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RENT is...

RENT is the single greatest thing to ever happen to this world. This show encompasses all of the most important issues of our time. It tells the all-too-familiar story of barely making it in this crazy world. The only things that matter are friendship, honesty, love, and happiness. **RENT** is the story of friends living together in New York City striving to cope with AIDS, drugs, suicide, homosexuality, transvestites, and paying the rent. Nothing is more beautiful than seeing this unfold before your eyes on stage. Jonathan Larson was nothing short of a genius.

RENT, the hit Broadway musical, written by Jonathan Larson and directed by Michael Greif, becomes the 15th longest running show in the history of Broadway on Monday, January 7 2002, when it plays its 2,378th performance, passing the legendary musical, *Annie*. **RENT** hits another landmark in the next few months: April 29, 2002, is its sixth anniversary on Broadway.

RENT opened at Broadway's Nederlander Theatre, on April 29, 1996 following a history making, sold out, extended, limited engagement at off-Broadway's New York Theatre Workshop. The musical went on to win every major best musical award, including the Tony Award, as well as the Pulitzer Prize for drama.

Inspired by Puccini's classic *La Bohème*, **RENT**-with joyous music and high-spirited dance-celebrates a community of young New Yorkers facing the soaring hopes and painful realities of contemporary life. The New York Times calls **RENT** an "exhilarating landmark musical that rushes forward on an electric current of emotion" and USA Today says "most Broadway mega-musicals seem like emotional counterfeit in comparison. Like most breakthrough pieces, **RENT** makes the rest of its genre seem antiquated."

THE STORY

Synopsis:

Act I

Mark, a filmmaker and the show's narrator, is spending a cold Christmas Eve in the Lower East Side industrial loft he shares with his roommate Roger, a musician. They receive several phone calls (TUNE UP/VOICE MAIL #1). The first is from Mark's mother consoling him over the loss of his girlfriend Maureen, a performance artist, to JoAnne, a Harvard Law School graduate. The second is from their friend Tom Collins who is detained by muggers. The last is from their landlord Benny demanding the rent. The power blows and so do Roger and Mark's tops (**RENT**). Outside, Collins is reeling from the mugging. He is comforted by Angel, a street musician, who offers him a helping hand (YOU OKAY HONEY?). Both HIV+, Angel and Collins head out for a night on the town and a life support meeting.

In response to a call for help, Mark sets out for the lot where Maureen is performing a protest against Benny's eviction of the homeless from a nearby lot. He urges Roger to come along but he refuses. As Mark reports, Roger has not left the apartment in six months. He is still reeling from the suicide of his girlfriend, who slashed her wrists upon learning that she had AIDS. Roger tries to write a song but the only melody he finds is "Musetta's Waltz" from Puccini's *La Bohème* (ONE SONG GLORY).

Mimi, an S&M dancer who lives below Mark and Roger, knocks with a request: LIGHT MY CANDLE. The attraction between she and Roger is immediate, but Roger shies away and shows her the door. Mimi knocks again. She has lost her stash. Roger helps her look and Mimi eventually finds it- in Roger's back pocket.

As Joanne wrangles with the sound equipment for Maureen's performance, her parents leave her VOICE MAIL #2, pleading with her to come to her mother's confirmation hearings in Washington. Collins arrives at the loft with a bag full of goodies. This includes Angel, transvested into Angel Dumott Shunard and gloriously arrayed in his Christmas finest- wig, glitter, and platform pumps. In TODAY 4 U, Angel explains how he earned \$1,000: a wealthy woman hired him to play the drums until her neighbor's yappy Akita barked itself to death.

Benny enters with a proposal (YOU'LL SEE): if Mark and Roger stop Maureen's protest, he will forgo the rent. He entices them with plans for Cyber Arts, a state-of-the-art, multimedia studio that will realize all of their dreams. Unsuccessful, Benny leaves. Mark, Collins and Angel try to coax Roger into coming to the life support meeting with them but he refuses.

Mark finally reaches the lot where Maureen will perform her protest. He encounters Joanne, still struggling with the sound

equipment and the many demands Maureen makes upon her. Mark offers help. Though they dreaded meeting, they have a lot in common (TANGO: MAUREEN). Once he finishes, Mark joins Angel and Collins at the LIFE SUPPORT meeting.

In her apartment, Mimi dresses and appeals to an imaginary Roger to take her OUT TONIGHT. She barges into his apartment and continues her appeal to Roger himself but after a passionate kiss he vehemently rejects her. They fight, her words blending with the affirmation of the support group that emphasizes the importance of living the moment (ANOTHER DAY). A young man from the support group asks quietly "Will I lose my dignity/Will someone care?" (WILL I?). His thoughts and fears are echoed by each member of the community. The thoughts are Roger's too, and he decides to go outside.

After the meeting, Mark, Angel and Collins roam the lot and rescue a homeless woman from the taunts and nightsticks of the neighborhood cops (ON THE STREET). Discouraged by life in New York, the three dream of opening up a restaurant in SANTA FE. Alone at last, Angel and Collins finally express their love for each other (I'LL COVER YOU). Joanne, meanwhile has her hands full juggling work, parents, and the ever-demanding Maureen...all over the phone(WE'RE OKAY).

The scene changes to St. Mark's Place where vendors hawk their wares to the bohemians of the East Village (CHRISTMAS BELLS). Angel buys a new coat for Collins. Mark finds Roger who spots Mimi looking for drugs. Roger apologizes and asks her to dinner. Just as the snow begins to fall, Maureen finally appears on her motorcycle to perform her protest, OVER THE MOON.

Following the protest, all convene at the Life Café, including Benny who announces that Bohemia is dead. Thus ensues a makeshift mock-wake that quickly segues into a celebration of LA VIE BOHEME. During the song, Benny confronts Mimi and threatens to reveal their past affair to Roger. Beepers go off to remind the revelers to take their AZT. Roger and Mimi each discover that the other is HIV+. Frightened, excited, they vow to be together (I SHOULD TELL YOU).

Joanne has been sent back to the lot by Maureen several times to check on the equipment. She finally rebels, telling Maureen that their relationship is over and announcing a riot in the lot: Benny has padlocked the building and called the cops but the homeless are standing their ground. And mooing. The artists rejoice, the riot continues, and Roger and Mimi share a small, lovely kiss.

Act II

The second act begins with the company posing the question, "How do you measure a year in the life?" (SEASONS OF LOVE). It is one week later, New Year's Eve, and Mark, Roger, Mimi, Maureen, Joanne, Angel and Collins are having a breaking-back-into-the-building party (HAPPY NEW YEAR). Once inside, Mark listens to one more phone message from his mother in Scarsdale as well as one from Alexi Darling, a tabloid TV producer salivating

over his footage of the riot (VOICE MAIL #3). Benny crashes the party, angering Roger and alienating Roger from Mimi. Dejected, Mimi wanders outside and into the welcoming arms of her drug dealer.

Mark fastforwards to Valentine's Day. Roger and Mimi are still together. Angel and Collins could be anywhere. Maureen and Joanne are still rehearsing another show, but it is not going well (TAKE ME OR LEAVE ME).

The company reprises SEASONS OF LOVE and time marches forward again, to spring. Roger and Mimi have a fight and Roger walks out. Alone, Mimi reflects on what life would be like without Roger (WITHOUT YOU). At the same time, Collins nurses a sick Angel; Maureen and Joanne reconcile; as do Mimi and Roger.

At the end of the summer, Alexi is still courting Mark for her TV show (VOICE MAIL #4). Roger and Mimi, unsatisfied by love's complications, break up, as do Maureen and Joanne. Angel dies (CONTACT). At a memorial service, his friends remember his spirit. Collins remembers his love (I'LL COVER YOU: REPRISE).

Outside the church, Mark phones Alexi to accept the job. Mark ponders how life has changed since last year as he recalls the joys of that one night last Christmas (HALLOWEEN). As the mourners leave the church, Mimi confirms that Roger has sold his guitar and is leaving town. Roger confirms that Mimi is now with Benny. A fight erupts among Roger, Mimi, Maureen, Benny, and Joanne. Collins interrupts them with the sorrowful reality that the family is breaking up. Joanne and Maureen reunite. Mimi and Benny leave.

Mark tries to convince Roger to stay in New York and face his pain and the fact that Mimi is very sick. Roger attacks Mark, accusing him of hiding from his feelings. Mimi enters, having overheard the entire angry exchange, and bids Roger farewell (GOODBYE, LOVE). Roger leaves town. Mimi turns to Mark for help. Benny offers one helping hand to Mimi and extends the other to Collins to help him pay Angel's funeral expenses. Mimi refuses the help and flees. Collins accepts and he and Benny go out for a drink.

Mark considers the events and faces the last year, as does Roger, who is on his way to Santa Fe. Roger begins to discover his own song and Mark turns down the television job to finish his own film (WHAT YOU OWN).

Roger's mom, Mark's mom, Mimi's mom, and JoAnne's father all wonder where their children are (VOICE MAIL #5). Back at the loft, Mark tells us again it's Christmas and he now has a rough version of his film, which he's going to show tonight. Roger has returned, has written his song, but cannot find Mimi. Collins enters with money he has gotten from an ATM rewired to give money to anyone with a special code. The password? Angel.

Maureen and Joanne suddenly arrive holding Mimi, whom they found collapsed and near death in the park. Roger begs her not to die and sings for her the song it has taken him all year to write, YOUR EYES. Mimi dies as Roger wails her name over a blast of

Puccini's music. Suddenly Mimi awakens, it seems that a guardian Angel was watching over her.

The company joins in a reprise of the affirmation that love is all and that there is "no day but today" (FINALE).

THE HISTORY OF RENT

The evolution of *Rent* is not a simple one. It took seven long and difficult years to take the show from its initial concept to its first public performance. The story of *Rent* is filled with highs and lows of the most epic proportions. For every burst of applause and prestigious award, there is the reminder that its creator is not here to share in its glory. In fact, it was only one week before *Rent*'s first preview that Jonathan Larson felt the first thump of the aortic aneurysm that would take him away. Director Michael Greif and the cast were rehearsing "What You Own" - the rousing second act show-stopper about dying at the end of the millennium - when Jonathan collapsed and asked for an ambulance. He later told friends that he couldn't believe that the last burst of music he would hear might be his own song about dying.

An ambulance took Jonathan to the hospital, and he was diagnosed with food poisoning. A few days later, after another incident, doctors at a second hospital said he had the flu. On January 25, 1996, Jonathan - weary but excited - went to the final dress rehearsal of *Rent* at New York Theatre Workshop. By the end of the show, Jonathan was surrounded by friends and supporters shouting in approval and stamping their feet. After the ovations subsided, he was interviewed by a reporter from The New York Times. The reporter told Jonathan off the record that *Rent* was an amazing achievement, destined for success. Then he went home, put on some tea, and died. His roommate found him on the floor of the kitchen, beside his coat. Jonathan Larson was 35 years old.

You know what happened to the play next - the show has become one of the biggest things ever on Broadway. It's become the sort of thing a playwright dreams about in the middle of the night, and in the morning is embarrassed at how wild he's let his fantasies run. *Rent* - Jon's first produced show - is like an athlete who has won the Rookie of the year award, an Olympic gold medal, the World Series, and the Most Valuable Player Award, all in the same season. It has collected the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Drama Desk Award, The Obie Award, the Tony Award, and the Pulitzer Prize. *Rent* was on the cover of Newsweek. Time called it a "breakthrough," The New York Times "an exhilarating landmark." At the 1996 Democratic National Convention, the cast of *Rent* sang "Seasons of Love." Movie and television stars have returned again and again, and afterwards, at the Nederlander Theater, they've gone backstage to sign a long brick wall - Mel Gibson and Janet Jackson and Jodie Foster -- forwarding their best wishes and congratulations to Jonathan and the cast. People in the show say they recognize the same audience members coming back to the Nederlander ten, fifteen times. Over the past few years, *Rent* has played to cheering fans throughout North America. In fact, it has become a global phenomenon, packing houses in England, Japan, Australia, Germany and countless other countries. If a young playwright told you this was

a fantasy of his, you'd smile at his ambition, and he'd walk away embarrassed. But here it is true.

There would be no Rent, of course, without Jonathan Larson. However, there are other voices too, artists and producers and actors who helped shape Rent and gave it sets and lights, flesh and bones. If you've ever wanted the inside scoop on Rent, you've come to the right site. Here's how it happened:

In the beginning, there was Billy Aronson, a Yale trained playwright who loved opera and had an idea: Billy wanted to write a musical updating of La Bohème. He wanted the show to be about people like himself - struggling to make art under lousy conditions. Some theatrical acquaintances suggested he work with Jonathan. In 1989, they met and swapped ideas. Jon came up with the title: Rent. He didn't like Billy's proposed Upper West Side setting; Jon lived a bohemian life downtown. He rented a scruffy loft that had a bathtub in the kitchen. For a while, he and his roommates kept an illegal, wood-burning stove. He dated a dancer for four years who sometimes left him for other men and finally left him for another woman. Jon wanted to write about his experience. In 1991, he called Billy and asked if he could make Rent his own, and Billy agreed.

New York Theatre Workshop put on a reading of Rent in the spring of 1993. Some thought it was simply ragged, but others were in love with the material, no matter its flaws. A young producer named Jeffrey Seller, who had met Jonathan several years earlier, felt the time was right to produce a musical. He had stayed in touch with Jon, because he was convinced that one day, "Jon was going to write a brilliant musical." When Jeffrey first saw the show, he felt the play was baggy, a collage with no narrative shape. "There were great songs," Jeffrey remembers, "but there were endless songs." Jeffrey was still interested - as long as Jon found a story as compelling as the music.

Jon sent a letter to Stephen Sondheim, his mentor, asking for advice and assistance. The older composer responded by encouraging Jonathan to apply for a Richard Rodgers foundation grant. Jonathan eventually won \$45,000 to support a workshop production of Rent.

What they needed now was a director. Jim Nicola, artistic director of the New York Theatre Workshop, immediately suggested Michael Greif, a young New York director who had recently become artistic director of the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego. Greif listened to a tape of Rent on a Walkman flying from California to New York. The script seemed shaggy. "What impressed me," he remembers, "was its youth and enthusiasm, and that it was a musical about contemporary life. Jon was writing about some people I felt I knew, that I sort of loved, or had loved in my life." What Jim wanted in a director was a counterweight to Jon's eternally positive outlook, which had allowed him to treat dark subjects like AIDS, homelessness, and drug addiction with optimism. Michael was hard-nosed and cool-headed. He met with Jim and Jonathan in January of 1994, and the three set to work on bringing the script to the level of the music. "It was very fragile

material at the time," Jim recalls. "And it was so easy for it to become sentimental or hokey. I felt Michael had the right sort of dryness and sharpness to balance Jonathan's writing."

Jim saw that his instincts were right when the three got down to shaping the script in Jon's loft. They met for a week in the middle of the spring, preparing for the workshop scheduled for November. They went over the script scene by scene, moment by moment. Immediately, the dynamic between Jonathan and Michael slipped into a productive yin and yang. Michael was afraid there was something self-congratulatory about the young bohemian heroes of the show; so Jon toned down the lyrics of "La Vie Bohème." Michael fretted about the homeless characters - that they not simply serve as East Village window dressing, as moral scarecrows where Mark and Roger could drape their good social conscience; so Jonathan wrote the new song, "On the Street," where a homeless woman gives Mark a stern telling off. Most importantly, Michael had reservations about the message of the show, the "No Day But Today" cheerfulness of the life support meetings. Michael had friends with HIV, just as Jon did, and they were not cheerful about it. Jon added the scene of Gordon questioning the life support credo, saying he regretted his low T-cell count. And Jon himself kept Michael from becoming too hard-nosed and cool-headed. Anthony Rapp, who originated the role of Mark, remembers, "what Jon gave Michael was some of his hope and heart and generosity of spirit. And what I think Michael gave Jon was some edge and realism and complexity, and making sure things didn't all resolve nicely and prettily. It was a good marriage."

That summer, Michael and Jon talked plot. One large problem, they agreed was the relationship between Maureen and Mark; in these drafts, a major plot point was Mark winning Maureen back. Michael didn't like it. "My position was, if they're gonna be lesbians, let them be lesbians. Don't make them about going-back-to-their-man." In October, Michael worked out the "performance vocabulary" of Rent. For budgetary reasons - and also because it suited the nature of the characters - the NYTW decided to have minimal props. Michael suggested the three "Frankenstein" tables, which could be used to serve multiple functions in the show. He pushed for a multiracial cast. Because it was rock, Michael played around with microphones, with actors singing directly to the seats: "We were very anxious to take advantage of the fact that it would be as much a concert as it was a play."

For all of its flaws, the November workshop was a tremendous success. It ran two weeks with the audience growing larger and more enthusiastic each night; by the last week it was sold out. Anthony Rapp, remembers the excitement: "I kept telling people it was going to be an event. We knew it needed work. But people I trust and respect - friends and collaborators - would come down and be knocked out by it.

Jim Nicola thought it needed work, too. But the responses he was getting from his friends were just what Anthony was hearing. "There was a lot of passion - again, the most striking thing was the

intensity of opinion about it. There was a large segment of people whose tastes I trusted who just loved it, and didn't care what the problems were. I felt even more convinced that there was really something strong here." Jim found himself moving towards an exciting, scary, stirring decision: "Rent was the kind of show to bet the company on."

During the workshop's second week, Jeffrey Seller returned to East Fourth Street. This time, he brought his business partner, Kevin McCollum. Sitting down in the front row, seeing the three tables, remembering the plotless show he'd seen a year earlier, Jeffrey had time for a crisis of confidence. He turned to Kevin before the show and warned him, "this is either gonna be absolutely brilliant or it's going to be a mess." At intermission, Kevin nudged Jeffrey and said, "I'm loving this. Get out the checkbook."

A few nights later, they brought a business associate named Allan S. Gordon to the NYTW. The three had worked together previously on the national tour of "The Real Live Brady Bunch." Allan was equally enthusiastic - like Jeffrey and Kevin, he was overpowered by the music. That night, the three decided to join forces with New York Theater Workshop to bring the show to fruition.

After the holidays, Jim, Michael and Jonathan sat down again in Jim's office. Jim had thought it over, and talked to NYTW's board members. The Workshop decided to stage a full production of Rent the following year with the help of Seller, McCollum and Gordon, who would get the commercial rights in return. The budget would be \$250,000 - twice the cost of anything NYTW had ever mounted.

They spoke about what needed fixing. The show had no single story, no primary narrator - in the November workshop, all the characters told the story; when they had something to say, they turned around and said it right to the audience. And the characters themselves, especially Maureen and Joanne, needed refinement. Jim gave Jon a task: Could he boil the plot down to a single sentence? The sentences Jon first turned in were impossibly long, crammed full of clauses, parentheses and second thoughts. But as Jim anticipated, as the sentences came into focus, so did the play.

Jim decided to hire a dramaturg to work with Jonathan. Dramaturgs work with playwrights as critics, advisers and editors. Jon did a lot of interviews before meeting Lynn Thompson. Lynn seemed to be on Jon's wavelength, and they hit it off right away. She was able to speak in a voice that sparked Jon's enthusiasm. Jim put the two on a schedule; Jon would deliver a revised draft by summer's end. Rent was to begin rehearsals in the fall.

Jon had found another strong collaborator. Lynn suggested he work up biographies of the characters, that he write a version of Rent told through each person's eyes. Her belief was that once Jon understood the story completely, once he really had the characters under his belt, the rewriting of the play would come in a simple burst. They worked through the summer, discovering a structure for Rent.

By October Jon had a new draft; he was confident his six years of work were over. Actors read the script aloud to everyone. Jim and Michael were pleased with many of the changes, but they knew they weren't out of the woods. The characters were sharper, but Jon had done some structural fiddling, turning much of the show into flashback. The first act began with Angel's funeral and Mark wondering, "How did we get here?," with the rest of the story catching up from there. No one was comfortable with this except the playwright himself. The Maureen-Joanne relationship was finally working, but their second act duet was by all accounts miserable. "One of the worst songs ever written," Michael remembers with a laugh. "The song was a straight out cat fight, the lovers sniping at each other, Maureen telling Joanne, 'You're the hepatitis in my clam.'"

Jeffrey was also concerned. The show was supposed to go into rehearsals in six weeks and Rent didn't feel ready to him. "On the one hand, the new script made a huge, wonderful leap from the workshop - a gigantic creative stride - but it wasn't there yet. Now it's late October and we're in casting. And the show starts rehearsing in December." Jeffrey dashed off some quick, blunt notes on what he felt needed to be changed in Rent before the production could move ahead.

Jeffrey's notes were intended for Jim and Michael, but somehow Jon got a hold of them. What the notes called for was another rewrite. Jon didn't want to do

any more writing. "There was real terror the production wouldn't happen," Michael remembers. "It was a tense few days. Jon was very upset and very frustrated. But we all wanted this show to be as strong as it could be." Jon turned to Sondheim one last time, and Sondheim reminded him of a key proposition: theater is collaborative. Part of Jon's job was to take into account what his collaborators felt. So Jon signed on.

Michael wanted a simplified structure, with a clearer emotional division between the two acts: "The first act should be much more the celebration, and the second act should reflect the ramifications and sorrows surrounding these lives." Jon finally quit his job at the Moondance Diner. His friend Eddie Rosenstein remembers, "After he left the diner, and he announced that he was a full-time professional musical playwright, his spirits soared. That's all anybody wants to do in life, isn't it? A chance to do what they do." During Jon's rewrites the show moved into casting. Michael wanted a youthful, sexy cast. He and Jon leaned toward young performers who seemed to have some connection with their characters, whose spirit could add dimensions to the work. The cast seemed to invigorate Jon. "He was really inspired by this company," Michael says. "We still needed the Joanne-Maureen song. And Jon really wisely said, 'let me just sit with these actors, and let me bring you something.' And then what he brings me is 'Take Me or Leave Me,' and I'm totally thrilled out of my mind."

In December, with casting done and rehearsals about to begin, Jon handed in the final version of Rent. Jon had worked a succession of 20 hour days. "He had completely cleaned up the narrative,"

Jeffrey says, remembering everyone's excitement with the last creative step. And Jon finally delivered to Jim his one-sentence summary of what story Rent told: "Rent is about a community celebrating life, in the face of death and AIDS, at the turn of the century."

From December on, it was a quick sprint to the show you've seen. There were a lot of what Jon called "programming changes": shifting songs from one position to another, seeing where they fit best. In January, Jim watched a rehearsal with a group of NYTW board members, and the emotional response to RENT was extraordinary. "It continued to get even tighter and better through rehearsals," Daphne Rubin-Vega, the original Mimi, remembers. The New York Times got wind that a rock musical based on La Bohème was going to premiere on the 100th anniversary of the original La Bohème. No one had known this; it was a fluke. The night of the final dress rehearsal, Jon was sick with a sore chest and a fever. Still, he took a taxi to Fourth Street, watched the show, and sat for his interview with the Times. The last thing Michael and Jim remember saying to him was to take it easy and sleep well. Jon died an hour later.

After Jon's death, there were a few revisions. Lynn, Jim and Michael and musical director/arranger Tim Weil (who would take charge of the show's musical elements after Jonathan died) would meet and attempt to decide what changes Jonathan would have approved. When the show premiered, they knew they had something special on their hands. Jon's death added an explosive, powerful element to the cast's understanding of the play. "The company had already come together so well, but the event of Jon dying just brought us together that much more strongly," Daphne remembers. "It let us remember that the bottom line is really about what you do with this experience, because tomorrow isn't promised you. There was no more powerful way of receiving that message than from someone who was completely healthy and died. Someone whose life was just beginning"

The day of Jon's death, no one at the Workshop was quite sure what to do. The first performance was scheduled for that evening. Jim Nicola's first inclination was to cancel, but he knew they needed to do something for Jonathan's memory. The first act, in particular, involved a lot of tricky dancing and jumping on tables. It hadn't been completely rehearsed, and he was afraid there would be injuries. That evening, New York Theatre workshop was filled to capacity with people Jon had loved - friends, family and colleagues. Jim decided on a sing-through - no movement, just songs. Throughout the first act, the cast was able to hold their seats. But very slowly, they began to rise. They acted, they danced. "It was incredible and terrible," Anthony remembers. "It was like we had to do it. We were all sobbing and crying." The lighting people made their way to the lighting booth; the sound manager began to pick up his cues. "They couldn't contain themselves," Eddie remembers.

"The audience was reaching out to the cast. They were crying and cheering. By the second act, it was no longer contained. It was the

full show run full-out. If emotion could have become a physical force, the roof would have blown off, the weather would have changed." The second act ended. There was a huge ovation, the cast slowly left the stage, and the audience stayed in the theater. No one was sure what to do. The cast returned and sat down in the front row. Finally, a single voice called from the audience, "Thank you, Jonathan Larson," which brought the evening's loudest, final burst of applause.

Characters

In order of appearance

Roger Davis, a struggling musician who's HIV+. Roger hopes to write one last meaningful song before he dies.

Mark Cohen, a filmmaker and video artist, and Roger's roommate.

Tom Collins, an HIV+ computer genius who's back in New York after being away.

Benjamin Coffin III, landlord of Mark and Roger's building. Benny wants to start a multimedia studio.

Joanne Jefferson, a public interest lawyer, and Maureen's lover.

Angel Shunard, a transvestite street drummer also infected with HIV.

Mimi Marquez, a dancer with AIDS and a drug problem.

Maureen Johnson, a performance artist and Mark's ex-girlfriend.

Mark's mom, Roger's mom, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson, Mr. Grey, Alexi Darling, Steve, Paul, a Christmas caroler, a woman with bags, a pastor, man with squeegee, a cop, a waiter, and others.

LIBRETTO

Act I

Tune Up #1
Voice Mail #1
Tune Up #2
Rent
You Okay
Tune Up #3
One Song Glory
Light My Candle
Voice Mail #2
Today 4 U
You'll See
Tango: Maureen
Life Support
Out Tonight
Another Day
Will I?
On The Street
Santa Fe
I'll Cover You
We're Okay
Christmas Bells
Over the Moon
La Vie Boheme
I Should Tell You
La Vie Boheme B

Italic type indicates spoken lines.

(The audience enters in the theatre to discover a stage bare of curtains. At stage left looms a metal sculpture intended to represent: (a) a totem pole/Christmas tree that stands in an abandoned lot, (b) a wood burning stove with a snaky chimney that is at the center of MARK and ROGER's loft apartment, and (c) in Act II, a church steeple. On stage the five-musician band performs under a wooden platform surrounded by railing. The wooden platform has a staircase on the upstage side.

Downstage left is a black, waist-high rail fence. Once the audience is in the theatre, CREW and BAND MEMBERS move about informally onstage in preparation for Act I.

ROGER DAVIS, carrying an electric guitar, enters upstage left and crosses to a guitar amp sitting on a chair at center stage. He

casually plugs his guitar into the amp and adjusts levels, then crosses downstage and sits on the table.

After a few chords, the COMPANY, led by MARK COHEN, enters from all directions and fills the stage. MARK sets up a small tripod and a 16mm movie camera downstage center, aimed upstage. He addresses the audience.)

MARK

We begin on Christmas Eve with me, Mark, and my roommate, Roger. We live in an industrial loft on the corner of 11th street and Avenue B, the top floor of what was once a music publishing factory. Old rock 'n' roll posters hang on the walls. They have Roger's picture advertising gigs at CBGB's and the Pyramid Club. We have an illegal wood burning stove; its exhaust pipe crawls up to a skylight. All of our electrical appliances are plugged into one thick extension cord which snakes its way out a window. Outside, a small tent city has sprung up in the lot next to our building. Inside, we are freezing because we have no heat.

(MARK turns the camera to ROGER)

Smile!

TUNE UP #1

MARK

December 24th, Nine PM
Eastern Standard Time
From here on in

I shoot without a script
See if anything comes of it
Instead of my old shit
First shot – Roger
Tuning the Fender guitar
He hasn't played in a year

ROGER

This won't tune

MARK

So we hear

He's just coming back
From half a year of withdrawal

ROGER

Are you talking to me?

MARK

Not at all

Are you ready? Hold that focus – steady

Tell the folks at home what you're doing Roger ...

ROGER

I'm writing one great song --

MARK

The phone rings.

ROGER

Saved!

MARK *(to audience)*

We screen
Zoom in on the answering machine!
(An actor places a telephone on a chair and we see MARK'S MOM in a special light.)

VOICE MAIL #1

ROGER & MARK'S OUTGOING MESSAGE

"Speak" ... ("Beeep!")
MOM
That was a very loud beep
I don't even know if this is working
Mark -- Mark -- are you there
Are you screening your calls --
It's mom
We wanted to call and say we love you
And we'll miss you tomorrow
Cindy and the kids are here -- send their love
Oh, I hope you like the hot plate
Just don't leave it on, dear
When you leave the house
Oh, and Mark
We're sorry to hear that Maureen dumped you
I say c'est la vie
So let her be a lesbian...
There are other fishies in the sea
... Love Mom
(Lights fade on MOM and answering machine.)

TUNE UP #2

MARK
Tell the folks at home what you're doing Roger
ROGER
I'm writing one great song --
MARK (to audience)
The phone rings.
ROGER
Yesss!
MARK (to audience)
We screen.
ROGER & MARK'S ANSWERING MACHINE
"Speak" ... ("Beeep!")
(Lights fade up on the street: the front-door area of MARK and ROGER's building. Nearby is a battered public pay phone. TOM COLLINS stands at the phone.)
COLLINS
"Chestnuts roasting..."
ROGER & MARK

(as MARK picks up the phone)
Collins!
COLLINS
I'm downstairs
MARK
Hey!
COLLINS
Roger picked up the phone?
MARK
No, it's me.
COLLINS
Throw down the key.
(MARK pulls out a small leather pouch and drops it off the apron downstage center as if from a window; a weighted leather pouch plops down from "upstairs." COLLINS catches it.)
MARK
A wild night is now pre-ordained
(Two THUGS appear from above, with clubs. They are obviously close to attacking COLLINS, who says back into the phone...)
COLLINS
I may be detained.
(THUGS mime beating and kicking COLLINS, who falls to the ground as lights on him fade.)
MARK
What does he mean...?
(Phone rings again)
What do you mean "detained"?
(Lights come up on BENNY, who's on a cellular phone.)
BENNY
Ho ho ho.
MARK & ROGER
Benny! (Shit!)
BENNY
Dudes, I'm on my way
MARK & ROGER
Great! (Fuck!)
BENNY
I need the rent
MARK
What rent?
BENNY
This past year's rent which I let slide
MARK
Let slide? You said we were "golden"
ROGER
When you bought the building
MARK
When we were roommates
ROGER
Remember -- you lived here!?
BENNY
How could I forget?

You, me, Collins and Maureen
How is the drama queen?
MARK
She's performing tonight
BENNY
I know.
Still her production manager?
MARK
Two days ago I was bumped
BENNY
You still dating her?
MARK
Last month I was dumped
ROGER
She's in love
BENNY
She's got a new man?
MARK
Well -- no
BENNY
What's his name?
MARK & ROGER
Joanne
BENNY
Rent, my amigos, is due
Or I will have to evict you
Be there in a few
(ROGER defiantly picks out Musetta's theme from Puccini's La Boheme on the electric guitar. The fuse blows on the amp.)
MARK (to audience)
The power blows...

RENT

(The COMPANY bursts into a flurry of movement. Then everyone except MARK and ROGER freezes in a group upstage.)
MARK
How do you document real life
When real life is getting more
Like fiction each day
Headlines -- bread-lines
Blow my mind
And now this deadline
"Eviction -- or pay"
Rent!
ROGER
How do you write a song
When the chords sound wrong
Though they once sounded right and rare
When the notes are sour
Where is the power

You once had to ignite the air
MARK
And we're hungry and frozen
ROGER
Some life that we've chosen
MARK & ROGER
How we gonna pay
How we gonna pay
How we gonna pay
Last year's rent
MARK
We light candles
ROGER
How do you start a fire
When there's nothing to burn
And it feels like something's stuck in your flue
MARK
How can you generate heat
When you can't feel your feet
MARK & ROGER
And they're turning blue!
MARK
You light up a mean blaze
(ROGER grabs one of his own posters.)
ROGER
With posters --
(MARK grabs old manuscripts.)
MARK
And screenplays
ROGER & MARK
How we gonna pay
How we gonna pay
How we gonna pay
Last year's rent
(Lights go down on the loft and go up on JOANNE JEFFERSON, who's at the pay phone.)
JOANNE
Don't screen, Maureen
It's me -- Joanne
Your substitute production manager
Hey hey hey! (Did you eat?)
Don't change the subject Maureen
But darling -- you haven't eaten all day
You won't throw up
You won't throw up
The digital delay --
Didn't blow up (exactly)
There may have been one teeny tiny spark
You're not calling Mark
COLLINS
How do you stay on your feet
When on every street

It's 'trick or treat'
(And tonight it's 'trick')
'Welcome back to town'
Oh, I should lie down
Everything's brown
And uh -- oh
I feel sick
MARK *(At the window)*
Where is he?
COLLINS
Getting dizzy
(He collapses.)
MARK & ROGER
How we gonna pay
How we gonna pay
How we gonna pay
Last year's rent
(MARK and ROGER stoke the fire. Crosscut to BENNY's Range Rover.)
BENNY *(On cellular phone)*
Alison baby -- you sound sad
I don't believe those two after everything I've done
Ever since our wedding I'm dirt -- They'll see
I can help them all out in the long run
(Three locales: JOANNE at the pay phone, MARK and ROGER in their loft, and COLLINS on the ground. The following is sung simultaneously.)
BENNY
Forces are gathering
Forces are gathering
Can't turn away
Forces are gathering
COLLINS
Ughhhhh--
Ughhhhh--
Ughhhhh-- I can't think
Ughhhhh--
Ughhhhh--
Ughhhhh-- I need a drink
MARK *(reading from a script page)*
"The music ignites the night with passionate fire"
JOANNE
Maureen -- I'm not a theatre person
ROGER
"The narration crackles and pops with incendiary wit"
JOANNE
Could never be a theatre person
MARK
Zoom in as they burn the past to the ground
JOANNE *(realizing she's been cut off)*
Hello?
MARK & ROGER

And feel the heat of the future's glow
JOANNE
Hello?
(The phone rings in the loft. MARK picks it up.)
MARK *(On phone)*
Hello? Maureen?
Your equipment won't work?
Okay, all right, I'll go!
MARK & HALF THE COMPANY
How do you leave the past behind
When it keeps finding ways to get to your heart
It reaches way down deep and tears you inside out
Till you're torn apart
Rent!
ROGER & OTHER HALF OF COMPANY
How can you connect in an age
Where strangers, landlords, lovers
Your own blood cells betray
COMPANY
What binds the fabric together
When the raging, shifting winds of change
Keep ripping away
BENNY
Draw a line in the sand
And then make a stand
ROGER
Use your camera to spar
MARK
Use your guitar
COMPANY
When they act tough - you call their bluff
MARK & ROGER
We're not gonna pay
MARK & ROGER & HALF THE COMPANY
We're not gonna pay
MARK & ROGER & OTHER HALF OF COMPANY
We're not gonna pay
COMPANY
Last year's rent
This year's rent
Next year's rent
Rent rent rent rent rent
We're not gonna pay rent
ROGER & MARK
'Cause everything is rent

YOU OKAY HONEY? *(The street)*

(The street in front of the pay phone. A HOMELESS MAN appears above on the right. Across the stage, ANGEL DUMOTT

SCHUNARD is seated on the Christmas tree sculpture, with a plastic pickle tub balanced like a drum between his knees.)

A HOMELESS MAN

Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are ringing
Somewhere else!
Not here

(The HOMELESS MAN exits. ANGEL gets a good beat going on the tub, but is interrupted by a moan. He starts to drum again and sees COLLINS limp to downstage-left proscenium.)

ANGEL

You okay honey?

COLLINS

I'm afraid so

ANGEL

They get any money?

COLLINS

No, had none to get
But they purloined my coat
Well you missed a sleeve! -- thanks

ANGEL

Hell, it's Christmas Eve
I'm Angel

COLLINS

Angel? Indeed
An angel of the first degree
Friends call me Collins -- Tom Collins
Nice tree ...

ANGEL

Let's get a band-aid for your knee
I'll change, there's a "Life Support" meeting at nine-thirty
Yes -- this body provides a comfortable home
For the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

COLLINS

As does mine

ANGEL

We'll get along fine
Get you a coat, have a bite
Make a night -- I'm flush

COLLINS

My friends are waiting --

ANGEL

You're cute when you blush
The more the merry -- ho ho ho
And I do not take no
(ANGEL and COLLINS walk off stage right.)

TUNE UP #3 *(The loft)*

(Lights come up on loft.)

ROGER

Where are you going?

MARK

Maureen calls...

ROGER

You're such a sucker!

MARK

I don't suppose you'd like to see her show in the lot tonight?
(ROGER shrugs.)

Or come to dinner?

ROGER

Zoom in on my empty wallet.

MARK

Touche. Take your AZT.

(To audience) Close on Roger

His girlfriend April

Left a note saying "We've got AIDS"

Before slitting her wrists in the bathroom

I'll check up on you later. Change your mind. You have to get out of the house.

(He exits.)

ONE SONG GLORY

ROGER

I'm writing one great song before I...

One song

Glory

One song

Before I go

Glory

One song to leave behind

Find one song

One last refrain

Glory

From the pretty boy front man

Who wasted opportunity

One song

He had the world at his feet

Glory

In the eyes of a young girl

A young girl

Find glory

Beyond the cheap colored lights

One song

Before the sun sets

Glory -- on another empty life

Time flies -- time dies

Glory -- One blaze of glory

One blaze of glory -- glory

Find

Glory

In a song that rings true

Truth like a blazing fire

An eternal flame

Find

One song

A song about love

Glory

From the soul of a young man

A young man

Find

The one song

Before the virus takes hold

Glory

Like a sunset

One song

To redeem this empty life

Time flies

And then - no need to endure anymore

Time dies

(ROGER is interrupted by a sharp knock on the door. It is MIMI MARQUEZ, a beautiful stranger from downstairs.)

ROGER

The door.

(ROGER crosses to the door.)

LIGHT MY CANDLE

ROGER

What'd you forget?

(MIMI enters, holding a candle and looking for a match; her electricity is down, too.)

MIMI

Got a light?

ROGER

I know you? -- You're --

You're shivering

MIMI

It's nothing

They turned off my heat

And I'm just a little weak on my feet

Would you light my candle?

What are you staring at?

ROGER

Nothing

Your hair in the moonlight

You look familiar

(He lights her candle. MIMI starts to leave, but stumbles.)

Can you make it?

MIMI

Just haven't eaten much today

At least the room stopped spinning.
Anyway. What?

ROGER

Nothing
Your smile reminded me of –

MIMI

I always remind people of -- who is she?

ROGER

She died. Her name was April
(MIMI discreetly blows out the candle.)

MIMI

It's out again

Sorry about your friend

Would you light my candle?

(ROGER lights the candle. They linger, awkwardly.)

ROGER

Well –

MIMI

Yeah. Ow!

ROGER

Oh, the wax -- it's –

MIMI

Dripping! I like it -- between my –

ROGER

Fingers. I figured...

Oh, well. Goodnight.

*(MIMI exits. ROGER heads back toward his guitar on the table.
There is another knock, which he answers.)*

ROGER

It blew out again?

MIMI

No -- I think that I dropped my stash

ROGER

I know I've seen you out and about

When I used to go out

Your candle's out

MIMI

I'm illin' –

I had it when I walked in the door

It was pure –

Is it on the floor?

ROGER

The floor?

*(MIMI gets down on all fours and starts searching the floor for
her stash. She looks back at ROGER, who is staring at her again.)*

MIMI

They say I have the best ass below 14th street

Is it true?

ROGER

What?

MIMI

You're staring again.

ROGER

Oh no.

I mean you do -- have a nice –

I mean -- You look familiar

MIMI

Like your dead girlfriend?

ROGER

Only when you smile

But I'm sure I've seen you somewhere else –

MIMI

Do you go to the Cat Scratch Club?

That's where I work - I dance - help me look

ROGER

Yes!

They used to tie you up –

MIMI

It's a living

(MIMI douses the flame again.)

ROGER

I didn't recognize you

Without the handcuffs

MIMI

We could light the candle

Oh won't you light the candle?

(ROGER lights it again.)

ROGER

Why don't you forget that stuff

You look like you're sixteen

MIMI

I'm nineteen -- but I'm old for my age

I'm just born to be bad

ROGER

I once was born to be bad

I used to shiver like that

MIMI

I have no heat -- I told you

ROGER

I used to sweat

MIMI

I got a cold

ROGER

Uh huh

I used to be a junkie

MIMI

But now and then I like to –

ROGER

Uh huh

MIMI

Feel good

ROGER

Here it -- um –

(ROGER stoops and picks up a small object: MIMI's stash.)

MIMI

What's that?

ROGER

It's a candy bar wrapper

(ROGER puts it behind his back and into his pocket.)

MIMI

We could light the candle

(ROGER discreetly blows out the candle.)

What'd you do with my candle?

ROGER

That was my last match

MIMI

Our eyes'll adjust, thank God for the moon

ROGER

Maybe it's not the moon at all

I hear Spike Lee's shooting down the street

MIMI

Bah humbug ... Bah humbug

(MIMI places her hand under his, pretending to do it by accident.)

ROGER

Cold hands

MIMI

Yours too.

Big. Like my father's

You wanna dance?

ROGER

With you?

MIMI

No -- with my father

ROGER

I'm Roger

MIMI

They call me

They call me Mimi

*(They come extremely close to a kiss. MIMI reaches into his
pocket, nabs the stash, waves it in front of his face, and makes a
sexy exit.)*

VOICE MAIL #2

*(JOANNE's loft. In blackout another phone rings. We see
MAUREEN in silhouette.)*

MAUREEN

*Hi. You've reached Maureen and Joanne. Leave a message and
don't forget Over the Moon -- My performance, protesting the
eviction of the Homeless (and artists) from the Eleventh Street Lot.
Tonight at midnight in the lot between A and B. Party at Life Cafe
to follow. (Beep!)*

MR. JEFFERSON

Well, Joanne -- We're off

I tried you at the office

And they said you're stage managing or something
MRS. JEFFERSON
 Remind her that those unwed mothers in Harlem
 Need her legal help too
MR. JEFFERSON
 Call Daisy for our itinerary or Alfred at Pound Ridge
 Or Eileen at the state department in a pinch
 We'll be at the spa for new year's
 Unless the senator changes his mind
MRS. JEFFERSON
 The hearings
MR. JEFFERSON
 Oh yes – Kitten
 Mummy's confirmation hearing begins on the tenth
 We'll need you -- alone -- by the sixth
MRS. JEFFERSON
 Harold!
MR. JEFFERSON
 You hear that?
 It's three weeks away
 And she's already nervous
MRS. JEFFERSON
 I am not!
MR. JEFFERSON
 For Mummy's sake, Kitten
 No Doc Martens this time and wear a dress ...
 Oh, and Kitten -- have a merry
MRS. JEFFERSON
 And a bra!

TODAY 4 U *(The loft)* *(MARK and ROGER's loft.)*

MARK
*Enter Tom Collins, computer genius, teacher, vagabond anarchist,
 who ran naked through the Parthenon.
 (COLLINS carries ANGEL's pickle tub, now filled with
 provisions.)*
MARK & COLLINS
 Bustelo – Marlboro
 Banana by the bunch
 A box of Captain Crunch will taste so good
COLLINS
 And firewood
MARK
 Look -- it's Santa Claus
COLLINS
 Hold your applause
ROGER
 Oh hi
COLLINS

"Oh hi" after seven months?
ROGER
 Sorry
COLLINS
 This boy could use some Stoli
COLLINS, MARK & ROGER
 Oh holy night
ROGER
 You struck gold at MIT?
COLLINS
 They expelled me for my theory of Actual Reality
 Which I'll soon impart
 To the couch potatoes at New York University
 Still haven't left the house?
ROGER
 I was waiting for you, don't you know?
COLLINS
 Well, tonight's the night
 Come to the Life Cafe after Maureen's show
ROGER
 No flow
COLLINS
 Gentlemen, our benefactor on this Christmas Eve
 Whose charity is only matched by talent, I believe
 A new member of the Alphabet City avant-garde
 Angel Dumott Schunard!
*(ANGEL sashays in. He's gorgeously done up in Santa drag, with
 a fan of twenty-dollar bills in each hand.)*
ANGEL
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
COLLINS
 And you should hear her beat!
MARK
 You earned this on the street?
ANGEL
 It was my lucky day today on Avenue A
 When a lady in a limousine drove my way
 She said, "Dahling -- be a dear -- haven't slept in a year
 I need your help to make my neighbor's yappy dog disappear"
 "This Akita-Evita just won't shut up
 I believe if you play non-stop that pup
 Will breathe its very last high-strung breath
 I'm certain that cur will bark itself to death"
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 We agreed on a fee -- A thousand dollar guarantee
 Tax-free -- and a bonus if I trim her tree
 Now who could foretell that it would go so well
 But sure as I am here that dog is now in doggy hell
 After an hour -- Evita -- in all her glory
 On the window ledge of that 23rd story

Like Thelma & Louise did when they got the blues
 Swan dove into the courtyard of the Gracie Mews
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
(ANGEL does a fabulous drum and dance solo.)
 Then back to the street where I met my sweet
 Where he was moaning and groaning on the cold concrete
 The nurse took him home for some mercurochrome
 And I dressed his wounds and got him back on his feet
 Sing it!
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me
 Today for you -- tomorrow for me

YOU'LL SEE

(BENNY enters.)
BENNY
 Joy to the world—
 Hey, you bum -- yeah, you, move over
 Get your ass off that range rover
MARK
*That attitude toward the homeless is exactly what
 Maureen is protesting tonight.
 (to audience, holding camera up to BENNY)*
*Close up: Benjamin Coffin the third, our ex-roommate who
 married Alison Grey, of the Westport Greys -- then bought the
 building and the lot next door from his father-in-law in hopes of
 starting a cyber-studio.*
BENNY
 Maureen is protesting
 Losing her performance space
 Not my attitude
ROGER
 What happened to Benny
 What happened to his heart
 And the ideals he once pursued?
BENNY
 The owner of that lot next door
 Has a right to do with it as he pleases
COLLINS
 Happy birthday, Jesus!
BENNY
 The rent
MARK
 You're wasting your time
ROGER
 We're broke
MARK
 And you broke your word -- this is absurd

BENNY

There is one way you won't have to pay

ROGER

I knew it!

BENNY

Next door, the home of Cyberarts, you see

And now that the block is re-zoned

Our dream can become a reality

You'll see boys

You'll see boys

A state of the art, digital, virtual interactive studio

I'll forego your rent and on paper guarantee

That you can stay here for free

If you do me one small favor

MARK

What?

BENNY

Convince Maureen to cancel her protest

MARK

Why not just get an injunction or call the cops

BENNY

I did, and they're on stand by

But my investors would rather

I handle this quietly

ROGER

You can't quietly wipe out an entire tent city

Then watch 'It's a Wonderful Life' on TV!

BENNY

You want to produce films and write songs?

You need somewhere to do it!

It's what we used to dream about

Think twice before you pooh-pooh it

You'll see boys

You'll see boys

You'll see -- the beauty of a studio

That lets us do our work and get paid

With condos on the top

Whose rent keeps open our shop

Just stop the protest

And you'll have it made

You'll see -- or you'll pack

(BENNY exits.)

ANGEL

That boy could use some prozac

ROGER

Or heavy drugs

MARK

Or group hugs

COLLINS

Which reminds me --

We have a detour to make tonight

Anyone who wants to can come along

ANGEL

Life support's a group for people coping with life

You don't have to stay too long

MARK

First I've got a protest to save

ANGEL

Roger?

ROGER

I'm not much company you'll find

MARK

Behave!

ANGEL

He'll catch up later -- He's just got other things on his mind

You'll see boys

MARK & COLLINS

We'll see boys

ROGER

Let it be boys!

COLLINS

I like boys

ANGEL

Boys like me

ALL

We'll see.

TANGO: MAUREEN

(The lot. JOANNE is reexamining the cable connections for the umpteenth time.)

MARK

And so into the abyss

The lot. Where a small stage is partially set up.

JOANNE

(playing with some wires)

"Line in"...

I went to Harvard for this?

MARK

Close on Mark's nosedive.

JOANNE

"Line out"...

MARK

Will he get out of here alive...?

(JOANNE notices MARK approaching.)

JOANNE

Mark?

MARK

Hi.

JOANNE

I told her not to call you

MARK

That's Maureen

But can I help since I'm here

JOANNE

I hired an engineer ...

MARK

Great!

Well, nice to have met you

JOANNE

Wait!

She's three hours late

The samples won't delay

But the cable --

MARK

There's another way

Say something -- anything

JOANNE *(into the mike)*

Test -- one, two three...

MARK

Anything but that

JOANNE

This is weird

MARK

It's weird

JOANNE

Very weird

MARK

Fuckin' weird

JOANNE

I'm so mad

That I don't know what to do

Fighting with microphones

Freezing down to my bones

And to top it all off

I'm with you

MARK

Feel like going insane?

Got a fire in your brain?

And you're thinking of drinking gasoline?

JOANNE

As a matter of fact --

MARK

Honey, I know this act

It's called the 'Tango Maureen'

The Tango Maureen

It's a dark, dizzy merry-go-round

As she keeps you dangling

JOANNE

You're wrong

MARK

Your heart she is mangling

JOANNE

It's different with me

MARK

And you toss and you turn
'Cause her cold eyes can burn
Yet you yearn and you churn and rebound

JOANNE

I think I know what you mean

BOTH

The Tango Maureen

MARK

Has she ever pouted her lips

And called you 'Pookie'

JOANNE

Never

MARK

Have you ever doubted a kiss or two?

JOANNE

This is spooky

Did you swoon when she walked through the door?

MARK

Every time -- so be cautious

JOANNE

Did she moon over other boys --?

MARK

More than moon --

JOANNE

I'm getting nauseous

(They begin to dance, with MARK leading.)

MARK

Where'd you learn to tango?

JOANNE

With the French Ambassador's daughter in her dorm room at Miss Porter's. And you?

MARK

With Nanette Himmelfarb, the rabbi's daughter, at the Scarsdale Jewish Community Center.

(They switch, and JOANNE leads.)

MARK

It's hard to do this backwards.

JOANNE

You should try it in heels!

She cheated

MARK

She cheated

JOANNE

Maureen cheated

MARK

Fuckin' cheated

JOANNE

I'm defeated

I should give up right now

MARK

Gotta look on the bright side

With all of your might

JOANNE

I'd fall for her still anyhow

BOTH

When you're dancing her dance

You don't stand a chance

Her grip of romance

Make you fall

MARK

So you think, "Might as well"

JOANNE

"Dance a tango to hell"

BOTH

"At least I'll have tangoed at all"

The Tango Maureen

Gotta dance till your diva is through

You pretend to believe her

Cause in the end -- you can't leave her

But the end it will come

Still you have to play dumb

Till you're glum and you bum

And turn blue

MARK

Why do we love when she's mean?

JOANNE

And she can be so obscene

MARK

Try the mike

JOANNE

My Maureen *(reverb: een, een, een...)*

MARK

Patched

JOANNE

Thanks

MARK

You know -- I feel great now!

JOANNE

I feel lousy

(The pay phone rings. MARK hands it to JOANNE.)

Honey, we're... Pookie?

You never call me Pookie.

Forget it, we're patched.

(She hangs up, looks at MARK.)

BOTH

The Tango Maureen!

LIFE SUPPORT

(ANGEL and COLLINS attend an AIDS Life Support group. PAUL, the support leader, sits on the downstage railing above. GORDON, one of the members of the group, is standing downstage left, facing the audience. As the members enter, they

introduce themselves and form a semicircle. Note: The names of the support group members should change every night and should honor actual friends of the company who have died of AIDS.)

STEVE

Steve.

GORDON

Gordon.

ALI

Ali.

PAM

Pam.

SUE

Sue.

ANGEL

Hi, I'm Angel.

COLLINS

Tom. Collins.

PAUL

I'm Paul. Let's begin.

ALL

There's only us

There's only this ...

(MARK blusters in noisily.)

MARK

Sorry...excuse me...oops

PAUL

And you are?

MARK

Oh -- I'm not --

I'm just here to --

I don't have --

I'm here with --

Um -- Mark

Mark -- *I'm Mark*

Well -- this is quite an operation

PAUL

Sit down Mark

We'll continue the affirmation

ALL

Forget regret, or life is yours to miss

GORDON

Excuse me Paul -- I'm having a problem with this

This credo -- My T-cells are low --

I regret that news, okay?

PAUL

All right

But Gordon - How do you feel today?

GORDON

What do you mean?

PAUL

How do you feel today?

GORDON

Okay

PAUL

Is that all?

GORDON

Best I've felt all year

PAUL

Then why choose fear?

GORDON

I'm a New Yorker!

Fear's my life!

Look - I find some of what you teach suspect

Because I'm used to relying on intellect

But I try to open up to what I don't know

GORDON & ROGER (*who sings from his loft*)

Because reason says I should have died

Three years ago

ALL

No other road

No other way

No day but today

OUT TONIGHT (*Mimi's apartment*)

MIMI

What's the time?

Well it's gotta be close to midnight

My body's talking to me

It says, "Time for danger"

It says "I wanna commit a crime

Wanna be the cause of a fight

Wanna put on a tight skirt and flirt

With a stranger"

I've had a knack from way back

At breaking the rules once I learn the games

Get up - life's too quick

I know someplace sick

Where this chick'll dance in the flames

We don't need any money

I always get in for free

You can get in too

If you get in with me

Let's go out tonight

I have to go out tonight

You wanna play?

Let's run away

We won't be back before it's Christmas day

Take me out tonight (meow)

When I get a wink from the doorman

Do you know how lucky you'll be?

That you're on line with the feline of Avenue B

Let's go out tonight

I have to go out tonight

You wanna howl

Be my night owl?

Well take my hand we're gonna howl

Out tonight

In the evening I've got to roam

Can't sleep in the city of neon and chrome

Feels too damn much like home

When the Spanish babies cry

So let's find a bar

So dark we forget who we are

And all the scars from the

Nevers and maybes die

Let's go out tonight

Have to go out tonight

You're sweet

Wanna hit the street?

Wanna wail at the moon like a cat in heat?

Just take me out tonight

(MIMI makes her way to ROGER's door and ends the song in front of him.)

Please take me out tonight

Don't forsake me -- out tonight

I'll let you make me -- out tonight

Tonight -- tonight -- tonight

ANOTHER DAY

(The loft. MIMI plants a huge kiss on ROGER, who recoils.)

ROGER

Who do you think you are?

Barging in on me and my guitar

Little girl -- hey

The door is that way

You better go you know

The fire's out anyway

Take your powder -- take your candle

Your sweet whisper

I just can't handle

Well take your hair in the moonlight

Your brown eyes -- goodbye, goodnight

I should tell you I should tell you

I should tell you I should -- no!

Another time -- another place

Our temperature would climb

There'd be a long embrace

We'd do another dance

It'd be another play

Looking for romance?

Come back another day

Another day

MIMI

The heart may freeze or it can burn

The pain will ease if I can learn

There is no future

There is no past

I live this moment as my last

There's only us

There's only this

Forget regret

Or life is yours to miss

No other road

No other way

No day but today

ROGER

Excuse me if I'm off track

But if you're so wise

Then tell me -- why do you need smack?

Take your needle

Take your fancy prayer

And don't forget

Get the moonlight out of your hair

Long ago -- you might've lit up my heart

But the fire's dead -- ain't never ever gonna start

Another time -- another place

The words would only rhyme

We'd be in outer space

It'd be another song

We'd sing another way

You wanna prove me wrong?

Come back another day

Another day

MIMI

There's only yes

Only tonight

We must let go

To know what's right

No other course

No other way

No day but today

(Lights slowly fade up on the Life Support group.)

MIMI & OTHERS

I can't control

My destiny

I trust my soul

My only goal

Is just -- to be...

ROGER

Control your temper

She doesn't see

Who says that there's a soul?

Just let me be...

ALL

There's only now
There's only here
Give in to love
Or live in fear
No other path
No other way
No day but today...

ROGER

Who do you think you are?
Barging in on me and my guitar
Little girl, hey
The door is that way
The fire's out anyway

ALL

No day but today
No day but today
No day but today
No day but today

ROGER

Take your powder, take your candle
Take your brown eyes, your pretty smile, your silhouette
Another time, another place
Another rhyme, a warm embrace
Another dance, another way
Another chance, another day

ALL

No day but today
(MIMI and the Life Support group members exit. One person, STEVE, remains at stage right, above.)

WILL I?

(Various locations)

STEVE

Will I lose my dignity
Will someone care
Will I wake tomorrow
From this nightmare?

GROUP #1

Will I lose my dignity
Will someone care
Will I wake tomorrow
From this nightmare?

GROUP #2

Will I lose my dignity
Will someone care
Will I wake tomorrow
From this nightmare?

GROUP #3

Will I lose my dignity
Will someone care

Will I wake tomorrow
From this nightmare?
GROUP #4
Will I lose my dignity
Will someone care
Will I wake tomorrow
From this nightmare?

(ROGER puts on his jacket and exits the loft.)

ON THE STREET

THREE HOMELESS PEOPLE

Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are ringing –
Out of town
Santa Fe

SQUEEGEEMAN

Honest living, man!
(He recoils as though he's almost been run over by a car.)
Feliz Navidad!
(Three POLICE OFFICERS, in full riot gear, enter and approach sleeping BLANKET PERSON. The FIRST OFFICER pokes her with a nightstick.)

HOMELESS PERSON

Evening, officers
(Without answering, the FIRST OFFICER raises his nightstick again.)

MARK (pointing his camera)

Smile for Ted Koppel, Officer Martin!
(The FIRST OFFICER lowers his stick.)

HOMELESS PERSON

And a Merry Christmas to your family

POLICE OFFICERS

Right!
(The POLICE OFFICERS stride offstage. MARK continues to film BLANKET PERSON.)

BLANKET PERSON (To MARK)

Who the fuck do you think you are?
I don't need no goddamn help
From some bleeding heart cameraman
My life's not for you to
Make a name for yourself on!

ANGEL

Easy, sugar, easy
He was just trying to –

BLANKET PERSON

Just trying to use me to kill his guilt
It's not that kind of movie, honey
Let's go -- this lot is full of
Motherfucking artists

Hey artist
You gotta dollar?
I thought not
(BLANKET PERSON crosses to downstage left with another HOMELESS PERSON.)

SANTA FE

(The Street.)

ANGEL

New York City –

MARK

Uh huh

ANGEL

Center of the universe

COLLINS

Sing it girl –

ANGEL

Times are shitty

But I'm pretty sure they can't get worse

MARK

I hear you

ANGEL

It's a comfort to know

When you're singing the hit-the-road blues

That anywhere else you could possibly go

After New York would be a pleasure cruise

COLLINS

Now you're talking

Well, I'm thwarted by a metaphysic puzzle

And I'm sick of grading papers -- that I know

And I'm shouting in my sleep, I need a muzzle

All this misery pays no salary, so

Let's open up a restaurant in Santa Fe

Oh sunny Santa Fe would be nice

Let's open up a restaurant in Santa Fe

And leave this to the roaches and mice

COLLINS

Oh—oh

ALL

Oh—

ANGEL

You teach?

COLLINS

I teach -- Computer Age Philosophy

But my students would rather watch TV

ANGEL

America

ALL

America!

COLLINS

You're a sensitive aesthete
Brush the sauce onto the meat
You could make the menu sparkle with rhyme
You could drum a gentle drum
I could seat guests as they come
Chatting not about Heidegger, but wine!
COLLINS (*with HOMELESS PEOPLE in the shadows*)
Let's open up a restaurant in Santa Fe
Our labors would reap financial gains
ALL
Gains, gains, gains
COLLINS
We'll open up a restaurant in Santa Fe
And save from devastation our brains
HOMELESS
Save our brains
ALL
We'll pack up all our junk and fly so far away
Devote ourselves to projects that sell
We'll open up a restaurant in Santa Fe
Forget this cold Bohemian hell
Oh—
ALL
Oh—
COLLINS
Do you know the way to Santa Fe?
You know, tumbleweeds...prairie dogs...
Yeah

I'LL COVER YOU

MARK
I'll meet you at the show.
I'll try and convince Roger to go.
(*MARK exits*)
ANGEL
Alone at last.
COLLINS
He'll be back -- I guarantee.
ANGEL
I've been hearing violins all night.
COLLINS
Anything to do with me? Are we a thing?
ANGEL
Darling... we're everything!
Live in my house
I'll be your shelter
Just pay me back
With one thousand kisses
Be my lover -- I'll cover you
COLLINS

Open your door
I'll be your tenant
Don't got much baggage
To lay at your feet
But sweet kisses I've got to spare
I'll be there -- I'll cover you
BOTH
I think they meant it
When they said you can't buy love
Now I know you can rent it
A new lease you are, my love,
On life -- be my life
(*They do a short dance.*)
BOTH
Just slip me on
I'll be your tenant
Wherever -- whatever -- I'll be your coat
ANGEL
You'll be my king
And I'll be your castle
COLLINS
No you'll be my queen
And I'll be your moat
BOTH
I think they meant it
When they said you can't buy love
Now I know you can rent it
A new lease you are, my love,
On life -- all my life
I've longed to discover
Something as true as this is
COLLINS
So with a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you
ANGEL
If you're cold
And you're lonely
COLLINS
With a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you
ANGEL
You've got one nickel only
COLLINS
When you're worn out
and tired
ANGEL
With a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you
COLLINS
When your heart has expired
ANGEL
With a thousand sweet kisses

I'll cover you
BOTH
Oh lover I'll cover you
Oh lover I'll cover you

WE'RE OKAY

JOANNE
(*on cellular phone*)
Steve -- Joanne
The Murget case?
A dismissal!
Good work counselor
(*The pay phone rings. JOANNE answers it and begins a conversation with MAUREEN simultaneously juggling two other calls on her cellular phone.*)
We're okay
Honeybear -- wait!
I'm on the other phone
Yes, I have the cowbell
We're okay
(*into cellular phone*)
So tell them we'll sue
But a settlement will do
Sexual harassment -- and civil rights too
Steve, you're great
(*into pay phone*)
No you cut the paper plate
Didja cheat on Mark a lot would you say?
We're okay
Honey hold on...
(*into cellular phone*)
Steve, hold on...
(*JOANNE presses the call-waiting button on the cellular phone*)
Hello?
Dad -- yes
I beeped you
Maureen is coming to Mother's hearing
We're okay
(*into pay phone*)
Honeybear - what?
Newt's lesbian sister
I'll tell them
(*into cellular phone*)
You heard?
(*into pay phone*)
They heard
We're okay
(*into cellular phone*)
And to you dad

(JOANNE presses the call-waiting as she speaks into the pay phone)

Yes -- Jill is there?

(into cellular phone)

Steve gotta --

(into pay phone)

Jill with the short black hair?

The Calvin Klein model?

(into cellular phone)

Steve, gotta go!

(into pay phone)

The model who lives in Penthouse A?

We're

We're okay

I'm on my way

CHRISTMAS BELLS *(Various locations, St.*

Marks Place)

FIVE HOMELESS PEOPLE

Christmas bells are ringing

Christmas bells are ringing

Christmas bells are singing

On TV - at Saks

SQUEEGEEMAN

Honest living, honest living

Honest living, honest living

Honest living, honest living

ALL FIVE HOMELESS

Can't you spare a dime or two

Here but for the grace of God go you

You'll be merry

I'll be merry

Tho merry ain't in my vocabulary

No sleighbells

No Santa Claus

No yule log

No tinsel

No holly

No hearth

No

SOLOIST

Rudolph the red nosed reindeer

ALL FIVE

Rudolph the red nosed reindeer

No room at the Holiday Inn -- oh no

(A few flakes of snow begin to descend.)

And it's beginning to snow

(The stage suddenly explodes with life! The scene is St. Mark's Place on Christmas Eve -- an open-air bazaar of color, noise, movement.)

VENDORS

Hats, bats, shoes, booze

Mountain bikes, potpourri

Leather bags, girlie mags

Forty-fives, AZT

VENDOR #1

No one's buying

Feel like crying

ALL

No room at the Holiday Inn, oh no

And it's beginning to snow

(Lights up on one woman, who is showing off a collection of stolen coats to COLLINS and ANGEL.)

VENDOR #2

How about a fur --

In perfect shape

Owned by an MBA from uptown

I got a tweed

Broken in by a greedy

Broker who went broke

And then broke down

COLLINS

You don't have to do this

ANGEL

Hush your mouth, it's Christmas

COLLINS

I do not deserve you, Angel

COLLINS

Give—give

All you do

Is give

Give me some way to show

How much you've touched me so

ANGEL

Wait--what's on the floor?

Let's see some more...

No--no--no...

Kiss me -- it's beginning to snow

(Lights focus on MARK and ROGER on right above.)

MARK

... She said, "Would you light my candle"

And she put on a pout

And she wanted you

To take her out tonight?

ROGER

Right

MARK

She got you out!

ROGER

She was more than okay

But I pushed her away

It was bad -- I got mad

And I had to get her out of my sight

MARK

Wait, wait, wait -- you said she was sweet

ROGER

Let's go eat -- I'll just get fat

It's the one vice left when you're dead meat

(MIMI has entered looking furtively for THE MAN.)

There -- that's her

MARK

Maureen?

ROGER

Mimi!

MARK

Whoa!

ROGER

I should go.

BOTH

Hey -- it's beginning to snow

(The POLICE OFFICERS, in riot gear, enter above.)

POLICE OFFICERS

I'm dreaming of a white, right Christmas

(POLICE OFFICERS exit.)

MIMI & JUNKIES

Follow the man -- follow the man

With his pockets full of the jam

Follow the man -- follow the man

Help me out, daddy

If you can

Got any D man?

THE MAN

I'm cool

MIMI & JUNKIES

Got any C man?

THE MAN

I'm cool

MIMI & JUNKIES

Got any X?

Any smack?

Any horse?

Any jugie boogie boy?

Any blow?

(ROGER pulls MIMI aside.)

ROGER

Hey

MIMI

Hey

ROGER

I just want to say

I'm sorry for the way --

MIMI

Forget it

ROGER

I blew up
Can I make it up to you?
MIMI
How?
ROGER
Dinner party?
MIMI
That'll do
THE MAN
Hey lover boy -- cutie pie
You steal my client -- you die
ROGER
You didn't miss me -- you won't miss her
You'll never lack for customers
JUNKIES
I'm willin'
I'm illin'
I gotta get my sickness off
Gotta run, gotta ride
Gotta gun, gotta hide -- gotta go
THE MAN
And it's beginning to snow
BENNY
(entering, talking on his cellular phone)
Wish me luck, Alison
The protest is on
COAT VENDOR
L.L Bean
Geoffrey Beene
Burburrry zip out
Lining
JUNKIES
Got any C man?
Got any D man?
Got any B man?
Got any crack?
Got any X?
SQUEEGEEMAN
Honest living --
ROGER
Mark, this is Mimi --
MARK & MIMI
Hi
ROGER
She'll be dining -- with us
COAT VENDOR
Here's a new arrival
THE MAN
That is an ounce
VENDORS
Hats, dats, bats
COLLINS

That's my coat!
COAT VENDOR
We give discounts
MARK
I think we've met
ANGEL
Let's get a better one
COLLINS
It's a sham
MIMI
That's what he said
THE MAN
I said it's a gram!
COLLINS
But she's a thief!
ANGEL
But she brought us together
BENNY
Which investor is coming??
COLLINS
I'll take the leather
BENNY
Your father? -- damn!
(The following is sung simultaneously.)
HOMELESS & VENDORS
Christmas bells are swinging
Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are singing
In my dreams -- next year
Once you donate you can go
Celebrate in Tuckahoe
You'll feel cheery
I'll feel cheery
Tho' I don't really know that theory
No bathrobe
No steuben glass
No cappucino makers
No pearls, no diamonds
No 'Chestnuts roasting on an open fire'
Chestnuts roasting on an open fire
No room at the Holiday Inn, oh no --
POLICE OFFICERS
I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Jingle bells -- prison cells
Fa la la la -- fa la la la
You have the right to remain
Silent night holy night
Fall on your knees oh night divine
You'll do some time
Fa la la la la
Fa la la la la

JUNKIES
Got any C man?
Got any D man?
Got any B man?
Got any X? -- Crack?
I'm willin' -- I'm illin'
Gotta get my sickness off
C-D help me
Follow the man -- follow the man
Follow the man
Jugie boogie -- jugie boogie
Follow the man -- follow the man
Any crack any X any jugie boogie boy
Any blow any X any jugie boogie boy
Got any D man, got any C man
Got any crack -- any X -- any jugie boogie?
COAT VENDOR
Twenty-five
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
Twenty-five
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
No way
Twenty-four
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
Twenty-four
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
Not today
Twenty-three
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
Twenty-three
ANGEL
Fifteen
It's old
COAT VENDOR
Twenty-two
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
Twenty-one
ANGEL
Fifteen
COAT VENDOR

Seventeen
ANGEL
 Fifteen
COAT VENDOR
 Fifteen
ANGEL & COAT VENDOR
 Sold!
MARK & ROGER
 Let's
 Go to
 The lot -- Maureen's performing
MIMI
 Who's Maureen?
ROGER
 His ex
MARK
 But I am over her
ROGER
 Let's not hold hands yet
MIMI
 Is that a warning?
ALL THREE
 He/You/I
 Just
 Need(s)
 To take it slow
 I should tell you I should tell you
 I should tell you I should tell you
 I should tell you I ...
ALL
 And it's beginning to
 And it's beginning to
 And it's beginning to –
(Lights blackout and a blinding headlight comes through the door. As it reaches downstage, the lights come up and reveal MAUREEN.)
MAUREEN
Joanne, which way to the stage?
ALL
 Snow!!!
(Blackout.)

OVER THE MOON *(The Lot)*

MARK
Maureen's performance.
(MAUREEN stands in front of a microphone.)
MAUREEN
 Last night I had a dream. I found myself in a desert called Cyberland.
 It was hot. My canteen had sprung a leak and I was thirsty.

Out of the abyss walked a cow -- Elsie.
 I asked if she had anything to drink.
 She said, "I'm forbidden to produce milk.
 In Cyberland, we only drink Diet Coke."
(reverb: Coke, Coke, Coke)
 She said, "Only thing to do is jump over the moon"
 "They've closed everything real down...like barns, troughs,
 performance spaces...
 And replaced it all with lies and rules and virtual life.
(reverb: Life, Life, Life)
 But there is a way out..."
BACKUPS
 Leap of faith, leap of faith
 Leap of faith, leap of faith
MAUREEN
 Only thing to do is jump over the moon
 I gotta get out of here! It's like I'm being tied
 to the hood of a yellow rental truck, being packed
 in with fertilizer and fuel oil, pushed over a cliff
 by a suicidal Mickey Mouse! -- I've gotta find a way
BACKUPS
 Leap of faith, etc.
MAUREEN
 To jump over the moon
 Only thing to do is jump over the moon
MAUREEN
 Then a little bulldog entered. His name (we have learned) was Benny.
 And although he once had principles,
 he abandoned them to live as a lap dog to a wealthy daughter of
 the revolution.
 "That's bull," he said.
 "Ever since the cat took up the fiddle, that cow's been jumpy.
 And the dish and the spoon were evicted from the table -- and
 eloped...
 She's had trouble with that milk and the moon ever since.
 Maybe it's a female thing.
 'Cause who'd want to leave Cyberland anyway?...
 Walls ain't so bad.
 The dish and the spoon for instance.
 They were down on their luck - knocked on my doghouse door.
 I said, 'Not in my backyard, utensils! Go back to China!'
 "The only way out is up," Elsie whispered to me.
 "A leap of faith. Still thirsty?" she asked.
 Parched. "Have some milk."
 I lowered myself beneath her and held my mouth to her swollen
 udder
 And sucked the sweetest milk I'd ever tasted."
(MAUREEN makes a slurping, sucking sound.)
 "Climb on board," she said.
 And as a harvest moon rose over Cyberland,
 We reared back and sprang into a gallop.

Leaping out of orbit!
 I awoke singing
BACKUPS
 Leap of faith, etc.
MAUREEN
 Only thing to do
 Only thing to do is jump
 Only thing to do is jump over the moon
 Only thing to do is jump over the moon
 Over the moon -- over the
 Moooooooooo
 Moooooooooo
 Moooooooooo
 Moooooooooo
 Moo with me.
(MAUREEN encourages the audience to moo with her. She says, "C'mon, sir, moo with me," etc. The audience responds. When the "moos" reach a crescendo, she cuts them off with a big sweep of her arms.)
Thank you.
(Blackout.)

LA VIE BOHEME *(Life Cafe)*

(Downstage right, the PRINCIPALS have lined up and are waiting to be seated. A large table is situated down center. Down and to the right, BENNY and MR. GREY are seated at a smaller table. The RESTAURANT MAN tries to shoo our friends out.)
RESTAURANT MAN
 No please no
 Not tonight please no
 Mister -- can't you go –
 Not tonight -- can't have a scene
ROGER
 What?
RESTAURANT MAN
 Go, please go –
 You -- Hello, sir –
 I said no
 Important customer
MARK
 What am I -- just a blur?
RESTAURANT MAN
 You sit all night -- you never buy!
MARK
 That's a lie -- that's a lie
 I had a tea the other day
RESTAURANT MAN
 You couldn't pay
MARK
 Oh yeah

COLLINS

Benjamin Coffin the third -- here?

RESTAURANT MAN

Oh no!

ALL

Wine and beer!

MAUREEN

The enemy of Avenue A

We'll stay

(They sit.)

RESTAURANT MAN

Oy vey!

COLLINS

What brings the mogul in his own mind to the Life Cafe?

BENNY

I would like to propose a toast

To Maureen's noble try

It went well

MAUREEN

Go to hell

BENNY

Was the yuppie scum stomped

Not counting the homeless

How many tickets weren't comped

ROGER

Why did Muffy --

BENNY

Alison

ROGER

Miss the show?

BENNY

There was a death in the family

If you must know

ANGEL

Who died?

BENNY

Our Akita

BENNY, MARK, ANGEL, COLLINS

Evita

BENNY

Mimi -- I'm surprised

A bright and charming girl like you

Hangs out with these slackers

(Who don't adhere to deals)

They make fun -- yet I'm the one

Attempting to do some good

Or do you really want a neighborhood

Where people piss on your stoop every night?

Bohemia, Bohemia's

A fallacy in your head

This is Calcutta

Bohemia is dead

(The BOHEMIANS immediately begin to enact a mock funeral, with MARK delivering the "eulogy.")

MARK

Dearly beloved we gather here to say our goodbyes

COLLINS & ROGER

Dies irae -- dies illa

Kyrie eleison

Yitgadal v' yitkadash, etc.

MARK

Here she lies

No one knew her worth

The late great daughter of mother earth

On this night when we celebrate the birth

In that little town of Bethlehem

We raise our glass -- you bet your ass to --

(MAUREEN flashes hers.)

La vie Boheme

ALL

La vie Boheme

La vie Boheme

La vie Boheme

La vie Boheme

MARK

To days of inspiration

Playing hookie, making something out of nothing

The need to express --

To communicate,

To going against the grain,

Going insane

Going mad

To loving tension, no pension

To more than one dimension,

To starving for attention,

Hating convention, hating pretension

Not to mention of course,

Hating dear old mom and dad

To riding your bike,

Midday past the three piece suits

To fruits -- to no absolutes --

To Absolut -- to choice --

To the Village Voice --

To any passing fad

To being an us for once

Instead of a them

ALL

La vie Boheme

La vie Boheme

(JOANNE enters.)

MAUREEN

Is the equipment in a pyramid?

JOANNE

It is, Maureen

MAUREEN

The mixer doesn't have a case

Don't give me that face

(MAUREEN smacks JOANNE's ass as she exits. MR. GREY reacts.)

MR. GREY

Ahhem!

MAUREEN

Hey Mister -- she's my sister

RESTAURANT MAN

So that's five miso soup, four seaweed salad

Three soy burger dinner, two tofu dog platter

And one pasta with meatless balls

A BOY

Ugh

COLLINS

It tastes the same

MIMI

If you close your eyes

RESTAURANT MAN

And thirteen orders of fries

Is that it here?

ALL

Wine and beer!

MIMI & ANGEL

To hand-crafted beers made in local breweries

To yoga, to yogurt, to rice and beans and cheese

To leather, to dildos, to curry vindaloo

To huevos rancheros and Maya Angelou

MAUREEN & COLLINS

Emotion, devotion, to causing a commotion

Creation, vacation

MARK

Mucho masturbation

MAUREEN & COLLINS

Compassion, to fashion, to passion when it's new

COLLINS

To Sontag

ANGEL

To Sondheim

FOUR PEOPLE

To anything taboo

COLLINS & ROGER

Ginsberg, Dylan, Cunningham and Cage

COLLINS

Lenny Bruce

ROGER

Langston Hughes

MAUREEN

To the stage

PERSON #1

To Uta

PERSON #2

To Buddha

PERSON #3

Pablo Neruda, too

MARK & MIMI

Why Dorothy and Toto went over the rainbow

To blow off Auntie Em

ALL

La vie Boheme

(JOANNE returns.)

MAUREEN

And wipe the speakers off before you pack

JOANNE

Yes, Maureen

MAUREEN

Well -- hurry back

(MAUREEN and JOANNE kiss.)

MR. GREY

Sisters?

MAUREEN

We're close

(ANGEL jumps on top of COLLINS, who's on the table. They kiss.)

ANGEL, COLLINS, MAUREEN, MARK, MR. GREY

Brothers!

MARK, ANGEL, MIMI & THREE OTHERS

Bisexuals, trisexuals, homo sapiens,

Carcinogens, hallucinogens, men, Pee Wee Herman

German wine, turpentine, Gertrude Stein

Antonioni, Bertolucci, Kurosawa

Carmina Burana

ALL

To apathy, to entropy, to empathy, ecstasy

Vaclav Havel -- The Sex Pistols, 8BC,

To no shame -- never playing the Fame Game

COLLINS

To marijuana

ALL

To sodomy,

It's between God and me

To S & M

(MR. GREY walks out.)

BENNY

Waiter...Waiter...Waiter

ALL

La vie Boheme

COLLINS

In honor of the death of Bohemia an impromptu salon will commence immediately following dinner...

Mimi Marquez, clad only in bubble wrap, will perform her famous lawn chair-handcuff dance to the sounds of iced tea being stirred.

ROGER

Mark Cohen will preview his new documentary about his inability to hold an erection on high holy days.

(ROGER picks up an electric guitar and starts to tune it.)

MARK

Maureen Johnson, back from her spectacular one-night engagement at the eleventh street lot,

Will sing Native American tribal chants backwards through her vocoder,

While accompanying herself on the electric cello --

Which she has never studied.

(At this point, JOANNE has entered and seen MAUREEN playfully kiss MARK. JOANNE exits. BENNY pulls MIMI aside.)

BENNY

Your new boyfriend doesn't know about us?

MIMI

There's nothing to know

BENNY

Don't you think that we should discuss --

MIMI

It was three months ago

BENNY

He doesn't act like he's with you

MIMI

We're taking it slow

BENNY

Where is he now?

MIMI

He's right -- hmm

BENNY

Uh huh

MIMI

Where'd he go?

MARK

Roger will attempt to write a bittersweet, evocative song.

(ROGER picks up a guitar and plays Musetta's Theme.)

That doesn't remind us of "Musetta's Waltz"

COLLINS

Angel Dumott Schunard will now model the latest fall fashions from Paris while accompanying herself on the 10 gallon plastic pickle tub.

ANGEL

And Collins will recount his exploits as an anarchist -- including the successful reprogramming of the M.I.T. virtual reality equipment

To self-destruct, as it broadcast the words:

ALL

"Actual reality -- Act Up -- Fight AIDS"

BENNY

Check!

(BENNY exits. Lights on MIMI and ROGER.)

MIMI

Excuse me -- did I do something wrong?

I get invited -- then ignored -- all night long

ROGER

I've been trying -- I'm not lying

No one's perfect. I've got baggage

MIMI

Life's too short, babe, time is flying

I'm looking for baggage that goes with mine

ROGER

I should tell you --

MIMI

I've got baggage too

ROGER

I should tell you

BOTH

Baggage -- wine --

OTHERS

And beer!

(Several beepers sound. Each turns off his or her beeper.)

MIMI

AZT break

(MIMI, ROGER, ANGEL, and COLLINS take pills.)

ROGER

You?

MIMI

Me. You?

ROGER

Mimi

(They hold hands and stare into each other's eyes lovingly. The rest of the company freezes.)

I SHOULD TELL YOU

ROGER

I should tell you I'm disaster

I forget how to begin it

MIMI

Let's just make this part go faster

I have yet -- to be in it

I should tell you

ROGER

I should tell you

MIMI

I should tell you

ROGER

I should tell you

MIMI

I should tell I blew the candle out

Just to get back in

ROGER

I'd forgotten how to smile

Until your candle burned my skin

MIMI
I should tell you
ROGER
I should tell you
MIMI
I should tell you
BOTH
I should tell
Well, here we go
Now we –
MIMI
Oh no
ROGER
I know -- this something is
Here goes –
MIMI
Here goes
ROGER
Guess so
It's starting to
Who knows –
MIMI
Who knows
BOTH
Who knows where
Who goes there
Who knows
Here goes
Trusting desire -- starting to learn
Walking through fire without a burn
Clinging -- a shoulder, a leap begins
Stinging and older, asleep on pins
So here we go
Now we –
ROGER
Oh no
MIMI
I know
ROGER
Oh no
BOTH
Who knows where -- who goes there
Here goes -- here goes
Here goes -- here goes
Here goes -- here goes

LA VIE BOHEME B

(ROGER and MIMI exit. JOANNE reenters, obviously steamed.)

MAUREEN
Are we packed?

JOANNE
Yes and by next week
I want you to be
MAUREEN
Pookie?
JOANNE
And you should see
They've padlocked your building
And they're rioting on Avenue B
Benny called the cops
MAUREEN
That fuck!
JOANNE
They don't know what they're doing
The cops are sweeping the lot
But no one's leaving
They're just sitting there, mooing!
ALL
Yea!!!
(Pandemonium erupts in the restaurant.)
ALL
To dance!
A GIRL
No way to make a living, masochism, pain, perfection
Muscle spasms, chiropractors, short careers, eating disorders!
ALL
Film!
MARK
Adventure, tedium, no family, boring locations,
Dark rooms, perfect faces, egos, money, Hollywood and sleaze!
ALL
Music!
ANGEL
Food of love, emotion, mathematics, isolation,
Rhythm, feeling, power, harmony, and heavy competition!
ALL
Anarchy!
COLLINS & MAUREEN
Revolution, justice, screaming for solutions,
Forcing changes, risk, and danger
Making noise and making pleas!
ALL
To faggots, lezzies, dykes, cross dressers too
MAUREEN
To me
MARK
To me
COLLINS & ANGEL
To me
ALL
To you, and you and you, you and you
To people living with, living with, living with

Not dying from disease
Let he among us without sin
Be the first to condemn
La vie Boheme
La vie Boheme
La vie Boheme
MARK
Anyone out of the mainstream
Is anyone in the mainstream?
Anyone alive--with a sex drive
OTHERS
La vie boheme
La vie boheme
La vie boheme
MARK
Tear down the wall
Aren't we all?
The opposite of war isn't peace...
It's creation!
ALL
La vie Boheme
MARK
The riot continues. The Christmas tree goes up in flames. The snow dances. Oblivious, Mimi and Roger share a small, lovely kiss.
ALL
Viva la vie Boheme!

Act II

Seasons of Love
Happy New Year
Voice Mail #3
Happy New Year B
Take Me or Leave Me
Seasons of love B
Without You
Voice Mail #4
Contact
I'll Cover You (Reprise)
Halloween
Goodbye Love
What You Own
Voice Mail #5
Finale
Your Eyes
Finale B

Italic type indicates spoken lines.

(The COMPANY enters from all directions and forms a line across the apron of the stage.)

SEASONS OF LOVE

COMPANY

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand moments so dear
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
How do you measure -- measure a year?
In daylights -- In sunsets
In midnights -- In cups of coffee
In inches -- In miles
In laughter -- In strife
In -- Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
How do you measure a year in the life?
How about love?
How about love?
How about love?
Measure in love
Seasons of love
Seasons of love

SOLOIST #1

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand journeys to plan
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

How do you measure the life
Of a woman or a man?

SOLOIST #2

In truths that she learned
Or in times that he cried
In bridges he burned
Or the way that she died

ALL

It's time now - to sing out
Tho' the story never ends
Let's celebrate
Remember a year in the life of friends
Remember the love
Remember the love
Remember the love
Measure in love

SOLOIST #1

Measure, measure your life in love
Seasons of love
Seasons of love

HAPPY NEW YEAR

(New Year's Eve. The scene opens on the street outside the apartment. One table, lying on its end, serves as the door.)

MARK *(carrying mock door)*

Pan to the padlocked door. New Year's Rocking Eve. The breaking-back-into-the-building party...

(ROGER and MIMI try in vain to pry a padlock from the door. They appear to be happy.)

MIMI

How long 'til next year?

ROGER

Three and half minutes...

MIMI

I'm giving up my vices
I'm going back -- back to school
Eviction or not
This week's been so hot
That long as I've got you
I know I'll be cool
I couldn't crack the love code, dear
'Til you made the lock on my heart explode
It's gonna be a happy new year
A happy new year
(MARK enters the scene.)

MARK

Coast is clear
You're supposed to be working
That's for midnight
Where are they?

There isn't much time

MIMI

Maybe they're dressing
I mean what does one wear that's apropos
For a party -- that's also a crime
(MAUREEN enters wearing a skintight "cat burgular" suit and carrying a bag of potato chips.)

MAUREEN

Chips, anyone?

MARK

You can take the girl out of Hicksville
But you can't take the Hicksville out of the girl

MAUREEN

My riot got you on TV
I deserve a royalty

MIMI

Be nice you two
Or no god awful champagne
(MAUREEN takes out a cellular phone and dials.)

MAUREEN

Don't mind if I do
No luck?

ROGER

Bolted plywood, padlocked with a chain
A total dead end

MAUREEN

Just like my ex-girlfriend
(on cellular phone)
Honey...?

I know you're there ...

Please pick up the phone

Are you okay?

It's not funny

It's not fair

How can I atone?

Are you okay?

I lose control

But I can learn to behave

Give me one more chance

Let me be your slave

I'll kiss your Doc Martens

Let me kiss your Doc Martens

Your every wish I will obey

(JOANNE enters)

JOANNE

That might be okay

Down girl

Heel...stay

I did a bit of research

With my friends at legal aid

Technically, you're squatters

There's hope

But just in case
(JOANNE whips out...)
MARK & JOANNE
 Rope!
MARK *(pointing off)*
 We can hoist a line –
JOANNE
 To the fire escape –
MARK
 And tie off at...
MARK & JOANNE
 That bench!
MAUREEN
 I can't take them as chums
JOANNE
 Start hoisting...wench
(All three cross upstage and attempt to throw up the length of rope over a plank. ROGER and MIMI are laughing and holding each other.)
ROGER
 I think I should be laughing
 Yet I forget
 Forget how to begin
 I'm feeling something inside
 And yet I still can't decide
 If I should hide
 Or make a wide open grin
 Last week I wanted just to disappear
 My life was dust
 But now it just may be a happy new year
 A happy new year
(COLLINS enters with ANGEL. COLLINS, dressed in black and wearing sunglasses, carries a bottle of champagne. ANGEL wears a plastic dress and blonde wig: a small blowtorch is slung around his shoulder.)
COLLINS
 Bond -- James Bond
ANGEL
 And Pussy Galore -- in person
MIMI
 Pussy -- you came prepared
ANGEL
 I was a boy scout once
 And a brownie
 'Til some brat got scared
COLLINS *(to MIMI)*
 Aha! Moneypenny -- my martini!
MIMI
 Will bad champagne do?
ROGER
 That's shaken -- not stirred
COLLINS

Pussy -- the bolts
(COLLINS takes a swig of champagne as ANGEL grabs the blowtorch.)
ANGEL
 Just say the word!
(ANGEL turns on the blowtorch.)
MIMI
 Two minutes left to execute our plan
COLLINS
 Where's everyone else?
ROGER
 Playing Spiderman
MARK
 Ironic close up: tight
 On the phone machine's red light
 Once the Boho boys are gone
 The power mysteriously comes on

VOICE MAIL #3

(Lights up on MRS. COHEN, who's standing on a chair and holding up a phone.)
MRS. COHEN
 Mark, it's the wicked witch of the west
 Your mother
 Happy new year from Scarsdale
 We're all impressed that the riot footage
 Made the nightly news
 Even your father says Mazeltov
 Honey -- call him
 Love, Mom
(MRS. COHEN, stepping off the chair, passes the phone to ALEXI DARLING.)
ALEXI DARLING *(on the chair)*
 Mark Cohen
 Alexi Darling from Buzzline
MARK
Oh, that show's so sleazy.
ALEXI DARLING
 Your footage on the riots: A-one
 Feature segment -- network -- dealtime
 I'm sending you a contract
 Ker-ching ker-ching
 Marky give us a call 970-4301
 Or at home try 863-6754
 Or -- my cell phone at 919-763-0090
 Or -- you can e-mail me
 At Darling Alexi Newscom dot net
 Or -- you can page me at –
(Beeep!)

HAPPY NEW YEAR B

MAUREEN
 I think we need an agent!
MARK
 We?
JOANNE
 That's selling out
MARK
 But it's nice to dream
MAUREEN
 Yeah -- it's network TV
 And it's all thanks to me
MARK
 Somehow I think I smell
 The whiff of a scheme
JOANNE
 Me too
MAUREEN
 We can plan another protest
JOANNE
 We?!
MAUREEN
 This time you can shoot from the start... *(to MARK)*
 You'll direct *(to JOANNE)*
 Starring me!
(Lights shift back to downstairs.)
ALL
 5, 4, 3... Open sesame!!
(The door falls away, revealing MARK, JOANNE, and MAUREEN.)
 Happy new year
 Happy new year
 Happy new...
(BENNY enters.)
BENNY
 I see that you've beaten me to the punch
ROGER
 How did you know we'd be here?
BENNY
 I had a hunch
MARK
 You're not mad?
BENNY
 I'm here to end this war
 It's a shame you went and destroyed the door
MIMI
 Why all the sudden the big about face
BENNY
 The credit is yours
 You made a good case
ROGER

What case?

BENNY

Mimi came to see me
And she had much to say

MIMI

That's not how you put it at all yesterday

BENNY

I couldn't stop thinking about the whole mess
Mark -- you want to get this on film
(MARK picks up his camera.)

MARK

I guess

BENNY *(formally)*

I regret the unlucky circumstances
Of the past seven days

ROGER

Circumstance? You padlocked our door

BENNY

And it's with great pleasure
On behalf of CyberArts
That I hand you this key
(BENNY hands him the key.)

ANGEL

Golf claps
(They oblige.)

MARK

I have no juice in my battery

BENNY

Reshoot

ROGER

I see -- this is a photo opportunity

MAUREEN

The benevolent God
Ushers the poor artists back to their flat
Were you planning on taking down the barbed wire
From the lot, too?

ROGER

Anything but that!

BENNY

Clearing the lot was a safety concern
We break ground this month
But you can return

MAUREEN

That's why you're here with people you hate
Instead of with Muffy at Muffy's estate

BENNY

I'd honestly rather be with you tonight than in Westport --

ROGER

Spare us old sport, the soundbite

BENNY

Mimi -- since your was are so seductive

MIMI

You came on to me!

BENNY

Persuade him not to be so counterproductive

ROGER

Liar!

BENNY

Why not tell them what you wore to my place?

MIMI

I was on my way to work

BENNY

Black leather and lace!

My desk was a mess

I think I'm still sore

MIMI

Cause I kicked him and told him I wasn't his whore!

BENNY

Does your boyfriend know

Who your last boyfriend was?

ROGER

I'm not her boyfriend

I don't care what she does

ANGEL

People! Is this any way to start a new year?

Have compassion

Benny just lost his cat

BENNY

My dog -- but I appreciate that

ANGEL

My cat had a fall

And I went through hell

BENNY

It's like losing a --

How did you know that she fell?

COLLINS *(Hands BENNY a glass of champagne)*
Champagne?

BENNY

Don't mind if I do

To dogs!

ALL BUT BENNY

No, Benny -- to you!

ANGEL

Let's make a resolution

MIMI

I'll drink to that

COLLINS

Let's always stay friends

JOANNE

Tho' we may have our disputes

MAUREEN

This family tree's got deep roots

MARK

Friendship is thicker than blood

ROGER

That depends

MIMI

Depends on trust

ROGER

Depends on true devotion

JOANNE

Depends on love

MARK *(to ROGER)*

Depends on not denying emotion

ROGER

Perhaps

ALL

It's gonna be a happy new year

ROGER

I guess

ALL

It's gonna be a happy new year

ROGER

You're right

*(ANGEL brings ROGER and MIMI together. ANGEL and others
move away from MIMI and ROGER.)*

ANGEL

It's gonna be a happy new year

ROGER & MIMI

I'm sorry

ROGER

Coming?

MIMI

In a minute -- I'm fine -- go

(ROGER kisses MIMI and exits. THE MAN appears.)

THE MAN

Well, well, well. What have we here?
*(He walks over to MIMI and holds out a small plastic bag of white
powder.)*

It's gonna be a happy new year

There, there...etc.

(Fade out.)

TAKE ME OR LEAVE ME *(Any location
and Joanne's loft)*

MARK

*Valentine's Day...Pan across the empty lot. Roger's down at
Mimi's, where he's been for almost two months now -- although he
keeps talking about selling his guitar and heading out of town.
(Still jealous of Benny)... God knows where Collins and Angel
are...Could be that new Shanty Town near the river or a suite at
the Plaza...Maureen and Joanne are rehearsing...*

JOANNE

I said once more from the top!

MAUREEN

I said no!

MARK

*That is, if they're speaking this week... Me? I'm here. Nowhere.
(Lights up on the scene.)*

JOANNE

*And the line is "Cyber Arts and its corporate sponsor, Grey
Communications, would like to mitigate the Christmas Eve riots..."
What is so difficult...?*

MAUREEN

It just doesn't roll off my tongue. I like my version.

JOANNE

You -- dressed as a groundhog -- to protest the groundbreaking...

MAUREEN

It's a metaphor!

JOANNE

It's...less than brilliant.

MAUREEN

That's it, Miss Ivy League!

JOANNE

What?

MAUREEN

*Ever since New Year's, I haven't said boo. I let you direct, I didn't
pierce my nipples because it grossed you out. I didn't stay and
dance at the Clit Club that night, 'cause you wanted to go home...*

JOANNE

You were flirting with the woman in rubber!

MAUREEN

*That's what this is about? There will always be women in rubber
flirting with me! Give me a break.*

Every single day

I walk down the street

I hear people say,

"Baby's so sweet"

Ever since puberty

Everybody stares at me

Boys – girls

I can't can't help it baby

So be kind

Don't lose your mind

Just remember that I'm your baby

Take me for what I am

Who I was meant to be

And if you give a damn

Take me baby or leave me

Take me baby or leave me

A tiger in a cage

Can never see the sun

This diva needs her stage

Baby - let's have fun!

You are the one I choose

Folks'd kill to fill your shoes

You love the limelight too, baby

So be mine

Or don't waste my time

Cryin' -- "Honeybear -- are you still my baby?"

Take me for what I am

Who I was meant to be

And if you give a damn

Take me baby or leave me

No way -- can I be what I'm not

But hey -- don't you want your girl hot!

Don't fight -- don't lose your head

Cause every night -- who's in your bed?

Who's in your bed, baby?

(Pouts in JOANNE's direction)

Kiss, Pookie.

JOANNE

It won't work

I look before I leap

I love margins and discipline

I make lists in my sleep

Baby what's my sin?

Never quit -- I follow through

I hate mess -- but I love you

What to do

With my impromptu baby?

So be wise

This girl satisfies

You've got a prize

But don't compromise

You're one lucky baby

Take me for what I am

MAUREEN

A control freak

JOANNE

Who I was meant to be

MAUREEN

A snob -- yet overattentive

JOANNE

And if you give a damn

MAUREEN

A lovable, droll geek

JOANNE

Take me baby or leave me

MAUREEN

And anal retentive!

BOTH

That's it!

JOANNE

The straw that breaks my back

BOTH

I quit

JOANNE

Unless you take it back

BOTH

Women

MAUREEN

What is it about them?

BOTH

Can't live –

With them –

Or without them!

Take me for what I am

Who I was meant to be

And if you give a damn

Take me baby or leave me

Take me baby

Or leave me

Guess I'm leavin'

I'm gone!

(They both sit.)

SEASONS OF LOVE B

COMPANY

In diapers -- report cards

In spoke wheels -- in speeding tickets

In contracts – dollars

In funerals -- in births

In -- five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

How do you figure

A last year on earth?

Figure in love

Figure in love

Figure in love

Measure in love

Seasons of love

Seasons of love

WITHOUT YOU *(Mimi's Apartment)*

*(MIMI's apartment. Three beds appear downstage. One, a hospital
bed, is occupied by ANGEL. ROGER sits on another, JOANNE on
the third. MIMI approaches ROGER, and then appears to be in a
hurry.)*

ROGER

Where were you?

MIMI

I'm sorry. I'm late...

ROGER *(interrupting)*

*I know. You lost your keys. No, you went for a walk; you had to
help your mother. (As he picks up the guitar) And how's Benny?
I'm gonna work upstairs tonight.*

MIMI

Wait...
I should tell you
I should ...
Never mind...

ROGER

Happy spring
(ROGER exits. MIMI pulls out a just-purchased stash and angrily flings it across the room. As she sings the following, a stylized "musical beds" is choreographed around her; during the bridge of the song, COLLINS carries ANGEL from the hospital bed and ROGER takes his place. By the end of the song, MAUREEN and JOANNE are reunited, as are ROGER and MIMI. COLLINS and ANGEL have lain down together, where ANGEL dies.)

MIMI

Without you
The ground thaws
The rain falls
The grass grows
Without you
The seeds root
The flowers bloom
The children play
The stars gleam
The poets dream
The eagles fly
Without you
The earth turns
The sun burns
But I die
Without you
Without you
The breeze warms
The girl smiles
The cloud moves
Without you
The tides change
The boys run
The oceans crash
The crowds roar
The days soar
The babies cry
Without you
The moon glows
The river flows
But I die
Without you
ROGER
The world revives
MIMI
Colors renew
BOTH

But I know blue
Only blue
Lonely blue
Within me, blue
Without you

MIMI

Without you
The hand gropes
The ear hears
The pulse beats

ROGER

Without you
The eyes gaze
The legs walk
The lungs breathe

BOTH

The mind churns
The heart yearns
The tears dry
Without you
Life goes on
But I'm gone
Cause I die

ROGER

Without you

MIMI

Without you

ROGER

Without you

BOTH

Without you

VOICE MAIL #4 *(The loft. The phone rings...)***ROGER & MARK'S ANSWERING MACHINE**

"Speak" ... ("Beeep!")

ALEXI DARLING

Mark Cohen
Alexi Darling
Labor Day weekend
In East Hampton
On the beach
Just saw Alec Baldwin
Told him you say hi
Just kidding
We still need directors
You still need money
You know you need money
Pick up the phone
Don't be afraid of ker-ching ker-ching
Marky -- sell us your soul

Just kidding
We're waiting...

CONTACT *(Various fantasy bed locales)*

(The COMPANY forms two main groups. As the music begins, a group of dancers start a sensual life and death dance, while a group of actors gather around a table centerstage to speak words of passion which punctuate the dancing. Eventually, the actors converge on the table and cover themselves with a white sheet, while moving to the music.)

GROUP A (ROGER, MARK, JOANNE, BENNY)

Hot-hot-hot-sweat-sweat
Wet-wet-wet-red-heat
Hot-hot-hot-sweat-sweat
Wet-wet-wet-red-heat
Please don't stop please
Please don't stop stop
Stop stop stop don't
Please please please please
Hot-hot-hot-sweat-sweat
Wet-wet-wet-red-heat
Sticky-licky-trickle-tickle
Steamy-creamy-stroking-soaking

GROUP B (MIMI, COLLINS, MAUREEN, ANGEL)

Hot-hot-hot-sweat-sweat
Wet-wet-wet-red-heat

COLLINS

Touch!

MAUREEN

Taste!

MIMI

Deep!

COLLINS

Dark!

MAUREEN

Kiss!

COLLINS

Beg!

MIMI

Slap!

MIMI, MAUREEN & COLLINS

Fear!

COLLINS

Thick!

COLLINS, MIMI & MAUREEN

Red, red

Red, red

Red, red – please

MAUREEN

Harder

ANGEL

Faster
MAUREEN
Wetter
MIMI
Bastard
COLLINS
You whore
MAUREEN
You cannibal!
MIMI & ANGEL
More!
MAUREEN
You animal!
MAUREEN, COLLINS & MIMI
Fluid no fluid no contact yes
No contact
ALL
Fire fire burn--burn yes!
No latex rubber rubber
Fire latex rubber latex bumper
Lover bumper
(The music explodes into a fevered rhythmic heat as ANGEL is revealed in a lone spotlight, dancing wildly.)
ANGEL
Take me
Take me
Today for you
Tomorrow for me
Today me
Tomorrow you
Tomorrow you
Love
You
Love you
I love
You I love
You!
Take me
Take me
I love you
(The music dies as ANGEL vanishes.)
ROGER'S VOICE
Um
JOANNE'S VOICE
Wait
MIMI'S VOICE
Slipped
COLLINS' VOICE
Shit
JOANNE'S VOICE
Ow!
ROGER'S VOICE

Where'd it go?
MIMI'S VOICE
Safe
COLLINS' VOICE
Damn
MAUREEN'S VOICE
I think I missed
Don't get pissed
ALL
It was bad for me -- was it bad for you?
JOANNE
It's over
MAUREEN
It's over
ROGER
It's over
MIMI
It's over
COLLINS
It's over

I'LL COVER YOU (REPRISE) *(In a church. ANGEL's memorial.)*

MIMI
Angel was one of my closest friends. It's right that it's Halloween, because it was her favorite holiday. I knew we'd hit it off from the moment we met. That skin head was bothering her, and she said she was more of a man than he'd ever be, and more of a woman than he'd ever get...

MARK
...and then there was the time that he walked up to this group of tourists -- and they were petrified, because, A -- they were obviously lost, and B -- they had probably never spoken to a drag queen before in their lives...and he...she just offered to escort them out of Alphabet City, and then she let them take a picture with her, and then she said she'd help 'em find the Circle Line...

MAUREEN
...so much more original than any of us...you'd find an old table cloth on the street and make a dress...and next year, sure enough - they'd be mass producing them at the Gap! You always said how lucky you were that we were all friends -- but it was us, baby, who were the lucky ones.

COLLINS
Live in my house
I'll be your shelter
Just pay me back
With one thousand kisses
Be my lover
And I'll cover you
Open your door -- I'll be your tenant

Don't got much baggage to lay at your feet
But sweet kisses I've got to spare
I'll be there -- I'll cover you
I think they meant it
When they said you can't buy love
Now I know you can rent it
A new lease you were, my love, on life
All my life
I've longed to discover
Something as true
As this is
(The following is sung simultaneously.)
JOANNE & SOLOIST
So with a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you with a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you with a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you with a thousand sweet kisses
I'll cover you
COLLINS
If you're cold and you're lonely
You've got one nickel only
When you're worn out and tired
When your heart has expired

COMPANY
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred moments so dear
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred -- measure a year
Oh lover I'll cover you
Oh lover I'll cover you
COLLINS & COMPANY
Oh lover
I'll cover you
Oh lover
COLLINS
I'll cover you
COMPANY
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand seasons of love
COLLINS
I'll cover you

HALLOWEEN

(Outside of the church. MARK is speaking on the pay phone)
MARK
*Hi. It's Mark Cohen. Is Alexi there?...No, don't bother her. Just tell her I'm running a little late for our appointment...Yes, I'm still coming... Yes, I signed the contract... Thanks...
How did we get here?
How the hell...*

Pan left -- close on the steeple of the church
How did I get here?
How the hell...
Christmas
Christmas Eve -- last year
How could a night so frozen be so scalding hot?
How can a morning this mild be so raw?
Why are entire years strewn
On the cutting room floor of memory
When single frames from one magic night
Forever flicker in close-up
On the 3D Imax of my mind
That's poetic
That's pathetic
Why did Mimi knock on Roger's door
And Collins choose that phone booth
Back where Angel set up his drums
Why did Maureen's equipment break down
Why am I the witness
And when I capture it on film
Will it mean that it's the end
And I'm alone

GOODBYE LOVE

(The principals emerge from the church.)

MIMI *(to ROGER)*

It's true you sold your guitar and bought a car?

ROGER

It's true -- I'm leaving now for Santa Fe

It's true you're with this yuppie scum?

BENNY

You said you'd never speak to him again

MIMI

Not now

MAUREEN

Who said that you have any say

In who she says things to at all?

ROGER

Yeah!

JOANNE

Who said that you should

Stick your nose in other people's ...

MAUREEN

Who said I was talking to you?

JOANNE

We used to have this fight each night

MARK

Calm down

JOANNE

She'd never admit I existed

MARK

Everyone please

MIMI

He was the same way -- he was always

"Run away -- hit the road

Don't commit" -- you're full of shit

JOANNE

She's in denial

MIMI

He's in denial

JOANNE

Didn't give an inch

When I gave a mile

MARK

Come on

MIMI

I gave a mile

ROGER

Gave a mile to who?

MARK & BENNY

Come on guys chill!

MIMI & JOANNE

I'd be happy to die for a taste of what Angel had

Someone to live for -- unafraid to say I love you

ROGER

All your words are nice Mimi

But love's not a three way street

You'll never share real love

Until you love yourself -- I should know

COLLINS

You all said you'd be cool today

So please -- for my sake...

I can't believe he's gone

(to ROGER) I can't believe you're going

I can't believe this family must die

Angel helped us believe in love

I can't believe you disagree

ALL

I can't believe this is goodbye

(MAUREEN and JOANNE look at each other.)

MAUREEN

Pookie

JOANNE

Honeybear

MAUREEN

I missed you so much.

JOANNE

I missed you.

MAUREEN

I missed your smell.

JOANNE

I missed your mouth.

Your --

(JOANNE gives MAUREEN a firm kiss on the lips.)

MAUREEN

Ow!

JOANNE

What?

MAUREEN

Nothing, Pookie.

JOANNE

No, baby -- you said ow -- What?

MAUREEN

You bit my tongue.

JOANNE

No, I didn't.

MAUREEN

You did -- I'm bleeding.

JOANNE

No, it isn't.

MAUREEN

I think I should know...

JOANNE

Let me see --

MAUREEN

She doesn't believe me!

JOANNE

I was only trying to...

(They hug & exit. The PASTOR from the church emerges on the above.)

PASTOR

Thomas B. Collins?

COLLINS

Coming.

(The PASTOR exits above and COLLINS exits into the church. BENNY stands off to the side as MIMI approaches ROGER, who turns away. She hesitates before leaving with BENNY.)

MARK

I hear there are great restaurants out west

ROGER

Some of the best. How could she?

MARK

How could you let her go?

ROGER

You just don't know... How could we lose Angel?

MARK

Maybe you'll see why when you stop escaping your pain

At least now if you try -- Angel's death won't be in vain

ROGER

His death is in vain

(MIMI reappears up left, in the shadows. She overhears ROGER and MARK's conversation.)

MARK

Are you insane?

There so much to care about
 There's me -- there's Mimi
ROGER
 Mimi's got her baggage, too
MARK
 So do you
ROGER
 Who are you to tell me what I know, what to do
MARK
 A friend
ROGER
 But who, Mark, are you?
 "Mark has got his work"
 They say "Mark lives for his work"
 And "Mark's in love with his work"
 Mark hides in his work
MARK
 From what?
ROGER
 From facing your failure, facing your loneliness
 Facing the fact you live a lie
 Yes, you live a lie -- tell you why
 You're always preaching not to be numb
 When that's how you thrive
 You pretend to create and observe
 When you really detach from feeling alive
MARK
 Perhaps it's because I'm the one of us to survive
ROGER
 Poor baby
MARK
 Mimi still loves Roger
 Is Roger really jealous
 Or afraid that Mimi's weak
ROGER
 Mimi did look pale
MARK
 Mimi's gotten thin
 Mimi's running out of time
 Roger's running out the door
ROGER
 No more! Oh no!
 I've gotta go
MARK
*Hey, for somebody who's always been let down
 Who's heading out of town?*
ROGER
*For someone who longs for a community of his own,
 Who's with his camera, alone?
 (ROGER takes a step to go, then stops, turns.)
 I'll call
 I hate the fall*

(ROGER turns to go and sees MIMI.)
ROGER
 You heard?
MIMI
 Every word
 You don't want baggage without lifetime guarantees
 You don't want to watch me die
 I just came to say
 Goodbye, love
 Goodbye, love
 Came to say goodbye, love, goodbye
MIMI
 Just came to say
 Goodbye love
 Goodbye love
 Goodbye love
 Goodbye
ROGER
 Glory
 One blaze of
 Glory
 Have to find
(ROGER exits. BENNY returns. MIMI steps away.)
MIMI
 Please don't touch me
 Understand
 I'm scared
 I need to go away
MARK
 I know a place -- a clinic
BENNY
 A rehab?
MIMI
 Maybe -- could you?
BENNY
 I'll pay
MIMI
 Goodbye love
 Goodbye love
 Came to say goodbye, love, goodbye
 Just came to say
 Goodbye love
 Goodbye love
 Goodbye love
 Hello -- disease
*(MIMI runs away. After a moment, COLLINS quickly enters, with
 the PASTOR trailing behind him.)*
PASTOR
*Off the premises now
 We don't give handouts here!*
MARK
What happened to "Rest In Peace"?

PASTOR
Off the premises, queer!
COLLINS
*That's no way to send a boy to meet his maker!
 They had to know we couldn't pay the undertaker.*
BENNY
*Don't you worry 'bout him. Hey, I'll take care of it!
 (The PASTOR acknowledges BENNY and exits.)*
MARK
Must be nice to have money.
ALL THREE
No shit!
COLLINS
*I think it's only fair to tell you, you just paid for the funeral of the
 person who killed your dog.*
BENNY
*I know. I always hated that dog.
 Let's pay him off, and then get drunk.*
MARK
I can't, I have a meeting.
BENNY & COLLINS
*Punk! Let's go.
 (COLLINS and BENNY exit.)*

WHAT YOU OWN

MARK *(imagining)*
*"Hi. Mark Cohen here for Buzzline. Back to you, Alexi. Coming
 up next -- vampire welfare queens who are compulsive bowlers."
 Oh my God, what am I doing?*
 Don't breathe too deep
 Don't think all day
 Dive into work
 Drive the other way
 That drip of hurt
 That pint of shame
 Goes away
 Just play the game
 You're living in America
 At the end of the millennium
 You're living in America
 Leave your conscience at the tone
 And when you're living in America
 At the end of the millennium
 You're what you own
(Lights up on ROGER.)
ROGER
 The filmmaker cannot see
MARK
 And the songwriter cannot hear
ROGER

Yet I see Mimi everywhere
MARK
Angel's voice is in my ear
ROGER
Just tighten those shoulders
MARK
Just clench your jaw till you frown
ROGER
Just don't let go
BOTH
Or you may drown
You're living in America
At the end of the millennium
You're living in America
Where it's like the Twilight Zone
And when you're living in America
At the end of the millennium
You're what you own
So I own not a notion
I escape and ape content
I don't own emotion -- I rent
MARK
What was it about that night
ROGER
What was it about that night
BOTH
Connection -- in an isolating age
MARK
For once the shadows gave way to light
ROGER
For once the shadows gave way to light
BOTH
For once I didn't disengage
(MARK goes to the pay phone and dials.)
MARK
Angel -- I hear you -- I hear it
I see it -- I see it
My film!
ROGER
Mimi I see you -- I see it
I hear it -- I hear it
My song!
MARK *(on the phone)*
Alexi—Mark
Call me a hypocrite
I need to finish my own film
I quit!
ROGER
One song—glory
Mimi
Your eyes...
BOTH

Dying in America
At the end of the millennium
We're dying in America
To come into our own
And when you're dying in America
At the end of the millennium
You're not alone
I'm not alone
I'm not alone
(Blackout.)

VOICE MAIL #5 *(Various locations.)*

(In blackout, once again the phone rings.)

ROGER & MARK'S ANSWERING MACHINE

"Speak..." *(Beep!)*

ROGER'S MOTHER

Roger, this is your mother
Roger, honey, I don't get these postcards
"Moving to Santa Fe"
"Back in New York
Starting a rock band"

Roger, where are you? -- Please call
(The following is sung simultaneously)

MIMI'S MOTHER

Mimi, chica, donde estas?
Tu mama esta llamando
Donde estas Mimi -- Call

MR. JEFFERSON

Kitten -- wherever are you -- Call

MRS. COHEN

Mark -- are you there -- are you there
I don't know if he's there
We're all here wishing you were here too
Where are you Mark are you there are you where are you
Mark -- are you there -- are you there
I don't know if -- Please call your mother

FINALE *(The lot and the loft)*

ALL SEVEN HOMELESS

Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are ringing
Christmas bells are ringing
How time flies
When compassion dies
No stockings
No candy canes
No gingerbread
No safety net
No loose change

No change no
ONE HOMELESS MAN

Santy Claus is coming

ALL

Cause Santy Claus ain't coming

No room at the Holiday Inn -- again

Well, maybe next year

Or -- when

(Lights shift back to the loft. A small projector rests on a milk crate, which is on a dolly.)

MARK

December 24th, ten p.m. Eastern standard time

I can't believe a year went by so fast

Time to see what we have time to see

Turn the projector on

(A rough title credit, "Today 4 U: Proof Positive," appears, followed by a shot from last Christmas of ROGER tuning his guitar.)

MARK

First shot Roger

With the fender guitar he just got out of hock

When he sold the car

That took him away and back

ROGER

I found my song

MARK

He found his song

If he could just find Mimi

ROGER

I tried -- you know I tried

(MARK's image appears on-screen.)

MARK

Fade in on Mark

Who's still in the dark

ROGER

But he's got great footage

MARK

Which he's cut together

ROGER

To screen tonight

(BENNY's image appears on screen.)

MARK

In honor of Benny's wife

ROGER

Muffy

MARK

Alison

Pulling Benny out of the East Village location

(The projector blows a fuse. Blackout.)

ROGER

Then again, maybe we won't screen it tonight.

MARK

I wonder how Alison found out about Mimi?

ROGER

Maybe a little bird told her.

(COLLINS enters in the dark, with several twenty-dollar bills in each hand.)

COLLINS

Or an angel.

(Lights fade up.)

I had a little hunch that you could use a little flow

ROGER

Tutoring again?

COLLINS

Negative

MARK

Back at N.Y.U.?

COLLINS

No, no, no

I rewired the ATM at the food emporium

To provide an honorarium to anyone with the code

ROGER & MARK

The code –

Well...?

COLLINS

A-N-G-E-L

Yet Robin Hooding isn't the solution

The powers that be must be undermined where they dwell

In a small, exclusive gourmet institution

Where we overcharge the wealthy clientele

ALL THREE

Let's open up a restaurant in Santa Fe

With a private corner banquet in the back

COLLINS

We'll make it yet, we'll somehow get to Santa Fe

ROGER

But you'd miss New York before you could unpack

ALL

Ohh –

(MAUREEN and JOANNE enter, carrying MIMI.)

MAUREEN

Mark! Roger! Anyone -- help!

MARK

Maureen?

MAUREEN

It's Mimi -- I can't get her up the stairs

ROGER

No!

(They enter the loft.)

MAUREEN

She was huddled in the park in the dark

And she was freezing

And begged to come here

ROGER

Over here

Oh, God –

(They lay her down carefully on the table.)

MIMI

Got a light -- I know you -- you're shivering..

JOANNE

She's been living on the street

ROGER

We need some heat

MIMI

I'm shivering

MARK

We can buy some wood and something to eat

COLLINS

I'm afraid she needs more than heat

MIMI

I heard that

MAUREEN

Collins will call for a doctor, honey

MIMI

Don't waste your money on Mimi, me, me

COLLINS

Hello -- 911?

I'm on hold!

MIMI

Cold...cold... would you light my candle?

ROGER

Yes -- we'll -- oh God -- find a candle

MIMI

I should tell you

I should tell you

ROGER

I should tell you

I should tell you

MIMI

I should tell you

Benny wasn't any –

ROGER

Shhh -- I know

I should tell you why I left

It wasn't cause I didn't –

MIMI

I know

I should tell you

ROGER

I should tell you

MIMI *(whispering)*

I should tell you

I love you –

(MIMI fades)

ROGER

Who do you think you are?

Leaving me alone with my guitar

Hold on there's something you should hear

It isn't much but it took all year

(MIMI stirs and ROGER begins playing acoustic guitar at her bedside.)

YOUR EYES

ROGER

Your eyes

As we said our goodbyes

Can't get them out of my mind

And I find I can't hide

From your eyes

The ones that took me by surprise

The night you came into my life

Where there's moonlight I see your eyes

(Band takes over)

How'd I let you slip away

When I'm longing so to hold you

Now I'd die for one more day

'Cause there's something I should have told you

Yes there's something I should have told you

When I looked into your eyes

Why does distance make us wise?

You were the song all along

And before this song dies

I should tell you I should tell you

I have always loved you

You can see it in my eyes

(We hear Musetta's Theme, played correctly and passionately.

MIMI's head falls to the side and her arm drops limply off the edge of the table.)

Mimi!

FINALE B

(Suddenly, MIMI's hand twitches. Incredibly, she is still alive.)

MIMI

I jumped over the moon!

ROGER

What?

MIMI

A leap of moooooooooooooo –

JOANNE

She's back!

MIMI

I was in a tunnel. Heading for this warm, white light...

MAUREEN

Oh my God!

MIMI

And I swear Angel was there -- and she looked GOOD! And she said, "Turn around, girlfriend, and listen to that boy's song..."

COLLINS

She's drenched

MAUREEN

Her fever's breaking

MARK

There is no future -- there is no past

ROGER

Thank God this moment's not the last

MIMI & ROGER

There's only us

There's only this

Forget regret or life is yours to miss

ALL

No other road no other way

No day but today

(As the finale grows, the entire COMPANY makes its way on stage.)

WOMEN

I can't control

My destiny

I trust my soul

My only goal is just to be

MEN

Will I lose my dignity?

Will someone care?

Will I wake tomorrow

From this nightmare?

(MARK's film resumes, along with two more films projecting on the back wall, "Scenes from RENT...")

WOMEN

Without you

The hand gropes

The ear hears

The pulse beats

Life goes on

But I'm gone

'Cause I die

Without you

I die without you

I die without you

I die without you

MEN

There's only now

There's only here

Give in to love

Or live in fear

No other path

No other way

No day but today

No day but today

No day but today

No day but today

ALL

No day but today

THE END