

# THE HAMILCAST

## EPISODE 259: JONATHAN GROFF PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

Lin-Manuel Miranda 0:00

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

Gillian Pensavalle 0:18

Hello friends. Welcome back to the Hamilcast. I'm Gillian and this week picks up right where I left off with none other than Jonathan Groff Hamilton Broadway's original King George, if you missed the first part of our hang, go listen to Episode 258. That's where you can hear all about how Groff and Lin met and became friends. How Jonathan got involved with Hamilton, what it was like to step into KG3 after Brian D'Arcy James, and the hands down best conversation I've ever had about Barbra Streisand. But if you're ready to go, let's do this. Enjoy Part Two with King George the Third, the second. Jonathan Groff.

Gillian Pensavalle 0:54

Okay, here's a question. Did you ever respond to the audience at all? Because you talked directly to us? So did the energy of the audience ever change your choices in that way? Or were you just mad?

Jonathan Groff 1:08

It's very tempting, I feel with that role, too. There were certain laughs that I removed intentionally, because and there's one that's in the movie that I would do sometimes. And I wouldn't do other times. Because sometimes I would feel like I want them to hear what I'm saying more than I want them to laugh at me. And so some shows, I would come out. And before I would sing, I would do this like this, like kind of like fake smile of like, Hi, Hi, everybody. Like that, that I think is in the it is in the movie, because I remember thinking, oh, wow, okay, Tommy kept that one. But some days, I wouldn't do that. Because it felt cheap. There were certain things that I would do, where I felt like, let me take this smile out, because it's this consistent laugh that I'm getting, but I, I don't want it to be that easy for me or for them. I want to keep them I want to keep

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the audience a little nervous and a little like, I don't want to be too pandering to the audience because you can be with that character. And it still works by the way. But I was I was I would be I was kind of obsessed by that push and pull of like, what if I just play this as a psychopath and I don't play this as a clown. And I and I really mean it. I really mean it and keep it I always wanted to really mean it and keep it real but there were just certain heightened things that I could do with an eyebrow or a look that would gain some laughing and sometimes when I would find when I would do it and they would laugh and then I would get mad at them as the character for laughing at me which which felt like which felt like right. So it was it was a constant. I was always moving in that space in in slightly different ways depending on my mood. And depending on the audience or even like Lin saying, go wake them up and that was what came out of me of like, I'm just gonna stand here and hold this note until you start laughing until you understand until you wake the fuck up. Right I'm just gonna go ahhhhhhh until it gets you like Wait, what's happening?

Jonathan Groff 3:15

\*And no, don't change the subject 'Cause you're my favorite subject My sweet, submissive subject My loyal, royal subject Forever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever You'll be back like before I will fight the fight and win the war For your love, for your praise And I'll love you 'til my dying days When you're gone, I'll go mad So don't throw away this thing we had 'Cause when push comes to shove I will kill your friends and family to remind you of my love Da da da dat da, dat da da da da ya da Da da dat dat da ya da\*

Jonathan Groff 5:02

So there would be little things like that, that, that I would find along the way, but it was like, the biggest gift ever to have that. That to be. I know I said it already but just to be like supported in that song where you could you could poke around and try different things. And once it got to Broadway I felt less freedom to try new things because I felt like we were delivering a product that was incredibly expensive. And so when

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we were on Broadway, I did feel a little bit more pressure to to deliver something consistently like to do 70% of what I knew was going to be a successful thing with maybe 30% wiggle room, whereas when we were off Broadway, I was really just kind of way more fluid in my experience of performing the song.

Gillian Pensavalle 6:01

It makes sense that Tommy didn't answer you when you're like so what should I do? Because once you got when when you realize oh, it's in the script, like Like you said, Your mom could do it. Also Tommy respond to your texture saying, but I do understand where it's like, well, what do you what do you get here? You'll it'll all make sense.

Jonathan Groff 6:16

And we did have a day like with like, he wasn't responding to my text before I got there. But then once I got there, he was very like, okay, let's, why don't we go over to Lac's house, we went over to his house on the Monday before I went in for two hours and like, talked about everything. So he did give me the intel once I got there. It was just like, in the week before I was like hi... could someone. But no one. Yeah, they were just really busy. They had a lot going on.

Gillian Pensavalle 6:43

Either one or both of us will get a text from Tommy today.

Jonathan Groff 6:47

Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle 6:48

When it comes out.

Jonathan Groff 6:48

Definitely.

Gillian Pensavalle 6:49

Yeah, I send my text now.

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Jonathan Groff 6:51

Yes, yes, exactly.

Gillian Pensavalle 6:54

Uh, Tommy, I'm sorry. I know you listen, I'm sorry. Um, I mean, the kitten heels have to have a little something to do with it, the cape, the little kitten heels that walk

Jonathan Groff 7:01

totally being in heels. Now. I've never really watched RuPaul's drag race until the last year. And now I'm understanding the level of drag that I was embracing that I didn't, unconsciously knowing that it was drag. But the heels gave me something and certainly the cape and the crown, the original crown, which is no longer there. You will have to ask Andrew Reynolds when you do have him on how he broke it. It broke while I was gone doing the Looking movie.

Gillian Pensavalle 7:34

You left him your crown and he broke it

Jonathan Groff 7:37

literally is what happened. But it was super heavy. And so I don't know if you've ever seen that the episode of I Love Lucy I think it's called Lucy gets in the pictures where she it's like they're in it's they're in LA and she finally gets this job where she's gonna be this chorus girl that dies coming down the stairs. And they put her in this giant head dress and every time she she tilts her head it falls over and that was also became an inspiration for that initial entrance because if I did tilt my head to the side, I felt like Lucille Ball.

Gillian Pensavalle 8:11

So you had to do it all with your eyes.

Jonathan Groff 8:12

Yes. Do I fit in? Yeah, or else I would fall over?

Gillian Pensavalle 8:33

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So you're there for a couple weeks and then you're going to Broadway and then Hamilmania happens.

Jonathan Groff 8:38

I remember the first preview on Broadway when the lights came down. And the audience it was like deafening, the screaming was deafening. And I thought these people don't even know the music yet. They don't even know what they're about to see. Like that. This is just pure excitement over Lin, over you know, in the heights and his fan base, and they don't even know that. The show is incredible. So already there was this energy. And then the thing that we kept hearing, you know, Obama is coming to the first Saturday matinee preview. But like the, the thing about the show is that it lives up to the hype. It is as good as everyone says it is. And so it started at this fever pitch, and then it just kept. It just kept getting bigger and bigger. And it wasn't two famous people. It was 10 famous people in the audience. And then it was 20 famous people and then backstage, it's politicians and musicians and movie stars. And it was like, it was unbelievable. It was unbelievable.

Gillian Pensavalle 9:55

Yeah, there's no way to really no one's ever really had an experience like that. I mean, they have you know, when Anthony Rapp was on, he was saying that Rent was similar to that at the time, but rent you know, not comparing in any way but just comparing the nature of the time like the the social media buzz, and all of that stuff, you know, Rent had. I mean, the idea that Rent still had kids like the city had to change that, like the theaters had to change the overnight lottery laws because they couldn't let 16 year old kids sleep outside 41st and seventh, like,

Jonathan Groff 10:27

Wow, that's crazy.

Gillian Pensavalle 10:29

Well, yeah, it was like a whole thing where it's like, we can't have kids sleeping outside, first and 797. Like, we just can't,

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that cannot be a thing. But it was that same fervor just at a different moment in time. But it's so hard to explain, I'm assuming if you haven't really lived it and then having to be King George or be in the show at all, and then have this person just sobbing at you at the end of the show. Because that's what happens, right? Like you're everyone is very emotional. At the end of Hamilton or and then you're just kind of like you're done with work. And then someone some, like, famous insanely famous person is just crying at you. And you're like, I don't like what a bizarre thing.

Jonathan Groff 11:14

Someone should make it like a funny or die video about that. Because it is they had reached that. That moment. I remember when I came to see it, which was a week after they opened Off Broadway. And I was like, Guys, it's like, it's good. And I feel like I've never seen anything, and I could see in their eyes while I was crying that they were like, okay, yes. Uh huh. Okay, I have to go. But I'll see you tomorrow. Did you like it? Yeah. I remember clocking that when I when I came backstage, in whenever that was March of 2015. And that only became bigger and bigger. And then it really was, it was such a headspace after the show, because it was like a cocktail party with no alcohol on stage because there was always 50 people on stage, famous... Beyonce, you know, or whoever it was. And, actually, in the case of Obama, and Beyonce, those are the only Beyonce slash Jay Z. Those are the only two times that they like, cleared the stage off, and it was kind of just about them.

Gillian Pensavalle 12:29

That's a sentence you just said, except for like Beyonce and Obama. Yeah.

Jonathan Groff 12:34

I know. It was crazy. But then they were like, my dad was talking to Tom Cruise. You know, cuz my dad was there and he was like, I was talking to Tom Cruise. And he really like, He really looks you in the eye.

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Gillian Pensavalle 12:46

He's like a real he's like a real scientologist

Jonathan Groff 12:49

He could, he was like, I can't. He was like, I was talking to Tom Cruise. And it was like, What? He really cares about what I have to say. He was like, really so present with me. I was like, Oh my god, this is so crazy. But that's what it was. It was just like, your friends. Your family, Tom Cruise. It was at this crazy weird cocktail party after the show. And it would be like for 45 minutes. And then you would go out the stage door. It was like it was like a 90 minute two hour experience after the show was over. Every every single night. Which was so singular.

Gillian Pensavalle 13:24

Yeah. It's amazing that you say it because it's true. A cocktail party without alcohol. Yes, it is true because I've been there with people where you're just kind of looking around like who could be at Hamilton? Like who else could be in the front there to see friends or I then I bring a friend like friends in the in the cast and then I bring a friend and everyone's kind of like, looking around to see who you Who else shared that room with you? Yes. Um, so it is but no one's holding a cocktail because that's not allowed because yes, this set and stage are so .... Like there is no backstage at the Rogers so everything is very like you can't have anything back there. You can't touch anything. And then totally, like valid and appropriate but it's it's it's an interesting here's something that you've never experienced in your life, I assure you walking out me walking out of the stage door and everyone go Whoa, oh. But that door opens they hear the sound of like the click and the door opens and they just they can't wait and it's like what we were talking about before we started recording like will that ever happened? What is the nature like what is the future of that?

Jonathan Groff 14:35

I remember seeing Linda etre come out the Stage Door of ... Dr. Jekyll and Hyde and being like, or seeing Sutton Foster come out the stage door and be like and I so get that. I it's it's just

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like there's no other medium other than theater where you get to see someone that you admire or have a fan of the you get to see them live do their craft. And then you get to see them like walk, like walk out of work like

Gillian Pensavalle 15:05

With like a coat on. Yeah, like a very real human.

Jonathan Groff 15:09

Yeah. I remember meeting Matthew Broderick at the stage door of this play called taller than a dwarf. And I had the feeling of like, I'll never wash this hand again after I shook his hand, and he was on a bike. And I was like, Oh, my God, that's so cool. biking. It's so awesome. And then I would bike every day to to Hamilton.

Gillian Pensavalle 15:27

Is that why you did that?

Jonathan Groff 15:28

It's like, I wish it was why I did it. No, I think I did it just because I started biking in 2010. And it opened up the city for me and made me re fall in love with New York just generally. And then I started using my bike for transportation because I found it so inspiring. And then now you just can't get me off my bike.

Gillian Pensavalle 15:48

Oh, good. Yeah, Matthew. I was in high school on the Upper East Side. And Matthew Broderick used to sometimes go to the deli that we used to go to, which is probably now not there. And he was very annoyed at the kids who were being 14. So that's no shade to Matthew Broderick. But that's my only he did not inspire me to get on a bike. He was just probably very bothered by me. But I you know, it's funny you say that, because watching the Hamilfilm, it's so beautiful. And it's it really is so cinematic, but there are just the way it's shot. It does. You feel like oh my god, they're all on a stage. It's this beautiful hybrid of this very cinematic moment. But really like this is theater. You're in a theater.

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Jonathan Groff 16:32

Yeah, totally.

Gillian Pensavalle 16:33

So I would love to talk to you about your experience with that, because I know you came back for that filming.

Jonathan Groff 16:39

Yes

Gillian Pensavalle 16:40

I would love to hear about that whole experience and what it was like to just fall back in to kg three. And that whole story

Jonathan Groff 16:47

I really I did feel when I saw the when I saw the movie. It felt like when I saw it at the public for the first time. And it and the fact that they could capture that feeling. I don't I still don't know how they did that. Because like you said, it feels like you're watching a play. But it also isn't a play. Because anytime you watch B roll from a play, it's so static and doesn't feel like the show so that they could capture that and have it feel like the show I still I don't know how he did it. It's amazing.

Gillian Pensavalle 17:19

Yeah.

Jonathan Groff 17:20

But yeah, I left this show in March 2016. And then they made they shot the movie at the end of June. So it had been a minute since I had done Hamilton. Again, it was one of those like lucky. This was one of those things also just like I never trained, I never went to college and never took serious acting lessons and ever studied voice seriously. So much of what I've learned, always my like way of learning has been doing but in some ways, even more than doing is watching. And my first job on Broadway was under an understudy in the show in my life. And I

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was also the dance captain. And I would watch every day the show. And when I was doing regional theater and I was in the ensemble, I would sit in the wings, and I would watch every day, the show literally every day in the wings or in the Pirates of Penzance. I was a cop and the second act at the regional theater. But I wasn't in the first act. So we go into the balcony. And I would watch the first act every day when I was whatever, 15 years old. And with Hamilton, part of the reason I really wanted to do it on Broadway was because when we were off Broadway, I would watch the show every day from the vom. And when we were on Broadway, I would sneak into the audience. And I would go into the box. And I would pull back the velvet curtain, there was people sitting right in front of me. And I would be in my king costume fully like in the costume and the wig, peeking through the curtain of the box watching I for the first several months, I watched the show every day. And then it was like I watched it every other day. And then I watched it a couple times a week. And that experience of watching it was just such a gift. just such a like, feels like so lucky to have had that and watching the movie. I really felt like everybody gets this experience now you can just hit play, you can just hit rewind and and and those kids that are making theater, the teenagers, the kids in college, we have kids that are young now that will watch it later. Just the fact that they're going to be able to watch and learn. You know about choreography about staging about set design about acting about how to write a musical about you know, like that, just to me is like such a gift and I hope that they record every musical ever on Broadway because I just think that musicals are going to get so much better because Hamilton was recorded.

Gillian Pensavalle 19:54

Did you hear that Come From Away is coming out.

Jonathan Groff 19:56

No.

Gillian Pensavalle 19:57

Yeah, today they announced it.

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Jonathan Groff 19:58

Ah Oh My god, that's incredible

Gillian Pensavalle 20:01

So like, its starting. it started.

Jonathan Groff 20:02

Thank God that's so great.

Gillian Pensavalle 20:04

Yeah, but you so where where were you

Jonathan Groff 20:07

I left the show early. I left my year long contract early, three months early to go do Mindhunter. So I flew on a day off. from Hamilton to LA got Mindhunter left the show in March. And it just so happened that we were on a they would have never let me out of shooting the show. To do this to do Hamilton, they just wouldn't have done it. Because when you signed up when I signed up for the show, they were like, and you're you're in every day and you can't leave and you'd sign on the dotted line.

Gillian Pensavalle 20:42

That's Fincher for you

Jonathan Groff 20:44

Totally, yeah, there was no compromise on that agreement. And I was like, not knowing that Hamilton was going to be filmed not knowing that that was even coming down the pike. I was like, Yes. And then even like at the Tonys, I came back that weekend for the Tony Awards, because I was out of the show already. Went to the Tony Awards, that they were over at 11pm or something. Everybody went to the party. I got in a car and with a pillow and slept for six hours and got driven to the set on Monday morning and shot MIndhunter. That's how intense they weren't. I would think it was a kind of get the morning off because I'm going to be at the Tony. No, we'll send you a car to from New York to Pittsburgh, you'll wake up on Monday and we'll shoot at

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5am. And here we go. And so that there was just I would have never been able to get out of that or get get out of that schedule. There was a week hiatus. And it just happened to be the week that because they shot it on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. And Monday I came in and did the scenes a bunch like the King George songs. And then Tuesday, I did it in front of the live audience with the rest of the company. Rory was doing it at the time and they he like flew home and got to deal with this husband. So he was like, that's great. Yeah, and it was crazy. I it was totally out of body. I sang the song three times on the Monday. And they're like, Alright, let's go again. And my voice just started to completely go away. I had no stamina whatsoever. Thankfully, they got like three good takes. And that was all I had left in me for that day. It was like riding a bike. It was like, you know, there's that part of the brain that can for me at least where I can choose to get stressed out or I can just choose a road divergent two paths,

Gillian Pensavalle 22:39  
right

Jonathan Groff 22:40  
I thought okay, you know what, I'm going to just choose to go down the path that this is fun and fuck it. I know it I've done it before I got this in my back pocket. There was another path that was like I don't remember the words but I chose not to go down that path.

Gillian Pensavalle 22:59  
Well I wonder I wonder if it helped that you were just in your your headspace like surrounded by unhinged narcissists on on Mindhunter that it was just it felt just like going home totally organic to KG3

Jonathan Groff 23:11  
Exactly there. I'm sure there was some sort of aspect of that like

Gillian Pensavalle 23:16

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Ed Kemper to kg three there's got to be a couple of

Jonathan Groff 23:19

Yes, totally.... and we had just done yeah the week before we had just done the first Ed Kemper interview we were like really in the thick of shooting Yeah, so I yeah, it was it was surreal It was super fun it was like so cool to see everyone again I remember being like spending a lot of the time being like

Gillian Pensavalle 23:38

And the beads again I'm sure the beads were beads

Jonathan Groff 23:44

were there yes the beads were there.

Gillian Pensavalle 23:46

Yeah, it's like coming home.

Jonathan Groff 23:47

Yeah, it did feel that way. And everyone everyone you know obviously was the entire cast for when I'd left several months earlier so it felt it was so fun and but again like the like being cast in the show, it was like a lucky completely kind of just things aligned shouldn't have happened and then it did.

Gillian Pensavalle 24:07

So the Patreon peeps have so many questions about Hamilton and a ton of other stuff so I always love to give them the credit and just let them ask those questions but I would love to just dive into Mindhunter for a little bit before we get to the Patreon peeps Yeah, sure. Again True Crime Obsessed like that's my job and so mine hunter really does check so many things on the will Gillian love this list. It's like True Crime Fincher. You a slow burn, it's ... like it's really everything just like I just devoured it. And I remember when Lynn came over the first time back in September of 20... 2017 when MIndHunter was just sort of becoming a thing I was like, Oh my god, did you hear that coffin? True Crime and Fincher and oh my god, what's it gonna be? And I wasn't exactly sure and said off. I think it was off

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air. He was just like I love and support Jonathan Groff. True Crime scares me. I will watch it through my fingers. He was like, are you into that kind of thing? And I was like, yeah, that was before true crime obsessed really took off. So I would love like, I know there are a lot of listeners that listen to the Hamilcast and true crime obsessed. But for those of them who don't if you can just explain what Mindhunter is. And then I have just like a couple of questions, because we're fascinated by the whole thing.

Jonathan Groff 25:21

Of course, Mindhunter is based on a book called Mindhunter, written by John Douglas, who is an FBI agent. And the story is about the birth of the behavioral science unit in the FBI, in like the late 70s, early 80s. And it's the group of people that coined the phrase serial killer, that's sort of like the line that can sort of let you know how sort of people didn't know a lot like what would like like all the things that we that we hear so much of now from shows like Criminal Minds or things that seem now culturally like so obvious. How why all the questions that we see in all these crime shows, this was like the late 70s, early 80s birth of that strain of psychology in the FBI posts, sort of like Hoover, good guy, bad guy. It's looking at the kind of gray, can we and this is actually what John Douglas did go into these prisons and talk to these incarcerated sociopaths and get information about why they did what they did to help us prevent it from happening in the future.

Gillian Pensavalle 26:32

Yeah, and it comes up on to crime obsessed, because I just say like, you know, John Douglas did that. And Patrick will be like, Wait, what? And I'm like, Jonathan Groff in Mindhunter did that same thing where like, we covered BTK, which I know was the cold open of Mindhunter. He was installing alarms like BTK is so terrifying. We did a live show about Manson and then we did a whole documentary about Manson. The women in the family. That scene was I watched that scene of you talking to Manson is like,

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that actor is phenomenal. He also played Charles Manson in Tarantino movie.

Jonathan Groff 27:11

Once upon a time in Hollywood. Yes, yes. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle 27:13

He's phenomenal. And there was another actor in justified who I'm also obsessed with who played Manson and another movie, so it was a justified connection. But um, yeah, were you a true crime person at all?

Jonathan Groff 27:27

It was one of those jobs. I had audition for David Fincher for the social network for Justin Timberlake part. Seven years before

Gillian Pensavalle 27:35

I auditioned for the for the girlfriend.

Jonathan Groff 27:37

No way at the Rooney Mara. Yes. Yes. The opening scene?

Gillian Pensavalle 27:40

Yes.

Jonathan Groff 27:41

I could totally see you in that part.

Gillian Pensavalle 27:43

It's because you're an asshole. That line. I remember seeing the script and I was like, Oh my God. But yes,

Jonathan Groff 27:49

yes. Yes. You're probably going to be a very successful computer person.

Jonathan Groff 28:11

such a great movie,

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Gillian Pensavalle 28:12

so good. Oh, on Andrew Garfield, back to Lin, Tick Tick Boom, like, please. Yes.

Jonathan Groff 28:17

Oh my gosh, so many connections. I love it. Yeah. Um, I met him then we had it was like a long work session. And I didn't get it. And I was like, someday really want to work with that guy. So when the audition came through, I was like, Oh, I really want to work with this guy. And true crime not I'm I'm like Lin I would have to watch it through my hands. I'm not into it. I I would never read it serial killer book. I wouldn't watch the shows the movies, whatever. I don't like horror movies. So the genre is not my thing. But David's name got me really excited. And then when I read the script, the character was so great that of Holden that I was an audition scenes were like the scene with Kemper was like 15 pages long and I got really into the psychology of the writing of the scenes not necessarily the subject matter was turning me on but this idea that it was this kind of like milk drinking you know do good agent who ends up mirroring these sociopaths in order to get information out of them was like what so dark and weird and I got really excited by the just the sort of character study of that. And so I remember practicing the scenes dressed as King George in my curtain in my beaded curtain dressing room. And I was like, you know, do you think there's more of you or whatever you know that big scene with Kemper

Jonathan Groff 30:17

[MINDHUNTER clip]

Jonathan Groff 30:54

I remember sitting there learning it. And Emmy kept coming through the beaded curtain in her like ensemble costume outfit, because she would always come in. And I remember hiding the sides. Because I knew if I told her what I was auditioning to be, she would have felt that she would laugh at me. Not that she would. But this was my own insecurity of how could someone dress

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like this play this part? How could someone that's doing this play this part, I had to really psych myself into it because it was so far away from what I was doing in Hamilton. And I really felt like this is such a long shot. But I'm gonna try for it. And I have to really believe that I can do it. And I and I needed the privacy of it being in my own without anyone's eye roll even for split second because I felt insecure about going up for it because it felt so not my own. Just like a world that I don't naturally live in, um, and then and then got it and was like, I felt so excited. And then it was so intense. But but it was intense. Because when I met with David, he said you can't get sick. You're in every single day of the shoot. We're going to be in Pittsburgh shooting for nine months, it ended up being we shot for almost 12 months in total with reshoots. And it was, you know, the the sort of like, the days would go fast, because he, he's very fast in that you're always working. It's not a lot of sit around and waiting. You're doing the scenes a lot. And he would like to do a lot of takes. And so the days would feel fast, but it would require a lot of in the best way energy and attention. And just the the process was the most intense process that I've ever experienced.

Gillian Pensavalle 33:01

So Zodiac is my favorite movie, as everyone knows, I've talked about it 100 times, but there's some behind the scenes thing. I'm not exactly sure what it is. But it's Jake Gyllenhaal, who plays Robert Gray Smith. And he is it's just like a scene about his day. He's dropping his he's putting his son on the bus. He's doing a couple of sketches in a notebook is he's a cartoonist and he's tossing the notebook on the passenger side of his car because he's in the driver's seat and he just like flicks the notebook, and that flick of the notebook to throw it into the passenger seat. David Fincher made him do I think it's like 30 or 40 times there's some behind the scenes thing where Gyllenhaal is like how many more times do you think he's gonna make me do this kind of as a joke like this knowing sort of tone because everyone knows that's Fincher's way that was my favorite part.

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Jonathan Groff 33:43

I mean, that it's weird because I, I think with David theater he gets along well, with theater people, true theater, people that love repetition, I think I'm a little I'm a little OCD or something too, in the way with with him and sort of what you're talking about with your editing. Where where I could I could just turn over the exact same thing. It's also why I love doing eight shows a week, the little small things that no one would ever even know but it's to me so interesting and fun to sort of. It's like perfect something is not even the right word. Because you know, it'll never be perfect, but always improve it. And with scenes like the ones that I would say it's it is harder to throw a notebook on a on a chair, like with with with with David and I did do those things lots of times, but we did, because in the psychological scenes, I could do them all day. I mean, we would finish those days with the serial killers, which we would take you know, the Manson one took three days to shoot. And the the first scene with Kemper took two days to shoot. And I could have just kept doing it because I love the psychology of those scenes and the actors that they hired to play With the serial killers was so good. And I, I was, that to me was the, in some ways the easiest thing because I, that's what I live for. I think you used to also start to learn as time goes by, or at least I feel this way in theater too. You start to see how people how much they love what they do, you start to understand why people are doing what they're doing, as you observe, as you observe things through the years, and with David, and the environment that he creates, he invites people to roll around in and really invest a lot of time and energy into what they're doing. And people have very different reactions to that invitation.

Gillian Pensavalle 36:01

Yeah, and it's just like what you were saying even it's so funny like to compare it to King George but everything was there for you to succeed. It was on the page and the like you said like the actors who who were in like the Kemper and Manson and all these people like the script is so is so well researched and written and these people that are giving it right back to you,

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and working as hard as you are, it just feels like a like the best game of tennis or whatever ever. You're just going right back and forth.

Jonathan Groff 36:28

Absolutely. Yeah, it was like that part was those big scenes and those experiences were what made the whole thing worth it and why I signed up for it in the first place. The hardest thing to me was just the the hours and just the sort of like, to me psychologically, I, I, you know, once you're on set with an, it's not as if I was watching it, I would like Lin, I wouldn't be it would be like, Oh, that must be so intense to do that. But when you're actually doing it, you're just kind of solving math problems. You know, you're trying to figure out the best way to tell the story, you're not really, for me at least invested in what is actually being talked about in the scene. you're you're you're telling a story. You're not living it, you know that because John Douglas talks a lot about the psychological toll that the work took on him

Gillian Pensavalle 37:18

Totally

Jonathan Groff 37:18

Like he, he's actually talking to serial killers. Like, he's actually talking to families where the kids have gone missing where the I mean, that is horrible. I can't even imagine that. I'm an actor in a scene. I mean, the hardest thing for me was just working the long hours. And I would take like naps, every every lunch break, I would go to my trailer, I would eat for exactly 10 minutes and I would sleep for exactly 20 minutes. And then I would wake up and then we would go, it was like the half an hour to like recharge before it was like it'd be on for the camera again. But that's just like a technical physical endurance, kind of like running a marathon situation. We're not actually dealing with, with people that have actually lost anyone so that it never took a toll on me like that, like it would for a real person. It was just the working every day, you know, and Saturday, we would rehearse on Saturdays. And then for

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nine months, you know, that was just, it was a lot of work. And it was great. And but it was it was it was challenging. But in all the ways that I enjoy

Gillian Pensavalle 38:22

what you were saying you're like, I'm not really like the method actor kind of way where I'm like, okay, so you didn't actually like research BTK and don't if you haven't, don't

Jonathan Groff 38:31

I wouldn't... I I like I read John's book, and I would read about the killers before we would interview them. And like I watched the documentary on Manson. But I wouldn't like... it was not my great passion to pour over the details.

Gillian Pensavalle 38:49

It really is. It's hard.

Jonathan Groff 38:50

Yeah. And David talked about, is it the toolbox? killer list? I can't remember the where there's these tapes of where you can hear them like drilling into people's bodies.

Gillian Pensavalle 39:01

Oh god, no.

Jonathan Groff 39:03

And he talked I think it was during Zodiac or if maybe it was Zodiac or something else. And he advised the Holt and I, and Anna from the beginning, you know, he said this, you don't have to hear this stuff. There's certain things that when you see it and you hear it you can never unsee or unhear certain things

Gillian Pensavalle 39:23

100%

Jonathan Groff 39:24

So go to do what you need, but you just play the scene

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Gillian Pensavalle 39:29

to tell you don't look up BTK Yeah, I care too much about you. Groff. Thank you. We've been through so much. Um, hey Groff. I have just one question. Yeah. Are you ready to take even more questions from the Patreon peeps?

Jonathan Groff 39:43

Oh, yes. Bring it I'm so ready. I'm so excited

Gillian Pensavalle 40:14

So this is a first actually. We have some questions from Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Jonathan Groff 40:21

What

Gillian Pensavalle 40:23

Lin is a Patreon Peep. Officially he's like on the Patreon. It's a whole thing.

Jonathan Groff 40:27

Oh my god, of course he is

Gillian Pensavalle 40:28

It blows my mind it's a really big deal but he has never once submitted questions for anyone.

Jonathan Groff 40:35

Whoa, I'm so honored and a little nervous.

Gillian Pensavalle 40:39

Oh, it's fine. You guys are in love. It's fine. People write papers about it. But yeah, he's been a peep for a while but he's never once submitted questions and he has like three for you. So we're gonna start

Jonathan Groff 40:51

Oh my god. Okay

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Gillian Pensavalle 40:53  
with Lin Manuel Miranda.

Jonathan Groff 40:54  
Okay. Let me get my mind right.

Gillian Pensavalle 40:56  
And I was trying not to react because you mentioned this a little bit. But he said number one Groff has probably seen the show the most times asked him about his most memorable experiences as a spectator from the vom Off Broadway, or his secret Phantom viewing box on the Rogers.

Jonathan Groff 41:12  
He see... he knows he knows. And

Gillian Pensavalle 41:16  
he said that like two days ago, so that was not planned. I was like, secretly texting him when we were in the bathroom or anything.

Jonathan Groff 41:21  
Oh, my God. How funny. Well, now, you know it's true, because we both said it separately. Okay.

Gillian Pensavalle 41:28  
Well, can you explain what the vom is? To some listeners?

Jonathan Groff 41:31  
I feel like they wouldn't know either. Yes, of course, I wouldn't know either. unless I've worked there. And they told me what it was. It's like, it's sort of like the bleachers at a high school football game. So you're kind of under like, if you can imagine bleachers in like a football game and you're under the bleachers. But there's a like, open space where you can walk out onto the field. That's what the backstage part of the backstage of the Newman theater is like at the Public Theater. So it's one it's like an exit like if you were going to jump off the lip of the stage and run into the audience in a Broadway

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theater, it would be like where the aisle of the audiences but at the public, if you go to the back of this particular aisle, it's it's a sort of path to the backstage area. So I would stand down there and it was like I was standing under the bleachers at a football game watching the game but I was standing watching Hamilton right the first thing that comes to my head about the the vom in at the Public Theater, was I had a really bird's eye view of Renee Elise goldsberry walk during the Schuyler Sisters she that when the turntable but go and she would be like with her pamphlet.

Jonathan Groff 43:06

And I just was... I just became so deeply obsessed with her and it's like her the way her shoulders would go back and the way that she would walk on the on the platform. I just that I don't know why I'd like standing in the vom, though. Something about watching Renee walking

Gillian Pensavalle 43:24

You can see it in the Schuyler Sisters in the Hamill film. She does that shoulder move, but she liked chest out. Yes. Yes. See it? It's amazing.

Jonathan Groff 43:31

Yes. It's amazing. And then in that when I think about being in the velvet curtain box

Gillian Pensavalle 43:39

That Lin calls the Phantom viewing

Jonathan Groff 43:41

the Phantom. Yeah. It was totally the Phantom viewing box totally.

Jonathan Groff 43:45

What was interesting about that was I could watch the audience just as much as I was watching the show. And I remember thinking it's funny that Lin asked me this question because I remember thinking he's so genius. Because you could he's, he's so as a

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writer, conscious of the audience, because it was like a sort of like what like, you know, how in a in a, in a comedy or in a show, when like a laugh kind of like crests and comes back down the way that the show is structured? They would be like, there was there was no lull. Yes, it like like musically, genre wise, story wise, every time something crested right before the audience had time to even like breathe, or get bored, or particularly in that run of the first act from like, the Schuyler Sisters all the way through to the end of Act One. It's like almost relentless how he just like, it would go, boom, boom, boom, and it would be like Comedy, Romance drama. was just like, just sort of overwhelming with the show, which we'd like, I would be standing there and all of a sudden it would be the end of Act One, it went by so fast. Yeah. Because he just could like, anticipate the, the the, it's just like a very basic thing of anticipating the audience's attention span.

Gillian Pensavalle 45:19

Yeah. And I talked about that, I think with him, and with Tommy, I want to say is that you are King George is just right on time.

Jonathan Groff 45:27

Yeah. And it's like that we are particularly with the king and part of why it is, like indestructible as a role. It's like, Okay, my brain is processing all of these historical figures played by people of color rapping, which is not how I think of like, Thomas Jefferson, maybe or what Thomas Jefferson isn't in the beginning, but it's not how you think of like old school, you know, 1776 weaving of white guys in wigs and like, whatever. And now it's this. So you're doing a lot of math. Well, not anymore. Another show so famous, but initially, you're doing a lot of math of like, Okay, and so that is Marquis de Lafayette. And that is Alexander Hamilton, and that is Aaron Burr. And then the king comes out and he's this like, white guy in the exact costume that you imagined him to be in totally not rapping? Singing a song that's dadadada da, da, you know, it's like you can you know exactly what it is the minute you see it, it's like no work required. And so there's like, ah, I get this I can understand for the, for the older folks out there that are maybe

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having trouble getting the references or keeping up with the words or really signing on for this concept. They see the king and they're like, ah, Okay, I get it. Okay, I'm in on the joke too. Okay, this this is something I can understand. It's like a, it's like Tommy said, there's a bunch of on ramps in the show. And satisfied being like kind of a final on ramp that like, if you haven't gotten on by satisfied, then nothing will bring you on. If that number does not, does not bring you into the experience, then you're a lost cause.

Gillian Pensavalle 47:13

Seriously, who takes a hard pass on satisfied? Well, no one listening to this podcast. I know that much. And How fun is it that Lin submitted questions? I was so excited for you to hear them. And that's what we're going to pick up next week with episode three because there are two more questions from Lin Manuel Miranda who might be a little clairvoyant or he just knows and loves Groff that much. Which Yeah, I mean, yes, that's the answer. And the Patreon peeps never disappoint because Jonathan takes more questions and talks about friendships and fame playing Seymour in little shop, how he was looking helped him truly love himself and we sign off with a very valuable life lesson from Kristoff and Sven. You're gonna love it. It's so fun. Thank you so much for listening. And until next week, stay safe stay healthy. Please, please, please wear that mask. I love you.

Gillian Pensavalle 48:31

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