intern Company:

CAST

Greg. GREG MALLIOS
Mom LARA MILLER
Darius MARK ST. CYR
Sophie. MARGARET IVEY
Dr. Bob, Dr. Theodora, Mercutio & Dr. Kunkel, Ph.D.
LORMAREV C. JONES

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director MARK LUTWAK
Set Designer. JEN LAMPSON
Costume Designer MELANIE MORTIMER
Properties. ANNA GOLLER
Choreographer KARIE-LEE SUTHERLAND
Sound Designer . . . HUNTER SPOEDE & MARK LUTWAK
from samples of *Xique Xique* by Tom Zé
Fight Consultant JONN BACA
Stage Manager SYDNEY RENEE KUHLMAN
Technical Director VERONICA BISHOP
Costume Director GORDON DeVINNEY
Drama Education Associates TERAH HERMAN &
ANITA TROTTA
Production Entomologist RANDY MORGAN

What's Bugging Greg? was also supported by readings at the Lark Play Development Center in New York City.

WHAT'S BUGGING GREG?

CHARACTERS

GREG SAMSA 12-year-old boy
MOM his mom
DARIUS his best friend
SOPHIE his other best friend
DR. BOB a general practitioner
DR. THEODORA a specialist
DR. KUNKEL an expert
MERCUTIO a pigeon

SET: Basically, a bed which turns into a gurney which turns into a car which turns into...Nature.

WHAT'S BUGGING GREG?

THE PLAY OPENS ON: *GREG SAMSA, verge of 13, sound asleep in his bed onstage. He sleeps cuddled up with a giant stuffed dog.*

MOM'S VOICE. Greg! Greggie! Time to get up! *(He moans. Pulls covers over his head.)* Pancakes, cinnamon rolls or Ninja Mutants? *(He remains under the covers. No answer.)* Pancakes, cinnamon rolls or Ninja Mutants? *(No answer, no movement.)* Greg!

GREG *(uncovers his head)*. Ninja Mutants!

MOM'S VOICE. They'll be out of the toaster in five minutes! Are you up?

GREG. Yes.

MOM'S VOICE. Are you really up?

GREG. Yes!

MOM'S VOICE. You don't sound up!

GREG. I'm up! *(He yawns. Stretches. Whips off his covers and discovers that he has become a cockroach. He sees his new horrifying legs. He sees his enormous weird abdomen. He sees that he now has pincers for hands. He tries to scream. Can't breathe, can't scream. Slowly finds his voice:)* Mm—mmm—mmmmah—mmmmmm maaaaaaah—Mom!... Mom...MOM! MOM! MOM! MOM!—

(MOM runs in. Freezes upon seeing him in utter fright.)

MOM. Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!

GREG. Is it serious?

MOM. My baby! My baby!

GREG. Help?

MOM. I'm calling 9-1-1! *(She whips out her cell phone and dials.)*

GREG. Is it *that* serious?

MOM. Yes! No! Nothing to worry about! Cover up! Stay still! Don't move! Don't panic! *(Totally panicking.)* Hello? Hello? I need an ambulance right away! Two ambulances! And a fire truck! And the Army, the Navy and the National Guard! 123 Battaria Way. It's my son! Something terrible has happened to him! I don't *know* what it is! Just get here! Now! Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! *(She hangs up. GREG starts to cry.)* Everything is going to be just fine, Greggie! Nothing to worry about. All right? Things like this happen to people every day. We're just going to take a fun ride to the emergency room and find out what this is.

(Frightened, GREG holds his arms out for a hug.)

GREG. Mama!

MOM *(freezes. Doesn't know what to do. Gags)*. Uhhh—

GREG. Mama?

MOM. Uhhh... You know I love you more than anything in the world, right? You know that, right?

GREG. Yeah.

MOM. Mom's just a little bit...barfy at the moment...

GREG. I'm scared! *(He cries.)*

MOM. Please don't cry. Please don't cry. *(She steels up courage. Tries to squelch her fear as well as her utter disgust. Approaches him determinedly and tries to hug him: he has four arms to negotiate; they're sharp.)*
Ouch!...

GREG. Try this way—

MOM. Owwww—

GREG. No this way—

MOM. Owww! *(SOUND of siren coming—saving her. She jumps away from him.)* Sirens! I hear sirens! They'll be here any minute. It's cold outside. You need a jacket. *(She grabs his cool school jacket.)* You could catch a chill and make this...worse— *(She realizes he has too many arms for it. Gives up.)* Forget the jacket! I'll wrap you up. Everything is going to be all right, do you hear me? There is nothing to worry about. *(Freaking out.)* What's taking them so long, why aren't they here yet? *(False calm.)* Just stay calm.

(She wraps him tightly in his comforter. SIRENS grow louder.)

MOM *(cont'd., frenzied)*. They're here! Hurry! Walk! Run!
(She drags him out with incredible strength.)

GREG *(muffled by comforter)*. Gak piffle, cccck, shshsht—

EMERGENCY ROOM

(GREG sits on the examining table. DR. BOB enters looking at chart.)

DR. BOB. Well now, what do we have here— *(He stops dead when he sees GREG. Gags.)*

MOM. He was fine when he went to bed last night.

DR. BOB. Uh...

MOM. He takes a vitamin every day. Maybe I gave him too many. All his vaccinations are up to date. Maybe the one for the dreaded Tinky Winker's disease was too much... Maybe he got too close to the microwave— Maybe he played too many video games—

DR. BOB. Er, I, uh...

MOM. Do something for him, Doctor! Do something!

DR. BOB *(spurred to action but totally unsure what to do)*.

Uh... Can you say "ah," young, uh...man?

GREG. Ahhhhh...

(DR. BOB whips out a flashlight, looks down his throat.)

MOM. I can't even hug him! I'm his mother and I can't hug him!

DR. BOB. Now open your eyes— *(GREG does so. DR. BOB shines the flashlight into them.)*

GREG. Owwww!

MOM. What? What?

GREG. The light! It hurts!

DR. BOB. Hmm... *(He pops a thermometer in GREG's mouth. Can't decide what to use for blood pressure.)*

Throws the cuff over his shoulder. Tries to find his heart through his stethoscope. Then other parts of his body: eyeball, foot. Gives up.) No one else in the family has ever had something like this?

MOM. No! No! You think he got it from me?

GREG *(with thermometer in his mouth)*. I'm thorry, Mom!

MOM. This is not your fault!

DR. BOB *(takes the thermometer out)*. Sixty-eight degrees.

MOM. What does that mean?

DR. BOB. Room temperature. Try this... *(He pops something into GREG's mouth.)* What does it taste like?

GREG. Good!

DR. BOB. It's snot.

GREG. Yeah it is. Like potato chips.

DR. BOB. It's snot!

MOM. What is it then?

DR. BOB. It's snot. Snot! Mine, actually. Now, lie on your back.

(GREG struggles to stand. Then falls backward. DR. BOB jumps backward involuntarily.)

DR. BOB *(cont'd)*. Sorry. Good. Now try to get up.

(GREG tries mightily to turn over but can't. Starts to choke.)

GREG. Ahhh...ohhhhh...hmmmmm...eesh...

MOM. What does that mean?

DR. BOB. Can I see you in private a moment, Mrs. Samsa?

GREG *(strangling; flailing)*. Can I...get up?

DR. BOB (*to GREG*). I need to talk to your mother, Greg.
We'll just be a minute.

(DR. BOB pulls MOM aside. GREG tries to survive.)

MOM. Tell me, Doctor. Tell me what it is.

DR. BOB. I'm afraid your son is a giant cockroach.

MOM. Nooooo!

GREG. Help?

DR. BOB. Frankly, Mrs. Samsa, I don't think your insurance will cover this.

MOM. But he'll get over this, right? Please? Yes? He'll get better?

DR. BOB. No.

MOM. But...what am I going to do?

DR. BOB. Step on him. Go on with your life.

GREG. Glugggggg...!

MOM. I don't want to go on with my life! I'm his mother!

DR. BOB. Then for goodness' sake, Mrs. Samsa, don't let him see you like this.

(GREG keeps fighting to live.)

DR. BOB (*cont'd*). He could lose hope.

MOM. You mean...there's hope?

DR. BOB. No. It's hopeless. There's nothing we can do for him. Except remain hopeful. If you let him know you're devastated, you could make him worse.

GREG. Can't...breathe...

MOM. There must be something I can do for him!

DR. BOB. Keep him warm. Avoid direct sunlight. Fresh air won't hurt him, as long as he doesn't escape. The world could be a very dangerous place for him.

MOM. What should I feed him?

DR. BOB. Anything he asks for. But whatever you do, make sure he never rolls onto his back. He could die.

GREG. Hellllllppppppaaaaaagghhhhh...!

(They finally notice GREG. Rush to save him.)

MOM. Oh!

DR. BOB. Get on the other side and lift—

BOTH. Eesh...push!... Ow!... Yaaaahhh... Arrrrgh...
(They struggle to turn GREG over. He gasps for air, saved. They gasp for air, winded.)

DR. BOB. Mrs. Samsa, you had better face reality here.

MOM. I want a second opinion.

DR. BOB. I understand. I'll refer you to a specialist I know who specializes in special cases. *(To GREG.)* Feel better, Greg! *(He leaves, shaking his head sadly.)*

GREG. Mom? What do I have?

MOM. Well...you have...a condition. That's what it is, a condition. And he said...if you rest and drink plenty of fluids... All of this will go away like a very bad dream.

GREG. Why did this happen to me?

MOM. Now you listen to me, Greg Samsa: you did nothing wrong to deserve this. You are a very good little boy. And everything is going to be fine. Do you hear me?

GREG. Yes.

MOM. What?

GREG. Yes.

MOM. What?

GREG. YES!

MOM. Good! I don't want to hear another word! We're going for ice cream! *(She struggles under his weight to help him out and into:)*

GREG'S BEDROOM - LATER

(GREG lies on his tummy in bed. MOM wraps him up tight.)

GREG. I can't move.

MOM. It doesn't matter as long as you're warm.

GREG. Mom?

MOM. Yes, honey?

GREG. What about the school play?

MOM. Oh. Oh dear.

GREG. Can I still be in it?

MOM. I forgot about the play...

GREG. I got the lead!

MOM. I'm sorry, honey. But that's just not an option right now. You have to get well before you can go back to school. Or anywhere, for that matter.

GREG. But...it'll all be over by then!

MOM. Greg—

GREG. I know all my lines already. Mrs. Havel is making my costume. You should see it. It has gold on the sleeves. And a sword. This is the most important thing that's ever happened to me!

MOM. Get some rest and we'll talk about it later, all right?

GREG. "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks—"

MOM. That's beautiful, honey. Just beautiful...

GREG. And what's more, I understand what I'm saying.

MOM. You might have been an actor someday...

GREG. Might have?

MOM. Could! Still! Be! Anything you want!

GREG. I want to be in the play. More than anything else in the world.

MOM. And you will! Absolutely! When you get better! I'm going to go call the school now and tell them you're a little...under the weather. Then I'm going to make you some lunch. Is there...anything you'd like in particular?

GREG. A hamburger. Raw. With mouse hair on top. Did I see french fries in the garbage?

MOM. They spoiled. I threw them out.

GREG. Great! I'll take those and... Got any old cheese? Rotten apples like, from under my bed? Really stale chocolate? Got any mold?

MOM (*disturbed*). Um...I, uh...I'll see what I can find...

GREG. Thanks, Mom.

(She goes to the kitchen. KNOCK KNOCK. DARIUS, GREG's best friend, is at the door.)

DARIUS. Hi, Mrs. Samsa! Is Greg home?

MOM. Darius! Oh. Oh dear. Uh... He's not...feeling very well.

DARIUS. Is that why he wasn't in school today?

MOM. I'm afraid so.

DARIUS. Can I see him?

MOM. That wouldn't be a good idea at the moment.

DARIUS. Will he be in school tomorrow? I need to know because I always save him a seat in the cafeteria.

MOM. No, honey. No school tomorrow.

DARIUS. What's he got? Because if it's chicken pox, pinkeye, head lice, measles, whooping cough, tetanus, polio or rabies, I've either had it or been vaccinated for it, so, I'm cool.

MOM. No, no, it's none of those.

DARIUS. Is it bad?

(MOM chokes up, can't answer.)

DARIUS *(cont'd)*. Really bad?

MOM. It would be best if he didn't have any visitors right now.

DARIUS *(doubtfully; worried)*. Oh. OK. Sure, Mrs. Samsa. Bye!

(DARIUS leaves and MOM goes off to the kitchen. DARIUS goes around and climbs in GREG's window.)

DARIUS *(cont'd., whispering loudly)*. Yo! Gee!

GREG. Darius!

DARIUS. Your mom says you're sick. She won't let me see you. What's wrong with you?

GREG. Nobody knows.

DARIUS. You sound OK.

GREG. I feel OK.

DARIUS. Does it hurt?

GREG. Not really.

DARIUS. Then what is it?

GREG. It's kind of hard to talk about.

DARIUS. Gee, dude, I'm your best friend. I'm here for you. Whatever. You can tell me anything.

GREG. I'm not telling you unless you promise you won't tell anybody else.

DARIUS. I promise.

GREG. Promise...you promise?

DARIUS. Yeah, whatever, just tell me!

(GREG rises from the covers and sits up, exposing his bug body. DARIUS shrieks.)