

RENT ANNOTATED SCRIPT *by Aysha Zackria*

Playwright: Jonathan Larson

Pages: 118

Acts: 2

“Scenes”: 40

Estimated Run Time: 2 hours

Named Characters:

Mark Cohen

Tom Collins

Benjamin “Benny” Coffin II

Roger Davis

Angel Dumott Schunard

Mimi Márquez

Maureen Johnson

Joanne Jefferson

Locale: East Village, New York City

Genre: Rock Opera (Musical)

Time / Period: 1989-1990

Description: Rent is a rock opera about living and dying—in America, in New York City, in a queer community during the AIDS crisis, in fear, in poverty, and in love.

Act 1:

Intro

- industrial loft: a large, usually unpartitioned apartment or artist's studio originally a factory, warehouse, or other commercial or industrial space
- 11th street and Avenue B: an intersection in Alphabet City, a neighborhood in New York City where residential buildings suffered high levels of neglect due to landlord negligence. The city purchased many of these buildings, but was unable to maintain them due to a lack of funds. Despite this, the music and arts scene was present, particularly with gay dance halls and punk rock clubs that sprung up in the 1970s.
- CBGB: a New York City music club opened in 1973 by Hilly Kristal in Manhattan's East Village; an abbreviation for "Country, Blue Grass, and Blues"; known for hardcore punk
- The Pyramid Club: a nightclub in the East Village of Manhattan, New York City; helped define the East Village drag and gay scenes of the 1980s



1. Tune Up A

- Fender: a popular and reliable brand of guitar

1a. Voice Mail #1

- "screening calls": the process of evaluating a telephone call before deciding to answer it; listening to the message being recorded on an answering machine or voice mail before picking up
- "c'est la vie": "that's life" or "such is life" in French



2. Tune Up B

- pre-ordained: pre-determined, decided ahead of time
- detained: held back, unable to proceed
- amigos: “friends” in Spanish, pronounced ah-mee-goes

3. Rent

- bread-lines: lines that distributed food to the poor, primarily in the Great Depression
- eviction: action of removing someone, especially a tenant, from a property
- digital delay: an audio effect which records an input signal and plays it back after a specified period of time
- incendiary: designed to cause fires; tending to stir up conflict
- spar: make the motions of boxing without landing heavy blows, as a form of training



4. Christmas Bells #1

5. You Okay, Honey?

- *purloined*: stolen
- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): A disease that results from HIV; HIV destroys the body's immune system and AIDS describes the most advanced stage of HIV

6. Tune Up Reprise

- AZT: a drug used to delay development of AIDS; common side effects of AZT can include headache, nausea, and loss of appetite

7. One Song Glory

8. Light My Candle

- illin': foolish, crazy
- Cat Scratch Club: an imaginary strip club
- *junkie*: a drug addict
- Spike Lee: an American film director, producer, writer, and actor; wrote and directed *She's Gotta Have It* and *Do the Right Thing*

9. Voice Mail #2

- Life Cafe: a restaurant in Alphabet City open 1981-2011, Larson wrote a lot of RENT listening to patrons while sitting inside

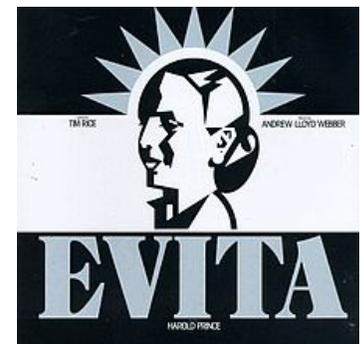


- Pound Ridge: a small town in Westchester County, New York; in 2000, the population was 96% white
- confirmation hearing: a hearing held by the US Senate to gather information on whether to approve or reject candidates for high federal office who are nominated by the president
- Doc Martens: an English footwear and clothing brand, known for its boots



10. Today For You

- *vagabond*: having no settled home
- *anarchist*: a person who believes in or tries to bring about a state of disorder due to absence or nonrecognition of authority
- Parthenon: a former temple on the Athenian Acropolis, Greece, dedicated to the goddess Athena, whom the people of Athens considered their patron
- Bustelo: an Cuban-inspired coffee brand, pronounced boo-steh-low
- Marlboro: the largest brand of American cigarettes
- Captain Crunch: corn and oat breakfast cereals
- Stolichnaya: a well-known Soviet brand of vodka made of wheat and rye grain
- MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology; a private research university; CMU's rival apparently
- *avante-garde*: new and unusual or experimental ideas, especially in the arts, or the people introducing them
- Akita: a large breed of dog originating from the mountainous regions of northern Japan
- Evita: the wife of Argentine President Juan Perón and First Lady of Argentina from 1946 to 1952; a musical with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics and book by Tim Rice
- *cur*: an aggressive dog or one that is in poor condition, especially a mongrel
- Thelma and Louise: a 1991 American female buddy road film turned murderous, directed by Ridley Scott and written by Callie Khouri



- *mercurochrome*: a trade name of merbromin, a topical antiseptic used for minor cuts and scrapes

11. You'll See

- Westport: a town in Fairfield County, Connecticut, United States; New Yorkers relocating from the city to the suburbs discovered Westport's culture of artists, musicians and authors in the 1970s
- injunction: an authoritative warning or order
- *pooh-pooh*: dismiss (an idea or suggestion) as being foolish or impractical
- Prozac: a synthetic compound which inhibits the uptake of serotonin in the brain and is taken to treat depression

12. Tango: Maureen

- Miss Porter's: a private college preparatory school for girls located in Farmington, Connecticut



13. Support Group

- *affirmation*: a statement of emotional support or encouragement
- credo: a statement of the beliefs or aims which guide someone's actions
- T-cells: formally known as CD4 cells, they play a central role in the immune response; people with AIDS have dangerously low numbers of T-cells

14. Out Tonight

15. Another Day

16. Will I?

17. On the Street

- Ted Koppel: a British-born American broadcast journalist, best known as the anchor for Nightline, from the program's inception in 1980 until 2005



18. Santa Fe

- *metaphysic*: the branch of philosophy that deals with abstract concepts such as being, knowing, substance, cause, identity, time, and space
- *aesthete*: a person who has or affects to have a special appreciation of art and beauty
- Heidegger: a German philosopher and a seminal thinker in existentialism

- *bohemian*: socially unconventional in an artistic way

19. I'll Cover You

20. We're Okay

21. Christmas Bells

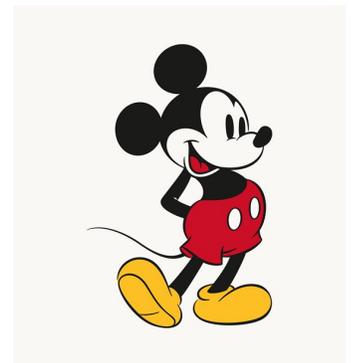
- yule log: a specially selected log burnt on a hearth as a Christmas tradition
- MBA: Master of Business Administration, a graduate-level degree that covers a wide range of business fields
- D, C, X, smack, horse, jugie boogie boy, blow: different slang words referring to heroin and crack cocaine



- Tuckahoe: a village in Westchester County, New York, United States

22. Over The Moon

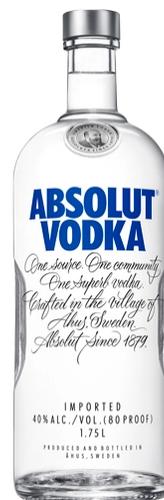
- canteen: a small water bottle, as used by soldiers or campers
- abyss: a deep or seemingly bottomless chasm
- Elsie: a cartoon cow developed as a mascot for the Borden Dairy Company in 1936 to symbolize the "perfect dairy product"
- trough: a long, narrow open container for animals to eat or drink out of
- Mickey Mouse: a cartoon character and the mascot of The Walt Disney Company, a symbol of capitalism



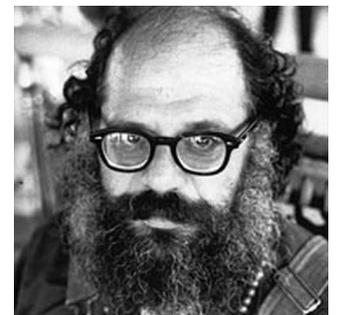
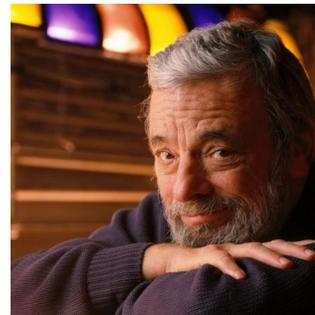
23a. La Vie Boheme

- Avenue A: the street on the border of East Village and Alphabet City, seen as a hip, bohemian part of town
- "oy vey": a Yiddish phrase expressing dismay or exasperation
- *yuppie*: a slang, derogatory term short for "young urban professional" or "young upwardly-mobile professional," considered arrogant and undeserving

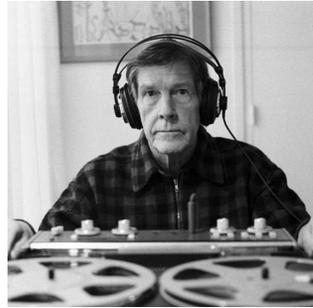
- *comp'ed*: given away for free
- *Muffy*: a slang, derogatory term for a stuck-up white woman, stereotypical WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant)
- “Our Akita” “Evita”: Angel killed Benny and Allison’s dog (see: Today For You)
- fallacy: an incorrect or mistaken belief, especially based on an unsound argument
- Calcutta: the capital of India’s West Bengal state; known for its drama, arts, and literature
- *eulogy*: a speech or piece of writing that praises someone or something highly, typically someone who has just died
- “Dies irae -- dies illa”: spoken Latin, translates to “day of wrath, that day”; pronounced dee-ehs ee-ray, dee-ehs ih-lah; from *Dies Irae*, a Catholic religious text about the end of the world
- “Kyrie eleison”: spoken Greek, translates to “Lord, have mercy”; pronounced kee-ree-eh eh-layz-on; from *Kyrie Eleison*, a Christian religious text
- “Yitgadal v' yitkadash”: spoken Hebrew, translates to “exalted and sanctified”; pronounced eet-gah-dal veet-kah-dah-sh; beginning of the *Mourner’s Kaddish*, a Jewish prayer said by those in mourning
- La vie Boheme: translates to The Bohemian Life; pronounced as lah vee boh-ehm
- playing hookie: to be absent without permission
- going against the grain: doing something unpopular or unexpected
- pension: a regular payment made to a retired person after they’ve contributed to the fund throughout their career
- Absolut: an expensive brand of vodka from Sweden
- Village Voice: a news and culture paper known for being the nation’s first alternative coverage



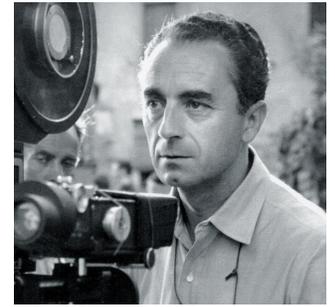
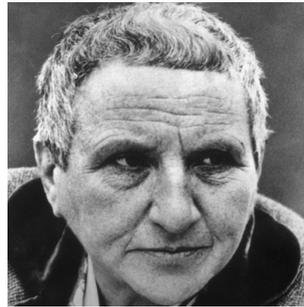
- curry vindaloo: a spicy, bright Indian curry dish; pronounced ker-ee vin-dah-loo
- huevos rancheros: translates to “ranch-style eggs,” originating from rural Mexico; hweh-vohs rahn-cheh-rohs
- Maya Angelou: a Black woman poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist (1928-2014), known for *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
- Sontag: referring to Susan Sontag, a bisexual woman writer, filmmaker, philosopher, teacher, and political activist (1933-2004), known for her essay *Notes on “Camp”*
- Sondheim: referring to Stephen Sondheim, a Jewish-American composer praised for having “reinvented the American musical,” including works: *Company*, *Follies*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Into the Woods* (1930-2021)
- Ginsberg: referring to Allen Ginsberg, a Jewish-American poet and writer who opposed war, materialism, and sexual repression; he was an icon of counterculture with his views on drugs, sex, multiculturalism, hostility to bureaucracy, and openness to Eastern religions (1926-1997)
- Dylan: referring to Bob Dylan, an American singer-songwriter, author and visual artist who is often regarded as one of the greatest song-writers of all time; known for *Knockin’ On Heaven’s Door* and *Like a Rolling Stone* (1941–)
- Cunningham: referring to Merce Cunningham, an American dancer and choreographer who was at the forefront of American modern dance for more than 50 years (1919-2009)



- Cage: referring to John Cage, an American composer and music theorist, a pioneer of indeterminacy in music, electroacoustic music, and non-standard use of musical instruments; known for 4'33" 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence (1912-1992)
- Lenny Bruce: an American stand-up comedian, social critic, and satirist known for his commentary on politics, religion, sex, and vulgarity (1925-1966)
- Langston Hughes: an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist; one of the earliest innovators of the literary art form called jazz poetry, and known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance (1901-1967)
- Uta: referring to Uta Hagen, a German-American actress and theatre practitioner; known for her teachings about actor technique (1919-2004)
- Buddha: a religious leader and teacher who lived in ancient India, primarily known for developing the process of enlightenment
- Pablo Neruda: a Chilean Communist poet-diplomat and politician who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971 (1904-1973)
- “Dorothy and Toto went over the rainbow to blow off Auntie Em”: a reference to *The Wizard of Oz*, blow off means ignore
- Carcinogens: an agent with the capacity to cause cancer in humans
- Pee Wee Herman: a comic fictional character created and portrayed by American comedian Paul Reubens, best known for his films and television series during the 1980s



- turpentine: a fluid obtained by the distillation of resin harvested from living trees, used for soap, cosmetics, and paint solvent
- Gertrude Stein: an Jewish-American novelist, poet, playwright, and art collector (born in Pittsburgh!) (1874-1946)
- Antonioni: referring to Michelangelo Antonioni, an Italian film director, screenwriter, editor, and painter best known for his "trilogy on modernity and its discontents" (1912-2007)
- Bertolucci: referring to Bernardo Bertolucci, an Italian film director and screenwriter with a career that spanned 50 years; considered one of the great filmmakers of the Italian cinema, known for *The Last Emperor* (1941-2018)
- Kurosawa: referring to Akira Kurosawa, a highly influential Japanese filmmaker and painter (1910-1998)
- Carmina Burana: translates to "Song of Beuren," originally a medieval collection of twenty-four poems, but mostly notably a vocal composition by Carl Orff (1935); the most iconic section of this cantata is *O Fortuna*
- entropy: gradual decline into disorder or randomness in a system (and a convenience store)
- Vaclav Havel: a Czech statesman, playwright, and former dissident, who served as the last president of Czechoslovakia and then the first president of the Czech Republic, democratically elected both times (1936-2011)
- The Sex Pistols: an English punk rock band that formed in London in 1975; seen as one of the most groundbreaking acts in the history of music for their anarchism, aesthetic, and "God Save the Queen" iconography



- 8BC: a nightclub, experimental performance space, and art gallery in the East Village, open from 1983 to 1985
- sodomy: anal or oral sex
- S&M: short for sadomasochism, the enjoyment of inflicting or receiving pain
- impromptu: done without being planned, organized, or rehearsed
- vocoder: a synthesizer that produces sounds from an analysis of speech input
- “Musetta’s Waltz”: a soprano aria from Puccini’s La Boheme (the opera that RENT is based off of)
- “Actual reality – Act Up – Fight AIDS”: ACT UP is a grassroots political group working to end the AIDS epidemic, the phrase “Actual Reality” was added as a reference to Collins’s work

23b. I Should Tell You

23c. La Vie Boheme B

- masochism: the tendency to derive pleasure, especially sexual gratification, from one’s own pain or humiliation. Also see S&M definition (La Vie Boheme)
- chiropractors: a practitioner of chiropractic, a system of medicine treating the misalignments of the joints
- “faggots, lezzies, dykes, cross dressers”: slang and slurs for different queer identities.. too big of a conversation to slap in an annotated script

Act 2:

24. Seasons of Love

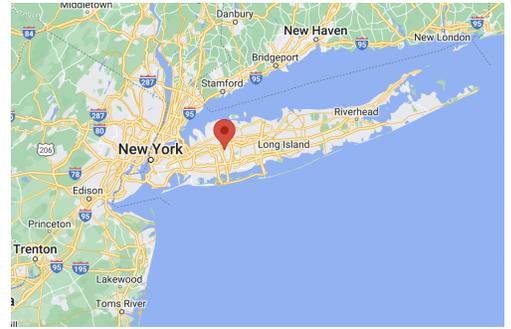
- strife: angry or bitter disagreement over fundamental issues; conflict

25. Happy New Year A

- apropos: very appropriate to a particular situation
- Hicksville: a town on Long Island, New York which began as a small farming community
- squatter: a person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land
- James Bond: A fictional character and franchise revolving around a British Secret Service officer. He is also known as 007. The films are also noted for Bond's relationship with various women, popularly referred to as 'Bond girls'.
- Pussy Galore: A fictional character within the James Bond franchise and one of the most known 'Bond girls'. She is the only woman in the US known to be running an organized crime gang, which has evolved into an all-lesbian organization.
- Moneypenney: Miss Moneypenney is the secretary to M, James Bond's superior officer and head of British Intelligence Service (MI6). While she has some relationship with Bond, because that relationship is within the professional realm, she is not always considered to be a Bond girl.
- the Boho boys: short for "bohemian boys"

26. Voice Mail #3

- "the wicked witch of the west": the primary antagonist in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
- Scarsdale: a town and village in Westchester County, New York; known for being majority upper class white people
- Mazel Tov: a Jewish phrase used to express congratulations, literally translates to "good luck"



27. Voice Mail #4

- sleazy: corrupt or immoral

28. Happy New Year B

- network TV: traditional TV networks (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, PBS, etc.) that broadcast over the air without charge
- golf claps: an instance of deliberately restrained clapping by an audience, of a type considered appropriate during a golf tournament but expressing a lack of approval or appreciation in other contexts
- benevolent: well meaning and kindly
- old sport: a term of endearment used for a friend with the subtext of “old money,” often known for its use in *The Great Gatsby*
- soundbite: a short extract from a recorded interview, chosen for its pungency or appropriateness



29. Valentine's Day Crossover

- Shanty Town: derives from Scottish Gaelic; "sean" meaning 'old' and "taigh" meaning 'house[hold]'; improvised shelter on squatted land
- Grey Communications: a television broadcast company, the nation's second largest television broadcaster
- groundhog: a mammal known for intricate architectural burrows, which they spend most of their lives in.
- Ivy League: an American collegiate athletic conference comprising eight private research universities in the Northeastern United States. Used beyond the sports context to refer the schools as a group of elite colleges (academic excellence, selectivity in admissions, social elitism)
- Clit Club: the boldly named lesbian party and popular 1990s venue that lasted from 1990 until 2002, with a sense of sexual freedom and diversity not necessarily present at bars in previous years and even at the time.



30. Take Me or Leave Me

- limelight: spotlight; the center of public attention
- droll: curious or unusual in a way that provokes dry amusement.



31. Seasons of Love B

- spoked wheels: A wheel with spokes and steel rim

32. Without You

33. Voice Mail #5

- East Hampton: A village in Suffolk County, in Long Island, New York; known to be a wealthy area
- Alec Baldwin: a famous American actor (1958-); starred in *Dress Gray*, starred as a sergeant who tries to solve the mystery of a murdered gay classmate in 1986; extremely popular for his starring roles in *Beetlejuice* and *Working Girl* in 1988



34. Contact

35. I'll Cover You (Reprise)

- skinhead: a member of a neo-nazi subculture that originated in Britain in the 70s/80s (note: the subculture of “skinheads” dates back further, but the modern image of aggressive, shaved, neo-Nazis [comes from this era](#))
- Circle Line: referring to Circle Line Sightseeing Cruises, a boat-based sightseeing and entertainment company based in Manhattan, New York
- The Gap: an American worldwide clothing and accessories retailer



36. Halloween

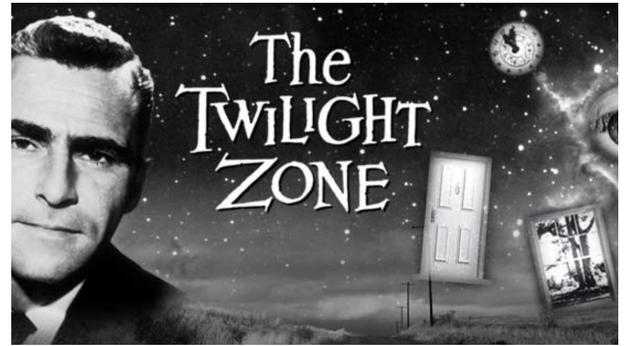
- Imax: a high-resolution screen display of seventy mm film format, whereas Standard is a regular resolution audio-visual quality with the film format of thirty-five mm



37. Goodbye Love

38. What You Own

- Twilight Zone: A sci-fi anthology TV series from the 60s that explored dystopian fiction, with each episode ending with some kind of moral “twist”; comparable to Black Mirror



39. Voice Mail #6

- “Mimi, chica, donde estas? / Tu mama esta llamando / Donde estas Mimi”: Spanish, translates to “Mimi, my daughter, where are you? Your mom is calling. Where are you Mimi?”

40. Finale

- Holiday Inn: an American chain of hotels based in Atlanta
- “a little bird told her”: used to say that the speaker knows something but prefers to keep the identity of the informant a secret
- “had a little hunch”: had a gut feeling
- honorarium: a payment given for professional services
- clientele: a body of clients or customers
- Robin Hood: legendary heroic outlaw originally depicted in English folklore; known for shooting arrows, stealing from the rich, and giving to the poor
- banquette: an upholstered bench along a wall, especially in a restaurant or bar



41. Your Eyes

42. Finale B

