

THE DAILY GAZETTE

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THEATER REVIEW

ATF offers chance to see a future Broadway hit now

Larson's pre-'Rent' self-portrait vivid, compelling theater

BY CAROL KING
For the Daily Gazette

GLENS FALLS — True to its mission to produce challenging, quirky and dynamic theater, Adirondack Theatre Festival is presenting a lesser-known work of playwright and composer Jonathan Larson, entitled "Tick, Tick ... BOOM!"

You may recall the history here. On the eve of the off-Broadway opening of his masterwork, "Rent," in 1996, Larson watched the final dress rehearsal of the musical, then returned to his apartment and died at the tender age of 35. Though "Tick, Tick ... BOOM!" was conceived before "Rent," it did not premier until 2001.

"Rent" went on to become one of the biggest Broadway hits of the last quarter-century and it would



Sarah Glendening, Colin Hanlon and Ryan Duncan star in "Tick, Tick ... BOOM!" at the Adirondack Theatre Festival.

not surprise me if "Tick, Tick ... BOOM!" followed in the footsteps of its predecessor. So see it while you can at reasonable prices, for the ATF production is nothing less than Broadway quality.

The story is autobiographi-

cal and examines Larson's fears and frustrations as a "promising" young composer and playwright. Colin Hanlon, as Jon, leads the three-member cast in a vivid portrait of a young man who is about to turn 30 and doubts that he will

ever realize his ambition to write a play that will become "the 'Hair' of the '90s." His girlfriend, Susan (Sarah Glendening) wants to move out of New York City and start a family on Cape Cod. His friend Michael (Ryan Duncan) whom he has

known since childhood and who is just his age has become a successful market research executive and has just purchased a "Beemer" and an apartment with "a bathtub ... in the bathroom."

FINE PERFORMANCES

The play is rich with humor and the performances luminous. Hanlon brings out all the edgy anxieties of a man whose biological clock is ticking madly, but he never overdoes. His performance of one of the show's greatest musical numbers, "Why," is poignant and personal. He offers a powerful portrait of hope, even as he contemplates his own mortality. Duncan is remarkable for his subtlety and complete commitment to a variety of roles. He plays Michael with all the warmth and humor you would hope for in a best friend. Glendening, also in numerous roles, gives an all-out star-turn performance of "Come to Your Senses," another of the show's memorable numbers.

With strong direction by Gabriel

'Tick, Tick ... BOOM!'

WHERE: Adirondack Theatre Festival, 207 Glen St., Glens Falls
WHEN: Through Saturday
HOW MUCH: \$28-\$9
MORE INFO: 798-7479

Barre, the nearly two-hour show, performed without intermission, zips by. Musical direction by Gary Adler is sharp and sure. With Adler on piano and keys, Dan Devine (guitar), Chris Reed (drums) and Greg Verheyn on bass, the band becomes part of the show.

Set design by David Esler includes a projection design by Dustin O'Neill. Both conjure the grunge and glory of a young Broadway-hopeful's life. Costumes by Isabel Rubio serve the show beautifully, setting the period of the '90s, but not imposing on the timelessness of the show's themes.