

THEATER

Review: Seasoned performers power up Cape Playhouse opener Larson's 'tick, tick ... BOOM!'

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The Cape Playhouse kicked off its 98th season with a BOOM! — "tick,tick ... BOOM!" that is, the semi-autobiographical story of Jonathan Larson, award-winning creator and composer of "Rent." The performance, which takes place before "Rent" became a sensation, follows down-on-his-luck composer Jon, who is on the cusp of 30 and has still not been able to break through the New York theater scene. His girlfriend, Susan, wants to get married and move to Cape Cod and his best friend, Michael, has left theater behind for a lucrative marketing job. Will Jon ever break through?

The show: tick, tick...BOOM

What it is about: Written by the late Jonathan Larson, the creator of the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning "Rent," this story, which took place before "Rent" came along, follows Jon, an aspiring composer struggling to break into the New York theater scene. Jon's girlfriend, growing tired of his extended theater struggles, wants to move to Cape Cod while his best friend, who has long given up on the theater scene, is making big bucks on Madison Avenue, leaving Jon to ponder if he will ever break through as the clock continues to tick away.



Larry Owens as Michael, Andy Mientus as Jon, and Krystina Alabado as Susan in Jonathan Larson's "tick, tick...BOOM!" at the Cape Playhouse through June 15. *Maggie Hall Photography*

'tick, tick ... BOOM!' is a must-see

See it or not? Definitely see it. This is a star-studded, phenomenal cast that catapults this musical into another stratosphere. The performance is filled with exceptional songs like "No More," "Come to Your Senses," "Louder than Words" and "Sugar."

Highlight of the show: The three performers in the show are incredibly talented and have been performing all over the world –movies, TV shows, Broadway – and it shows. Andy Mientus, who plays Jonathan, has been in the TV show "The Flash" on CW and in a number of Netflix shows including "Dolly Parton's Heartstrings: Two Doors Down." Krystina Alabado, who plays Jon's girlfriend Susan, has been all over Broadway in "Mean Girls", "American Idiot" and "American Psycho". Larry Owens, who is exceptional as Jon's best

friend Michael, is best known for his work in the TV shows “Abbott Elementary” “High Maintenance” and “Betty.”



Andy Mientus, as struggling playwright Jon, with a cutout of his idol Stephen Sondheim in *tick, tick...BOOM!*, Jonathan Larson's semi-autobiographical play. *Maggie Hall Photography*

Playwright Jonathan Larson's Cape ties

Fun fact: The legendary music theater composer Jonathan Larson mentions Cape Cod in the script for *tick, tick...BOOM!* half a dozen times. Turns out the Larson family rented a summer home in West Dennis and later built a home in Hyannis. In fact, Larson, at the age of 3, saw his first play at the Cape Playhouse in the early 1960s – “The Wizard of Oz.” It’s incredible that the first production of a Jonathan Larson musical at the Cape Playhouse happens in the very room where he fell in love with the theater.

Worth noting: “tick, tick...BOM!” is about a young musical theater composer trying to launch his career while he’s still young. After Larson’s death, his

family foundation and the American Theatre Wing (producers of the Tony Awards) created the prestigious Jonathan Larson Grant, awarded to promising early career writers. The Cape Playhouse production features not one but two winners of the grant – music director Andy Roninson and Larry Owens, who plays Michael.

One more thing: Pay attention to the multiple characters Owens and Alabado play throughout the 90-minute performance (no intermission) including a number of customers at Jon’s work, his father and mother, colleagues at Michael’s work and in a rare twist, both of them share the role of Jon’s snotty agent, and both performances are absolutely hysterical. **If you go:** Runs through June 15, with first week showtimes at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and a 2 p.m. matinee Saturday. Showtimes for the second week are 7:30 p.m. Monday to Saturday with 2 p.m. matinees Wednesday and Thursday. Tickets, at www.capeplayhouse.com/, are \$51-\$101, according to the website, and the show is recommended for age 12 and older.