

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 301 BLAINE ALDEN KRAUSS 1 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, everyone. Welcome back to the Hamilcast, I'm Gillian and today this fine morning. It's 11:00 a.m. here in New York City. I am here virtually with Blaine Alden Krauss. Hi. Thanks so much for joining me.

Blaine Krauss [00:00:35] Hi. Thank you for having me. Very excited.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:37] Yeah, me too. Before we get started, can you tell me your pronouns, please?

Blaine Krauss [00:00:41] Yes, he him.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:42] Thank you. So you're on the Philip tour

Blaine Krauss [00:00:45] What are you and what are yours?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:47] Mine. Are she her, thanks for asking.

Blaine Krauss [00:00:49] She her, perfect.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:50] Thank you. You're on that rambunctious Philip tour that we know and love so much. You are a and please correct me if I'm wrong on any of these. You are stand by for Hamilton, Burr and KG3.

Blaine Krauss [00:01:02] Yes. Yes. Trifecta.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:04] The trifecta, I mean three. Very different, but also weirdly similar people.

Blaine Krauss [00:01:11] Daddy issues.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:12] I mean, full stop all throughout lots and lots of daddy daddy issues. Yes. On Broadway, you were in the Great Comet, Kinky Boots, The Cher Show National Tour,

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Simba in The Lion King Theater Under the Stars. You played Benny In The Heights with Anthony Lee Medina, who played Usnavi friend of the Pod.

Blaine Krauss [00:01:31] We love Anthony Lee Medina the knife.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:33] We love funky cold medina.

Blaine Krauss [00:01:36] We love we stan that star.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:38] Yes. Oh my god, star. Love him. Yeah. You were in two episodes of Pose.

Blaine Krauss [00:01:43] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:43] Oh my god. Sondheim unplugged this. We're going to. We're going to talk about Sondheim in a little bit. I would love to dove into your experience with that, for sure, but. Hi, how are you? How are you doing?

Blaine Krauss [00:01:52] I'm good. I'm I'm all smiles. Just the way you just heard through my my resume. There is it's a good little, a gratitude rush that I just had.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:03] I'm so glad to hear you say that because I am well aware that sometimes it makes people a little uncomfortable, but I want people to know who I'm talking to.

Blaine Krauss [00:02:12] You know, the facts are facts.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:13] Find the lie

Blaine Krauss [00:02:15] i did I do those things. I did do those things. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm great. I'm great. I'm doing really

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:23] well. Where are you right now in the Philip tour?

Blaine Krauss [00:02:25] Buffalo Buffalo, New York. We just got here on Monday. It is now Thursday that you and I are recording this. And yeah, we're here. We opened last night. I was on for Hamilton on Tuesday when we did our first performance, but we

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had our our opening proper last night and it's been good. It's been good. I'm I'm waiting for the snow, I'm waiting. I'm like. At any moment, this is all going to turn and we're all going to be in the snow. But I'm across the street from the theater, so I'll be all right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:58] So this is December 16th. I don't think you're going to come out. I mean, you're definitely not coming out until maybe January or February. So who knows

Blaine Krauss [00:03:06] when this comes out of the world, it's going to be. I have a feeling a lot is going to happen. So this is going to be funny to laugh at when we're listening to this later, this particular section right now, everyone's going to have a three month little drive by.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:23] Yeah, we're living in the past and the future at the same time.

Blaine Krauss [00:03:26] Right now, baby, this is life.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:29] yeah, hopefully I'll be over the sinus infections, so I apologize.

Blaine Krauss [00:03:32] Yeah, oh, you'll be over.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:33] In meantime, I mean, who knows, you know, when you're in it, it feels like it's never going to end when you when you are a little under the weather.

Blaine Krauss [00:03:39] Yes, I was just saying about this someone the other day like you, when you feel sick, you don't know what health feels like. Yes, it's like you would give anything for somebody to tell you what healthy feels like.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:48] Yeah, you didn't know what it was like before. You will never feel it again. You look at everyone with a sense of envy. Look at how they are just walking through life without a sinus infection,

Blaine Krauss [00:03:58] and they don't even know. They just don't know. It's so funny. It's that's so true, though.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:03] Yeah, so that's sort of where I am. So it'll be fun to listen to this in the edit and then release it in January of 2022.

Blaine Krauss [00:04:09] Hopefully healthy. Yeah, a healthy

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:12] where are you from originally that you're looking forward to the snow?

Blaine Krauss [00:04:14] I am. Oh, interesting this week, but I'm from Tampa Bay, Florida and Tampa Bay property. Tampa Bay is three cities Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, and I literally lived in all three of those cities. But I my birthday's in December and my birthday was on the 8th.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:35] Happy belated birthday, my birthday's. The 21st December is the day.

Blaine Krauss [00:04:39] Come on, but you're still you're still Sagittarius at twenty first, right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:43] I'm on the cusp of Sagittarius and Capricorn on the cusp.

Blaine Krauss [00:04:46] OK, yes. Nice, my brothers.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:48] Yes, Sagittarius.

Blaine Krauss [00:04:50] And so I think because my birthday's in the end of the year and know, of course, I can't move it. And but honestly, I love all the seasons and growing up, I love Florida. I love Florida. I love Florida. But listen to me and I always do this question, OK? Would you rather be cold and then get warm or warm and then get cold? I may have set this up wrong, but

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:13] I despise the summer. My birthday's the winter solstice and I. Live that life, I would rather be cold and be cozy and warm than be sweltering, hot and like not be able to do anything about it.

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Blaine Krauss [00:05:26] That's exactly right. That's what I try to tell people. I'm like, You can eventually get warm. You'll eventually get some kind of warmth. When it's high, you be butt naked, baby. It's over. It's it's a drench. It's a drench. Yup, I agree. Oh yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:44] And then it's like, you can't sleep like that. Yeah, I'm with you.

Blaine Krauss [00:05:47] No, no, no, no. And then you actually then you're getting sick. And that's one thing. But but no. Yeah, I love. I enjoy the winter and I enjoy it all seasons, and I didn't grow up having it. So I was like a little kid out the window. One day I'll see snow. And yeah, so, so, so so this will be it'll it'll. Like I said, I'm across you from a theater, so I'm just going to play on it. The other people have to travel. They're going to hate it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:11] Yeah. Are you do an Airbnb?

Blaine Krauss [00:06:13] No, I'm in this hotel. I come here actually a lot for some symphony gigs that I've done. I'm a past couple of years. Yeah, with the Buffalo Orchestra and I'm staying at the same hotel. I stay at the same time. It's perfect little how chillin at Holiday Inn.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:31] Tell me your entire life story. I want to jump right into it. I want to hear the entire Blaine Alden Krauss story. I want to hear about these symphony gigs I want to hear about. I want to hear about all of that.

Blaine Krauss [00:06:43] All of it. All of it all. Yes. OK. Sicily, 1990. Picture it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:49] Picture that's golden girls. For everyone

Blaine Krauss [00:06:52] Anybody? Anybody. And Sophia, the select. Yes. So I yeah, I'm from Tampa Bay, Florida, and I have I have a really great family. I grew up in my early years, primarily just with my mom and I'm. I'm biracial. So my mom is African-American and my dad is white and I grew up on my mom's

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side. An amazing, fun, crazy, insanely crazy, embarrassing. The best way to be embarrassed if you ever had to be embarrassed, I guess I'll take this way that it comes from them. And it's only because my family, like it's just they so live in the moment and they so are just present and very joyful people and happy to be alive and will make any situation seem like it's just something so. So they're loud. Basically, I'm saying they're like,.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:54] Gotcha.

Blaine Krauss [00:07:55] And and yeah, and I grew up with them and my dad is in the army and. And so he kind of popped in and out and then settled in the high school years. But I've always been a, you know, I'm a text area. So, you know, we we we we love the woo woo. You know, the spiritual tech is just like a little more heightened and, you know, very adventurous. And I'm always asking questions and I've always been that way. And so very early on, I think I had a really, really keen sense of what I wanted to be doing. And I always was a singer and always with someone who was kind of in front of people. My mom tells the story. But she I was outside and it was like just right before I could really fully start speaking, you know, real words. She's like, You were almost there, but it still was in the gibberish land. And she's like, You were outside. And I come outside and you were there with a couple other kids and they're like sitting and you were standing and you're just like going off in gibberish, just like. And they're like, You're like, Whoa, this is like, I was like, What is happening?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:21] It's crazy. It's like Hamilton and my shot where he's telling everyone,

Blaine Krauss [00:09:25] Let's go inside. Not everyone's like, we our talking about that because you're so passionate. Great. Really great. That's a thank you for that. I'm going to take that in my pocket

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:37] Yeah, of course. Take it with my compliments free of charge.

Blaine Krauss [00:09:39] Thank you. Thank you. So, yeah, so I've always been someone who as enjoyed, I guess, being in front of

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people and, you know, using my self and what I learned early on to be my artistic talents vocally and eventually acting wise, you know, to kind of make people feel things. I think that's like when I think about what my larger kind of like, you know, purpose and what I'm doing, you know, not how I'm doing it, but what I'm doing, right? Yeah, is that I like, I love it. I like helping people feel I love. Seeing people have aha moments. I love reminding people. I think I, you know, going back to my family, I do enjoy this life. I really do enjoy being here. I know that. Of course, it has its struggles, but I think I did. I do think it's a great place and I enjoy reminding people that it is a great place and that channels through music and it channels through theater, you know, and that's very cool. And I didn't know that, obviously at an early age, but I was going through the motions, you know, so I went to art schools and did that whole thing in school, middle school, high school and went to school in college, conservatory of Music for musical theater. You know, I I thought at first I was going to be like a singer, primarily at the time when I was growing up, it was like Usher and Brian McKnight. And so it was like, OK, you could be running around like a crazy person sweating, or you could be sitting at this piano and singing. And it's like, Oh, I'm going to do the Brian McKnight rap myself

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:19] singing at the piano.

Blaine Krauss [00:11:20] Yes, the piano in American Idol. There's like, these are like my formative years. I have the American Idol DVD set when they lived in a house. Don't forget they lived in the house people and they they were roommates. Yes. Oh my gosh. Kelly, Justin, I would play it on my own portable DVD player, man. So that was my life. That was I was sad. I was going to go that route. And then theater happen organically at school and and I think this will tie into our Hamilton convo at that time. I, when you're kind of in the school system doing music only, it's a, you know, very traditional choir style of singing. You know, now there's a lot of programs because everyone wants to be a pop star, you know, of contemporary music and pop music and vocal music, which I think if I had when I was younger, I would have gone, but I didn't. And so, you know, this school musical comes along and do shows like Once on this island and shows that I was like, Oh,

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this kind of sounds like very cool, like something that's on the radio. Actually, I like this. I like singing. That's OK, I'll do this. And then I got swept up into it right and started doing musicals and musicals and as like, Oh, this is fun. I like this way of expressing it. So that's kind of how I've ended up on the musical theater train and went to school and in graduate had a great time at that program and graduated and have been very blessed to have had great opportunities in which I was able to apply what I had been working for. And those moments in that and and now I'm doing this podcast with you.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:04] I love hearing that and I love I mean, you have something on your Instagram that I was going to save for the end, but we're here now. You're a paradox process. Can you talk a bit about that? Because I feel like it ties in to the feeling and and being happy to be here, you know?

Blaine Krauss [00:13:21] Oh yeah. I was trying to I almost jumped in that lane. I was like, I said this

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:25] let's go there. Let's let's go there for a little bit.

Blaine Krauss [00:13:27] OK, hey, exit exit one. See? So I I have always have all I've always been like, I said, interested in spirituality and I don't mean religion, but I just mean spirituality, right? And and the the the what? You know why? What for what? Really, how what? You know all those big questions. I am that nerd. I enjoy it. I enjoy it like we can. Same highway, different lane. Like, let's do aliens. One day we'll talk about that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:03] Yeah, we could do that today.

Blaine Krauss [00:14:05] Different lane, different lane. But the point is, I ask the big questions what is going on? So I think I definitely also, like I said, recognize the mental and emotional health portion of of living. And I think through the experiences of my family and growing up and being an artist, you know, we in our nature are talking about, you know, the psyche, the mental and emotional health and well-being of human beings. These characters that we create, right? That's what we're at the best

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of our job. That's what we're working on and trying to expose. So that kind of stuff has always been around me, and I always I early on kind of started to see the value of like therapy, right? Some people go to, you know, when you're back in, the therapy now has really come a long way. Mental health, I'll say it's come a long way. And it's especially been in the last two years, not last six years, you know, really getting there. But when I was younger, it was very much like, Oh, this thing. And I've heard some people did it and I'm being very. It seemed like the people who did it were much more wealthy and had access to those kinds of things and services and was like, Oh, that's what is that interesting? And you know, as I've gotten older and have lived life, it kind of starts circulating again. And I had been saying for a while to myself, like, you know, someone's out, they need therapy now, they need therapy. And I say, Well, maybe you need therapy. Why don't you go? You've never been. And some friends at Kinky Boots were talking. They always openly talked about a therapist that they share. And yeah, yeah, it was very it is very open, always talking about it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:59] Oh no, I love therapy. I think we should all be in therapy. I'm open to talk about it, but it's interesting to share a therapist with a friend.

Blaine Krauss [00:16:05] That's yes. Yes. Yes, yes. Yes. Yeah. They just so happen to have because they end up going to Paradox Process, which is a mindfulness therapeutic technique. So it's a it's a place and they they're great. And so their energy also, when talking about it, it was so light and fun to like. I was like, Oh yeah, definitely have to try this. So I ask them to go. And I wince when I could tell something was like off with me. Like, I feel like I tend to have it all together. Not really, but or have a good balance of I do have some things together and I'm not faking it, but I'm also, you know, pressing forward and I'm generally OK. And there was a period when after you listed a lot of those credits that I had done, I was in New York and things were fine. But I also think they were like fine. Things were fine, but some, such as something was just there that I didn't know what was, but just something was there. So I was like, This is a good time to go. And I went, and I have pretty much that was like three years ago, and I had a therapy session every week since then, and it completely was the I don't want to

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say, missing piece, but the the the the next huge major tool that I needed for all areas and aspects of my life, like physical, mental, emotional, financially relationship, all of that, all of that. It was like, Ah, this plus everything I've been doing now, we're really going to get somewhere. And it really, really changed me. I mean it. It affected my auditioning the way I was auditioning and the, you know, getting rid of all the weight that you bring to an audition. And you know, there's there's so much happening when you go to an audition room and of course, you're just trying to think about the character and think about what they need in that particular audition scene. Your song that they've given you, right? Say it's Hamilton, right? And, you know, just think about my child. What does he want? You know? But really, with a lot of us actors and anybody who wants something, you know, you go in, but then you bring everything else, right? OK, I got to get this job. I really need the skill would be nice to get this job. I really need this credit. Oh, what about the money? The money would be great. That would change my life. Oh my God, get you this and I figure, do that and you bring so much baggage into the room that has nothing to do. That all has to do with yourself, things that you've thought about, you're working on and that immediately affected that, right? I was immediately able to detach all those kinds of things that were rooted in other things, right? And focus on my work. And that's once I start. That's where I first saw the effect of it and I was like, Oh, this is great, like, I booked. I think that's one of the reasons why I Pose to tell my therapist all the time. I just my attitude and the room and what I was bringing in my mental headspace. It just was clear and different. And so. So long story short, I was very inspired and they have a growing team of people, and I'm really would love for people who look like me, black and brown people and all people, but especially queer people of any color to have access to this. And the one thing about the paradox process, and again, we'll do this for another day is it's a very it's a self empowering tool. And there, you know, other than anything clinical, there isn't anything in that in that happens in your life that you can't handle if you have a clear and focused and resourceful state of mind. And it's just a technique, a tool that that, you know, that gets you to that place. And it's I guess if you do meditation, I would liken it to a mindful meditation.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:12] I was just going to ask you if meditation is involved because everything you're saying.

Blaine Krauss [00:20:18] Yeah, it's the core base of meditation and and but it's mindful, right? So instead of having a moment where you're not thinking of thoughts, you're actually inviting the mind to get active because that's what our mind naturally does. Actually, it's like, you aren't your thoughts. You aren't the things you think you're you're actually the person who's observing those things. That's why you're able to hear them. And it's because you're observing it and your mind functions more like a computer than yourself. And when you realize that the brain wants to solve problems, it's always solving problems. It's always taking things and seeing and hearing. And depending on how what events you've seen in your life where you come from, it's doing this equation and then spitting back out this reality that you actually have more control over than you think. I'll button it on that. But wow, I got inspired and I got certified with them, and I straight studied with them for a long, long, long time. And something that was totally left field for me. Excuse me. So I never thought I would do, let alone want to teach people and show people. But I it's it's been a life changer. And and yeah, so I work with people and I go to a lot of schools and work with kids. And while I don't teach them the technique verbatim, I'm definitely dropping little tools and treasures for them that hopefully they'll remember when they leave like, Oh, OK, if I'm feeling this anxiety, I'll say these things and do these things. And you know, and I hope it grows. I'm really hoping that one day the two really merge in a bigger way because I got going back what I said earlier. You know that the. The how I'm I'm living, my purpose isn't as important as kind of knowing what the purpose is and and knowing who I am and know and knowing, you know what I'm here to do, what the bigger why and everyone deserves to know that and how that kind of peace. So so yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:25] Yeah, yeah, it's so hard to because you want to think about, oh, just the big picture, but I'm thinking about auditions in particular. If you love a show or if that, you know, sort of what it could do for you, right or wrong, you know, because no one can really see as far ahead as

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they think they can, they think, Well, if I get this, then this will happen. And then this and this and this and it never happens what you think it's going to be, never know.

Blaine Krauss [00:22:50] Even if you even if you get it, even once you get it the whole, OK, you got it and you think that it actually does it, actually? Actually, you know? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it is. It is. It is. Yeah, it it, it is. But I think to add one more thing into our little pocket is, you know, when you get to a place where you trust and can see and the way you can see it is through your own adversities through seeing how you overcame and found another way. So once you get to knowing and seeing that this life and anything that you want is possible and out there and is abundant and is never dry that there you know this this show that you love. If you don't get that show, there will be another show that you love and it might be for different reasons. It might be more. I guarantee, you know, and when you lock into like that train and let that be your guide, then it's amazing what, how, how things start flowing more effortlessly and easily. Do you know what I mean? Because you? I do. I I I really do. I know you now. I know you. I do, you know. And so that and that's that's a daily battle and that's a show by show battle. And you don't win them, all right. But you build that muscle and you build up. That's that strength and and you build those up and you just kind of find yourself into a less resistant journey, I would say. Cause, like you said earlier, there is there's so much you don't have, you can't have control of everything. That would be a boring world, actually. It's something we think we want a god I could control. You would hate it. You would absolutely hate everyone and everything happened the way you wanted it to happen. There would be no joy and the creating of it. There would be. That's what you love, right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:24:50] And then there would be a lot of pressure to make sure that you're doing it right instead of just letting it happen,

Blaine Krauss [00:24:55] correct instead of just being, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So it's definitely a battle. But that's that's the that's the point of a tour, right? Like, you know, just saying the way we all use exercise exercise is not this perfect wand. You know, we we're humans, we fluctuate. Life happens to

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us. We grow up with kids, we have relationships, we don't. We go back. We do this activity of this job. You know, it's another tool to just always keep us focused, you know, keep us on track when we need to get back there. So put it in your toolbox if you're listening,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:25] but it seems like you were sort of on that track before you really got into it with the the paradox process. Like, it seems like that was sort of you were getting there on your own to begin with because you're what you've done. Like, how did you get from Florida to CCM? And if you can, you can you just explain what Kim is and the importance of it to the listeners if they don't know?

Blaine Krauss [00:25:49] Yes, yes. CCM is our acronym for the College Conservatory of Music, which is a top tier conservatory program at the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati, Ohio. So that's why I got my Bachelor of Fine Arts. The musical theater program at Kim is the oldest musical theater program actually in the country. It actually pre-dates Stephen Sondheim, has a chair in Oxford and a prestigious theater chair. And and CCM has been around for a long, long, long, long, long, long time. The accreditation programs that they give to programs they based off of what was going on at came at the time. So it's a very top tough school to get into. Amazing talent has gone there, come out of that program to try to be in and in the end just had the top talent, Sharon Wheatley. And so I graduated there and I went to that program, and it's so funny. You say so OK. So so I, you know, I'm. The first in my family to go to an out of state school. Some affluent families who went to some really great junior and community programs, which were much more community colleges, were much more prevalent. Actually in the 90s and the 90s, access to community educated college and junior colleges were much more widely available. And actually, I think now we're seeing the society, we're trying to bring those back into the spotlight as forms of higher education because not everyone is. And not everything is meant to be done at a four year school. I think there's tons of benefit, but to make that a one stop shop for everything, it's just not right. So I'm saying that to give value to where my family went. But I, you know, one of the second or first to go to, you know, a huge, traditional expensive program far away from the family. And I knew we were

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going kind of through our internal family transition. And so things were a little shaky and rough on our end when I was in high school and I knew that if I were to go to a school that I want to go to, which didn't exist in Florida, I didn't know where that school was, but I knew it wasn't in Florida. I and that's only because I grew up in Florida, and I just didn't want to be in Florida for college, right? Everyone. College kids dreams to go away to college, right? There are some fine, fine schools in Florida. I knew that if I were going to do that, I, Blaine Alden Krauss, would have to be the one to make that happen. You know, I I just knew we finally I would joke like, I can't even afford it loan like. There's just no way that, you know, I feel like we're in a deficit now, let alone adding more on that. And I do want to ask my parents or family to take on that with things. So I, I, I went into Hustle Overdrive mode. I mean, I applied for every grant, every scholarship known to man that I could find. I did competition program where if it was a vocal competition or which I did, you know, I want a \$10000 grant from a competition. I won a Congressional Black Caucus scholarship and I did. I'm a presidential scholar in the arts from the this program that if you're a young high schooler, I think 14 to 16, it's called the Young Arts Program, and it's a national competition scholarship competition program that's held in Miami every year. And from those pool of artists, they cover all mediums. They have programs that happen in New York and then eventually out of those pool of performers. There is a commission created by the president, and at the time I was Obama that chooses like 15 or 20 art scholars. And you go to D.C. to promote to the Kennedy Center and get this medal made of and all this stuff. So I did that. So that came with scholarships. So I but I was searching and googling and and just just collecting as much money as I could. You know, I didn't really have a job I had. I worked at the Boys and Girls Club around the corner, my best best friend Anthony Murphy, who was the first genie on the first national tour. We went to high school together. We grew up together. We would YouTube. We'd be in my back basement youtubing Broadway together, and now we're out here doing how we so we were. Oh no, no. It's a full story. So we worked together this boys and girls club, which I made little money, but that's going to do anything for school and dumb. And I had enough money to. I applied for Carnegie Mellon and CCM and Boko tried to get my top schools where, you know, in my mind, I wanted to go to

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the best. I didn't know where the best was, but I I googled little and then literally I googled it. Google Carnegie Mellon keeps coming up, I guess Carnegie Mellon and then a friend of mine at my high school, her brother went to see and he came to the school and did like a presentation on behalf of the school. I had never heard of them. He sang, Killed it. And of course, I Google. I'm like, Oh my God, these are these people. It's a talent. You've you cc. I keep saying to says, I agree I'm going to apply to these schools not waitlisted for kind of I'll tell the truth. If I got waitlisted for Carnegie Mellon, that was my top choice in my mind. I was going to pull the Patti LuPone as a singer all my life. I was just going to be an acting drama major. Go in, hone the craft voice lessons on the side. You know, I need to get the act together. Pull apart. So it's going to go to Carnegie, I got waitlisted and and I'm just going to say it too, they do a dirty thing at Carnegie, where they give you because we're talking financials, finances, it's kind of the baseline of the story. What they do is they give you a financial offer before they give you the artistic offer. So they basically say if you end up going here, this is how much aid we could give you. And mine was like a full ride

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:33] Wait a second. I know they tell you that first.

Blaine Krauss [00:32:37] First. So I'm like, So in your head, you know me. I'm like, I've been doing all this. This would be this is it like this would be this is it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:44] And wait a second, if they're offering you a full ride, then what is the other question? I know I would. I would think OK if if, if, if I get an air quotes, if, then they'd give me almost a full ride or a full ride. You would think that that's a done deal.

Blaine Krauss [00:32:58] Yeah. I guess because they operate like that was just from the school. Right. It was like, you do all the normal things applying for the school. And then of course, you got the artistic audition. And of course, there's that. So before, but still no before the the actual program, the try thing for. So I'm not trying to throw a party on the bus.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:16] Look, it's good for people to know listeners at home who want to, you know, it's just good for people to know what's going on.

Blaine Krauss [00:33:23] Things might have changed. Things have changed. But this is my journey, my journey. So I got this sit there and I wasn't just it was so funny because I was for a millisecond. Of course, I was like, Oh, dang, like, you know, OK? But Waitlisted was going to close in, they're considered. But then in my mind again, I was like, Well, I want to go to that. I don't know why. I just was this person that I want someone to be here. That's fine. And then I got into CCM, never visited the school. I had visited Carnegie. Now it was a school showed up day one with mattresses and bat and just bags with my aunt. Looking at the campus, I guess this will do this will cheer. Do we like this? OK, okay, cool cool cool. This is work. I didn't care because when I Googled it, it said CCM, you know, at the top of the thing, and I just knew that's what I wanted to be. I wanted to train at the best place. So I worked. I worked very hard my freshman year at 6pm and I knew that I needed to just work hard and be a sponge and and really take take the opportunities that the school can afford me because I knew as it would happen is that the end of the year would come. I had raised enough money to pay for that first year of tuition, first year of room and board and have my own money. So still a lot of money. But first year was done. I was it right like I was doing all the scholarship stuff. And so I knocked on the door at the end of freshman year of the head of our department. And I was like, Hey, and you know, I can't afford this place anymore. I this is how I got here. I was able to raise this, you know, and and and at the time, you know, system doesn't have this huge their prestige a school, but they don't have this huge like endowment for artistic scholarships and not like other programs do so. So they weren't like throwing out Carnegie Mellon bills or

Gillian Pensavalle [00:35:28] Carnegie Mellon money, so

Blaine Krauss [00:35:30] they weren't throwing out that Carnegie Mellon money that, you know, and that's a grade the system was operating on the Corbett's. And I don't know if you're the Corbetts, but they had been at the door bell. You know what I'm

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saying is that's new money. Oh yes, it's old money. Yeah. Doorbell money versus that old normal money. That's right. So so I rang the doorbell thinking, Hey, I can't afford it. And you know, we had a long conversation. And you know, I I just I don't know that I presented my case as like, I've worked hard and you cast me in shows and I love it here, and I know that I can get a good education. And I, I think I said, like, I know you value me here. And, you know, because school is a symbiotic relationship, right? This isn't like, you know, elementary school anymore, middle school or even high school. It's I have to take ownership of my education. Right. I I funded this right. So I also had to say, you know, this became, you know what I mean? I had to open up the doors to being like, we both are doing something here, right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:35] I mean, they let you in, so they get it

Blaine Krauss [00:36:37] Let's talk about the services here. You got it. You like it. I like it. Let's keep it going. Or what? Or am I going back home? You know, so so they I think it's the first time I have told this this story, but it is at the core of it's an example of just how my life has been, which is touched by a lot of people and takes. It took a village for me to get one here and I think it takes a village for. All of us so the I met some donors of the program and they became like surrogate parents while I was at school, they helped me get through school and was just there emotionally and invited me over to their home many times and gave me cooked for me and gave me a second foundation. And they literally helped me through school up until my last year, and then I was able to kind of handle that on my own. And that's how I got from Florida to Canada through school.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:44] So you rang the doorbell, you walked in there? Ding dong, hi, I need help. And then the person you're speaking to, they say

Blaine Krauss [00:37:54] he was like, Well, we don't, you know, he's like, Well, we have doorbell money. So I really don't know what we can do, you know? But but but you know, it was I didn't feel like devastated, but I definitely left feeling like, Oh,

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:11] so how did the donors come in? Did this person introduce you to the donors?

Blaine Krauss [00:38:15] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, I did. I sang it some teacher event, and they literally it was like, I have to get someone playing. This is so and so so so this is play. He walked away and they were like, Hi, we're your new, I think where she is, like, where you're in Cincinnati parents. And they said, Whereas if they knew me forever just completely took and helped me and aided me and I wouldn't be here without, I really wouldn't have got through school and gotten, you know how it goes? I mean, I possibly would be here, but it wouldn't look like this. And that's been my whole life, though that's been, you know, I just told you the abridged version. But if I could go back and start like a very important what's my life story? So many people from so many crazy, crazy parts of the world have helped me and open doors and shown me things and introduced me to people and given me opportunities. And, you know, I think I just so happen to be present and, you know, for it. And obviously I was excited and obviously was this kid who was going for something. And so we all aligned. But it really I have been like the product of such great guidance. I think we all are.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:36] You know, I hear that all the time, people saying there was this, there was a teacher or a mentor or someone who saw something in them and really helped lift them up or just be a sounding board even or just there. I hear that a lot about important people in your life.

Blaine Krauss [00:39:51] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, a friend of mine, not to steal someone else's story, but he just wrote a post. He had a set of friends, and when he first met, he's an older friend. And when he first moved to New York City, he worked at the TKTS booth like when it first came out. This is the red stairs in the middle of Times Square. And he met this woman who was visiting and for over the course of four days would see her every morning. And she would ask, Oh, which? Which I go to, which looks like or two. And by the fourth day, he gave her a number and was like, Oh, I'm going to do my own first solo show here, so I'll come back to see it. And she actually flew back, I think, from Indiana or some some state flew back, came to see him in his first production, ended up giving him his equity card

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because she knew or was a part of some theater. They had this relationship over some 20 plus years. And she just passed away. But he wrote this beautiful tribute about how I met this woman. You know, coming to see, you know. So it's amazing. What kindness can go is. It's amazing where being present can take, can lead you. And it is a testament of just, you know, no one can go it alone like you. I can. Yes, I can do all the work I want to do and put myself and set myself up for it. But it takes other people to be at to it, take someone else to create the thing. It takes someone else to open the door. It takes someone else to. I'm going to be even trivial to work at the place so I can eat lunch to be about my day. Like we're all connected. We're all helping each other. We're all, you know, a part of it and and shepherding each other along. You know, if you see it that way, like if you try to actively see it that way, it'll be a more pleasant journey. That's for sure.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:41:41] It's a very important shift in perspective, I think. Yeah, because it's so easy to not do that. It's so easy to be annoyed and like frustrated.

Blaine Krauss [00:41:50] Oh yeah. And I have my days and my moments, you know, like, it's yeah, it's yeah, you're right. It is so easy. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:41:59] So tell me about when did the symphony gigs come into play?

Blaine Krauss [00:42:01] So the guy I'm just talking about who wrote this beautiful post. He is just think I see what's up. I know he wants me to get out there, his name is Scott Colter and he runs a program. He runs a company called Spot on Entertainment. And Scott is a graduate of CCM. He's actually. So, so he actually did the CCM's very first senior showcase. So if listeners, if you're if you graduate from one of these conservatory programs, usually at the end of the year, you will put together a showcase where all the graduating seniors will put on some songs to then go to New York City with an audition for agents. So Scott was one of their very first educates people, and I was doing a masterclass of CCM with him and we worked together and had a great just. It was great. It was a really great session. And when I my last, the not the day before

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my I, so I did Lion King right after college. That was my first show I booked. I booked it before I graduated, actually, but I finished and then immediately joined the tour. I did it for a year and the day before my last day on tour, Scott called and said, Hey, are you in the city? I'm doing a chess concert at 54 below and I need you to replace, you know, someone to Anatole. I played Anatole in chess at school and I was like, Oh, oh yes, of course. Like this was also I was going to happen the first day I got to New York. So like, fly in and then that night, like day one in New York City, come save if it's possible. And I was like, Oh yeah, and I was like, I'm going to be honest with you to Scott. Like, I'm going to like live dreams. Tomorrow night is my last year of it tour, and it's been a long journey. So I'm going to enjoy this. Like, you know, of course, live. You know, don't forget, it's high ties on high music. So that's sort of that relationship with him. I did that concert and then began to fill in for he does a lot of symphony shows and programing across performing arts venues. He is a brilliant, a brilliant singer and has an incredible voice and an incredible interpreter of lyric and songs, but also is an incredibly smart, witty just guy. So he knows theater history incredibly well. He knows music incredibly well. So he puts together the best shows and then he I am just a braggart and a little bit one of the reasons why I'm sure if you saw him, you loved him. He has the best patter and talking in a show ever. Normally you don't want to hear people talk and or they haven't really rehearsed it enough. So it's just little like family. It is. So it's sometimes better than the performing that's happening in the shows. He's just so comfortable and makes an audience full of, you know, symphony orchestras tend to have a different type of person, I would say. And he just makes the ease he brings and the relaxation. And then not to mention the talent and the quality of shows that he does. So I love, you know, doing orchestra and symphony work kind of taps back into that original singer and me that just stands there and just blame and is singing a song versus a character. And that's a place that I'm super comfortable with. So, so, so we do. I do a couple of shows. We do a really great show called The Wonderful Music of Oz, which is music of Wicked. The Wiz, Wizard of Oz. Goodbye Yellow Brick Road from pop standards. Yeah, yeah. And telling you the way he it's like, it's my one of my favorite shows is we do that. We do the show called Music of the Knights, spelled with a K. So it's music of

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L. Elton John, Paul McCartney and Andrew Lloyd Webber, three of those. And they actually have so much in common. Very interesting. So great. Really, really clever. Fun shows with that and great talent and and we do a couple throughout the year. It's it's it's so fun. And so, yeah, so so.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:26] Yeah, it sounds amazing.

Blaine Krauss [00:46:27] Yeah. So that's that's, you know, he introduced me into that world and also the cabaret scene and the cabaret world. And I've done a lot of performing 54 below. I've done my own show there twice. So yeah, it's it's it's a it's a side of the artistry that's not music, that's not performing a show every night that I could exercise that I love.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:50] Yeah, you'll have to let me know the next time you're there because I'll come see you.

Blaine Krauss [00:46:54] Yes. Yes, please.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:03] All right. Next week, I'll be back with Blaine for part two. He's talking all about his first encounter with In The Heights and the special community that comes with putting up that show. Plus hearing the first rumblings of Hamilton seeing the show for the first time. His audition process and much more. So I'll see you next week. Until then, stay safe. Stay healthy. I love you. I'm G.Pen

[00:47:59]

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

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