

## **Janis Hirsch '72**

Executive Producer and Writer

Janis Hirsch was born in Trenton, New Jersey, which she left the second she was allowed to attend Rollins College, the only place she could find in a temperate climate without a math requirement, she says. A month after graduating, she went to work at the legendary Coconut Grove Playhouse and the following summer was hired by burlesque legend Ann Corio to assistant-manage the Storowton Music Theater in Massachusetts.

Janis moved to New York and talked herself into a job on the *National Lampoon* show *Lemmings*, which starred John Belushi, Christopher Guest, and Chevy Chase, among others. She then worked at the *National Lampoon* magazine, and can be seen in “none of her glory” in the *National Lampoon*’s famed High School Yearbook parody. During this time she also contributed to several books of humor as well as writing for various publications including both *The New York Times* and a much-heralded parody of it called *Not The New York Times*, which was the brainchild of Tony Hendra, Christopher Cerf, Henry Beard, Veronica Geng, and George Plimpton.

Her first job writing for television was on a show called *Love, Sidney*, significant because its star, Tony Randall, played a gay character. Alas, times being what they were, the only way anyone knew he was gay was that he had a photograph of a man on his desk.

She relocated to Los Angeles to write for *Square Pegs*, which starred a 16-year-old Sarah Jessica Parker. During this time, she wrote her first television pilot, under the tutelage of Norman Lear, and then moved to the iconic *It’s Garry Shandling’s Show*. She also was fortunate enough to write and produce for series including *Anything But Love*, *LA Law*, *The Nanny*, *Frasier*, *Bette*, *My Wife and Kids*, *Will & Grace*, *’Til Death*, and *Brothers*, while also writing movies of the week including *Stranded* and *Little White Lies*. Janis is excited to be supervising several young women writers on their various television projects.

She has rewritten several feature films, including *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*, and has added material to several theatrical presentations, including *Hairspray*, David Lee’s production of *Can-Can*, and *Flora the Red Menace* for Reprise in Los Angeles as well as writing the script for *Some Kind of Wonderful*, a musical with the songs of Carole King and Gerry Goffin, which premiered in Los Angeles several seasons ago. She also contributes special material for Bette Midler’s tours and shows.

She is currently writing an original musical with composer Dan Lipton and lyricist David Rossmer for producer Jayson Raitt as well as *Thank Heaven: Singing the Praises of Alan Jay Lerner*, to be produced by Liza Lerner. Additionally, she’s working with producer Robert Kanter on an original musical based on the life and loves of, and murders committed by Walburga Oestereich. With actress Caroline Aaron, she wrote the play *Such A Pretty Face*, which enjoyed a debut with the Skylight Theater and then went on to a long run at The Beverly Hills Playhouse, directed by Tony Award-nominee Sheryl

Kaller and produced by Broadway's Suzi Dietz. She is currently working on two books (a memoir and a self-help), and she contributes the "No, YOU Shut Up and Drive" column for the award-winning VroomGirls.com.

Having had polio as a child, Janis is active in post-polio awareness and devotes much of her time promoting and supporting the integration of people with disabilities into mainstream television and films. A former Board Member for Deaf West, the theater company that developed *Big River*, she is still an honorary member of that organization. She has served on the producing committee for the Alzheimer's Association's "Night At Sardi's" fundraiser and is particularly proud of her work as a Board Member of Faith In America, which comes from the brain, heart, and soul of her old friend Mitchell Gold and is dedicated to ending religious-based bigotry in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual communities.

Janis lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Larry Shulman; their son, Charlie; and their dogs, Gracie and Fiddy Cent Shulman.