

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 269 JEREMY MCCARTER PART 2 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, hello, hello, I'm Gillian. Welcome back to the Hamilcast. Today, I'm picking up my conversation with Jeremy McCarter, the author of Hamilton The Revolution and the upcoming In The Heights Finding Home. The In The Heights book comes out on June 15th, and there's a link in the show notes if you haven't preordered your copy yet. So if you missed part one with Jeremy, please check that out before diving in here. That's where Jeremy talks about how seeing In The Heights at 37 Arts in 2007 gave him hope for the future of hip hop and theater, plus his experience getting to know the creative team and watching them develop Hamilton at the public and how that led to putting together the majority of what we now know is the Hamiltome in just seven weeks. But if you're all caught up with that, I'll leave you to it. Here's part two of my conversation with Jeremy McCarter.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:00] You know, I just have one more question for you, Jeremy.

Jeremy McCarter [00:01:03] OK.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:03] And that is, are you ready to take more questions from the Patreon Peeps?

Jeremy McCarter [00:01:08] I'm as ready as I'm going to be. Let's do this.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:38] OK, so Amanda says it's obvious you knew Hamilton was going to be a game changer, but did you ever dream the book you wrote about it would also become a cultural phenomenon?

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Jeremy McCarter [00:01:48] Absolutely not. No, look, it was really fast to try to get the book done at all because we were on a very tight deadline. So there's not a lot of time to sit around and ponder. Is everyone going to love it? Is it going to be a big hit? You just need to get it done and out the door in time. So even if there had been a chance to sit around and ponder, like, is it going to be a thing that people embrace and everything that's happened, I don't think there's any scenario where I would have imagined that it has been received the way that it has been received since it was published. Um, um, you know, this isn't in the book because the book was printed by this point. But Lin and I had our book party shortly after it was published and the demand for the book had already been so steep that there were no books at the book party because nobody had one. And it turned out that the paper that is used in the book, which is so much of what's great about it, is that very special sort of magic paper.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:49] Yeah

Jeremy McCarter [00:02:49] You can't just like gin that stuff up in a weekend. It takes time, I guess, to make it so. It took a minute for us to get more books. So for a while there, it was a book that lots of people wanted to read and nobody could get their hands on. Having a book party with no books is not something that I expected to happen. But that said, uh, it has been wonderful to see that people seem to like it. And I have gotten to give lots of talks and meet particularly of young people who are inspired by the show and think the book has helped them to figure out sort of how it happened to me. The response that I'm excited about is the one that it's still too soon for. As I said, there's an element of this book that is designed to demystify. I hope the people who are trying to tell their stories will be able to read this book and in very concrete, practical ways, understand a little better. This is how you can do it. And so for me, the readers I'm most excited about at this point are the ones who are going to be doing Hamilton for themselves in their schools. And I don't know how many years. Some number of years from now, it'll be licensed,

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it'll get done. They will have to figure out how to do this in New York. And this book will tell them, because that's the way it's written, is to tell them this is how it happened. And then the dream is, once you've done it, you can then go do it on your own. But the story that you want to tell, so Hamiltome as an instruction manual to making cool shows, that is the reception that I am thinking about. I've had ahead of time. And I'm so excited to get to see, um, you know, in the future.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:36] Yeah. And I feel like that will be here before we know it, because I remember so early on in this podcast, the whole thing about. Yes, the original Broadway company was filmed. It's, you know, Lin whole line about, you know, it's locked up in Gringotts and we want as many people as possible to see it. And it'll be years before the Hamilfilm is available. And I can go throw it on after we wrap if I want to. It's here now.

Jeremy McCarter [00:05:02] Are you going to?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:03] No

Jeremy McCarter [00:05:03] how many times have you watched it on Disney Plus

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:06] You know not that much, honestly. I've watched it the screener before Lin came on again to talk about it. Then there was like a Twitter party that he threw. So I watched it. Then I watched it with my parents because I took them to the show and they've been on the podcast and they're like big, gigantic fans and like a couple of other times since. But I use it and the and my editing all the time. I use the Hamiltome too, because I don't trust the Internet. So like instead of going like which and I think Genius.com is a great website. It's like I use that all. I do use that all the time. But sometimes if I need inspiration for the title of an episode, I'll try to look through it. But I'm so gentle with it that sometimes I do rely more on genius to go through it all.

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Jeremy McCarter [00:05:53] But it's OK.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:54] Yeah, I just don't want it to get hurt. And then I'm thinking too like, all right, well now I have to, it has to leave the apartment to get all these signatures that I've missed over the pandemic. So I don't know what's going to happen.

Jeremy McCarter [00:06:06] But I think I can imagine happening is that when people can leave their houses and they can move around again, you know, the people who haven't been able to come to your place to be on the podcast but have done it remotely, will all just come hang out

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:20] Wouldn't that be something? Yeah. OK, so like you and Groff.

Jeremy McCarter [00:06:23] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:24] Sasha Hutchings and all these people, we'll just have a big party.

Jeremy McCarter [00:06:27] I don't I can't think of any other way to do it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:29] I think that would be awesome. Actually, all jokes aside, the more I'm thinking about it, I'm like, yeah, why, why shouldn't I do that. Just have a gigantic hamilparty. Why not? This is your fault, Jeremy. Do you know that the first interaction I ever had with Lin on Twitter was because of this book?

Jeremy McCarter [00:06:48] I don't.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:48] It was from my personal account, not the Hamilcast account. But he wrote about Jordan Catalano from my so-called life and the annotations. Yeah. And he says, during helplessness is Lin Lin. He goes Ham goes full Jordan Catalano here. And I took a picture of it and I was like, oh my

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God. I like just it just blew my like everything about this book was like, oh my God, oh my God. Then it was like the last the last name I expected to read and Lin's adaptations was Jordan Catalano from my so-called life, which I ended up doing a podcast about with my friend Patrick Hinds. But and I was like, I can't you know, Jordan Catalano. I was like, I watched, you know, fun fact. I once went to a Halloween party dressed as Rayanne Graff, and I watched that show once a year almost. And I just can't believe it. And Lin quote tweeted it. He was like, the youths are not going to understand a single word of this tweet, but I appreciate it was like, oh, my God, I should. And then I was like, I should have done it from the Hamilcast. Oh, my God. And it was just like this craziness.

Jeremy McCarter [00:07:44] So the podcast started in January of 2016.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:47] January of 2016. Yeah, the tail end of January of 2016.

Jeremy McCarter [00:07:50] And you saw it for the first time

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:52] in April of 2016.

Jeremy McCarter [00:07:54] So for those first three months I now want to go back and listen to those. So for the first three months it's, it's the, it's the cast album. Like is that what you're digging into.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:03] And Chernow.

Jeremy McCarter [00:08:05] Wow OK, you went back to the source.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:06] I went back to the source and then I still get emails. Are you going to continue, Chernow? And because so it was this thing where I was like, well, if there's nothing to talk about, we'll just read and discuss the Chernow chapters. And then I realized, like, OK, now I have to explain the financial systems that were written into existence. And, you

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know, Chernow was a great read. But I'm like, right, the ADHD and the explaining these things to people, but not more than I was willing to do it. I was taking the notes and like doing the research. And then people started wanting to come on, people wanted to come on and it became the Chernow chapter episodes were getting few and far between. And I like gave up the Chernow chapter discussion because it just felt like, well, Mandy Gonzales wants to come over. So I don't I mean, like, it just got I just it my thing the thing that I love about creating things is allowing it to grow into what it's meant to be, even if it looks totally different from day one. And that's really what has happened with this podcast over the last five years, no pun intended. But it's just it's become what it's supposed to be. The turn out chapters were not what it was supposed to be anymore. And I feel bad when people email about it or tweet me about it. But I'm sorry, I just out for the podcast that grew outgrew them. You know, it's no it's no shade to anyone. It's just like there's too much to keep up with.

Jeremy McCarter [00:09:35] And now there's going to be a big party to sign your book.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:37] Right. All right. I'll take it. It's a pretty good trade off, I think. Onya says thank you for the Hamiltome. I love this book. I can't wait to hold the Heightstome in my hands. My question is, what were the differences for you to work on the Hamiltome with the cultural phenomenon happening during this time versus the Heightstome with the Broadway production of heights like so far in the past. But with the movie happening now,

Jeremy McCarter [00:09:57] that's a great question. Um, in some respects they're very similar because it's the setup is the same. I'm writing the chapters. Lin is doing these amazing, funny, insightful annotations to his lyrics. Um, uh, this time we also have the amazing Quiara Alegria Hudes, who's written essays that sort of stitch the different versions of the show together, um, which is wonderful. And her memoir, by the way,

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which is out now. So we'll certainly be out when this airs. But her memoir is beautiful and everyone should go read it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:31] She's amazing.

Jeremy McCarter [00:10:31] Um, so the fact that there was so much time to cover meant trying to look for one way to unfold this extraordinary life of the show. It couldn't just be like they made the show and then they made the movie. It has to be there's something about the essence of In The Heights that has had this effect on so many different people over the years. It draws people together somehow. How and why and getting to talk to so many people who have done it in New York, around the world, people who made the movie hearing things come from people who had the same experience on different productions of In The Heights. They've never met one another was wonderful. Um, and then, as I said, like, it's the same cast of characters and a lot of respects. It's more Chris Jackson and Anthony Ramos, there's a lot of Alex Lacamoire in this book and who, you know, was obviously one of the main creative forces in the stage version and is hugely vital to the movie as well. Um, and with this one, I think the difference is, um. The Hamilton story exists, so I have a feeling that most of the people who pick up this book will know the Hamilton book already. They'll know that part of the story. And so this is really about, um, completing it. This is the stuff that came before the Hamilton story and the stuff that has happened since. And so hopefully the two of them fit together. Um, and, you know, there's a lot of Lin in both of these shows. So in a sense, this is a lot of his creative work for the first 40 years of his life.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:13] Yeah, absolutely.

Jeremy McCarter [00:12:14] And the other thing that's similar between them and nothing to do with me, but the photos are absolutely breathtaking in this book. Um, they're drawn from, you know, people rummaging around in boxes that hung on to you from the 90s.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:28] Oh, my God.

Jeremy McCarter [00:12:30] But also behind the scenes photos from the movie, behind the scenes, photos from the stage version, things from all across the world. And see here, I can show them to you right here. No, just kidding. This is just this is

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:49] Did you see how I perked up and I was like, wait, did I was going to say, like, the light needs to adjust because I don't see anything. Everybody held up a blank page.

Jeremy McCarter [00:12:56] This copy of the book is not actually the book. It's just a dummy. So we can see the cover and decide if we like it or not. All the pages inside are blank,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:05] hook, line and sinker. You got me, Jeremy. I mean, I was in

Jeremy McCarter [00:13:08] you know what happened, like, I got this and I was like, oh, great. I love it. I love the cover. It looks fantastic. I'm really excited about it. And it doesn't matter that all the pages inside are blank. But now having this thing around for a writer, a book that feels like a book, but all the pages inside are blank is like, uh, it's kind of like an anxiety dream, except in real life

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:31] Its like an episode of The Twilight Zone. You're waiting for Rod Serling to just appear in an armchair.

Jeremy McCarter [00:13:35] Yeah, kind of. It's like this thing that has no words in it is like, um, trippy. So I'm super excited for it to come back from the printer. It is. I think it is like on the presses right now, actually in mid April, I'm not sure, but I think like pages are being bound. So there will be, uh, an actual book with actual words and pictures in it soon.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:56] You don't even have one yet on April 17th.

Jeremy McCarter [00:13:58] Nobody does. There aren't any. No, they don't. They don't exist, um, which is exciting. You know, there's this way that it's the book business is still ultimately like a branch of manufacturing. It's an object. You know, there it comes. It comes from a factory and it has to be assembled from raw materials. There's something so tactile about these things, um, that I love the idea that right now they're like boxes of these things that I, I certainly hope are starting to fill up with, like, you know, the product that will be shipped to distributors and then to customers.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:33] I got photos from the nineties. I can't wait. Um, speaking of photos, though, Cassie's asking, were you a part of any of the photography that went into the Hamiltome? Did you choose the photos at Lin where they photos the show already had on hand? So these photos in the book are stunning.

Jeremy McCarter [00:14:49] They're beautiful. Um, they came from a bunch of different sources. Some are the official production photos. So those are the a lot of the photos of the cast in costume on stage, uh, somewhere, um, specially commissioned by Frank Okenfels. A lot of the close ups are those the portraits. This beautiful sort of antique portraits are by Joshel Lehrer.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:15] There's a whole book of those photos, too. There's a whole.

Jeremy McCarter [00:15:17] There is. Yeah, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:18] It's oh my God.

Jeremy McCarter [00:15:20] And then lots of behind the scenes stuff that, um, you know, people happen to have or we happen to grab and looking for ways that we could stitch it all together.

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You know, I didn't art direct it, but Lin and I were both trying to figure out with them, you know, what is the right way that the visuals can support the story that we're trying to tell. And it's interesting, like if you look at it, the lyrics in almost every case, the the images that go with the lyrics are from the finished show. Those are all production photos. So when you're looking at the lyrics, you're looking at them with photos of actual Hamilton. The chapters are not the chapters are all process. Yeah, those are much more sort of documentary style, which was another subtle way of trying to get the two realities of the book to make some kind of sense.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:11] Yep. That's unbelievable. Sorry, I'm just looking through your book in front of you. Sorry about that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:17] Ginette is asking, curious if there has been any consideration to make a Volume two featuring all the different casts from the UK or the US.

Jeremy McCarter [00:16:27] This is this is volume two right here. It's it's called it's called In The Heights: Finding Home. Um, there hasn't been God. The story has gotten so vast anymore. With all of those companies all over the world and so much history since then, as I said to me, the interesting the the most interesting moment in the life of the show, I think since its creation, needless to say, is when it gets adopted by hundreds and hundreds of companies of young artists all around the country and then around the world, I just I can't I genuinely don't know what that's going to be like when 17 year olds and 20 year olds are doing their productions of this and they're getting to be Angelica and Lafayette and everybody else. I would love to know what that's like. Um, you know, I don't know if it's a book or a documentary or what, but that's a real moment. That would be wonderful to see.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:17:25] Do you think they're going to have to edit, Say No to This for high school?

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Jeremy McCarter [00:17:28] Interesting question. I think it depends on the choreography

Gillian Pensavalle [00:17:31] Which isn't vulgar by any means? I mean, it's Andy Blankenbuehler.

Jeremy McCarter [00:17:34] Well, depends how you do it, right? I mean, when they when they get to do you know, when the youngsters when the youngsters get to do it for themselves, they'll make up their own choreography.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:17:42] Yes. I don't know why. I was just like, everyone's going to be doing the original Andy Blankenbuehler choreography in high school. No

Jeremy McCarter [00:17:49] Because the lyric, is there anything really trying to think if there's anything really objectionable in the lyrics,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:17:54] keep the fuck in Yorktown, everybody, and keep it in Washington on your side to southern motherfucking Democratic Republicans. Keep that in. It's too good. If you're going to do the show, then do the show. You think 17 year olds are talking about this and saying these words, give me a break.

Jeremy McCarter [00:18:09] When the show is licensed, it should have a letter from you. It goes with the script and the score

Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:14] Yelling at everyone give me a break. Yeah, that's that's that's how you really get people to listen to you start with saying give me a break and then people are really it's really hard. You get a point across

Jeremy McCarter [00:18:24] cowards don't censor this for signed by you in silver marker

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:31] xoxo g. pen. Carey is asking, was there a person or a chapter that surprised you or took a direction you hadn't planned on?

Jeremy McCarter [00:18:39] I'm not sure that a chapter or person surprised me exactly. But I will say that a moment in the book that means a lot to me and that I've been happy to see means a lot to other people, too, is where I get to talk about Anthony Ramos and his journey to getting to be on that stage with everybody else and the fact that he had the interaction that he had with President Obama that I had just happened to be in exactly the right place at the right time to get to catch. Um, I didn't realize how emotional that was going to be for a lot of people until readers told me how moved they were by that chapter. Um, but I'm really happy that that's in there. And and for sure is one of the things that I'm thrilled about with the Heights, Book Heights, tome Heights, whatever we're ultimately calling

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:32] Bodega Bible

Jeremy McCarter [00:19:34] Bodega Bible love that is more Anthony stories. Um, because, I mean, he's just a wonderful guy is, as we've said, is going to be a huge star. But knowing where he came from and what it took for him to get where he is, uh, just makes it all the sweeter.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:51] Can you elaborate a little bit on the story you're talking about in case just for context for people

Jeremy McCarter [00:19:57] Sure, sure. Sure. There's a chapter in the book. Um, so, you know, if anyone hasn't read the book, there are, um, sort of snapshots or portraits of, um, most of the members of the original principal cast. And in Anthony's case, it talks about how he grew up in the projects in New York. And, you know, it was a long shot for him to have a career in the performing arts as an actor. Uh, but he stuck with it. He got someone to believe in him and, um, attempted to get cast in

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In *The Heights* once. And it didn't work out. But he found his way to Hamilton and he was performing in the matinee that President Obama came to see shortly after opening. And, um, I saw him do it. President Obama, before he left stage, after giving this speech to the whole company, you made a point of going up to Anthony and saying something wonderful about it. And I, you know, asked Anthony right afterwards, like what? Because I couldn't hear it. I could only see it. And just this sort of glow on Anthony's face when he told me, um. So, yeah, I'm delighted that I got to share that one.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:03] Christine is asking, what was your favorite story or a piece of trivia that didn't make it into the Hamiltome?

Jeremy McCarter [00:22:08] Oh, that's a good one. Uh, trying to think of what ended up on the cutting room floor. It did end up being a much bigger book than they had originally planned on it. It turns out Lin and I both had a bit more to say than I think they had originally budgeted. And so it's a it's a weightier Hamilton than anyone had anticipated. But what didn't make it in? I would say the thing that didn't make it in it didn't end up on the cutting room floor. It just hadn't happened yet. The day when we all went to the White House in 2016 for the sort of final, um, Hamilton day at the Obama White House when the company performed an hour's worth of material from the show, culminating in Chris and Lin performing, um, one last time, uh, for the Obamas and the Bidens who were also there. So they performed for two presidents. Um, that moment of Chris singing the words of George Washington's farewell address with the huge iconic Gilbert Stuart portrait directly behind him on the wall of the White House, with President Obama sitting in the front row about six feet away from him and from where I was sitting, I didn't even have to turn my head to see this unbelievable sort of, um, scene. And I really wish that had happened in time to be in the book, because it does distill a lot of that moment for the show, but also for the country. Um, so that's one. If I had to if I had a time machine somehow, that's what I would have tried to get into the book. Um, I would have had to take my

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memory of it in the time machine back before it had happened, because that's from the publication deadline was so. Yeah. I guess it also then becomes like a science fiction book, but it would still be a cool thing to have in there.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:44] I almost can't believe that we have video of that moment, it feels it's so intimate and so personal to everyone in that room that I kind of can't believe that I can again, go watch it after we wrap if I want it to. And that that Cjack I mean, I'm never surprised by anything he does because he's just, as Lin says, just so fucking majestic, but which is so true. But you would think that you'd have something in your throat or you'd be there would be tension. There are the emotion would be coming through in a way where you couldn't, like, totally nail one last time. And he sings. I mean, he sings the shit out of it like he always does. But it's just like it's unbelievable. I mean,

Jeremy McCarter [00:26:28] so when it ended, because that was the end of the program after that song, I probably President Obama walked up to the podium and said a few words and then everyone they left. You have to wait until the president leaves the room for security reasons. Then we all could get up out of our chairs and start moving around. And the first thing I did was rush up to Chris and grab him, because from where I had stood, it wasn't just watching him sing in front of the iconic portrait. There was one moment where he moved his arm. So he was exactly striking the pose that Washington is striking in the portrait.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:59] How dare you, Chris Jackson. How very dare you.

Jeremy McCarter [00:27:01] It blew my mind. Yeah. So I said, like, do you realize what you did? You said, you know, from where I was sitting, it was like it was just this uncanny moment where I was like, you were doing exactly like I couldn't even get the words out. Chris was like, Yeah, man, I meant to do

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that. Well, you knew exactly what you knew exactly what he was doing.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:18] Cjacked I've had it. I've just had it with him. He's just it's too much.

Jeremy McCarter [00:27:23] It was a good day.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:24] I can imagine. Yeah. Ellen says you were among the first to recognize the value of hip hop as a vehicle to tell a story in the theater. As you detailed in the Hamiltome when describing your first encounter with In The Heights, how do you see that expanding? And what other musical genre or form do you think may have that potential in the future?

Jeremy McCarter [00:27:43] This is going to sound weird, but I'm not sure that there is one. Um, I should say that there is the big argument that I was making, which is that Broadway musicals have gotten lethally cut off from the energy of the culture outside the theater. There needed to be more styles and more influences flowing through Broadway than ever had. Um, you know, it didn't make sense to me that people could say, as most of my friends did, because at this point, you know, a lot of my best friends had no interest in the theater and they would say, I hate musicals and you would know exactly what they were talking about. But why should that be possible? Why you can say this is before Spotify, but there are thousands of ways to sing songs and musical styles and they're constantly changing. You can tell stories with so many of them. Why is it that there's this one way that in the theater virtually all of the musical storytelling was happening? It didn't make sense. And because I was young and felt like picking a fight, I guess that was the thing I kept writing. And the one the most egregious, it seemed to me, was hip hop. So in terms of the big argument, which is there ought to be more music that is now happening, I feel like the musical diversity of Broadway is way beyond what it was 15 years ago. And that's wonderful. Um, and there will be more musical styles that come along. But it just felt to me like hip

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hop was the one that was last to the party, but it was the one that was egregious because it had a potential that other forms of popular music, um, don't have because hip hop is a form of verse. And theater was from most of its history, a form of verse drama. So you squint your eyes just right. And hip hop is actually closer to what theater has traditionally been than like an Arthur Miller play is. So it was just like it seemed to me this enormous missed opportunity. And I didn't know if anyone was going to figure it out while I was around and on the beat. Um, but when Lin did it, just actually I told him there's a couple of years ago, um, I reviewed it off Broadway in twenty seven. I reviewed it on Broadway in early 2008. By the time I reviewed it the second time in thousand eight passing Strange had gone to Broadway, um Spring Awakening had gone to Broadway and it just didn't feel quite as urgent to be making the case to try to convince people that you needed to open up Broadway to like more musical styles. You just felt like they were there. And when In The Heights opened on Broadway, it just felt I very clearly remember this after. I reviewed it the second time, I just felt like, OK, I've been doing this for six years, I've said what I want to say. If I keep doing this, I am going to start repeating myself because I don't know how else to say it. Like these shows In The Heights in particular, they're here. And it was a couple only a couple of weeks after that, actually, when an editor at Newsweek coincidentally reached out and asked if I was interested. I just felt like the thing I got to tell Lin is like because of In The Heights, I felt like I sort of said what I needed to say and could go off and do other things. So, yeah. So I do think now to what it's, uh, how many years later and I think there is still a long way to go. I think there's still a huge amount of potential that hasn't been tapped yet. But I'm also more confident that I was back then that it is going to continue to be. I mean, how long does it take for inspiration to turn into a show? Lin saw rent in nineteen ninety seven, I think, and In The Heights, uh, went off, arrived off Broadway ten years after that, uh, Hamilton was off Broadway in twenty fifteen so and on Broadway in twenty sixteen and the cast album and Disney plus. So you know it's early. Yeah. But it's happening I'm sure out there in the country are lots and lots of

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young songwriters and theater makers who feel that they have permission to tell their story because of Hamilton and um, you know, the Broadway of the late 20s. Um, I think it's going to be a more adventurous and more musically boundary breaking place than the one that I was writing about 15 years ago.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:32] Well, that's really exciting.

Jeremy McCarter [00:32:33] It's just as I said, it felt like there was a potential for storytelling there in the way that the best MCs were using words. I mean, that's what it was. I have been a writer since I was five, so I'm just listening for the way people use words. And when I started listening to hip hop, when I was in junior high or something, just made something, some circuit closed in my brain. You can do this with words like if you can do this with words like I'm like, why listen to something else if this is out there? And yeah. And Lin, it turns out around the same time, a few hundred miles away, was having the same thought, except he was actually like making something out of it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:16] Right. Katherine's asking, how do you balance what goes into the book between fundamental core storytelling, wanting to provide a different angle or perspective or break new ground and pure creative impulse?

Jeremy McCarter [00:33:29] If it works? They kind of all all those planes land at the same time. Um, I think everything in there is supposed to feel like it's doing all of those things. Um, and then it's another Sondheim, uh, rule. Right. Variety, variety. Variety. So with these with both of these books there, there are dozens of chapters. And even though they have to keep one thread, one narrative thread moving. Yeah, I'm always interested in trying to figure out, is there a different way in? Can I change the point of view in this one? So if the last chapter was a profile, this one is more of a sort of, you know, a scene where I witnessed something. I can tell the story from that perspective, or should it be more like an essay where it's about some idea, it's all feel really, um, and trying to with

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both of these books, it's hopefully it gives you a feel for the life of the show or show slash movie. It's not just like the process. It's the. It's the. It's what it felt like to be inside it, I guess

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:42] Lucy wants to talk about critiquing theater, so she says, I would love to know more about the process of writing critiques for theater. There are some writers who go into a show just waiting to tear someone or the show apart. And then there are others who genuinely seem to love the art form of theater and want to see shows succeed. There are so many actors or companies for good or bad know that much of their livelihoods may depend on the outcome of a review from a theater critic. So she has a couple of questions, but we'll go one by one. So she says, how do you approach critiquing theater, knowing this? And what can writers who do critique theater do better, knowing that they may be an outsized influence on whether a show continues or ends?

Jeremy McCarter [00:35:19] So I should say this is I got to reach back a while because I have a review to play in 13 years or so. But I would say the tricky thing about it is that the people who love theater and want to see shows succeed. Sometimes that makes you write a harsh review of something because there are shows that have promise their young artists that you can celebrate the exciting things that happen. And when those things arrive, you celebrate them. But some shows are are not you know, some shows are done in bad faith because someone was trying to, like, exploit some intellectual property or something or I mean, we've all been there. Sometimes the show just doesn't work out. It just doesn't come off. The concept was wrong. The casting wasn't quite right. And if you are trying to help that better theater arrive, then you kind of have to be honest. The only real judge is like, did what was your honest response to this? And if you're honest response, was it disappointed you it made you angry, then you have to say it and hopefully say it in a way that is not needlessly vicious, but say it clearly. And because you're writing for readers, say it in a way that's interesting. And people want to read that and read the next thing that you

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have to say. Um, I will say, though, like, on balance, it's really hard. I mean, you like six years was about as much as I could do it because, I mean, think about the TV shows you watch. Think about the songs that you happen to hear that you didn't pick to listen to. I mean, making stuff that's great is really hard. Most of the stuff is not great. And if the job is to tell readers if every single thing is great or not, you end up writing a lot more bad reviews than good ones. And after a while, like, you kind of need a taste for blood to keep doing it. And I didn't particularly so. So, yeah, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:22] She's also asking, do you recommend performers read reviews?

Jeremy McCarter [00:37:26] No. Performers? No, but afterwards maybe. Um, but I wouldn't want to have in my head what somebody thought of a performance that I need to go out and give again that night. Yeah. Because it's not just it's not just critics. I mean, some family members, some friend, some someone can say something that gets in your head if you're a performer. And I say, this is just me, but I would be really protective of letting that stuff in if I were a writer or director. That might be different. But even there, I think it would depend on the critic. I mean, if it's someone whose tastes you like, if it's someone who you think might have a special insight on the work, that's different. But no, for a performer. No, no, no, no.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:15] Yeah. And our last question, Lucy says, In your ideal world, what should be the relationship between those who make art and those who write about it?

Jeremy McCarter [00:38:23] Well, it helps if they know what they're talking about. I would say that as a first thing and then, you know, OK, well, this is relevant. Lin and I met and got to be friends. That happened significantly in the summer of 2008, which is after I had stopped being a critic because he was young and clearly like going to be doing a bunch of stuff. And I don't know how I would have felt about like hanging out with a guy much as I loved what he was starting to make. And my

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confidence that, like, this is the guy like this is that might have been tricky if I felt like I was on the hook to then sit in the aisle seat and tell everybody what I thought. Right. But I was out. I was done. So it's a fine line. And different critics have walked it in different ways. Um, but, you know, to me, it's the worst thing that can happen is when you read a review and not just of a play of anything, read review. And it's clear that the person has some basic misunderstanding of how the art form works or lacks some kind of context that would make something make sense. That's not good reading.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:36] Yeah, I agree. Chris says, I'm really curious about what book or books is on your nightstand or on your tablet right now?

Jeremy McCarter [00:39:43] It's a good question. I'm reading a few things right now. Um, so I just finished Quiara's book, uh, as I said, um, which is My Broken Language. It's wonderful. Everyone should read Quiara's memoirs. Um, I have been reading a biography of Billy Wilder. I just wrote a review of a new collection, Billy Wilder, The Great one of the great writer directors in Hollywood history. There's a new book that I just reviewed, um, of his journalism that he wrote before he became a famous, wonderful Hollywood director. Um, and I got sucked back into that biography. So I've been reading that. And the other book up right now is Jia Lin Yangs book One Mighty and Irresistible Tide, uh, which is about Asian immigration to the United States, um, which feels awfully timely. Um, so, yes, that's that's the mix right now. And then, you know, I will get distracted from those things to read other stuff, pull something off the shelf and then, uh, get, um, disappear down a rabbit hole of somebody's collection of plays or something.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:40:48] Sure. What's your process like when the bodega Bible comes to your door and it's totally done? What do you have a I don't know, like a ritual when when something is totally done?

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Jeremy McCarter [00:40:57] Well, I will probably do what I did last time. Um, when I got my first advanced copy of the Hamilton book, I took it out of the box, made sure that it was intact and everything sort of generally looked OK. I put it back in the box and I sealed it up and I waited for my daughter to come home from school. 2016, she would have been four, I guess. Uh, and, uh, I let her open it and showed her the cover and she recognized her last name on the cover, which was exciting. And then I showed her the dedication page, which is her name, um, and she was old enough to recognize it and didn't quite understand what she was seeing. But that was a great moment. So this time now with both my daughters, what I'll probably do is take it out of the box when they're not around to make sure everything looks OK, all those like glorious photos that are in there and the songs that we've been listening to for years and then put it back in the box and then let them open it. And, uh, I'll sort of read it over their shoulders, most likely.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:42:05] That's very sweet. Um, Ella's asking, what do you like the most about writing and what is your source of inspiration? Greetings from Poland.

Jeremy McCarter [00:42:14] Oh, um, hello, Poland. The best thing about writing is having written I mean, writing's hard. This I write, but yes, writing is really hard. It's not something that I think most writers enjoy like ever. I don't know, do you when you have to write something.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:42:33] I don't consider myself a writer, though. I feel like that.

Jeremy McCarter [00:42:36] But everyone writes like something, right? I mean, like I say, for me, it's always hard. I don't the process of it is challenging if you're doing it right. I remember this writing class I did take in college. They told us at the beginning, just so you know, this class is not going to make you a faster writer. It might make you a better writer, but it's not going to make you faster. And it's truth. You're doing it right. It kind of takes a while. And so the actual writing

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is, um, is a challenge. So so, yes, it's sort of a joke. I like having written, but the one thing I do enjoy a lot is the research that goes into writing anything that's more than a couple of hundred words. I don't know. There's something that about research that I guess considering what I do for a living, thank God my brain is wired this way. But to me, it's not like, uh, drudgery. To me, it's like, uh, mystery. It's like an adventure. Like you have to like you have clues and you have to, like, solve the puzzle. Like, what is the answer to this riddle? It is out there. If I find the right book, if I read the right magazine, if I talk to the right person, like somewhere, this information is out there and I'm going I'm not going to stop until I find it. I find that weirdly, but like, constantly delightful. So you'll find me at the library. That's what I'm trying to say.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:03] OK, I love libraries. Oh my God, I love libraries. I'm just I just thought of is this an Aaron Burr quote, like a real Aaron Burr quote or is it just wrongly attributed to him? But didn't he say things written remain? Isn't that him?

Jeremy McCarter [00:44:17] I don't know. It could be.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:19] Yeah, I don't know why. It's just that just popped into my head, as you were saying that.

Jeremy McCarter [00:44:24] Yeah. And then the challenge is to go find them.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:27] Right. Well, Jeremy, I really I can't thank you enough for spending this evening with me

Jeremy McCarter [00:44:33] Can I ask you questions now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:34] Yeah, OK, sure. I was going to let you off the hook, but ok.

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Jeremy McCarter [00:44:39] No, I want to come on, this is exciting for me. All right. What, you have spent five years. Yes. Like deeply immersed in this. How has it. Spilled out into your life and affected the way you, like, move through the world, and just to clarify, I don't mean like now you're friends are like Lin and Tommy. And it's like I mean, the things that are totally unrelated to Hamilton and the people who made Hamilton like how has this have these five years and all these conversations like sort of shaped or affected the way you think about things or do things?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:14] I mean, actually, technically, I am really proud of the my journey as an editor and as a storyteller in that sense. So hearing these stories and making not changing the story, but using the music or, you know, using the instrumentals or taking I don't know, maybe I just played C Jack singing one last time in front of President Obama. I don't know. But being able like when you're talking about that research, I love that part of the editing, finding what I can use and tying it together and putting things in context for people. I really want everyone to really understand these stories because I think they're all important. And so I think hearing from you and it is a really big deal. And so I think in my life, it I see things I've always seen things kind of big picture, but also very detail based. So I want I want the context of these episodes to be general that everyone understands. But like all of that is in the details. And so I think when it comes to creating other things, I'm taking that creative experience through this and also hearing, you know, trying to trying to be as this isn't a joke, like trying to be as Tommy Kail as possible about it, like thinking about, you know, and I say that because he says things and I'm like, how do you get to that point? Like, he say like, how do you how do you run how do you be a director of something, even though I'm not a director, but like sort of at the helm of something without being stressed out about it. And it really becomes about having a plan. And like he said something about like, you know, when you walk in on day one of a rehearsal, you can't expect it to be day eight or day forty or day whatever, like it's day one and

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that's what you have to do. And don't try to do too many things at once in my whole thing is maybe it's the ADHD, maybe it's the enthusiasm and excitement. I want to do things at once and why can't I? Because that's exciting to do that. And it's like, no, that's not Tommy Kail would say don't do it.

Jeremy McCarter [00:47:22] Now, Tommy would say that Tommy is very impressive guy because Tommy runs very cool. Yeah. And gets extraordinary amounts of things done. This is actually one of the fun things about this book, about the In The Heights book is getting to talk to people like Lin and Tommy and Lac who now are at the peak of their professions. They're regarded as brilliants, you know, and get them to reflect on what it was like to be making In The Heights when they were babies.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:56] Right. Right, right.

Jeremy McCarter [00:47:57] Fifteen years earlier. And try to get them to say, like, well, what do you think now about that person who made that choice? Would you do that differently now? And, you know, the supreme example is Lin, who's writing these annotations to his lyrics, where he's saying where he's telling you what he thinks now at forty one, everything there is to win about these some of these in some cases, these things he wrote when he was a teenager. Right. Like what do you make of them. So yeah. So so if if the Heights book will give you fresh insights into the way the Tommy Kail is able to move through life so coolly,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:34] I also get a reassurance from Lac and a little bit of Andy to where it's not right until it's right, because some people might call me a little bit of a workaholic. And I don't care if you can't hear the imperfection I'm hearing. If I still hear it, then I'm going to work until that edit is as smooth as possible or until, you know, if I have some idea, like I have this crazy idea wants to do. Kyle Scatliff was talking about he was Laffytte/Jefferson on the Phillip tour and he was talking about how Washington on your side, he's he sees it as stars from Les Mis. And I was listening

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to it and I was like, I think I can mash those up. I think I could do I think I can edit it in a way.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:13] And it took it was like a big chunk of time, but I was like, well, it's the idea now and I'm like 70 percent there. And I know if I just do it, I think it'll be cool and maybe no one will get it and maybe it'll suck and maybe it's too much. But like, I want to do it. And something like, you know, Alex will always say, like, you know, you know, when it's right. And so that's that's always my like. Well, Alex Lacamoire told me that I can be a workaholic, so I can I can, you know, but I'm sure he would say finish the glass of water on your desk and hydrate and stretch your legs.

Jeremy McCarter [00:51:43] No, he would. But there's it's something to admire about all of those guys. There is a there it's not it's not interpersonal at all, but there is a ruthlessness about form and about work and understanding like this is you just have to figure out what works within the constraints of the project and then do not stop until you found the thing that fulfills it. Yeah. Um, that is like a beautiful thing to see in action now across two books. Not just the one.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:14] Yeah. Oh God. I can't wait for it. I can't wait. I can't wait to have these both of these beautiful books. I know exactly where the bodega bible going to live. I know

Jeremy McCarter [00:52:24] it is designed to fit beautifully next to the Hamilton book on everybody's shelves. So you could clear a little space for it now. It's coming soon.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:33] I got it.

Jeremy McCarter [00:52:33] How do you know when it's done or is it never done.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:36] An episode or the podcast.

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Jeremy McCarter [00:52:38] The podcast.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:40] Well, I didn't start with a goal like my I was just like, OK, well, I know it's crazy that I haven't seen this thing and I know it's crazy that I don't know how to make a podcast and I don't have any equipment, but I'm going to do it. And we'll see what happens. And then I've just been just there's so many people I still want to talk to that I haven't spoken to yet. And I think I don't I don't I never had an end point. I don't see to me it feels like, well, why would I end it when Australia just went up? Right. And there are so many more people that are coming and going. And just because you're not in the show today doesn't mean I don't want to talk to you. There are still people in the original company I haven't spoken to and there are people who have who don't exist in any company yet. So and everyone has a different story. And when I when I say company, I mean like lighting people too. you know, like that it's all it's everyone. So I feel like everyone has a has a story to tell. And I think it's it's wild. It was wild when it started when people were being cast in the show as fans of the musical who had discovered the podcast a little bit. And so I then listened to episodes to kind of get a little insight from Tommy or or there whoever was also playing their role. And then they because Hamilton was so big that they had sort of heard about it a little bit. And now they were like fans of the show and now they're in the show. So it's been amazing to talk to people who've been in all of those rooms from the very beginning to people who I always mention her. Lexie Garcia, who was such a gigantic fan of the show, who would go to Barnes and Noble and read this book with tears in her eyes because she couldn't afford it and that she was in the show. And like for her to like what? I handed her the book and she was like, Gillian, you don't understand what it's like for her to sign it because of what it's just all of these full circle moments. Yeah. Or not even full circle moments. Just like like, you know, the rollercoaster is going up for so many of these people.

Jeremy McCarter [00:54:43] So it is this beautiful. Can't stop. It's just getting better and better. Yeah. Stories are like the

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great stories. The people who haven't even arrived yet you got to talk to.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:54:56] Yeah. And Anthony Ramos and all these people. And Jasmine, you know, there are some people who who have yet to swing by. So, yeah, there's no end in sight.

Jeremy McCarter [00:55:04] Anthony is going to be busy for a little while.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:06] I mean, I've just been saying that, like from episode one, I'm just like, yeah, when Lin comes over because he's got to come over and I just feel that way about Anthony. So take your time, Anthony. I'll be here.

Jeremy McCarter [00:55:16] All right. I've I've I could go on and on with the questions, but I'll stop. Um, this has been a lot of fun.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:23] I'm so glad. Well you'll come over for gin for sure. And then we'll do this and you can sign it and then we'll like you can ask me everything, anything you want.

Jeremy McCarter [00:55:29] It's like gin with interest the way like a you know, like a debt, like it just accumulates interests. Like the gin is growing in the glass. Yeah. Every week that goes by,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:37] I have a heavy hand. Oh OK. Well what kind of what is your gin drink. You just said like something with gin but I don't know what you.

Jeremy McCarter [00:55:46] Bombay Sapphire.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:47] Oh great. OK, just like on the rocks

Jeremy McCarter [00:55:49] no, with tonic. OK, um little lime.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:53] Yeah. That will not be a problem. So Jeremy really thank you so much. Yeah. This has been an honor and it's been so much fun and congratulations on everything. And so where can the people find you all your social media and then where they can preorder or buy the. The In The Heights book, just all the websites and all the information that you want to give people,

Jeremy McCarter [00:56:17] yes, In The Heights finding home is available everywhere. Everywhere you can buy a book, you can find this book anywhere you can find the Hamilton book, you can find the In The Heights book. At this point, you can find me on Twitter at JxMcCarter and you can sort of find me on Facebook. But he's really on Facebook anymore. I'm not really on Facebook. Um, and and I have a website and my name Jeremy McCarter dot com. Um, if you want to, uh, if you have more questions, feel free to hit me up any time. Always glad to hear from people reading the books.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:56:48] Yeah. Cool. Well, again, really. Thank you so much. My pleasure. And listeners, thank you so much for hanging out with me week after week and patreon peeps, thank you for your amazing questions. That was so fun. Yeah. All right. I'll see you next week. I don't know. I don't know who I'm talking to next, but we'll see. Thank you again so much for listening. And thank you, Jeremy, for joining me.

Jeremy McCarter [00:57:08] Thank you.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:57:09] So I'll talk to you next week. I am G. Pen

Jeremy McCarter [00:57:11] J. Mac

Gillian Pensavalle [00:57:51] 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

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