

The Star-Ledger

DRIP OF A DAY: Overcast and cool with periods of rain and drizzle.

at 7 A.M.

56°

at 2 P.M.

62°

at 7 P.M.

64°

DETAILS
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TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2001

THE NEWSPAPER FOR NEW JERSEY

REVIEW

Gymnastic comedy soars

NEW YORK STAGE

Antigravity's Crash Test Dummies

Where: New Victory Theater, 209 W. 42nd St., New York

When: Through June 3; 7 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays; 2 and 7 p.m. Saturdays; noon and 5 p.m. Sundays

How much: \$10, \$20, \$25. Call (212) 239-6200 or visit (www.antigravity.com).

BY MICHAEL SOMMERS
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

NEW YORK — Forget De La Guarda and Blue Man Group and get a good look at the spectacular gymnastic comedy of Antigravity's "Crash Test Dummies."

They're a comical, amazingly airborne tribe, and their 90-minute show at the New Victory Theater is a terrific mix of wacky nonverbal humor and acrobatic artistry.

Dazzlingly staged and devised by Christopher Harrison, who founded his Antigravity troupe of world champion athletes 11 years ago, the show posits its 19 superb performers as android-like dummies who test out various products. While these dummies happen to be extremely physical and amiable beings, they're none too bright either, so spectacular falls, comical collisions and all sorts of kinetic hilarity ceaselessly result.

Harrison gives each trouper an individual nature, and Shelly Bomb's nifty designs equip them in a variety of cool sci-fi accouterments to match. In brightly colored industrial surroundings designed by Jonah



Amy Gordon as a rag doll who is always getting into trouble.

Logan and accompanied by humorous sound effects and live music from Sxip Shirey and Paul Weir, the performers go about their high-flying funny business with gusto.

Testing a glue product, two guys keep getting stuck together, resulting in intricate hand-balancing feats. Testing sheets of fabric, half a dozen others are lofted high into the air coiled in its skeins to fly and twirl about in dizzying configurations. A session with "rocket shoes" (apparently pogo-type stilts) sends the company leaping into a soaring kick line. Bungee cords, trampo-

lines, parallel bars and similar devices keep everyone in perpetual motion.

Kids will enjoy the company's wild cartoon antics, but adult eyes will equally admire Antigravity's athletic proficiency — and, dare one say, its performers' rippling physical attributes. Simply put, they're a buff bunch of young men and women, and the ways their muscles play out in action is significantly attractive.

Singling out individuals is an injustice to the overall excellence of the company, but there are a few too splendid not to mention. Amy Gordon portrays a cheerful rag doll of a misfit with an odd resemblance to Sarah Ferguson and a cute way of always getting into trouble. Jonathan Nosan's dummy gets out of physical whack and into some incredibly limber contortions as mechanics strive to sync his body parts. A redheaded nerd-type, Stephan Choiniere coolly spins and soars upon a whirling steel-rod cube hoisted high over the stage.

Audience members will discover their own favorites as they observe these clownish dynamos hurdle, vault, tumble, dive, leap, bounce, catapult and generally zoom all over and around the New Victory's stage. Excitingly lit by Herrick Goldman, "Crash Test Dummies" looks fine from the theater's downstairs rows, but appears even better from the less costly seats in the upper regions.

A steal at a \$25 top ticket price, "Crash Test Dummies" offers a blessedly unpretentious and remarkably entertaining medley of athletic thrills, knockabout humor and toothsome eye candy. There's been talk that Antigravity's visit to 42nd Street may be extended a while longer, and they're sufficiently appealing to all ages and interests to remain in business there all summer long.