

Review: 'Curse' magnifies men's issue

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It takes about 10 minutes for the men in AtticRep's "The Irish Curse" to get down to business.

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They spend the opening moments starting a pot of coffee, hunting around for snacks, joking around, and gabbing about sex, manners and the priest's acting career. The priest — Father Kevin (Rick Frederick) — reminds newcomer Keiren (**Rodman Bolek**) and the other guys that they are a support group.

And then Rick (Rusty Thurman) stands up to speak, revealing the point of the group. It's for men with extremely small penises — "I am not my penis," Rick says. "I only think I am."

Besides Father Kevin and Rick, the group consists of Joseph (Lawrence Coop), a lawyer whose wife left him, and Stephen (Tyler Keyes), a gay cop who also attends a group for sex addicts.

Joseph notes near the end of the play that they've mostly used the meetings as gripe sessions. Keiren's questions force them to go deeper, sharing things they've never shared before.

The play, directed with a typically sure hand by **Roberto Prestigiacomo**, explores masculinity and society's shifting expectations of men. It's thoughtful, sometimes heart-rending stuff. It's also really funny from start to finish.

All five actors have created fully realized characters, masterfully balancing the play's comedic moments with the rawer material. Keyes in particular nails the physicality of his character — a moment in which he grabs a fleeing Keiren and drags him back to the group is electrifying.

In addition to giving a terrific performance, Frederick designed the show's set and sound. Both elements, along with **Greg Starbird's** lighting, place the audience squarely in the church basement with the group. Fluorescent lights hang overhead, illuminating the whole space, including the audience. The deft approach heightens the intimacy of the evening.

"The Irish Curse" can be seen at 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays and 2:30 p.m. Sundays through May 29 at the **Attic Theatre** at **Trinity University**. Tickets cost \$10 to \$20. Call 210-999-8524 for reservations or visit atticrep.org to buy tickets online.

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