

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 297 MARCUS CHOI 3 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] Hi, friends, I'm Gillian. Welcome back to The Hamilcast. We're going to dive into part three of my conversation with the Philip tour's George Washington, Marcus Choi. So if you haven't listened to parts one or two yet, pause here and start there. If you're all caught up, congratulations, you've redefined your legacy. NO! Congratulations, you made it. We've arrived at the final new episode of 2021, and I honestly cannot believe I just said those words. So if you've been here for a while, you know the drill. I take off the last two weeks of the year and I don't release any new episodes, but you should watch your feed because next week, December 20th, I'm rereleasing Mike's radio play. Twas the Night We Made It For You last year with some very, very familiar Broadway voices, by the way. And we wanted to throw it in your feed again this holiday season. It's totally free to listen to, but if you can, we ask that you consider donating to the Actors Fund. You can find all the information. Cast crew where to donate, how to donate all that good stuff. Oh, and the play itself at TwastheNightPlay.com. It'll also be in your podcast feed. You don't have to do anything Monday, the 20th, it'll just be there. And to wrap out the year, we'll be dropping a promo for season three of my sketch comedy podcast. Ted & Michael Read Sketches Into Microphones, and again, lots of familiar Broadway voices in that as well. We had a really, really fun and ridiculous time making the season three for you, so stay tuned for that. And lastly, yep, that's how we're going to get emotional. Look, whether you've been here from episode one or you discover the Hamilcast this year or anywhere in between. Thank you so much for being such a major part of this journey. It's a true joy to bring you stories from Hamilton companies from all over the world every week. It's my favorite thing to do, and I'll be back with more new episodes in 2022 and beyond. And I'm not going to say too much, but there are some really exciting things I have planned for the next year, and I can't wait to share them with you, so please stay tuned for that. And I just have to say, like, I have to mention it every year, I feel like George Bailey all year round. I have George Bailey moments constantly, and

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it's all because of you. So thank you again, and I'm wishing you a very happy and healthy holiday season. And now, without further ado, here's part three of my conversation with the absolutely wonderful Marcus Choi.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:43] Rick says, thank you for taking a picture with me in Dallas while you were in full costume in 2019.

Marcus Choi [00:02:48] Oh, was it during Broadway Cares!

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:51] Picture with me in Dallas while you were in full costume in 2019, like, what are we collecting?

Marcus Choi [00:02:55] I don't know.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:56] That's all he said

Marcus Choi [00:02:56] I think that's the only reason why I would be in costume.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:59] Yeah, because I can't imagine. Yeah, those are a lot of rules you'd have to break for, right for that photo to happen. Right? But then he says, What did you do to make Washington your own character?

Marcus Choi [00:03:08] Great question. I think that like by default, any time an actor or an individual portrays a character, like by default, they can only do it the way that they do it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:22] Mm-Hmm.

Marcus Choi [00:03:23] You know what I mean?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:24] Yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:03:24] There's only one Gillian. There's only one me. There's only, you know what I mean? There's only there's only one version of what you can do. And and I think the thing that I tried to work against is, C Jack's performance is so great. Everybody knows it because he did such a great job and

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he's got a beautiful voice and it was, you know, iconic. And it's so easy to kind of lock into or mimic on some level a performance, right? And so I think that that's I just tried to, um, stray away from what I remember or what I saw and just tried to really kind of focus line by line what it means in the historical context of the show and what it means to me. And then and then figure out how I what my interpretation is and and then just be honest in that delivery, you know?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:28] Yes. Katie says, has your portrayal of G.W. changed from before the pandemic or, you know, before lockdown? If so, what is different and what led you to those changes? Thank you

Marcus Choi [00:04:38] Thank you, Katie. Good question. I mean, we kind of touched on this a little bit. Um, as far as like different source material that I've ever read or listen to. Yeah. With the whole aspect of of the first conspiracy that book and, you know, implementing kind of like the suspicion of different people as spies. I think the thing that changes the most for me, especially from the beginning and happened more often early on, was kind of like the mechanics of the show. Right? I had to constantly recalibrate where everything was for me vocally because I was finding that I was, I was losing my voice. And there's an approach. There's an approach to to Washington that I think is is a is a fine balance, right to act one. It's a lot of screaming. It's a lot of screaming. And so if you blow your voice out, you won't have your top notes or I won't have my top notes for one last time. Or I'll struggle, you know what I mean?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:46] Oh, wow, yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:05:47] So I always have to make sure. When I when I first started the show, probably like I would say every other month, I would have to like, keep tweaking. My placement of all, my screaming, all of my rapping and pitching it differently and then figuring out kind of mechanically within my voice where everything should sit, where to give and where to hold back, um, which will allow me to maintain my voice. My voice is like integrity all throughout the rest of the show. And so I think as far as, you know, making changes, it's more it's

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not necessarily like acting choices. I mean, there's definitely. I feel like I've figured out some nuanced things as far as Washington goes in his relationship, mostly with Hamilton, because that's who most of my scenes are with. But for me, it's more of just like a it's a more of a technical thing that I just constantly have to tweak, like I'm still tweaking. Yeah, you know.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:56] Ya. Sarah says, what was the process to get the tour back up and running? How long of a rehearsal window did you get and were you nervous to jump back in to G.W. after so much time? So we touched on this a little at the top.

Marcus Choi [00:07:08] Yeah, yeah. So we had a four week rehearsal process, which before we started, I thought like, Wow, four weeks. That's a lot, you know, like in in like a regular rehearsal process, we have six weeks. The six weeks also includes tech and lighting and and run throughs. Right. So I'm like four weeks is like a luxury, but I think that they were intentional. They were intentional and giving us that amount of time. Like, I think the first week we only rehearsed five days and they were, I think, like five hour days as opposed to eight hour days. So it was kind of like this slow process of like kind of ramping up into rehearsals and also kind of starting the day off with kind of the healing process. And the warming up was just like it was such a complete luxury. Yeah. So we were really thankful for that. But yeah, it was. It was four weeks of rehearsal and everybody already knew the material. So what I thought was really nice about this time was when the when the pandemic started and everything shut down, half of majority of our cast was new. Right? And so when new people come in? We have a put in right. They have rehearsals, but we don't all start together, right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:35] Yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:08:35] And so having that opportunity for everyone to kind of start from from page one and kind of learn the show all over again was such a great experience as far as like cast camaraderie and chemistry and just that connection with everybody this time around that we weren't afforded the

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first time. You know, like when we started in 2017 18? Yeah, no, we definitely had that right. But that was the beginning of the tour. And so when as people would leave, new people would come in and then we just didn't have that moment or, you know, a six week rehearsal again, you know, as an actor, when you book a job and you're replacing somebody, it's your responsibility. And the show's responsibility to to rehearse you, you have to learn it and then you get put into the show. You have a dress rehearsal and then and then you're in. Right? And so that process of starting all over again and then having everybody kind of rehearse together was such a nice experience with this new group of people. And now that was the second part of that question.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:47] Were you nervous to jump back in?

Marcus Choi [00:09:49] Oh, right, right, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah. You know, after after a year and a half of not performing in front of people. And you know, I would do like virtual concerts and readings and stuff like that over the pandemic. But you know, being in front of a live audience is different. It's a completely different beast, you know? And so to to hop on the back of that, that wild animal and just hold on for dear life, that was, yeah, it's nerve wracking, but I definitely had a good time.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:29] All right. So we have some questions about representation now, JD says. I'm thrilled to have spontaneously decided to bring our girls to see the show in Philly on Saturday instead of waiting for DC next summer, especially because they will be seeing people who look like them on stage because they're half Filipina. She says You all have done so much to change the conversation and highlight the importance of representation. Thank you. As a Filipina American immigrant and musical theater lover, Lea Salonga has been a touchstone and source of pride for most of my life. Growing up in the Midwest and wondering how I fit in, if I was good enough, I could look at her and just know that there was a place for me. I squealed so much years ago when she and Lin-Manuel Miranda did the ham4ham of his song in Tagalog for that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:42] She says: What was it like performing an allegiance with last longer? How have your

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experiences as an Asian-American man informs your portrayal of George Washington and how have quote model minority expectations affected you? And how do you and other Asian-American actors counter them?

Marcus Choi [00:12:58] Oh yeah. All right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:01] And she says this isn't a question, but she's going to wrap up, she says. I've had so many conversations in the last year with other Asian-Americans about how we're trying to push ourselves beyond our internalized socialization to not rock the boat so we can use our voices to speak out. You are literally using your voice to change the game. Thank you.

Marcus Choi [00:13:18] Oh, thank you for that question. That was. Girl, you put in work. First of all, thank you. It's it's so thoughtful of for everything that you just said you came to see the show

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:38] Saturday instead of waiting for next summer in D.C.

Marcus Choi [00:13:40] and I'm I'm so glad you did come come back to D.C. do both.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:45] Yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:13:46] I'm so glad you guys came in and I totally understand that. Um. Representation matters, it matters so, so much, and I love that your daughters were able to come see the show and see myself and Stephanie and Aaron Albano on the on the stage just, you know, representing. And when I was growing up, the show that did that for me was Miss Saigon. You know where I I was in high school, I saw the first national tour come to L.A. And I'm like, I can do this because they could do it, you know? And then I think, you know, in all honesty, I think the reason why I have been in the show for so long and want to continue being in the show for a while is because I understand that there are so many Asian-American kids who come see the show who are fans of the show, and they could see themselves in me because they have a place. They absolutely have

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a place and they absolutely need to pursue acting if that's what they want, if they want to perform. You need to believe that you do have a place in this business, right? And so I think the relevance and the importance of doing this show at this moment matters so much as an Asian-American man, right? And particularly in this role because. I just feel like there's so many, like there's so many great things about the character of Washington, but like. To stand as a pillar of integrity and, you know, selflessness, I think those are all amazing things that people can strive to, you know, use as an example, just in everyday life, right? And in like it's I feel like it's a torch that I need to continue to carry for a while, you know, because I understand that like, yes, I, I enjoy doing the show, but I think that I think that it's bigger than me. I know it's bigger than me. I know it's bigger than me, you know? So, yeah, I'm so glad that you guys came to see the show and that you're your daughters were able to to to see it, you know, because it's important.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:19] Yeah. And you know, speaking to that, Grace says as a Taiwanese-American woman, it was so refreshing to not only see you, Marcus, but Stephany Jae Park and Aaron Albano on the stage. What you literally just said. She says, Do you feel the pressure of being one of not exactly the first, but one of the handful of Asian-Americans on that stage?

Marcus Choi [00:16:37] Do don't feel pressure from for me in the beginning. In the beginning, I understood that like, Oh, I'm like, I'm in a unique situation, right? And like when it comes to when it comes to like hip hop and rap, like you don't normally see a lot of Asians, you know, incorporated into that genre, right? And so, you know, I love that they gave me this opportunity. And so I don't know if it's necessarily pressure. I might have felt the pressure in the very beginning. But, you know, I think that like holding on to any kind of like, I don't know, aspect that's not that's going to hinder me from a performance or in any way. I think like I had to let go of that a long time ago. You know what I mean? Because when I step on the stage, the thing about the show is that like the color of the colorful ness of the cast is important, but at the same time, it needs to disappear because we are not an accurate representation of the people who we are portraying, portraying,

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you know? And so I think that we, when we're on stage like color doesn't matter. You know, we are just we're literally it's almost like we're a band of actors. And on this given night, we're going to play these roles. And on the next night, we're going to play different roles. But, you know, that's kind of like an old school way of thinking of like a troop of actors, you know? But yeah, but you know, it's in that sense. It's like, that's kind of like like the ethos of the show, you know, it's like, we're not we're people of color telling a different narrative. And so I think that I think I just had to, you know, if I was feeling any pressure about being an Asian-American in the show, I had to let that go a long time ago. But let me let me just go back to what J.D. was saying about Lea. Yes, I forgot to touch on that. Sure, I absolutely love Lea like she's my sister. You know what I mean? Like, she texted me the other day. She's like, What's a Korean restaurant that you went through that I really liked? And like, she's, you know, I understand, like when I first. So I worked with a couple of times, like we did Flower Drum Song together, and then we also did Allegiance together. But like, she's in the flower drum song family, like, we're all still really close. And and like, she's like a sister and like I like, I knew that she was a big deal, but like, I didn't really get it until, like we'd worked together. And then her stardom had her star had grown brighter. When we did allegiance from when we did flower drum song because she was older, she had done more in the Philippines like she is an ambassador in the Philippines. You know what I mean? Yeah. And and like you know, her body of work is amazing. She's incredible. You open up, she opens her mouth and velvet comes like spewing out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:46] Yep, when you're right, you're right, Marcus.

Marcus Choi [00:19:47] She has a voice of an angel. She's it's butter, you know? Yeah. So I get it. I love Leah. So, yeah, it's always. It's always great. You know, getting to to work with her.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:18] Well, speaking of some of those shows, Catherine says shows like Flower Drum Song and Miss Saigon can contain substantial roles for Asian performers. Some

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great music, beautiful moments and we can love them. Miss Saigon is a show dear to me personally, Catherine says. She says they can also be problematic narratives about a mysterious orient created by white people for white people. So how do you wrestle with that as an artist or what are your thoughts looking back on those performances?

Marcus Choi [00:21:44] Oh man. Yeah, yeah, that's a tough one. That's a tough one. Because, uh, you know, we all know that Miss Saigon is just it's an awful story. I mean, it's a beautiful musical. But like, if you break down the story, it is awful.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:01] Yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:22:01] You know, white man saves the day, but actually completely screws are over, you know what I mean? Like, yeah, it's it's it's it's hard.

Marcus Choi [00:22:13] It's hard. Wrestling and wrestling with that, you know, but as an artist? OK, so I'll tell you a little story. When I was in high school, I went to go see Miss Saigon and I when I saw it, I was like the engineer that that's that's it. That's the role. Right? That's number one on the bucket list. And I had auditioned for Miss Saigon a couple of times, but I didn't get it, which is fine. And so when it came around to this production, the Broadway revival, I didn't get it when I initially auditioned for it because I only auditioned for the engineer. I didn't even audition for the ensemble and I knew that I wasn't going to get it because Jon Jon Briones, who was who is was amazing in the show. He had done the original production in London, and so like he and Cameron Mackintosh were super tight and like, like, I get it like he. It was like it was a no brainer for him to do that show. But I auditioned for as a replacement for one of the cast members when I was on Broadway and I got it and that that position was an engineer understudy. So cut to 20something years later, I get to do the engineer on Broadway, and it was amazing.

Marcus Choi [00:23:43] To have that like full circle literally happening, you know, in like in that moment and understanding like the relevance of that show in my narrative, like it was, I was a mess. I was a mess. And in the bowels, you know, and and

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in, you know, even though I know Saigon has its problems within the narrative. As an artist, that role is so incredibly satisfying, it just feels like, I mean, you know, you're putting on the wig, you're putting on the makeup, you're putting on the costumes and you know, you're portraying a different time period and you just you completely you get lost in this guy. And it was so much fun. And I don't know if people like if, Catherine, if you've heard of people referring to, you know, a show as like an actor's roadmap. So like from the downbeat of Act one to the final curtain bow of act to your character's arc, the choices that you make. I call it a roadmap, right? The the engineers road map is so complex. And so when you are done with the show, it just feels like you've accomplished this like Herculean task and you got through it. And it's it's incredible. Like when you're singing American Dream at the end of Act two, it's just like you just have to lay it all out, like you're literally just you're exploding on stage. And it was incredibly satisfying and that just an amazing experience. And like, it was one of those moments where like, you know, like when you're going through something and people often are just like, Oh yeah, I wish I could remember, you know what it was like in the moment. I just wasn't aware of it until later. Like, I was fully aware of the moment while it was happening. And it was awesome.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:58] It was awesome. You were like as present as you could have been.

Marcus Choi [00:26:01] Yeah, yeah. And I just wanted to savor every moment, you know, a certain look. When you signed the contract to do the show, you got to let all that other stuff go. You know what I mean? It goes back to what I said about anything that's going to hinder you from doing the show. Like, if you have a problem with it, don't do it right. But I knew for me, I understand that. Yes. Miss Saigon culturally has problems, right? I knew that going in. And I know that it's a dated piece, but it was something for me that I had to do. And so once I had the opportunity, I had to let all that other stuff go.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:46] Yeah, I understand that. Before I hit record, we were talking about food on tour and I told you that the peeps are going to have questions about it. Yeah, yeah, you're in Philly right now, so. Kelly says first of all, she

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says, I love Marcus's Washington. Thanks, Kelly. She's asking, what is your favorite kind of food to find in each city on tour and what's the dish you're still dreaming of after leaving that tour stop? Oh man.

Marcus Choi [00:27:13] OK. OK. So I I really love a good steak. So if there's like a like a specific steakhouse to that city, that's a non chain steakhouse. I will. I will go, you know, like perfect example is like when we're in Indianapolis, we went to St. Elmo's in St. Elmo's is like, it's like an old staple, downtown Indianapolis. You know, white tablecloths, professional waiters. And it's just like his old school. You know what I mean? School. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so, you know, it was like a good steak is something that I always try to find. But at the same time, like, I love Asian food, right? And I always try to find in every city. I always try to find like where the Chinatown is in the Koreatown and, you know, the different pockets of, you know, diverse Asian neighborhoods because I always have to have my kimchi. And so whenever we find a good restaurant, we always as soon as somebody finds one, we all message each other. We're like, Yo, this place, this dish. And when we were in in, this one was like came out of nowhere when we were in Appleton, Wisconsin, right? Tiny town. Tiny. There was this Thai/Vietnamese restaurant called Basil Cafe, and they had this one beef noodle dish. It was like on the specials. It wasn't even on the menu. It was like one of the specials. It comes with this. It was like this, like spare rib on the bone, like Flintstones bones sticking out of the bowl of noodles with all these vegetables and with like like savory beef pho broth. And it was. So. Good. I think I went back in like three weeks, I went to like four times

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:16] once you find a spot that you love. You have to just go and especially like in Wisconsin, what?

Marcus Choi [00:29:20] Right, right, right. Right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:22] It's like a mirage.

Speaker 1 [00:29:23] Exactly. I was. Did that even exist?

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Marcus Choi [00:29:25] I was shocked. Like, I loved Wisconsin, like Madison, great Milwaukee, great string cheese, smoked string cheese. I didn't know it. Now I do. And a love. Yeah, smoked string cheese.

Marcus Choi [00:29:40] When you're in Wisconsin and you're like on the highway and you need some gas and you pull over into a gas station for some reason at every gas station in Wisconsin. They all have a little like fridge section with all these different cheeses like cheese curds and, you know, whatever, and they'll just have like a plastic bag with like three pounds of smoked string cheese, all just tangled together that somebody made. And it's so good.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:11] That sounds amazing.

Marcus Choi [00:30:13] It's so good.

Marcus Choi [00:30:14] Smoke string cheese?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:16] Yes. Wait, we were talking about cheesesteaks. That was the thing. So you're Philly now?

Marcus Choi [00:30:20] Yes, I'm in Philly now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:21] There was a cheesesteak spot that you didn't love it then. Yeah. And I was like, Don't name names until we're recording.

Marcus Choi [00:30:26] Yes. So now that we're in Philly, this is my first time really kind of spending any extended period of time here. I took it upon myself to, you know, I'm on a food quest and I wanted to find out what the best cheesesteak in Philly was. And you know, it could be different for somebody else, but the best one for me, right? So I went to one last week on my day off.. eh.

Marcus Choi [00:30:54] I won't name names, but it wasn't very good. This is OK, but I went one today much better. But it was like 30 minutes outside of downtown. It was like in a neighborhood north of Philly and. Yeah, it was a hundred times better. But everybody's been sending me kind of suggestions, Oh,

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you got it, you've got at least, you know, you got to go to like Gino's and Pat's and and Jim's and Larry's, and they're all just like one name, guys.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:25] Like dudes.

Marcus Choi [00:31:26] Yeah, yeah. It's just, you know, they all have their own spin on it, I guess. But yeah, I just if you want check up, check out my my Instagram page. I put it, I put him in my my what's the story archive? That's what it is.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:41] The archive.

Marcus Choi [00:31:41] OK, yeah. I started. I started an archive for the cheesesteak.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:44] Oh, so this is like a like a whole journey.

Marcus Choi [00:31:46] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:49] What makes it like your perfect cheesesteaks? I agree anything could be it's all relative.

Marcus Choi [00:31:54] Yeah. So I'm finding that I like the the more good we're cheesesteaks with, the more more cheese and the more sauce. Uh. Onions, you know, like the one that I had today, had provolone with cheese, mayonnaise, steak, onion, sweet pepper, mushrooms. And then what I didn't do before was put a little bit of ketchup and a little bit of hot sauce on top. That was...

Marcus Choi [00:32:27] So good. And I like it. I just want it to be like, I don't like it. I don't want to be dry, you know, because if it's dry, then it's harder to chew. You want it to be a mess. You want it to be a. Yeah, in the in the bread, I think the bread is like, I don't know what. I forgot what the loaf was called, but the bread is specific to Philly, and I made the mistake of getting it with sesame seeds the first time. And that's like, like my friends were like, What is that? Why are you doing that? I'm like, I don't know. They offered it the like

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with seeds, or no seeds. And we're like, Oh no, oh OK. Big Mac has seeds, so sure seeds. They're like, No, no, no, no.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:03] Look, it's so bad. Don't offer it right.

Marcus Choi [00:33:05] Right, right, right.

Marcus Choi [00:33:06] I guess some people are into it. But um, and I love me some sesame seeds, but just it's just not right on a on a cheesesteak. So I'm finding that like the gooey or cheesy or ones are better for me. What's with some like vegetables cut into it

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:21] Brittany's asking, What has been your favorite city stop on tour? And is there any food that you look forward to the most when traveling? So I guess steak is what we covered like. Yeah, we always try to find.

Marcus Choi [00:33:33] Yeah, I mean, we always try to find like, I guess like if there's any chef that's in the town, like a notable chef, like in Nashville, I forgot the chef's name, but his restaurant is called Husk and one of the guys on our show, Conroe. I think you're you're recording with him next week. I have. Yeah, yeah, he's like, he's like my best friend on tour. He Oh my god. Yeah, yeah. No, I love him. He's like, He's my brother. Yeah, he's great. His friend from California had moved to Nashville with her family, and she's actually she was working at at dusk, so she was like, our connect. And then when we went, they just man, they took care of us and their food is so incredibly good. The executive chef there, I forgot his name, but he's like the mad scientist of the South. Cool. Yeah, like he goes in, forges for super unique ingredients and then like creates this alchemy with fake smoke and moisture and heat. And and then like, it's it's it's incredible.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:40] I found him. I just googled him. Ben Norton

Marcus Choi [00:34:42] Yes. Yes. Glasses, tattoos?

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:45] Yes. Wait, I think I watched a special. Did he make himself really sick because he worked his ass off? Yeah, that's him?

Marcus Choi [00:34:52] Yeah. Like, like I want to say, he had like a like a like a minor stroke.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:56] Something happened with his eyesight or something. And because he was working it, there's some special I'll put it in the show notes.

Marcus Choi [00:35:01] It's like it's like a chef's table or something.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:35:03] I think it's something like that where he but he's also like, be really inventive and it's called husk because he's like growing corn and like doing something really cool and inventive with the corn. But his family was like, You have to stop working so hard, and he's like, No, and he got really sick. And now part of it is like the work life balance. It's kind of amazing. Yeah. His story? I can't believe you went there. Oh, yeah, yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:35:25] Yeah, it was so good.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:35:26] Oh my god. That's so cool.

Marcus Choi [00:35:28] Yeah. And so we try to find like if there's a chef that's in town or if there's like, like a good restaurant or like a good brunch spot and like everybody in our cast likes to go out and eat. So as soon as they find somebody like, Oh, you need to go check out this place and this place is a really good and you know, fried chicken is another place, another thing that we're all really into. You know, like the oh man to Nashville, the South can make some fried chicken. Yeah, it's good. But yeah, steak is something that we always try to look for, like a good steak house because, you know, like I literally I could feel I could feel like my blood pressure going up when I'm eating a steak, you know, like, I can't indulge in it too often, but when I do, I go in, right?

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:15] Well, those old school restaurants are like, You can't beat them.

Marcus Choi [00:36:18] Right, right, right. And like, they're so good. I am a sucker for dry state. I that's all I want to eat now. You know, and bone marrow. I went to this place the other night called Alpine Rose here in Philly, and they ate it. They had the most amazing bone marrow. They make it. They make it with. It was like bone marrow and toast. But the toast has a layer of braised beef cheek sprinkled with shallots or chives. And then you and then you have the bone marrow, and then there's like a layer of caramelized sugar on top of it. And so you, like, cracked the sugar, scoop out the marrow, put it on the beef cheek toast and you eat that. It's so good, so good.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:08] It's so funny because I didn't know that like the food on tour conversation would be what it is like the listeners want to know. And then you all have these amazing stories and you're like, Oh no, no, this is what we want. Like, you just all love the food on tour, which I love. I didn't know that that was going to be such a thing.

Marcus Choi [00:37:27] Yeah, I didn't either. But in all honesty, like, like I grew up in California, I'm basically California, New York, right? And there are great restaurants in California, New York. And so like if you want to talk about like the mecca of food like it, it's it. It expands outside of just those two cities and in every city, they have people who are just remixing things left and right. And so, you know, kind of like this new age, like this new American cuisine, right? They're calling it new American. It's not your, you know, steak, potatoes and peas. You know, it's not old school, right? It's not just meatloaf. They're going to put a spin on it. And everywhere is just there's so many places that are just coming up with like amazing dishes and amazing cuisine and, you know, the luxury of us being able to travel for work. One of the benefits is that we get to we get to, you know, encounter a lot of these places. And boy, do we go in, we seek it and we get it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:32] Yeah. And that's how you can really experience a place to, yeah.

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Marcus Choi [00:38:36] You know, and I think it's also just kind of a part of like feeling like we have some sort of normalcy to this job, you know, and being able to, you know, enjoy our time off and, you know, feel like we have a life and we're not just, you know, married to the show.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:53] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Michelle says spill the tea and ginseng Sundays. I see what you did there, Michelle. She says, What is this magical potion?

Marcus Choi [00:39:06] Oh, ginseng sun. Yeah, ginseng sundays. The thing is, it's real.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:11] Yeah. Tell the listeners what that is exactly.

Marcus Choi [00:39:13] OK, so ginseng is a it's a root, right? So it's this extract from this. Well, it's I say Asian root. But you know, Koreans have have kind of cornered the market alongside with the Chinese. But the Koreans synthesized this like concentrated ginseng root dose. It's like this tiny little packet that you just tear away and you, you shoot it. It tastes awful. It tastes like soy sauce pooped in dirt.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:44] Oh, OK. I was like, I love soy sauce. What's going on here now?

Marcus Choi [00:39:49] So, yeah, there's there's a little bit of a savory ness to it,

Marcus Choi [00:39:51] but there's but it's just it's it's earthy. It's it's really earthy. But what it does is it like it expands your your capillaries and your your blood cells so that it increases your metabolism for a short period of time. So it's a boost of energy? Right? And so on Sundays, that's Sunday night's show is probably one of the hardest things that we have to do. We have a five show weekend. Yeah, right. Starting from Friday Friday night, we have to Saturday then to Sunday. To do Hamilton on a Sunday night is extremely difficult. And so pretty early on, you know, my mom sent me this box of ginseng. She's like, You should try this. So I tried it and I was like, Oh my

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God, I feel amazing. And so I battled it out to everybody in our cast. I gave it a neck. Give it a Fergie Kyle Elijah. God.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:40:47] Like, they need more energy, these people.

Marcus Choi [00:40:49] Well, yeah, yeah. That's Sunday night. That's Sunday night. We all did. Yeah, Joe Schmo. Like we all, we're all taking it for a while. But then with it, you rage so hard in act one because you're going so crazy that you crash in Act two, like somewhere right around quiet uptown. Everyone's just like.....zzzzzzzz. So, so we have to be a little bit more responsible. I had to be more responsible about like when I take it, but like, you know, like anything, you don't want to do anything for too long. So, you know, we go through phases, we're like, we'll do it and then we'll back off and do it again. And, you know, whatever. But I've been trying this other thing now where? So between shows, part of my routine is you definitely have to take a nap. I have to take a nap between shows. And then I have to take a shower. It just feels like you're refreshing. You're starting over and you're you're, you know, you're like ramping up again. And that really, I don't know if it's kind of like a placebo effect, but for me, it's just like taking a shower really kind of resets me. And then I've been doing, you know, the noon's the the tablets that you put it, like the electrolyte tablets that you put in the water.

Marcus Choi [00:42:10] yeah, it's kind of like, you know, like Airborne's, when you just drop it in the water, it's like, it's like

Gillian Pensavalle [00:42:15] it's dissolved. I've been drinking all day. Emergen-C.

Marcus Choi [00:42:18] Yeah, exactly.

Marcus Choi [00:42:18] Exactly. Yeah. So Noon's are the same thing. But but they but they're like, you know, B vitamins, electrolytes, you know, all the good stuff, but they make some with caffeine. So I'll do that at the top of the show. And that's been that's been helping.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:42:34] Suzanne, Valerie and Claire, they're all asking about tour life, so they just want to know, like, what are your strategies for feeling a little bit more at home as you move? What does moving into a new city on tour look like? Do you get to see much of the cities you perform just some general tour life questions for you? So that's Suzanne, Valerie and Claire.

Marcus Choi [00:42:54] Hi, guys. Yeah, it's so yeah. Tour life is well, this time around. Tour life is a little bit different. We don't get out as much as we used to. Certainly, it differs from city to city. You know, if the vaccination rate is lower in the COVID rate is higher. Like, we were not happy about being in Atlanta because the numbers are really high when we got there and vaccination rates were really low and we knew that we were going to Jacksonville next. And while we were while we were in rehearsals for in Atlanta, that's when Jacksonville spiked. There was like a week where they had the most numbers in the whole country, so we were all freaking out about going to Florida. And, you know, it was stressful, but you know, it peaked and then it started going down. And then so by the time we went, it was fine. We don't get out as much as we used to, but you know, in a city like Philly, we we have been and I think it's just all it's all about just being responsible for yourself. You know, like the company is only as safe as its least responsible person. And so we all try to keep each other accountable. You know, and we're all good about, you know, wearing a mask. And as soon as it's available for us to get our booster, then we're all going to try to get a booster and all that. But, you know, I think like some of the things that make me feel like when I move into a new place, feeling like it's home is is certainly like I like I have a blanket that I brought with me on tour.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:32] Sure.

Marcus Choi [00:44:33] Yeah. You know, it's just like, it's like a

Marcus Choi [00:44:34] throw, but like it to have to have that, like always around kind of makes me feel, you know, kind of normal. You know, where it just makes any kind of space feel

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like it's mine and my shoes. I have a whole bag just for my shoes. I'm embarrassed to say it, but it's true.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:56] Don't be embarrassed.

Marcus Choi [00:44:57] I love shoes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:58] You love shoes. And you love an old, fancy Old-School steakhouse. Yeah, come on. You know how to live? Marcus Yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:45:04] Yeah, I am a man of leisure, right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:08] And also relatively hard work at

Marcus Choi [00:45:11] the same time. So, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:13] Lastly, Carrie is asking you what is inspiring you right now?

Marcus Choi [00:45:18] Well, you know, I I mentioned earlier that I I try to read a lot, uh, during the show because I have some breaks between scenes and there's a book that I read recently said, Can't hurt me by David Goggins. And if you guys haven't read this book or have heard of it, it's it's pretty incredible. It's an incredible story of this guy who grew up in Buffalo and and had, just like an incredibly abusive father, had an awful, awful childhood and dealt with like dyslexia and and just like had all this trauma. And um, and basically, it's a story of him overcoming different obstacles in life, and he went on to join the military and. You know, he became a Navy seal and he became like an army ranger, and he's one of the most decorated military people in the history of America, and he's gone on to do incredible things for, you know, the fallen the fallen soldiers project where he is now, like an ultra marathon runner. And he does like like the hundred mile races. He does like the Badlands races. He does like the double Ironman races, all to raise money for these causes. He's just an incredible human being. He broke. He has the Guinness Book of World Records for four pull ups.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:52] What?

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Marcus Choi [00:46:53] It's yeah, it's it's incredible.

Marcus Choi [00:46:56] And he accomplished a lot of the stuff with a hole in his heart.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:59] Jesus.

Marcus Choi [00:46:59] Like he had a birth defect and then didn't even know like he accomplished all these things and then start it after he was like a marathon runner. He started to have like all these health issues and then come to find out that he had a hole in his heart. He had to get surgery. Oh my God. And then once he felt like he was better than he kept doing other things, but like felt even better doing it in like, yeah, he is. He's a pretty incredible human. So that's that's something that has been inspiring me recently and just kind of kind of giving me life to kind of like when I feel lazy to, you know, overcome and just be like, if David can do so.

Marcus Choi [00:47:36] No, I seriously. I mean, he's yeah, I mean, he's definitely like he's a he's a unique human being. Unique. Yeah, he yeah. If you if you haven't heard of his book, definitely. Definitely. Check it out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:52] I will.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:53] Yeah, I also I wanted to end on. Claire said something, too. She said she just she just saw the show this weekend, so this is a Monday. So she was in one of those five shows, OK? She said, Marcus, if you see or now saw a person sobbing uncontrollably in the family circle, please? No, those are tears of happiness. Hamilton has meant so much to me over the last year and a half, and getting to see it live on stage is going to be a very emotional experience. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you to you and the whole cast and crew for making that possible.

Marcus Choi [00:48:21] Oh, I love that. Isn't live theater so great

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:24] Her husband's first time seeing it live?

Marcus Choi [00:48:26] Oh, nice, nice.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:28] Yeah, I always want everyone that I talked to to know how much these listeners really care. Still, the spark hasn't faded for them at all, and especially now that we've all been in this period where we couldn't see anyone or do anything or see anything. And now that it's coming back, it's very emotional for us to I know it's crazy, emotional for you on stage. Yeah, and just coming back together. But just so you know, I hope you're feeling it right back, you know, when you're on stage.

Marcus Choi [00:48:58] Yeah, it's when we were in Atlanta, we had an invited dress rehearsal before we opened and we had gotten in touch with Stacey Abrams and her camp and governor, Senator Warnock and just kind of local governments and try to get as many, you know, civil servants into this invited dress as we could. And along with, you know, whoever it was like friends and families that we could invite. And then I think we also invited some, some local schools and stuff. And it was just it was the most amazing audience for our first complete show back and we were everyone. I know that everyone just felt like this incredible moment of like like elation. But it was it was so much more than that because it was just it was like happiness wrapped in a like a warm, crusty bunch of love. You know what I mean? Like, it was just they were cheering in places that we'd never heard cheering before. Like we stood in the timeline in the opening number. You know, when we all stand at the lip, the front of the stage? Yeah, and they started applauding there and everyone was just like, Ooh. So yeah, I think, you know, we all we all just like, Ah, we're just so appreciative to be back at work and then. You know, I just when when over the pandemic, when Hamilton got on to Disney Plus for a second, I thought to myself, I don't know what this is going to do for the tours or, you know, just the different productions that are out right now. I don't know. It might. It might ruin the back end. You know. But I don't feel that I haven't felt that, um, I just I feel like seeing the show live, you can never recreate that. And they shot that so well, they shot the original company so well. As

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far as musical live musical productions go. It was one of the best productions that I've seen, you know?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:26] Yes.

Marcus Choi [00:51:29] But there's just nothing like seeing it live.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:32] Yes.

Marcus Choi [00:51:33] You know, the energy that you feel from not just the actors on stage, but the person next to you and how they're being affected and their interpretation, their excitement like it's visceral, you know, and and I'm and I'm so glad that, you know, people are able to see live theater again and, you know, enjoy the process and, you know, just the return of it all because, you know, we're definitely enjoying it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:04] Well, Marcus, I really like I can't thank you enough for spending all this time with me tonight on your one day off. It really means the world to me. Thank you for your generosity in this conversation.

Marcus Choi [00:52:15] It just hasn't really been two and a half hours.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:18] Yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:52:18] Wow.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:18] I know.

Marcus Choi [00:52:20] That flew by that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:23] I really had a great I really appreciate you and

Marcus Choi [00:52:26] I appreciate you.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:27] Thank you.

Marcus Choi [00:52:28] Thank you.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:29] Can you tell the listeners where they can find you like social media handles and websites and all that stuff?

Marcus Choi [00:52:33] So my Instagram handle is just Marcus Choi. I'm on TikTok. But I'm mostly on Instagram. So if you want to come check it out, please check. Come, check it out. And then I used to have a website. I just let it go. Yeah, I it's yeah. And then I think it's like somebody. Somebody bought my my address, my website address and then now like for me to get it back. I would have to pay to whoever, you know, hundreds of dollars. So I'm just like, I'm over it right now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:53:04] Remember what it was like, everyone. You need to have a website to do anything and then just we all did it. And now no one has their own personal website anymore, right?

Marcus Choi [00:53:12] Because nobody cares.

Marcus Choi [00:53:14] And it's all social media.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:53:16] Look, Marcus, you would not put your cheesesteak journey on the website, right? Instagram. And I'm going to check it when we were out right now because, yeah, I'm hungry and I need to live vicariously through you.

Marcus Choi [00:53:27] Yeah, yeah.

Marcus Choi [00:53:28] And you can check out all my camping stuff. Yes. You know, honestly, like there was a time when people would ask me how I was doing. The last year and a half, there was a part of me that would feel guilty about saying that. Like, I had an amazing year and a half because there was so much sadness and so much pain and so much trauma and grief that was happening all across the world. But I think that it's important. For people to know that, like happiness and joy was happening at the same time. And and to share that. And so like I, you know, I wanted to go camping and do all that thing. Like, I just love camping and I just want to go camping for so long, but couldn't because, you know, I just work in life and stuff. And so when we

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were afforded this opportunity, we hit the road. We saw some nature.

Marcus Choi [00:54:25] It was awesome.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:54:26] I was talking to Jordana about that the other week. She spends so much of her time in nature and did the same thing, and it's just like there's value to that as well. That's there's nothing to feel guilty about really taking in this pretty gigantic but also very small world.

Marcus Choi [00:54:43] Yeah, I mean, we were isolating, right? Certainly social distancing, you know? But it was it was just it was great experience like Utah is one of the most beautiful places on Earth. You know, Arizona, Utah. It's great.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:01] Yeah, you're seeing the world, your seat, you're going, you know, like just that's so amazing that your job you were, say overseas and you were in Korea. I mean, that's like, what a life, Marcus. You're doing it. You know

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:16] Um, well, thank you everyone for listening, of course, and joining us for these episodes. Marcus, again, really, thank you. Enjoy the rest of your night off. I love everyone. Thank you for listening. Thank you.

Marcus Choi [00:55:29] Thank you, guys. Yes. Thank you for. For hanging out and visiting.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:31] I will talk to everyone so soon. I love you. I am G.Pen.

Marcus Choi [00:55:35] I am hashtag Marcus Asian George Choi.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:55:39] Yes

Gillian Pensavalle [00:56:18] The Hamilcast is brought to you by my love of the thing TM and my complete lack of chill, please join me in raising all the glasses to Sir Alex Lacamoire for generously making my intro music and this custom Yorktown arrangement that I will never, ever get over. Thank you. Thank

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