

# THE HAMILCAST

## EPISODE 286 STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE 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, my friends, I'm Gillian and welcome back to the Hamilcast. We're picking up where we left off last week and my conversation with Stephenson Ardern-Sodje from Hamilton West End. If you have haven't listen to Episode 285 yet, please pause and check that out. First, Stephenson talks about his unconventional journey to Hamilton, which involves Idris Elba and getting pulled out of class for rehearsals. It's a wild ride, but if you're all caught up, here's part two of my conversation with Stephensen Ardern-Sodje.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:00:50] So, yeah, and then you you're in and then now it's adjusting and adapting to now being and I don't know, one of the biggest shows of all time. And it's not 100 percent knowing what role you're going to play in any given moment.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:01:04] Well, yes. So I didn't I was I first year I was obviously I was off stage cover. So we didn't we it was kind of a strange when you start rehearsing and they just so we had they were Sam and I both very deadline orientated people. And so we kept asking Carrie, we were like, OK, so how long should it take us to learn Hamilton and Burr? And she was like, well it takes as long as it takes. And we were like, yeah, but how long did it take other people to learn how much, you know, like how long should. And she was like and she very, very professionally was like, look how long you need is how long it will take. And it took us about a month to to learn our first track. And then it took us about three weeks to me about three weeks ago. Larens/Philip, Phillip. And then it took about three weeks to learn. MAN five and probably two weeks to learn and six after that, because by then you've got a lot of the show in your head. And so I I learned Hamilton first and I said and and and like you said, it was this point where you kind of go, I don't know when I'll be ready to be swung on. I don't know when you know when they'll need me. And what happened was I learned Hamilton and we teched Hamilton on a Tuesday day. And so all the swings came in and a few of the leads came, oh, no, not a few of these before the covers came in. The leads kind of generally don't attack other new people coming in or take like one swings

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learn any tracks because obviously they're doing a show every night. So a few of the off-stage covers came in and stood in. And we had we had what was essentially a full cast, minus a couple of bits and bobs, and we had the king and I don't think we had. But Sam and I are playing games and Burr and so we checked on the Tuesday and we were signed off. It was like you could play Hamilton, you could play Burr. And then that Saturday morning I got a phone call from Katie, who was our company manager, and she said, Hi, Stephenson, how would you feel about going on for Hamilton tonight? And I was like, Yeah, yeah,

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:02:53] I can I could do it. And I was like, you don't have to but jam. So that week, Jam had been on partial voice rest, so he was only doing single show days. He wasn't doing double shows. And Ash, who at the time was alternate, was also first cover Laurens, which was something that they did in the first year. And I think they suddenly realized they were like, that's crazy because he's that first guy behind first couple Laurens. So he he had done a week of Lauryn's that week and he was like spent. And so they were like, we can ask James to come back and do the other show, but it's like an opportunity. And, you know, if you if you feel ready for it, like we could just throw you on. I was like, yeah, let's give it a go. So my professional debut, my West End debut was playing Hamilton in Hamilton. Oh, yeah.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:03:41] I mean, that journey is stuff people dream about.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:03:45] It was crazy.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:03:46] It's crazy.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:03:47] It was very zero to one hundred, you know, and that was kind of I guess that was like less than a year after my first audition. Maybe I'll just off. But just after,

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:03:55] what, a year, Stephenson? I mean,

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:03:57] yeah, that was great. And it literally was I remember so vividly I was backstage and obviously that week I'd done it in the costume and everything. So I was like, yeah, this will be fine. And, you know, you go

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out, you do you do the first line. And I was like, it's just going to be like the restaurant. And I'm quite relaxed, like a laid back person. And I think that's what makes me a good swing, is that I can if you tell me you're going on for a character today, I'm like, oh yeah, cool. Will do that. And so I was like, it's just going to be like that. And I got backstage and I remember Mike Giberson, who was king, pulled me aside and he was like, Hey man, how you feeling? And I was like, Yeah, no, I'm feeling good news. Like you're going to be absolutely fine. Just take it act by act, scene by scene, line by line. Like, you know, you really like you just Buchanans. I know. I think I'm going like I really think I'm going to be okay. And he looked at me, he was like, okay. Like, I think he expected me to be more nervous. And I, I went round into the alcove, which is where Hamilton starts, you know, at the back of the stage, and then he comes out and does his thing. And I went round to the alcove and then I heard it and and I went and I went, oh, no.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:04:59] I was like, oh, God, this is actually really happening. And and obviously, the audience, like, we're like going crazy when the lights went out. And and so I but then but then I had Burr come out first, got almost forgot he did that then I had Burr come out up and I had as, as each of the leads came out, I was like, these guys have done this, you know, they've almost done it. I think like a hundred shows at this point. You know, they even if I say every single line wrong, I'm stunned, not in the right place the entire time. Like the show just will happen. Like there's a beat throughout, like something will happen. And I kind of my my energy kind of settled. I was okay. And then I heard my cue and I walked out. I went to Alexander Hamilton and then the crowd just went and I and I literally took a step backwards. I felt like I was like, this is not the same as the dress run at all. And and I saw Richard in that. I'm like the little screen in the MD box. He went. Grab the orchestra, and so we were just waiting for the crowd to stop and then he and then he was like, my name is ... me and my name is Alex. And then from then the show just kind of went. It was like a blur, but it happened. And that was the first time I was on with almost all of the leads. I think the first on my first time, I did any scenes with Richard or Obbie. I was with Sifiso because it needed if Giles had been there, then Sifiso would have been on for Hamilton because Giles was off. So it was such a specific kind of like pattern of people before you get your third cover on, you know, they really had

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structured the show well. But yeah. And I remember I remember doing Meet Me Inside with Obbie and I'm used to doing with Carrie, who is like a five foot two dancer. And I turned around. I was like, don't call me son. He is like six foot six, you know, like standing next me. And I was like, oh gosh, yeah, this is different. Yeah. Yeah, but but it happened. The show show happens.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:06:48] It happened. You know, I was going to ask you because I asked Leslie, I was like, tell me since we were going to be at first, you know, I'll be doing this together. I was like, do you have any Stephenson stories? And I said, because you know, I'm going to be asking, oh

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:07:00] my God, what did he say?

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:07:02] He said he was like, oh, he's going to hate me. He said, just like a flubbed line towards the end. Right.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:07:08] Well, which one was it? Because I actually made a list. I prepped for this. I watched because because I really pride myself. I was like, I'm I'm really good at lines. I don't ever really forget them. And then I watched the Hamilton. I watched like that Disney+ Hamilton show in prep for this for this focus. And I was like, I forgot. Like, I forgot. Oh, my God. And by the end of the show, I was like, did I ever get the show right? I really forgot my lines.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:08:46] Yes, I've got this written down because it was it was

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:08:49] God Stephenson,

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:08:50] it's in the first verse of the first verse of quiet time where it's like you see him in the street walking themselves, talking to himself happily, and then he goes like, Philip, you like it uptown. It's quiet uptown. And then and they go, his hair has gone gray masses, you know, and then you're supposed to go, you knock me out, I fall apart. And then the and then the ensemble. Can you imagine. And I, I went look around, look around.

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**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:09:16] And it's because the show is like so in people's muscle memory. Right. Like they know that trigger is you not me. Out I fall apart. Can you imagine. And they heard look around, look around. And it's the bit where they're all like, well you've got four couples and they're like walking slowly and they're doing this like slow mo walk. And it's supposed to be really like the world is going on around him and and everybody is just completely that happy. And he's sad. And I did that and nobody knew what to say because I give them the wrong cue. And so half of the people tried to say something and it just came out like, yeah, and the other half people just didn't say. And then they all just looked at me and started going -- shoulder shaking. And I was just like, there's no I don't know what it was. And I also don't know how to fix it. I can't help it. But we managed to get through it. But that was it was bad.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:10:00] Yeah, well, like I said to Leslie, and like I say to everyone who has stories like that, first of all, not to take away from the absolute terror, I know your feeling in that moment not to take any of that away. First of all, it always seems to kind of work out, like you said, lyrics for my shot in that moment. But you even if you did a little work, it could have been about things like, yeah, like you start singing, you'll be back, not even your track. And it always kind of seems to work. And to everyone's just so happy to be there. Yeah, they're all fine. Yeah.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:10:34] It was okay. It was okay. Yeah.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:10:35] Well do you have any Lesli stories for me.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:10:37] Yeah I do actually. That was something I was going to say which I Leslie Leslie for me is the absolute he's such, he's such an amazing balance of the most incredible professional and also the biggest, like mess around.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:10:52] Yes, I gathered that.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:10:54] Yeah. But he manages to fly. I think it's because he has such he has such belief in any

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decision he makes on stage, whether the decision is right or wrong. He's the kind of guy that if he did the right call, if he did the wrong choreo and you did the right choreo and you're next to him. You would look at him and you go, God, that guy's killing it. And this guy clearly doesn't know what's going on. Like, he has that kind of he just he just is such a committed performer. And so he can get because of that, he gets away with so much. And I, I, I remember that was a one night where I where I for some reason I just shaking hands with Burr early doors in. Oh yeah. Shaking hands in Schyler Sisters as man five. And I was chatting to Leslie and I was like, oh you fancy playing a game to see who can shake hands with all the lead. Well, the Sons of Liberty first and I like I was thinking I was like this. There's only like three or four places where you could legitimately do that. Like, you know, he's really nice. He just goes, yeah, yeah. Right then. And just turned around and immediately just walked across the room was like, Hello, Aaron Burr. And I was like, no, you can't do that.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:11:55] And so we just for the neck. And he managed to get all of the sons and live in like the next three songs. And I was like, oh did you have you have destroyed me. Like every time he did it, it was like he was creating a new scene, like at the end of the story tonight Reprise, you know, it's like where we're after the wedding. He just had like had a moment with with Lafayette where he's like, hey, man, like I had a really good time. And he's fully just giving you like a secondary story here. And everybody in the audience must be going like, this is great. There's so much detail

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:12:25] and it's just they're really friends. Like, I wonder what you're talking about. I yeah. Because I was going to say if I mean, if you can't get it before the election of eighteen hundred, that, that whole thing like that's a very easy I mean half the choreography is handshaking is. I would say from a winter's ball like the entire the wedding.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:12:41] The wedding is a hot spot. Yeah. But then, but the thing is everybody is doing quite specific careers so you don't want to be, you have to really commit to it. You know, you can't be like half hand out and they look at you and they go, what do you know? I'm supposed to be

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doing this, you know, like you have to be like I'm shaking your hand right now, like

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:12:54] that dancer language that you and I just don't understand

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:12:57] Yeah, but yeah, I mean, there were a lot of moments like that where he would just he would commit to something and he would have everybody else would be cracking up except for him. And so it just it would be like you look like you're the only person that says she's doing the right thing and you're the only person onstage doing the wrong thing. But he was it was amazing. And then he do he do something like the the man one drum fill, you know, and you just be like, God, you're great. Yeah, you're very, very good.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:13:21] Yeah. He was like, I don't even really have to stretch. Like, I just kind of it's easy. You audition with a broken collarbone.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:13:27] It's like, oh well I mean, that doesn't help.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:13:29] And he also got hit by a car last week. I'd like to do two shows. I was like, Leslie, the Hamilcast Doneness. You have to take care of yourself.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:13:38] Please look after your body.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:13:39] Like I didn't mean to. I don't want to lecture, but I was like, I just have to say, like, that's not you have to, like, take care of yourself. Don't dance through the pain. That's OK.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:13:46] Have you seen have you seen I think he's posted on his Instagram. Have you seen the spin that he does in South Pacific, in the Pacific at the moment of the trips to the festival? Can I send it to you now? Is that possible? Let me let me see if I can find it. I think he posted might just put it in the group.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:14:00] If it's on his Instagram, I can get it on my computer right now.

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**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:14:02] Yes, I think it is. I think. Yeah, yeah. It's it's like he was on June 23 and it is something I'll send you the link and just like your body is made of rubber, like how you do these things.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:14:14] Oh my God.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:14:15] Yeah. And where is that in South Pacific. Where does that fit

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:14:19] Yeah. Like Yeah. I'll link this. The caption says not me coming like Spider-Man rehearsals, So we're open. I mean, that's a he's just it's effortless for him.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:14:31] He's incredible. He's he's the kind of person exactly that like we were saying, that like you go dancers are a different species. That's yeah. That is not a human body. It's something it's something extra. Right.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:14:39] Oh, so you said earlier this is making me a little shy, but you said earlier that listening to some episodes of the Hamilcast helped you was like you said, it was part of your training is what you said. OK, so now that we I learned about how sort of wild your training was, I would love to know not in a selfish way, but like, what did you learn that helped you in this whirlwind year?

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:15:04] I think I think it's like it was nothing. It was not specifics. It was more to do with the ethos of the show, I think. And listening to Lac and Tommy and Steph talk, you know, wax lyrical about the show and talk about the way in which they constructed it. I think just really and the vision, the vision of the show specifically, kind of saying, like I was saying about the dance, actually, when Sam and I had our dance recall, there were we were in that this is the second time I was in when I eventually got into the show, we had this dance call and there were some guys in there who were better dancers than us, like objectively better dancers. And and and they were dancing the My Shot choero. And they were sharp. They were really, really giving you, like, beautiful, graceful lines. And and Carrie Carrie actually said to one of them, she was like, I can see that you can dance, you can really dance. You know, I need you to to, like, take the edge off it and just think about where you are in the narrative. I and you think



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about who you are as a character, I need you to tell the story more rather than just dancing it. And and, you know, that's the kind of information from a podcast like listening to the way that like Andy talks about choreo and listening to the way that he talks about physical storytelling freed me up so much more to not be afraid of coming into that dance hall and being like, oh, my God, they're going to be people and they can do robots and, you know, do this. I was like, I know that I can tell a story with my mouth and with my body. I know that I can't do a triple pirouette, but I know that I can tell a story in a way that Andy Blankenbuehler and Steph Klemons will hopefully would find appealing. And that kind of like briefing in advance kind of makes you go like, OK, this is this may be the show for me in a way that 42nd Street perhaps would not be. It's it's important and it's so important because it's like you I well, I suppose it depends on what show you do. But I do think for for a show like Hamilton and for shows that kind of come in the mold of Hamilton, it is important to remember that, like when you're moving, you're not just doing five, six, seven, eight. There's a reason you're telling a story. You know, I'm Alex Sarmiento talks about it a lot in her episode. And I think it's you know, it's really there's that kind of there's that element of. The way that she talks about it again, go about to dance is having a language, you know, they don't just do a move because they're doing a move. They don't move because it tells you something. And when you as an audience member don't know the specifics, it tells you in a subconscious way. But it still does tell you, you know, whether that's grace or whether it's anger or whether it's beauty, whatever it is, get that information if if it's done correctly. And and for people like me who don't have decades of of technique, I can at least be like, well, I'll just try. And I would be thinking that word really hard while I'm doing that stuff. And that's what I can offer you.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:17:40] Yeah, I'm telling you, I mean, like I said before, you're just this your story gives I think a lot of people hope. I think there are a lot of people out there who just consider themselves like, oh, I like doing this and I like, you know, and there might be a fire in them. And this this undiscovered unearthed talent and them that that, you know, Lacamoire or a Klemons sees. And suddenly here we are off and running. You know,

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**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:18:06] I think it's I think it's so important. I also think I really not that I thought at 26 my life was kind of set, but I thought that I went to university pretty early. I went to uni as soon as I could at 18, you know, in a way, kind of I was I grew up in a small town and I was like, I want to get out and I want to go and do something, you know, be in a big city and go do something else. So I came to a uni, to the English because it was vague and I didn't really know what I wanted to do. And so by the time I was 21, I definitely had felt like I was like, oh, God, I've like I've made decisions here that are going to dictate the course of the rest of my life. And I don't know if those decisions are necessarily the decisions that I would have made. Now, you know, if I taken a year out or if I thought about it more, if I'd known more about known what I know now about the world. And and so it was definitely a decision for me when I got this offer to to go train again where I was like, I guess you can there is no kind of limit on the amount of times you can really position your life if you dedicate to and hopefully, you know, you are able to kind of follow through on that.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:19:02] Yeah, well, you have to put the work into which for sure you are. And, you know, not to take away from people who have trained their whole lives, because I think that's incredibly valid. Like Leslie Bomont, you know, people we know it's their whole life, but I have a dream that seems unattainable because at 26, like, you're starting fresh, you're starting from the beginning like that, especially with dancing and Broadway and theater. Yeah. If you haven't danced since you were five, the theory is or the the preconceived notion or whatever is if you haven't been dancing and only dancing since you were five, then like you can't do Andy's choreo. And that's not true.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:19:42] It's just not. And it's built to to make sure that that's not true. I think, you know, I do think that he really he doesn't choreograph for just specific bodies who have that kind of skill set. He tells a story. And he also, I think, which is really important, is that there's there is a focus on kind of making sure that the things work for you. You know, you work within a framework. But again, like I said, you know, she has different characters for each of those for each of those women, you know, in the ensemble. And I think similarly, my man five was different to Waylon's Man five, which

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is different to, you know, whoever's on Broadway right now. And there will be you know, the choreo has space for that. The storytelling in the show has space for that. And I think even the leads have space for that in a way that a lot of other shows don't. And you see that in the variety of covers, you know, and you can see a cover who like someone like John, if everything his physicality is something that you go well, he's six foot four, six foot five, you know, he's the way he plays Hamilton is so different from the way that Ash was playing Hamilton in the first year, you know, because ash's, ash's like five, ten and has he was always more scrappy and his young, scrappy and hungry, I think because because if John moved as much as Ash moved, then you're like, oh, my God, that's terrifying. You're a big dude and you're really living, you know? Yeah, exactly. And I think that was such a nice kind of in that original casting of of of Jam's Ham and Giles Burr. I think that was such an amazing kind of masterclass in visual storytelling. That way you kind of go buzz really working hard. And he's really like having to do all this work, whereas Jam comes on with his height and does and does so much for him, you know, immediately. And then obviously he acts through it, which makes that work. But you you get so much for free with that that you see why Burr in that scenario would get frustrated with a guy who's like, I work just as hard as him, but he just walks in and he just has this thing. And it's like it's that's the classic, like, bad thing. But it's like the casting does it the body type types do it. And it's amazing. The match ups that you see I think are fascinating to me.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:21:40] And it is fascinating, too, about how it is this universal thing that is so much on the page where there are Hamiltons who are not six four who also have like what is that it what does that thing that he has that I can that I just don't have like that that same exact feeling can come with someone who's not six four. But there is something that comes for free with with an Eddie Lee or, you know, or someone else in your or Miguel's or whatever. Someone you're like. How. Burr, you're like, what is it like it and it's just it's in the, of course, talent of all of these people, but so much of it is on the page. And then we're back to Shakespeare again, where it's like it just all makes sense. The right and the rhymes, they they shock you and they impress you. And it's like, oh, my God, how can you even think of that? But it also makes sense.

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**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:22:37] There's a quote actually in the book, which I will try and find.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:22:40] This is once you listen to the Giles eps, you're going to be like you are me. Like, I was like, I promise I'm not going to read your own book back to you, but you're on thirty seven. You said above

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:22:52] there's a bit of a historical bit. Let me find out. You got it. Yes. I was looking for the wrong color highlighted that's why. So the quote, the quote that I kind of was one of the things I drew for my Hamilton is and also my Lauryn's actually Bates's both were imbued with a quixotic sense that it was noble to die in a worthy cause. Like Hamilton, Lauren's was so sure of himself that he could sing briskly overbearing to those who disagreed with him. And I think that's like for me, the big difference between Burr and Ham is especially like kind of early on, but I may maybe even like carrying on is that Hamilton will die. You know, he will put his body on the line and he's like, I believe this. And if I have to be the first man who gets hit by a gunshot to prove that I was right and, you know, in a way that kind of borders on arrogance at some point, whereas I think Burr, you know, as we find it, as it goes way, it's like Burr kind of has he's a bit more of a flip flop and he will go where he needs to go. But Hamilton is like, I will die for a noble for a noble reason rather than living. And I that was something for me that I think is like the X Factor that Hamilton has that Burr the other people can sense coming off him, because that's the kind of thing that makes you want to follow someone into battle. Right. I feel like I think he will take the the lead. He will he believes what he believes so much that he makes me believe it.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:24:07] Yes. I've seen Hamilton's where I've thought to myself, putting myself in that position, like, yeah, no, I you know, being on that box in my shot, like, you can you can totally see why people it's like a magnet and people are just like like tell me more about this new thing I've never even considered like, what are you talking about? I'm in

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:24:26] that box. That box for me. That's another thing I wrote down. I was like, I want to talk about that, because I, I think there's another quote which I like the like standing in the box in my shot was the moment for

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me where I kind of was like, oh, I think I know who my Hamilton is, because there's a quote from the book where it says, The rich folklore surrounding this pivotal event in Hamilton's life suggests that his speech came about spontaneously, possibly prompted by somebody in the crowd. After mounting the platform, the slight boyish speaker started out haltingly and then caught fire in a burst of oratory. If true to his latest style, Hamilton gained energy as he spoke. And I just kind of feel like there's like there's a pre my shot Hamilton and then there's a post My Shot Hamilton. And it's like a guy who's been a perennial outsider, who's always felt different. He's always felt like he needs to be somewhere else. And then he gets to this place and this moment in time and this position in history and he just goes, these people get what I'm saying. No one, you know, no one back home. I was saying these things and they were like, yeah, he's he's smart, I guess, but he's also like, crazy, you know, like and and we'll support him. But we don't really know, you know, can't really follow him because of where we are. And then he gets this place and he goes, this is my time and these are my people. And then he just doesn't stop. But the insecurity of at the beginning where he kind of needs the prompting from someone in the crowd and, you know, and then you get an Lin does it in the video and in the Disney by like you can kind of see the moment he goes, OK, people around me, people are here. And then he smiles and you're like, you're going to be OK

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:25:49] and you can hear it. Oh, my God, I have chills. But you could hear it in the music, that bump, bump, bump. But it's like growing and growing. And he's realizing it. They're realizing it. And we in the audience are realizing it in Burr is like, what the fuck? Like at Burr knows how it all ends. Burr. Yes. Knows what happens. And he's still saying, like, do you see like do you get it like I still like he's still with us trying to figure out like where did it go wrong. Like, like what, how, how did this all happen. And also saying like will you see how this person could drive me crazy. Right. Like you see why I'm like, I'm not. I have some points here.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:26:25] Yeah. And and I think that's it's like the moment that a group of people thought Hamilton, like, you're right, you're right about everything. And he went I mean, he was just like, what? I mean, and before that point, he

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didn't you know, he felt that he was I think I'm right about a lot of stuff. And then he gets told and he's like, I am right about a lot of stuff. Like I'm right about

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:26:42] all that little reassurance was just like here we go

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:26:46] poisoned chalice as well as being the thing that kind of let him off. Yeah.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:27:46] The show is so good. I don't know

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:27:47] if even said, you know,

**Speaker 1** [00:27:48] it's so good

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:27:51] because it's been a while since I've been in it now and like it going like coming back to talk to you about it. I was like, do I have lots to say about it? And I started watching and I was like, I have so much to say about this. It's so good. Oh, my God.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:28:03] Let's keep talking about it.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:28:05] Yeah, well, I mean, I watched it. I watched it when it came out and it came out during lockdown and we were all

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:28:11] They bumped it up. It was supposed to be October of this year, like in the theaters, but well before. Yeah, a while before any kind of, you know, pandemic happenings. And then they bumped it up because smart. Yeah. They wanted us to have it and have something to do, you know. So yeah. And joy and love.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:28:26] I remember watching that because I've never I've never seen the only production I've ever seen is our production. I've never seen any, you know, any production. I've never seen a Broadway show either. I mean, because it's obviously it's kind of like like you said, it's going from zero to a hundred. And I've not really had the chance. I've been lucky enough to be in shows the entire time that I've known about doing shows. Really. So it's like so I

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haven't really had time to like take all day and come and do it. But I've got a New York trip booked actually in April next year. It's very ambitious because we're not currently allowed to fly over to you guys. But I feel like maybe we will be able to by the time this will by the time that comes around the end of April, I'm with my girlfriend and a couple of friends coming over and we will see lots of theater.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:29:08] So hopefully. Well, keep me posted. Will hang out. You know, I don't know if you listen to the Carl Queensborough episodes, but.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:29:15] Yeah. Oh, I actually have a I have something to say about that as well. But yes, I did listen to the Caulkins professor and yeah, he came over. I was very jealous because, like, he was getting the full, like, red carpet service. He had like cookies and like that was yeah. He was getting treats and stuff. I like what you were saying earlier about how, like, you haven't been able to have people over. Yeah, I was like, yeah, it is a shame because I mean, not that you can't tell over the over the episodes, but I when I listen to him I'm like, yeah, I want to be in the room, I won't be in the room.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:29:43] It's a new room because Mike and I moved in October of twenty twenty. It's a new room but it's still the same. Thank you. But yeah I mean Mike heard as you know and the listeners know, Carl was dealing with a bunch of, like, custom stuff. It took him forever. He was on this crazy line and then he had to change. His phone was like, reschedule. He was like, no, I'm coming over. So Mike will come. And Mike was like, OK, well, then we're going to, like, give him. Mike was like, I'm sorry, he's never been here, OK, New York pizza, rainbow cookies and doing the whole thing. And then we went out that night. It was crazy, but he hung out like a bunch when he was here because he's like, I don't know if you guys want to show me, like Al and Mike was like, OK. And we just like, you know, did a bunch of fun stuff. So we will do that with you. And you're done as well right now.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:30:26] And Sam's coming as well. Yeah. So then you'll meet you'll meet Sam.

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**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:30:28] Yeah, I can. We'll have a whole it'll be a whole thing. You have to promise that one. Mike and I come to London. You'll do the same right.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:30:35] Please. Yeah, absolutely.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:30:37] What were you going to say about Carl. Do you have him.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:30:39] So he he accused me of being involved in a Scarin Taryn that I was not involved in.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:30:45] Oh, my God. The Scarin Tarrin's. Oh, my God.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:30:48] So he he was talking about scaring Tiran. The the the mini series is called from from Tarinn's run

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:30:55] Could you just explain to the listeners

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:30:57] of that? Yeah. Yeah. That's a very like specific reference. So Tarinn was our original Madison Mulgan. He is a a big guy. He's like six foot one. He's like, really built He looks like a very intimidating individual that he's actually like a teddy bear. But he's also very easy to scare in terms of like jump scares. So around the building, as you're doing the show, there's lots of kind of staircases. You come down and, you know, with a turn in them, there's corners that you turn. And basically, if you are anywhere near Tiran in a time that he doesn't expect you to be, that he will jump out of his skin. And and people just took advantage of that. And I did I did partake in a few scouting sirens on and off the stage. But, um, but there's one that Carl references, which is it's a video. Again, I think I'll try and find this for you because it's great. But it's give me one second. I'll see if I can find it, and then I'll carry on the story. I is it this one. Yes. Is this video OK?

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:31:55] Oh, it's Alex. Yeah, it's all dark. I can't see anything. It's darkness. Yeah.



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**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:31:58] Don't worry. It's coming. It's coming. Where is she. Where's Alex. So she is in the coat rack that she's in the costume coat rack and she's standing on the lower beam of it with her feet in some of Taryn's boots. So she looks like she's just costume and Tarinn comes into the room.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:32:53] I have to tell you, I've said this on many occasions. That would be me. I I'm at home with Mike and he'll come into the room and I will jump out of my skin. I don't know what is wrong with me. I would be the easiest, easiest target for that. And it's my least favorite thing.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:33:12] It's terrible. But that's why I had to clear the air because I was a kid. I heard I heard Carl be like, yeah, I think Stevenson jumped up and I was like, how dare you? I was a victim. I was a victim of that same crime.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:33:22] Well, this is this is what I love to do on the Hamilcast set the record straight. That's really good. I'm glad I give you the space, the space.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:33:29] I'm also I just I just like at the very beginning I was going to do this, but I really want to compliment you on just how incredibly slick the audio is on this. I always feel like whenever because like whenever you have like, first of all, you have like an encyclopedic, like, selection of sounds and like samples and things like whenever someone references something, it's just like there it is, you know, and not just like from the cast recording, but like like when they're talking about like, oh, ham for ham. And you're like, oh, you mean this just like immediately. It's that I'm like, God, it's so good. Oh. Like, you know, into it and you'll be like, and that's that. There it is. There's the song for you. I'm, I love it. It's great. It's such a good experience.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:34:05] Thank you so much. That really means a lot to me. I do. I mean, I have I have the album, the instrumentals and In The Heights like in my editing program. Like at the ready.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:34:16] Yeah. Yeah.

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**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:34:17] I have a couple of things that I think I've maybe edited over the years. I have like the satisfied with the the instrumental into the lyrics and out of the instrumental, like that's

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:34:27] the way you weave those instrumentals in and out. I'm always like oh just a moment where you want to pull the lyrics. I'm like, yeah that is, that's nice.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:34:33] That's very thank you so much. That was one, that was just something that I thought like I wonder if I could do this and pull this off. And it's one of my most favorite things to do is figure out like how to how to be able to use the lyrics and the instrumentals and weave them together and try to, you know, it's really fun. So thank you so much for saying that. That means a lot to me as a fellow podcast or, you know.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:34:56] Yeah, well, exactly. I know how hard and frustrating it is. And I'm just like I just just the same thing over and over again, you know, just the same audience thing. Like, it's it's dedication.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:35:05] It's also because the show was so good or anything I'm using is so good where it's like maybe I don't have to listen to it five times, like five times extra. But it's like or I'm or even I'm just discovering some kind of musical onion and Lac's orchestration or something where I'm like it just that sounds good to listen to.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:35:25] Great question. Have you ever this have you discovered something in the editing of this podcast that you didn't realize, you know, musically where you're like, oh, put this in and then you go, oh, that's that?

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:35:33] Yeah. Oh, totally. And I can't there's not anything specific I don't think that I can point to right now. But there are definitely moments where I've let something play a little longer, like the point has been made, you know. Yeah, but I'll let it play because it's like it's a passion project. There are no ads, like I'm not getting paid. Like I could just kind of do whatever I want. Yeah. So I'll just let it play a little bit because I'm hoping that people will

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hear what I hear or hope that it'll do the same for them that it does for me. So sometimes it's very personal.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:36:06] You're doing you're doing the Lord's work. I feel like it's it's great

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:36:11] It's so fun. It's like, oh my God, I get to just like be and these instrumental I mean, when those instrumentals came out, they they changed the course of the podcast and just. Yeah.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:36:20] And it's and it's just it's so dense isn't it, that you like like I was it is an episode of your podcast where, where you deconstruct the horse.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:36:28] Yes. Hip hop horse.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:36:29] Yes. Yeah. Yeah. That's because I, I like was in the show. I'm still you know, I had the podcast and I'm like that's what that is like. It's like, it's like I feel like you bring so much depth to the show. Thank you. You know, even as somebody who has been inside of it, I'm like, I'm learning, I learn things.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:36:47] And I just I really appreciate that. It was fun because the hip hop horse, like, started with Scott Wasserman. It was like Lac to Scott Wasserman to well, Wells, too. It was just a bunch of people saying like, oh, here's what I did with hip hop horse or you know, Lac telling the story where you called. Well, he was like, can you just make this horse, like, sound cooler? And Wheel was like, sure, that's kind of what I do. I just make things sound cool. Or sometimes I hear from the cabinet and they tell me things like, I didn't I never I've never heard that before.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:37:16] Yeah.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:37:16] You made the thing that you're learning like, Andy. Episodes like there are. And just to keep to keep the friendships what they are, I won't tell tales out of school, but sometimes I'll get text messages saying I never once heard that. And I'm like, OK, you have this big of a hand in the creation of the thing and you're still learning. It's wild to me and it's why the podcast will go on forever.

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**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:37:38] That's amazing.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:37:38] And then I was even talking to. To Leslie Bowman about this earlier that, you know, this podcast has gone from and the first couple of episodes, people writing emails like I have tickets, I'm really nervous that Daveed's are not going to be on this like this pedestal. And the original company who is, you know, deserves all of the credit and all of the accolades. Right. But I remember saying to them, like, who do you think is going to be playing Lafayette Jefferson? If.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:38:02] It's not to some guy.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:38:04] Like whoever is in that? I mean, these people are fantastic and excellent at their jobs, trust the creators, trust the people you love and respect so much that the show the show is the show is the show. That's what I always used to say. And so it went from that. Right. These people being like, oh, I don't know. I don't know. And sure, maybe there are still a very, very, very small percentage of people who are just like it's not the same whatever. But then, you know, Leslie saying there are Hamilfans who he hasn't been in the show for years, who are traveling to see him front row and South Pacific.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:38:39] Yeah.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:38:40] You know, and I told the story of these Patreon Peep who are now friends in real life, totally independent of me, but traveling to see Nik Walker, not an original company member. And Sweeney and Sweeney Todd, Ithaca, New York. Like it's it's an amazing journey how people have and the patreon peep. I said I said this was like you were never like, oh, I'm so nervous. It's not going to be the original company that like, it was never their vibe anyway. But I love that people are falling in love with roles and actors and dancers and all of these people and then just wanting to support and encourage and everything you do. That's fantastic.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:39:22] It's amazing. I was going to say, I think the thing that I think that it kind of the closest thing I can compare it to after having kind of come into the world of it, I've never been a big sports fan. I've never I've never, like, supported a team. And, you know, I kind of I can

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watch a football game or whatever, but it's never been something where I follow teams and things. But then when I got into the world of musical theater and started trying to kind of track like also that person was in like a concert here, and then they went to do this and now they're going to take over from this person. And you realize, well, for me at least, I'm like, it's a bit like sports. It's a bit like sports teams. And you have certain certain, you know, shows where you're like, I have the show, I love that show. But then also I loved that person in that show so much like you said, that I'll I follow them in that transfer when they go across to this and they do this and that and you go it's it gives you that so much richness to the kind of tapestry of performers and shows and venues and all of this stuff where you suddenly go like, oh yeah, I'm like, this is my sport. Like this is the thing that I like to do. You know, I like to track people's progress. And you see a graduate graduate concert where somebody just sings and you go, that path is going to be star like that. And then and then six weeks later, they get cast as like cover, you know, cover Marreese and Les Mis or something. And you go, OK, cool. So like that's where you're going to go. But then, you know, this is really interesting. And, you know, then you you go and do this and you go do that and it's yeah I, I love it and I love that people love it so much. The fans. Maybe that's a good thing to talk about Hamilfans because they were so supportive. When I joined there was actually a thing, it was kind of crazy. We because we were going in like I said, we were going in from like ten to five. We would leave just as people were queuing up for the returns queue and like the show was kind of getting started. So, you know, the cast members were coming in, getting ready to warm up and we would be going off to go home when we were learning the show. And on our first week, we left the building and somebody from the returns queue was like Simon Stevenson, we can't wait for you to start. He was so excited. And I was like, who are you? And How do you know who I am? Like, where like but like, I don't know. I think they must have been like, put a little announcement out, you know, on that Hamilton UK instead of something like we've got these two new people who are joining. But we were that was the first kind of taste we had of like, oh, people like know about this stuff like that. It was amazing.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:41:39] It's a beautiful thing. And it's like, you know, people who maybe like, I'm just going to use Daveed for an example again. Now, maybe people who wouldn't know

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about clipping, know about clipping, and they are super interested in blind spotting now. And like what Daveed has to say, because he has good shit to say, like important stuff that maybe that this particular person wouldn't necessarily know about who was so upset if Daveed isn't in the show, but then follows everything he does, I'm like, that's a good path to follow, you know?

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:42:09] Yeah, yeah, yeah. And it must make I mean, it must they've done such a good job that they've been doing it for a while now, but it must make the recasting and the kind of like constructing of those different teams so interesting because yeah. You like you said, like they're big shoes to fill. There are people who do fill them, like me and Walker, like fill them really well. And then you're like, yeah, you're right, because you give these people such a platform and then they go on, they carry on the kind of Hamilton mantle. And it is it's it's big. It's it's a it's a huge community.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:42:36] It's like this. I used to say it's like collect. Baseball cards, if you go to see a show and it's like, oh, my God, Treco's Washington. Oh, and then it's like, you know, Pokemon like, you got to catch them all. Like you want to see everyone. And it's like, wait, wait. A show full of swings like, are you kidding me? Like that could be someone's first time on his Burr that could be the first time that Angelica is with that Hamilton like that like. Yeah. All of that is just it's the most beautiful thing to me. It's so exciting. And I think finally, after all of this time, people are really the people who are a little fearful of I really love this thing. I really want to see this person whose voices in my ear I get it. Yeah, but the excitement of who's this?

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:43:23] I totally agree.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:43:24] This dynamic has never happened and may never happen again. Like, holy shit, this is a moment.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:43:29] Yeah, it's it's stunning and it does fundamentally change the show as well. But it's such a strange thing to perform across from someone when I might, because of the way that the casting and the covering fell, I would only ever go on as Hamilton if Sifiso was on his Burr. So I never played, but I never played with Giles, even though I was

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in the show with him for six months, because if Giles was in the office, I would have been on Hamilton because I was second Hamilton and I was third cover of Hamilton. And so, like, you're sitting upstairs even as a member of the team you're working on, you're like, so I wonder who I could be opposite. And and so Sifiso was my Burr almost every time. And then one day I got Waylon who and and well, and I, you know, really good friends. And we kind of like we bonded. And he'd been my life, Jeff, a few times and I'd been Laurence Phillip with him. Laff/ jeff. So we've been in the Sons of Liberty four. And then one day we were like, you know, things like that. And it was like and and the show for us was just it just was like in such a different place, you know, because suddenly I'm like and I've seen him. Do you know, I've seen him do Burr. I've watched it like from from sort of back of the stalls. But you suddenly go like. Oh yeah. Like you are a different kind of Burr and you're forcing me to make different choices. You're forcing me to do this. The show is more exciting as a as a result, you know, and if the show is going to have any legs at all, it can't rely solely on an original cast because those people are going to want to leave at some point. And then you have to be able to excite people with new combinations. And I think they do it really, really well.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:44:55] So many things can be true at once. The original cast can mean what it meant to so many people and when all these awards. But the show can also be as universal as it is, it's all exciting. You know,

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:45:07] you're making me want to go back into now I'm like, can I call Tommy? Can I just be like, hey, man, I'm you know, I'd love to slide back in if you I mean,

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:45:14] maybe maybe by the time I get to London, I'll be seeing you on the show.

**STEPHENSON ARDERN-SODJE** [00:45:18] Hey, you know. Right. You never, never know. Listen, and they might need me when I so I stayed. I actually think I'm I am the only UK Hamilton who's been in he's played the UK performer. He's played Hamilton for three years. For three seasons. Oh wow. So I because I, I, my first, my first time I went on was in like May and then it may have the first of the first year and then obviously I was second cover of Hamilton for all of second year, but then they kept me on for two months because they had a big cast change from from

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second season to third season. So because of that, they were like they were I think they lost all that. All their Hamiltons moved on except for. Yeah, well, we've done to them whether what they were training up other people. They were like, could you stay on for two months and just be on on call in case we need someone? It was just call it state. So they had no no depth in Hamilton. And and then I went on in the first week in the third year cast who I hadn't been because I because I knew the show and if I hadn't been in rehearsals with them and I could've been coming to warm up every day and just being like, hey, guys, like, you know, having a good time. But I was kind of my brain was in this place where I was like, it's almost the end, you know, like I'm ready to kind of go on and do the next thing. And I booked my next job. So I was thinking about that. And then I got a call and they were like, yeah, you're on tonight. And so suddenly it was new New Burr, New Washington, new, was Shandra's Angelica, actually. So that was really nice. But it was yeah. It was like all these different people. Simon Anthony Rowden, who was Lola in Kinky Boots and then came on to be Burr. And I've watched them a couple of times and I was like, yeah, these guys are really cool. It is a shame that I'm never going to do anything with them. And I did it and I was like, this is this is amazing. And it was a completely different show. You know, so many new ensemble members and people who I knew, like Joe Griffiths Brown, who had been a swing in the second year, who then got moved up to MAN one. So it was so nice to get to play with him in a role that was like he'd been he'd been really, really gunning for that. And then it got it. And Bonnie was in was in you. You know, there's all these different things where it was like the show is just if I could do a whole another year, like, you know, like suddenly it's reenergized and you're like got all these people and all these different possibilities and this play time, like it was it was stunning. It was really, really nice.

**GILLIAN PENSAVALLE** [00:47:30] See, told you it was a wild ride. All right, next week I'm wrapping up my conversation with Stephenson as we discuss Hamilton as a gateway to history. What music gets him in the headspace to go on stage? What inspires him and why rethinking who gets to be a part of classic roles in theater is so important. Plus, more questions from the Patreon Peeps. All right. We'll be back. So until then, stay safe. Stay healthy. I love you. Thanks for listening. I'm G. Pen.



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[00:48:29] The Hamilcast is brought to you by my love of the thing TM and my complete lack of chill, please join me in raising all the glasses to Sir Alex Lacamoire for generously making my intro music and this custom Yorktown arrangement that I will never, ever get over. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. To become a patreon peep and join the best, kindest and most welcoming corner of the Internet, go to Patreon dot com, slash the Hamilcast. You can submit questions to guests, join Zoom Hangouts, get behind the scenes access and of course, my unending gratitude. I'm at the Hamilcast on all social media and you can listen wherever you get your podcasts. Visit the Hamilcast dot com for transcripts, episodes and more. You can see what's going on with Mike. You know Mike at Michael Paul Smith dot net. True Crime Obsessed is my true crime comedy podcast with my podcast soul mate Patrick Hinds of Theater People and Broadway BackStory fame. Thank you so much for listening. It means the world to me, to the revolution