



IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

tick, tick...BOOM!

+ pre-recorded Q&A with director Lin-Manuel Miranda, producer Julie Oh, executive producer Julie Larson, writer Steven Levenson and actors Andrew Garfield, Vanessa Hudgens, Alexandra Shipp, Robin de Jesus and Judith Light

Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winner Lin-Manuel Miranda's adaptation of *tick, tick...BOOM!* has been a long time in the making.

The new film, featuring an all-star cast led by Academy Award-nominee and Tony Award-winner Andrew Garfield as Jonathan Larson, centres on the then-upstart composer and playwright as he attempts to create a musical theatre masterpiece. Larson wrote the original *tick, tick...BOOM!* at the same time he was putting the finishing touches on the show that would come to dominate the New York stage in the 1990s and beyond: *RENT*.

tick, tick...BOOM! also stars Alexandra Shipp (*Love, Simon, X-Men: Apocalypse*) as Larson's dancer girlfriend Susan, and Robin de Jesús (*In the Heights*) as best friend Michael. As the friends traverse their artistic careers and major life decisions, they confront the AIDS crisis in its height, much as Larson did in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *RENT*. 'Suddenly you were seeing people who had never been on a Broadway stage before; queer people, people of colour,' says screenwriter Steven Levenson (*Dear Evan Hansen*).

Although Larson didn't live to see the success of either production – he died from an aortic aneurysm the morning of *RENT*'s Off Broadway premiere – his work influenced an entire generation of aspiring stage performers, Miranda among them. The New York native saw *tick, tick...BOOM!* as a 21-year-old theatre major and later caught producer Julie Oh's attention playing Jon in a production of *tick, tick...BOOM!* just a year before his landmark *Hamilton* debuted on Broadway.

Miranda's debut skilfully weaves on-stage performance with scenes of Larson's life, paying full tribute to the musical genius. As *LA Times*' Justin Chang puts it, '*tick, tick...BOOM!* feels refreshingly intimate and specific, idealistic but rarely naive, and grounded in a way that gives an unexpected lift to its flights of fancy.'

Brookie McIlvaine, Netflix production notes

The three most significant men in modern American musical theatre, Stephen Sondheim, Jonathan Larson and Lin Manuel Miranda are all present in *tick, tick...BOOM!* All three redefined the art form, but the tragedy of Larson is that he died before he saw his work achieve notoriety.

tick, tick...BOOM! is set five years before Larson's death, as his thirtieth birthday and the workshop of his musical *Superbia* looms. Jonathan is living in a run-down apartment, ignored by his agent, working at a diner and trying to write the song the emotional arc of *Superbia* depends on. Despite the setbacks, Jonathan believes in his own talent. He's buoyed by brief encouragement from Stephen Sondheim, and introduces himself at parties as 'the future of musical theatre'.

Directed here by Lin-Manuel Miranda, *tick, tick...BOOM!* was originally conceived by Larson himself as an autobiographical one man show. After his death, the production was revived as a three-hander, bringing in his best friend and girlfriend as characters. In the film version, Miranda cuts between a stage performance of the songs with singers Karessa (Vanessa Hudgens) and Roger (Joshua Henry) to a cinematic retelling of events with Larson's girlfriend Susan (Alexandra Shipp) and best friend Michael (Robin de Jesús).

As the film's title card informs us, 'Everything you are about to see is true, aside from the bits Jonathan made up.' Andrew Garfield has a gargantuan task in the role of Larson: singing, dancing, appearing in almost every frame. His performance is pitched perfectly, even when the film's energy and editing borders on chaos, Garfield remains a transfixing presence. In the spirit of Larson, Miranda's direction explores the full potential of the musical, employing everything from stripped back acapella to glitzy multi-dimensional set pieces with dozens of voices in harmony.

Miranda's tribute to Larson is as devastating as it is exuberant. Even the most upbeat of musical numbers are haunted by the spectre of death. Jonathan lost three friends to AIDS and the 'tick, tick, tick' he wrote about hearing – his sense that he was running out of time – was prophetic. After being immersed in Larson's talent and struggles, the devastation sets in when, exhausted, Jonathan tells his friends he 'doesn't have five more years' in him. It's made all the worse to remember he had less than six.

Leila Latif, *Sight and Sound*, [bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound](https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound), 18 November 2021

tick, tick...BOOM!

Directed by: Lin-Manuel Miranda

©: Netflix US LLC

an Imagine Entertainment *production*

Production Company: 5000 Broadway Productions

Presented by: Netflix

Executive Producers: Celia Costas, Julie Larson, Steven Levenson

Produced by: Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, Julie Oh, Lin-Manuel Miranda

Co-producer: Deb Dyer

Unit Production Manager: Deb Dyer

Location Manager: Ryan Smith

Post-production Supervisor: Kelley Cribben

1st Assistant Director: Mariela Comitini

Script Supervisor: Thomas Johnston

CASTING BY: Bernie Telsey, Kristian Charbonier

Screenplay by: Steven Levenson

Based on the musical by: Jonathan Larson

Director of Photography: Alice Brooks

A Camera/Steadicam Operator: Michael Fuchs

B Camera Operator: Stanley Fernandez

Still Photographer: Macall Polay

Visual Effects Supervisor: John Bair

Visual Effects Producer: Lisa Kelly

Visual Effects by: Phosphene, Host VFX

Edited by: Myron Kerstein, Andrew Weisblum

Production Designer: Alex DiGerlando

Art Director: Deborah Wheatley

Set Decorator: Lydia Marks

Costume Designer: Melissa Toth

Make-up Department Head: Judy Chin

Hair Department Head: Mandy Lyons

Title Design: Teddy Blanks

Colourist: Stephan Nakamura

Colour by: Company 3

Songs and Score by: Jonathan Larson

Music Supervisor: Steven Gizicki

Choreography: Ryan Heffington

Sound Mixer: Tod A. Maitland

Re-recording Mixer: Paul Hsu

Supervising Sound Editor: Paul Hsu

Stunt Co-ordinator: Scott Burik

Unit Publicist: Julie Kuehndorf

Cast

Andrew Garfield (*Jonathan Larson, Jon*)

Alexandra Shipp (*Susan Wilson*)

Robin de Jesús (*Michael*)

Joshua Henry (*Roger*)

Bradley Whitford (*Stephen Sondheim*)

Tariq Trotter (*H.A.W.K. Smooth*)

Judith Light (*Rosa Stevens*)

Vanessa Hudgens (*Karessa*)

Jonathan Marc Sherman (*Ira Weitzman*)

Mj Rodriguez (*Carolyn*)

Ben Levi Ross (*Freddy*)

Laura Benanti (*Judy*)

Danielle Ferland (*Kim*)

Michael Diamond (*Peggy*)

Utkarsh Ambudkar (*Todd*)

Gizel Jimenez (*Cristin*)

Kate Rockwell (*Lauren*)

Aneesa Folds (*Danya*)

Joel Perez (*Lincoln*)

USA 2021©

120 mins

Courtesy of Netflix

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. See something different today on [player.bfi.org.uk](https://www.bfi.org.uk/player)

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at [bfi.org.uk/join](https://www.bfi.org.uk/join)

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

The British Film Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales No. 287780