

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 266 CHARLES LAPOINTE PART 1 TRANSCRIPT

Lin-Manuel Miranda [00:00:00] Hi, I'm stage and stage's Lin-Manuel Miranda, and you're listening to the Hamilcast.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:18] Hello, everyone. Welcome back to the Hamilcast, I am Gillian. Tonight, I am here with Charles LaPointe, award winning hair and wig designer. Hey, Charles.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:00:29] Hey, nice to be here.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:31] Thank you so much for joining me. You said I can call you Chuck, so I might go back and forth.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:00:35] Totally.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:35] Cool. Before we get started, can you tell me your pronouns, please?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:00:39] Him/his.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:40] Thank you.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:41] So, you know, look, I can't read your entire resume because we have so much to get to. You've worked on over 70 shows. Hamilton, Aint Too proud. Beetlejuice, Cher, SpongeBob, Motown, The Color Purple, Beautiful. After midnight, Magic Bird, Newsis, Lombardi. Bring it on, in the heights. Wicked. You know, quite a few Tommy Kail Productions in there.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:01:01] Yeah, we've been together a while.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:02] Yes. I cannot wait to hear all about your friendship with Paul Tazewell, who I'm also obsessed with.

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:01:08] Who you can get on this cast. You know, you could be glad to do this.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:12] I was going to ask you after I was going to see you, you thought that maybe you had a good time. And then I was going to ask you about putting us in touch because I've been dying to talk to Paul Tazewell.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:01:23] I'm sure he would love it. I'm sure he would love it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:25] OK, well, thanks. OK, now I'm really so right now we're drinking, we're drinking some coffee. But if we choose to skip because, you know, I like to make a custom cocktail or at least name it. Now, in these covid times, since we're not together.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:01:38] oh cool.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:38] My husband Mike, who we call Mix Master Mike. He's very good at the naming of the things. And he was like, what? Why do you call it hair of the human instead of hair of the dog? And I was like, you know what?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:01:50] That's pretty fabulous. I like that. Stick with it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:53] So no matter what we're doing, the coffee, water, wine, tequila, whatever, whatever you get into, thats what we're-

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:00] hair of the human.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:01] So your friend and a patreon peep of the Hamilcast, Kate, put us in touch.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:07] She did.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:07] Yeah. So I just want to shout out Kate. I'm very grateful. Thank you so much. How do you know Kate?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:13] Hi Kate. Kate is the tenant of one of my oldest friends who I started performing with when I was 17.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:21] Wow.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:21] And have stayed. We've remained friends all these years. And that's how I met Kate. She was this tenant.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:27] That's incredible.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:27] And now his friend and I think they've known each other a very long time. She she and I only met two or three years ago.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:34] Yeah. She sent me this email. It's the people are so nice. You'll get to know them a little bit when they ask their questions for you, but they're so sweet and so kind. And she was like, hey, Gillian, I'm just I was wondering if maybe you'd be interested in I said, Kate, are you kidding? Absolutely. I would love to talk to Charles. You just got back from Australia.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:56] I did.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:56] So we have to talk about that? You are newly vaccinated. Congratulations.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:02:59] Thank you very much. Happy to be so.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:01] So and I've been talking for ten minutes. It feels like. So tell the people exactly what you do.

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I want to hear the whole Chuck LePointe story, like what you do, how you got into it, the entire thing.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:03:12] Hi, everybody. I'm Charles LePoint. I'm a wig designer. I'm a Broadway wig designer. I've been doing this for about twenty five years, actually. Twenty seven now. How I got into it was a little nefarious. I slept with the boss, if you will. I met this guy, Tom Watson. We started a relationship at the time I was performing in theater and doing wardrobe as as my actual paying job. And was looking for something else and kind of was floundering a bit and I met him and this is what he did and we started this relationship and at the time he was doing a lot of opera, which when you do opera, you not only have to learn about hair, you also have to learn about makeup because most companies can't afford the two departments. So he basically took me on the road with them because he was always on the road and threw me in and said, look, try this, see if this works. That was really how it started.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:06] But were you interested in working with hair makeup as a kid?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:04:10] All right. So I had two sisters growing up and my eldest sister has Down syndrome. I would do her hair. I do her makeup. We'd go to thrift stores, I'd put her in gowns and we do photo shoots. This is my big thing. But my mom was like, oh, you love hair so much. Why don't you get into it? Why don't you be a hairdresser? I'm like, Mom, I'm gay. That's the last thing I need is to be a stereotypical hairdresser. So I fought tooth and nail for about eight years. And then I met this guy and that was the end of. Here I am.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:37] Where did you grow up?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:04:38] In Westport, Massachusetts, right near the cape.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:41] Your mom was cool with it?

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:04:42] Not at first. You know, it was the 80s. So when I came out, it was like kind of right in the middle of AIDS, number one. And number two, not many people were out and about. So I was the first guy in my school. I was the a lot of firsts were going on there. And first of all, my family, my entire extended family. So it was at first a little bit they were raised Catholic. That was all that bullshit they had to work through. Then we had one drag me out fight where everybody ended up crying their eyes out and that was it. The next day she was pretty much ok.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:13] Yeah, you're like, Mom, you're encouraging me to be a hairdresser. I don't know what-

Charles G. LaPointe [00:05:16] Yeah, exactly. What what is. What's this. I don't get it. I don't get it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:21] Can you just describe to the people maybe just what your job is exactly like really the intricacies of what you do as a hair and wig designer

Charles G. LaPointe [00:05:31] As a hair and wig designer I'm not like any production that you do. It's so it's all about collaboration. I work with the costume designer directly. We come up with a he comes or they he she comes up with a design and overall design. And many of the designers I work with know me so well, they trust me. So they kind of give a rough idea of what they think the hair should be based on the period or whatever or the concept. And then they allow me to go in and interpret it. I decide color, I decide the style I decide to fit. So people come into my room, we do a head wrap, wrap them up in plastic, draw the hairline. I put them on a block, I stuffed the block and then I've got them. And from that I can do anything. So then we build the cap, we put in the hair based on what I want it to be. And that's really then we style when it's all done.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:24] It sounds like you're very much like me and I'd learn by doing person.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:06:29] Yeah, that's exactly it. I've never gone to beauty college. I've never gone to cosmetology school, barber school. I basically learned from the experience of great teachers and experience. Just failing, really failing is how you learn the most and being OK to having it be OK to fail.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:50] I want to ask you about your friendship with Paul Tazewell, but also all of your experience with the cabinet, the Tommy Kail, Lin scene, because you've known them for a long time. And so I guess what comes first, I get your Paul Tazewell story comes first before the Tommy Kail of it all

Charles G. LaPointe [00:07:09] Yeah. So I met Paul when I was with Tom. Tom Watson, who's another wig designer on Broadway, who is the guy I was talking about before.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:18] Sure.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:07:18] He did a show with Paul called Drowning Crow, and that was Tom's like Tom's first big African-American led show. It didn't go probably as well as everybody had hoped because the play was really not very good. But in the end, Paul and Tom started to forge a bit of relationship. But Tom could not do the next production. So he recommended me. And that was P. Diddy's just went out of my head with Audra McDonald, A

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:49] Raisin in the Sun. Yes.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:07:51] Thank you. Thank you very much. This is you're going to you're going to do a lot of this kind of stuff right now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:56] Happy to help.

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:07:57] So that was my first big foray into the world of African-American hair. And that's really how I've made my career, is by representing this underrepresented group of people on Broadway. And I just have an affinity for it. I, I immediately I don't know if something happened when I started doing it because I was petrified. I had no idea, you know, especially in the two thousands when African-American people on Broadway saw the white guy coming in to tell them how their hair was going to be, it was met with some skepticism naturally. And I would be on the subway staring at people's heads and seeing how the hair grew out, the heat, how the helix was in each person's. And the different textures that you were dealing with and trying to translate that into a wig so that this person, this actor felt like this was really their hair and not just something arbitrarily through on their head. So I spent a lot of time really working on it. But also what I loved about it was that you can do anything with African-American hair that texture. You can style it into so many different things and all that texture, all texture, hair, whether it's African-American or not. Does that is it kind of locks on itself a bit so you can create shapes and designs and stuff without a lot of effort and a lot of sitting. You can do a lot of different. It's fascinating stuff. I love it. I still love it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:20] People trusted you. And I think the reason why people would trust you is because there's so much care. I can hear it in your voice. I can see it in your face. You care so much about what you're doing and doing it right. That comes through so clearly to me.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:09:35] Well, thank you. No matter who I'm making awake for, that's what it's that's the basis you want it to be. I want it to be real. I can do the most outlandish design, but I always want that wig, whether it's meant to be a wig or it's meant to be someone's hair, to look like it's growing out of their head so that there's a sense of illusion that you don't even think about that. You're not saying, oh,

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that's a beautiful wig. What you're saying is, oh, hair is incredible.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:00] Yeah, and I think that's true. And I think that's part of the beauty of when you or someone in your position does your job as well as you clearly do, the last thing you think about, because everyone looks so natural and wonderful and you know the same thing. I was talking to Ana-Lee Craig all these years ago about the microphones. You don't see the microphones like everything is really natural on stage. And so I think when you see if you were to Google you and do some research on you and then see images of the wigs that you've done on stage, there are images where I'd say there's no there's not a wig there. I don't know why this photo is included.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:10:37] Then I've done my job.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:38] Absolutely you have.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:10:40] That's really what it comes down to if you think that and people think that and I feel like I've won. And I think that's true for all with designers and all shows. If it's done well, you have no idea that there are so many.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:51] Yeah.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:10:52] Because there really are a lot.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:53] Right. Right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:54] So tell me about I guess heights was the first year was the foray into Lin, Lac, Tommy of it all.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:11:01] Andy Exactly. Exactly. And that's all through Paul Because I developed a relationship with Paul, not only were we instant colleagues, but we were pretty much instant friends and that just kept developing as each show went on. And our next big thing was The Color Purple, which was an

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incredible experience for the both of us. And then in the Heights came very shortly after that. And that was my first foray into that whole world and what they were like. And what's interesting is I'm older. Paul and I are both older than all of them. And yet I felt like I was the kid in the room. They were. So I mean, I'm sure the being the first show, they were scared to death, but at the same time, there was a confidence about what they had and the the the project and the just the talent pool was unbelievable. I mean, it was it was an honor to be involved in that show. And it was so personal to him and to all of them. Really.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:56] Yeah.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:11:57] And nobody knew what the hell was going to happen with it. And then it was this huge success. And they all sky we all skyrocketed after that. We just the work just kept coming.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:07] Is it a little working in your position, your role? Is it a little bit like when the musicians tell me that you don't like audition to be in the pit in a Broadway musical, like people, you know, people, and they recommend you and they say, I trust this person with this guy because I can't imagine you. How do you like interview to be you?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:12:26] Well, I think I've done it once or twice. I mean, it's generally you you connect with designers and the designers once they see what you do and like what you do, they bring you want other shows because most designers don't or costume designers don't want to think about the hair. They don't want to have to worry about. They've got enough to worry about with the costumes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:47] Right.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:12:47] So when they find someone they like, they bring them along because then they're guaranteed to

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have what the outcome that they're looking for through the collaboration. So that's really how it works. For the most part.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:58] Let's just go right into Hamilton then. Right. Because you were saying that it's not entirely true that because I thought the whole thing about the original Broadway cast, there were it was like all the natural hair. I mean, are you going to pull the rug out from under me and like, OK, except for KG3.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:13:15] KG3. Angelica had a wig. She was wigged the whole time. Ari DeBois was wigged

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:20] because I even had in my notes I was like, all right. So Lin famously cut off his hair after his last show right there.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:13:27] The boys were all natural. There were no boys wigged. Ari ended up having a wig. She kind of went in and out of it for whatever reason. I don't remember what the reason for that was. Betsey.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:40] Wait Betsey, that like iconically blond hair is a wig.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:13:43] Yeah.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:13:43] But that's so much her is it because of the movement and the choreography of the show? Because that when she goes out the stage door, she looked the same.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:13:52] She had her hair was breaking because it was getting bleached blond so much. And she she would have to maintain the roots all the time. So to save her from all the struggle, we wigged her in the look and then she could option whether she wanted to stay blond or whatnot, because I think she at one point went back to her natural color for a little while just to let her hair take a break

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:14] Right. But it was her original look.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:14:17] It was her original look. We basically just copied a look. Now, when I did that wig, the first time, the roots on it were almost black. It looked horrible. I'm like, how could you fuck this up so badly? Pardon my pardon language.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:31] Say whatever you want.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:14:32] All right. All I did was I'm like, all right, I've got to do something. I can't throw this wig out. I went and it just bleached the color out, not knowing what it would do. Because you have to understand, when you put color on a chemically processed hair, you don't know what the actual chemical process is. So it can your color, depending on the brand, can come out in a myriad number of shades. So you're always taking a chance. Again, I'm not a colorist, so it's all hit or miss anyway. So I thought, all right, let's throw a little bleach on it, see what happens, and all of a sudden the roots came out, this kind of natural brown color and it looked like it was going to totally dodged a bullet on that one.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:12] Let me tell you, you fooled me. And a lot of other people say, oh, no, I always ask people what their Hamilton story is. And it feels like I'm taking a hard left because we were just talking about this one specific thing. But I want to hear about your general Hamilton story, because I remember them. You know, I think there were bonnets for a time. And I know that there was a lot of changes with how the cast was going to look. So I would love to hear sort of how you got involved in the show and then the journey of how the look started and now where it ended.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:15:49] I got to tell you, I think you're going to be disappointed because, well, when Paul approached me with the show, it was kind of an off the cuff type of thing.

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Paul had been involved with the mixtape when they did the first staged reading of that. And he kind of what he kept playing it down. Paul is very low key anyway about any project, but he was particularly playing this down for some reason. He felt like it was going to be it could it had the chance to be successful. But again, it had no money. I was super busy at the time. He's like, I don't think it's many wigs. We're interested in doing it. I'm like, I'd love to do it. I'd pretty much do anything. You wanted to clean the toilet. So when we did it originally, it was just two wigss. It was the King George and Angelica had won. So I wasn't really even in tech for that long. I was there for a day and they were teching the Ten Duel Commandments. And I sat there and I was watching this thing really with no, I didn't even I did no research. I had no idea what I was even going into.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:49] Well there was nothing to research. It was so new.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:16:51] There was no script even that I had seen nothing. I hadn't I hadn't done anything. So I'm sitting there watching this thing and I'm looking at Paul. And I'm you know, when you get that sense that you are watching something that is going to change how it's all done, I literally bawled my eyes out over that song, which is just so not emotional, but I just lost it. I just felt like, oh, my God, I, I need to be a part of this because this is going to change how it's done. And that was my introduction to that show.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:17:24] Did you say I was going to be disappointed by that? Because I can. Can you see the chills? Ok, so there are two wigs, but that doesn't mean that there's a lot of people with hair in the cast.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:17:36] So, yes, we did a lot. We did a lot of styling. There was a lot of talk about that. We sat down with everyone and went over the looks and secured the look and then everybody had to maintain the look. So there was a crew that ran it and did the hair dressing for the show in general, that it moved to Broadway and we upped the ante by adding more

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wigs to it. So what started off as two wigs went to six and then all of a sudden it jumped to twenty four because we had all the swings and the covers to do it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:04] Why the change? Because I've seen I've been so fortunate to see so many different people in so many different roles. And sometimes the Hamilton is wigged, sometimes he's not.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:18:14] OK, so the whole concept with the show is that from the neck below it's period inspired from the neck above it's modern. So what the only directive really that I got from Tommy and Paul really was that everybody had to have some essence of themselves within the hair. It didn't matter if they were wigged or not wigged. They wanted to keep them as much themselves as possible. So in the beginning, that meant fewer wigs. But the way we got to really almost all of the cast, the wig was that once we started putting many productions together, it was just too hard to manage everyone with wigs. You would have the consistency of the same look every ostensibly the same look every single night. We could manage to look without worrying about people going out and getting haircuts without somebody wanted to change, take out their dreads and or their braids. We could keep consistency and people would have a little bit more option in their daily life to do what they want to do. So that's really how the big number of wigs came about and they're all made to look like their own hair or some part of their hair.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:18] Right. And that's part of the you know, we always say movie magic, Hollywood magic, but the theater magic where someone can walk out of the stage door and look exactly the same. And so it feels like there's not a wig happening. But there is.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:19:33] In fact, there is. Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:35] So if I were to be cast in Hamilton, let's just say a new a new person walks into Hamilton.

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Right now, I'm cast as I don't know, the woman one. Let's just say that'll never happen. And ideally, I'd be cast as Burr, different conversation. Do I mean, is the conversation with this is like a multilayered question. I'm sorry the ADHD is coming out there. How much does the person have a say in how they want their hair to go? And as the designer of hair for a show like How hands on are you for the different production? So we'll talk about Australia in a minute, but.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:20:08] Totally hands on. That's my gig you know what I mean

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:11] So you were traveling to all the companies intially

Charles G. LaPointe [00:20:14] Initially.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:15] So I come in, I'm new and I sit down.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:20:18] The first thing I notice is that you have purple hair. So I say to you, I love your hair, which I do. I love the color. It's actually really beautifully done.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:25] Thank you so much.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:20:27] But because you're in the ensemble, that hair color would draw too much attention from the principals. Totally. So what I would ask you is first thing is what's your natural hair color? And you would tell me what your natural hair color is,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:40] very dark brown, so brown that sometimes people think it's black.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:20:44] OK, so you've got very dark hair. Let's come up with something that feels like you. You have straight hair with a little bit of movement in it. Fine. So we give you some body in the hair. Let's do a dark color. But let's

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give you a highlight that's a little bit more naturalistic. That won't draw too much focus, but still makes you feel like you've got a little little pizzazz that you have. And you would say to me, oh, I really like to have bangs. And I'm like, all right, we'll work out the bangs. No problem. It's all collaboration. It's all conversation.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:11] Right

Charles G. LaPointe [00:21:11] I don't come to you and say, oh, this is the wig you're going to wear and that's the end of it. But basically, everyone comes in knowing that we're doing something based on their hair. So if you came to me and you had curly zizzy hair, we would do a wig that had that texture, hair, maybe the cuts different, the style might be different, may not be as long or whatever, because we have to look at it in the larger picture of the whole show and see what we have. I don't want fourteen people with long curly hair, so I would vary the styling, the looks, the cuts, the whatnot based on the overall picture. But you personally, I'm basing your look on you and your essence. What I'm feeling it is what you feel it is, and a collaboration with two

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:51] Awesome. I wish I could have that real conversation and then just wake up one day and not have to worry about it so much.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:21:58] You can come into the studio any time. Fit you for a wig

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:01] Are you serious? I would love to.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:22:02] Yeah. You could come and learn what we do from the ground up.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:06] I would. You know, I've never worn. Thank you so much for that invitation. When things happen, I'm going to take you up on that. That's incredible. I would be that it would be an honor.

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:22:17] I'd love it.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:22:17] I don't think I've ever worn a good wig. Halloween costumes here and there, but like I don't even know what it feels like to be able to move freely because, you know, you're thinking about the choreography in Hamilton, right? It's no easy feat. So you have to not only look like you and feel like you, but feel so confident that you could do the Yorktown dance break and nothing is going to slip off the top of your head, right?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:22:41] That's right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:41] Tell me about Australia. Just the entire experience that Australia currently I mean, we're recording this on April 9th. You'll probably come out in May or June. Currently today at this moment, April 9th at seven thirty six. It's the only production of Hamilton happening in the world

Charles G. LaPointe [00:22:57] Absolutely right. In fact, there are only four productions happening in the world, period. Most of them are in Australia.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:23:02] Australia knows how to do it

Charles G. LaPointe [00:23:04] Well they also only have 30 million people in a country the size of the United States. So it's it's a little easier to manage it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:23:11] So you're the first person I've spoken to to have gone to Australia and done that whole process. Can you walk me through the whole like all the quarantine, like all the nitty gritty, like I want every single last detail. The people want to know, the people want to know what it was like to to, you know, what was the phone call like? Hey, we're taking the show on the road.

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:23:30] It started well before quarantine. So we had known about this happening for a while. Then it was put off because of Covid, that we didn't know if it was going to actually happen. Must have been September, August, September. We found out that it was going to actually happen. Everyone we were all in the middle of it. We had no idea how the hell that were going to work this. Yeah, I was supposed to be going along with Paul in November for the first round of fittings. I ended up not being able to do that or not wanting to do it because of covid. And I just thought it was too risky. I had just developed diabetes a few months before. So the idea of going to stay in a hotel room for two weeks without any cooking facilities and there's a lot of Asian food in Australia and Asian food is notorious for having sugar in it. So there would be a lot I'd be limited in what I could do. I had to limit my carbs and blah, blah. There's all kinds of crap. So I ended up opting out of going for that fitting and ended up zoom calling the entire thing. But I really wanted to in February came around. I was dying to work and really wanted to go so you could all go to the range that we went. So it started in the airport. You know, they flew US business class, which was very nice. You know, we're in the lounge wearing a mask. It's me and Nevin Steinberg. We're we're the only two on my flight. We get on the plane. There are literally twelve people on the plane. It seems it's a massive jumbo jet. We get to Australia and immediately you're brought to what's the call for passports go immigration. And Nevine and I were pulled out because we're part of this new initiative with them. We got shipped off to a hotel with that were apartments. So we actually had a balcony and fresh air and we looked at the bay and some of the people had to go to regular hotel. So that was a very different experience than we had. I loved every minute of the quarantine. I didn't have to answer to anybody. I was by myself.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:24] Yep.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:25:25] I loved every minute of it. I got to work quietly. My day was centered around me. You know, it was really it was nice to have it. A very awful situation.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:34] Sure. Yeah, of course

Charles G. LaPointe [00:25:35] So that was that part of it. And two weeks later we got out. It was fine. You know, they fed us and you could also grocery shop. You could have meals brought in. You could it was very it was everybody was so nice. It was it was so different from the mayhem of the United States, so different. It was a whole different vibe.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:54] I feel like some of my questions don't make sense because of what you just said. So because Australia has had such a different experience with covid than we have here, my initial question was going to be something along the lines of, oh, aren't they? So were they so excited to be getting back to work and being social and being in person? And I'm sure they were on so many levels. But for us here, that still, in a way, even though people are getting vaccinated, seem so far away. Right. So I wonder if that excitement, of course, a very high level of excitement because things were still happening, but not this sort of almost like desperate need that we have here.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:26:34] Yeah, I mean, there was still a little bit of that. Yeah. You felt the excitement of people getting because you have to understand the the borders didn't really open until about two weeks before I got there. So you still couldn't fly to Melbourne. Nothing really opened within the country. Like all the states were separate. They were all quarantined. It was dependent upon how many cases sprung up. Now, Melbourne got hit the hardest because I guess the the largest influx of foreign travel is because all the quarantine or all the COVID cases generally came from overseas, either Australians returning or people going to work in Australia. They were bringing the virus there. They had pretty much eradicated. So when they when they'd have a flare up, unlike. The flare up was like one hundred people, and immediately they would shut down the entire state or they would quarantine the city and by quarantine, I mean you were not allowed to leave your house. You

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are able to let the dog out. Originally, you were able to go and do exercise for two hours a day to go to the grocery store. Toward the end, it was like five days. You couldn't leave your house and they would tell you the quarantine was happening and they gave you time to go to the grocery store and stock up. But after that, you were not allowed to go out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:48] Even if everyone did it, they just they didn't politicize it. It didn't become a thing. They just listened.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:27:53] Yeah, they actually listened. Well, for the most part, yeah. I'm sure there were the rebels, but sure, for the most part, everybody was in on it. They got it. They understood.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:02] So what was it like for you to go over there in February? Are you thrilled?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:28:08] GIRL. Thrilled. Yes, very, very excited to see what it was about and see how it was going to happen. I was so glad to go back. I'd never really spent time in Sydney. So, yeah, Melbourne was really where I was. Yeah, I was really super hyped on it. I was meeting someone who was the me down there, Kylie Clark. From the moment we started zooming and communicating, I was like, this girl's my sister. She she and I are on the same plane. I don't meet a lot of people who I feel like have the same passion for it that I do. I mean, I don't know if that's really the right word, but I have my own style and I've developed my own style. And I haven't met a lot of people who kind of are in that same. There's just a certain something I look for in Wigmaker and I'm talking about wigmakers. I'm not talking about with designers. She has all of that stuff that I look for in terms of quality, in terms of sense, of terms of in terms of all that stuff. We just got on like it was like talking to myself, really, because she would she'd pick up on something I didn't see. I'm like, oh, my God, you're absolutely right. That'll change the whole thing. I do the same to her because she built her company, built all the

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wigs except for three, and then I built the other three. So she was kind of flying in the wind. So we had to do all this over. Zoom and picking out the hair color of the style. And it was funny when we got to Australia we realized, oh my God, all these wigs kind of look the same color wise because all the girls, a lot of them are indigenous or have some indigenous blood. So they all have dark, curly hair.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:39] Which is amazing.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:29:39] Who have all highlighted the hair with blond. So as we're going along, we're like, oh yeah, well we got to put up and then you realize, OK, we might have overdone this a little bit. Then we go in and add roots, we call it. But the collaboration was so smooth and so easy. It was it was really amazing, really.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:55] It's so nice to hear that you think that, especially because I would assume, you know, not a wig maker or designer or anything like that. I mean, it must be hard, a little bit over zoom if you can't feel the texture or see something up close because it needs to be so. I mean, even me, like, for example, my hair, it looks so much darker when I go outside. I really I'm like something like, who's got that pink hair? Like sometimes it looks hot pink. So for you over zoom to still be able to have those conversations and see all of those details is pretty amazing.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:30:25] Yeah, it's hard to do with color. The color is though, that's where you lose that a lot because it's just not the resolution is so different from what you're actually seeing, like when sunlight hits it, when a fluorescent light hits it, a incandescent light, instead it changes the color of the hair. So it's your kind of we were shooting in the dark the whole time. And even though Kylie was standing right there, she she also had to negotiate what kind of figure out what I was seeing and how she was seeing it and find somewhere in between that we could get the color right. So, it was cool. And she's become a friend now, which is absolutely amazing.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:02] That's so wonderful. Oh, wait. Before we get into the Patreon Peeps, here's a question for you. Did you were you in Puerto Rico with Hamilton? Oh, yeah. OK, because I wanted to ask you about this. I was there, too. I went for it. I went for a couple of days and saw the show there. And not only did Lin famously cut off his hair after his last Broadway performances, Hamilton, but then he pulled his wig off in Puerto Rico. Have you seen that video?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:31:25] No.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:25] He very it was like a gif for like a very slow motion video he made of just like like pulling off the Hamilton wig. And someone was like, Lin, I can't believe you were you were so rough, like handling that really amazing wig. And he was like, my wig guy was there. No wigs were harmed in the making of this, like for everyone.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:31:45] He might have done that because he did the whole shows, the whole run. So I might have left by the time he did, that might have been something. Actually, I think the supervisor let me know they were doing it. I wasn't there. I wasn't there.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:57] So a wig guy was there. It wasn't you, a wig guy.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:32:02] Yeah. Lin would never have done that on his own without letting us know. Well, yeah, that's not him.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:08] And it was so slow like he did slow down the video. It was like with such care, like you could tell that whoever was working on the wig, like, you know.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:16] Yes. It was just like a funny Internet bit that. He did, and, of course, people had to.

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:32:21] Of course they do.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:25] But you know what? Speaking of people on the Internet, I have a really amazing kind, warm corner of the Internet and they have some questions for you. So, Charles, are you ready to take some questions from the Patreon Peeps?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:32:37] I am absolutely ready.

Lin-Manuel Miranda [00:32:38] Yes, Patreon Peeps, Wonder Powers activate. If I were shockwave, this would be much more impressive

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:07] Annabel is asking, what is your favorite hairstyle in Hamilton and why

Charles G. LaPointe [00:33:14] That's a hard one.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:15] I love that it is.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:33:16] I think that Betsey was probably my overall favorite because it was probably the hardest one to do, to get right and to make believable. And when that happened, I felt like, OK, I can breathe now. I can I get it. This is good. This works. And when because the first time she came out in that wig, she we knew it wasn't right. She knew it wasn't right. I could tell she didn't feel great in it. It was too it was too obvious. So many things were wrong with the color of it. But when she came out after we fixed it, I mean, even Paul looked at me was like perfect because even because nobody knew really nobody was aware of it anymore. They didn't even know that had come out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:57] Right.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:33:57] So I think that's probably my favorite look. But then, you know, we do a lot of great work and a lot of gridlocking and stuff like that in the show. Now,

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depending on the people who are going in. And I always love those because they're so technical and fun because there's no real. The thing about Hamilton is there's no real styling. We're really kind of creating looks that already exist in some way, so it's not really about coming up with elaborate hairstyles, it's about kind of making this person look like themselves or some version of themselves.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:32] Yeah, I love that. You've said a couple of times that there's this visceral feeling like you see it, you know, that it works.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:34:39] I think all of us go through that. All of us, all the wig designers. Paul goes through that David. Brian Brown goes through that, you know, when something's going to work. And, you know, you also know in the universe when it's not working. And hopefully you can figure out a way to get it to work, which is always the big challenge.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:56] Cassie says involvement in Hamilton seems to have a way of changing the world view of all those involved. Have you had any moments with either the cast or creative team that have impacted you on a personal level?

Charles G. LaPointe [00:35:06] Oh, yeah. I mean, there are too numerous to name. And I will say the most recent one was in Australia. They had they're very much about bringing the indigenous culture into the whole thing. So when you go to Australia, because it was all indigenous tribes, especially in Sydney, the tribes were located in certain areas. So where the theater stood was the land of a certain people. I'm sorry I forget their name, but what they had they do is they have their shamans or their we call it them a religious head or the icon that comes in and does a smoking ceremony. So basically they're welcomed. It's a welcoming ceremony where they smoke through how he starts a fire on stage with this apparatus. That's basically a rough twig and and eucalyptus and things like that. And then they they get it on fire, get the smoke going, and then it goes around the room and basically heals the entire room. It was the

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most you know, I'm not a very spiritual guy. It was so beautiful. It was so simple. And you just it just emphasized the fact that we were doing something special, that this was a special event. And then he did it, individual people who felt like they had things that they needed to let go of. And then this man went around and hugged every single person in the room. It was like it just happened in tears the whole time. It's amazing. Just that was an amazing that's the kind of experiences we have. And it's been very it's basically changed my life. So in a lot of ways.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:36] That sounds incredible.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:36:38] It was incredible.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:39] I know it's impossible to picture, but my brain just wants to that's that's like, wow.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:36:43] I'm going to find out the name of the tribe and the actual ceremony and the man. And I'm going to get that, too, because I just think you should look it up. It's very interesting.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:52] Yes, I will. I will link it in the show notes. Absolutely.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:55] I'm yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:56] Yes, yes. So, Michelle, this is what I'm talking about when I say the people have very specific questions. Michelle says, can you tell us about the designs for the women ensemble members in Hamilton? She says, woman one seems to have her hair downish like Carleigh Bettiol. WOMAN two is a pixie cut and blond. WOMAN three They all have their kind of different looks. Is that consistency a coincidence or rather another chess, not checkers moment? So I think we answered that's where it started with like....

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Charles G. LaPointe [00:37:29] What probably happened was she was in rehearsal, had her half up, half down. And I looked at her and I'm like, that's perfect. What we need to do is put a little bump in the top, make it look a little less like a dancer and a little bit more stylish. So let's lead a little bit toward Gwen Stefani type of feeling. So very flat, straight here with this little bump and a twist that. Ari came in. Her hair was twisted up or her hair was short. I can't remember what she had up time. So we're like, OK, this is perfect. Just leave it like this. It was very like thrown together because we were at the public. So there was no I had one day to be tech. There was no real time. I was just kind of looking at people and seeing what they were doing. And then and when it moved, it changed.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:12] Yeah , it's so funny because when Michelle is saying chess, not checkers, we've been so good in talking to Andy Blankenbuehler and Alex Lacamoire wear these layers. It's this onion and everything means something. And so I think people tend to look for. Oh, so OK, why does why did Carly have that? And then why does a woman to have it in this company and why does and it's because it worked. And so for the consistency of the show, that's just what it is

Charles G. LaPointe [00:38:40] And I am just not that deep. So someone wants to read into something. You can. But the truth is, a lot of these things by happenstance. It's just the moment that it was and it had to be approved, something had to be approved. So with other people like Betsy had that kind of she had the pompadour hair, but it was much more floppy. We just we stylized it more so it would stay contained. When she was dancing, Jasmine, who played Peggy Mariah, we had to figure out how to make her look different from one act to the next. So that's something that took a lot. Time to go over, and it was very simple what we did, but we had to play with a few things just to make that happen, see where we were, because, again, initially it was about them looking like themselves. Tommy didn't want a lot of wigs. He didn't want a lot of artifice. He wanted there. He wanted to see them as people. So that's the conceit that we started with.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:35] So for her last question, then, I think it could go either way with what you just said, either it's not that deep or there's a reason for it. So she says, I'm also curious as to the reasoning or a theme behind Eliza being the only principle with her hair down and act one and the only principle with her hair and a ponytail and act two.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:54] OK, so Eliza being the most, let's say, vulnerable of the girls, she we wanted a look that was very, very plain and simple. It had to be. And Pippa had this beautiful long straight hair center or a little bit off to the side part. We had to keep it off her face. So we just tied it back with a little tieback. The second act, she's got a ponytail because her hair would have caught on fire when she did the letter scene when she did burn. I mean, it was all practicality

Gillian Pensavalle [00:40:27] and leaning over Philip.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:40:30] Yeah, we had we had to practically keep her open.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:40:34] So because her hair would have caught on fire,

Charles G. LaPointe [00:40:37] could have caught on fire during burn. That's it. Nothing more.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:40:39] I love that.

Charles G. LaPointe [00:40:39] Sorry.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:40:42] No, it's no, that's amazing. But see, this is what I mean. I mean, the specificity of.

[00:40:53] OK, I did some research and I found out that the Sydney Lyric Theater is on the land of the Gadidal People of the Eroa nation. I want to give a big thank you to the Australian Patriot peeps who help me out with this and check out the show

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notes for more information on that, because it really is super interesting and land acknowledgment is very, very important. All right. Next week, I wrap up my conversation with the wonderful Charles Lapoint. He's telling us about the greatest and most terrifying moments of his career. You'll find out what it takes to make a wig stick on Broadway and what happens when they don't. Charles tells us why he loves his job so much and has advice and invitations for those of you who want to follow in his footsteps. It's awesome. You don't want to miss it. So until then, stay safe. Stay healthy. I love you. I'm G. Pen.

[00:42:08] The Hamilcast is brought to you by my love of the thing team and 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, kindest and most welcoming corner of the Internet, go to Patreon dot com, slash the Hamilcast. You can submit questions to guests, join Zoom Hangouts, get behind the scenes access and of course, my unending gratitude. I'm at the Hamilcast on all social media and you can listen wherever you get your podcasts. Visit the Hamilcast dot com for transcripts, episodes and more. You can see what's going on with Mike. You know Mike at Michael Paul Smith dot net. True Crime Obsessed is my true crime comedy podcast with my podcast soul mate Patrick Hinds of Theater People and Broadway Back Story fame. Thank you so much for listening. It means the world to me, to the revolution.