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THEATER

THEATER

- [Based on a Totally True Story](#)
- [Screwmachine/ eyecandy](#)
- [Landscape of the Body](#)
- [Guardians](#)

FILM

- [Clean](#)
- [Kinky Boots](#)
- [The Death of Mr. Lazarescu](#)
- [Alternative Freedom](#)
- [New York International Independent Film and Video Festival](#)

TECH CORNER

- [Foley Sound](#)

Casting

- [Casting: The Sixties Project](#)
- [Auditions- Angle of the Sun](#)
- [Altar Boyz](#)
- [Saint Heaven](#)

Feature

TRAINING DAYS
[How a summer training program can help you develop your skills](#)

Listings

- [Off-off-Broadway](#)

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Iron Curtain

By Susan DiLallo
Directed by Cara Reichel
Prospect Theater Company
West End Theatre
263 West 86th Street
212-352-3101

Review by Melanie Gretchen

In an impressive array of talent and material, *Iron Curtain* easily sweeps its audience off its feet with a comic tale of two struggling playwrights who are forced to perform in communist Russia.

Iron Curtain opens as a musical performed in Russia for none other than Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, played by Brad York — complete with a big hat and red tie. Failing to meet his approval, the singers and dancers move off, leaving Minister of Musical Persuasion Onanov, played by Gordon Stanley, to appease Khrushchev.

Back in the States, down-on-their-luck writer Murray and lyricist Howard, played by Jeff Edgerton and Marcus Neville, discover an audition that promises travel. They attend the audition held by Agent Schmearnov, played by Larry Brutstofski, and Onanov, who kidnap them and whisk off to Russia. Starring in the musical is Masha, played by Jessica Grové, who captivates Murray's attention; choreographing it is the very capable Hildret, played by Beth B. Austin, who challenges Howard's love for Shirley, played by Maria Couch, who makes her way to Russia to find him.

While the plot for *Iron Curtain* may sound complicated, the results are simple: in a refreshing romp through communist Russia, every song and line leads this intelligent, flawlessly-crafted musical comedy with all the charm of the 1930s musical and all the heart of its heartland Russia. Edgerton and Neville are adorable as the hapless team. Their complementary voices bring an honesty to what might otherwise be schmaltzy lyrics. Grové is a delight as Masha. Her easy soprano and natural acting make her a joy to watch. Brutstofski's gruffness and ability to play to the hilt as Schmearnov is a gift.

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So if you're looking for a hard-hearted take on the former USSR, you're not going to find that here. This musical comedy is exactly what is says.

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