

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 268 JEREMY MCCARTER PART 1 TRANSCRIPT

Lin-Manuel Miranda [00:00:00] Hi, I'm stage and stages
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 so excited. I'm here
with Jeremy McCarter, coauthor of Hamilton the Revolution aka
the Hamiltome, coauthor of In The Heights: Finding Home, a.k.a.
the Heightstome and Hometome. Is that accurate? Is that where
we're going with those?

Jerney McCarter [00:00:37] The fan favorite? Those are both
fine, the fan favorite is Bodgea Bible.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:41] Oh, God, perfect.

Jerney McCarter [00:00:43] Which is pretty dreamy.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:45] That's super dreamy. Thank you so
much for being here. I'm thrilled to talk to you. I have so much
to say and so much to ask.

Jerney McCarter [00:00:52] My pleasure. I have questions for
you. You know so much about Hamilton. You could tell me lots of
things I don't know about Hamilton.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:57] I don't think that's true.

Jerney McCarter [00:00:59] We're going to find out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:00] We'll see. Yeah, we'll find out
before we get started. Jeremy, can you tell me your pronouns,
please?

Jerney McCarter [00:01:04] Sure. he/him

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:04] thank you. I have like two pages worth of things to tell the people about what you do and who you are. I can't read all of it.

Jermev McCarter [00:01:10] Dont read all of it dont read all of it

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:11] I'm so intimidated by you. Like, you know, the artistic staff at the Public Theater for five years, you created and ran the public forum series, which was amazing. The Make Believe Foundation, which is a nonprofit audio production company, which I love audio production. So I'm just. Yeah, I just you're I'm going to put it all in the show notes, but I feel really intimidated by you.

Jermev McCarter [00:01:33] Dont do that. It's just that it's. No, because it's I just have a very short attention span. It's career wise, it turns out. And every three or four years I go looking for another cliff that I can throw myself off. And then it leads to a good war stories and also a bio like that one, which doesn't make a lot of sense when you read it straight through.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:51] Oh, no, but sometimes the cliff is like serving on the jury for the Pulitzer Prize for drama and sometimes the cliff is writing the liner notes for Company.

Jermev McCarter [00:01:59] Right. There have been some pretty cool cliffs.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:01] Um, I think maybe my favorite book might be how you started out writing for New York magazine, basically begging the theater industry to incorporate more hip hop into those things that they're doing.

Jermev McCarter [00:02:11] Yeah, that was one that was like a cliff on top of the cliff, I guess. Um, I, I so yeah. That was, that was one of my gigs was I was a drama critic for six years, all told, three of them for New York magazine. And um, I came

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from a school of thought that said it's not much fun, the job isn't much fun if all you do is wait for someone to put something on stage and then say if you like it or you don't like it, it's more fun if you have a point of view and there are things that you really want to see. And so I thought, well, what is the thing that I want to see? And it just felt to me in the in the arts that Broadway didn't sound much like the rest of the world musically. It just felt like it was this little bubble. There wasn't much that was interesting or exciting going on musically. And so whenever I got the chance, I would make a fuss about it in the pictures of New York magazine, which I guess is a pretty good prelude to what we're going to talk about tonight.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:09] Yes, I had the privilege of going to a virtual screening of In The Heights.

Jerney McCarter [00:03:15] You did? Fantastic.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:16] So it's April 17th tonight. I think you'll come out at probably around May or June, but you might be out either, right, when Heights is hitting theaters June 11th or something like that. So I've just the timing just worked out really well that I it's now freshly in my brain while I'm sitting here talking to you about the new book of yours. But I want to hear everything Lin story, the Heights thing, like how you went from, like begging the theater industry to put more hip hop in. And then they did. And I'm now

Jerney McCarter [00:03:43] I don't think it was entirely like no one said like, OK, fine, we'll do it. It wasn't quite that one to one.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:49] Lin hasn't gone on the record saying, you know, I read what you I've been following your piece.

Jerney McCarter [00:03:54] The Broadway League all got together once. Yeah. And they and they and they typed up a certificate that that didn't happen. No.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:59] Well, they have a lot of work to do. The Broadway League anyway, the Hamiltome. I'm I'm I'm thrilled to be talking to you, but I'm a little heartbroken and a lot of ways because, one, I wish I could hand you like a gin cocktail, which is what you were drinking. You would ideally be drinking, right, if you were.

Jerney McCarter [00:04:16] Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:17] But We're both drinking wine, so I figured I'd call the vino tome. Is that a cocktail name? But usually if, you know, if you came over, I'd like be handing you a cocktail and you would be signing my sign and book, which is The Hamiltome.

Jerney McCarter [00:04:31] That's so great.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:31] And it's a prized possession of mine that is I've missed out on since February of last year, February twenty twenty Andy Blankenbuehler was the last person to sign it and all the people I've had. So I have to figure out some way to do it.

Jerney McCarter [00:04:46] We'll get that done.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:47] Yeah, yeah, yeah. But it's this really beautiful. The book is so beautiful anyway, but I was reading through it today just to, you know, get the feeling of it again in my brain. But like so many people signed it all over the place and like I wrote notes, like everyone in the cabinet wrote notes like Chris Jackson wrote on his page. Can you see that

Jerney McCarter [00:05:07] I can. And in such like beautiful silver, shiny ink, it looks fantastic.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:13] Yeah, well, I had a silver Sharpie. For everyone, because I feel like that would pop more

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on all the because everything so beautiful and the colors are so rich and it's I'm just I was getting really emotional thinking about this, really. It's such a beautiful piece of art in so many ways, esthetically, physically, emotionally. And so I'm just I'm thrilled that I get to talk to you about it, but I can't believe that you your name is on the front of it and you don't have your signature on it.

Jerney McCarter [00:05:41] It's funny. My copy, too, is signed like a yearbook.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:46] Oh, amazing.

Jerney McCarter [00:05:48] I've took it to the Rogers one day. This must be spring 2016. The book came out in April, so it must have been actually maybe it was one of the advance copies before this. It was even on shelves. And I was just expecting like, let me get everybody to sign it the way that I have the off Broadway poster signed by everybody. And I handed it to J.B. Jason Bassett, the production stage manager first and the stage manager's office, and then turned away to talk to whoever else was around. I didn't think about it for a few minutes. And when I turned back, he had not just signed his name. He had written this lovely message. And I was really touched by that. And so I handed it to the next person who saw what I had done and then thought, oh, that's what we're doing. So then the entire company pretty much has written this series of lovely messages all through the book. So. So that's a so. Yeah. So I guess we have the two we have these two golden. Yes. Hamiltomes signed by all of those wonderful people.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:52] I know. And you know, it's so it's been a real experience over these five years of of the podcast watching people hold it and look through it. Some people know exactly where they want to sign it. Oh, I'm going to go to the wardrobe page. Oh, I'm going to go to the sound design page. Some people had never really looked at it because they were too in the show. Some people get lost in it and turning the pages and holding that parchment feel. And usually we would thumb

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through it almost to get you know, I would sit they'd be on the couch and I'd be sitting sort of watching them, letting them have this beautiful moment. And some people say, oh, I haven't seen this in so long or, oh, I haven't seen this yet. And then 15, 20 minutes would go by and we would sort of just talk about it and pages and how beautiful that is. And oh my God, there's a picture of Paul McCartney. And before I'd even hit record, we'd be sort of bonding over this thing. So it's still bringing people together, even people in the thing to come talk about a person who made a thing about the thing.

Jerney McCarter [00:07:55] It's really great to hear, by the way. So you said five years. It definitely crosses my mind. The best use of the next couple hours would be me asking you questions about Hamilton.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:07] No, no, JMI. James Igelhart just came back and he turned the tables on me too. I can't have you do me. All right. I want this to be about you.

Jerney McCarter [00:08:15] This we're going to we're both going to have fascinating things to say about the show before this is done.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:20] You can ask me things now. I feel bad. I just I just, like, totally shut you down. Tommy Kail is like banging his head against the desk right now. How dare I should've just said yes. Yes. And that's freestyle, right?

Jerney McCarter [00:08:31] That's right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:31] So I just let's talk about I mean, because even when we were emailing about this, your height story and your Hamilton story and your Lin story and your cabinet story, it's all the same long, wonderful story, right?

Jerney McCarter [00:08:43] It is kind of of a piece. I mean, particularly with the In The Heights book that's coming out in June. A big part of the appeal is that it is in many ways a

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continuation of the story. It's so many of the same artists. It's going back to people who I love and admire and getting to talk with them some more. Um, because to understand Lin's shows, you kind of have to it helps to see the whole picture. And the whole picture is so totally intertwined with Heights and Hamilton. And it's been a real pleasure to get to be around for as much of it as I have.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:21] I did my research a little bit today and I found this 2007 review of heights that you did when it was off Broadway.

JermeJ McCarter [00:09:30] Right? Yeah

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:31] Of course. You say delightfully enough. Here's a musical that owes more to Big Pun than to Bernstein. So that's true. I mean, you know, looks to audience. That's true. But when we were talking earlier about, like, begging theater to incorporate hip hop here, this thing comes along and. Oh, my God, it did.

JermeJ McCarter [00:09:48] Right. Yeah, I remember it. I do remember it. I mean, look, in six years of reviewing plays, I saw I spent thousands of nights in theaters seeing show after show after show, and most of them blur together. And I never think about them again. That one. I distinctly remember what it was like that night. I just I remember if I went back to thirty seven, arts in that theater was still intact, which I'm not sure that it is. But if I went back, I could show you where I was sitting. And it did not go as I as I say in the introduction to the new book candidly, like I didn't expect a lot when I went, I didn't know who they were. The track record for shows trying to do something with completely new sounds was not great. Um, and I just knew within five minutes, I mean, the opening number had not ended. And I just felt right away like this is the thing that I've been looking for. Like I don't know who that guy is. Never heard his name before. But something's going on here.

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JermeY McCarter [00:11:10] And so that's what is that. 2007. Yeah that was 2007. So that's 14 years. So yeah

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:18] Yeah. I was saying to I was texting with Lac today about the, about the film, the movie and it's beautiful and stunning. Have I mentioned that. Have I. It's fantastic. It's just so wonderful on so many levels. And I said to him, I said, I hope you're going to take this the right way in the way I mean it. But it felt like, oh, this is this is what the vision was on Broadway like. Of course, we're in the bodega for something like, yeah, of course we're in the bodega with Usnavi and of course, like to be sitting in the chairs at Daniela's. Right. And then it's like, well, of course we're also dancing on the side of buildings. Like, it all makes sense. But now I said it just feels like this this version of it was so has been swirling around for so long. And then now there are two beautiful ways. And now the story lives in these two versions of it.

JermeY McCarter [00:12:09] Right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:10] And that's thanks to everyone involved. And just you and just you know, thankfully, he did take it the way I intended it. I didn't want to say like, oh, like you guys gave it the old college try on Broadway, but you finally got it right. That's not sure how I mean it.

JermeY McCarter [00:12:22] Yeah, this is tricky. Like, I want to I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to say about the story of the making of the movie of In The Heights. I don't want to give away too many surprises from the book. But, you know, the original company is, um, you know, they're honored and represented in the movie. And that's something that has meant a lot to them. Um, you know, the the reason to go back to In The Heights to write the book Lin reached out to me in the summer of 2019 to say, let's write a book about In The Heights and and it took a minute to figure out what's the story to tell. Um, you know, what's the angle, what's the thing that pulls it all together. And what's really fascinating and something that I hadn't really seen when

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I saw it off Broadway and then on Broadway is the way that this show has. And now movie has been this incredible engine for a community to form all these relationships among these artists who feel that they had an experience different from other shows, other things that they've done with their lives, and to try to rewind the tape and figure out how does that happen? What did it mean to them off Broadway? What did it mean on Broadway in the movie? Is it their relationships among the specific artists? Is it something in the show itself? Is it a little of everything? Um, and so that's the story of the book. It's how this the this show about a community has created a community, um, which I definitely don't want to give too much away, but is is, is global. Um, the show has touched people in many different places and that's even before the movie comes out

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:09] I will say without giving too much away, stay until the very, very, very end of In The Heights. Right. And that's so did Lin call you and say let's let's do the Hamiltome but for heights, was that kind of.

Jerney McCarter [00:14:20] No, it wasn't that clear. Um, it was just Lin had wanted to do a book about In The Heights when it was on Broadway and hadn't gotten to do it and I think has been wanting to do it. And now there's a good reason to do it. It's there's this huge movie, um, and and it took him in it to figure out what's the right way in. One thing that was important from the beginning is that it wants to feel like like a like a cousin to Hamilton because so many of the characters characters, so many of the other subjects, so many of the people in it are the same. In fact, it's even here I can show you I have these this.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:01] Oh, wow.

Jerney McCarter [00:15:02] Holding up this beautiful book

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:04] When does it come out and where can we get it? Let's just do all the all the plugs right now.

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Jerme y McCarter [00:15:08] Comes out June 15th I think is the new pub date. They moved it up when when the movie moved up, they moved the pub. So June 15th, everywhere, but you can see on the back, you can see it, can you read

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:21] the eagerly awaited follow up to the number one New York Times best seller, Hamilton The Revolution.

Jerme y McCarter [00:15:28] There we go.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:28] I already preordered mine. So that's that's an option, too, for everyone.

Jerme y McCarter [00:15:32] Bless you.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:33] Of course,.

Jerme y McCarter [00:15:34] I can sign that one, too, when I finally get to sign the other one. I would love it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:37] I guess I'm going to have to have Cjack and Mandy and all these people come back and.

Jerme y McCarter [00:15:41] That's right. Um, but, you know, the you mentioned Lac the chance to spend more time with Lac to spend more time with Anthony Ramos, with Lin, Tommy, the people who were so the people who are essential to Hamilton, a lot of them were also essential to either the movie or the show of In The Heights. And, um, you know, they're great company. One of the things that makes these books worth doing is that they don't want to keep the secret of how they did the thing. They want to share the secret of how it happened. And, um, and a big part of both of these books, hopefully, is that they help people coming up to understand, like, oh, that's how you do something like that. I now understand how I can do something like that. Um, and, you know, that audience is the one that means the most to me.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:33] Yeah. I've always been so I guess enamored with the fact that like Lin whole SoundCloud is demos. Right. And and first drafts and versions of things that you would think maybe someone would not want out there. I mean I can understand someone not wanting to have the first draft or you know how you know Lin singing Alysa it trying to do that voice. I can totally understand why someone would not want that. But he has a whole SoundCloud full. He called me before first burn came out because I don't know if you know the story about first burn on the mixtape. So the like his first draft version of Burn when he came over the first time in twenty seventeen during the recording we took like a bathroom break and he played his demo of it.

Jerney McCarter [00:17:18] Wow.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:08] And my husband and I, like, lost our minds, and he went on like BuzzFeed News when first came out and said

Lin-Manuel Miranda [00:18:16] This month's hamildrop, Hamilcast literally came because I was I was doing the Hamilcast, which is a fan podcast that that has really sort of blown up. And I wanted to play them goodies. I'm like, here's some stuff that didn't make the show. And I played them this. And I was like, this is kind of, oh, I should do so. She was like, Can I play on the show? No, I think I'm going to do something. And then I sort of brought it up to the people at Atlantic and I said, why don't we use this to showcase some of the incredible people in our in our companies like we could have. And this is this is where Tommy Kail comes in, because he always has the best idea. OK, so I said I have a question for you. Yeah. We could have one of one of the allies, as in we can have the Chicago Lysa do it or we could have one of the tour, Lise's Do It or Raichel in London. And he said, Why? You have all five of them do it. Yeah, I said, yeah, that's the best idea.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:05] When first burn came out with all those amazing women and Alex and just this incredible,

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incredible song, he messages me and he's like, Hey, remember how I said that I was going to do something with First Burn? I did it. Here it is. It comes out at midnight. Your podcast comes out at midnight. Why don't you play First Burn? And also here's the demo of me singing it, which no one else has. It's not even on a SoundCloud you have both and whatever. And it was one of the most generous things that I was even on his radar or mind when First-born was about to come out. But like he just said, OK, like play it side by side with these five incredible women and the harmony that Alex Lacamoire put together. I just like here's the original idea of it. And there's no fear about like it's just it's incredible to me. Yeah.

Jerney McCarter [00:20:51] Is that the highlight? What's the highlight? Do you have like a do you have like a list in your head, the top ten moments, the top ten coolest things from five years of doing this show.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:03] Oh yeah. I could write a whole book about that alone. Yeah. Of like cool things. I like music wise that I've heard or just like, like

Jerney McCarter [00:21:10] you like things you've gotten to see do the you know, conversations you've got to have the stuff that you've learned.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:19] Being able to sit in the pit in Chicago, what they call a pit sit that like, I'm getting emotional, just thinking about it.

Jerney McCarter [00:21:28] That's like with it, with all of your friends, with the headphones and the dials to.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:36] Yeah. That was a really, really, really big moment. Yeah. Anything that Lin has has thrown my way or because I think he knows how much it means to me and it's always like he never has to do any of that. When Alex Lacamoire had the the string section on the Philip tour do an isolated and isolated record, the string build from that would be enough

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because it's my favorite part of that would be enough. So when he came on, the three Lac episodes are just like insane because he is, as you know, and overprepare and also just he cares so much and he thinks he's so thoughtful. And he was like, how do you want to do this? And, you know, it's your show, but it's been so long and we got to do it right. And what should I bring and what do you what like what's your setup like? Can you show me the pictures of the cables that you have? So in case I have to bring anything, I mean, he just really we work together so, so well and so much on that one. But he had them record the string builds and then he played it for me. And there's a picture of me sitting on the floor of my apartment with my headphones on as he's playing it with my head, my hands just like, wow. Lin.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:24:28] Because when it's so beautiful and two, why would he ask to have that they're on tour, like, why would they record just the isolated string? It's like these people, the generosity is endless. Tommy Kail saying the words, we made the show for you. We didn't know who you are at the time, but we made it for you. Jeremy, come on now, it's what am I supposed to do?

Jerney McCarter [00:26:25] I mean, you're supposed to you're supposed to write this book. That's it. You really should.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:30] Well, thanks. I mean, I think I'll just keep making the podcast for as long as people still want to talk to me.

Jerney McCarter [00:26:35] Right. It is amazing. I mean, the Hamilton book, we had the almost all of the writing in that book was done in, I think, seven weeks from the time we started until when it all needed to be handed off to the people who were going to design it and, you know, sort of flow everything into the pages, into the whatever, to have five years to dig in and to talk to all these people is is pretty wonderful.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:04] Yeah, it's been. I mean, and it's all it's all there for you too. Like. It's all if any. That's what that's what I love to like. It just lives forever. It's free. There are no ads. It's just like it's just there for you to have. Right. So you said seven weeks. But I mean, this is not seven weeks in the making. This book, the Hamiltome.

JermeY McCarter [00:27:27] No. Well, let's see when. So here's the story of Hamilton, which I think some of it might be in the introduction to the book. I haven't I haven't looked at the introduction in a minute, but it was opening night off Broadway. It was a good party. And I do I have this I have this memory. This is just coming back to me. I haven't thought about this moment a long time. We were at the library, which is the upstairs bar at the public, and everybody is there.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:54] God I love that place.

JermeY McCarter [00:27:55] And I don't know if it was before or after the review came in the Times review, but it was already a great party. And I just have this memory of standing there with Oskar Eustis, the artistic director of the public, and. Lin, I think, and Brian D'Arcy James walked up, who was still in the show at that point, he was still playing the king and just kind of looked at us and we looked at him and he just kind of laughed and shrugged because it's like, what do you say? Like, everyone knew that this sort of extraordinary thing was happening. And, um, and sometime around that point in the party, Lin said there's going to be a book about the show and like, let's do it. And initially I didn't see how to do it, so I wasn't sure that I wanted to do it. Um, people had had said to me when they were describing their work on Hamilton that they didn't want to be the one to f it up like they all felt this pressure, as I'm sure you've heard on the show, like 50 times by now, to, um, be as good as the material and the idea of doing a book that would be fit to stand alongside the show. I didn't see a way to do it right away, so I wasn't sure. So I had to go away and think about it. But the idea of doing a book that would take the two revolutions and tell them is one story, the American Revolution,

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which is the story of the show and all the revolutions that are the product of the show itself. That seemed like a cool book. And if we could get it right, that felt like something that could maybe be fit to stand alongside the show. So that's what, February? That's February of 2015. It took a few months to figure out is this going to happen? How is this going to happen and make all the arrangements, stuff like that. We didn't start really writing until the end of June and the manuscript had to be in shortly after opening night, which was the first week of August. So the writing was that fast. And then the designing and the Lin's lyric annotations and things like that took a little longer. Those came in in different spots, but it was really, really fast. Um, and I still am not sure how Lin managed to get all those annotations written when he was, because this is when he was still doing seven shows a week and the to you know, 2015. The whole world was blowing up with this show.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:24] Yeah. And it's funny because when he came over the first time he annotated his page, so his you know, it's like the photo of him playing I guess like what is it, Red Dead Redemption. I think he's playing video games and he has his feet up and he it just points to cassettes and, you know, sick or sleepy, I think it says, like pointing to his face. So he added, like just layers on layers. But I love I love so much about the book, but that it really it just leans into the Hamilton of it all, as Mike Moyes would say, like even the table of contents on the character of George Washington and the character of Chris Jackson for a right hand man are on the perfect union of actor and roll with allusion to Renee Elise Goldsberry. It captures the feeling of it so well.

Jerney McCarter [00:31:08] Yeah, that was a big priority to make it feel like the show. So it's not just the subject of this book is this show, but the spirit of the two feels somehow similar. And that was a benefit of having at that point spent years around the development of the show and hearing them talk about it and hearing them. This is when I was on the artistic staff of the public theater. So it was in these meetings I was hanging out and getting to hear the way they were talking about it and

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see the way that it was coming together. And so when we were figuring out, well, how should the book feel like, what do we want's its esthetic? It just seemed like it should be as close to what the show feels like as possible. And so Tommy had said he wanted it to feel the show, to feel very unfiltered, like it starts with an actor who walks on stage and starts singing. There's no the set doesn't move except for one little moment. Like there's really nothing between the audience and the actors and the story that they're telling. So that suggested to me in this in the book version, well, then it can't be cluttered. There shouldn't be a lot going on. It shouldn't be a lot competing for your attention. It should be very, very, very spare. Um, and and and there is this fidelity listening to Paul Tazewell talk about the costumes and how important it was to find the right balance of the things that are modern and the things that are authentic to the period. And Korins in the way that he thought about his inspirations for the set and it's nautical and all of these like unbelievably minute touches, um, then it just it just made me think and have all these conversations with the designers of the book. What are the ways that we can do to make it feel like it's it's now, but it's also evoking the period. And when I think about books from that era, they all have those long crazy titles which are wonderful. And so I asked someone who worked on the book to just like go find lots and lots and lots of tables of contents from books written between in Hamilton's lifetime, I think. Or like if you're a few decades after that, and then I just played Mad Libs with them, I just took all the tables of contents and the things that the chapters were about and then kind of mixed and matched until they felt like they had a there was like a consistent voice running through it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:24] It's like a pamphlet like all the titles of those pamphlets.

Jerney McCarter [00:33:27] Yeah, I miss those. I want that to come back. Those long crazy titles. I think there's something to like a title that runs like that has like two sentences in it.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:34] I like it. We have two very long sentences but or right in the middle or. Right. I like that. I also and the writing is just so beautiful because you really do get lost in it. It really feels like a conversation. It feels so unfiltered, like you said. And a perfect example of that I think is an Lac section where you wrote the Lin and Alex walked into the green room to find an actual Beatle standing there and you italicized an actual Beatle. And I fucking loved that because it's such a great you hear it, you can't read it any other way, then you sort of slow down like an actual Beatle standing there. And I just I thought maybe because it was just it's just so my speed. But I just I loved that. And I thought that was a perfect example. If you haven't sat and read, which I almost read all of it again today, just like do you do get lost in it because it's so beautiful, but it's so it's so well-written, too. I thought that was a really good example to show the tone a little bit of how well it can look a little daunting. It's a big book and there's a lot to it.

Jerney McCarter [00:34:44] One of the things that appealed to me about the book is not knowing exactly how it was going to work. When we decided to do it, um, it felt to me that it ought to be a book that you begin at the beginning and you end at the end. It should be one story. But for that to work, all of the material would have to follow one narrative arc. So if the chapters were going to sit next to the songs, then the story that's running through the chapters would have to have sort of the same beats as the songs in the show. So then how do you thread the material along that path so that it feels like you're reading one consistent story? And there wasn't like one big answer. It was a lot of like trying stuff and moving stuff around. Um, but the but the puzzle quality of it is one of the things that really drew me to it. The penny finally dropped in my brain and started to make sense to do. The book was Sondheim said the content dictates form. Right? I mean, it's I think it's rule number one of his of his books, which are right over my right shoulder there. Um, and if the content of the book is we're telling the story about these two revolutions, then the form ought to be, well, then let's get them along the same arc

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so that it feels like one reading experience or listening experience. If it's the audio book

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:08] Im just fascinated and interested in all of the little like nerdy organizational logistical points of this, because you have I mean, you had conversations with all of these people. There are quotes from them and about them. So were you just sitting down with everyone or was some of it were you just sort of documenting this in an ongoing way?

Jerney McCarter [00:36:30] Well, it's funny. The all the quotes, all the interviews happened in those seven exciting weeks in the summer of twenty fifteen. OK, but yeah, I'd been I mean, I didn't know that I was doing research for a book in the years before that, and I'd been around and they'd been around and have been watching them work and and getting to know them. But that's exactly what was happening. I mean, I had the whole time the show was being developed at the public, I kept this like file folder of like mementos and things to hang on to because I loved it and was so excited that, you know, we were doing it. And I didn't realize until we started work on the book. Oh, look, this is now these are now primary sources. Like later they'll go back to being souvenirs. But for now, these things are helping me. Remember, it was on this date. This happened. These are the people who were involved at this stage. And this is when this person joined and that it added up all the the reconstruction of it. I remember that was a big priority to already in the summer of twenty fifteen, there was this feeling that there was something inevitable about the show's success. It was such a rocket, it was so universally acclaimed. And I wanted to try to capture the moments when that was the opposite of how it felt. Go back to when it was just one guy's crazy idea and then all the things along the way when it could have been something else, try to keep it from feeling inevitable, because when you see it, it's hard to imagine it being any other way. In fact, it could have been lots of different ways. And and with In The Heights too. It's funny. With the. Look, I mean, that really was different. They're they're they're you know, Lin says that In The Heights he wrote something like 60 songs. Mm hmm. Um, and

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with Hamilton, I don't know, there might be like ten minutes sitting around that didn't find its way into the show. Yeah, it was unbelievably lean. Yeah. But it still could have been very different. Um, and try to capture all those choices while they happened was a big part of the fun of the book.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:36] So let's go back to Heights a little bit because I want to hear how you got to being in those early moments of Hamilton at the public. But it all started with heights because you saw the thing you said finally, finally, this is what I've been writing about. And then you and Lin are introduced and it's sort of a little bit of love at first sight, right?

Jerney McCarter [00:38:58] Well, we didn't meet face to face for more than a year after that. The show had already gone to Broadway. And so I'd written about it twice by the time we met. But one of the publicists for the show had read what I'd written and obviously knew Lin and said you guys would hit it off. So fixed us up. And and yeah, we met after the show one night. He was still playing Usnavi and got to drinking and got to talking. And it turns out, as I think is in the introduction to the Hamilton book, um, that first conversation is when he told me what he wanted to do next. So this is this is summer of 08. And, um, and then so I knew about it then in the summer of 08. And then when he went and performed it at the White House and in capsule form telescopes, what the next few years of Hamilton are going to be like where at the beginning people think it's crazy and by the end they're all cheering and screaming. He sent me the video right after that happened. And I thought, that's so cool that he pulled this off and got to go perform at the White House. Um, and it just stuck in my head. Then a couple months later, it came out and then it's, you know, started being taught in history classes, apparently like all over the country already. But when I left the magazine business and I went to work at the public theater, part of the gig was to propose projects and like bring in artists for the public to potentially be in business with. And I thought back to that clip and Lin

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enthusiasm years earlier when he had talked about his dream for this crazy Hamilton mixtape idea.

Lin-Manuel Miranda [00:40:51] I'm thrilled the White House called me tonight because I'm actually working on a hip hop album. It's a concept album about the life of someone I think embodies hip hop. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, you laugh, but it's true. He was he was born a penniless orphan in St. Croix of illegitimate birth, became George Washington's right hand man, became Treasury secretary, caught beef with every other founding father and all on the strength of his writing. I think he embodies the word's ability to make a difference. So I'm going to be doing the first song from that tonight. I'm accompanied by Tony and Grammy winning music director Alex Lacamoire. Anything you need to know, I'll be playing Vice President Aaron Burr and snap along, if you like.

JermeJ McCarter [00:43:14] So I told my boss, Oskar Eustis, I know the first artist that I'm excited for you to to meet, and that's my friend Lin, who had a couple of years ago this crazy Hamilton idea. I don't know whatever happened with it. But when we find out and I did not think I would tell this story because I love Oskar, but he tells it so I'll tell it. His reaction to that suggestion was not enthusiastic because In The Heights it competed against one of his shows when it won it's four Tony Awards. And so it took a little persuading for him to get on board with that. But he did. And I, uh, reached out to Lin and told him that my boss, Oscar, was super excited to meet with him.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:43:54] Sure. Thrilled. Couldn't wait.

JermeJ McCarter [00:43:56] Yeah. And then because I knew what was going to happen and it did as soon as they were in the room together, they fell in love. That was love at first sight. Even more, the two of them completely hit it off. And so from there on and it took years for the deal to get done. Jeffrey Seller, the producer and and Oscar made the arrangements for the show to be to have its world premiere there. But it meant that I got to

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sort of watch a lot of it happen. And that was a total joy. And I could not be more grateful because those early days of watching this stuff come out of Lin's brain and watch actors perform the material for the first time. Uh, it felt like being in on this incredible secret for a couple of years before the whole world knew what was up.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:44] I love hearing about those days, I've not just from the cabinet, but Diana Weiner from a stage manager perspective and Kurt Crowley, you know, Scott Wasserman and you can feel it even now that whatever the energy, this unknown energy that was swirling around the public at the time.

Jerney McCarter [00:45:05] Yeah, we when when the tickets went on sale, it broke the public's phone system, which was an early indication of the appeal it was going to have. And then the whole time it was there, it's the thing that you dream of getting to experience if you work in the theater, which is because it's just in this one building, if people want to experience it, they have to come there. And so you could stand in the public lobby and just watch this like unbelievable explosion of energy eight times a week when the show was over and people would come out, you see on their faces how they'd just been affected by this thing that they saw. And and that was one of the reasons why it felt like the Hamilton book should talk about the changes that are happening, because one of the most significant changes was something I got to watch in that lobby night after night, the way that the actors lives were changing, like in significant ways because of what was happening to them. And, you know, that makes it all the more fun with the book to go back and check in with Anthony Ramos and check in with Chris Jackson.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:18] Oh my God. Yeah. Anthony Ramos, superstar extraordinaire.

Jerney McCarter [00:46:21] He's going to be. Yeah, like it's now here, like the the ads. It's all happening

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:27] Those Calvin Klein ads all like it's. Oh my God. Oh, my God. I think the story was told. I want to say the story was told on this podcast. Maybe it wasn't, because now we're in like two episode like two sixty something to seventy. So I don't know. But I heard a story where Joel Grey, just like in the height of Hamilton being sold out at the public like no one like Oskar Eustis could barely get a ticket at Joel Grey, just like walked up to the box office. It was like one ticket for Hamilton, please. And they were like, I'm sorry, Joel Gray, we're sold out. It seems like it's me. It's me, Joel Grey. There's a ticket. There's a ticket back there somewhere. I'd like to Joel Grey, front and center

Jerney McCarter [00:47:11] That's fantastic.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:12] I'm I'm almost positive. I mean, it might if that's an urban legend, then, like, I'll take it. I think it's a wonderful story.

Jerney McCarter [00:47:20] I don't know if it's true or not, but let's go with true because that's a great story.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:23] Yeah, you don't understand. There's a ticket back there somewhere. I just find it. Yeah, and they did. There's always a ticket for Joel Grey.

Jerney McCarter [00:47:30] I would wear that t shirt. There's always a ticket for...

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:34] Yeah. Joel Gray is the ticket and to everything. Right. The other thing I love about the Hamiltome is that it goes beyond the show and the making of the show because you're we're talking about marriage equality. We're talking about race in America and the eduham and how that was affecting people. I mean, already so early on in the Hamilmania of it,

Jerney McCarter [00:47:56] The Hamilmania, that's good.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:58] Again, it goes back to the Beatles, just Beatlemania. Hamilmania.

Jerney McCarter [00:48:01] Right. I guess it felt like there is the narrow version of the story, which is just process. This is how these artists made this thing. But I thought the phenomenon, the life of the show was a better story, and that meant connecting with the kids who had come to see it and what it meant to them. And and, yeah, I mean, it's it's a show about Alexander Hamilton like that is inevitably going to intersect with, um, you know, every hot button issue there is. And some of the best conversations I had with the members of the original company talking about what it meant to them to be playing these like, you know, these people, the people on our money, uh, the people who have the statues around Washington, D.C. and what a challenge that was in some respects and, um, how meaningful it was in other respects. And and it's been, you know, just try to try to get all of it in the book to the to the best extent that I could.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:49:04] In another. I think it was a talk you did at Google. I think you said something about Lin. And I want to ask you if we could just talk about that or elaborate on it. You said that Lin wasn't just finding new answers to old questions. He was finding new questions.

Jerney McCarter [00:49:21] Yeah, I mean, look, I remember what it felt like in 2007, what Broadway musicals and off Broadway musicals were like. I remember the kinds of questions that people were trying to answer and the puzzles they were trying to solve. There weren't a lot of people trying to make salsa and hip hop musicals about life as it's actually lived in a neighborhood in Manhattan. That no one was trying to solve that except Lin and because Lin was trying to solve it, that meant Quiara and Tommy and Lac and Bill and Andy and everybody else who worked on that show decided to figure it out. And in a million ways, you don't get Hamilton without the success of In The Heights in lots of obvious material ways, but in the relationships that were formed, in the experience that they

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gained. Um, so that initial sense of like it's possible to do something completely boundary breaking and new is totally there. When they decide to make Hamilton, no one's trying to figure out how to do a hip hop based musical about the founding fathers. It is not a puzzle that anyone's trying to solve until he decides it's time to solve it. And that is, you know, you either have a brain that's set up to take big swings like that or you don't. And he does, thank God.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:50:51] All right, next week, I wrap up my conversation with Jeremy, he's taking questions from the Patreon peeps. He shares more secrets on what you can expect to read in the new In The Heights fighting home. He explains why sometimes the best theater review is a bad one. And he tells me what it was like to be in the room while Lin and CJack sing one last time to President Obama at the White House. Oh, and there's a link to preorder the bodega Bible in the show notes. OK, until next week. Stay safe. Stay healthy. I love you. I'm G.Pen.

[00:51:54] The Hamilcast is brought to you by my love of the thing TM 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 BackStory fame. Thank you so much for listening. It means the world to me, to the revolution