

Rent from page E1

New York City dealing with relationships, work, creative desires and losing friends to AIDS. These are also the elements of "Rent," which focuses on a group of artistically creative young people, gay and straight, who deal with the many trials and tribulations of living in New York City and trying to find a break and also struggling with drug addiction and HIV/AIDS.

"Jonathan's work made me feel something," Sella said. "I was 25 and he was telling my story, and I didn't even know him. I love 'Rent' and I did it because I loved it. I hoped others would love it, too. And they have."

Sella described Larson as a man with a towering exuberance for the arts and a mission to bring younger people into live theater.

On Jan. 25, 1996, Jonathan Larson died of an aortic aneurysm, just hours before the dress rehearsal off-Broadway of "Rent," and just 10 days before his 38th birthday.

"It was probably the worst grief I ever felt. I lost my grandparents, but I never lost a contemporary like that. I never lost a friend in such a shocking way," Sella said.

"Rent" was originally produced at the nonprofit New York Theatre Workshop and then commercially off-Broadway. Originally, Larson and Sella and his two co-producers saw the rock musi-

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cal as strictly an off-Broadway production.

"When we saw it in performance, in front of an audience, I said it feels like a Broadway musical. It was big - big in feelings, big in character, big in music," Sella said.

Sella's assessment proved right. The play moved to Broadway in April, 1996, to rave reviews and sold-out audiences and, along with "Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk," has helped bring young people back to theater.

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Sella is currently overseeing four companies of "Rent" and planning London and Sydney productions. He is also importing an Argentine musical for Broadway opening in spring and beginning work on a new musical.

Line from page E1

viduals to say 'here I am, to get out of the crowd.' It's about the individual finding their niche in society, and the difficulty of the arts, and discipline of dance."

Originally directed and choreographed by Michael Bennett, "A Chorus Line," which takes a behind-the-scenes look at chorus dancers auditioning for a part in a Broadway musical, played on Broadway 4,137 consecutive times, surpassed only by "Cats" in 1997. Music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Edward Kle-

Legends from page E1

they know them from first listen.

"Day by Day," the initial single from "Legends Diner" was a Top 40 track on the *Contemporary Charts*. "Life Goes On In L.A." is climbing the charts.

With the music part figured out, Monroe is learning about the business "day by day."

ban make this a truly memorable show.

Gillespie says this is one of the strongest musical casts he's ever put together. Caston isn't the only student with professional experience, cast members have spent summers performing at Disney World, Cedar Pointe and Universal Studios.

David Havasi of Rochester who portrays Mike, has worked as a performer in the summer at Disney World and Universal Studios.

A sophomore, Mike is a role David always wanted to play. "I've been dancing since I was in eighth grade," he said. "I thought dancing was only for girls. My mom had to practically drag me to a hip hop dance class at a studio. It was so much fun, and all guys. I said 'I love this' and found out that guys can dance, and be manly too. It was a great revelation."

Eighth grade was also when Havasi joined the choir, and learned singing isn't just for

nerds.

Like the character Mike who sings - "I Can Do That" - David is preparing for a career in the arts, doing modeling on the side. "A Chorus Line" is wonderful, it's great," he said. "It's all about people discovering where they're at, where they come from and where they're going. Like us in college."

This "Chorus Line" will be set in the 1990s, and there's a surprise ending.

Juggling school, theater challenges producer

BY KEELY WYGONIK STAFF WRITER

Jennifer Rembisz of Livonia and her friends had so much fun performing in shows at Mercy High School that they decided to

keep on doing it after they graduated.

"Let's just do one," she said in 1996 while talking to friends she met through Mercy High School in Farmington who said they regretted not having a show to work on.

The theater company, Jack-In-The-Box Productions, presents Edward Albee's two-man show "The Zoo Story" Friday-Sunday, March 27-29, at the University of Michigan-Dearborn's ROC.

The cast features Christopher Cain of Redford as the "disturbed fanatic 'permanent transient' Jerry, and Bryon D. Harvey as the clean-cut suburban character, Peter.

Set in a peaceful park in New York, Jerry disturbs bookworm Peter about his recent "trip to the zoo."

Rembisz is producing, Karri Washington of Southfield is stage manager, and Theresa Ciseo of Livonia, lighting engineer.

"I've always loved his (Albee's) work," said Rembisz explaining why she wanted to produce this show. "He's an absurdist who attacks the moral values of soci-

came from my head can get on the radio and that people take the time not only to buy it, but send letters, faxes and e-mails."

Divorce was a name he thought of while going through a divorce. "It's severing the old to make way for the new, because with every ending there's a beginning," he said.

At Borders, you'll just see "Me and my acoustic I," said Monroe. Michigan is the first stop on a bookstore tour that will take him to Texas and California.

"It's a song showcase, and set up nicely," he said. "People are there to study, the audience will listen. It's real direct, not loud like a club."

■ "The Zoo Story" - 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 27-28; 6 p.m. Sunday, March 29, University of Michigan-Dearborn's ROC. The campus is off Evergreen Road (between Ford Road and Michigan Ave.). Tickets \$5, buy two get one free, (734) 797-JACK.

■ "Speed-the-Flow" - 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, April 2-4 and April 9-11; 2 p.m. Sunday, April 5; Studio Theatre, downstairs at the Hilberry Theatre on the campus of Wayne State University. Tickets \$5 to \$7, call (313) 677-2972.

Rembisz, whose main aspiration is to be a lawyer, truly enjoys theater, and the challenge of juggling 17 credit hours at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and working as a sales rep for Joker's Entertainment, an agency that offers singing telegrams, magicians and other services.

"I'm having a blast," she said. "If you're going to go into theater, do it because it's fun."

Rembisz said she believes theater is a good outlet for young people because it's creative.

"We're hoping to keep going with this production," she said.

"We're loving it, and committed to presenting high-quality theater at prices affordable to patrons. My show is \$5, cheaper than a movie. I went to the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and still have a lot of friends

there. The ROC is centrally located, easy for patrons to get to."

The best part, if you buy two tickets, you can bring a friend for free.

At the Studio "Speed the Flow," David Mamet's dark comedy, opens April 2 at Wayne State University's Studio Theatre.

Mamet explores the savage underside of the American film industry as he looks at two friends (Gould and Fox) planning to pitch a new script to a major Hollywood film studio while destructively interacting with the office secretary (Karen).

"Speed-the-Flow" contains adult language and situations. The technical staff includes Shatha Faraj of West Bloomfield (stage manager).

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