

NEXT Magazine feature, Naked Boys Singing by Lorie Caval – 2001



Where the (Naked) Boys Are

Off-Broadway's *Naked Boys Singing* marks its 1,000th performance. by Lorie Caval

When the former artistic director for Los Angeles' Celebration Theater, Robert Schrock, conceived of his musical comedy *Naked Boys Singing*, he was hardly a stranger to the stage—or nudity for that matter. In addition to producing 40 world premieres, including the acclaimed *End Of the World Party* and *A Language of Their Own*, Schrock had shown his own behind on stage as an actor. "I was a pioneer," laughs the gregarious director, "I worked at La Mama in 1970 and we did a show called *The Dirtiest Show in Town*. Yes, I was naked in 1970! Knowing what's entailed in performing naked has served me very well." Nudity notwithstanding, *NBS* is hardly the dirtiest show in town, but it is one of the most popular. In fact, on Saturday, December 1st, the New York production of Schrock's Off-Broadway baby will celebrate its 1,000th performance at the Actor's Playhouse, joining the ranks of Off-Broadway's longest running musical classics like *Forbidden Broadway*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and *The Fantastiks*. *NBS* is comprised of 16 clever musical vignettes with suggestive themes like the "Naked Maid," "Window to Window" and "I Beat My Meat"—the latter of which is actually about a bunch of blithe butchers.

The two-year-old show has garnered such notoriety, productions of

NBS have opened across the country and the world. "I'm the luckiest homosexual man in the world—I get to travel all over the world and look at naked men!" laughs Schrock.

One of the original naked boys, Tom Gualtieri, has been with the show since *NBS* started in New York. Before he got the part, he says, "I never had a nude part before and I was a little concerned about it because people in the industry look down on that kind of thing." Gualtieri remembers. Says Schrock: "The perception of a *Naked Boys Singing*-type show is far different from what the show actually is. People always leave the theater saying, 'Oh, it's not what I expected.' They don't expect that it's just a musical comedy without pants," he laughs. But it does have legs now that *NBS* is about to have its 1,000th Off-Broadway performance. "It feels like the show's grown up," Schrock says, "it sort of felt that way when it transferred from Los Angeles to New York. It's really nice to see it respected in a legitimate part of the theater scene. And it's good to know that the show is so accepted as not just some little nudie gay show in the Village. It's a good job and it's a really recognized legitimate show and I think that's a wonderful thing." ■

Naked Boys Singing plays at The Actor's Playhouse (100 Seventh Avenue South) Mon., Wed-Fri. at 8p; Sat. at 7 & 10p; Sun. at 3 & 7p. Tickets are \$35-45 Sun.-Thurs., \$35-50 for Fri. & Sat. For tickets call Telecharge at 212-239-6200.