



“Tick, Tick...BOOM!” Rocks George Street Playhouse

Transcript

Story by Gina Marie Rodriguez

[MUSIC: “A LITTLE WIGGLE”]

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (00:03):

This is Gina Marie Rodriguez, and you are listening to “The Jersey Arts Podcast.” Musical theater nerds, myself included, can rejoice. George Street Playhouse is bringing back “Tick, Tick...BOOM!,” the posthumously produced musical from Jonathan Larson, best known for having written the widely known rock opera, “Rent.” For those less familiar with the theater scene, you may know the name “Tick, Tick...BOOM!” thanks to Netflix’s 2021 film adaptation wherein Andrew Garfield gave an Oscar nominated performance for his role as Jonathan Larson himself. Sadly, Larson passed away before he was able to see success. “Rent” became a Broadway hit and has gone on to receive both critical and audience acclaim. It wasn’t until after the success of “Rent” that Larson’s friend and producer Victoria Leacock sought to revive what had begun as a rock monologue. With the help of author David Auburn, what was once a one-man show was turned into a three person musical.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (00:57):

George Street Playhouse Artistic Director, David Saint, was also a close friend of Jonathan Larson. And to honor his friend, almost 30 years since his passing, Saint is directing a new production of “Tick, Tick...BOOM!” Now, as a big fan of Larson’s work, I am so thrilled to have had the opportunity to speak with director David Saint and the star of the show, Daniel Marconi, to learn about the history, joy, and tragedy that led to the “Tick, Tick...BOOM!” we know today. If you loved the film but have never seen the show on stage, now’s your chance. And if you’ve been a fan for years, you can celebrate another opportunity to enjoy the life and music of Jonathan Larson in person. To get the inside scoop on the evolution of this show and laugh at my poor attempts to flirt with a leading man, check out my interview with David and Daniel.

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GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (01:43):

I would love to chat about “Tick, Tick...BOOM!” I mean, it's one of my favorite shows. I happen to love- I happen to love the music of Jonathan Larson, so I'm really excited about this. So, hi gentlemen, how are you? It's very nice to meet you.

DAVID SAINT (01:57):

Hi, I'm David, the director, and this is my star, Daniel Marconi playing Jonathan. So, I guess, I don't know if you know my history with Jonathan.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (02:06):

I know that you knew him. I know that you've been around this show since its inception, really.

DAVID SAINT (02:11):

Yes. I worked on it originally with Jon, and he played himself in it, and we did it three different times. It had three different titles. It was first called “30/90” 30-slash-90, and then it was called “Boho Days”. That song's not even in it anymore. It was the song-

DANIEL MARCONI (2:30):

The Demo Track is still on the original cast, and they put it back in the movie.

DAVID SAINT (02:36):

Oh my God. Yeah. But we cut it from the show, but that was it, the second title, and finally it ended up with “Tick, Tick...BOOM!” as the title. And just so you know, I was working on “Rent” with Jonathan for six years, and I brought it to every theater in New York. I mean all the big nonprofit theaters, and everybody said ‘No.’ And finally I got a call, I was in Seattle doing a show, and Jonathan called and said, somebody finally said yes, New York Theater Workshop, and they had a workshop fall out and they want to do it.

DAVID SAINT (03:14):

I said, that's fantastic. He said, the only bad news is they want to start rehearsal in two weeks, and you are out of town for six more weeks. So, I don't know what to do. I said, you do it, you get a different director and you do it. So that's what, and then of course I talked to him almost every night and the night before I flew in to see the first performance of “Rent,” like an hour after we talked on the phone,

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he died. So, I flew in the next day. I landed, and I was told what had happened, and it was a Greek tragedy. I mean, he never saw the show in front of an audience, and then he never certainly saw what the show became. Jonathan lived and this play, "Tick, Tick...BOOM!," it's all about his life where he shared an apartment at 508 Greenwich Avenue where I was many times there, and he shared with like another four other people revolving roommates, and it was a railroad flat with the bathtub in the kitchen and these struggling young artists with no money. And then after Jonathan died, he became a multi multimillionaire, but he never saw any of it. I worked on this a long time ago with Jonathan, and now he's been gone almost 30 years. So, I really wanted to do it again as a tribute to him in his memory. And the hardest part was finding someone to play Jonathan, because they have to have the essence of Jonathan. And even though this fellow doesn't look anything like Jonathan, he has Jonathan's spirit.

DANIEL MARCONI (04:56):
And ADHD.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (04:57):
Well, that's what's important.

DAVID SAINT (04:58):
Exactly. Yes. And ADHD, they're both ADHD.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (05:04):
Well, again, ADHD advocates, let's just talk about that as well.

DANIEL MARCONI (05:08):
That's right.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (05:11):
But let me ask, Daniel. I mean, what is it like for you to be playing someone who's so important in the theater culture?

DANIEL MARCONI (05:19):
Yeah, I mean, to me, I'm not looking at it as playing the guy who wrote "Rent". We talked about that a lot early on. How we market, we generally market "Tick, Tick...BOOM!" as the story behind the man who

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created “Rent” or the creation of “Rent” or anything like that. But in reality, it was written before all that happened. This was all a rock monologue that he performed alone, not knowing what was to come. And so I try not to look at it with any kind of hindsight bias on it. And then what you're left with is a 29-year-old, which I'm 29, struggling artist in New York. I am a struggling artist in New York. And he's simultaneously so specific and also so universal about the just pursuits of a career in the arts.

DAVID SAINT (06:17):

Combined with today, we just finished working on “Therapy,” which is the number between him and his girlfriend. And I knew the lady who inspired the part of Susan. Her name's not Susan, her name's Janet. And I also knew his best friend, his gay friend who got AIDS, and he is still alive, the best friend. But back then, in 1990. Thankfully yes, but in 1990, we all thought if you were diagnosed with AIDS, you were dead like three years maybe tops. But then he lived right at that time when the drug cocktail started, and so he survived. And ironically, and tragically, Jonathan's the one who died.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (07:06):

Yeah, I thought about that before. It is tragic.

DANIEL MARCONI (07:09):

It's the ultimate Greek tragedy. He has said so many times, and this takes place five years into- let me think about this timeline for a second. Where this takes place, he's been working on a show for eight years, and he's been living in this apartment at 508 with all these roommates, not even in his own bedroom, in a curtained off section of the living room with nothing but his keyboard-

DAVID SAINT (07:39):

Mattress on the floor-

DANIEL MARCONI (07:40):

And cat, and a litter box, which I've lived. I've lived in a studio with a litter box, and it's, it's not ideal. And how tragic is it that even after this story and through his death for six more years, he lived in that apartment?

DAVID SAINT (07:57):

Yeah. He never moved out of that apartment.

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DANIEL MARCONI (07:59):

He was at that apartment when he passed.

DAVID SAINT (08:01):

And he was working, I worked with him on "Rent" for about six years. So, they do actually overlap in the sense that while he was doing "Superbia," which is the show that gets done in "Tick, Tick...BOOM!" that he's working on, he was also working on "Rent." And I was telling them that I did a show called "Billy Bishop Goes to War" in New Jersey in Teaneck at the American stage, which no longer exists. A two character play, Billy Bishop, who was played by Roger Bart, and the piano player who played all the other roles was Jonathan Larson. And the three of us would drive his little Volkswagen Beetle back and forth to Manhattan. And Jonathan would give Roger and me lines of a song like "Santa Fe," that song in "Rent". He was composing at the time, and he would say this and using that, and Roger Bart was actually the first public reading that "Rent" had was Roger playing Roger. And Jonathan named the part after Roger as Roger Bart, because in "Boheme", it's Rudolfo. So, we kept the others named the way they were named in the original, but Mimi is Mimi, but Roger Rudolfo became Roger because of Roger Bart.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (09:30):

I love these stories. It's just so nice to hear all of the backstories.

DAVID SAINT (09:35):

The history, and of course, when they ended up doing it, finally Roger was too old to play the part.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (09:43):

Another tragedy, really.

DAVID SAINT (09:45):

Yeah, I know. So, but there it goes. It's all history now and so much in this, I mean, when you talk about the workshop of doing "Superbia," it was at Playwright's Horizons and he talks about his agent Flora Roberts, who I knew well, and she was there. I was there at that workshop because I was working on "Tick, Tick...BOOM!" with him at the time. So it's crazy. It's crazy.

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GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (10:13):

Wow. Yeah, I mean, it's crazy how time flies too. I remember having seen this show on stage many years ago now. I am guessing over a decade. I loved it then. And then when I heard about the Netflix adaptation, of course, I was really excited to see what they were going to do with it. But then they cut out my favorite song. I was very upset. They cut out "Green Green Dress."

DANIEL MARCONI (10:34):

"Green Green Dress!"

DAVID SAINT (10:35):

Oh, I know. They choreographed it just yesterday or the day before, and it's so sexy and it's so fun.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (10:46):

I love that. I'm going to have to go just to see that.

DAVID SAINT (10:50):

Exactly. I remember when we did it originally, when the show was over and people walked out of the theater, they played "Green Green Dress" as the exit music because it was so catchy and went out singing it. It's a great number. It's a great number.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (11:08):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, as a musical theater nerd, I think because green is my color, I just imagine some man singing it to me one day. It hasn't happened yet, but one day.

DANIEL MARCONI (11:18):

There's time.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (11:19):

There's time.

DANIEL MARCONI (11:21):

Oh no, you gotta come for that.

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GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (11:25):
Exactly. He can't give us a preview now, I have to come.

DAVID SAINT (11:28):
No way. No way. I need the lyrics first.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (11:31):
Absolutely.

DAVID SAINT (11:32):
And also, the thing that's different if people have seen the movie is that the state show is a whole different creature because one of the great things about the state show, Jonathan subtitled it a rock monologue because he wanted it to be, feel like Eric Bogosian was just doing his monologues at that time. He's starting and also John Leguizamo, and Jonathan loved both of them, and this was his sort of musical version of that, to do a monologue that was edgy and funny and passionate, but with music, and he wanted to bridge rock and roll music with show music. But, what the great thing about the play that the movie doesn't do is that all these other characters are played by two actors. And that's such a delight to watch these actors become all these other characters. Whereas the movie, they just hired a whole bunch of actors to play every single role, which is fine, but it takes away the theater fun of it.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (12:35):
No, I'm very excited to see that. I love, I mean, even as an actor, it's got to be so exciting just to be able to play multiple roles within one show. I mean, building your resume in one shot.

DAVID SAINT (12:49):
Exactly. They were saying that in rehearsal that they get to do so much in this show because there's a lot of comedy. I mean, it's very funny, and thank God I have three actors who are really funny. And so that part of it works beautifully as a comedy. And then you have the music and they all sing incredibly. And this one was just on Broadway in "Sweeney Todd."

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (13:14):
I saw that. That's exciting. But I was going to ask you about that. Oh, sorry, Daniel. What?

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DANIEL MARCONI (13:20):
I just acknowledged that it was indeed exciting.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (13:23):
Oh, my question about that was going to be what is it like to be a part of such, I mean, "Sweeney Todd" is a much larger ensemble, so how does that environment change affect you from being part of such a large cast, to one of three?

DANIEL MARCONI (13:37):
Yeah, I mean, it's so different in so many ways, but I think I longed for, I pined for the intimacy of projects like this. I come from a play background more than from a musical background. So I come from generally smaller pieces. Most of the stuff that I cut my teeth on, and I dunno, I mean, already you've seen a week and a half in, less. We are already getting extremely close in a way that you kind of can't. It's much harder in a setting when you have a massive ensemble. But it's so tight knit when it's just the three of us and it's lovely. They're such wonderful folks.

DAVID SAINT (14:22):
He was replacing in "Sweeney Todd" too, which is a different thing because you're not creating it with the original cast. You're going into a role that's already been played,

DANIEL MARCONI (14:36):
And you rehearse it alone for the most part. I just was like, yeah, you learn it all just by yourself-

DAVID SAINT (14:43):
And the stage manager.

DANIEL MARCONI (14:44):
And then you get one 'put in' rehearsal where you do the show in your costume while everyone else just kind of walks around in street clothes and it's the most disorienting thing you can imagine. But yeah, this is nothing like that. And it's the opposite, and it's lovely. They're both wonderful, but

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (15:01):
In their own ways.

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DANIEL MARCONI (15:03):
This is the thing that I long for.

DAVID SAINT (15:05):
And also, you're going not shabby. Sondheim and Larson.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (15:10):
Oh yeah, absolutely.

DAVID SAINT (15:12):
Great, great artists of the musical theater.

DANIEL MARCONI (15:14):
You don't have to worry about trying to figure out how to act a lyric.

DAVID SAINT (15:18):
Right.

DANIEL MARCONI (15:19):
Which is so nice.

DAVID SAINT (15:19):
Yes, exactly. Or where it's all just generalities and moons, boon, June or whatever the version is of that. So I mean, both Jonathan and Sondheim were really exceptional lyricists, and Steven Sondheim was Jonathan's idol, so he's right in that school of the importance of the lyrics.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (15:47):
It's rather poetic that you've gone from Sondheim to Larson because he was his idol. So I do love that. I also really wish this weren't a podcast because you're so expressive, and I wish people could see your face, but go on. Go on.

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DANIEL MARCONI (16:03):
My face is so loud. My face says so many words.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (16:06):
In the best of ways.

DANIEL MARCONI (16:07):
Oh, well, it depends who you ask. But yeah, no, there's an entire Sondheim tribute in this show. We do "Sunday," and in this it's "Sunday Brunch" at the diner. And yet the funny thing is with this is the one time in the show where I'd consider calling the lyrics dumb. They're brilliant in that it's a dumb parody and it's so brilliant. But what's funny is even with these silly lyrics, Sondheim's melody and echo-skeleton of his orchestration- just on a piano and three voices is like, ah. It's aural ecstasy. It's amazing.

DAVID SAINT (16:51):
And we are just at a point in rehearsal where we only have a piano. I mean, we will have more musicians when we get into the actual show, but right now we have a pianist and that's it. But it still comes through. Don't forget, Jonathan played all this material for me in his terrible apartment with the bathtub in the kitchen and four roommates and no room, and he played on electric piano in his apartment. That's where I first heard these songs. That's where I first heard the songs to "Rent." It was all in his little electric piano and talk about, he mirrored the story of "Rent". He was like in "La boheme." He was a really poor, struggling artist living in what his father and mother called a slum, and he worked in the Moondance Diner right up until he died. He took off from Moondance Diner as a waiter. He took off right before the workshop of "Rent" started, and that was his first break from the diner, and then he died. He could have bought the diner now.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (18:03):
He could have, but I like to believe that he can still be a part of it. Now, he may not be here physically and present with us, but I like to think that he's enjoying it all from afar.

DAVID SAINT (18:13):
Absolutely. And having worked with him on it many times, I mean, even in the audition, I started to cry because Jonathan was suddenly back in the room singing to me. And it's a lot to handle. It's a lot to handle.

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GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (18:29):

Yeah. I can only imagine.

DAVID SAINT (18:31):

Even after all this time.

DANIEL MARCONI (18:33):

He must have just been the most beautiful heart. I mean, the thing that he told stories, our initial table work the first few days was a lot of stories about Jonathan and he told stories about, I mean, the fact that Jonathan was just so content living in that situation, as long as he had his music, as long as he could compose, he didn't care what he had to do to scrape by if it meant that he could have his piano. And also, the Greyhound story.

DAVID SAINT (19:03):

The generosity, he had no money, but I was a young director and I was directing around the country wherever I could get work, and he would just show up opening night. And I said, Jonathan, why didn't you tell me you were coming? 'I wanted to surprise you.' Well, how did you get here? 'The Greyhound Bus.' To Seattle, a Greyhound bus. That shows his spirit.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (19:30):

Oh, that's such a nice story. And what a blessing it is that you as the cast can benefit from someone who knew Jonathan Larson. That's huge.

DANIEL MARCONI (19:40):

Oh my God. It's the ultimate dramaturgy. Yeah, no, it really is unbelievable. And it gives you, I think my appreciation is so much deeper for the anecdotes. You know what I mean? The reverence. It's, yeah. Yeah. We're very lucky.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (19:59):

It's a lot to, I mean for you, David, I don't know what the nostalgia, what the emotion of that situation really is, but I hope that it's cathartic in a way to be able to-

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DAVID SAINT (20:11):

It is, and yet, don't forget, I mean, I went to see "Rent" at the opening on Broadway, and I was there with Jonathan's parents, and we just cried through the whole thing. So that was catharsis so recently after he had passed, but now it's a different thing because I'm 30 years older. He's gone almost 30 years. And it's looking back at somebody from my youth, and now I'm 30 years older. And I think what would Jonathan have done, how would fame have affected him and how many more shows did he have in him that he could have written that we never saw? Don't forget, the night before he died with "Rent," he said, David, I need to talk to you about the dramaturgy of the show because I'm not happy yet with how it is. And then he died and nothing was touched. So for people to realize Jonathan was still working on the show.

DAVID SAINT (21:16):

I mean, he was going to have a whole rehearsal period and previews to work on the show before it even of moving to Broadway, and it just took off like a rocket. But he wasn't finished. I think of Sondheim's song, "Finishing the Hat," and he was still working on "Rent," but yet it won the Tony, the Pulitzer, every award known to man, and it's such a huge hit and ran over 10 years on Broadway. And it goes down in the annals of history as one of the big hits of Broadway musical theater. It really changed musical theater in many ways, and that's what his dream was. But he never saw it realized.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (22:06):

I mean, it's really heartbreaking to think about, but I mean, I'm glad that we've all been able to benefit from his work and obviously his heart and his passion. It didn't need more work. He got it to where it needed to be in the time that he was given. And like I said before, I think he sees that now. I would like to believe that he sees that now.

DAVID SAINT (22:27):

Yeah. Well, so many people's lives, it has affected that show. And now "Tick, Tick...BOOM!" I'm finding is having a resurgence, and a lot of it's due to the fact of the Netflix movie two years ago. So now it's brought it back into people's consciousness, and so I'm hoping that brings a whole new audience that haven't seen it on stage.

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GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (22:51):

Definitely. As someone who knew him, did you have thoughts on that movie? Were you happy with it? Did it pay him homage in a way you appreciated?

DAVID SAINT (22:59):

I loved, what's the fellow who played Jonathan? Andrew Garfield. He was wonderful, I thought, and very like Jonathan. I felt he really captured Jonathan. The rest of it, I have to say, I'm a fan of theater over film. Arthur Laurents, who was my mentor who wrote "West Side Story" and "Gypsy," he said that theater is language of metaphor, and film is literal. It's literal. It is what it is. And so, it doesn't take off for me. That's why the movie of "Rent" didn't take off for me, the movie of "Tick, Tick...BOOM!". It was good mainly because of Andrew, I thought. But there's something wonderful about it being a theater piece right there in front of you.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (23:51):

I understand that. I think one of the best things about movie adaptations of theater is that so many people don't have access to theater otherwise. So they're at least introduced to this work in some way.

DAVID SAINT (24:02):

I now control all the properties of Arthur Laurents. I'm the executor of his estate. So I worked on the movie of West Side Story with Steven Spielberg for two years, and that was an incredible experience.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (24:17):

I can only imagine. That sounds wonderful. But they filmed some of that in New Jersey, didn't they?

DAVID SAINT (24:21):

A little bit. A little bit. We came out for New Jersey, of course, in New Jersey. New Jersey claims that the whole thing was shot here.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (24:30):

We try, okay. Throw us a bone.

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DAVID SAINT (24:32):

It was in Brooklyn. Some of it was in, a lot of it, we couldn't, nothing around the area of where "West Side Story" takes place was the way it was then. It's all gone. It's Lincoln Center. It's all highly developed. But we did go uptown. Way uptown and found some brownstones that were very, a lot we shot in the Bronx and the Bronx, the areas of the Bronx that aren't the most developed, slightly dangerous areas of the Bronx. That's where we shot a lot of it.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (25:06):

Okay. Well, I'm going to pretend this conversation didn't happen and tell everyone, it was filmed entirely in New Jersey anyway.

DANIEL MARCONI (25:11):

That's right. Me too.

DAVID SAINT (25:12):

Oh, okay. There you go.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (25:13):

I'm kidding. I'm kidding. But anyway, I got distracted before I mentioned my favorite song in "Tick, Tick...BOOM!". But I didn't get to ask you guys, which I know is always a crazy question to ask someone who's actually a part of the show, but I'm going to do it anyway. Do you guys have a favorite song?

DAVID SAINT (25:29):

No, I'll go to you first.

DANIEL MARCONI (25:31):

Well, as someone who came up worshiping Sondheim, I get too much of a kick out of "Sunday." It's so fun. It's so gorgeous, and it's so fun. But because that's a parody, I don't think it really counts. So this is my way of getting two answers. I would say the original composition of choice. Oh man, "Come to Your Senses" in the context of this show. A, I think that chorus is the most beautiful melody.

DAVID SAINT (26:03):

It's great song.

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DANIEL MARCONI (26:03):

In the show, but also the split function of it dramatically because in the show “Come to Your Senses” is it's part of the “Superbia” workshop, but it's also, it can be reinterpreted as Susan singing to John and it works. It has that split, that split effectiveness. And alongside that-

DAVID SAINT (26:26):

I remember when we found that song because we needed another song for Susan, we wanted a solo. And I said to him, do you have something from one of your other shows that you love? And he said, well, from suburbia, there's a song that's my favorite. And he played it for me. And I said, that's perfect, because the lyrics work both ways. It can be Susan and Karessa who's singing in the workshop of “Superbia.” It's funny because again, in the movie, they had a different actress sing Karessa, “Come to Your Senses.” And I miss that, having the same person playing so you see the dual reality of the song simultaneously. And that's again, theater. Metaphor. It can be both at once. You don't need a different actress to sing it or play it, but probably I love the song “Why.” Because “Why” is really getting back to Jonathan's beginnings of why he wanted to spend his life this way.

DAVID SAINT (27:41):

There's a line where he says, “what a way to spend a day, and I make a vow here and now, I'm going to spend the rest of my life this way.” And that was Jonathan from the time he was a kid in summer camp and-

DANIEL MARCONI (27:58):

Every artist too. The universality -

DAVID SAINT

I did a lot of interviews for George Street with different, especially during Covid, we did a lot of interviews with different artists, and I was amazed. Actors, directors, designers, composers, writers, almost every one of them fell in love with the theater when they were a kid. When their grandmother or their father or their school teacher or someone brought them to a show and they caught the bug and they fell in love with the magic of what happens in the theater. And it's amazing how many people and successful people, they all started the same way.

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DAVID SAINT (28:41):

It always came down to, well, it was my summer camp, or was I was in high school, or I was in middle school and they took us to a play, or my grandmother took me to a Broadway matinee and I couldn't believe it, no matter how old or young people are. So that's why it's so important that young people come to the theater. I have to tell you a story that's sort of sad about that. Ironic, really. We have a TV that does for the lobby, if you're late and you can watch until there's an appropriate break to go in. And once I had some Rutgers students who were in a freshman class theater appreciation, and they came and they were sitting, there were like three of them sitting in the lobby watching the tv, and I said, you can go in now. It's past the late seating mark.

DAVID SAINT (29:36):

And they said, oh no, we have to watch this for class credit. And I said, you do realize right through those doors, it's happening in person. And they had no idea. They had never seen a show. These were freshmen in college. They had never seen a show in person. And I was stunned. I thought, how is this even possible? But it is if people don't bring their kids to the theater, or it doesn't have to be your own kids, but through schools or whatever, that we need to introduce young people to the arts. And that's why I'm hoping that this show "Tick, Tick...BOOM!", doing it. I'm not young anymore, but I'll tell you, I really want young people to come and see this show because Jonathan was a young person when he wrote it, and it will speak to them. It will speak to them.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (30:26):

Well, funny enough, I do work at Rutgers as a teaching assistant for Theater Appreciation. So those were probably my students, but I will be pushing it to them. I have already told them to come see the show. And it happened that way for me too. I'm a theater lover, and my first show was "Phantom of the Opera." My parents brought me when I was probably 10 or so, something like that. That's how it goes.

DAVID SAINT (30:47):

You got the bug,

DANIEL MARCONI (30:49):

Mine was "Lion King."

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DAVID SAINT (30:50):
Yours was “Lion King?”

DANIEL MARCONI (30:54):
Like in '97.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (30:55):
I still haven't seen “Lion King” on Broadway, which is shocking.

DAVID SAINT (30:59):
The first 15 minutes are iconic, and what she did in the first 15 minutes is true magic theater magic.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (31:08):
I know. Shame on me. Right? It is actually -

DAVID SAINT (31:12):
I haven't seen a lot of the big Disney shows. Where you lose me. I'm old school. I don't want to see cartoon characters on stage. I just don't want to see a teapot singing and I don't want to see, it's hard for me. I like shows about people.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (31:31):
I do too. And I say that as a Disney kid, but I still agree with you.

DAVID SAINT (31:35):
I mean, there are a lot of people who, my nieces and nephews, they love those Disney musicals. They watch them a hundred times.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (31:45):
I get that. I watch them on TV a hundred times, but I can't do that when they make these adaptations. You know what? I'm not going to trash Disney. Let's not do that. I'll go in a different direction.

DANIEL MARCONI (31:55):
I'm a Disney theatrical kid.

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DAVID SAINT (31:58):

My choreographer is like a Disney representative. He has everything Disney. So, oh, I can't say anything bad about Disney.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (32:08):

Yeah, no, no, I love Disney. That's where we're going to end that. But I do have a question for you, and it's something that I haven't really asked in these podcasts before, but I noticed that George Street Playhouse is doing, or I should say, your offering an open captioning program. Have you had that long?

DAVID SAINT (32:27):

Yes, we've had that a few years now, and people really appreciate it. And we have the audio described performances, which it's always fascinating to watch them because they come in a couple of shows early to practice to get used to how they're going to describe, particularly if you have a very physical show, like a farce where a lot of things are happening. It's a real workout for those people that have to tell the people listening, what's going on, on stage because they can't see. So it's really fascinating to me. And then I also think there's a new thing now where they're doing special performances on Broadway too for Autistic Awareness, and they cater the show to be played in a way that won't frighten people that have autism because they watch differently and they very hard to communicate the show in a way that won't intimidate autistic folks.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (33:42):

I love that we're living in a time where we recognize how much representation matters and how we need to cater to different audiences. I'm grateful for that.

DANIEL MARCONI (33:52):

Yeah, I mean, in the last 10 years, the steps that accessibility, whether physical, literal or some kind of mental emotional accessibility, the steps that it's taken just in the last decade, it's unbelievable, and hopefully it'll continue trending in that direction.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (34:10):

I hope so too.

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DAVID SAINT (34:11):

I know our actor playing Michael, he's very proud because he's Asian, and he said, I think this is the first, the first Asian who's played this. So I'm not sure, I don't know all the productions, but he feels a great pride in being able to play Michael as an Asian.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (34:34):

I love that. It's so important. I push representation all the time. Representation does matter. I mean, I'm a white Latina, but it was still really exciting when I was a kid and I saw the movie Selena, and I was like, oh my God, that's JLo. She's a Puerto Rican like me. That's so cool. But yeah.

DAVID SAINT (34:50):

Did you appreciate in the movie of "West Side Story" how I loved the fact that some scenes were in the Puerto Rican spoken Spanish, and they didn't even use subtitles. Just assumed that the audience, the non-Spanish speaking audience would get it from the scene what was going on.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (35:12):

And they did. I mean, it was easy to, well, I say that as somebody who did understand it, but I think it was. I was able to take my dad to see that film before he passed, and it was just really nice to be able to see that representation on screen with my dad who grew up in that era. My father was much older, so he did actually grow up in the times that "West Side Story" was set. But I digress. I don't know how we got there. I'm sorry about that.

DAVID SAINT (35:40):

Representation.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (35:41):

Yes, representation. It was representation. We talked about so much. I feel like we covered a lot, but is there anything that you gentlemen would like to say to audiences to encourage them to see this show?

DAVID SAINT (35:54):

Well, I think it runs the gamut. It's a very young show, so it has tremendous energy. It has humor and passion, and the music is great, and it's unusual because now, I mean, Lin Manuel Miranda talks about

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Jonathan Larson as one of his inspirations because Jonathan did bring the sound of rock into a more conservative showbiz sound, and Lin has gone on and done the same thing with rap.

DANIEL MARCONI (36:33):

It's also, as we mentioned earlier, speaking of accessibility, ADHD accessibility. I mean this, it's like one eighty minute ADHD fever dream, which for someone like me and most of my generation with our ten second attention spans, he had that too. And it's written that way where it'll go from a dramatic scene straight into a -

DAVID SAINT (37:02):

He keeps switching characters instantly on a dime. Yeah, that's very ADHD.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (37:09):

It's perfect for the neuro-spicy crowd.

DANIEL MARCONI (37:11):

Exactly. Thank you. Thank you, thank you. It's perfect for the current generation.

DAVID SAINT (37:16):

You won't get bored, myself included. It moves very quickly.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (37:19):

That's a good sell. I'm looking forward to it because I'm going to pretend that you're singing "Green Green Dress" to me when I'm there.

DANIEL MARCONI (37:25):

Oh I will be. I'll just to be cautious, I'll singing it to you every show, and then whenever you're there, you'll know.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (37:33):

Thank you so much. This is what I'm looking forward to now. It will make my life and I will wear a green dress. Now I have to buy myself a green dress.

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DANIEL MARCONI (37:40):
I hope so. Excellent. I need the inspiration.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (37:42):
I actually have a green gown. Does that count? Can I wear a green gown?

DANIEL MARCONI (37:46):
It's not green green gown, so I don't know. We'll make the final judgment when you come.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (37:53):
I mean, what do we define as a dress? It's just floor length, that's all. I think it's still a dress, whatever. We're going to pretend and you're going to sing to me, and then we're going to get married, and it's all good.

DANIEL MARCONI (38:03):
It's going to be a privilege.

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (38:04):
Thank. Thank you so much, gentlemen. This has been a wonderful talk.

DAVID SAINT (38:08):
It's been wonderful talking to you, and I look forward to seeing you at the show.

[MUSIC: "A LITTLE WIGGLE"]

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ (38:13):
"Tick, Tick... BOOM!" will run April 23rd through May 19th at the George Street Playhouse in New Brunswick. Special open caption performances will take place on May 4th, with English captioning at the 2pm matinee and Spanish captioning at the 8pm performance.

And for those Rutgers students out there, George Street is offering a special student discount. This offer is specific to those attending Rutgers University. To take advantage, call the GSP Box Office at 732-246-7717.

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This episode was hosted, edited and produced by me, Gina Marie Rodriguez. Executive producers are Jim Atkinson and Isaac Serna-Diez. And my thanks to today's guests, David Saint, and Daniel Marconi for their time today. I'm Gina Marie Rodriguez for the Jersey Arts podcast.

Thanks for listening!

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