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## ArtSpoken & Reviews

### Goggas! is even better than before



*Jennifer de Klerk*

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**Jennifer de Klerk:** It is a privilege to be enrolled as a Gogga in this lively children’s show that dances along with all the colour and vibrancy that is Africa.

“We South Africans are known for our hospitality,” says Antic the Ant

proudly, dressed in a cheerful street mix of bush gear and a Springbok rugby outfit with a couple of cute little feelers on top.

The local Goggas certainly go out of their way for Lady Caroline, an elegant Monarch butterfly with beautifully decorated wings. Taking a snooze on a flower hat at a royal garden party in London, she woke on a plane to South Africa and now has to find her way home.

I saw this show, which won the Naledi award for best children's performance recently, on its first run last year and was enchanted to see how it has evolved and developed.

Then it was a delight, proudly South African and a refreshing change from the Americanised story-telling of traditional fairytales. Now it is smoother and more polished with lots of bright new touches.

There is a place for Disney, but there is also a place for our own stories, especially when the characters are recognisably ladybirds, bees and other garden insects, singing and dancing with African verve to numbers from Johnny Clegg and Mango Groove among others.

The costumes are an inspiration for any mum faced with producing an outfit for dress-up day at school. Raid the cupboards for odd items, dig out the scarves, go through the trash for recyclables, decorate caps and motorbike helmets with decals and beads and attach wings made from whatever you can find.

Don't forget the beach towel, goggles and flippers for the water insect and a hip street-smart outfit for the cosmopolitan bug about to embark on a trip to London.

The result is wildly energetic and colourful and the characters take up their roles with zest.

There has to be a villain and here it is the smoothly sequined chameleon Conrad with an amazingly beaded tail. Please be nice to chameleons – Conrad can't help eating other insects and he quickly puts aside his yearning with butterfly a la mode when offered a friend instead.

Then there is sweet little Bafana the Bumblebee who is allergic to honey – a definite handicap for a bee – and the dictatorial queen bee – glorious in gold and black – who has to learn that different doesn't mean worthless.

Neat little life lessons go down with a spoonful of honey and some royal charm as the travellers make their way towards the airport and the Hillbrow Tower in the background gets taller and taller.

The different characters are well defined by acting as well as costume. Devon Flemmer arouses sympathy as Conrad, Dolly Louw is a gracious queen bee and Abby Bryson is a beautiful and charming butterfly. The kids rushed to have pictures taken with her afterwards.

The pivotal role is the robustly South African Antic, with his rugby aspirations and pantsula dance moves. Here Dannie Putter, fresh for this season, fills his feelers with flair. No wonder Sweet Caroline – yes, they sing that one too – falls in love with him.

This is thoroughly good fun and I really enjoyed all the new touches, especially the smoothly choreographed stage combat scene and the well-polished dance numbers.

The joy of this show is that there is plenty to appeal to adults as well as children. The little ones loved it, but the older ones were equally enthralled.

Goggas! A New South African musical is written by Gillian Katz and directed by Francois Theron with a top team - musical direction by Rowan Bakker, set by Stan Knight, costumes by Sarah Roberts, lighting by Jane Gosnell and choreography by Shelly Adriaanzen.

Goggas! Is at the National Children's Theatre until April 21.

*Jennifer de Klerk is editor of Artslink.co.za*

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