

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

[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, friends. Welcome back to the Hamilcast, I'm Gillian, and we're picking up where we left off last week with Hamilton London's original Burr and author of the new book Hamilton and Me, Giles Terera. Look, you know the drill. Have you missed last week's episode? Go back and check that one out before you dive into this one. Among other things, Giles talks about seeing Hamilton for the first time, winning his Olivier Award for Aaron Burr and how the book came to be. So if you're all set, let's do it. Here's part two of my conversation with Giles.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:50] I love also the the ever present ready from Lac, so when you read the book, because, you know, Burr starts the show and Alex Lacamoire you write so many times and I even wrote my notes, I was like, it's ever present. I love it so much. And Lac would look at you and say, Ready? Which is the most loaded question really. And it's like it's a courtesy. But it's also like, I don't know, am I like,

Giles Terera [00:01:15] Totally, totally. Lac was the first person I met in this whole gig. So my audition I met Lac and again, I'd seen the show two days before that. And you're blown away by this thing and you think, oh my God, I remember crying at the interval because intermission, I should say, because I thought not only is episode, you know, what the story and what's going on, but I thought I'm thinking an artist has been able to, if it seemed for once like come up with a piece of art that's perfect, that's like fully formed. But just it just is it works. I couldn't tell the difference between the staging and the choreography and then the choreography and the costumes when they do the lifts. And that way the dresses move perfectly and then the look perfectly. So that gives you think it all seemed so perfectly unified that I was really moved by that I was like, what? What could you say to that? If you to the artist is like, well, that didn't come out like I wanted it to. I wanted to change that without looking at my stuff because because it's not right. I was like, what would you have to say about Hamilton? Again, it's like it's perfect. It's actually perfect. So that going into meeting Lac, I was like, that was the intimidating

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

thing going, how am I going to how am I going to be able to meet these people who have already got something which is so perfectly formed. But, you know, I expected them to be very intimidating and intense and exacting and fundamentalist about everything. Whereas actually the first thing I remember about Lac is like a smile and. Hello. Hi, how are you doing? So know, just it was just it was just a nice presence to be in. And normally it's not like that in auditions. I didn't do too many musical theater auditions, but usually it is very intense and very intimidating and like, OK, you know, get this right or, you know, give us what we want, what we need to see where Lac it was just like chilled cool and OK, I have to tell this. Because I, I, I had decided to audition. They send you a bit of room at the end from the to the end, which is only a tiny bit of it. And they send you by the first verse of wait for it and then the first verse of Theadosia. And then at the end of the opening. And so I had decided to I wanted to do all of it because, because I don't like auditions like that's like five minutes long, six weeks long.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:17] And to do the last bit of it without ramping up to it a lot

Giles Terera [00:04:21] Yeah. It's kind of strange. So, so I thought, well I'm going to try and do then the whole thing so I can go in there and then I'll show them what I can do and then they can say, OK, we've seen everything, thanks very much but no thanks. I don't have to go in there a million times. I had a friend. The last show I was in was Mormon and I had a friend who was in a moment like 16 times, and then they threw him over to New York. And I was like, that would absolutely I went to that. I'd be too nervous. So if I let me just let me just try it. And I, you know, I loved it. And I, you know, the moment I heard room like, that's my job. That is it. That I just couldn't stop. Listen to it. So if I'm going to try and do all of its activities to try and learn it. So I went in and said Lac was cool. And it's like which we start with. And I was like, well, let's let's start with room. OK, fine, fine, fine. And I said, well. I'd like to try and do all of it, she said. OK, OK, OK, OK, that's fine. So he said, I'll do I'll do it. I'll be the others are being laugh. And I none of that. I'm going to try and do the whole thing. So it kind of looked to me like, OK, OK, fine, go for it. So we started the song and I did the whole thing. And then halfway through I was a bit like, is this a

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

bit... You know, what does he think of this strange thing for someone to come in audition to do? But I can't I'm not going to second guess myself about that fucking keep going. So I just did the whole thing. And then afterwards he was just really cool and he was like this. He got it in the sense that I was I was I've made a decision and a choice about its character and its role I was going to do. But you also got the humor of it, me being all of them and kind of and and even the tiny moments where they're like overlap.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:15] that's exactly what's in my head thinking. Try to picture you talking to yourself and this.

Giles Terera [00:06:22] Yeah. But I kind of thought if I can, if I can do that then then at least see I see something. He was really cool and then he played around with it and, and like I say, like the it felt like he kind of got the, the joy of it because it's you know, it was it was again I think it's quite an intimidating thing going into an audition of that for that kind of part, that kind of role. But it was cool. We played around, you know, and then the next day I got up and my agent was like, and they want to see you again. And the director is going to be there this time. So Tommy told me this time and and again, that's about him. And they were both really cool. And I can't stress enough that it doesn't normally feel like that opening. It was like, OK, is a material. Let's play around with it and let's see where we go. Let's have fun with it and make it your own make your own choices. And with the whole Lac are you ready thing. It was it was, you know, and I said, no, I'm not ready. In the five seconds that would have been cool to me. There's something about it was very much a kind of given. It was very much. That's what I mean about. It's about what we bring into the room. We have a voice, we have some autonomy. You know, we are bringing something to this. And the fact that I was ask that question, it wasn't like he never turned around and said, right, here we go, action. You know, you said, are you ready? And I appreciate that. Yeah. I think what struck me about Lac from that first audition was like Lac is a great musician, obviously. And he plays like to me, Lac kind of mentality is like band. We're in a band, we're jamming. Let's go.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:06] Yes, yes.

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

Giles Terera [00:08:07] And I and I always got that feeling in in even when we were like the entire company said, we're learning room or whatever, we're learning some big thing is a kind of OK, let's go. Let's we're going to do this thing now. Let's go and do it. And it's fun. Let's play and always love that about Lac. So again, sometimes it's not it's not always like that. But I've been in bands, I started out in bands and stuff and that sense of like here we go, we're going to do this together of cool thing that Lac, you know, Lac can hear in a flat baritone from this hotel room. I mean, Lac knows exactly what he wants and exactly what he needs to hear. But again, it's this kind of balance thing that I found all the way through. It is on one hand, they could be incredibly prescriptive about it. And I remember having a call with Lac and it was for us to go through and wait for it. And he was he was excited because he was like, you know, I want to see what you do with it. I want to see what, what, what, how you make it your own and, you know, feel free to play and have choices and stuff. And in the back of my head, I know exactly that. He's going to he's going to be saying, well, I don't want that and maybe I want to live like this. But in the first instance, he gave me the opportunity in the in the room to just feel like I told me exactly the same thing to me. When we'd go upstairs to do the scenes, he would say, we just go wherever you fit in a move, wherever you feel, go with your instinct. And then, of course, it's like, well, this is where you need to be. But before that happened, we felt like we had in some way, only a little bit for ourselves. And I think that to me as an artist is really, really important, definitely, because if you don't feel like it's yours, then you're not going to stick with it. You run out of fuel with it. And very quickly, whereas with Hamilton, I did it for a year and I never. Ran out. I always felt like it was something else again or there was something else, try and I discovered something. I heard something new, not even in it, just perfect with other characters I had and used up all the time up until the last performance. I hadn't heard that before. I didn't realize it. And that sense of like feeling like of ownership, I think is I think it's important. Yeah, I think it's really important.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:43] Yeah. Because that's important where you stand we can talk about later. So you finding it is more important in that moment and then like, like imagine and I'm sure you can as an actor imagine someone saying no, you have to feel this over there.

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

Giles Terera [00:10:58] Yeah, totally.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:59] It's just I think it's so valuable and it's amazing how often that doesn't happen. When you're creating something with a group of people like that. That's where that's where my brain is. Like what? You're creating art with people. So why would you be such a stickler about it?

Giles Terera [00:11:15] Right. You're invested in it. Then there's performance and if you're invested in it, you'll fight for it in a different way. You know, you come in at a matinee and in October, whenever I'm not feeling like you're still invested in that thing already, it's yours. So therefore you take care of it in a different way. I think I certainly felt that. I always felt like every second I was on that stage was a choice that I've made, even though I knew that actually a lot of those choices we made many years before. And I think, yeah, that was that was a very important thing for me. And I think for everyone else in the cast.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:50] It was also surreal, a little bit reading your journal for so many reasons. But also it occurred to me that when Tommy and Lac were working with you and the West End Company, that's when they started listening to the podcast. And that's when my real friendships with them sort of began. OK, when after Lin came over the first time in twenty seventeen, he had I think three episodes and then Mike and I did the Lin besides as we called them, which was like us sort of recapping the biggest deal ever that he, you know, he was aware of the podcast and he came over and we had this whole thing and it was so cool. And he just came like by himself and he played, you know, he called them goodies like it became, you know, first burn was a thing because he played it during a bathroom break. We heard The Decemberists Ben Franklin song like we just hung out. So we had like a little bit of a recap and not telling tales out of school, but, you know, a little bit of out of context outtakes and just like fun stuff. So during during those two episodes, the Lin, besides, we talked about the Beastie Boys and stuff like I can't remember how it happened, but it was something it was like, oh yeah, you know, we'll do the Barbershop, Beastie Boys or something like made a joke about the Barbershop, Beastie Boys. And we made like a reference. I was like because I would oh, from episode one, I'm like, Hey, Lin, I

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

know you're listening. Hey, Lac, I know you're listening. Hey, Tommy, I know you're listening to everyone. And so I was like, oh yeah. Lac what are you doing? Like putting up the show in London. You're too busy to like write arrangements for Barbershop. You see boys like ha ha ha. Right. Know a couple that episode came out. Then the next day he was like, hey, you know, in regards to the Hamilcast episode eighty Whatever. And he wrote charts for Barbershop, Beastie Boys. And I was like, oh my, like posting on Twitter. And it was a thing. And I was like, wait a second, you're putting up because it was the biggest deal that they were putting up Hamilton and Lin. It was like everything. I was like, how much time actually do you have in a day? This is insane. So then we became friends and we started like Demming and texting. And then he was like, Hey, Tommy and I, you know, made a little something for you. This is for you. Like, you can play it on the podcast

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:11] And I'm thinking about like the line of all of this, like really cerebral, beautiful, creative work and then like on their downtime, they're doing hilarious comedy bits for a podcast about the show. Like, it's just it's kind of a mindfuck.

Giles Terera [00:14:29] Yeah. I mean, what struck me about them, I love that. Like that sense of play. You know. Yeah. Lin Lin has that Lin with Lin. We didn't see Lin as much in rehearsal scenes filming, but that sense of play that we came up with a couple of little extra things that we filmed and stuff and I'm like, yeah, let's go for it, let's do it. I mean, I always hoped that we would Ham4Ham stuff and that was so much fun hanging outside a bit.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:53] Yeah. That Ham4Ham that happened though was like I mean I this word is now a cliché, but it was actually epic.

Giles Terera [00:18:07] Yeah, it was crazy, but that sense of like, OK, well, we're here, what do we do? Let's let's play, let's have fun and think outside the box. And we're here because we enjoy it again. I think it's it's it's rare. I don't I've never really experienced that before in the same way that in this in this show. So anyway, I think it kind of gave our company a sense of it was it was OK to have fun as well. And I mean, you know, I mean, again, Steph would be pulling a hair

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

because we have all these tea breaks, right? So we have these tea breaks in the Americas can never understand with these tea breaks that we have to be in the middle of something. They have to go for tea break you have to have equity

Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:55] rules for what is it, four o'clock or something?

Giles Terera [00:18:59] midmorning and yet one like 11 or something happens 11:00 mid-morning and then this lunch and then there's one in mid-afternoon. And the Americans are like, what the fuck is like? What's what is this?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:09] What is this

Giles Terera [00:19:10] Where are the actors? And then we're out, we're out in the corridor, like having fun and laughing and stuff. And I think for most of the cast, the balance between, like having fun and doing the Yorketown dance break, I think there was a good balance there for me. I was I think my my my experience has been more intense, which is why I think tell me sort of very wisely, sort of kept an eye on me and tried to help me find that balance. But I think partly it was never, like I say in the book, it was never like no one was being shouted out in our mind. It was different. I never saw any of that. Yes. I mean, all of us actors had moments where we were just rocking back and forth in the corner of the room wondering, wondering if we could get fired the next day. But that was down to us.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:59] Right, right, right. You can have tense moments without raising your voice and yelling at people.

Giles Terera [00:20:04] Yeah, yeah. And we worked really, really hard. And, you know, but I think it was also this sense of, you know, we're all doing what we love, all of the dancing members of our company. It never ceased to blow my mind the fact that everyone gets their own little bit to shine. So all of the dancers come from like really different disciplines and have different strengths and stuff. And they all get to do that bit and that thing. So it's again, bringing onto stage what you enjoy doing will be doing that. We were on the stage or not. You know, let's see, the is like one of the best dancers in our company and he's this amazing, like street break dance, hip hop, crazy shit. And that's what he loves doing. So we're in that

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

room doing what we love doing, you know. So like you were saying earlier on, it's like, yes, you can you can work hard and still enjoy what you're doing and, you know, you can enjoy doing and still be working hard, still getting a job. I think that's we definitely have that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:04] Another thing you said throughout your journal that really I was like, oh, my God, the the idea that sometimes Bell's just ring. Yeah. And I'd love to talk to you about that a little bit. And if you can maybe explain it to people who haven't read it yet, what that means, because you say it often and every time you do it like it stopped me in my tracks

Giles Terera [00:21:25] when I talk about it first, it's when I meet the row and I first encounter the road and really first encounter the show. So that's when I'm auditioning. I had I wasn't aware of as aware of Hamilton as everyone else was because at the time mid twenty sixteen, you know, those guys were at the White House or that was the Tonys which just happened. It was, it was it's kind of peak. I mean there isn't it big I suppose. But it was it was on fire and I was less aware of it as some of my colleagues. But then the moment I knew I was going to be auditioning for and listen to it. And I'm going to sit down and listen to the recording, and it was that it was like a bell was ringing and it was there was something about this guy. I hadn't even listened to the whole of the cast recording it. It was sort of halfway through at the moment was during Aaron Burr sir he says, oh, you're an orphan, I'm an orphan. It was something in that moment where I thought, I don't know what this is. I don't know who this character is or where it's going or it's going to end up. But something is happening to me listening to this. And the only way I can describe it is like a bell ringing off of something. You have to pay attention to, something you've got to acknowledge. And that has an effect on you. When the bell rings, it kind of you feel the reverberation of it. And that's kind of a resonance they had with me. I was like, OK, and then and then it was a case of going, I don't want to think about it too much or question it too much or work out what it is. I know that, you know, it's just something about the way the mind works, its relationship to what you must be thinking and then how it expresses it with its lyrics. It was just something I couldn't quite put my finger on

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

any of it. But I know it's hard to explain. I feel like I'm explaining it very well.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:23:29] But no, I think you are beautifully and you do in the book. I mean, you know, I'm asking you to to repeat things that you've fleshed out already and you've worked through already. So I apologize for that. I just I have these I mean, Giles, when I tell you pages and pages of notes, I'm going through them like like page numbers and highlighted like things that you you know, Americans love to work Saturdays. Boom. Let's go. And here we are Saturday, July 3rd.

Giles Terera [00:23:54] That's exactly what I loved. It's a day off.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:23:57] Yeah, exactly. But, you know, like when you you said just little things, you know, you say it occurs to about that. You're talking about the score and you say it occurs to me it's a map. And I'm just like, there are so many things that you were feeling and that you wrote down and shared with us that I just really, really latched onto. And I selfishly want to talk to you about all of them. But I realize that maybe that's not the best way to go. Like you rant like you literally ran into the statue of Hamilton in Central Park, like you were running with a friend of yours and you ran in Hamilton.

Giles Terera [00:24:29] Yeah. Yeah. I mean, again, things like that. But then it was I was in New York and I was there for The Merchant of Venice. We're performing at Lincoln Center. So my agent had said, okay, you're going to be well, I've arranged a meeting with the Hamilton people for when you're in New York. I said for a week or so and then they said, you want to go see the show. So I went see the show. And I, I think we've been on the Tuesday or something. I went I went to see the show and then I was auditioning a couple of days later. So my first morning when I get into New York, I went on a run. I love running around Central Park. I went my friend, and it was a middle of July or late July. So almost immediately we were like exhausted, panting. So in a cut to, like, pushing ourselves as far as we can and then say, OK, let's stop, let's stop the stop. Emily saying, yeah, let's stop by that statue over there down by the east side of the museum and stopped at it and looked up. And it was the Hamilton statue with just the word Hamilton on it. And

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

my my friend was like, you see, you know, this is a good sign. But I was like, OK, well, that's what I mean by Bell. You've sort of something I didn't mean necessarily know what any of it meant. And I didn't try and question any of it too much. A few things that that happened. And I'm not you know, I'm not saying it was kind of written in the stars or anything, but yeah, sometimes people always say, I must say to you all the time, but what's that? Why is Hamilton so why does it work? Why is it so amazing what it's the kind of the sort of X factor of it that makes makes it what it is. And I think I don't know I don't know why that is. I can I can tell you a number of reasons, but ultimately, I think with any good piece of art or anything it's created which kind of works and has reaches people in the way that Hamilton does. It's sort of unexplainable, really, to a certain extent. I think it's two things. I think there's a kind of, um, a kind of coming together of ingredients. You have the mode in which Lin decides to to tell the story musically. You have the fact that at that very moment you have a president who is a person of color in the White House. Like, I think there are lots of things which come together which mean that this thing happens at this particular moment. The flip side of that. It takes hard work. The flip side of it is you kind of you know, you have to it's like anything else, you have to roll your sleeves up and get on with it. So for me, it was like, I don't really want to spend too much time trying to second guess why this is happening or why I feel this way about this character or what any of it means. I think, yes, look at why you know, my feelings about it, but not necessarily what the answer is to any of it. The answer is in doing it. And I learned a lot into an amateur. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:41] Yeah. And you do you talk about that a lot about you know, you prep and study and rehearse for years and years and then, you know, for your career and then for however, with the show and then it's all up to you to just go out and do it. Yeah. Which is, you know, just every actor has lived that right. That before. But it's like, you know this, OK, so maybe maybe it wasn't written in the stars, maybe it was. But when you finally now take on this role and really dove into Aaron Burr and who he was and you and you did I mean, you were researching you were finding letters and books, which it's rare to find stuff on him. But another thing I loved was your story about Craven Street. Did I say that right?

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

Giles Terera [00:28:28] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:30] Giles, you talked about trying to spot him in the darkness. I like your writing. I can't get over it. It's just the most beautiful. But like, can you tell the listeners a little bit without giving too much away about a little bit about Craven Street and spotting fear and the darkness are trying to.

Giles Terera [00:28:46] Well, OK, stop me if I'm telling too much, but

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:49] I know it's up to you, you know what

Giles Terera [00:28:53] I mean? Well, it's interesting because the reason why I can find anything out of that and is because unlike the other founding fathers, you know, Jefferson and Hamilton, that, you know, they're very meticulous about leaving their legacy and leaving their papers intact and all of that because they knew whereas Burr just got rid of all of his, um, hence why we can make up a lot of stuff about him. But after after the deal and all of that, he was he was in Europe and I knew that. And then and I read somewhere that it was great history. And so one day after rehearsals, I was walking home and I came across. I went a different way than I normally go. And there's a river, which is a street which is right on the river by embankment, which basically starts on the main road, which runs parallel to the river and then goes down to the river. So you can imagine it as a kind of 18th century thing. And that leads directly down to the river. And in that street there is the Ben Franklin Museum, which is this beautiful old 18th century house, looks exactly the same as I guess it would have done then. And so then I realize that this is great and Street where Burr lived during his time in London. So, again, that was one of those kind of funny moments. But, you know, I think sometimes if you're working on something, those kind of things jump out to you because you're sort of hyper aware of of all of those kind of things. But, yeah, I was just really fascinated by the man. And and I think because it's not a huge amount written about him, it's a lot in Ron's book, those events going on. But apart from that, there's not a huge amount. So I was just like, well, who is this guy? You know, we know that he's the villain. But actually, the interesting thing I found about Burr how many

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

people say, oh, he was this really charming, personable guy who people like to be around and which I was kind of surprised. I was looking for this kind of cold, aloof, ambitious sort of guy. And actually, it was interesting to see how many people said contemporaries at the time said, you know, he was good fun to be around. You know, he was he was he like to entertain. And he was quite gregarious in many ways. And I think then you go, OK, well, let's look at someone who is professionally all of those things, who knows how to operate professionally and he knows what he wants in terms of his political ambitions and career ambitions. But then underneath that, who actually is he? And that kind of contrast I found really fascinating thought. That's something you can get your teeth into because Lin has this guy come out and talk directly to the audience and then he talks to the to Hamilton. And this guy doesn't the sensitivity and Washington in the in the story. So right away you have these two versions of this guy. So for me, I was like, OK, well, that makes perfect sense. There is one guy who actually, um. Is someone who is quite good, not necessarily comfortable, but good at being around people because he knows what he has to do. And then there's another guy who's talking directly to the audience is another guy who is sharing his innermost thoughts. So, yeah, it was it was a way of kind of building up who I thought this guy was from what I researched and then what Lin had written on the page. But you never really get you know, you see a always going in. And now even now, I think. Oh right. Yeah. No, I would do that. I would, I would think about that moment differently. You know, that's the writing I guess.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:49] Yeah. You know, so many times, you know, I'm on record podcasts live in a vacuum. Right. So many things one day and then you talk to someone else and your opinion changes. Are you hear someone else's perspective of Burr. And I remember for such a long time, I thought, you know, room is so. So well done on every I mean, I want to talk there's more about where I am, I have like gigantic notes about this, but I remember saying to several times, like Lac said, a two Lac like the strings in room are the sound of a villain being born. And in the end, the show. Right. Like in the show. But then I'm like, no. Now, so many conversations later. That's years ago that I had that conversation with Lac. It's like no villain is not the right word to use. Yeah. Yeah. And you know, ever since I've. I can't, I don't, I can't tell you when that that perspective changed for me, but those are those strings are like

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

they're, they're mischief and there is some kind of darkness to them and there's something there. And it was like the word I used at the time and then the word I sort of hung onto. And also because now I'm the villain in your history. Right? Like, because it's just it's all kind of there. But now talking to so, so many burs, like, I wish I could take it back and edit it back that or have a little asterisk or something on it because it's not it's so not that cut and dry at all. It's so many times Giles. What do I do. It's out there

Giles Terera [00:34:25] Well that's that's gross I guess. And that's, that's, that's the fact that, you know, our thoughts and feelings change. My thoughts and feelings change a huge amount during working on this role. But I think when with people that we class as villains who end up doing terrible things, I think often, you know, things which include murder or treachery or betrayal, often you can you can sense something in that person where that kind of deepest desire is somehow unleashed. Somehow they kind of give in to something within themselves and that, you know, tips them over the edge and then something happens. Or if they resist that deep itself, I think with Bird that's definitely at play, it's it's definitely a case of like, what does he actually want? What does he feel inside? And then this is this is a guy that's presented to the rest of the world. This the guy who goes around knocking door to door, trying to get votes. And I think the two things I think absolutely come to a boil in in room and musically, as you're talking about, I think that's what I sense. The strings you're talking about, it's like there's something bubbling up within him which he hasn't really allowed to bubble up before. And in that sense, it's that it's a very dangerous thing because you don't know where that can go. So when Room happens, it's like, OK, now he's admitted he wants what he wants. Now, how is he going to get how far is he going to go to try and achieve that? So I think I don't think you're wrong. I think you're wrong in that sense.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:14] He does kill the guy at the end, Giles. Like, kill him. He gives you the murderer at the core of it

Giles Terera [00:36:18] like he is. But why? But what I feel I know.

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:25] Totally, totally. Yeah. And so speaking of room, there's something you said. I mean, I put the book down and scream this word, the word Rashomon.

Giles Terera [00:36:33] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:35] So this has not been discussed on the podcast. I mean, it has a little bit, but not in detail for a long, long time. So Rashomon is a film that that I love. And so my I was a communications major in college, but my minor was film. You cannot study film without studying Kosala or Rochman specifically. So if you could maybe explain to the listeners Rashomon and why it is so important to your perspective and performance and room.

Giles Terera [00:37:08] OK, ok, my that's my favorite film. That's one of my favorite film

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:13] I feel like the weather is right. Look... It has to be raining.

Giles Terera [00:37:19] Exactly. Exactly, exactly. Exactly. And so what you have is what you have in Rashomon is one event, which is this murder that happens and there are three witnesses to it

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:32] and a rape. It's the murder and.

Giles Terera [00:37:34] Yeah, the murder. Right. Right. So there's a priest and then there's like a farmer and it's a peasant. And they sat in this Ratterman temple and they've witnessed this thing, but they've witnessed it from different from their own perspective. So they get called up in front of a judge to to to explain what happened. And they have different versions of it. So if I'm getting is going to have different versions of it

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:58] and it's from 1950. So like Akira Kurosawa, I mean, is like, yeah, yeah. They mentioned him in rent if that helps you musical theater people. But like. I mean, everyone stole from him later on. It's just really like a prolific and also just he changed the game for so many film film techniques that we use. And just. But this yeah. The story is told from different perspectives of people like in the rain in

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

this temple. They're all telling their stories of what happened and his version of what happened.

Giles Terera [00:38:30] It's an extraordinarily beautiful film. And the murder and rape, the whole thing happens outside in this beautiful forest and it's raining a lot. And so it's basically this one event described from three different perspectives. And and and I guess I mean, people have written a thesis about it. But what I take from it is that it's a kind of subjective thing in terms of you as an audience. You hear these three perspectives and you have to make up your own mind as to what happened. Well, when you get to a room, there's a kind of version of that. The Burr tells the story from his perspective and then from Jefferson's perspective, Madison, is that in there and how it fits in that as well. And for me, I loved that because it meant that it's like which version is the it's the truth. Which version is the right version. And then and also it means that the audience get to also be involved and make up their mind. And that's what happens. Right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:29] Right. And it's also like everyone who's telling the story makes themselves either they're a little bit of a hero or it's like Thomas claims. Yeah. It's just that idea of when, you know, witness accounts in and court are the most unreliable because it's your own memory and then your own trauma or whatever your experiences with what you're witnessing. I mean, there are times where you think like, well, what did you do last Tuesday? And you're like I say, here's I would be like that. I did this. Yeah, it's not true. So your memory of it and then your when you're inserting yourself into this narrative of what happened to other people. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I like threw the book down with love. I was like, fuckin Rashomon. We get it.

Giles Terera [00:40:13] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because, you know, for me the important thing is that the audience are involved. The audience has to have to go. OK, well I have to make a choice about what I think actually happened. And given given that burr is you know, saying, you know, at the top of the show, how does this happen? And at the end of the show, you know, you think you think I'm one thing, you think I'm the villain. But actually, um, do you really think of it now, knowing what you know? And I think that's very rational. It's like now when you see the whole movie, you've heard the story from different perspectives. Now, what do you think? Right. And I think I love that. I love the

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

atom and the fact that it was just me doing it. I loved it. I mean, the entire company is present. But in terms of like flipping and flipping, because you see what's brilliant about it, I think the writing about a million things is it's the fact that you see how Burrs mind works. That doesn't happen. A lot of writers, that's very hard to do with the right writing to show how the mechanics of someone's brain works. And Shakespeare's brilliant to that. And I think Lin is really, really, really brilliant in in in this show. And Room is where you've got to see all of that all of that play out. Yeah, amazing.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:41:32] Because you say, like, you're you're really just phenomenal. Like, no, I'm not going to I'm not. Your podcaster now, you know.

Giles Terera [00:41:41] Yeah, that's right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:41:42] You're allowed to do this. I know, but I'm just what you say, you know, certain things that like jumped out at me when you said the repetition is an incantation when you're when I got to be in the room or he's like like summoning.

Giles Terera [00:41:54] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:43:13] And your attention to detail even in I'm going to go back now, I'm sorry, I know we're talking about room, but even in our in bursts are like the words where it goes. I to me to we like changes like it. Yeah. Like you talk about like once once Alexander realizes you're an orphan, that changes the way he communicates with and finally just the language of it is so important. But you took it on as the actor which is like fascinating because it could just be on the page and then it works regardless.

Giles Terera [00:43:44] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:43:45] You talk about this idea of Burr being called so many things. And then a friend. My first friend. Yeah, my first friend. And like how it all connects, like from beginning to end. And when those changes happen, it's just like, oh my God, found it. Oh my God

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

Giles Terera [00:44:04] I'm glad because like I, I'm curious about stuff, you know, so I'm looking on the page and my training is such that, you know, OK, what am I. I've got a paper. Right. OK, how am I going to do that. OK, so the first thing I do is look on the page and just look what's written, what's written. So I'm always kind of investigating that text and and looking for all the clues. And I always think any question that I have, the answer is going to be right down the page. So for me, I'm looking through I'm looking through at this and realize that, yeah, Alexander is using the word Iola and then at a certain point it changes to and I thought, what happens there? And it's the fact that he sees you're an orphan. I'm an orphan. And because that's what's that fact about BURR is what struck me right at the beginning of my experience with it just jumped out at me and I thought, OK, well, if something happens that you want to look for the cornets, when something happens, these two become friends. You've got two minutes if that to establish what this thing is. All of a sudden they're mates, they're in the tavern and they're off. So for me, it's like, what can I use? What's in the text? What's Lin written? Lin, you know, as a writer means something with every single word, every single choice, every single image that you use is it's my job as an actor to try and find out what that is so I can tell a story the best of my abilities. But, um, yeah, I would. That's just the way that I work. And again, like, if that if that's helpful to other people, then and if that kind of reveals something and helps people's enjoyment of the of the piece, then I'm like, I'm here for that

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:46] There's something about your curiosity. The first thing you say is a question. So you know that you as Burr, you're looking for answers. And, you know, like when you talk about aaron burr, sir, you say, what if you hadn't stopped for that drink? Yeah, but you do stop. So why do you stop this day? Should have been the day that they met, could have gone any other way, but it went this way and it led to what it led to. And so why

Giles Terera [00:46:11] it's seems so obvious to me that there is starting it's all retrospective. So he's he's lived his life and he's saying, how did this all happen? So for me, the process was like, look for the moments where it could have not happened. It could have gone a different way. Um, yes. You're telling a story as it unfolds, but for burr, it's telling it, knowing the

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

entire story. So how can each one of those moments be active? And, you know, again, that's Tommy Tommy and mean somebody saying at some point in get the very, very first moment I walk on stage. That was a really interesting moment because. I think the first moment of any play was so it's important, obviously, and the first time you step out on stage is very important and walking from the waiting to eight, just to say that line was actually the hardest thing in the entire rehearsal process, because it's like what makes him want to walk? What makes you want to stop? What? And actually I hadn't really thought about it for rehearsals and told me we talking about it one day because I don't know, in a weird way, it can almost feel like if you don't have that intention, if you don't know quite where you're going, as to why you're moving, why I'm stopping, what you want is a kind of has a bad kind of quality to it. So Tommy and I were talking about and he was like, well, you know, maybe maybe when when book comes out this time, this night, this particular evening, that the ending is going to be different. Maybe maybe there's a version where he doesn't end up getting out. Maybe, maybe there's a version where it can be different. And I think it's amazing because that's what I spent my life doing. You talk about therapy, I'm sure. It's like, oh, fuck that decision I made. Why did I do that? I knew it was wrong. I knew it wasn't a healthy decision to make. I knew in the moment I could have gone a different way, but I didn't. But I'd be itself up to much about it. But I need to learn from it. So and all of that kind of stuff is exactly where I start to show. I think I think that's what it's like. So therefore, to me that makes sense because it's active. I've got something to do. I've got a reason to be moving. I've got a reason to be stopping. I've got a reason to be talking to you. I consider my my kid versus the audience, my friends. And so that kind of that my natural curiosity I think fed into. But I just think that's what's that's what's written. That's what's written on the page, you know.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:54] Yeah. A couple of things. First of all, I love watching you tell talk about this because I see you turning to the side and you're you're almost watching yourself come. It's like it's like I can see you, but I can't. How do I say this in a way that makes it so? I'm watching Giles. Right. And you are turning and looking, but talking about yourself coming out on stage and you're looking as if you're looking in the wings, which is really beautiful. I love that you call us

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

confessors and the books and the books, not books. And there was something else, but I lost. Oh, the curiosity. Hey, Sagittarius. I mean, that's I mean, asking endless questions and just like diving in and researching. And, you know, there's just I mean, and it's also just inherently you like I don't care when you were born. I mean, I do because we're, you know, kindred like that. But it's just you as an actor, it's just part of your whole process

Giles Terera [00:49:49] just like your your podcast. You've been these five years. You've done seven hundred fifty million episodes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:49:55] It's like give or take.

Giles Terera [00:49:57] And it's essentially about the same thing. One thing, one piece. So it's something in you which, which, which you know, it's not that your curiosity about the thing or about the process or about people or the people who performed it created it is such that you can go for have many hundred episodes. You've done that. And to me it's the same thing. It's like I talk to you. It's it's quite natural that you could you know, that you could be asking questions about this show until you're 80 years old and I feel the same thing about about this character. It's like, yeah, I could I could I could keep searching for this guy and his choices and his experiences and his thoughts forever. Yeah. I mean, in a way, I think the fact that he is as a historical figure, so enigmatic and it's so little written about it makes it easy to go well. I want to find out more and I want to fill in the blanks. And I want to I want to keep I want to get to the heart of kind of humor is where Thomas Jefferson. Well, I mean, if anyone in history has kind of mapped out their legacy, it's him. So with BURR, it's a lot to find out. And it's one of those characters, one of those people, the more you find that. But I learned that he it was one thing that said talks about his relationship with Native Americans, you know, and just little things. Oh, that doesn't necessarily fit into what I necessarily thought about this guy. And that just I think that just lends a richness to the character. And therefore, as hopefully as an actor, you can you can explore more of that richness with an audience.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:58] So after listening to Giles for these last two weeks, you can see how I read the book so

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 281 GILES TERERA 2 TRANSCRIPT

quickly, right? How do you not hang on his every word? All right. We have one more episode left. Next week, we get into some of the deeper philosophy of what Burr was thinking in that final moment and how he changes over the course of the show and how sometimes the clothes really do help find the man. And of course, Giles is taking questions from the Patreon Peeps for more information on Hamilton and me, including international shipping. The audio book, the digital version, go to Hamilton and ME.COM. So until next week, stay safe. Stay healthy. Thanks so much for listening. I'm G.Pen

[00:53:06]

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