

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 258 JONATHAN GROFF PART 1 TRANSCRIPT

Gillian Pensavalle 0:00

All right, ready?

Jonathan Groff 0:01

Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle 0:02

Okay.

Jonathan Groff 0:04

Ready Aim Fire,

Gillian Pensavalle 0:05

I don't even though the answer to that question myself.

Lin-Manuel Miranda 0:08

Hi, I'm stage in stages Lin Manuel Miranda and you're listening to the Hamilcast.

Gillian Pensavalle 0:27

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Hello, everyone. Welcome back to the Hamilcast. I'm Gillian and I am here tonight. I cannot believe it with Hamilton Broadway's original KG3 and certified heartthrob, Jonathan Groff.

Jonathan Groff 0:40

Whoa. All right. Certified heartthrob. I'll take it.

Gillian Pensavalle 0:44

Yeah, that's... I mean, we'll get into I have like something specific to say to you about that, which I know sounds as it was coming out of my mouth. I'm like, Just don't be weird.

Jonathan Groff 0:52

I can't wait. That's thrilling.

Gillian Pensavalle 0:53

Thank you so much for being here. This is amazing.

Jonathan Groff 0:56

Thank you for having me. I'm so I'm so excited that we're getting to do this virtually at you know, at least at the very least here.

Gillian Pensavalle 1:04

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Yeah. You know, everyone is always invited to come back and do it for real, as I say not to take away from the amount of fun we're about to have. I like hosting you I miss making you the cocktail and giving you appetizers and snacks and having like a little party.

Jonathan Groff 1:10

Have you learned how to make a lot of different drinks based on people's requests?

Gillian Pensavalle 1:21

Yeah, or sometimes people. So it's different now. Because I don't want to give people homework. I don't want people to go out and have to get things or whatever. Because usually I would say, Tell me what you love and or hate to drink. And then if you're up for it, I will create the cocktail. So if someone said they like, like a French 75 then I would either give them an actual French 75 for example, or like a take on it, and then name it something appropriate to them.

Jonathan Groff 1:49

That is so cool.

Gillian Pensavalle 1:52

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And my husband Mike we call him mix master Mike like he's amazing at it. Ask Chris Jackson about the cocktails that Mike makes them because they're like the stuff of legend.

Jonathan Groff 1:58

Wow.

Gillian Pensavalle 1:59

So now I just say, me if you're down to drink or whatever, you make what you want, and I'll match you and I will still come up with the name.

Jonathan Groff 2:06

Oh, okay. So what's the name? I'm dying to know

Gillian Pensavalle 2:09

You wanted to drink an aperol spritz, right?

Jonathan Groff 2:11

Yes. Well, I told you that it was going to be between the bulevar da and the aperol spritz. And then it was going to be a game time or a day of decision. But then it became a last night decision. Because last night, I polished off the rest of my Campari. And it's a blizzard. Right? So I was like, Okay, I guess it's I said the Aperol

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and I have the champagne. And so I don't have an orange slice. But um, I think it's gonna be the aperol spritz because I have no Campari

Gillian Pensavalle 2:40

Well, you know, I'd get in trouble from the listeners. If I didn't just name it the Aperol Spits, right?

Gillian Pensavalle 2:49

It's the lowest hanging fruit but I had to do it.

Jonathan Groff 2:53

That is so good. Why didn't even see that coming.

Gillian Pensavalle 2:57

You know, it's my, my husband Mike. He did it. Like I was talking to him. I was like, yeah, so he says he wants this with the aperol spritz. And I think and he was just like, the aperol spritz. What do you not sound like?

Jonathan Groff 3:09

Wow, touche. Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle 3:11

Cheers.

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Jonathan Groff 3:12

Cheers. So so much. Oh my gosh.

Gillian Pensavalle 3:15

And, and you you told me off air, but I can call you Groff and/or Groffsauce. Yes.

Jonathan Groff 3:22

Or you can call me whatever you want.

Jonathan Groff 3:25

Yeah, I already go for it.

Gillian Pensavalle 3:26

Heartthrob. And so I'm just gonna I'm gonna read through some of your credits real quick, because I do I do want to show you something.

Even though this is not a visual media, but obviously Hamilton Broadway's original KG3, Melchiorre Gabor and the original Broadway cast of Spring Awakening, I saw that that show meant a lot to me. I saw I think either my friend won the lottery or I don't know. But I saw you very close. I saw you and Leah Michelle doing what you do. Very close.

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Jonathan Groff 3:52

Nice.

Gillian Pensavalle 3:52

And if you've seen that show, you know what I'm talking about. Oh, yeah, you're

Jonathan Groff 3:55

Right. Yes. Yes. Yes. Were you on the stage? Or were you? No, I wasn't. No, it was like the front row of the orchestra. Is that where the Yeah, okay, got it.

Gillian Pensavalle 4:03

Right in the corner where like, right on that side of the stage where you guys did your thing. It was great. My friend Ashley saw that show with her dad. And he was not expecting. Yeah,

Jonathan Groff 4:13

Yes. Akward.

Gillian Pensavalle 4:16

Yeah, yeah, but fantastic. Yes. Little Shop Off Broadway in 2020. A show a new show that we you know, that was out in 2020. HBO's The Normal Heart, HBOs Looking. Glee, the 36 Questions podcast,

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Mindhunter, which we absolutely have to talk about. Oh, and Frozen. And Peggy, you're just amazing. I'm honored that you're here. Thank you.

Jonathan Groff 4:41

Oh, thanks for having me.

Gillian Pensavalle 4:42

But another thing that used to happen when people came over and this is something that I feel like a little sad about is that so the Hamiltome.... Hamilton the revolution, you know this book, right? Yeah, of course. So this was my sign and book.

Jonathan Groff 4:55

Cool.

Gillian Pensavalle 4:56

So many people. It's like filled with signatures and notes and all this really cool stuff but that the last person assigned it was Andy Blankenbuehler. Because he was the last person to come over last February before everything shut down.

Jonathan Groff 5:09

That's crazy.

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Gillian Pensavalle 5:10

And when I so I have to figure out a way to get I don't know all the people I've had over this last year or something. I don't know what I'm gonna do with it. But I remember after a little shop I was I told you and I was like, I don't mean to be weird, but it's going to be hard for you to sign. Find out find a page in Hamilton because so many people have crushes on you that there are like drawings and hearts all over every picture of you and

Jonathan Groff 5:34

oh my god.

Gillian Pensavalle 5:35

Here's what Morgan Marcel Can you see? It's just you saying Morgan

Jonathan Groff 5:42

what's Okay, wait, can you show it to me one more time because there's a story that actually accompanies that. So she now this is the gossip. You're getting the gossip now,

Gillian Pensavalle 5:53

Already? How many Spits have you had?

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Jonathan Groff 5:55

I know. I know. I've even had like I've had a sip of my spits.

Gillian Pensavalle 6:00

Thank you for just going there with me

Jonathan Groff 6:02

Morgan Marcel's slash Morgan Mateo, she's Instagram name or handle whatever it's called. Is Morgan Kai I think because Morgan Kai is her Maybe her middle name. I can't remember why it's Morgan Kia. Renee was doing the Broadway cares, equity Fights AIDS curtain speech. And she was saying I'd like to, you know, we've done the what's the name of that organization that Pippa and Morgan we're raising all that money for that was

Gillian Pensavalle 6:35

Graham Wyndham.

Jonathan Groff 6:35

Graham Wyndham. Yes, that was Eliza's initial charity. And, and the money that we were, you know, Broadway Cares was raising was also going to that, so she was saying, the money is going to this organization called Graham Wyndham and pick up Philippa Soo and, and Morgan Kai, would you please step out and, and this was like a week

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of Renee delivering the speech and calling Pippa, Philippa Soo, and Morgan, Morgan, Kai. And then, and then Morgan was like, Renee, you know, that my last that that's just like my Instagram. And Renee was like, Oh, of course, she did know that. But for whatever reason, like because of the Instagram and whatever, that was just like, what she was calling Morgan in that moment. And fully knowing that was not her last name, but incorrectly doing it over and over again. And so then I thought that was the funniest thing, because also the way that she would announce it was with such like Renee, charisma and confidence, and she'd be like, Morgan Kai. And so that's why she wrote me saying Morgan Kai in your book, that's

Gillian Pensavalle 7:48

incredible. Also, I did that. On a project in college, where I was just like paired with it was a group project that I didn't know the person really like. It was just these people I was paired with. And her like, her screen name was an abbreviation of her last name, but it sounded like his last name still. So I was, it was the I was tasked with putting together the actual packet and I was like, bah, bah bah project by Gillian Pensavalle. Lee and then this person and her like, half last name, and she like, nice. He was like, I thank you for like, she wasn't it was just I don't know, it was a thing. And so I then I like felt bad enough that I wrote like this formal email to the professor totally taking the blame for it.

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Jonathan Groff 8:32

This Well, it's funny, because Renee was mortified, ever. And he was like, I can't believe I've been calling you that, of course, no, that's not your name, that the next night that she comes out to do the Broadway cares speech. This is like, we you know, Renee is very genius. And this was one of those moments where we were all you know, sort of giggling to ourselves waiting for her to do the speech. And she was not going to say Morgan Kai this time, and Renee came out with a slow jam rap. where like, I had Pippa and, and Jasmine like, we're like beatboxing behind her. And Renee did this entire wrap that she wrote on her own to honor the speech. She like wrapped the speech and Morgan's name correctly, to like, to make up for the fact that she had been saying it wrong the whole time. It was so and we all just fell on the floor while she was delivering that speech because she she really was like, now I'm gonna do it. I've been below the bar and now I'm about to just like take it to the whole next level.

Gillian Pensavalle 9:38

And you raised 100,000.

Jonathan Groff 9:40

Yes, exactly. Probably.

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Gillian Pensavalle 9:43

Yeah. So the other some more stuff for you. Rory O'Malley, he pointed an arrow and he said I kept the beads.

Jonathan Groff 9:51

He did keep the beads. Awwww.

Gillian Pensavalle 9:56

so we'll get into that because that's your whole we I mean, we have to talk about the you and Lin dressing. Stories whatever they may be. Is this what this was the first one. This was what inspired everyone this is Chris Leary who's a dresser and he wrote Thanks for everything so much fun. And he This is a self portrait really, it's of you and him

Jonathan Groff 10:16

my god, that is hilarious a

Gillian Pensavalle 10:19

stick figure of him with eyelashes for days, and he has his arm around you.

Jonathan Groff 10:24

Oh, wow. Oh my god, I love him.

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Gillian Pensavalle 10:27

I don't know where I mean, we'll find a spot. But it's really like, the photos of you are just completely people just love ya

Jonathan Groff 10:36

I'll just write on other people. That's that's easy to fix.

Gillian Pensavalle 10:42

So yeah, I just wanted to show you that.

Jonathan Groff 10:43

Thank you. That book is amazing. I love that book.

Gillian Pensavalle 10:46

It's really it's, did you look through it or read it?

Jonathan Groff 10:49

Yeah

Gillian Pensavalle 10:49

You know, I've seen a lot of people see it and hold it for the first time and go through it trying to look it, they're trying to figure out where they want to sign it. Not everyone really sat and read it

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either because they lived it or because they were in the show and didn't have time to really take it in. But it's gorgeous.

Jonathan Groff 11:06

I don't know if I actually sat down and read the whole thing from cover to cover. But I remember when they gave it to us paging through it like a yearbook. It felt like such a cool and and I remember, uh, correct me if I'm wrong, but it's like, each like the the show rolls out. And they tell the story of like, the actors and the creative team. And it's like, chronological but not good goes in the order of the show. And that you they tell a little piece about the show at every song or every scene. It's a different like story about something that branches off from that. Is that right?

Gillian Pensavalle 11:44

Yes, it's absolutely right. And also simultaneously, which is fascinating how they do it. Also, the actors playing the character like Philippa, we learn about her around like burn, you know, things like that.

Jonathan Groff 11:55

Right. So cool.

Gillian Pensavalle 11:56

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Yeah, it's awesome. So we have, oh, my God, so much to get to. And also my other podcast, my job, my podcast that I do for a living is true crime obsessed. So we have to talk about mindhunter eventually, we definitely,

Gillian Pensavalle 12:12

peeps questions. Oh, my God. So I mean, I don't even know like, Where do you want to start Groff? Like, I have. I have stuff that like Lin talked about when he was on, like Lin stories you I mean, I always ask people like what your Hamilton story is, so we can just dive into how cuz I know you have been friends for like way before Hamilton.

Jonathan Groff 12:32

That I guess is a great place to start because in some ways with Hamilton, I it's kind of like I won the lottery. It was everything about the, my involvement with this show was a complete surprise. I was not a part of the development process. And Brian D'Arcy James was playing King George the Third Off Broadway, he opened the show. And when they were in, I think rehearsal or in tech. I got this text from Lin, because we had actually met when he was coming up with In the Heights, and I was on Broadway was Spring Awakening. But I had done a weekend performance of hair in Central Park where Karen Olivo was playing Sheila. And she introduced us because Lin wanted to shoot a video this is so Lin, Lin wanted to shoot a video where he was

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recreating a number from a High School Musical 2. Oh, yeah, to promote In the Heights coming to Broadway. And the sort of from what I can remember story of the song was like, I should be doing rewrites in In the Heights, but instead of like, pretending to be Zac Efron and talking about promoting the show itself.

Jonathan Groff 14:15

So that was the first time I met Lin. He was like, stand here. I'm gonna rap. You just have to stand there. And that's it. And then I'll take you to dinner after this.

Gillian Pensavalle 14:23

And he wanted us specifically in this.

Jonathan Groff 14:25

Yes. Because he had thought of a rap rap about me and Zac Efron. And I don't know, I don't know if he I don't know if I agreed to it. And then he made that up, or if it was the reverse, but Karen, I remember Karen saying, I friend Lin is so great. He's so talented, and He's so nice. And he just, you know, I'm gonna do this thing for him where it because she also was like, we were essentially like models and the music video. And she's like, I'm gonna do it too. And it'll be so fun and you'll get to know him a little bit and he's just a great person.

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Lin-Manuel Miranda 14:57

Hi my name is Lin Miranda I know you don't know who I am but I Wore these pants and I'm willin' to dance Like an idiot if ya just gimme the chance To just plug my show and reach the people Bust my flow cuz the flow is lethal It's called In the Heights and life is sweet yo It helps that I get to kiss Karen Olivo Eight times a week, yo The beat's goin' but we keep goin' cuz we know We movin' and provin' to Michael Riedel We can have a hit show about Latino people Who wake up at my Bodega And sorry "Mr. Kenny Ortega" You better tell Zac Efron that he gotta get off Because he's never gonna look like Jonathan Groff Woo, damn he's so cute Heh, okay, I'm sorry but it's true Don't look in his eyes you'll get taken in You'll be breakin' in to Spring Awakenin' And that High School Musical's rakin' it in It was paper thin, but they made it again I'm facin' the end of this song the hard way Is this what it takes just to make it to Broadway?!

Jonathan Groff 15:54

So we met doing that I hadn't even seen in the heights yet. Because I've missed it off Broadway. And because I think we were maybe doing Spring Awakening or Yeah. And so we met then. And then we then then in the heights, and Spring Awakening was on Broadway at the same time, and we would meet for dinners and we bonded over Saved by the Bell. And then out of the blue. We like would see each other opening nights. I remember one opening night of Shrek, me and Leah Michelle

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had a dance off with Lin and Jeanine Tesori on the dance floor. So there was all of these, like, we had such great moments together. And every time we saw each other, it was like, we kind of lit each other on fire.

Gillian Pensavalle 16:38

Yeah.

Jonathan Groff 16:39

And then I got this text saying, Hey, you know, I'm doing this show Hamilton that's about the founding fathers and Brian d'Arcy James is playing the king, and we just found out he has to leave. Would you come in for the last two months of the Off Broadway run and replace him? It's it's only really one song. It's not a lot to do. It wouldn't take long to learn. You just like come in and kind of like, be in the show? And I said yes. without hearing the show or seeing the show or understanding what the show was it hadn't even opened yet. But I was like, Yeah, I love the public. And I love Lin, and that'd be fun. I don't know, it just seems like it would be fun to be around Lin for a couple months. That was it. I didn't know it was like.... like Hamilton, you know that? You know. And I and I remember I got I was supposed to come a week or two earlier. And then I got delayed in LA. And I was like to send me the song and I'll learn it. And on my own. I couldn't sing it. It was too high. When I was

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practicing it in my agents kitchen in Los Angeles. There's a cracking and I was like, Oh, my God, Brian D'Arcy James, like, can sing so high, and how am I ever gonna be able to sing this. And I couldn't get it. And I couldn't get it. And then I showed up on a Friday and saw the show, and was like, Oh, my God. And then went into the show on Tuesday on a Tuesday. I didn't know I supposed to have a British accent. I kept also like, saying, like emailing texting Lin and Tommy being like, hey, if somebody could just like with their iPhone or something, record what Brian's doing so I can get a sense, no response. Because they were all like, so busy with the show moving to Broadway. And there was this thing right after they opened Off Broadway. Were they going to move the show that like in April or May and just move it directly from the theater from the theater at the public? Or were they going to wait, there was this moment in time where they were maybe going to move it? And so they were dealing with all of that. And I was over here being like, Hey, I'm coming in, but no one sent me video. So I was like, oh, okay, I guess I have to have a British accent. But I didn't have I didn't know how to do a British accent. So I didn't have an accent for about a month. And Lin said that the first time I went on, it was like, I'd want to contest to be in Hamilton and I came out and I was like, you'll be back soon you'll see like a karaoke version of you'll be back dressed in a king costume. But it all started with because of my relationship and friendship with with Lin.

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Gillian Pensavalle 19:13

So you were friends with him. But you You didn't know that much about like he was that busy on Hamilton, working on Hamilton, that you were still friends with him. But you kind of didn't even know what you were getting into when like he was close enough to say, Can you do this? But you still didn't know exactly like what was happening down to the public.

Jonathan Groff 19:31

No, you know what that you just reminded me Actually, I had. We had been randomly staying in the same hotel in California, maybe like a year and a half before this. And we were sort of talking about musicals, or we were at the hotel bar. We just happened to be at the same hotel, and we meet up at the hotel bar. And he took me to his hotel room and played me helpless/satisfied. He's like I'm writing this thing. And this I want to play these two songs. And he did. And I was like, Oh my god, that's so amazing. And so I remembered him playing me that and we were like calling people and I don't even think that there was FaceTime existed then we were just like calling people. I don't know, we were just like, drunk

Gillian Pensavalle 20:17

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Was he filming you because he loves filming your reaction to things,
especially Satisfied

Jonathan Groff 20:21

I think it was before that, and I kind of forgotten about that till
you just asked me if I'd known what it was. So I had known that it
was a show that he was doing. And I had heard those two songs. And I
remember thinking like, Oh my god, it's like Destiny's Child. I
remember thinking that like, Oh my god, it's like real, r&b music.
This is so cool. But not understanding the context of it, or who the
characters were, or, you know, not really understanding what what it
was as a as a show itself.

Gillian Pensavalle 20:50

Right. And my second thing was, I know you're not on social media. In
the nicest way. I asked you like, how detached Are you from the
internet? Because that video of you guys with the High School Musical
thing is again, the stuff of legend.

Jonathan Groff 21:05

Oh, wow. Okay

Gillian Pensavalle 21:06

There are whole YouTube videos dedicated to your friendship with Lin

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Jonathan Groff 21:10

That I knew about because he will send me stuff. And and we did recreate that rap. from high school... Heights Cool Musical Too during the ham4ham, it was like maybe the first ham4ham or one of the first ham4hams. We went out there and he like, did the rap thing. Or I did it. I can't remember which way it went.

Jonathan Groff 22:19

But yes, I did know that. He texted me one time and told me that that someone contacted him to say that it was like a college course on gender and relationships or something. And they were using our relationship as an example of male modern male intimacy that it was like a college. In some college somewhere was like, look at this is an example of like, a gay man and a straight man and they're affectionate with each other and they love each other. And this is unique to these modern times.

Gillian Pensavalle 22:54

Well, you two are in love. And I say that like I'm in love with everybody. So you know.

Jonathan Groff 22:59

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Oh, my God, we really are. I love him so much. And and we joked and he would any joke from the very beginning. That it's that in Hamilton, it was like the year we live together in a studio in Hell's Kitchen because we shared a bathroom and we were in the what we call the Idina Menzel suite, because it was her dressing room for IF/THEN. Right, right before Hamilton,

Gillian Pensavalle 23:20

Right. So like Rory said, In the book, the beads, because this is also something that's been sort of touched on, but now that you're here, like, I hate to, I've been talking about you behind your back for five years, in a way with so many people, so many of your friends and colleagues. And now you're here. So yeah, Lin that you that you shared a dressing room and you took the door down? That was your thing?

Jonathan Groff 23:40

Yes, I walked into the room. And I was like, they because they had put up. It was like a Idina's sitting area for her guests. There was like her dressing room area, which was lens dressing room area. And then there was this middle room that she used as like a kind of guest room, and a bathroom. But when you put a door on the wall, it made the dressing room really small. And I just felt like I don't want there to be a door here. And it became kind of like a thing of not

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like my door is always open that people would come through the beads and and said, You know that so much of the show, for me was the social experience that I had of people coming into the beaded curtain and sitting on my little like couch area that I had there. And so yeah, that the beaded curtain, it started with a practical idea of like, maybe if I took this door off, it would feel bigger. And then it became more of a spiritual experience of opening myself up to the rest of the theater in a way where there was sort of like an open door policy.

Gillian Pensavalle 24:53

You're not ever prepping for you're not you're not ever getting in the headspace for it's quiet uptown.

Jonathan Groff 25:00

Exactly yes I gotta say like I'm not a I am not a big like leave me alone in the corner with my headphones on actor I'm not a method actor in that way that even if I was doing something serious, I am not like a close the door and give me my quiet moment before I do this because an Andrew Reynolds I don't know if you've interviewed him yet

Gillian Pensavalle 25:26

not yet

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Jonathan Groff 25:26

he would tell me like it's he got really stressed playing the king there is like a really bizarre thing of not being able to move and having to sing in your full range, and never interacting with anyone that in some ways. Having a beaded door where you can actually talk to people did help me with the show because you're so isolated as the king that having as much contact and as much interaction as possible. It makes the experience so much better. Because when when you're on stage it is so you and the audience and nothing else. Really.

Gillian Pensavalle 26:07

Yes, that makes complete sense. Lin so just some stories that Lin told me about you was that you would make faces at him on stage. So after you'll be back, you would turn around and walk away and he would be crossing and this very heavy moment 32,000 troops and it was all very sexual.

Unknown Speaker 26:52

Groff would say crazy things to me as he is walking up stage at the end of you'll be back. He'd like, you know, he motions to the conductor he walks Upstage and that's right when I'm crossing with him to go down for to go 32,000 troops in New York Harbor is looking at me like we're like

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Gillian Pensavalle 27:48

But anyway you can hear it in the audio where it's just like Lin making mouth sounds because when I was looking at him, he was just doing a lot of tongue work.

Jonathan Groff 27:57

Yes, yes. There's a lot of creative things that one can do with a scepter.

Gillian Pensavalle 28:03

Oh

Jonathan Groff 28:05

There's so much. There's just so much. There's, you know, you can just let your mind go there and imagine the possibilities.

Gillian Pensavalle 28:14

Right. And suddenly, where we don't see you because because you you know, at that point, you have the like the shawl the little

Jonathan Groff 28:20

You have a giant cape

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Gillian Pensavalle 28:21

Yeah, the cape. So you're because later on, you're not as protected.

Jonathan Groff 28:25

Exactly.

Gillian Pensavalle 28:25

When your back is to us. You have that little

Jonathan Groff 28:27

Exactly. It's like a giant wall that you can do anything behind. It was Lin and Renee. Those are the two people that would come out and a little sash. I feel like well, Sasha mooned me one day from Off Broadway. Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle 28:41

She failed to mention that last week. Yes, she mooned to me.

Jonathan Groff 28:45

She definitely moved to me off Broadway, from the wings. And I was like, Whoa,

Gillian Pensavalle 28:51

what's happening Sasha?

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Jonathan Groff 28:53

I love I love that. toeing the line of being professional and being unprofessional. I think that it would be unprofessional if anyone could see it. But it as long as everyone can keep moving forward. I think it's it's anything that's fair game. And there's something about that eye twinkle that I find makes being on stage feel even more alive. And I would like it. Yeah, I love I love the I love being on the brink of laughing It's some It's like my favorite place to live in. And that was hard in Hamilton because I was it was so rare that I was seeing people and so whenever they made it with walking offstage and you'll be after you'll be back was like two seconds. So anything I could do to like, pretend the scepter was a penis and make people laugh was I was just like aching for any of those moments.

Gillian Pensavalle 29:53

Yeah, it's funny because I talked about that, especially people you know, the Philip tour we know on this podcast is you Like this rambunctious like Tommy Kail and Patrick Vassell has to be like you guys got to pull that shit back just like a lot of it like so there's So Nik Walker is like, present like he loves the pranks and you know he and Sasha chaos twins like they love all that shit. And so we I've spoken to people about these pranks are just like trying to make people break or do all this stuff and it's the conversation is really

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great because people say that just the right like it's fun for them but the the respect that people have if you say like, I am the type of actor actually I do need my silence, I'm not going to have the beaded door. They'll leave you alone, which I think is cool. Like, I will not hear the name Chris Jackson in any of your stories. And imagine that after you know one last time as he's leaving, and you're coming in, like what the fuck that he's gonna be making faces that you like, I just know,

Jonathan Groff 30:52

I would try to make faces at him though. You better believe. Yeah, I would say things under my breath. He would never he would never say occasionally maybe, as I'm trying to remember it. He would like, smile at me. But I would be over there yet trying to get him to giggle even though he was like sweaty and you know, post giant emotional moment,

Gillian Pensavalle 31:15

right, like after one last time of all?

Jonathan Groff 31:17

Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle 31:18

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And also there's, you know, a time and a place like Lin told the story about the grape lady video

Lin-Manuel Miranda 31:24

Yes. That was the one time I got him. Yeah I think I can tell I think he's told this story. Can I tell you the grape lady's story? You know, that viral YouTube video, this reporter she's like stomping grapes for a piece but they're up on a raised platform and she goes, stop. Okay, go and like goes ahead and then like, falls forward badly. And then she makes the most unearthly sound. And it's just like, oh, I'll add like, the reporters are like, Oh, I hope she's gonna get cut back to the reporters. And I'm like, ooh, ouch. Looks like she took a hard fall. Yeah, ouch. [clip] One day in our dressing room apartment. Groff and I were watching this video and many other viral videos. And so that night, we're doing the Reynolds pamphlet. And I don't know why Groff thought maybe his mic wasn't on because he doesn't really have a solo. But like, as he comes up to me to wave the pamphlets in my face, he's going [noises] like that volume in my face. And it's the only time I ever broke during Reynolds pamphlet. I just went Nope, nope, nope, nope. Just I just turned around and faced upstage and laughed at never gonna be president when I'm in the middle of that circle. Just couldn't couldn't do it. Couldn't do Groff as grape lady at point blank range.

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Gillian Pensavalle 33:25

But it was during the Reynolds pamphlet.

Jonathan Groff 33:27

Yes. But he was still like, I can't believe you made me laugh. When hit everything that is happening to Hamilton. It is like a kind of like a everything has gone wrong for him. And now he has to turn up stage and like shoulder shake laugh as I go by him because I did the like. I hope that ladies okay, because I've looked it up. I've looked it up so much. I can't find anything about her. There's an action figure that some people are selling but but that's the that's the that's the most interesting thing I could find. But it when you I've looked up a lot like Is she okay? Did she look really hurt herself? Because I would feel bad if she died or something. And, you know, but I can't I can't find any intel.

Gillian Pensavalle 34:12

When Lin told me about it. Of course I had to find the audio. Of course I had to put it in Yeah, in a perfect impression of you doing it. You just have to hear it in my head. Yeah, I also went down that rabbit hole because I was like, This is so it's just such a horrifying sound. And you do like you have to laugh at it because it's bizarre.

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Jonathan Groff 34:33

Yes. Oh my god. And when it cuts back to the the anchors and they're like yeah, she took a hard fall off. Hope she's okay.

Gillian Pensavalle 34:44

Yeah. You do hope she's okay. Yeah, that's the thing. Like you really do because it's so like, what the fuck? And so I went down that rabbit hole too, and I found nothing.

Jonathan Groff 34:53

Maybe you could solve that on your true crime podcast

Gillian Pensavalle 34:56

You know another mystery.

Jonathan Groff 34:58

Yeah, another unsolved mystery.

Gillian Pensavalle 34:59

Another hopeful happy ending, like hopefully it's not a murder. Hopefully it's just like the crime is that we didn't know for so long.

Jonathan Groff 35:07

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Exactly. Okay, exactly.

Gillian Pensavalle 35:11

But okay, so you had no accent when you went to public, right? So you're in the bad karaoke version, which is still better than any karaoke version that's ever been done in any karaoke bar since Hamilton has come out. Except for maybe when Mike does it, Mike does a really good,

Jonathan Groff 35:25

Nice, nice.

Gillian Pensavalle 35:27

So you get to the public, you still don't know what you're supposed to do.

Jonathan Groff 35:31

This was this was a big learning experience. I'm showing up to the public. At this point, the show had opened. It had gotten phenomenal reviews, you couldn't get a ticket. Brian D'Arcy James was beloved by the company. And I'm coming in, to replace him to share a dressing room with Chris Jackson, Anthony Ramos, Oak, and Daveed

Gillian Pensavalle 36:03

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Oof

Jonathan Groff 36:04

And sit and it's a small dressing room, and you're sitting in a spot with a guy that everybody is in love with. And so I really, I, it was a, it was a very unique experience. And I learned so much because I showed up. And I had remembered from Spring Awakening, I had, I have this sort of like theory about replacing someone, which is that sometimes, sometimes people come in ready to like, put their own stamp on something, which can be really frustrating for the people that are already doing the show, because they've rehearsed and found something that was organic that the whole group is doing together. And so when somebody comes in and just does their own thing, it can really throw off the balance. So in addition to being even though the role of the king is kind of singular in the show, and has a lot of alone time, it to me, it meant just as much with my onstage behavior as my offstage behavior. So when I came into that dressing room, I was like, Okay, I'm just gonna keep my head down. Listen, I'm not going to try and become everybody's best friend. I'm just going to show up, be polite, do the job. Get people doughnuts for my put in rehearsal, you know, just trying to like, come in. And not. And almost as though it's like, as little challenge as I can bring to the rest of the company. That's what I felt like, was my job, in the beginning, is like you're supposed to come in and just slide in. And

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people, the other people here are gonna go home and not think about the fact that you're there or not there. You're just there to like, like, support what's happening, be invisible, kind of take care of the people around you and go home. And that's it. And so I and then I was like, Oh, shit, okay, I don't know, I don't have a British accent. I have no sense of this character. And here we go. And so I started. Totally, this is the great lesson to about the immediate lesson about the writing of Hamilton, is that my mom could play the king in Hamilton, and get laughs and it would work. That's how it brilliantly it's written. Because I remember walking out the first day with no accent, barely squeaking out the notes, and thinking and hearing the audience react in a similar way to how they reacted to Brian. And I thought, Oh, my God, this is a brilliant piece of writing that requires no acting. And the costume does a lot of the work. The song does a lot of the work, you're in, you're out. And so in a way, having no character was was really a great thing to learn in this particular experience, because it's still slayed. Even though I can say this, I was like, not good. I had to or not even that I was not good. I just had no point of view. I had no idea what I was doing. I was just sort of flopping into it. And so then as time went by, and I sort of started taking accent lessons, and I started to slowly incorporate the British accent into the show. I hired a coach on my own to just do it by myself. And and I was watching a lot of barbers because I was because Brian D'Arcy James has those giant

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eyebrows. And he's got this like he's older than me. He's his like legs, his eyebrows, his whole kind of like Build is like this sort of like, an Napoleon kind of, I just when I saw him in it, I was like, Oh my God, he's so brilliant. And this is like, I can't do what he's doing. Because I'm not I don't have his body, I don't have his face. I don't have his, I can't do what he's doing. So I don't know. I don't know why they asked me to do this part. That's how I felt.

Jonathan Groff 40:23

And then, as the weeks wore on, and I started to understand the power of the minimalism, which I learned from my first performance, oh, I could do nothing and people will still laugh. I suddenly found great power in that. And I started watching these performances. I was watching really into Barbra Streisand, and that she does this song called when the sun comes out that I was watching on YouTube, and that the camera doesn't, there's no cuts, it's just a shot of her. Once again, Barbra Streisand, Barbra Streisand, she comes down, it's in her My name is Barbara performance. And it's like, she's fucking herself with her own voice, like she's, she's so into her own. It's like orgasmic what she's doing is like, if she's like, arching her back, even. And she's just like, comes out there with this energy of you may worship me now.

Jonathan Groff 42:16

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And when she finishes the song, she puts her like she, she turns her head away, she doesn't even like to acknowledge the audience clapping really, she just sort of like finishes and turns away. And it's like, incredible. She's incredibly powerful. And this confidence, and I started to think like, Okay, what if I come out doing as very little as possible? And I think like, you may worship me now. All this was adding up together in the, in the, in the show, and then Lin one day, about a month into the, into my run of the show off Broadway, said, God, this audience is so quiet, can you go out there and wake them up? And I was like, Yeah, sure. So I went out there with not I just like, with him saying that I was like, Okay, I don't know, I don't know what I'm gonna do. But I just went that went out there with that in my mind. And it got to the part of the song where it's like, forever and ever and ever.

Jonathan Groff 43:21

And I just held the note and went a little mad.

Gillian Pensavalle 43:26

Yep

Jonathan Groff 43:27

And couldn't didn't start like, held it too long, and then held it long, like even longer for too long. And that then became my shtick.

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And then Tommy came to see the show week later was like, please stop doing that. And I was like, Okay.

Gillian Pensavalle 43:41

Well, Tommy respond to my text when I asked you what I should do

Jonathan Groff 43:45

Exactly. But it that sort of I was like, Oh, right. He's mad. He's like, he's like, there was a there was like a madness that I learned about a little bit further into it as sort of like still mad and then suddenly like the layers of the character started to come in. And then I started to understand what it was I was doing. And then I started to understand the power of minimalism and how much you could in especially in that small theater, raise an eyebrow or look and and the effect that you could feel that it would have and then and then there was moving to the Richard Rogers into a bigger space and thinking, is that going to read in this giant theater? Is this eyebrow raise going to read is this slightly psychotic look going to read and it did. It did. It was like the I really learned so much about what it meant to stand on a stage and have an audience come to you when you're supported by the costume and the song and you really can do whatever the fuck you want. And doing nothing to me was just incredibly powerful and it was such a, it was such an amazing gift to learn that it was I wasn't anticipating that I was going to learn

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that and find that. And it really was like the Off Broadway experience was my rehearsal process. And it was truly surreal and a little bit of a mindfuck to be rehearsing your part while you're in the greatest show, one of the greatest shows ever written. But I was supported by this phenomenal character where you could fail and still win.

Gillian Pensavalle 45:39

I still can't believe this happened. I cannot believe Jonathan Groff is on the Hamilcast. And he'll be back not just next week, but the week after. That's right, you get three episodes with Groffsauce. There's so much coming up in his next two eps. But here's some of what you can expect next week. Groff talks more about his performances King George the Third and what it was like coming back for the Hamilmovie, which was still on Disney+, by the way, like Lin says, we just have it now. You'll hear what it was like welcoming celebrities and their post Hamilton emotions backstage and why Jonathan totally relates to all of our gaspy stagedoor moments. And for those of you who also listen to True Crime obsessed, get ready for that Mindhunter talk I know you've been waiting for. I mean, everyone's gonna be into what Groff has to say, but I just know the true crime people out there have been really excited about it. And lastly, Jonathan takes questions from the Patreon peeps, including one very, and I mean, very surprising peep. I don't want to give too

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much away, but it's a bit of a thing. We've actually talked about him a lot so far. I feel like I just gave it away. Okay, yeah, I should go. I'm gonna go watch some Barbra Streisand and I suggest you do the same. Thanks so much for listening. And until next time, stay safe. Stay healthy. Please wear that mask. I love you. I'm G. Pen.

Gillian Pensavalle 47:19

The Hamilcast is brought to you by my love of the thing (TM) My complete lack of chill Please join me in raising all the glasses to Sir Alex Lacamoire for generously making my intro music and this custom Yorktown arrangement that I will never ever get over. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. To become a Patreon Peep and join the best, kindness, and most welcoming corner of the internet go to patreon.com/thehamilcast. You can submit questions to guests, join Zoom hangouts, get behind the scenes access and of course my unending gratitude. I'm @thehamilcast on all social media and you can listen wherever you get your podcasts. Visit thehamilcast.com for transcripts, episodes and more. You can see what's going on with Mike, you know Mike, at MichaelPaulSmith.net. True Crime Obsessed is my true crime comedy podcast with my podcast soulmate Patrick Hinds of Theater People and Broadway Backstory fame. Thank you so much for

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listening. It means the world to me [with clip] To the
Revolution!