

# CENTER STAGE

BY CHRISTOPHER CAPPIELLO

## Letts' Bug Infests Coast Playhouse

When the Lost Angels Theatre Company staged the 2005 Los Angeles production of Chicago playwright Tracy Letts' unsettling drama *Killer Joe*, they walked home with four Ovation Awards, including best production, best ensemble and best direction. The same team is bringing another typically searing Letts play, *Bug*, to the Coast Playhouse this spring.

"If you're going to play such a harrowing, depressed character, it's nice to walk outside and have it be 75 degrees!" says Amy Landecker, making her L.A. stage debut starring as Agnes. Landecker is an old hand at Letts' challenging work, however, having played the role of Agnes' lesbian friend RC in the acclaimed 2003 off-Broadway production of *Bug*. She also starred in *Killer Joe* in Chicago.

Agnes is a divorced waitress with a coke problem who holes herself up in a bug-infested hotel room to avoid her abusive ex-husband. When RC introduces Agnes to the quiet Gulf War vet, Peter, a love affair blossoms amid the squalor, welts and scratches. Typical Letts territory.

"Tracy gives you these huge circumstance—you're infested with bugs and the FBI is after you!" Landecker says. "The play asks that you bare all in more ways than one," she says, explaining that Agnes and Peter (Andrew Elvis Miller) have an extended scene in the nude. "I'm nude on stage for about 10 minutes," she says, laughing. "After you've had kids, that's a thrill."

Her daughter, in fact, was in utero during the off-Broadway run. "I actually had to leave



Andrew Elvis Miller

eventually because I was so pregnant," she explains. "RC is a lesbian dealing with a custody issue with her lover, so it wasn't really appropriate for her to be also having a child! It was an amazing experience doing that show in New York, though, and I'm hoping we can even come near that kind of energy and vibe."

Chances are pretty good. Lost Angels has assembled many of the same artists who brought *Killer Joe* to L.A., including director Scott Cummins. The May release of the film version, starring Ashley Judd and Harry Connick, could boost the play's visibility, too.

Landecker's voiceover career gives the New York-based actress the flexibility to pick up her family and move west for a few months to do a play in a small theater. "Who comes to L.A. to do theater?" she asks, laughing. "I'm loving L.A., though. I don't want to leave. Right now I feel like we're on vacation."

*Bug* runs April 20-June 3 at the Coast Playhouse, 8325 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood. For tickets (\$34.95) and more information, call (866) 411-8111 or visit [www.buginla.com](http://www.buginla.com).