

British Theatre Guide

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tick, tick... BOOM!

Book, music and lyrics by Jonathan Larson

Aria Entertainment and Joe C Brown in association with Park Theatre

Park Theatre

3–27 May 2017

An autobiographical work, the central character of *tick, tick... BOOM!* is based on Jonathan Larson, in the years before the creation of mega hit musical [Rent](#), the success of which he tragically didn't live to enjoy.

Originally a solo piece, after Larson's early death *tick, tick... BOOM!* was reworked by David Auburn as a three–hander and, although it doesn't have the complexity or mass of *Rent* with which it shares many features, it stands on its own merits. If I had to put them in order of personal preference, *tick, tick BOOM!* would come first.

In this show, Larson uses his now trademark rock musical style to study the dilemma of a poverty stricken young artist struggling to have his work recognised in the New York of 1990.

The tick, tick of the title is the countdown towards a life milestone and in the story events that might have seemed benign in different circumstances take on a weightiness in the light of Jon's fast approaching 30th birthday.

His ongoing job as a waiter is a persistent reminder of his lack of success as a musical theatre composer; his best friend Michael, who gave up an acting career, now has a lucrative job in marketing which shines like a beacon of material achievement that might be reached by Jon in exchange for selling out, and Jon's girlfriend, dancer turned teacher Susan, wants to move out of the city and start a family.

In spite of Jon being pulled in different directions, the show is much more than an exercise in self–absorbed indecision and in this thoughtful and peppy production the show's warm heart is charmingly revealed.

Jordan Shaw's is a tender, engaging portrayal of best friend Michael and Gillian Saker's sensitive performance and powerful vocal chords provide a skin-tingling rendition of "Come to Your Senses". Conflicted artist Jon is delivered with tangible sincerity in an outstanding performance from Chris Jenkins.

This *tick, tick BOOM!* also benefits from a terrific band led by musical director Gareth Bretherton, raunchy, table-humping, comic, energetic choreography from Chris Cuming and keen pacing under the direction of Bronagh Lagan.

Lagan has gone for up close and personal staging, making a virtue of the limited confines of [Park Theatre](#)'s 90 space and creating an intimacy that makes this show quite irresistible.

Reviewer: [Sandra Giorgetti](#)