

MW

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Home Run

THE STUDIO THEATRE SECONDSTAGE HAS emerged for its new season in outstanding form with **BAT BOY THE MUSICAL**, the ultra-quirky off-Broadway hit inspired by the 1992 *Weekly World News* cover story about a creature — half-child, half-bat — rumored to be on the loose in West Virginia.

In the incredibly imaginative hands of writers Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, and composer Laurence O'Keefe, *Bat Boy* (Patrick O'Neill) becomes a teenager captured by locals in the coal-mining-turned-cattle-ranching town of Hope Falls. Blamed for a spate of cattle deaths, he's handed over to the town veterinarian Dr. Parker (Buzz Mauro) for euthanasia, but a remarkable bond forms between the boy and Mrs. Parker (Lauri Kraft), who, along with her daughter Shelley (Tara Giordano), turns the boy into an educated, civilized — not to mention showtune-belting — charmer they call Edgar.

Under the pitch-perfect direction of Mike Chamberlin, O'Neill, Mauro, Kraft and Giordano provide hysterically subversive and vocally deft takes on their bizarre characters. They're supported by an enthusiastic ensemble — Mark Bush, Terry Crummitt, Kate Debelack, Carlos Offutt, Doug Sanford and Meghan Touey — who render various wacky denizens of Hope Falls in an infectious gleeful fashion.

The creators skewer anything they can — pop culture, musical theatre convention, small-town intolerance — but they have such a good-natured and talented touch, *Bat Boy The Musical* never strays from an euphoric path.

Through Dec. 8 at The Studio Theatre, 14th & P Streets NW. Tickets are \$30. Call 202-332-3300. Visit www.studiotheatre.org.