



The Drink Tank 410 Hamilton

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Editorial by Alissa



I resisted. But, as we all know, resistance is futile. And, we also know, this is about a resistance, a rebellion, a revolution. *Hamilton*, in itself is revolutionary.

I have been a fan of musicals for as long as I can remember. I joined a group through my local convention that loves musicals and loves to sing. We used to get together to sing musical songs just for shits and giggles. One of my friends in the group was someone from (at the time) Phoenix Comicon that worked in the same department, Point of Sale. We used to chill up in our banking room (we called it Cloud City) and listen to music until shift change. Kate had the *Hamilton* soundtrack. When she turned it on, I was instantly mesmerized! I listened to it on repeat on the drive to Worldcon that year (from Phoenix to Kansas City). You know I had it memorized!

I can't remember the chain of events that led to seeing it in Chicago during SMOFcon. But bless Laurie Mann! She had the foresight to get the group tickets. I even asked my mother if she wanted to go, because some of the fondest memories of growing up were going to plays with my mum.

The time came, and we had a very nice dinner out. We met at the theatre, and we of course had photos outside the theatre! We sat on the floor level, off to the right. Emma (bless her) and I cried through the whole damn thing! We were mouthing the words, because it's not a sing-a-long, and we had tears just streaming down our faces. I fucking loved every minute of it!

I have seen it here in Tempe since then, and the same thing happened! This time, I got to see it with Kate, who introduced me to the music, and my other *Hamil*-friend, Denise! I cannot tell you how much I love this show! Again, we were off to the right of the theatre, so I know I'm missing things.

The thing is, I know it's not for everyone. I just want to share my enthusiasm for the

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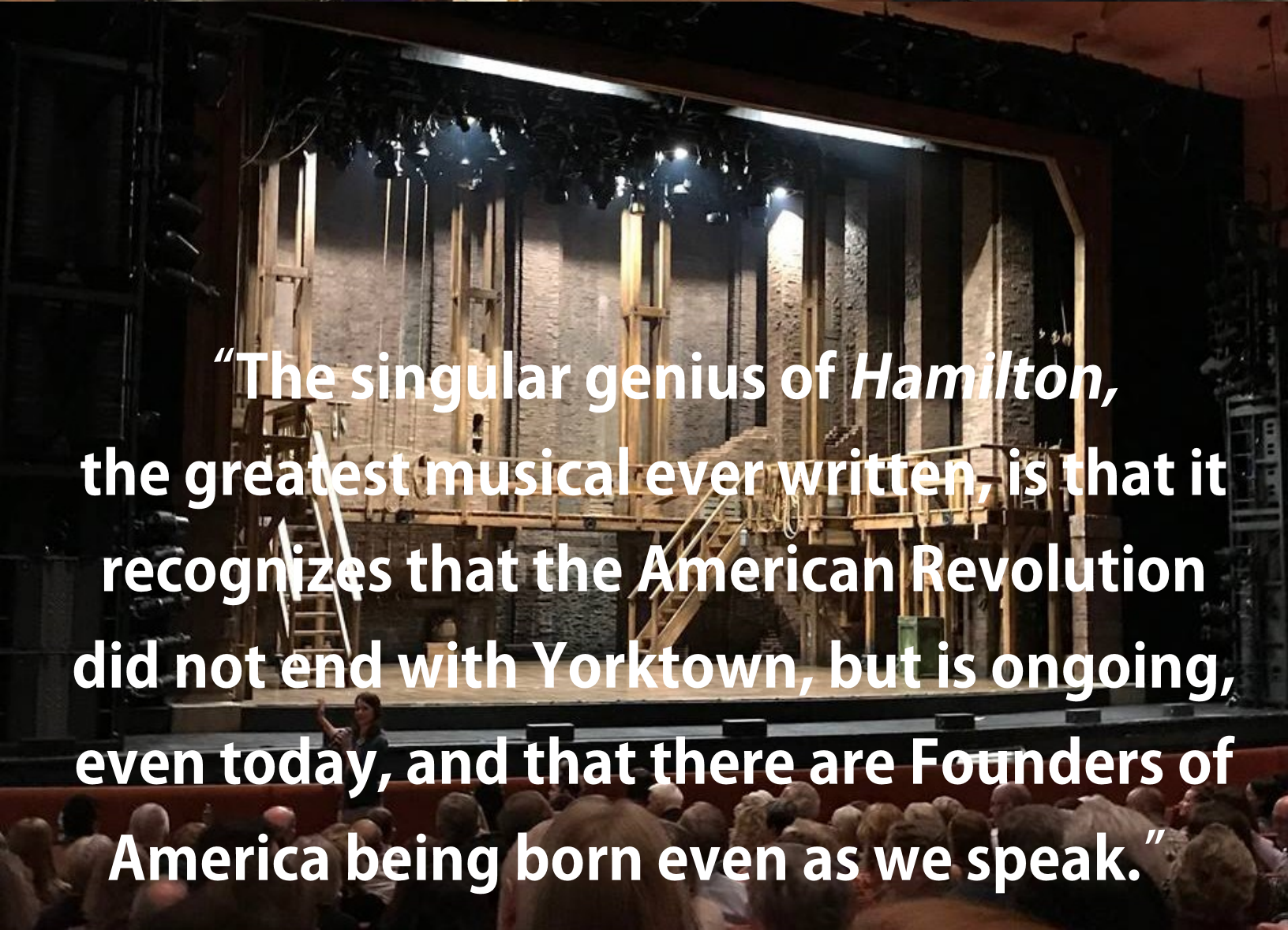
things that I love...that does not mean that everyone MUST share my enthusiasm. Recently, I just found out that my dad has got a ticket, which is almost amazing, since he was not the least bit interested in it. Now, he wants to see it because he wants to see what everyone is talking about. I'm just excited he's going!


Here's for my most exciting part of this...I saved money before my upcoming Eastercon trip to London just so I can see *Hamilton*! I could not throw away my shot! I got a ticket in mostly center, fairly up close! I'm so excited! I have talked to my other *Hamil*-friends, and they all agree that it will be so worth it; they all expect a full report afterwards!

Onwards to others' accounts of their *Hamilton* views, opinions, experiences, etc. We do hope you enjoy how we tell our stories.

*“You have no control, who lives,
who dies, who tells your story.”*





A close-up, slightly low-angle shot of a person with short, light-colored hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling at the camera. They are wearing a dark top and a necklace. In the background, a large, brightly lit poster for the musical 'Hamilton' is visible. The poster features a silhouette of a person standing on a star, with the word 'HAMILTON' in large, bold letters. Above the poster, the text 'The PrivateBank Theatre' is visible. The scene is set at night, with a warm, yellowish light from the poster and a bright, circular light source in the upper right corner.

The PrivateBank Theatre

HAMILTON
AN AMERICAN MUSICAL

The Drink Tank 410

~Editors~

Alissa McKersie

Chris Garcia



Okay, quiz time. Name the Tony-award winning musical set during the American Revolution that defied any number of conventional stage practices; was suspenseful despite the audience knowing the historical outcome; depicted singing, dancing Founding Fathers as humans with passions, foibles, and individual quirks; was performed at the White House for the sitting president; and will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary on March 16th.

“*Hamilton!*” you shout with glee. “Wait, what? Fifty years?”

If Sherman Edwards, a school teacher who had dabbled in songwriting, hadn’t spent over a decade working on *1776*, a musical about the First Continental Congress; and if producer Stuart Ostrow hadn’t gambled on this most unlikely project, there might never have been a *Hamilton*. *1776* laid the groundwork for Lin-Manuel Miranda’s show . . . in many ways.

The Creative Team and the Cast

Edwards had written a couple of pop hits, including “See You in September” and the Johnny Mathis hit, “Wonderful, Wonderful.” But he wanted to be the next Meredith Willson, creating the book, music, and lyrics, as Willson did for *The Music Man*. He doggedly worked on his show for years, visiting Ben Franklin’s grave in Philadelphia, where he sang new drafts, and endlessly auditioning for producers. Stuart Ostrow was intrigued: “Edwards owned the emotional content . . . you believed he was John Adams,” he wrote in his memoirs. But the plot was flawed. How do you create suspense about the Declaration of Independence when every-

one knows the damn thing gets signed?

Ostrow agreed to back the show if someone else did the libretto. Edwards initially balked, but then realized Ostrow might be his only chance. He grudgingly gave in, and Ostrow hired veteran Peter Stone. Next came a long search for a director. Jerome Robbins turned it down (now there's an alternate history musical: what if Robbins staged *1776?*), but recommended a young man who had never directed on Broadway, Peter Hunt. Ostrow liked the novice's enthusiasm and drive. Next on board was legendary scenic designer Jo Mielziner, who astonished Ostrow by creating early sketches of the Congressional Chamber even before signing a contract. "Because it's going to be a hit," he told the producer. The designer had confidence, but the press had written the show off as a flop in the making.

Ostrow completed the creative team with Onna White (*The Music Man*, *Mame*) and Patricia Zipprodt (*Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cabaret*) as choreographer and costume designer.

The cast included William Daniels as John Adams, Howard Da Silva as Ben Franklin, Ken Howard as Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Vestoff as Abigail Adams, and newcomer Betty Buckley as Martha Jefferson. Daniels had been on the stage since childhood, starting in the long-running *Life with Father* (moving from child to teen son), but, aside from a comic supporting part in Alan Jay Lerner's *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1963), wasn't known for musicals. Buckley wasn't the first choice for Martha; Louise Lasser was cast, but was too much of a clown. Buckley, literally just arrived from Texas, said, "Howdy!" at her audition. As Ostrow wrote in his memoirs, she looked "like a cheerleader" and they were ready to reject her on sight. "Won't y'all at least hear me sing?" she asked, then launched into "Johnny One-Note." Ostrow turned to Stone and Edwards and said, "If you were Thomas Jefferson and hadn't seen your wife for six months, wouldn't you finish writing the Declaration of Independence the minute Betty Buckley walked in the door?"

Da Silva was the production's veteran, with a track record going back to the legendary *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937) and the original *Oklahoma!* (1943). He was not afraid to throw around his considerable expertise at a rookie director and songwriter (and producer Ostrow was fairly new, too). Da Silva maintained that Edwards had told him he could direct the show, and that still rankled. The clash of wills almost led to dire consequences as the show stumbled towards Broadway in early 1969.

Trouble Out of Town

Da Silva complained about any of Franklin's line changes. He was furious when Stone gave a punchline mocking Franklin to John Dickinson (Paul Hecht). When his big solo, "Doozy Lamb," was cut in the first tryout city, New Haven, he wanted to quit. This was the show's big production number, full of chorus girls and drunk soldiers: a scene in which Franklin and Adams (the War Committee) were investigating reports of "whoring and drinking" in the army camp at New Brunswick. This ode to sex made Franklin look like a dirty lech (yes, I've heard it --on a demo record sung by Sherman Edwards; the demo also has pop versions of some songs too appalling to believe. But I digress.). In addition, the entire sequence took the action away from the drama unfolding in the Congress. Despite its being the only real example of White's choreography, the show was better without the sequence.

(In an eerily similar way, Miranda cut a dirty song in which Hamilton, Laurens, and Lafayette, all drunk as lords, sang of Alexander's track record in bed. It was replaced with "A

Winter's Ball," more to the point--and even managed to include a John Adams insult. Anachronistic, but Miranda's reasoning was that the cocky Hamilton of 1779-80 would likely relish someone naming a tomcat after him!)

But losing his big number infuriated Da Silva. In a New Haven restaurant, he railed against the tyros he had to work with, the injustice of the cuts. But his old friend Alfred Drake told him if he quit, he'd be leaving the best role he'd had in years. How do we know about this private conversation? Because young Peter Hunt was in the next booth, listening to Da Silva complain about him. Drake convinced Da Silva to come back, though Ostrow had hired a standby (Rex Everhart), in case he changed his mind.

Cutting the first act finale led to another pivotal decision: to go without an intermission. It wasn't the first musical to do this, but it was rare for Broadway. Stone juggled song orders and scenes, and Edwards wrote the charming "The Egg" for Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson--taking his inspiration from Fay Gage's logo for the show poster. This may be the only case in history of a logo leading to a show tune, rather than the other way around. They also gave up all attempts to insert a number in a lengthy scene in the Congress, resulting in a thirty-five minute stretch without song. This was a Broadway first, but they realized the dialogue was more effective here than any songs Edwards concocted. It was a radical choice.



The tryouts continued in Washington, D.C., where it became obvious the show needed more movement, especially with "Doozy Lamb" cut. Producer Ostrow suggested having Betty Buckley dance during "He Plays the Violin." Late night sessions in the hotel had Onna White teaching Buckley, Daniels, and Da Silva to waltz, and the entire scene was transformed.

The production then began previews in New York. Four days before opening, Howard Da Silva had a minor heart attack during the tech rehearsal. Ostrow called Everhart to step in, but Da Silva would have none of it. "If I die on stage, I die on stage. But I'm gonna open the show, and then I'll go to the hospital." They kept an ambulance by the stage door. After each curtain, it transported him to the hospital overnight. Eight performances later, Da Silva checked into the hospital for a week. This explains why Everhart did the original cast album. Interestingly enough, the newspapers explained Da Silva's absence as the Hong Kong flu or a virus. (Hey, I had the Hong Kong flu that very winter; it was Not Fun.)

Contrary to the naysayers, *1776* was the smash hit of the 1968-69 season, winning Best Musical, Best Supporting Actor (Ron Holgate, for Richard Henry Lee), and Best Director for Hunt. William Daniels had been nominated as Supporting Actor as well, due to a ridiculous technicality about his name not being listed above the title. John Adams was clearly the leading role, on stage and dominating the action for almost the entire show. In justifiable annoyance, Daniels withdrew his name in protest.

1776 also won the Drama Circle Critics Award, and nearly all the original cast reunited for the very faithful movie adaptation in 1972.

The Best Libretto Ever?

Lin-Manuel Miranda thinks Peter Stone's libretto for *1776* is "among the best--if not the best" in musical theatre history. Many theatre buffs agree with him, though one could make a case for Arthur Laurents' *Gypsy*. Some believe *1776* could stand without its score, citing the famous thirty-five minute sequence without songs, but I think Edwards' music helps humanize these figures from the distant past. There is nothing like song for creating emotional resonance.

Stone, working with Edwards, faced daunting challenges. They had to make a well-known historical event suspenseful; reduce the Second Continental Congress (nearly sixty delegates) to a manageable stage cast of twenty-two; compress the events from May to July 4, 1776 into a two-hour show; and win over audiences with an unabashedly patriotic show in the turbulent days of 1969.

Much of the dialogue and lyrics in *1776* come from the letters, diaries, military dispatches, and published works of the men of the era. John Adams, of course, was the principal source, though some of his lines came from his cousin, Sam--and some of John's ended up given to other characters. Lewis Morris' complaint about the New York legislature speaking "very loud and very fast" and never getting anything done? That's adapted from Adams' diary, bitching about New Yorkers. John and Abigail's revealing letters comprised much of their characters' dialogue, though one key endearment in "Yours, Yours, Yours" was a wry quip Adams said to a girl he had dated before he met Abigail . . . uttered when he was ninety and his Abby had been dead for years. A letter of Caesar Rodney's describing the conservative Southerners as "cool, considerate men" gave rise to that group's identifying song.

Yet for all the fact-based character details, Stone knew certain things had to be changed for dramatic effect. Richard Henry Lee didn't go to the Virginia House of Burgesses seeking a resolution proposing independence; the order was sent to him. The actual debate over the Declaration took place after the vote on July 2, nor did all the delegates sign it on July 4 (most signed August 2; Col. McKean didn't sign until 1777). Martha Jefferson never visited Tom in Philly; she had just had a miscarriage. Caesar Rodney did wear a scarf to conceal his skin cancer, and he did indeed make a last minute ride to Philadelphia for the vote--but he was not at death's door. He died in 1784.

The two greatest challenges to the passage of the Declaration--the southern colonies' balking over the slavery clause and the "conversion" of John Wilson of Pennsylvania--were significantly altered for dramatic purposes. The devastating walkout of the entire south is fictional; most of the colonies (north and south) had agreed about the deletion of the slavery clause. Indeed, one of Rutledge's most devastating lines, chiding the north for feeling "tender" about the slaves while being "considerable carriers" of slaves, is taken from Jefferson's notes. But that walkout, coming just when Maryland had joined the pro-independence side, makes stunning theatre.

Yet while Stone fiddled with facts for theatrical effect, he deleted one line in the slavery debate, despite its authenticity. Adams says (the quote is actually Sam Adams'), "If we give in on this issue, *there will be trouble a hundred years hence*; posterity will never forgive us." Given

the startling accuracy of this prediction, Stone edited the italicized phrase because “audiences would never have believed it.”

The Pennsylvania delegation was indeed split at the time of the vote on independence, but not quite as portrayed. Franklin was in favor from the start; Wilson (not yet a judge) would not cast his vote until his district was canvassed, and they supported it; Dickinson and Robert Morris were opposed; John Morton was uncommitted, but joined Franklin and Wilson on July 1. Dickinson and Morris abstained on the final vote of July 2, rather than casting dissenting votes. I can’t be certain, but I wonder if Stone and Edwards made their last-minute switcher James Wilson simply because there were so many Johns (Adams, Hancock, Dickinson, Witherspoon) in the play already.

The libretto’s biggest diversion from history was the character of John Dickinson, seen as a fervent loyalist--and the perfect foil to John Adams. Dickinson was wealthy, true, but he also was a lawyer (like Adams), and also opposed the Crown’s oppressive taxes on the colonies. He feared the further escalation of violence in North America would mirror that of the English Civil Wars and the Cromwell era. Nonetheless, he wasn’t entirely against independence. More specifically, he wanted the Congress to adopt the Articles of Confederation before declaring independence.

But every protagonist needs an antagonist, and *1776* has Adams and Dickinson squaring off splendidly, if not accurately. As Peter Stone quipped in the published libretto’s afterword, “To quote a European dramatist friend of ours: ‘God writes lousy theatre.’”

And so Broadway in 1969 got a musical unlike any other.

American History Musicals

Miranda has said that, while he grew up loving Broadway musicals, he didn’t come to know *1776* until he was in college, when he fell in love with the film version. Miranda and William Daniels, who played Adams, did an interview for New York City Center in March 2018. They discussed their respective American history musicals, which even played in the same theatre. (Though in 1969, the Richard Rodgers Theatre was still the 46th Street Theatre.) Adams mentioned how the biggest improvement to Sherman Edwards’ original libretto was Stone’s going back to the actual period texts. Miranda jumped on that, as he discovered while writing *Hamilton* that “the truth is invariably more interesting than anything a writer could make up. . . these guys [the Founding Fathers], who were petty, brilliant, compromised--that’s more interesting than any marble saints or plaster heroes you can create. . . *1776* certainly paved the way for *Hamilton*--not just in that it’s about our founders, but also in that it engages fully with their humanity. I think it makes them accessible to us in a very real way. To begin an opening number with everyone telling another guy to shut up--what better way to pull these people we see on statues and on our currency off of the pedestal?”

In writing *Hamilton*, Miranda, like Peter Stone, went back to the sources. In fact, the opening lines of the first song, “Alexander Hamilton,” are adapted from one of John Adams’ descriptions of Hamilton: “the bastard brat of a Scotch peddler.” He used letters, diaries, essays, memoirs, newspapers, Federalist Papers, the Reynolds Pamphlet, Washington’s Farewell Address, and more. As Stone and Edwards had done, he blended them into the libretto and lyrics. And he went further.

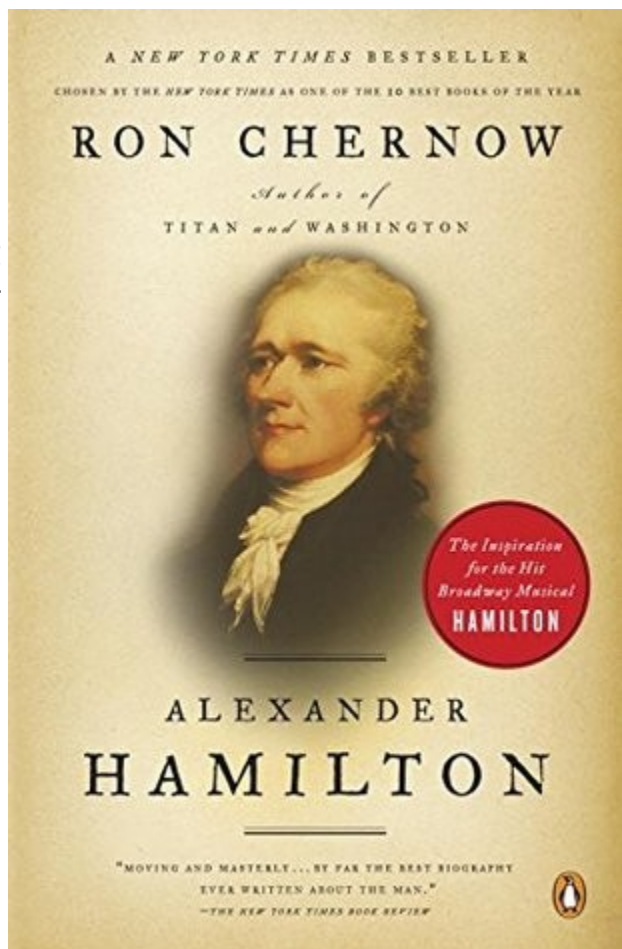
The initial idea for *Hamilton* came when Miranda was reading Ron Chernow’s biography

of Alexander Hamilton while on vacation. He hired Chernow to be the historical consultant for the musical, declaring “I want historians to take this seriously.” Chernow had always thought his biography of Hamilton would make good popular entertainment; it had drama, success, failure, and sex. The studios had even optioned it three times. But he never expected a rap musical, certainly not one with a multi-ethnic cast. Chernow did not merely correct errors and supply obscure details, but, as both men noted, he provided “encouragement.” He discussed the characters and their motivations with Miranda. Chernow was with the production through the first rehearsals and workshops, and through the sitz-probe. He saw the show more than twenty times while it was at the Public, sometimes arguing over places where Miranda fudged for dramatic effect (as in having Hamilton’s three friends meet in 1776), but always giving support.

Miranda also had help from another source, one with with impeccable credentials in the rather limited field of American history musicals. John Weidman, who wrote the libretti to two Stephen Sondheim musicals--*Pacific Overtures* (1976, about the opening of Japan to the West in 1853) and *Assassins* (1990, Off-Broadway, about the history of presidential assassins)--had a daughter in Miranda’s high school class. He himself had grown up in musical theatre, where his father Jerome was a librettist. He was impressed that his daughter’s classmate had achieved success on the Great White Way with *In the Heights*. When Miranda asked for his help, he willingly gave it. Miranda had bogged down in the wealth of historical details while writing *Hamilton*, and complained, “Inevitably, the more research I do, the more daunting the project becomes.”

Weidman replied: “Let your imagination go to the places where it naturally wants to go and turn it loose. . . the songs themselves start to become the ‘research.’ Inevitably, they’ll start to suggest patterns, what’s missing.” Miranda persevered, later naming Weidman one of the key influences on *Hamilton*’s creation. It wasn’t just his fatherly advice, either, but the man’s own work. 1776 showed there could indeed be singing, dancing Founding Fathers, but *Pacific Overtures* and *Assassins*--both concept musicals--stretched musical boundaries further. *Hamilton* would do likewise, with blacks and Latinos portraying white Founders, its use of a wide variety of musical styles, and the underlying theme that “This is a story about America then, told by America now,” as director Tommy Kail put it.

As Edwards and Stone did in 1776, Miranda sometimes played fast and loose with the facts. As an historian and a theatre historian, I can privately note these and excuse them for the sake of the drama. These are mu-



sicals, not documentaries or history lectures. The depiction of Hamilton as driven for success from his first arrival in New York, and the emphasis on his immigrant status throughout (for which he was mocked during his whole life) are central to Miranda's story. That's what drew him to the project, reading Chernow's biography and thinking of his own immigrant family history. That's why I can gloss over Miranda's biggest bit of fudging: the historical Hamilton, while an immigrant himself, did not hold immigrants in high regard. He opposed Washington's open immigration policy (America as "an asylum to the persecuted") and, while he generally hated John Adams, he endorsed the Alien and Sedition Acts. When Jefferson pushed for reducing the time to process naturalization papers, Hamilton opposed it. Hamilton's writings show a definite distrust of "foreigners."

***How you say, no sweat
We' re finally on the field. We' ve had quite a run
Immigrants:
We get the job done***

None of this comes up in the musical. But Miranda has not quite two and a half hours to tell the entire adult history of this man. In the second act, we get Hamilton's fiscal plans and the discussion of the location of the new capital, views of his relationships with his growing son, wife, sister-in-law, and his lover--with the resulting personal fallout from his affair; the foreign policy clash with Jefferson, Washington's Farewell Address; his son's death, the election of 1800, the duel, and a review of his legacy. Government policies on immigration are not addressed at all. Is it cheating that audiences leave the show likely thinking immigrant Alexander Hamilton was pro-immigrant when he actually wasn't? Yes. But it's the same kind of cheating that had Peter Stone making John Dickinson into something he wasn't or having the southern colonies walk out. It's not perfectly historically accurate, but it's damn good theatre. And I note again, these are works of entertainment, not textbooks.

As it turned out, Miranda had written more material (which got cut) for that crowded second act, all to keep the focus on the main story. One was a debate on slavery, written as a third "Cabinet Battle." He also chucked most of a song about the feud between John Adams and Hamilton. It's a deliciously vicious song, but he couldn't justify spending several minutes getting the audience worked up over a character they had not met (nor would they--Adams never appears on stage). This brings us to a final link between *1776* and *Hamilton*.

There is a tradition in rap of sampling and giving "shout-outs" to the work of others in song lyrics. Miranda does this throughout *Hamilton*, but since I know zilch about rap and hip hop, these allusions zipped past me. I did, however, catch the homages to Oscar Hammerstein (a brief quote from "You've Got To Be Carefully Taught"), *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*.

And in the few surviving lines from the longer "Adams Administration" is a sampling of Sherman Edwards. Hamilton yells, "Sit down, John . . ."

That's a direct lift from the opening number of *1776*.

Except Miranda follows that with: ". . . you fat mother--"

Not in the original lyrics, but perfectly in character.



Flipping the Founders

By Valerie Estelle Frankel

It can't have escaped anyone's knowledge that the hottest musical in town rewrites history. Hamilton himself might have been mixed race, but not Latino. His Eliza wasn't Asian, and her sister Angelica wasn't Black. Nor were Burr, Jefferson, Madison, Lafayette, and Washington. Nonetheless, it feels true for modern viewers. Why shouldn't Black and Latino characters boast, "Immigrants—we get the job done?" Why leave it for white men in whiter wigs? Creator Lin-Manuel Miranda adds, "And there was no one questioning casting decisions because the demands of this show are so specific that just finding someone with the right skill set seriously limited the talent pool" (DiGiacomo).

Of course, this update to relatable immigrant figures rebelliously building a nation has clicked with viewers. *Variety* wrote, "In the end, Miranda's impassioned narrative of one man's story becomes the collective narrative of a nation, a nation built by immigrants who occasionally need to be reminded where they came from" (Stasio). Throughout America's history, new immigrants of whatever background have struggled yet persevered. The country was built by immigrants, always bullied as outsiders and newcomers whatever their skin color. Alexander Hamilton was just one more, with his look adapted for present times.

Obama is a great fan and saw the show several times. In fact, he was hosting the White House Evening of Poetry, Music and the Spoken Word on May 12, 2009, when Lin-Manuel Miranda, invited to perform a song from his award-winning musical *In the Heights*, instead offered up a rap. "I'm actually working on a hip-hop album," Miranda said. "It's a concept album about the life of someone I think embodies hip-hop: Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton."

This short speech, from Obama's surprised reaction laugh to the entire rap (later to be the show's opening number) is on YouTube, followed by the president's standing ovation. Obama says of it, "Part of what's so powerful about this performance is it reminds us of the vital, crazy kinetic energy that's at the heart of America – that people who have a vision and a set of ideals can transform the world" (*Hamilton: The Revolution* 284). He hosted Miranda and his team for a concert at the White House, some of which appears on the PBS documentary *Hamilton's America*, as do the president's thoughts on the show.

The fresh sound, offered by real rap artists, updates history to new relevance. Miguel Cervantes, who starred as Hamilton when the show opened in Chicago in September 2016 said:

This is what our country looks like. It's a mix of all of these types of people. Regardless of what the men and women looked like 200 years ago, what the people look like now is this. What the music sounds like is this.

I think that's part of the magic of it—the storytelling aspect and the hip-hop style. The cultural diversity of the performers [reflects the diversity] of the people that you see singing those songs in pop culture.

[Our] George Washington ... doesn't look like the one on the \$1 bill. That has an effect on how you think about history and how you think about how our country is now. (Kowalski)

What's really revealed here, below words, below superficial understanding, is that America's history—and now its future—belong to men and women of color as much as to anyone else. Miranda explains of the show: "In *Hamilton*, we're telling the stories of old, dead white men but we're using actors of color, and that makes the story more immediate and more accessible to a contemporary audience. You don't distance the audience by putting an actor of color in a role that you would think of as default Caucasian. No, you excite people and you draw them in" (DiGiacomo). Of course, this also offers much-needed representation on Broadway and in the many schools that will eagerly perform it. Leslie Odom, Jr. (Burr) saw a workshop version of *Hamilton* at Vassar and found himself responding, almost viscerally, to "The Story of Tonight," in which Hamilton and three friends (Mulligan, the Marquis de Lafayette and John Laurens) boisterously drink together in a tavern on the eve of the Revolution. "That's the one that made me a puddle, because it was four men of color onstage singing a song about friendship and brotherhood and love, and I had never seen that in a musical," Odom says. "I had seen white guys do it, in *Jersey Boys*, in *Les Mis*. Never seen a black guy. So I was a mess, and from that point, I was along for the ride." (Binelli)

Miranda similarly describes the lack of parts for Latino men before he created many parts in *In The Heights* ("Hip-hop and History Blend"). This earlier show, meanwhile, shares his neighborhood with the audience, complete with freestyle rap and salsa. Miranda played the narrator, Usnavi, in this story that reflected his own younger life. Music director Alex Lacamoire handled both shows with choreography by Andy Blankenbuehler, and Christopher Jackson starred in both. As Miranda adds:

I can't say I have enough experience with Hollywood to feel that I've encountered racism there. I can tell you that I did about five fruitless years of auditioning for voice-overs where I did variations on tacos and Latin accents, and my first screen role was as

a bellhop on *The Sopranos*. It was actually an amazing experience. James Gandolfini stayed and did his sides even though he wasn't onscreen. That's the mark of the kind of actor Gandolfini was.

I don't differentiate between black and Latino actors. We're in the same struggle to be represented in a way that's even close to honest. And I can tell you that the amount of Latino characters I can point at and say, "That's what my life experience looks like" — I can't think of any off the top of my head besides Jimmy Smits in *Mi Familia*. (DiGiacomo)

Director (of both shows) Thomas Kail explains of *Hamilton*, "What we're trying to do with the cast and the larger gesture of the show is say here's a group of people that you think you can't relate to. Maybe we can take down some of those barriers and allow a reflection to be truer" (*Hamilton's America*).

The PBS special *Hamilton's America* poignantly showed Washington's original actor Chris Jackson exploring the slave quarters at Mount Vernon. According to the unaltered history, this would have been his only place in the story. "It is quite literally taking the history that someone has tried to exclude us from and reclaiming it," says Odom Jr. "We are saying we have the right to tell it too." (Binelli).

While many adaptations about the Founding Fathers don't dwell on the slavery issue, Miranda brings it into the text over and over, starting with the show's tenth line. Pro-slavery Jefferson is the story's central antagonist, with his slave mistress, Sally Hemings, making a quick appearance. Hamilton calls Jefferson out on who's really tilling his fields ("we all know who's really doing the planting"), while his friend Laurens campaigns to end the practice (as he did historically, though he was heir to a plantation). Hamilton was the most abolitionist among the Founders for reasons that reflect in the show's text. Historian Carol Berkin comments, "I think his opposition to slavery is of a piece with his general belief in meritocracy. He says slavery keeps men, who might make major contributions to our society — prevents them from doing that and so it's inefficient. It doesn't let people who have talent use their talents well" (*Alexander Hamilton: American Experience*).

Meanwhile, the great, highly sympathetic Washington makes uncomfortable comments about slavery as he isn't prepared to end it. Laurens cries at Yorktown, "Black and white soldiers wonder alike if this really means freedom," and all Washington can manage is "not...yet." At show's end, when Eliza mentions that Hamilton never accomplished everything he wished, including abolition, a culpable Washington bows his head. The story does more than rewrite America's past with multiculturalism—it also explores the most problematic truths of the original history.

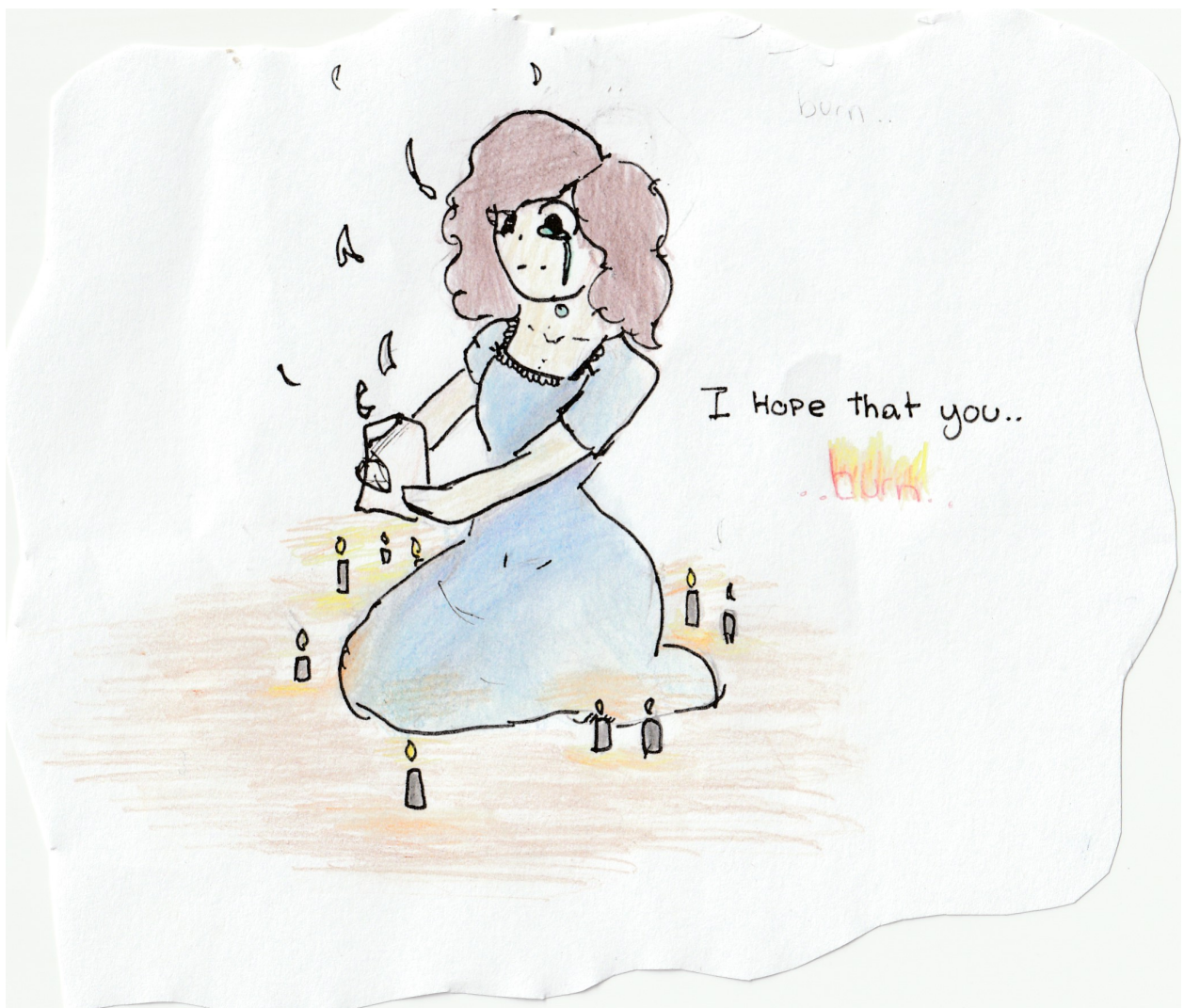
Feminism has a subtle thread as well. Sparking his revolution, Laurens tells both men and women to "rise up," adding the line "tell your sister," suggesting it's her revolution too. Women indeed participated in the war, some disguising as men and others providing information and supplies. Of course, the chorus, half female, fight as soldiers onstage. Later, Burr campaigns for president, reminding women to "tell your husbands" to vote for him — they did not have an actual vote, but they could thus influence the political process.

The main stars are mostly men with only the sisters Angelica, Eliza, (and Peggy!) among the women and the last (and her counterpart, Hamilton's sultry piece on the side) barely developed characters. Still, one can picture future high school productions flipping some of the parts to let girls strut about in Jefferson's high heels or rap at Lafayette's top speeds. Angelica

is the clear brazen feminist of the story, as, in her introduction in "The Schuyler Sisters," she announces, "And when I meet Thomas Jefferson/I'm 'a compel him to include women in the sequel!" Her demands make her appear a revolutionary herself.

If fast rap is a token of brilliance and speedy cleverness in the musical (and it is!) her "Satisfied" emphasizes her quickness of thought. First, she and Hamilton flirt in a way that stresses their both being ambitious geniuses in a world of the ordinary as Hamilton insists, "You're like me. I'm never satisfied." Angelica thinks, "So this is what it feels like to match wits/ With someone at your level!" Miranda adds:

The lyrics to "Satisfied" – in which Angelica Schuyler recounts how Hamilton and her sister Eliza met and married – are some of the most intricate I've ever written. I can't even rap them, but Renee Elise Goldsberry, who plays Angelica – that's her conversational speed. That's how fast she thinks. You really get the sense that Angelica's the smartest person in the room, and she reads Hamilton within a moment of meeting him. (DiGiacomo)



However, Angelica confides in her speedy rap that her marriage is the largest financial and political decision of her life, one that will define everything she becomes and affect her family's status as well. She chooses not to give herself away on a brilliant, ambitious nobody, both out of practicality and out of love for her sister. A cold decision, but one that emphasizes that she's too smart to be swept away by love. (Historically, she was already married when they met, though the pair continued flirting in letters, as they do in the show.) Ron Chernow, the biographer whose book inspired the musical, calls the relationship between the trio a "curious ménage à trois" and adds that, unusually, the women's "shared love for Hamilton seemed to deepen their sisterly bond" (Chernow 134).

Her counterpart Eliza is the quintessential "good woman." Historically, Eliza was "the most self-effacing 'founding mother,' doing everything in her power to focus the spotlight exclusively on her husband" (Chernow 130). In fact, Eliza spoke proudly of her husband's "Elasticity of mind. Variety of his knowledge. Playfulness of his wit. Excellence of his heart. His immense forbearance [and] virtues" (qtd. in Chernow 132). She spends the show urging Hamilton to stay home more and vacation with the family as she appears mostly oblivious to politics and the war. At the same time, Eliza sings to her husband: "Oh, let me be a part of the narrative/In the story they will write someday" ("That Would Be Enough"). While she's proud of her husband's impact on history, she wants some of it for herself.

Further, she skips the song of unrequited love so common in musicals. Instead, after she is disappointed in love, she sings of revenge against her husband – hurting him by destroying their shared words and legacy. This she did historically, but, it is believed, for privacy, not out of anger. Miranda's making this destruction into cause and effect lets her affect history while making the choices about their relationship. She also takes over the final song, finishing as storyteller by putting herself "into the narrative" – describing her great deeds like building an orphanage. The story thus subtly transfers from Hamilton to herself.

There's no firm evidence that the historic John Laurens was gay, but there are indicators. In one April 1779 letter, Hamilton expressed such fervent and open affection for Laurens that Hamilton's son wrote a note that he "must not publish the whole of this" (Chernow 123):

You sh[ould] not have taken advantage of my sensibility to ste[al] into my affections without my consent. But as you have done it and as we are generally indulgent to those we love, I shall not scruple to pardon the fraud you have committed, on condition that for my sake, if not for your own, you will always continue to merit the partiality, which you have so artfully instilled into [me].

Their closeness is only suggested in the show, but sharing the dual role with Hamilton's son emphasizes his love for both these young idealists, prepared for tragedy. Laurens perished attacking the British in August 1782 at only age 27, as one of the last casualties of the war. His death was a true devastation for Hamilton, who never found another such comrade. "Despite a large circle of admirers, Hamilton did not form deep friendships easily and never again revealed his interior life to another man as he had with Laurens" (Chernow 173). All of Hamilton's complex loves are thus reproduced in the musical.

Of course, modeling so many minorities as heroes is one of the greatest things the show offers. As Miranda reveals, the true power of the show is its ability to educate about a modern America of equality. He explains:

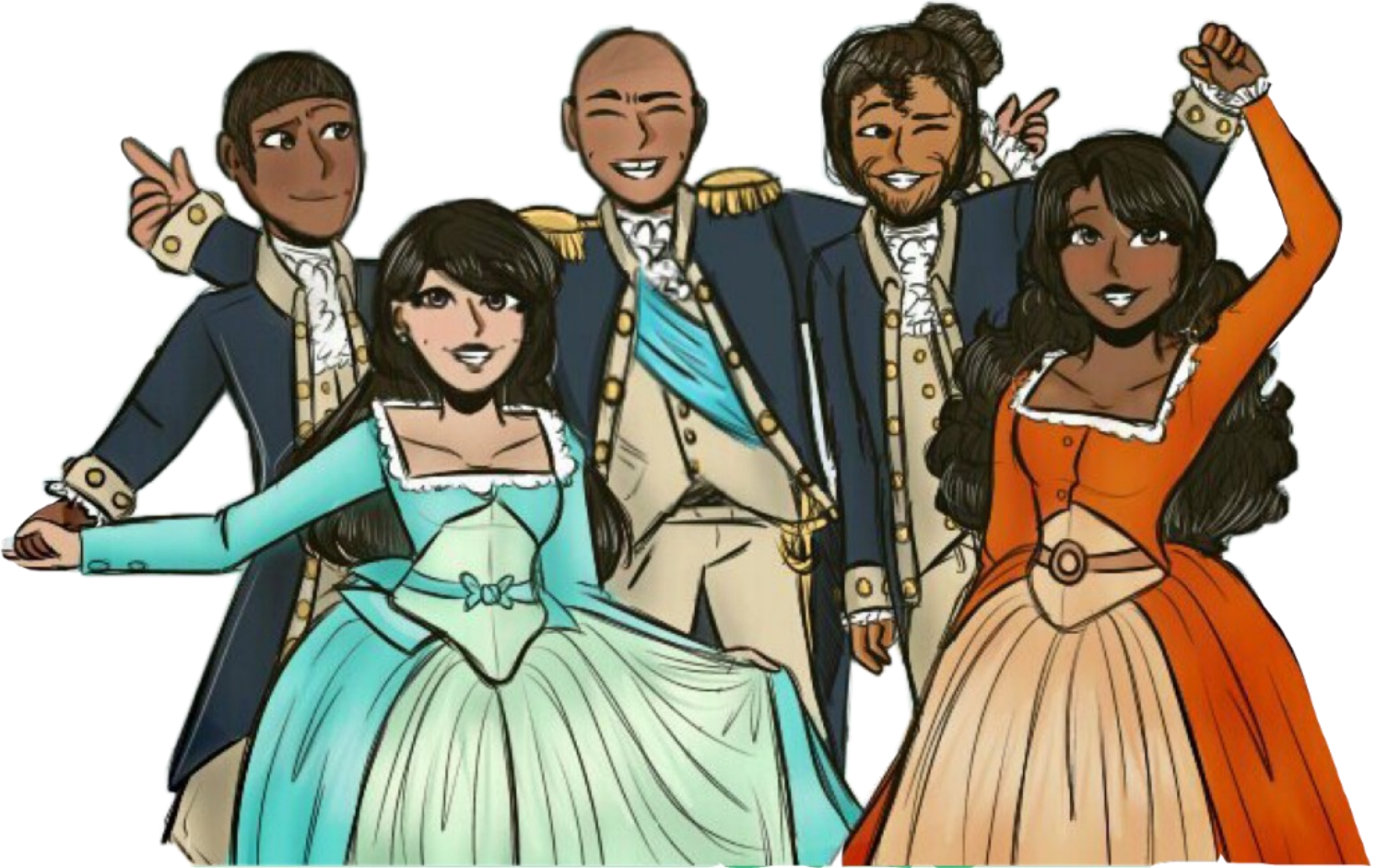
What I can tell you is that works of art are the only silver bullet we have against racism and sexism and hatred. Joe Biden happened to see *Hamilton* on the same day James Burrows was here. James Burrows directed every episode of *Will & Grace*, and remember when Biden went on *Meet the Press* and essentially said, "Yeah, gay people should get married"? He very openly credited *Will & Grace* with changing the temperature on how we discuss gays and lesbians in this country. It was great to see Jim Burrows and Joe Biden talk about that, and Jim thanked Biden and Biden thanked Jim because that was a piece of art changing the temperature of how we talked about a divisive issue. It sounds silly. It's a sitcom, but that doesn't make it not true. Art engenders empathy in a way that politics doesn't, and in a way that nothing else really does. Art creates change in people's hearts. But it happens slowly. (DiGiacomo)

With *Hamilton* around, this change may happen a little faster.

Valerie Estelle Frankel is the author of *Who Tells Your Story?: History, Pop Culture, and Hidden Meanings in the Musical Phenomenon Hamilton* as well as *The English Teacher's Guide to the Hamilton Musical* and more critical works on *Game of Thrones*, *Outlander*, *Doctor Who*, *Wonder Woman*, *Buffy*, and more.

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Hamilton by Whitney Randolph

I adore musicals, I have since I was little. No surprise then that I found myself a group of like-minded individuals who love musicals as much, if not more, than I do. So, when Hamilton started to get big, we knew about it, talked about it. But we live in Arizona, so none of us saw the actual musical until a year ago when it went on tour and came to Gammage here in Tempe.

My husband and I were prepared for this to be a circus. We knew that demand would be high. The people who would get the first choice of tickets would be those who were prior season ticket holders, so the season before Hamilton was to arrive, we got season tickets to Gammage. We were going to see this damn musical and know what all the hype was about.

Of course, my friends knew all about this as well. They were all season ticket holders or knew season ticket holders that would purchase tickets for them. The anticipation was crazy, it was almost two years before the show was even going to show up in town that we were all talking about it. It was an interminable wait before we could actually see it, but that's what soundtracks are for, right?

There have been several shows throughout the years where I went in knowing little more than the basic plot. Many I've seen, I knew the big songs in addition to the story. There were several shows, though, that I had the entire soundtrack memorized before I had ever set foot in the theater. I won't say that seeing these shows wasn't fun. There was a reason I had the soundtrack memorized, I loved the music and seeing the performers only heightened the experience. But it never quite had that magic of discovery that came from going into a show with no expectations, no prior knowledge.

With how big of a deal everyone was making Hamilton out to be, I didn't want anything to be lost from the experience, so I made a choice. I decided that I was going to actively avoid listening to Hamilton songs until I actually saw the play. I didn't want anything to be given away about the plot. I didn't want to anticipate any particular song or movement. I wanted fresh eyes and ears. I didn't begrudge anyone who listened to the soundtrack on repeat; I completely understood. This was just my personal decision.

Can I tell you how much trouble this ended up causing? Let's ignore how hard it is to avoid a very popular musical when you are in a group that actively gets together to sing songs from musicals. I had to avoid late night shows, music channels and I still ended up hearing My Shot beforehand because I went to a choir show at my old high school and they performed it. That was to say nothing of the reaction to my decision that my friends had.

Please listen to it, begged one, with how complicated the raps are I am afraid that you won't understand the plot. How could you possibly know that you want to see it if you don't listen to the music? Another asked. Listening to the soundtrack is only going to build the anticipation beforehand, another urged. It went on. I was mercilessly and endlessly teased (good-naturedly, of course) about my decision. Only my husband, who had decided to the same, really understood it, but I stood firm.

The day finally came where I was going to see Hamilton for the first time, and I had managed to avoid all but that high school production of one number. I sat down in my seat nervous that I was going to come out of it not liking the show or admitting to my friends that I had no idea what was going on and I wished I had familiarized myself better. All these worries dissipated as I was swept into the magic of the production, the amazing wordplay, the dynamic choreography, the mix of humor and heartbreak. I walked out of that theater elated and ready to discuss every moment of one of my new favorite musicals with my friends.

One of those that had given me probably the hardest time about my decision, the biggest Hamilfan I have met, told me afterwards that she completely understood my decision. While she didn't regret any moment listening to the soundtrack, she admitted that some of the most emotionally poignant moments didn't have quite the same impact when she knew they were coming. Validation achieved!

I did buy the soundtrack on the drive home though.



Hamilton: A Drunk History by Chris Garcia

I have not seen *Hamilton*, and at these prices, I probably won't until it's on the high school drama club circuit. Why can't it be on tv! Why can't Lin Maunel Miranda bring *Hamilton* to the small screen?

Well, he did... kinda.

You see, there's pretty much only one show on TV that is really portraying history in a way that people are actually interesting to people who like history AND listening to inebriated friends jabber at them. *Drunk History* is that show. The premise, as I have spoken of so much, is that a comedian drinks and then tells a historic tale. Then, a set of actors acts out the tale, including lip-synching the dialogue of the storyteller. It's highly researched, and the drunken storyteller is usually hilarious. There are some amazing episodes, like the one which details the stories of DB Cooper, Agatha Christy's disappearance, and the Circleville Letter Writer. Perhaps the one that is most fascinating, and the most relevant to this issue, is Lin Manuel Miranda telling the story of Alexander Hamilton.

That's right – the writer of *Hamilton* recounted the story of AH while totally boozed-up.

Now, the casting of the enacting of the story allows for various old dead white guys to be played by people of differing genders/ethnicities. So, when we get LMM's story acted out, it's the powerhouse team of Alia Shawkat as Alexander Hamilton and Aubrey Plaza as Aaron Burr that really plays. Two women who give a great performances, lip-synching the words and giving good body to the voice. Their supported by Tony Hale of *Arrested Development*, and David Wain of *The State*. That's a good cast alone, but add Dave Grohl of Foo Fighters, and the regular *Drunk History* cast, and it's a perfect episode cast.

And LMM is more-or-less ideal. Often, the storytellers are settled into their traditional drunken states. Natasha Legaro, who's drunken ramblings I remember from the olde days, is suitably bitter. Paget Brewster is as hilarious as she is when drunk, and some just go down-



beat. LMM is AWESOME!!! He manages to be quaint, and sweet, and funny, and puts a very distinct light on the characters. He messes up a couple of times, but so what? It's amazingly entertaining. He also has a wonderfully potty mouth. The word 'motherfucker' is thrown around very liberally. In the middle, he gets a call from Quest-Love. He is very drunk, and completely seems like it. He's funny, and the way that the actors take the out of world stuff, like the call from QuestLove, is exactly what *Drunk History* is all about. The way he presents Burr as the cautious motherfucker who made one rash decision is great, and I understand that view is widely-debated.

The fun of the episode isn't the information, though it's artsy, it's the little touches. The description of Hamilton leaving Nevis for the mainland on a boat that catches on fire, followed by LMM saying "this is the stuff you can't do in a play" for lack of believability. The nice touch is that the model of the ship they use is lit on-fire by a hand with a stick lighter! It's that sort of charming details, the leaning in to the lofi (and probably low budget) of the web series it started out as. The entire episode tells a single story and does it so very well. LMM is a great talked, Derek Waters as an interviewer is wonderful, and the ending moment, the two of them snuggled up on the couch and LMM turning towards Derek and saying "what do I gotta do to get a part in this movie" is the perfect ending.

This is a great, and very funny, episode, and it's a big reason why I think *Drunk History* is the best documentary show on TV.



Hamilton's New York by Denise MacIntyre

I love theatre. Musical theatre in particular. I've been attending professional and amateur productions since I was a child. Every time I discovered a new favorite show I would listen to the cast recording on repeat for months and sometimes buy a t shirt or other show merch to proudly display my love for the show. I did this with *RENT*, *Les Mis*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Wicked*, *Avenue Q*, and finally, *Hamilton*.

I was first introduced to *Hamilton: An American Musical* through some friends. We used to meet twice a month for dinner and to sing showtunes together. I'd heard of *Hamilton*, but knew nothing about it at that time. You see, I'm a history nerd and Alexander Hamilton has always been my favorite founding father. I've answered the question "Who is the person you most admire?" with his name since at least 2003. Just knowing that a show about his life existed was enough to make me want to see it and I prefer to see shows for the first time knowing as little as possible about it to avoid spoilers. One night during our bi-weekly meetups, my friends insisted that I listen to the cast recording, reservations be damned.

My obsession with *Hamilton* began much like it had with my previous show obsessions: listening to the music on repeat for days, weeks, and months on end. Something about this show was different, and almost three years later it still has its grip on me. Maybe the reason is that it combines my mutual interests of history, U.S. Government, politics, and musical theatre, or that it mixes musical genres seamlessly, or the truly inspired lyrics which occasionally contain direct quotes from the actual historical figures. Whatever it is, there is something uniquely special about this show and I am not the only one to recognize that as evidenced by

the fact that Hamilton and/or its creators have been honored with just about every award imaginable.

First I listened to the cast recording on YouTube daily. Then I learned about the cut songs and earlier versions. Then I started watching videos of interviews Lin and the other cast members have given over the years. I learned about Lin's other shows, *In The Heights* and *21 Chump Street*, and fell in love with them as well. I also learned much more about the founding fathers and founding mothers. I own so much show/fan merch: several t shirts, a couple of magnets from Lin's Prizeo campaigns, custom shoes, a Christmas tree topper, shot glass, lapel pin, hoodie, postcards, charm bottles, several cds (OBC cast recording, the Mixtape, and two cds by Leslie Odom Jr.), a copy of Lin's book "GMorning, GNight! Little pep talks for me and you", a signed libretto of *In The Heights* bought from the Drama Book Shop (that Lin is now a part owner of!), a 100+ year old copy of *The Federalist* published in 1908, and *In The Heights* original Broadway cast recording signed by the original cast and crew. That last item comes with an incredible story.

Last July two friends and I traveled to New York from Arizona to see *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and to take in the sights. All of us are *Hamilton* and history nerds so we visited Trinity Church cemetery to pay our respects to Alexander and Eliza Hamilton, Angelica Church, and Hercules Mulligan as well as visit Fraunces Tavern, a New York bar that opened in 1762 and was the place where Hamilton and Burr drank just days before the fateful duel in July 1804. A week before my trip to New York, Lin-Manuel Miranda tweeted that there was going to be an event for the 10th anniversary of *In The Heights* at a bookstore in New York. It was to be a panel discussion, Q&A, and signing of the recently released vinyl LP set of the cast recording. Of course I wanted to go, but there was one problem: the event was to take place 3 hours after my plane departed to come back home. With only a few days notice I was able to get an extra day off work, change my flight reservation, book a hotel for an additional night, and buy the *In The Heights* vinyl set that was the cost of admission to the event. I couldn't believe my luck. I was about to meet my actual, real life, honest to goodness hero.



The event itself was spectacular. The original cast and crew were there and for about an hour told behind the scenes stories about how the plot evolved, relationships blossomed, and funny on stage anecdotes. That was followed by a short Q&A and then the signing portion. I was able to get selfies with several of the cast members while they signed my lyric book insert. Everyone was so kind and patient while trying to get through the impressively long line as quickly as possible. I kept it together as I met Chris Jackson, Alex Lacamoire, and Tommy Kail, but I went full on fangirl when I got to Lin at the end of the line. I was able to tell him that he is my hero and thank

him for his brilliant work as well as all the charity work he does through his Prizeo campaigns and work with Hurricane Maria recovery. Then as security was ushering me away to keep the line moving, I was able to speak to Lin's parents who were there to support their son and tell them what incredible humans I think they both are in their own right, but also for raising such wonderful children. I got a selfie with Luis and Luz Miranda that I treasure.

I managed to make it downstairs before bursting into tears. I had just met my hero in the flesh and told him so. I spoke words that he heard and vice versa. In three successive days, all of my Broadway dreams had come true: seeing a show on opening weekend (*Head Over Heels*), seeing a Tony Award winning show with the original Broadway cast (*Cursed Child*), and meeting Lin-Manuel Miranda. I texted friends back home while outside the bookstore and asked them "What do you do when all your dreams come true?" I walked the two miles back to my hotel that night in a dreamy, blissful, daze. Along the way I got to see several of New York's landmarks: the Flatiron Building, New York Public Library, The Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, and Trump Tower. It was without a doubt the best vacation I've ever been on and a memory I'll cherish the rest of my life.





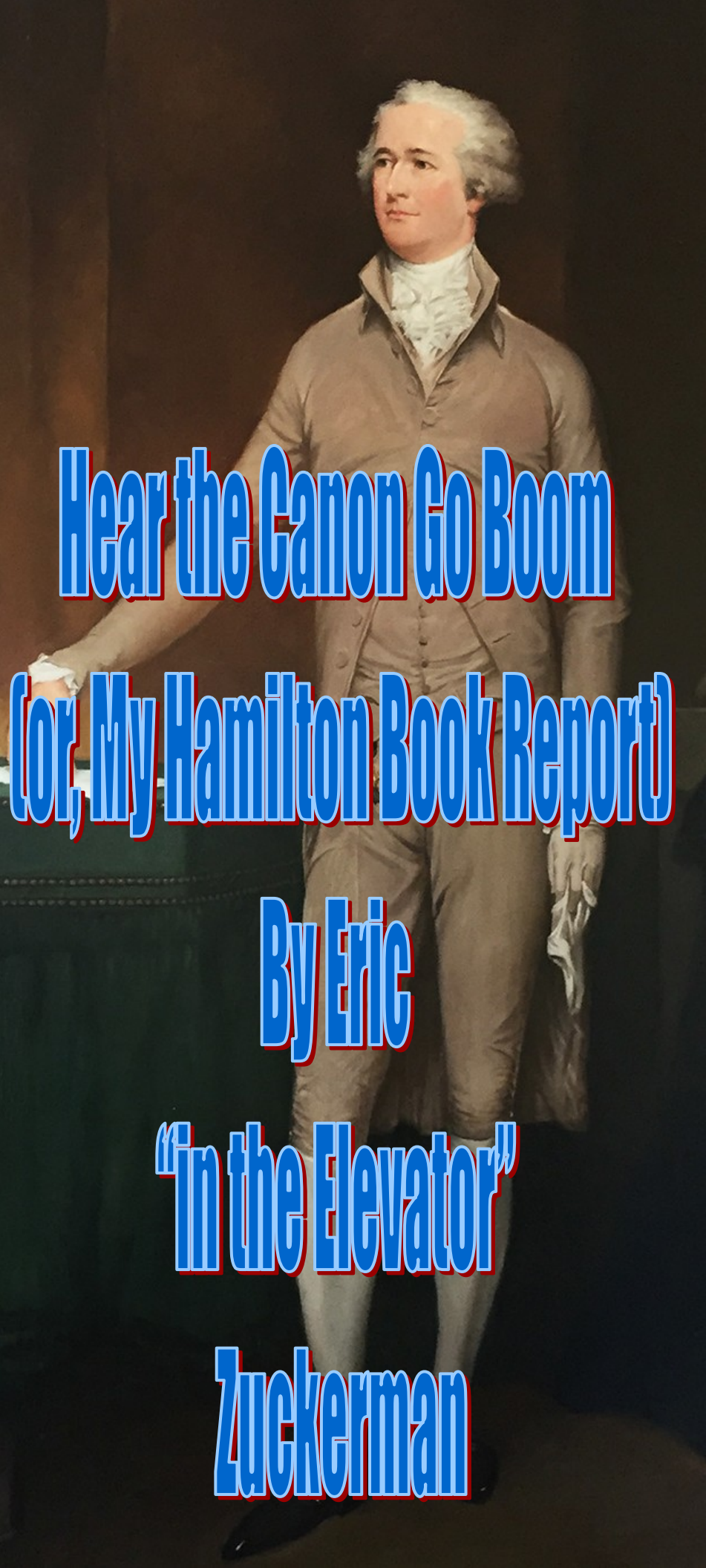
In this Hugo-winning fanzine issue dedicated to a Tony-winning musical... I'm writing about a Washington Prize-winning biography, by a Pulitzer-winning author. Of course, that would be *Alexander Hamilton*, by Ron Chernow. *I have just heard from a friend of a friend that, "Hamilton is historical fan fiction," – which spectacularly resonates – and this, THIS is the canon.*

The book is verbose, making it a fitting tribute to the colossal wordiness of its principal subject. A friend/fan asked rhetorically when we were discussing *Hamilton: The Revolution*, "Oh, you have the *Hamiltome*?" (Why didn't they listen to me, years before I had held a copy in my hands, and title the book about the show, *The Hamilton Treasury*? That would have been perfect!) But, at 832 goddam pages (versus 287), the biography would better have been nicknamed, "*The Hamiltome*".

Whatever you choose to call it, my spouse and I consumed it in audiobook format, weighing in at no less than 29 compact discs. It consumed the near totality of three road trips for us: round-trip Berkeley to So-Cal; one-way NYC to Boston (via northeastern PA, Albany, and Vermont); and round-trip Berkeley to Portland. And we pressed hard to finish it in only that much time in the car!

(Genre-relevant footnote: it was read by Scott Brick, who has voiced a lot of audiobooks, but notably for us, *The Martian Child*, by David Gerrold. As that latter work is written in intimately autobiographical voice, Scott Brick had been a transmogrification of Gerrold, as far as we were concerned. Also, I found myself hoping that Brick gets paid by the word, or by the CD, rather than per book.)

The relationship between LMM and this book cannot be overstated.



Hear the Canon Go Boom
(or, My Hamilton Book Report)
By Eric
"In the Elevator"
Zuckerman

Miranda bought *Alexander Hamilton* to read on vacation to Mexico in 2008, and *The Hamilton Treasury* (Can I just call it that?) reports that he dog-eared many pages of his copy, as inspiration hit him. Here's Miranda in his own words, and photo:

https://twitter.com/lin_manuel/status/610440904453844993

[@Lin_Manuel](#)

[#MrowbackMonday](#)

In 2008 I bought Chernow's Hamilton bio to read on vacation.

[@HamiltonMusical](#) rehearsal starts today.



6:37 AM - 15 Jun 2015

When Miranda demoed the first track of “The Hamilton Mixtape” (before the title was recycled as a collection of bonus material), a possibly-apocryphal story is Chernow marveling, “You just summed up the first 150 pages of my book in four minutes.” Chernow would sign on as historical consultant to the musical, and stresses the “encouragement” that he gave to LMM.

This biography, while it may be verbose and weighty, has a lot of merit, if your goal is to delve deep into Hamilton's life. One can see where it might have sparked Miranda's imagination, and planted the seeds for the show. Occurrences and timeframes in Hamilton's life that merit a couplet or a verse in a song are given loving attention from Chernow. Some important events that didn't fit into Miranda's work at all (most notably, the 1804 New York State gubernatorial election: the actual last straw for Aaron Burr, leading up to their fatal duel)

also are painted with lush semantic brushstrokes in the biography. It follows almost inevitably that Chernow creates a more complex and nuanced portrayal of that guy on the sawbuck in your wallet.

Also, the biography describes a fair amount of the pettiness and infighting between the Founding Fathers, excepting Washington (who never officially aligned with either of the nascent parties, even if some might consider him a *de facto* Federalist), detailed in fully documented prose. The musical delves into this somewhat, but with nowhere near as much texture. It struck us while listening, how much *plus-ça-change* there is in this biography, of partisan opposition. I also came through with markedly diminished views of Thomas Jefferson; and also John Adams, who seemed to be the antithesis of Truman's the-buck-stops-here philosophy. Maybe I should try reading a Jefferson biography, and see what that scholar has to say about Hamilton?

On the downside, Chernow's version of George III provides no comic relief whatsoever. Proceed with caution.





Reviews by Stephanie Alford

Title: *Alexander Hamilton*

Author: Ron Chernow

Published: 2004

ISBN-13: 9781594200090

Publisher: Penguin Books

Publisher's Blurb: **Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ron Chernow presents a landmark biography of Alexander Hamilton, the Founding Father who galvanized, inspired, scandalized, and shaped the newborn nation.**

Title: *Alexander Hamilton & the Persistence of Myth*

Author: Stephen F. Knott

Published: 2002

ISBN-13: 978-0-7006-1419-6

Publisher: University Press of Kansas

Publisher's Blurb: ... **explores the shifting reputation of our most controversial founding father. Since the day Aaron Burr fired his fatal shot, Americans have tried to come to grips with Alexander Hamilton's legacy. Stephen Knott surveys the Hamilton image in the minds of American statesmen, scholars, literary figures, and the media, explaining why Americans are content to live in a Hamiltonian nation but reluctant to embrace the man himself.**

“The image of Hamilton fashioned by Jefferson and his allies has endured and flourished, and the Hamilton of American memory is a Hamilton who championed privilege and who was a foe of liberty.” (Knott, p. 26)

Ron Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton* and Stephen F. Knott's *Alexander Hamilton & the Persistence of Myth* offer a unique insight to both the man, and the legend of the man.

And while I have pondered long and hard about how to write about Hamilton without turning into a Thomas Jefferson bashing machine, it is difficult to talk about one without the other. Thanks to Jefferson and his network of devoted mouthpieces, Hamilton's reputation remains in tatters centuries after the founding of the US.

That it took a musical based on Chernow's book to address, and repair Hamilton's reputation, is a statement on how deeply entrenched lies and rumors become. It's also a statement on how easy it is to believe the worst in people instead of looking for the best.

Not that Hamilton was a complete paragon of virtue, and could, "at moments of supreme stress, ... screw himself up to an emotional pitch that was nearly feverish in intensity." (Chernow, p. 115) It is hard to imagine how a man with such an towering intellect could have so many blind spots, and be so stupid.

Soaring blind spots seem to go hand in hand with towering intellect. Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr, and James Madison, all seemed to be intimidated by Hamilton's intellect. "The byzantine, interrelated nature of his programs (e.g. central banking, professional standing military, international trade with Britain) made him all the more the bane and terror of his opponents." (Chernow, p. 349)

Nuance, and the lack of understanding thereof, is the two-edged blade of smart people everywhere. It's baffling how so many around us just don't understand what we think is an easy idea. "... things were so blindingly self-evident to Hamilton that he was baffled when others didn't grasp them quickly - an intellectual agility that could breed intolerance for less quick-witted mortals." (Chernow, p. 119)

Knott picks up this thread, "At bottom, Jefferson could not countenance the fact that an immigrant upstart without the appropriate pedigree ... dared challenge him." (Knott, p. 11)

Jefferson presented the image of a down-home gentleman farmer who understood the agrarian slave-holding farmers of Virginia. He came from wealth, owned property and was a slaveholder. That the bastard child of poverty from the island of [Nevis](#) in the Caribbean should rise up and challenge him was more than Jefferson could tolerate.

As is also sometimes true of very smart people, Hamilton was not a crafty plotter and "often could not muzzles his opinions." (Chernow, p. 176) The myth which has stuck to Hamilton most is that the people are a "great beast," not to be trusted with direct democracy.

Hamilton was right, but there's a nuance long missed by his detractors. Trusting a mob mentality to make sensible decisions, especially those involving running a government is a bad idea. As individuals, we are smart and sensible. Of course we know, individually, what we want and need from our government leaders. Put us in a big group and mob mentality takes over, and no one has a good idea, not even what's for dinner.

This myth about Hamilton continues to live because of he understood the unruliness of a mob. On this point, he was accused of hating all people, especially the less-privileged and standing for something like a monarchy in America. Lesser minds were too busy making up lies and spreading gossip to try to understand the nuance in Hamilton's statements.

He wasn't against a democracy per se, he was against allowing the unruly mob have such power. Among other political factors, this is one of the reasons we're stuck with the electoral college. How else to avoid the mistakes of mob rule?

In the late 18th century it was impossible to believe the republic would ever be big enough, educated enough, and sensible enough to have good decision making processes. Women read? Slaves freed and owning land? Hah, never happen.

Except Hamilton sort of expected it, even if he couldn't get past the hypocrisy of being white, educated, (male), and marrying into money. His heart and ideals were in the right place, though. His background prepared him well to understand why paying and supplying the militias was important. He championed a standing professional army, precisely because farmers arriving on the field of battle with a pitchfork were woefully unprepared for the rigors of professional fighting.

Hamilton even understood the need for a centralized federal bank for economic stability. (And that's all I'm qualified to recount because the only thing I know about banking is there are too many fees.) He was, according to both Chernow and Knotts, an economic genius. Well, they're not the only ones, economists over the centuries have sung his praises too.

But these lofty ideas were held in contempt by those threatened by his enormous mind and his exceptional work ethic. I can understand his disinclination to pander or be less forceful when expressing ideas. We just want to get stuff done and don't have the energy to play the political games at which others are so good.

And those blind spots? How about Hamilton as participant in the nation's first sex scandal? For over a year, Maria Reynolds, and her husband, caught Hamilton in their thrall and blackmailed him. "Quite understandably, [there were those who] could not conceive that someone as smart and calculating as Hamilton could have stayed as long in thrall to an enslaving passion. Hamilton could not have been stupid enough to pay hush money for sex, [they] alleged, so the money paid ... *had* to involve illicit speculation. In all fairness, ... it is baffling that Hamilton submitted to blackmail for so long." (Chernow, p. 530)

And Hamilton, rather than quietly admitting it and moving on, wrote volumes to be published in newspapers describing every sordid detail. Career was the motive for this, not worry over his marriage to Eliza and their family. After the affair, Hamilton never strayed far from his family, remaining close by until his death.

Which, of course, leads to the duel with Aaron Burr. Hamilton, "born without honor, was exceedingly sensitive to any slights to his political honor." (Chernow, p. 237) Born without honor, meaning born of suspect parental lineage. Believed to be a bastard, the quickest way to get him riled up was to mention this.

"[Burr] was a chameleon who evaded clear-cut positions on and was a genius at studied ambiguity." (Chernow, p. 192) He was an opportunist, and could figure out endless ways to profit from any political wrangling surrounding him. Further, Chernow writes, "... Burr was a lone operator, a protean figure who formed alliances for short-term gain." (p. 421)

He was bent on revenge for Hamilton's part in Burr's ostracism from the Jefferson administration and



losing the governorship of New York because Hamilton was freely quoted as saying Burr wasn't fit for office. Hamilton can hardly be blamed for Jefferson dropping Burr from the ticket as VP. The quote about not being fit for office, that part was true.

Weehawken, NJ on July 11, 1804 lives in infamy as the place Burr shot Hamilton, thus ending the career and loving marriage of Alexander Hamilton who only ever wanted to see the US become a strong nation. Burr's life ended that day too. "...Hamilton committed his last patriotic act, for he ensured that Aaron Burr would never again be a viable player in the politics of the early republic." (Knott, p. 1)

But, Hamilton's legend lives on. Depending on the era, he's been seen as selfish and elitist, interested only in money and power. Depression-era scholars and politicians blamed the Depression on Hamilton, despite being dead for 125 years.

Even his scandalous affair made an appearance during the [Clinton impeachment](#) hearings in 1998 when his team presented "a thirty page brief to the House Judiciary Committee citing Hamilton's affair with Maria Reynolds and the reluctance of Congress to pursue the issue after concluding it was a private matter." (Knotts, p. 225)

The profound effect Hamilton had on government is immeasurable. Chernow's nearly 800 page biography follows Hamilton from Nevis to his rise in US politics and his death at the gun of Aaron Burr. Chernow admires Hamilton but doesn't let that get in the way of the facts as presented.

Stephen F. Knott also admires Hamilton and defends Hamilton against the scurrilous myths which continue to be taken as truth. Between the two, Chernow and Knott present an interesting and entertaining read of a man too intellectual and uncompromising for the likes of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Aaron Burr to respect.

Chernow has the best last word, "Any biographer foolhardy enough to attempt an authoritative life of Alexander Hamilton must tread a daunting maze of detail." (Chernow, p. 733)





Hamilton by

Reagan Edmiston

Back in 2017, I had heard of the new musical theatre phenomena that was hitting Broadway, Hamilton. I didn't know a lot about it. As an Australian, I had no idea who Alexander Hamilton was. All I know was that it looked fun and exciting and I would somehow get to see it.

Fast forward to a trip booked to the UK that happened to coincide with the release of Hamilton on the West End and it seemed the Fates wanted me to see this musical sooner than I had thought. I booked whatever seats I could get my hands on. I was up in the rafters but that didn't stop the goosebumps when the opening song was performed. I knew by the time 'My shot' was over, I was hooked. I had to have the soundtrack. I needed to listen to this magic again.

I became a Hamil-fan. I listened to the soundtrack over and over. I bought the t-shirt. I fangirled over LMM. I found a facebook group that combined my love of Harry Potter and Hamilton (Hamilclaws) where all kinds of nerd fandoms collided. I was so proud of myself when I could 'rap' the section in 'Alexander Hamilton'.

What I didn't realise at the time was the impact that 'My shot' would have on my life. I had some major life events over the past few years and felt I was lost and struggling with where I was going and what I was doing. 'My shot' came into my life at a time when I needed to find the confidence in myself to stand by my self and my convictions. To say it was okay to be Me.

I was fortunate enough to be able to see Hamilton again at the end of 2018 and the tears poured down my face when I had heard 'My shot' performed after the life changes I had made. This song, this anthem to my life, the song that I had pounded the pavement to for miles at a time as I tried to find my sense of self... to hear it performed live again... it's a moment I won't forget.

The Drink Tank



HAMILTON