

# OHS grad starts off-Broadway theatre production company

By JOSEPH KELLARD

Gary Maffei works big.

For the past three years, the alumnus from Oceanside High School's Class of 1973 has run a production company for off-Broadway musicals while he works full-time as an executive director for a non-profit organization.

Today Maffei is backing "Once Around the Sun," a new musical that will play a limited engagement at the Zipper Theater, a former zipper factory in the garment district. Featuring an original score by Robert and Steven Morris and Joe Shane and a script by Kellie Overbey, "Once Around the Sun" tells the tale of a struggling musician from Greenwich Village who heads west to Los Angeles where he reaches rock stardom. "But he finds the lifestyle isn't what it's cracked up to be," Maffei said, describing this production as "a musical about music."

Maffei first got involved in theater production as an investor through the late Steve Leiter, a friend from his days living in Oceanside. Leiter was a producer for "Brooklyn," a musical about homeless street performers who tell a story about a young girl in search of her father. ("Brooklyn" is playing in Seoul, South Korea, and is expected to return to New York.) Maffei was bit by the theater bug, and soon became an associate producer for "Brooklyn."

"Just being on the inside and backstage, it was very exciting," said Maffei, who said he has long been a fan of musical theater. "The rest is history. And anything I do, I usually do it in a big way."

Along with his domestic partner, Charlie Maffei, Maffei established Maffei Productions ([www.maffei productions.com](http://www.maffei productions.com))

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**GARY MAFFEI, RIGHT, WITH HIS BUSINESS AND LIFE PARTNER, CHARLIE MAFFEI,** outside the Zipper Theater in Manhattan, where the musical they produced, "Once Around the Sun," is now playing.

# OHS alum now a Broadway producer

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in 2003, and have so far produced three musicals, all of which are presently in theaters.

The production that came between "Brooklyn" and "Once Around the Sun" is "Newsical," a musical that pokes fun at the news.

"Whatever was in the newspaper that day, the writers actually rewrote the show every week around this news," Maffei explained about this musical that was originally staged at Studio 54. There were various weekly skits on high-profile people from President Bush and Martha Stewart to Michael Jackson and Paris Hilton. ("Newsical" recently found a new home in Provincetown, Mass., and will tour the nation.)

Growing up in Oceanside, Maffei became interested enough in politics that he went on to earn a bachelor's degree in political science at C.W. Post, where he later earned a master's degree in public administration. In the late 1970s he worked for Congressman Norman Lent, and later got heavily involved in fundraising for then-Sen. Alphonse D'Amato as a non-paid staffer. During these years, he even enjoyed a stint as president of the Oceanside Republican Club.

"My life has really taken a turn since then," he laughed. "I'm now involved in Democratic politics."

His experiences in politics pointed him toward management and fundraising for non-profit groups. At first, he was director of development for Molloy College, where he also

taught political science for four years. Maffei went on to work as an executive director for various Long Island non-profit groups. This step moved him from Oceanside to Manhattan with his wife and daughter in the late 1980s. Today, Maffei is executive director of QSAC ([www.qsac.com](http://www.qsac.com)), a not-for-profit fundraising agency that serves children with Autism in New York City and Long Island.

Looking long-term, Maffei's goal is to get "Once Around the Sun" to play on that street where it's said there is a broken heart for every light there. "We're hoping things go well and we move to Broadway" he said.

"Once Around the Sun" ([www.oncearoundthesun.com](http://www.oncearoundthesun.com)) is now playing at the Zipper Theater, located 336 W. 37th St., and will run through Sept. 11. Tickets are available by calling Telecharge.com (212) 239-6200.

Comments about this story? DMiller@liherald.com or (516) 569-4000 ext. 213.



**GARY MAFFEI SHARES A JOKE** with Lucie Arnaz at the opening of "Brooklyn," a musical he produced in October 2004. Maffei is a graduate of Oceanside High School who owns Maffei Productions, a theater production company.