



- About Us -

Edinburgh University Savoy Opera Group was formed in 1962 by Edinburgh University students to promote and perform the operettas of William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. Since its inception EUSOG has expanded beyond this original aim and enchanted Edinburgh audiences with innovative performances of Savoy Opera and musicals alike. This year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe sees the society enthusiastically preserving its reputation for diversity as we present Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* and Jonathan Larson's *Rent*.

Savoy's continuing aim is to produce high quality performances for the benefit and enjoyment of our members and audiences, and so we are delighted to add Simon Burrow and Nina Logue to our list of young and gifted Directors. Their shared vision for the highly celebrated musical *Rent* is powerful and dynamic and their dedication and passion utterly infectious; qualities that are clearly reflected in the production. The cast, too, demonstrate a remarkable magnetism and competence, ensuring that we are unquestionably "proud to present" *Rent* for the Festival Fringe 2009.

Despite the fact that all of EUSOG's shows are produced and directed by amateurs, our productions are consistently hailed with critical acclaim thanks to the efforts of our talented and aspiring membership. "Savoyards" frequently continue their passion for musical theatre after University; recent alumni include a West End director and a conductor of the Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Both *Rent* and *The Pirates of Penzance* follow a string of EUSOG Fringe successes. Last year's *HMS Pinafore* raised £1500 for charity whilst our production of *Company* earned five star reviews, and in 2007 *Guilds*, an original piece of work written by two society members, won great acclaim and has since been requested for performance by other UK theatre groups.

- About the Show -



Rent first appeared on the theatrical scene in 1994. Jonathan Larson's moving and revolutionary rock version of Puccini's opera *La Bohème* portrays a group of impoverished artists, addicts and lovers maintaining a precarious existence in the Bohemian Alphabet City of Lower East Side New York under the ever-present shadow of AIDS.

Jonathan Larson focused on composing ***Rent*** in the early 1990s. While working as a waiter at the Moondance Diner he wrote hundreds of songs, but only forty-two made it into the final incarnation of the show. By 1994 the New York Theatre Workshop had picked up the show, and performed it in their annual schedule. Over the next two years Larson staged more workshop productions of the show, before producers agreed to stage it off-Broadway, where it received critical acclaim and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Following its off-Broadway success, producers decided to take the show to Broadway, where it won the 1996 Tony Award for Best Musical, and awards for Best Original Score and Best Book of a Musical. The rest, as they say, is history.

Sadly, Larson never saw the success of his musical creation. He gave his first interview about ***Rent*** on January 24th, 1994, the day before the off-Broadway premiere. He was found dead in his apartment the following day, having died alone, of an aortic aneurysm. This only added further poignancy to what was already an extremely relevant and hard-hitting show.

Rent's compelling message has lost none of its original potency. Going beyond the standard frivolity of much of its genre, it portrays the reality of what it was truly like to live under the shadow of AIDS. It brought an ethnically diverse cast and hitherto controversial topics to what was a traditionally conservative medium, going a long way to increasing the popularity of the musical in the younger generation. Its impact was to change Broadway for ever.

Larson's masterpiece was one of the ten longest running Broadway shows, winning over fifteen different awards. The success of the show led to several national tours and foreign productions, and in 2005 it was also adapted into a hit motion picture that has brought the message of this remarkable and revolutionary show to an even wider audience.

Cast Biographies

Mimi Marquez: Stephanie Baillie

Stephanie graduated with an HND in Musical Theatre last year and is going on to continue her BA (Hons) in August. She has appeared in several productions over the past few years, including leading roles in *Fame*, *Godspell*, *Jekyll And Hyde* and *Hair*. This is Stephanie's first production with EUSOG and she is absolutely thrilled to be playing Mimi at the Fringe.

Joanne Jefferson: Rachel Timney

This is Rachel's second Fringe show as a member of EUSOG, having played the role of Sarah in *Company* in 2008. She is thrilled to be involved again this year and having been a fan of *Rent* for many years, being given the chance to perform as Joanne is a dream come true. Rachel is going into the fourth year of her music degree at Edinburgh University specializing in voice, studying with Margaret Aronson. She has been a member of EUSOG for the entirety of her university life. She has also worked closely with the Edinburgh University Footlights, Edinburgh University Singers and Edinburgh Studio Opera. She hopes to pursue a career in the performance world.

Maureen Johnson: Olivia Holland-Rose

Olivia first discovered her aptitude for musical theatre in Los Angeles, where she attended the world famous Beverly Hills High School. She appeared in numerous productions including *Pirates of Penzance*, *Twelfth Night* and *Beauty and the Beast*, before taking on the lead role of Rosemary in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* in her senior year. Once at Edinburgh University, Olivia threw herself into the musical theatre scene, and was cast as the lead Jane, in *Salad Days*, produced by EUSOG. This year she has taken part in the Edinburgh University Footlights' production of *The Pajama Game* and also starred in the Melodramatics' avant-garde production of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, where she received highly positive reviews in the Evening News. She is thrilled to be playing Maureen in *Rent*, a role she has dreamed about for many years.

Mark Cohen: Ross Martin

Ross has previously performed in productions of *Summer Holiday* as Don and *Les Misérables* as Marius. He has hosted a solo concert and was a member of the World Scout Jamboree Cast in 2007. Most recently Ross has performed in the Edinburgh University Footlights' production of *The Pajama Game*. Ross is delighted that *Rent* will be his Fringe debut.

Roger Davis: Ali Watt

Delighted to be back at the Fringe with EUSOG after playing Bobby in last year's *Company*, Ali has recently appeared as Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, Jimmy Porter in *Look back in Anger*, Nicholas in *One for the Road* and as the title role in Justin Butcher's *Scaramouche Jones*. A keen past-member of the University of Glasgow's Cecilian Society, Ali spent eight years in the National Youth Choir of Scotland and his past musical roles have included Emcee in *Cabaret*, Don Lockwood in *Singin' in the Rain*, Riff in *West Side Story* and Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Ali is an Edinburgh native and, approaching the end of a two-year solicitor's traineeship, commences training at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in September.

Tom Collins: Greg McCafferty

Greg has always had a passion for musical theatre, and has been involved with amateur dramatic societies from an early age. He was particularly happy to be cast in the lead roles of two productions, notably Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls*.

More recently, Greg has continued to develop his performance skills through working with Denise Borland at DBS Voice Development. Since joining EUSOG as a member of the cast of *Rent* he has thoroughly enjoyed the rehearsal process, and is delighted to be 'treading the boards' with such an exceptional company.

Angel Dumott Schunard: Jimi Mitchell

This will be Jimi's first Fringe experience and what better way to begin than performing a musical which is so close to his heart. Jimi has previously performed as M. Thenardier in *Les Misérables*, King Herod in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Khashoggi in *We Will Rock You* and The Mikado of Japan in G&S's *The Mikado*. Being given the opportunity to play Angel is a complete honour for him.

Benjamin "Benny" Coffin III: Ed Sheridan

Ed is in his final year at Edinburgh University, having divided up the preceding three between performing with the Bedlam Theatre, his degree, and worrying about his degree. This is his first show with EUSOG, having appeared at Bedlam in shows such as *Guards! Guards!*, *Hidden In This Picture*, *Art*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Don't Switch It Off*. He also directed a production of *Closer*, and appeared in *How To Be Horrid*, a sketch show which was taken to the Fringe last year. He studied at the Junior Guildhall School of Music & Drama for 11 years, and attempts to get cheap laughs as part of The Sugaring-Off Cabin, a regular sketch show at the Stand comedy club."

Alex Duffy

Alex has been involved in the Edinburgh University Theatre societies for the past three years. This is his second production with EUSOG, a follow up to last year's Fringe production of *Company* in which he played David and understudied Bobby. An avid member of EU Footlights, he played Prez in *The Pajama Game*, was in the Cowboy Trio in *Crazy for You* and Luis in *West Side Story*. He has also been involved in scattered productions with Theatre Paradok and Bedlam Theatre.

Martin Heavens

A recent graduate of Edinburgh University, Martin's student life was dominated by performing. *Rent* is Martin's second show with EUSOG, having made his debut in *Company* at the Fringe last year. Other credits include; *42nd Street*, Action in *West Side Story*, Mingo in *Crazy for You*, and Max in *The Pajama Game*, all with the Edinburgh University Footlights, *Attempts on Her Life* with the Edinburgh University Theatre Company, as well as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Benny in *Guys and Dolls* and Fagin in *Oliver!* with Forth Children's Theatre. Martin also performs with improvised comedy troupe *The Improverts* every night of the Fringe.

Mark Laverty

Rent is Mark's second show with EUSOG having played the ever popular "Turkey" in *Honk!* in 2006. He has been involved in numerous musicals including *West Side Story*, *Crazy for You* and *The Pajama Game* with EU Footlights, as well as productions with Music Theatre for Youth Ireland and Youth Music Theatre:UK. Mark has loved every second of *Rent* and wants to thank everyone involved for making this experience so great.

Jerry Meldrum

Since graduating from the University of Edinburgh in 2008, Jerry has been working in Marketing and has been actively performing in a variety of shows and concerts. A member of the St Andrew Camerata, EU Singers and EUSOG, Jerry has enjoyed a variety of roles, most recently as Alexis Pointdextre in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer*. Jerry is hopeful that his musical activities will continue for a long time to come. *Rent* will be Jerry's first Larson adventure and he is extremely excited to be a part of it.

Jason Park

Jason Park is a musical theatre fanatic and has been so from a young age. From his first role as a street urchin in *Millenium Memories* in the Pavilion Theatre, Glasgow, Jason has enjoyed many shows which have all offered a very different flavour! Previous experience includes Bobby in *A Chorus Line*, Judas in *Godspell* and the title roles in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Jason is delighted to be involved in this production of *Rent* and wishes the cast and crew all the best for the run and hopes the audience enjoy it as much as he will! It has been an experience he is sure to never forget.

Robin Stewart

Robin has just graduated from the University of Edinburgh, where he has for the past four years been heavily involved with the E.U.T.C. at the Bedlam theatre, where he is a member of the resident comedy troupe *The Improverts*, and Edinburgh University Footlights. This year marks Robin's fourth consecutive Fringe, having previously performed in shows including *Company* with EUSOG last year. During the Fringe Robin will also be performing daily with *The Improverts* at Bedlam Theatre, and in *Unknown Album* at the Underbelly.

Helen Coad

Prior to graduating from Durham University in 2008, Helen was involved in developing music in her college, in particular managing and directing a mixed voice choir as well as being a member of the chapel choir and annual musical theatre productions. Helen discovered her love for musical theatre through roles such as Princess Ida in *Princess Ida*, Jack's mother in *Into the Woods*, Cynthia in *The Goodbye Girl* and, most recently, Dionne in Edinburgh Music Theatre's Production of *Hair*. A Larson fan, Helen is extremely excited to be involved in *Rent* and hopes to continue her involvement with EUSOG when she attends Edinburgh University as a postgraduate music student next year. Helen intends to pursue a career in youth music.

Jenny Dickens

Jenny has been involved in theatre from a young age and has thrown herself into theatrical societies and organisations throughout her school and university education. This is her third consecutive performance at the Edinburgh Fringe with EUSOG following the highly successful *Guilds* in 2007 and the 5* rated *Company* last year, in which she played the part of Amy. Glad that she no longer needs to chant 'I'm not Getting Married' in her sleep, Jenny is looking forward to embracing her inner drug-addict, though she is still unsure as to what 'jugie boogie' is. Despite this flaw in her character development, she has thoroughly enjoyed learning the beautiful yet challenging music of *Rent*, and is thrilled to be a part of such a great musical.

Katie Foster

This is Katie's second appearance with EUSOG, having hugely enjoyed playing Jenny in last year's acclaimed Fringe performance of *Company*. She has no doubt that *Rent* will be a similar success. Katie has also had the pleasure of performing in EU Footlights' productions of *Crazy for You*, and most recently *The Pajama Game*. Before her move to Edinburgh, Katie was a member of Centre Stage, Exmouth, and enjoyed the roles of Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls*, Mme Thenardier in *Les Miserables*, (School Edition) and Angie in *Summer Holiday*.

Quianna Givens

Quianna Givens is a native of Baltimore, Maryland currently doing an MSc in Translation Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Although having played piano and sung both alto and tenor in countless choirs for the past fifteen years, this is her first experience with live theatre. She is thrilled to be joining the cast of *Rent* and "over the moon" that her first appearance on stage will be performing in one of her favourite shows of all time.

Torty Lee

Musical theatre has been Torty's true love since the age of 5 when she was part of the chorus for *Joseph*. At 13 Torty won a drama scholarship to Felsted school, where she was in the principal cast in numerous productions, including three musicals that toured the USA, as well as winning the Sir Tim Rice Senior Drama award, and performing in a YMT:UK production. She went on to spend her gap-year on a scholarship in New York where she took the lead roles in two plays. Having been heavily involved with the Edinburgh University Footlights over her first two years at University, she is delighted to make her Fringe debut with EUSOG this summer.