



Dan Butler and Austin Peck head new off Broadway comedy-drama

**BY MICHAEL SOMMERS
NEWJERSEYNEWSROOM.COM
OFF BROADWAY REVIEW**

With the global success of "The Vagina Monologues," Eve Ensler not only freed women to talk about their private parts in public, she also liberated men to contemplate their own junk.

These testosterone testimonials have ranged from the infamous "Puppetry of the Penis" and the current "Circumcise Me" to "The Irish Curse," which opened Sunday at the Soho Playhouse.

A success at the New York International Fringe Festival several summers ago, "The Irish Curse" is Martin Casella's character study about five Irish-American guys sharing their stories at a group support meeting in a church basement in Brooklyn.

Their common problem is a smallish penis size. Descriptions range from "baby corn" to bottle caps. It's all genetic, of course, but their inability to show or grow (much) below the belt has affected their lives.

The characters include a genial middle-aged priest leading the session (Scott Jaeck), an uptight lawyer (Dan Butler) whose wife has left him for a better-endowed man, a gay cop (Austin Peck) who just so happens to be a sex addict and a sporty Staten Islander (Brian Leahy) who stuffs

his jock with a sock. A first-timer at their meeting is an anxious young Dubliner (Roderick Hill) on the brink of his wedding.

Since this modest 90-minute comedy-drama does not much develop beyond its situation, let's not divulge the guys' intimate conversations except to note that sizable laughs arise and towards the conclusion a couple of manly tears are shed. For all of its frank talk, the play proves to be surprisingly mild entertainment.

Good acting enhances the production staged with a light touch by Matt Lenz. A comic stalwart from TV's "Frasier," Butler effectively contributes several varying outbursts of anger. A hunk from "Days of Our Lives," Peck depicts the randy detective with a smoldering nature beneath his studied cool.

"The Irish Curse" continues an open-end run at the Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St., New York. Call (212) 691-1555 or visit www.theirishcurse.com .

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