RENT

OCTOBER 16 – 26, 2008
LYDIA MENDELSSOHN THEATRE
DEPARTMENT OF MUSICAL THEATRE
The University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance
Department of Musical Theatre

presents

RENT

Book, music and lyrics by Jonathan Larson
Musical Arrangements by Steve Skinner
Original concept/additional lyrics by Billy Aronson
Music supervision and additional arrangements by Tim Weil
Dramaturgy by Lynn Thomson

Rent was originally produced in New York by New York Theatre Workshop and on Broadway by Jeffrey Seller, Kevin McCollum, Allan S. Gordon and New York Theatre Workshop

Director
Mark Madama

Music Director/Conductor
Cynthia Kortman Westphal

Scenic Design
Arthur Ridley

Costume Design
Christianne Myers

Lighting Design
Stephanie Shechter

Sound Design
Jim Lillie

Assistant to the Director
Louis King

Stage Manager
Angela F. Kiessel

Setting:
New York City, 1996

There will be one intermission.

Rent is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. 421 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019 Phone: 212-541-4684 Fax: 212-397-4684 www.MTIShows.com

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change. As a courtesy to others, please set pagers to silent mode. Cellular phones and electronic watch alarms should be turned off so that will not interrupt the performance. Photography, audio recording, and videotaping of any kind are not permitted due to copyright restrictions. Flash photography endangers performers by causing momentary blindness.

The School of Music, Theatre & Dance acknowledges the generosity of McKinley Associates, Inc. whose support has helped make this production possible.
CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

Roger Davis.......................................................... Mark Ayesh
Mark Cohen.......................................................... Cary Tedder
Tom Collins.......................................................... Kent Overshown
Benjamin Coffin III............................................... Alex Puette
Joanne Jefferson.................................................. Corbin Reid
Angel Schunard................................................... Robert Hartwell
Mimi Marquez....................................................... Ashley Blanchet
Maureen Johnson................................................ Julia Myer
Ensemble.......................................................... Amanda Choate, Brant Cox, Kevin Hegmann, Erik Heitz, Bryan Langlitz, Nathan Lehmann, Katie Madison, Nora Menken, Kevin Munhall, Desi Oakley, Mary Michael Patterson, Jose Angel Sepulveda

DIRECTOR’S NOTES

When I first saw the Broadway production of Rent I thought it was great fun. The energy was thrilling, the music terrific and the excitement infectious. Now, twelve years later I also see it as a retrospective look at the 1980’s and 1990’s in New York when the entire city seemed to be shrouded by a cloud. Rent deals with a NYC in the midst of an AIDS epidemic, massive drug addiction, streets littered with homeless, and the “normal” people who perished and survived these times. Then a New Yorker, I lived in a building featured on the cover of New York magazine captioned as a, “Westside apartment building longtime famous for drugs, prostitution and white slavery.” I like any youth, found joy and excitement in these times and the horrors of the present were only a part of the city’s social landscape. Working on Rent surprised me with memories both good and bad, brought up anger and sadness and sorted out many mysteries of my past. We, as the characters in Rent, dealt with a frightening future surrounded by a disease that killed indiscriminately. Jonathan Larson, before his unexpected death, wrote a timeless musical and a loving tribute to his friends combining injustice, fear, community and hope into a theme greater than the tragedies of the time. As the characters in this story our cast’s youthful idealism clearly tells this tale with the same infectious enthusiasm I remember from my first viewing of this amazing piece of musical theatre.

— Mark Madama
ACT I

Mark, a filmmaker, is spending a cold Christmas Eve in the Lower East Side industrial loft he shares with Roger, a musician. They receive several phone calls. The first is from Mark’s mother consoling him over the loss of his girlfriend Maureen, a performance artist, to Joanne, a Harvard Law School graduate. The second is from their friend Tom Collins. The last is from their landlord Benny demanding the rent. The power blows and so do Roger and Mark’s tops (Rent).

Outside, Collins, reeling from a mugging is comforted by Angel, a street musician, who offers him a helping hand (You Okay Honey?). Both HIV+, Angel and Collins head out for a night on the town and a life support meeting.

In response to a call for help, Mark sets out for the lot where Maureen is performing a protest against Benny’s eviction of the homeless from a nearby lot. He urges Roger, who has not left the apartment in six months due to the suicide of his girlfriend, to come along but he refuses. Roger tries to write a song but the only melody he finds is “Musetta’s Waltz” from Puccini’s La Bohème (One Song Glory). Mimi, an S&M dancer who lives below, knocks with a request: Light My Candle. The attraction between she and Roger is immediate, but Roger shies away and shows her the door. Mimi knocks again. She has lost her stash. Roger helps her look and Mimi eventually finds it.

Joanne’s parents call, pleading with her to come to Washington. Collins arrives at the loft with a bag full of goodies which include Angel, transvested into Angel Dumott Shunard. In Today 4 U, Angel explains how he earned $1,000: a woman hired him to play the drums until her neighbor’s dog barked itself to death.

Benny enters with a proposal (You’ll See): if Mark and Roger stop Maureen’s protest, he will forgo the rent. He entices them with plans for Cyber Arts, a state-of-the-art, multimedia studio that will realize all of their dreams. Unsuccessful, Benny leaves. Mark, Collins and Angel leave for the life support meeting without Roger.

Mark reaches the lot where Maureen will perform her protest and encounters Joanne. Though they dreaded meeting, they have a lot in common (Tango: Maureen). Once he finishes, Mark joins Angel and Collins at the Life Support meeting.

Mimi appeals to an imaginary Roger to take her Out Tonight. She barges into his apartment and continues her appeal to Roger himself but after a passionate kiss he vehemently rejects her. They fight, her words blending with the affirmation of the support group that emphasizes the importance of living the moment (Another Day).

Discouraged by life in New York, Mark, Angel and Collins dream of opening up a restaurant in Santa Fe. Alone at last, Angel and Collins express their love for each other (I’ll Cover You). Meanwhile, Joanne has her hands full juggling work, parents, and the ever-demanding Maureen...(We’re Okay).

The scene changes to St. Mark’s Place where vendors hawk their wares to the bohemians of the East Village (Christmas Bells). Angel buys a new coat for Collins. Roger spots Mimi looking for drugs. Roger apologizes and asks her to dinner. Maureen finally appears to perform her protest, Over The Moon.

Following the protest, all convene at the Life Café, including Benny who announces that Bohemia is dead. Thus ensues a makeshift mock-wake that quickly segues into a
celebration of *La Vie Bohème*. Benny confronts Mimi and threatens to reveal their past affair to Roger. Beeper goes off to remind the revelers to take their AZT. Roger and Mimi each discover that the other is HIV+. Frightened, excited, they vow to be together (*I Should Tell You*).

Joanne tells Maureen that their relationship is over and announcing a riot in the lot: Benny has padlocked the building and called the cops but the homeless are standing their ground. The artists rejoice, and Roger and Mimi share a small kiss.

**ACT II**

The second act begins with the company posing the question, “How do you measure a year in the life?” (*Seasons of Love*). One week later, New Year’s Eve, and they are having a breaking-back-into-the-building party (*Happy New Year*). Once inside, Mark listens to a phone message from his mother and one from Alexi Darling, a tabloid TV producer. Benny crashes the party, angering Roger and alienating Roger from Mimi. Dejected, Mimi wanders outside and into the arms of her drug dealer.

By Valentine’s Day, Maureen and Joanne are rehearsing another show, but it is not going well (*Take Me Or Leave Me*).

*Seasons Of Love* marches time forward to spring. Roger and Mimi have a fight and Roger walks out. Alone, Mimi reflects on life without Roger (*Without You*). At the same time, Collins nurses a sick Angel; Maureen and Joanne reconcile; as do Mimi and Roger.

At the end of the summer, Alexi is still courting Mark for her TV show. Roger and Mimi, unsatisfied by love’s complications, break up, as do Maureen and Joanne. Angel dies (*Contact*). At a memorial service, his friends remember his spirit (*I’ll Cover You Reprise*).

Outside the church, Mark phones Alexi to accept the job. Mark ponders how life has changed since last year (*Halloween*). As the mourners leave the church, Mimi confirms that Roger has sold his guitar and is leaving town. Roger confirms that Mimi is now with Benny. A fight erupts amongst the friends. Collins interrupts them with the sorrowful reality that the family is breaking up. Joanne and Maureen reunite. Mimi and Benny leave.

Mark tries to convince Roger to stay in New York and face his pain and the fact that Mimi is very sick. Roger attacks Mark, accusing him of hiding from his feelings. Mimi enters, having overheard the entire angry exchange, and bids Roger farewell (*Goodbye, Love*). Roger leaves town. Mimi turns to Mark for help. Benny offers one helping hand to Mimi and extends the other to Collins to help him pay Angel’s funeral expenses. Mimi refuses the help and flees. Collins accepts and he and Benny go out for a drink.

Mark considers the events and faces the last year, as does Roger, who is on his way to Santa Fe. Roger begins to discover his own song and Mark turns down the television job to finish his own film (*What You Own*).

Back at the loft, Mark tells us it’s Christmas again and he now has a rough version of his film. Roger has returned, but cannot find Mimi. Collins enters with money he has gotten from an ATM rewired to give money to anyone with a special code, ANGEL.

Maureen and Joanne suddenly arrive holding Mimi, whom they found collapsed and near death. Roger begs her not to die and sings her the song it has taken him all year to write, *Your Eyes*. Mimi dies as Roger wails her name over a blast of Puccini’s music. Suddenly Mimi awakens, it seems that a guardian Angel was watching over her.

The company joins in a reprise of the affirmation that love is all and that there is “no day but today” (*Finale*).
**About the Author**

Jonathan Larson received the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Rent*. He also won the 1996 Tony Award for Best Musical and the 1994 Richard Rodgers Award for *Rent* and twice received the Gilman & Gonzales-Falla Theatre Foundation’s Commendation Award. In 1989 he was granted the Stephen Sondheim Award from American Music Theatre Festival, where he contributed to the musical *Sitting on the Edge of the Future*. In 1988 he won the Richard Rodgers Development Grant for his rock musical *Superbia*, which was staged at Playwrights Horizon. He composed the score for the musical *J.P. Morgan Saves the Nation*, which was presented by En Garde Arts in 1995. Mr. Larson performed his rock monologue *tick, tick... BOOM!* at Second Stage Theatre, The Village Gate and New York Theatre Workshop. In addition to scoring and song writing for *Sesame Street*, he created music for a number of children’s book-cassettes, including Steven Spielberg’s *An American Tail* and *Land Before Time*. Other film scores include work for *Rolling Stones* magazine publisher Jann Wenner. He conceived, directed and wrote four original songs for *Away We Go!*, a musical video for children. *Rent*, his rock opera based on *La Bohème*, had its world premiere on February 13, 1996, at New York Theatre Workshop. Mr. Larson died unexpectedly of an aortic aneurysm on January 25, 1996, ten days before his 36th birthday.

— biography and photo courtesy of Music Theatre International, photo by Matt Grady

**About the Cast**

Mark Ayesh (*Roger Davis*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Wichita, KS  
Ashley Blanchet (*Mimi Marquez*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, New Rochelle, NY  
Amanda Choate (*Ensemble*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Brunswick, ME  
Brant Cox (*Ensemble*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Kirkland, IL  
Robert Hartwell (*Angel Schunard*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Raleigh, NC  
Kevin Hegemann (*Ensemble*) sophomore, BFA Musical Theatre, Lindenhurst, NY  
Erik Heitz (*Ensemble*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Kirkwood, MO  
Bryan Langlitz (*Ensemble*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Marlton, NJ  
Nathan Lehmann (*Ensemble*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Madison, WI  
Katie Madison (*Ensemble*) sophomore, BFA Musical Theatre, Traverse City, MI  
Nora Menken (*Ensemble*) sophomore, BFA Musical Theatre, North Salem, NY  
Kevin Munhall (*Ensemble*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Wichita, KS  
Julia Myer (*Maureen Johnson*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, North Ridgeville, OH  
Desi Oakley (*Ensemble*) sophomore, BFA Musical Theatre, Wichita, KS  
Kent Overshown (*Tom Collins*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Oakland, CA  
Mary Michael Patterson (*Ensemble*) junior, BFA Musical Theatre, Aledo, TX  
Alex Puette (*Benjamin Coffin III*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Aurora, OH  
Corbin Reid (*Joanne Jefferson*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Minneapolis, MN  
Jose Angel Sepulveda (*Ensemble*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Puerto Rico  
Cary Tedder (*Mark Cohen*) senior, BFA Musical Theatre, Marietta, GA
ABOUT THE ARTISTS


JIM LILLIE (Sound Designer) In the early 80’s Jim had the privilege of Sound Designing and/or working on shows directed by Victor Valentine and Martin Herzer.

MARK MADAMA (Director) is an Assoc. Professor in the Department of Musical Theatre. UM: Big River, The Pajama Game, 1918, City of Angels, Guys and Dolls, Children of Eden, Nine, Good News!, Assassins, Company. Regional Theatre: His work has been seen throughout the United States and Europe. Resident director at the Music Theatre of Wichita in Wichita, Kansas, for the past twenty years. Awards: Best direction and best production honors, International Theatre Mosaic in Calgary, Canada; International Theatre Festival in Dundalk, Ireland; numerous nominations and awards for work in various regional theatres.

CHRISTIANNE MYERS (Costume Designer) is an Asst. Professor in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama. UM: including As You Like It, She Stoops to Conquer, The Cradle Will Rock, The Coronation of Poppea, Tartuffe, Don Giovanni. Off-Broadway: Running Man, Oedipus, American Dreams: Lost & Found; Theatreworks/USA; The Public Theatre & Ma-Yi Ens.; Irondale Ens.; Lincoln Center Institute. New York: The Juilliard School. Regional Theatre: Purple Rose Theatre; Indiana Rep; Vermont Stage Co.; Clarence Brown Theatre; Syracuse Stage; Caldwell Theatre; Pine Mountain Music Festival. Other: BFA, Pace Univ.; MFA, New York Univ.

ARTHUR RIDLEY (Scenic Designer) is a Lecturer in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama and the Properties Master for University Productions. UM: Big River, Così fan tutte, The Boys from Syracuse, A Chorus Line, Oklahoma!, The Tavern, Side Show, Sweeney Todd, Pal Joey. Regional Theatre: Music Theatre of Wichita, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, St. Louis Black Repertory Co., Indiana Repertory Theatre, Victory Gardens, The Body Politic, Actors Theatre of St. Paul, Stage/West. Other: Previously taught at Webster, Purdue, and Washington Universities. Upcoming: Kiss Me Kate, Music Theatre of Wichita.

STEPHANIE SHECHTER (Lighting Design) is a BFA design and production candidate in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama. UM: Lighting design: As You Like It, Stage management: J.B., Ritual and Reveries (1st ASM), The Cradle Will Rock (1st ASM), Seussical (ASM); MUSKET: Assassins; Basement Arts: Icarus’ Mother.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Detective Scott Galeski of the Wyandotte Police Department for the use of the riot gear and to Mike Cadotte of NAMES Project Michigan for his knowledge and guidance on the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

Thanks to Donzell Williams of Above Ground Hair Studio for Angel’s wig and make-up design and Ryan Brooks of Salon Vox. Special thanks to Alan Young (Screen Arts and Cultures), Tom Bray, the Duderstadt Video Studio, Janet Maylie, and William Stanton for their assistance with film elements. Additional thanks to Henry Aronson, Elizabeth DiFelice, Joseph Gramley, and Joseph Schlenke.

The performers in this production are undergraduate students in the Department of Musical Theatre. The designers are faculty and students in the Department of Theatre & Drama and guests. Scenery, costumes, properties, sound, and lighting were realized by the students and staff of University Productions, the producing unit of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC/ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater productions. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC/ACTF representative, and certain students are selected to participate in KC/ACTF programs involving awards, scholarships, and special grants for actors, playwrights, designers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.
To learn more about Jonathan Larson and the continuing fight against HIV/AIDS, please visit the following websites:

Jonathan Larson Foundation  americantheatre.org/larsongrants/
The NAMES Project  namesproject-michigan.org
HARC - HIV/AIDS Resource Center  r2harc.org
Official Broadway/Touring show website for Rent  siteforrent.com
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_Beauty and the Beast_: Garrett Miller, Brynn O’Malley
_Bells are Ringing_ (2001 Revival): Josh Rhodes
_The Boy From Oz_: Josh Rhodes
_La Cage Aux Folles_: Gavin Creel
_Candide_ (1997 Revival): D’Vorah Bailey
_Chicago_: Josh Rhodes, Brian Spitalnik
_Chitty Chitty Bang Bang_: Erin Dilly (Tony nomination)
_A Chorus Line_ (2006 Revival): David Baum, Tommy Berklund
_Cry Baby_: Nick Blaemire, Courtney Balan, Lynne Shankel (music director)
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_DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS_: Jeremy Davis
_Dracula_: Megan Reinking
_The Drowsy Chaperone_: Kate Loprest
_Follies_ (2001 Revival): Erin Dilly
_Footloose_: Hunter Foster, Jennifer Laura Thompson
_42nd Street_ (2001 Revival): Tamlyn Shusterman
_Fosse_: Josh Rhodes
_The Full Monty_: Lisa Datz, Danny Gurwin
_Good Vibrations_: Jesse Nager, David Reiser
_Gypsy_ (1989 Revival): Robin Robinson
_Gypsy_ (2003 Revival): David Burtka
_Hair_ (Upcoming): Megan Reinking
_Hairspray_: Brynn O’Malley, Kevin Hale
_Into the Woods_ (2002 Revival): Erin Dilly
_Jekyll & Hyde_: Whitney Allen
_Jesus Christ Superstar_: Eric Millegan
_Jersey Boys_: Daniel Reichard
_Legally Blonde_: Dani Spieler, Cara Massey
_The Light in the Piazza_: Glenn Allen
_The Little Mermaid_: Katy Basile
_Little Shop of Horrors_: Hunter Foster (Tony nomination)
_Little Women_: Danny Gurwin
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_Mamma, Mia!:_ Chris Peluso, Barrett Foa, Darryl Semira, Joi Price
_Mary Poppins_: Jesse Nager, Gavin Creel (London)
_Nine to Five_ (Upcoming): Jeremy Davis
_Phantom of the Opera_: Susan Owen, Paul Schaefer
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_Ragtime_: Adam Hunter
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_The Scarlet Pimpernell_: Danny Gurwin, Gilles Chiasson
_Show Boat_ (1994 Revival): Doug LaBrecque
_Side Show_: Kristen Behrendt
_South Pacific_ (2008 Revival): Jeremy Davis
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