

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Rent

Jonathan Larson

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh

14–18 February 2017

*Rent* is a blast from the past, a rock musical that was created in the early 'nineties.

This production could have gone a bit lighter on the sound as the audience is pummeled by the music at times to the detriment of the words. It's still a great piece of theatre to watch even if it does take a while to get into it.

*Rent* has played an important role in the evolution of the musical, setting the stage for more edgy musicals and some famous parodies. Even today it is quite shocking to see such serious subjects taken on in such a bold way.

With a simple set of scaffolding and the cast in grungy costumes, the simplicity of the staging is a part of *Rent*'s image, but more use could have been made by the cast of the levels. Also it might have been more in keeping with the aesthetic to have the band more visible rather than hiding them away.

The show is a year in the life of various artists and their friends struggling to live in New York City's East Village at the end of the nineteen-eighties. Despite the sound issues, the cast are strong, with the duets like "Light My Candle" and "Tango Maureen" often better than the ensemble numbers.

Harrison Clark is playing Angel for the Edinburgh run of the tour and won the audience over despite not being the expected actor for this pivotal role. Angel provides some of the show's funniest and also most depressing moments and Clark really pulls this off.

Another diva adding light relief is Maureen (Lucie Jones) whose first appearance is quite late on with a solo show that gives the production a real burst of energy.

*Rent* is loosely based on Puccini's opera *La Bohème* and the first act finishes with the song "La Vie Bohème" referencing this. It's a great song and the cast throw themselves into it, but its impact is sadly diminished by the inaudibility of many of the lines.

The second act is stronger with some really good numbers starting with "Seasons Of Love", and the plot comes together too. It is difficult not to be moved.

For the fans, and the show has a lot, the words are already known and the show definitely delivered the feeling the fans were after judging by the reaction at the end.

Reviewer: [Seth Ewin](#)