

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Hi. I'm stage and stage's Lin-Manuel Miranda and you're listening to The Hamilcast.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:05] Hello, everyone. I'm Gillian and welcome back to the Hamilcast. We're picking up this week where we left off with Marja Harmon, the And Peggy Torres, Angelica Schuyler. Catch up with last week's episode if you haven't already. Marja talks Growing up performing in Indiana how a chance encounter and supportive family helped lead her to her first professional gig alongside the likes of one Billy Porter and then her journey to New York. But hey, if you're all caught up, let's dive in. Here's part two of my conversation with Marja.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:49] So what what is the next chapter in this amazing life story?

Marja Harmon [00:00:53] And the next chapter was then The Lion King. Lion King, I, I came off of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. So I'm making it sound like all these things happened right after one another. They did not. They did not. I mean, those those three things did actually kind of happen pretty quick within like kind of like months. But I got in Lion King the tour, and it was like my fourth time I auditioned for, like, many times. This was probably like my maybe like my fifth or sixth time going in for it. This time was my time. And I found out that I was going to be going on tour, the Joining the Gazelle tour. And so I did that for a year, which was then completely different because that was kind of the first time I was stepping into like, you know, like a commercialized machine musical at that point. And also like the last tour I had done had been non-equity. So doing a production contract tour was like, Oh, I was like, Oh, this is set like, you know, a month long sit down. And then, you know, I had a makeup artist and all these things that I didn't know existed. So and it was crazy. The process for Lion King was

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

very, very cool. It was cool to work with the whole to face Julie Taymor concept because there's not like, you know, you have the headpiece and so much of the rehearsal process is mirror work. Oh, cool. Even before you get. Yeah. There's a lot of you're in front of the mirror and you're looking at how, like, even if your head's doing something, what's this head doing? Is it translating the same thing and the same feeling and learning how to, like, do all the movements and like, do the the lioness movements? It was it was very it was very physical. And I thought it was a lot of fun. And then, you know, that role is such a it's such a princess track. You know, it's it's 22 minutes on stage. It's, you know, you get these really cool key moments like Shadowlands or you get to be on top of the rock at the end, you know, and there's, there's such high payoff, but like such. It wasn't like coming off of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. It was like it was fun. It was relatively, you know, easy. And the show is a stunning show. And I'd always wanted to be a part of it. And it the cast was incredible. It was just. I got to see a lot of the country and get a chance to really say like, oh, this is what it's like when you're on tour. You get to kind of sit down in a place for a while. You get a sense of the city and what it's like to live here. And I had a really great time and a really great time doing during that role.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:38] Yeah, a nice little, you know, career palate cleanser almost.

Marja Harmon [00:03:42] That's a great way to think about it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:43] Like a lighter role. You get to be at the top of the rock for a little while. You get to, you know, and then sort of recharge after coming off of something so intense, you know, it's a different muscle, a different creative muscle.

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

Marja Harmon [00:03:54] It did. And it also taught me the muscle of kind of how to exist in a show like that. Because like I said before, I had I built things from the ground up. I had a lot of license to play in Lion King, you know? Yeah, they want your individuality to come through. But also the show has been running for quite some time. They know what works. So in, you know, here's the box. You can exist within the box, but you can't color outside the lines type of a type of an idea. So it also kind of taught me how to exist in that type of a vehicle as well, which was very different. And I used to like to like do things differently every night. And I know the residents don't like that all the time that much. And now it's like, Oh, but I'm living at it. They're like, No, live right here. So I was like, okay, okay, okay. But, but that's also I found that also to be very valuable as well.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:48] Because you really, you truly, it sounds so obvious, but you never know where your career is going to take you and what lessons you'll need to have and what you'll need to know. You know, like you have no idea.

Marja Harmon [00:05:00] Exactly.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:01] So everything can be valuable. Everything. There's always an opportunity to be a sponge no matter what.

Marja Harmon [00:05:06] And even if it feels a little like again, because so many I mean, so many music, we have so many major musicals that have been running for such a long time. It's, it's it's a great gift if you can find your way into one. But there's also, like I said, like this is a product and they want to make sure that the product from a business standpoint, no matter where you're seeing it in Calgary and New York and L.A., that the audiences are, for the most part, having the same experience, even though they want your individuality to come

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

through again. Here's the box. Don't go over here, but you can play within this box. And it was also great to learn that because it's a skill totally. And it's a skill that you can take with you from each from each show that has a long life. You know, then what? I left Lion King. I decided not to stay on tour. I was having a really hard time adjusting to being away. And, you know, I left Lion King without having anything lined up. And it was also a really tough time. It was like it was like during the recession, work was really hard to find. And I came back to the city and I struggled. I struggled for like three years. I it was a long time before I booked anything lucrative. Like I book like regional things here and there. I got to do Merrily We Roll Along at City Center, which was amazing. I did that with Lin. That was really cool. But you know, those are really short contracts. So, you know, I, I was temping. Temping. I found a temp job that I kind of stayed with for a year at an architecture firm. And my life was very much like The Devil Wears Prada. Yeah, but for architecture. And I was running around all day, you know, fetching things and getting phone calls at 6 a.m. about flights and organizing site visits and like doing all this stuff to the point where they even I fit in so well there that they even offered me a job like a salary position. And it was really tough because I had been out of work, out of lucrative acting work for like two and a half years. And I was like, oh, should I should I do this? You know, because I was at that point, I was getting closer and closer and closer to things, but it just wasn't going my way. It was a very frustrating place to be in. I felt like I was auditioning and auditioning well and then not, you know, getting the gig. And even my agent was, I think, on the last disappointment, they were like, Marcia, everyone, you know, has nothing but great things to say from the room. Just. I know we're closed. Just. Just try not to get down. Just keep at it. And I really almost took the salary job, and I thought I thought, no, it's not you know, I don't want to do this. And, you know, and I eventually got a regional gig and it kind of gave me that I left I left the

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

temp job I played. I went to go do Oliver in Virginia for like a month. I came back, I worked at J.Crew for a while. I did like retail for like for like almost six months. And then auditions for Book of Mormon came, fell at my doorstep. And I went in. I had you know, it was it was a relatively short process. It happened to be a short process. I went in, I have like two callbacks on a dance call. And then I found out, I think I was like gotten it maybe like a week later. And so I was like, oh, I think got a job, you know, like, and a consistent job and a show that was. I had never seen it prior to. I hadn't. Ever seen it. It's like once I got it. I finally saw the show. So I know I had no idea what I was walking at, but I just knew it was the show that everyone loved and everyone wanted to see.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:34] And the musical from the South Park guys.

Marja Harmon [00:08:37] Yeah, it had won all the awards and I went in for the first time after I had booked the show and I watched it and I just died laughing. But I also didn't expect it to be so heartwarming. Like at the end I was like, cry. I was in tears and I was in Book of Mormon for on Broadway for four years. And it was so much fun, such a happy company, so fun to go to work, such a fun show to do. And that was my home for for a good a good chunk of my career.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:09] I've heard that working for that company is excellent, excellent. They really, really take care of their people.

Marja Harmon [00:09:15] They really do. They really do. They throw the best parties. Yeah, yeah. Very, very spoiled there. But also it was like, you know, it's a very happy show. It's a very happy company. It was cool to, like, totally do something completely different than what I've done in my entire career. I felt like I've been like these, like, you know, Royal Disney

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

princesses and, you know, then doing Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and then now I'm in the South Park musical. I was in the ensemble, so was like very low stress. It was like low stakes. I just really just had a good time every night. Got to, like, watch, like, you know, the brilliant actors playing at a price. Now they're coming have like, you know, learn about comedy and comedic timing. It was I had some great years and Book of Mormon.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:01] It's nice to find some kind of security in that in this business, you know, to just be able to just...

Marja Harmon [00:10:08] And it gave me some financial. Yeah. After having like three years of like no financial stability being really stressed of course, you know, and and working jobs that you know I just nontraditional working jobs that were kind of like crushing my soul it was just nice to be working, to be in a great show, a show that I was proud to be in. And yeah, getting, getting stable again was really great.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:32] Yeah. And when you look back like the two roads were being, I don't know, an architect working in the architecture world or being on Broadway and like a really nice gig for four years, like your age. It was so right. I'm so glad your gut was so right. So glad that you were just like, no, this is not it's not.

Marja Harmon [00:10:51] It also was miserable. I was working it was working like 12 hour days for something I wasn't even passionate about to support. To support someone else. Right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:58] Like you'd be settling. Yeah.

Marja Harmon [00:11:00] I was like, this is not. I mean, yeah, I could have a salary position in New York. Oh, man. I mean,

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

that's nothing to kick out of bed, but at the same time, I was like, That's not what I want to do.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:09] And you'd be miserable.

Marja Harmon [00:11:11] Yeah, I was miserable, so.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:12] Right. Yeah. So what happens after Book of Mormon? Hamilton. Hamilton. Let's do.

Marja Harmon [00:11:18] Hamilton.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:19] So I want to hear like, what was your first experience with the show you had worked with Lin before with Merrily We Roll Along. So just the whole like were you listening? Were you not listening? Were your friends hounding you about it? Were like, what was your experience? Just like living in the world, knowing that Hamilton existed before you were auditioning for it?

Marja Harmon [00:11:38] Oh, I was listening. You know, we were hearing all the rumblings about Hamilton off-Broadway down at The Public, and it was like going to be revolutionary. And I got to see it the the last preview before they opened so that that last Monday night. So like all of industry was, there was a very lit audience. And I remember just being. Blown away. I had never seen anything on Broadway like it. The storytelling, the dance that. The storytelling through the dance. I couldn't take my eyes off the ensemble. I could not take my eyes off of them. I remember, like watching Ariana DeBose and being like, you know, and I and I remember thinking I finally saw myself and I saw Rene come out as Angelica, and I saw the Schuyler sisters and, you know, auditioning in musical theater pre Hamilton was very different than it is now in terms of opportunities for people of color and the types of things that you've got to go in for and the same types of things you would end for over and over and

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

over again. And for me, it was the first time that I saw a Black woman who was brilliant, sexy, charismatic, funny standing, and her power being everything that I thought I was like. That's what I want. That's who I am. That's what I want to do. And that was like the first time I kind of seen it represented in that way and then, you know, Satisfied happened. And we saw the same scene twice from a different perspective and I thought mindblowing. I've never seen that done ever. You know, there was just so many incredible, groundbreaking moments in the show outside of the music and outside of how he, like he married so many different genres and paid homage to musical theater all at the same time. I it's a masterpiece, and I knew I had to be a part of it. I didn't know when I would be a part of it, but I knew I had to be. You know, and of course, I called my agents. I was like Hamilton. And he was like, I know everyone, Hamilton fans. And so he was like, I'm working on it. And I went in for the very first time, gosh, maybe in 2017 it was to audition for the original standby to replace the original standby. And there were other people at the time, like further along in the audition process. So for me, I kind of got the feeling and I was like, Oh, that kind of felt like a screening.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:05] Why? Why did that feel like a screening?

Marja Harmon [00:14:07] Because it felt.

Marja Harmon [00:14:08] Because I had actually was talking to other people who were there and they were like, Oh, this is like my third or fourth time and this is my first. So it kind of felt like I was just getting on the files in a way. And I had I had that whole entire packet, which is huge, by the way, because it's for I'd like to cover all the Schuyler sisters. So I mean, I'm sure you know and have heard it's every single song that every single woman sings. Yes. You're doing a one woman concert of Hamilton. So much so much material to prepare. And so I went

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

in, I felt really solid about it, you know, and the feedback was, we like her. We'll bring her in down the road. Now's not her time. Okay. So I kept the packet and I kept working on it. And then I got a call in 2018 to come in and that was for a work session.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:00] So we haven't talked to about a work session in a long time. Can you explain to the listeners what that means exactly?

Marja Harmon [00:15:06] For me, I feel like a work session is a little more informal, like you're actually stopping and starting and they're working your you're there's a creative person in the room. Whenever I say creative, like usually like a music supervisor, a dance supervisor or acting supervisor are in the room and they're working through the material with you. It's less, it's less of like a presentation and more like, let's see how it is to work with you, how you take notes, how you handle adjustments, that type of thing. That's how I personally feel.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:37] Yeah, everyone's kind of showing their cards a little bit more like versus an audition. They're like, Okay, thanks so much. You can go now.

Marja Harmon [00:15:43] And you're getting active feedback in the room, right? Which I think is the big difference. So at least, at least if it's not that time, at least if this is not your go around with the show, at least you have heard from ahead creative what they need to see for next time, you know, which is very helpful because sometimes you can walk out feeling like, I don't know what I need to do differently.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:08] Right. Exactly, exactly.

Marja Harmon [00:16:09] So I went straight into a work session and I felt really, really great about it. I went into work

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

session with Patrick Vessel and Matt Gallagher. Oh, great. Yeah. And I walked out feeling like, wow, I felt really great about that. And then I got a call that I'd be having a full creative. So like the Tommy Kail would be there, Alex Lacamoire would be there, you know, prepare all the same material. They're going to prepare to go through everything they're looking at you for the stand by for this specific company.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:40] And and Lin & Andy too?

Marja Harmon [00:16:42] Let Andy was not there and Lin was going to watch later via video.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:47] Got it.

Marja Harmon [00:16:47] Yeah. Yeah. So I you know, I scuttled so many sessions with my vocal teacher to like to go through the whole packet to make sure it was pitch perfect, note perfect because Alex Lacamoire was going to be in the room. I did read. Although sister harmonies. At the end of Schuyler Sisters, I made sure I can do each one precisely because I was like, They're going to probably ask for this, right? Oh, and Alex Lacamoire did, he was like, Peggy and the Schuyler sisters, Eliza and the... Angelica and and, you know, and you sing all these songs back to back. You don't get water. You don't get a break. It's like. Which were you would never do in the show obviously it's like it's the Schuyler sister got let that audition process right. It's insane.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:17:29] And you know, I happened to know that Alex Lacamoire is an overprepare. He loves preparation and being prepared like himself. Like when he came over to do his episodes of the Hamilcast years and years ago, he and I like worked together about what it was going to be in the sense that he wanted to bring he wanted to bring his keyboard. He wanted to bring pieces of music for to play. He wanted to make sure that I

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

could hear it in my headphones. So we had like phone calls because he it meant a lot to him that we were finally doing this. And he knew it meant everything to me how he wanted to make sure like send me. I was like sending him pictures of my equipment so that when he came over we could hook it up where that he played something on his keyboard and I heard it in my headphones so I could follow along. And then he also made sure that it was recording on a separate track so that I can use it and it would have the best possible quality in the edit. Like this is a person who thinks of everything and wants every sets, every one and everything up for success.

Marja Harmon [00:18:35] Right, right. So right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:36] Which was like and he was like, Look, it's still your show. We could do whatever you want. But like, here's what I think would be cool and let's if you want to work together on the prep on that, that would be great. And after the fact, he was sending me isolated music tracks like the Dulcimer and wait for it and like the bells ain Yorktown, like he was sending me stuff like, oh, use this, oh, use that. And it's his like, he created it. It's with his permission. But he, that kind of thing means a lot to him. So I the fact that you were you sort of you were ready for that you anticipated.

Marja Harmon [00:19:08] Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:08] Having to do those harmonies like on a dime.

Marja Harmon [00:19:11] Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:12] I think I did not I think it didn't go unnoticed, not just that you could do it, but that you were like ready to do it. You know what I mean? Does that make any sense at all?

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

Marja Harmon [00:19:21] Absolutely. Because he I mean, hearing that story, you just don't have it that resonate it's why a while but he it I mean he is you know he's my fiance he always says prior planning prevents poor performance and like that's Alex like and he's such a collaborator. Like, it's it's so great that he was, like, even before, during and after. Like, how can we make this special, right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:19:45] And also, like, let's let's let it be what it's going to be. So there is that creativity. Like, if you want to color outside the lines, that's totally fine. But just let's make sure that we kind of have everything we could possibly want and need.

Marja Harmon [00:19:59] Right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:00] To make it great.

Marja Harmon [00:20:00] Right.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:01] You know.

Marja Harmon [00:20:02] And that's I mean, I, you know, I talked about, you know, doing Hamilton's was so funny because it like requires it's like requires the most technique. But then you have to kind of like make it look like there is no technique, you know, because, like, at the end of, like, you're rapping, you know, right? But I was like, what? What can I control in this element? Like, you know, they're looking at me to stand by for these three women. Let me make sure that I know who these three women are. Let me differentiate them and let me have a handle on this material and like to to the best of my control. So I just wanted to be prepared for anything that they might throw at me, because I've been in this situation. I mean, we've all been in those situations. We've been in an audition where

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

something was thrown at you and you were completely taken off guard and, you know, maybe didn't go well. I know I've definitely been in that situation. So yeah, I think it was the most prepared I had ever felt for an audition before. Definitely.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:03] And do you also think part of that is because Angelica meant so much to you?

Marja Harmon [00:21:07] And then so being in the show and the show meant so much to me? Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:16] My dog just came into. Fiona's now laying on my feet right now.

Marja Harmon [00:21:20] I was like. I was like, I heard mine and I was like, is that right?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:24] No, no, no, wait. What's your dog's name?

Marja Harmon [00:21:25] Sheehan.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:26] Sheehan? Yeah. I love them.

Marja Harmon [00:21:29] I love her. I mean, it's a lot of travel with her, but it gives me something that's familiar, which is good.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:21:35] Yeah, it works, right? It can work complicated traveling with dogs. But I've heard, I think like the Phillip company, they had a bunch of dogs and they were like encouraging other cast members to get dogs on the road.

Marja Harmon [00:21:45] And Peggy has a lot of we have a lot of dogs. We have a lot of pets. And about half of us drive the

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

tour. I'm a driver, so yeah, I have my car and my dog. It can be in for a long haul in between cities sometimes or, you know, Tucson to Boise. But, um, but it is nice to have a vehicle in the city. That's, it's, I mean, it's makes life a lot easier.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:08] Like dogs make everything better, so.

Marja Harmon [00:22:10] And dogs make everything better. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:12] Okay. Sorry. So you're doing this work session? Yes. Kail and Lac and Patrick.

Marja Harmon [00:22:18] That's all. Patrick Gallagher. Every. Everybody. Yeah, yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:21] And you're killing it and Lac's throwing harmonies at you and you're nailing them.

Marja Harmon [00:22:25] Nailing. And, I mean, I. I felt so soild. I felt so sad about my audition. I think it was also helpful, too, because I, I'd had the work session with Patrick and Matt. I'd worked I had no Matt prior to I work with Matt Gallagher on Book of Mormon. I'd worked with him on some other project projects, too, so that really relaxed me in the room. And I think there's also something, you know, auditioning. You know, as a woman who was like, you know, in her mid thirties was different and you know, mid twenties I felt more grounded, more confident in who I was. I was like, I know I have the experience and the skillset for this show. I know I am right for this show. Whether or not you think it's the right time for me, that's up for debate. But I know that I have that everything I've done thus far has prepared me for these roles. And so I felt very confident going into it too. And I felt very comfortable in the room and I felt like it was a great opportunity for me to show my skill set and show and have fun. I got I got to a place where

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

I stopped taking ownership over roles that I didn't have, like in the sense of, you know, sometimes people can go in for an audition to be like, Oh, this is my part. I never thought it was my part. I stopped thinking about I stop thinking that. I started thinking this is an opportunity to play and have fun and do something different. And I tried to just look at it as something to share and a chance to have a good time. And that helped me really let go of any expectation, helped me relax more in the room. And I felt like that Hamilton audition, that that final Hamilton audition where I, you know, got the show. I felt like everything I kind of been working on had led me to that moment where I could feel my best self in that audition.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:24:11] And it worked.

Marja Harmon [00:24:13] And it worked, yeah. And it worked. And I found out I was going to be the standby and I was going to be joining the And Peggy company and that we were going to Puerto Rico with Lin because like, that's an information that I had prior to the audition. I didn't know any of that. So to learn that, I was like, Whoa, that's incredible. So to know that we were doing Puerto Rico prior to sitting down in San Francisco and we were going to have that whole experience, which was amazing. I learned Angelica first and I had the opportunity to actually learn it on its feet because Sabrina Sloane, the incredible Angelica who was coming from another company to be the And Peggy Angelica. Initially she was like taking a little vacation in between. So I started learning on my feet, which was very helpful. I had never obviously had understudy in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, but I never covered multiple roles. So preparing myself for that and what that would feel like, especially being someone like me who is such like a perfectionist and precision, I had to let go of a lot of things. I had to let go of it being perfect. I had to let go of like I think at one point I tried to like look at two roles at the same time and my head exploded. I was like, Why did I do that? And let me just focus on the role

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

that I'm doing. And once I complete that, we'll move on. So I learned Angelica first, I learned Eliza next, and Peggy was the last role I learned. And I got to debut Angelica in Puerto Rico with Lin, which I didn't think was going to happen. It was very it was very special that that got to happen because I wasn't sure if it would end, because I just wanted that experience to be on the stage with him and do it with him and also to feel that audience because it was insane. It was like a rock concert every single night.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:00] I was just going to say I was I was there.

Marja Harmon [00:26:04] You were?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:05] I. Yeah, I came to Puerto Rico. Yeah. And it was the I, I, it's just the energy. I can feel it again. Being in that theater and being in that room, I mean, that it was like a rock concert. You're absolutely right. Yeah.

Marja Harmon [00:26:19] When did you. When did you come for the opening?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:21] Soon after the opening.

Marja Harmon [00:26:22] Oh, that's so cool.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:24] It was it was great. We were at the show, we're or one of the shows because Lin was doing this a lot where he was telling people from the stage to stop filming.

Marja Harmon [00:26:32] When he called the woman out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:34] When he called the woman out. Yes, yes, yes. That was the show. I was that.

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

Marja Harmon [00:26:38] Lady filming in the fourth row. Please stop it. I gotta holla just to be heard.... I was.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:42] Yes, yes.

Marja Harmon [00:26:43] Yes, yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:44] And we were I was like, oh, and then yeah, it was it was really amazing. But just like that, you know, tell me what it was like to you were really hoping that you were able to be on stage with him and then you were and he's the guy who made this thing that, you know, means so much and these characters that now you get to play. And what was that?

Marja Harmon [00:27:01] No pressure.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:02] To play Angelica. Right. Like you see the show and you're like, I've never seen myself on stage before in this way. And then you get to play that character with the guy who wrote the thing. I mean. Come on.

Marja Harmon [00:27:14] Yeah, it was my debut. I had even worn all the costumes yet at that point because they were trying so hard to get everything done. And I think I the only one I only wore one costume and a run through like the week prior. It was, it was crazy. I even turn to, like, Rebecca was there with me backstage, like backstage for a little while at the top. And I just turned to her before the opening, and I was like, Rebecca Webber. Sorry. I'm just like, everyone knows who I'm talking about. Yeah, I was like, how was. I looked at? I was like, This is crazy. I've never done this before. But you know, the show starts and Lin comes out and says Alexander Hamilton and the audience stops and stands on their feet and like applauds for 10 minutes. Right. Then the show continues. Even in and before Satisfied they was. I can't remember what number it was. I think it was like during Right Hand Man Darlin, who was our Peggy. She

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

was like, Stand right here for a second. And I was like, okay, okay. And, you know, and then came over and he, like, did, like, a little impromptu wrap with me about Satisfied, just like, calm me down. And he was like, he does this for everyone's debut. It's really fun moment.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:21] That is so sweet.

Marja Harmon [00:28:21] So it was lovely.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:23] Like and terrifying.

Marja Harmon [00:28:25] And terrifying.

Marja Harmon [00:28:27] But, you know, everybody, you know, we do this beautiful tradition in Hamilton where it's your first show. Everyone puts their hands on you backstage. And that's a very grounding thing. And it also reminds you that they that no matter what happens, the cast has you. And to have fun. At the end of the day, it's a play.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:43] Right?

Marja Harmon [00:28:44] You know, like, yeah. And you're not going to it's your first. It's not going to be perfect. No one's perfect. You can do it eight times a week and it's not perfect. Like it's just about to stay as present as you can in certain moments. And I just remember trying to just be like, just be present, enjoy it, enjoy it. You know, don't worry so much about, you know, being perfect or hitting every number. And it was really, really special. And because I had advance notice that was going to be going on, too, my parents were able to be there, so I was able to have support out in the audience, which was really amazing. Yeah. And I'll just I'll never forget it. I think it was really incredible that all the off stage company got to have that moment and Puerto Rico at least once. And that

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

was really, really cool before we moved on to San Francisco. And yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:29] That's really special.

Marja Harmon [00:29:30] Yeah, it was great. We were in San Francisco for about, I guess. I'm trying to figure out when I found out I would be taking over Angelica. Maybe about like seven months into my contract. And I was very excited because as much as I loved standing by, I loved that I got a chance to explore all of those women and play all of those women. For me, it was really difficult to not be in the show nightly, and I thought the thing was, I thought I would really enjoy it. I mean, I had been doing eight shows a week for 20 years. I was like, Oh, this will be nice. But I think for me especially to be away from it, I think if I were in New York it'd be different. But to be away from home, to be away from my family and friends, I want to be actively doing the thing. And so when I found that out, I was very excited and Angelica. The thing that I always felt, I always felt shortchanged because I didn't get to do Angelica that often. I probably went on for Eliza the most. I was like, There's so much I want to explore with her, and I feel like I never get enough runs to get comfortable. So I was so excited to get to live in it eight times a week. And I took I moved onstage. Right at the top of 2020. So I got about a month in before the pandemic hit. So the return last July has truly been like this contract has truly been like my true like a chance to like really sink my teeth into her and live in her on stage and have just the best time.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:07] Yeah. Well, tell me about her. Tell me about your Angelica and your exploration of this really layered character and person.

Marja Harmon [00:31:16] And person.

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

Marja Harmon [00:31:19] I. Oh, she fascinates me. I never like when I first saw the show, I'm saying satisfied. I was like, so interesting a such a such as a question of, you know, duty versus desire. Like who? Who's this woman who strategically steps aside and even exploring, even within satisfied like exploring, you know, number one, number two, number three, you know, every single verse out, all of her, her thought process she goes through that you're able to get a glimpse and and see she was such a trendsetter, you know, she was a socialite. Like, number one, she could talk her way out of that. She could marry someone outside of her status. Why not like the the thing that she could not talk herself out of was her love for her sister and her sister's love for this man. And, you know. And. That overtook everything. That was the one thing that she can't that's the thing that she can't rationalize out of. And she steps aside so that her sister can be happy, but also at the same time trapping herself and that, you know, forever what if and then how she lives with that. And I love it. I love it. Even during, you know, I'm selling off to London, it really kind of feels like I'm removing myself because I can't stay. You know, it kind of feels like I have no choice but to remove myself from this picture and to get us, you know, be would be there on the periphery. And that's too painful for her. I feel and and I, I don't know, I just I love exploring that relationship with her sister and that love. I love exploring the relationship with Hamilton because the thing I like to think of is that like Angelica would be Hamilton. Angelica would be the Founding Fathers if she were a man at that time, like totally you know, she was she was consulting with all of them. They all were consulting with her like, yeah, she's she's this incredible force and mind and it's so great to play with that how fast she thinks but also with with, you know, like to to lay into like her sexuality and her her confidence. And then also just I know I'm just saying a bunch of things right now. I'm probably not making any sense, but also it's great. And then you have all of that, you have all of that, you have all that. And then like in

THE H★MILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

the middle of satisfied, you have this crack, you have this break that you see for just a second and you have this beautiful, raw moment. And then, you know, and then you're back to the toast. I think there's just it's been so much fun to play with her from an acting standpoint throughout the entire show and really live in her every single day, depending on where I am that day too, and make different choices. And with these, like with Julius and with Donald, I also love to play like Donald loves to play on stage and I feel like he's exciting.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:07] He's a menace.

Marja Harmon [00:34:08] The most exciting thing, I think. Like one day during I've been reading Common Sense by Thomas play you know and it's kind of the stairs he comes up and you know I say br you disgust me and and when I said it I think that day I like played with his lapel like I did something like I touched him. I completely threw him up, right? And he was.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:27] Like, Good.

Marja Harmon [00:34:28] Oh, That's what we're doing.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:30] He sees it as like, challenge accepted.

Marja Harmon [00:34:33] Challenge accepted.

Marja Harmon [00:34:34] We do it all the time.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:36] That's so great.

Marja Harmon [00:34:37] But it's such a gift to do to to do this show with actors like that. It keeps it it keeps it fun. It keeps you engaged. Like we all feel it. We all have a very visceral feeling of each other in this company. And when I can

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

trust that I can make a choice like that and that my fellow actor is going to go with it and say, yes, it's very exciting.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:58] The box is so much bigger than maybe in previous shows where you can. Yes, really explore within because you know, from Kurt Crawley or Lac or whatever, like Ian Weinberger, even Patrick Vessel like you can go on a vocal journey, but it has to make sense. So let's go through it. Like you could do something so new and so different, but it has to. You can't do anything like for the sake of it. It still has to fit the story.

Marja Harmon [00:35:24] It has to fit the story. Yes. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:35:26] And your and your character and like the music and whatever you can't like, if you're going to do a vocal journey, do it at the end of one last time. Don't just do it in the middle, like for the sake of it, because everyone knows you can sing because you're playing George Washington. So don't like don't do that, you know, but find. So those conversations too are like no one's going to, you know, Kail is going to sit you down or someone's going to be like, you can't do that lapel thing because, you know, the formula says not to. It's like, no, no, no, you're with Donald Weber. And that's like a that's like a sexy, flirty, Angelica thing that makes sense for Angelica. Yeah.

Marja Harmon [00:35:55] Yeah. And they and they love that. Like you said, it has to be motivated by the story. Right? Like we're not just doing vocal gymnastics for the sake of it. In fact, nothing bores me more, right? I, I mean, if I don't, if I don't know where it's coming from, it's I lose interest. So and I think the danger with this show typically is like when when Lac comes in to do as vocal brush ups, one of the first things he says is everyone's over singing, huh? Everyone's over singing. Go back to the story. Go back to the text, you know, and you do

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

have those moments. I think I'm guilty of it, especially sometimes like in Angelica, because so much of it is, is, you know, fast, fast rapping or words. If I if I get to have a little melody and I catch myself languishing in it too much, I'm like, I'm over singing Take It Back. It actually makes the show stamina wise, easier to when you approach it from that from that focal point as well, because it is a hard show to do.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:56] Yes, it is. I mean, yeah. I mean, like even the auditions can be grueling.

Marja Harmon [00:37:02] Yes.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:03] And then once you actually get there.

Marja Harmon [00:37:04] Yes.

Marja Harmon [00:37:05] I mean, what other show demands that especially like, you know, for their offstage coverage that someone played multiple principals and principals that are all over the spectrum, you know, like this. That's where all three vocal, different vocal parts, this guy, two sisters or George Washington to, you know, Jefferson to Burr like, you know, we have men in our company who do all of those things. It's it's insane. Firstly, skilled human beings.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:45] I couldn't agree more. Okay. Next week, I'll be back to wrap up my conversation with Marja. She's talking about being with Hamilton through so many stages, launching in Puerto Rico, getting through a pandemic, making changes to the show from then to now, and opening up the conversation on how to do better in the industry. Plus, her favorite moments in the show, the best food on tour, and so much more as she answers questions from the Patreon Peeps. So until

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 333 MARJA HARMON PART 2 TRANSCRIPT

then, I love you. Thanks so much for listening. Stay safe out there. I'm G. Pen.

[00:38:40] **Gillian Pensavalle:** 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. A big thank you to Jenson Parker Neal, my dear friend and right hand man who helps me make the thing about the thing. To become a Patreon Peep and join the best, kindest and most welcoming corner of the internet. Go to patreon.com/TheHamilcast. You can submit questions to guests, join Zoom Hangouts, get behind the scenes access and of course, my endless gratitude. On social media at the pod is @TheHamilcast and I'm @gillianwithag G-I-L-L-I-A-N-W-I-T-H-A-G. Visit THEHAMILCAST.COM for episodes, transcripts and more. You can see what's going on with Mike, you know Mike, at MichaelPaulSmith.Net True Crime Obsessed is my true crime comedy podcast with my podcast soulmate, Patrick Hinds, and we were the first podcast to ever play Broadway. Ever. Thank you so much for listening. It means the world to me. To the revolution!