

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 6 2019



Courtesy photo

Ryan Schafer and Carter Tholl star in "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" The musical runs through Sept. 29 at Roxy's Downtown in Wichita.

'Tick, Tick ... Boom!' tells story of Jonathan Larson, the creator of 'Rent'

BY DAVID BURKE
Eagle correspondent

"Tick, Tick ... Boom!" the newest musical at Roxy's Downtown, provides challenges for each member of the three-person cast.

For Ryan Schafer, it's playing Jon, the struggling Broadway composer who's based on the musical's own creator, Jonathan Larson.

For Carter Tholl and Max Wilson, the challenge

is in creating dozens of other characters between the two of them.

Larson, of course, went on to compose "Rent," the iconic Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning musical that debuted off-Broadway in 1996, the day of his unexpected death.

"It is kind of his autobiographical musical," Wilson said of "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" "The way we've kind of interpreted it is the show he's working on throughout the entire

piece eventually becomes 'Rent.'

"You meet Jonathan as he is working on the show tirelessly, and on a workshop of the show," Wilson added. "It's about the stress and strife of doing all of that."

Directed by Roxy's artistic director Rick Bumgardner, "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" opens Friday and continues through Sept. 29.

"You hear hints of

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'TICK, TICK'

'Rent' throughout it," Tholl said. "There's a song called 'No More,' where you hear the sound that's going to become his sound. It's like a foreshadowing of 'Rent.'"

Schafer said he's been a fan of "Rent" since high school and did his share of research on Larson after being cast early in the summer.

"I was trying to find videos and things of him speaking or performing on stage, and there's not as much out there as you might think," Schafer said. "It was right before digital cameras and all that really became popular. He

passed away before that all hit the mainstream."

While Schafer said learning about Larson was "an interesting challenge," his fellow performers "have a whole separate challenge."

"I have a lot of monologues, but they have to switch characters on a dime," he said. "They're a lot more versatile than I am."

"The two of us are really 'ensemble-ly,' if that's a word," Tholl added.

"My challenge was finding different characters and different 'stock' people," Wilson said.

"There should be a big

'TICK, TICK ... BOOM!'

When: Sept. 6-29; 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays, Sept. 8 and 22; 6 p.m. Sundays, Sept. 15 and 29

Where: Roxy's Downtown, 412 ½ E. Douglas

Tickets: \$25-\$30, by calling 265-4400 or online at roxysdowntown.com

distinction from character to character, because there aren't big costume changes. People just have to know by the way we're behaving and the way we're speaking that we are a completely different



Courtesy photo

"Tick, Tick ... Boom!" is a precursor to "Rent," the musical by Jonathan Larson. The new show at Roxy's Downtown tells the story of a writer's struggle to create a musical.

person in a different scene."

For Tholl, who has a

master's degree in opera performance from Wichita State, playing multiple characters was something new.

"I've never really done a show like that," she said. "Literally in one scene I'm facing one direction and I turn the other way and I'm a new person. I was glad to be able to work on something new like that."

Wilson said his experience working at Mosley Street Melodrama helped him tackle so many personas.

"That gets you ready for something like this," he said. "There are so many baloney full out characters at Mosley." Wilson's first role at Roxy's was the show "Fly by Night," where he played 17 characters. "This isn't a cake-walk, but it's been done."


Obviously far lesser-known than "Rent," "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" does have beautiful music and a universal theme, its cast members say.

"I just love the music so much," said Wilson, a fan of the show since hearing

the cast album in high school. "I didn't know the script as much as the score. The script is even more beautiful than the music once you dive into this."

"The themes of this show are really universal and can be understood and appreciated," Schafer said. "These are characters you can relate to. The story's all about growing up and making decisions that will affect the rest of your life, and how the choices you make will change the shape of your future - not only yours, but others. It's a timeless story about coming to terms with who you are and what you become."

"It's about time slipping away from you, and you wanting to do more than you could possibly do in your life," Schafer added. "I feel like that's more relevant now than ever, because we're so addicted to our phones, and everything is moving at a faster pace than it ever has been. We feel like we're so behind all the time."



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