

With only 525,600 of them in a year, the audience won't regret one minute when watching Woodrow Wilson High School's powerful rendition of RENT: School Edition. With impressive and harmonious vocals, heart-wrenching acting, an energetic ensemble, and a heartfelt motif of love and loss, this production will leave the crowd overwhelmed with emotion.

RENT, premiering off-Broadway in 1996, is a rock musical written by Jonathan Larson. Loosely based off the opera *La Bohème*, this moving performance ran on Broadway for twelve years and obtained four Tony Awards along the way. The school edition, published in 2008, contains only slight changes to the original.

Based in the 1990s, RENT: School Edition revolves around seven friends living in the desolate East Village of New York who struggle with poverty, homelessness, AIDS, and the baggage that comes with love. Working together as a unit, the entire cast of Woodrow Wilson High School's RENT: School Edition captivated the audience with seamless harmonies from the first to last note. Along with the strong leads, the large ensemble had commitment to character, which helped drive the show with electrifying energy.

Throughout the show, Mark Cohen (Zach Rakotomaniraka) documents these hardships through the lives of his friends. Always with a camera in his hand and a striped scarf around his neck, Rakotomaniraka perfectly narrated the story through his honest and bitter commentary. In numbers such as *Tango Maureen* and crowd favorite *La Vie Bohème*, he delivered jaw-dropping vocals with chilling riffs that left the audience in awe. Mimi Marquez (Gabby Anifantis), one of the friends he documents, struggles with drug addiction and AIDS. With her alluring dance

moves, angelic voice as demonstrated in *Out Tonight*, and a beautiful character arc, Anifantis makes it easy to see why Roger Davis (Aidan Trinity) falls for Mimi and accepts her baggage.

Meanwhile, Maureen Johnson (Julia Ravenscroft) strutted on stage with an over-the-top personality. Her standout protest song *Over the Moon* truly made the audience feel just that with her astounding belt and quirky movements. Another notable character who could flaunt his heels was Angel Schunard (Sammy Solomon). Solomon's pure yet flamboyant portrayal of Angel brought a ray of light on the grim situation experienced with his love interest, Tom Collins (Ben Schiffrin). In the spotlight during *I'll Cover You (Reprise)*, Schiffrin brought raw emotion on stage, leaving the audience wiping away tears as he demonstrated the effect of loss and love. Throughout this musical, the ensemble was engaged with crisp and purposeful movements with beautiful harmonies in infamous numbers such as *Seasons of Love*. Each individual in the cast developed genuine chemistry, leaving an emotional impact on the audience.

In addition to a compelling performance, the technical aspects were equally phenomenal. With organized and impressive stage management by Olivia Greene, Athena Swiader, and Paige Hollander, the show ran smoothly with few hiccups. Other notable technical features include the intricate and realistic set, showy and period-appropriate costumes, and flashy lights.

When revealing how much can change in just 525,600 minutes, Woodrow Wilson High School's production of *RENT: School Edition* advises the audience to measure your life in love as they learn to embrace the ups and downs of life within the *Seasons of Love*.