

## **THE IRISH CURSE**

**A New Comedy by Martin Casella, Directed by Matt Lenz**

**To Have Its Off-Broadway Premiere At**

**The Soho Playhouse**

**Performances Begin St. Patrick's Day, March 17th**

**With Opening Night Set For March 28th**

Sarahbeth Grossman and Craig Zehms today announced that they would present the Off-Broadway premiere of Martin Casella's acclaimed comedy *THE IRISH CURSE* at the Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam Street (between Avenue of the Americas & Varick Street) beginning an open-ended run on St. Patrick's Day, March 17<sup>th</sup>. Opening Night is set for Sunday, March 28th. Matt Lenz will direct. Casting will be announced shortly.

*THE IRISH CURSE* had its world premiere at the New York International Fringe Festival with a sold-out run in 2005, garnering rave reviews and winning the Overall Excellence Award for Playwriting. The play was also acclaimed in its European premiere at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This production subsequently transferred to The Dublin International Gay Theatre Festival.

In *THE IRISH CURSE* size matters to a small group of Irish-American men who meet every Wednesday night, in the basement hall of a Catholic church, at a self-help group for men with small penises (*it is allegedly an Irish trait to be under-endowed*). When a twenty-something blue-collar guy joins the group, he challenges everything the other men thought about "the Irish curse"...tackling their obsession with body image and unmasking the comical and truthful questions of identity, masculinity, relationships, social status, sex and the ever important "do I measure up to the next guy?"

**Martin Casella's** other plays include *Scituate* (Best New Play, SCFTA); *Mates* (LA Weekly Award, Best New Play), *Paydirt*, *Desert Fire*, *Beautiful Dreamer*, *Grand Junction*, *The Big Enchilada* and *George Bush Goes to Hell*. He wrote the book for the musicals *Paper Moon*, *Happy Holidays*, *Taking Care of Mrs. Carroll*, *Saint Heaven*, *Doo-Dah!* and co-wrote the book for the new jazz musical *Play It Cool* (GLAAD nomination). His plays have been seen at, among others, the Pasadena Playhouse, Coast Playhouse, Coronet (LA); TBG, Linhart and Access Theatres (NYC); Village Theatre, Group Theatre (Seattle); Bailiwick, Theatre Building (Chicago); Stage One (Wichita); Paper Mill Playhouse (NJ); Goodspeed Opera House, Stanford Center for the Arts (Connecticut); Walnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia); Ford's Theatre (Washington); and in Tokyo, Dublin and Edinburgh. His current theatrical project is the musical *Free Money*, a musical about the invention of credit cards, with composer/lyricist Keith Gordon and documentary filmmaker Barbara Wellin-Multer. In film and TV, Casella has written for Steven Spielberg, Rob Reiner, Dan Petrie Jr., John Milius, John Badham, Francis Ford Coppola, Herbert Ross, Bruce Cohen, Anthony Edwards, The Walt Disney Company, Universal Pictures, Ladd Company, HBO, Roger Corman, Kerry Washington and Paulist Productions. TV projects include the film "Behind the Lens" for CBS, and "Daddy's Girl," an HBO pilot, and a stint as a writer on the ABC daytime drama "One Life To Live." His feature screenplay *One Night Stand* was directed by Talia Shire and starred Ally Sheedy and Frederic Forrest. Casella is currently adapting David Johnson's play *Busted Jesus Comix* for the big screen; and is writing the feature film *Tom's Dad* for Emmy Award-winning producers Joni Levin and Keith Clarke. In addition to previously having taught playwriting at the California Institute of the Arts, Casella's happiest – and proudest – most recent adventure is teaching playwriting at the Harvey Milk High School here in New York City. Casella is a proud member of The Dramatists Guild, the Writer's Guild of America, Actors' Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild.

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**Matt Lenz**'s Broadway credits include *Hairspray* (Associate Director - also for National Tours, South Africa, Las Vegas, Toronto, Germany), *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (Resident Director), *The Yellow Brick Road Not Traveled: Wicked's 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* (Director). Off-Broadway: *Idaho!* (NYMF - Winner of "Best of Fest" 2008 and Best Director Awards), *The Irish Curse* (NY Fringe Festival), Alan Ball's *The Amazing Adventures of Tense Guy*. Regional: *Saint Heaven* (a new musical by Martin Casella and Keith Gordon), *Scituate* by Martin Casella (Stamford Center), *Aida* (MUNY, Gateway), *The Full Monty*, *Beauty and the Beast* (MUNY, North Carolina Theatre, Michigan Opera Theatre), *South Pacific* (Casa Manana, NCT) *Confidentially*, *Cole* (LA), *Dirty Blonde*, *Love! Valor! Compassion!* (Austin). Member SDC.

**Sarahbeth Grossman** is an independent producer in theater, film, and television as well as a strategic consultant in entertainment and digital marketing. Her theater background includes serving as Associate Managing Director of the Yale Repertory Theatre where she produced the annual WinterFest of new plays. In LA, Sarahbeth served as Producing Director of the Los Angeles Stage & Film Company, which fostered new writers and new works with a year-round reading series. Under the LASAF banner, Ms. Grossman produced the LA premiere of Evan Handler's one-man show *Time On Fire: A Comedy Of Terrors*. Her film and TV work includes stints at Showtime Networks and Viacom Pictures. Her independent film credits include production crew work on *Me and Veronica* directed by Don Scardino, *Bopha!* directed by Morgan Freeman, *Strapped* directed by Forest Whitaker, *Three Wishes* and *Out To Sea* (Associate Producer) directed by Martha Coolidge. Sarahbeth served as Vice President of Development & Production for Ms. Coolidge's Ozma Productions under a television development deal with Pearson Entertainment. Ms. Grossman moved to Walt Disney Home Entertainment where she oversaw online marketing and became Executive Director of Global Brand Strategy & Business Development. Ms. Grossman then spent a short time as Vice President of Marketing at *Variety* before forming her own consulting business. In her spare time, Sarahbeth volunteers with charitable organizations raising money for breast cancer research and supporting children and families living below the poverty line.

**Craig Zehms** produced *The Irish Curse* for the 2005 NYC International Fringe Festival. He began his career as an actor and appeared in regional theatres including the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson Theatre, Ford's Theatre, Goodspeed Opera House, and the Odyssey Theatre Ensemble. His TV credits include "Newhart," "Hooperman," and "V-The Series." He currently serves as the National Spokesperson for Lalique North America and for the past 20 years has produced and appeared at events at luxury retailers throughout the country.

**Lauren Helpern** will serve as Set Designer and **Traci Klainer** will serve as Lighting Designer. Additional members of the design team will be announced shortly.

**Performances, which begin March 17<sup>th</sup>, will be Tuesday through Saturday evenings at 8 PM, Sunday evenings at 7 pm, with matinees Saturday and Sunday at 3 PM. Tickets will be \$59 for all seats/all performances.**

**For tickets and more information visit [www.TheIrishCurse.com](http://www.TheIrishCurse.com).**