

RENT

RENT

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Jonathan Larson**
Directed by **Thom Allison**
Choreographed by **Marc Kimelman**

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

9+

CONTENT ADVISORY

Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

SYNOPSIS

When Jonathan Larson's genre-bending musical debuted on Broadway in 1996, it redefined the genre for a new generation of audiences. Considered to be the first live rock opera, *Rent* won both the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony for Best Musical. Its 12-year run was one of the longest in Broadway history, and it has since been adapted to the big screen and performed worldwide in over 25 languages.

Inspired by Puccini's 1896 opera *La Bohème*, *Rent* focuses on a group of young East Village artists, performers and philosophers as they struggle through the hardships of poverty, societal discord and the AIDS epidemic. Loft-mates Mark, a struggling filmmaker, and rockstar wannabe Roger who is HIV-positive are facing a Christmas without electricity after they fail to make the rent. Over the next year, Mark, Roger and their fellow artists chase their dreams while trying to keep the lights on.

Rent's innovative blend of pop music and breakneck pacing, coupled with its bold exploration of social taboos and contemporary issues, helped to bridge the gap between the traditional Broadway musical and younger generations. Lin-



Clockwise: Erica Peck, Nestor Lozano Jr., Andrea Macasaet, Kolton Stewart and Robert Markus.

Manuel Miranda, the creator of the smash musical *Hamilton*, became obsessed with *Rent* after watching the film adaptation and cites Jonathan Larson as an essential influence on all of his work. Like many young people at the time, Miranda was blown away by *Rent's* ground-breaking depiction of underrepresented and marginalized 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, members of the global majority, immigrants and those living in poverty. Those representations matter more than ever. So do the characters' anxieties about pandemics, skyrocketing rents and financial insecurity.

Shortly before his tragic and untimely death at age 35—on the very day of *Rent's* off-Broadway premiere—Jonathan Larson shared his hopes for the play with a journalist. "In these dangerous times," he said, "where it seems that the world is ripping apart at the seams, we all can learn how to survive from those who stare death squarely in the face every day and should reach out to each other and bond as a community." With a song list that includes the iconic "Seasons of Love," *Rent* tells a story as relevant today as when it took Broadway by storm.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Global Competencies:
 - Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
- Grades 9-12
 - The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
 - Canadian and World Studies
 - English
- Grades 11-12
 - Social Science and Humanities

THEMES

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Love and Life
- Art as Resistance
- Chosen Family
- Death, Dignity and Dying
- East Village, New York City in the 1990s
- Gentrification
- HIV/AIDS
- Home, Being Unhoused and the Housing Crisis
- Living Life to the Fullest
- Mental Health
- Performance Art
- Poverty
- Recovery
- Resilience
- Substance Use Disorder and Addiction

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How would you define love? How would you define unconditional love? What does it mean to love someone unconditionally?
- What do you already know about HIV/AIDS? What questions do you have about HIV/AIDS?
- Why do people create art (i.e. visual art, theatre, music, dance, etc.)?
- Do you find it easier to stand up for yourself or to stand up for others? What are some actions that you have taken to stand up for yourself or others?
- Does social change happen slowly or quickly? Explain your thinking.

STUDY GUIDES

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD>



From left to right: Nestor Lozano Jr., Robert Markus, Andrea Macasaet, Erica Peck and Kolton Stewart. Photography by Ted Belton.

BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS

STUDENT MATINÉES

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Wednesday, April 12th
- Monday, April 17th
- Wednesday, April 26th
- Monday, May 8th
- Wednesday, May 17th
- Friday, May 19th
- Wednesday, May 31st
- Tuesday, June 6th
- Friday, June 23rd
- Tuesday, June 27th
- Thursday, June 29th
- Friday, September 8th
- Thursday, September 14th
- Tuesday, September 19th
- Thursday, September 28th
- Wednesday, October 4th
- Tuesday, October 10th
- Friday, October 20th
- Thursday, October 26th

WORKSHOPS & CHATS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

SOCIAL MEDIA



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