



26th March 2012

Senator Katherine Zappone to launch programme of 9th International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival.

The International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival, now in its 9th year, will from the 7th – 20th of May host 147 performances, by 83 performers in 22 new plays and 16 free events, over 14 days, in 8 Dublin venues, from 7 countries, in two new weekly programmes. All this to entertain, educate and (occasionally) challenge one great diverse audience – that should include you.

Senator Katherine Zappone, Ireland's first openly gay female member of parliament, will officially launch this remarkable programme at 1pm on March 28th in the Arlington Hotel, Temple Bar. Zappone, alongside her spouse Anne Louise Gilligan, stood up to challenge the law as it continued to discriminate against gay people who are married.

The festival's founding Artistic Director, Brian Merriman, explains "We are extremely grateful to Senator Zappone for showing her support of the festival in such a wonderful way. Her leadership and courage is typical of the open and generous contribution gay people are making to the human rights agenda, which does, and will, make Ireland a good place to live. Actions like hers are beyond bravery – they bring about change – allowing public enquiry into ones individuality is deeply personal, but the result is generously beneficial to all."

This year the festival nears its 1800th performance as next year will see their 2,000th, just in time for the tenth anniversary year in 2013 – a truly impressive landmark and testament to the festival's resilience through thick and thin.

The festival has provided a platform for stories to be written, told, heard and discussed within the safety of theatre. These stories, match the diversity of the festival's participants, both cast and crew; they are told by men and women, young and old, straight and gay, Irish and international.

Merriman explains: "Foreign nationals make up over 25% of our audience and are a valued, hard working cohort of our volunteers corps. We have a German, Belgian and Pole on our Executive Committee as well as a guy from Galway!"

In fact this ethnic diversity is no more apparent than in the companies hosted by the festival over the years. This May, Dublin will host professional theatre makers from Ireland, UK, Germany, USA, Canada, South Africa and Australia. The international programme is carefully designed from over 80 worldwide submissions.

Merriman continues: “About half of our audience and of our performers, writers and crew are gay - the rest share our requirement for good theatre and are most welcome. This is not an exclusive event for our wonderful supporters in the LGBT community, and they respect that. This is an artistic event for theatre lovers at home and abroad – it is for Dublin, our arts, our city and all its people and beyond.”

As the largest event of its kind in the world, the International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival has helped Dublin become *the* centre for gay theatre and has placed gay theatre itself on the map as a concept and a valid theatrical and social identity. Alongside the festival, Dublin City Council has evolved from trying to shut down the Project Arts centre for showing a gay play in the 1970s to being the best City Council to support the holding of such an event in the 21st century. The festival’s flags will once again grace the quays this year, flying high for all to see.

And that is just who the festival wish to entice, doing so with a programme containing something for everyone. In Artscape’s production of *Mary & The Conqueror* (South Africa) the lives of inspiring South African writer Mary Renault and her lover Julie Mullard are paralleled with those of Alexander the Great and his lover Hephaestion. From history to stand-up with *The F*cking World According to Molly*, to love uncovered through violence in *Stop Kiss*, to cabaret as filmstar Lionel Jeffries’ son Ty performs as *Miss Hope Springs*, to the challenges that face many who try to endure depression prompted by constructed shame in *Half a Person*, to comedy in *Womb Service*. Through iconic music from female vocal legends in *The Queen B’s*, to a magical wand bringing a family of women together in *Outlook*, the HIV stories of families and friends in *Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens* and the world premiere coming out story of TV star Eilish O Carroll (Mrs. Brown’s Boys), daughter of a Labour party TD in *Live, Love, Laugh*.

This year marks the *European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity Between Generations*. So in the generous and inclusive ethos of the International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival, grab your mum, your son, your sister and your lover and visit www.gaytheatre.ie for more information.

