

The West Wing Weekly
0.06: Hamilton Special
Guests: Lin-Manuel Miranda and Thomas Kail

[Intro Music]

JOSH: You're listening to *The West Wing Weekly*. I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Today, we're not discussing an episode of *The West Wing*. We're discussing *Hamilton*, the musical, and how it crosses over with *The West Wing*. *Hamilton*, as you probably know, is a record-breaking phenomenon. It got 16 Tony nominations in 2016 and it won 11, including Best Musical. *Hamilton*, like *The West Wing*, is a story about American politics. We've heard for a long time that *The West Wing* was a big influence on *Hamilton*, so we wanted to find out more directly from the creators.

JOSH: Well, this is very exciting. Our guests are Lin Miranda and Tommy Kail. Our host is Hrishikesh Hirway. I'm not involved. Like the best episodes of *The West Wing*, this episode doesn't have me in it. [Both laugh] Hence, it will be, I think, remembered as one of the best episodes of *The West Wing Weekly*. The story behind it is we've wanted to get them from the get-go and they've been enthusiastic about doing the show. Then, this opportunity came up. They were in town for the Oscars. They told us they had some time the next morning. I was aghast when I discovered that I would be in Sacramento. I'd be out of town at a baby shower for my niece. Very exciting. That meant that I was out of the picture. I have to admit I secretly thought 1) Hrishikesh won't want to do this without me and 2) certainly, Lin and Tommy won't want to do this without getting the full *West Wing Weekly* experience. I was wrong on both counts [Hrishikesh laughs]. Everybody was just absolutely delighted at the notion of doing the interview without me.

HRISHI: We missed you, Josh.

JOSH: Didn't sound like it. [Hrishikesh laughs] All bitterness aside, I'm very excited for people to listen to it.

HRISHI: One of the best things about recording this was that Lin and Tommy came over to my house to record it wearing *West Wing Weekly* t-shirts.

JOSH: That is awesome.

HRISHI: And, it turns out the story actually starts before *Hamilton* with an earlier musical that Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote and that Thomas Kail directed called *In the Heights*, which was also a huge Broadway hit.

JOSH: So, I guess that's it. I've interpolated myself into the episode as much as I could by just trying to create a long rambling intro, but I guess it's time to get to the heart of the matter and play the damn thing.

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "Alexander Hamilton" excerpt]

[end excerpt]

LIN: I'm Lin-Manuel Miranda. I'm the writer of *Hamilton*.

TOMMY: My name is Thomas Kail. I directed *Hamilton*.

HRISHI: Thank you both for being here.

LIN: It's our pleasure.

HRISHI: For each you: How did you first come to *The West Wing*?

LIN: I came to *The West Wing* when there were reruns on Bravo from 11 to noon and I just got caught up one day with an episode. I was flipping channels and found it and then that became 'appointment television' back when I was young and hungry and unemployed. I sort of fell into the reruns and then caught up in I think what was airing on TV at the time was Season 5. That became like a mutual language for us very quickly when we were working on *In the Heights*. So, we watched Seasons 5, 6, and 7 together, I think, like week to week, but caught up via the Bravo reruns.

HRISHI: So, this was like 2004?

TOMMY: Yeah. I mean, Lin and I met in 2002 and at some point during that, I feel like- and I don't like to say this, so I'm glad we're not recording. Lin might've actually told me about it.

LIN: The rare thing that I tipped him off to instead of vice versa.

TOMMY: So, I grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, so right outside of D.C. and I moved very far away from anything political so the idea of watching *The West Wing* was anathema - not interesting to me in any way. And then, I think Lin started watching them and telling me about them and I just caught a couple of them. It's sort of like "When did you learn how to ride a bike?" Like, there was a moment I guess you did and then you're like "Well, I've always ridden a bike." I don't really remember pre-*West Wing* life, but I guess it existed.

LIN: Yeah, I don't either. But I do remember beginning to record the episodes on Bravo and then fashioning those in order because they're all out of order.

TOMMY: And I do remember getting the box set because the complete box set, which came in the little file cabinet thing, I feel like you got it for me or I got it for you for some event for our show, and then it became...

LIN: That's true.

TOMMY: And then we did a re-watch.

LIN: We did a re-watch, but I remember buying the DVD box sets one at a time.

TOMMY: Right.

LIN: And then, I was dating a girl from the Philippines and they had bootleg box sets of the ones that weren't out yet, so I have a box set that says "The Weet Wing" because it's misspelled, so I had "Weet Wing" Season 5 right after that came out. But, I remember getting those box sets one at a time before the accordion came out.

TOMMY: That's amazing.

HRISHI: How did you two meet?

TOMMY: Lin was...

LIN: I wrote a name on a napkin [Tommy laughs]. And said I had this idea...

TOMMY: And I threw a basketball through a window. Lin was a freshman at Wesleyan when I was a senior, and I heard about this very precocious freshman who was doing another piece of student theatre and was using the lights from the show that I was using.

LIN: We were sharing the same light plot on the weekend, but we never met. It was just like...

TOMMY: He was taking our stuff. That's how I really first sort of met him.

LIN: Your friend Neil came and picked them up when our show was done to take them over for his show at the gym.

TOMMY: And then, Lin wrote an early version of *In the Heights* his sophomore year, so this is 2000, and I had graduated from college in '99 and that same friend Neil, Neil Stewart, and my friend John Mailer were seniors and went to go see Lin's student production and they made a demo CD and asked Lin for it. Right, they came up to you and asked you for it?

LIN: Yeah. They came up to me and they said "Listen, we're going to New York and we're starting a theatre company, so we'd love to talk to you about this as soon as you graduate." So, I met Tommy for the first time a week after graduating Wesleyan in 2002.

TOMMY: Yeah. So I formed this little company with my friends called Backhouse Production. I had been listening to the *In the Heights* demo CD for two years.

[In the Heights song "Benny's Dispatch" excerpt]

BENNY: [sung] *I'd like to mention/I'm on the microphone this mornin'/Honk ya horn if you want it!/Ok, we got traffic on the west side/*

[excerpt continues to play under speech]

TOMMY: Someone was writing music that I would listen to, but it was being used to storytell in musical theatre, and I came to theatre very late. I didn't start doing anything until I was 21, really. I took an acting class in high school. So it was popular music being utilized in a form that I thought was very foreign. Like "Well, that's not what theatre does." Then, I heard this album and I was like "Oh, when does he graduate? May in 2002. Let's go find him." And so, we did.

LIN: I didn't know that Tommy had been listening to this thing for two years. He hits me with both barrels the second we meet. He's like "Well, Usnavi's a character who meets everyone. Maybe the "In the Heights", which you have third in the thing, should be first and Usnavi is your narrator." It's all these ideas, like a Sorkinesque amount of information, and I went "1) Ok, this guy's really a lot smarter than me and 2) These are all really good ideas." So, that was the beginning of a conversation that continues all the way in the car up until meeting you. [All laugh]

TOMMY: That was May 2002 and that first time we hung out was about five hours.

LIN: Like the other people in the meeting were all falling away [cross talk] they all left! And then it was just...

TOMMY: [cross talk] They all left! I was looking for a pickup meeting [all laugh] and Lin was in there...[trails off]

HRISHI: So, soon after that you started talking about *The West Wing*.

LIN: And it became a part of the lingo of how we talked to each other; like how we talked about character; how we talked about dialogue. You know "I've never felt like this. It doesn't go away" was an often quoted thing before readings and workshops because we were just trying to get *In the Heights* off the ground from 2002 to 2007 and I was - my day job was - I was basically like a part time teacher, then a substitute teacher. Tommy was Audra McDonald's assistant and we were just sort of - those were our day jobs, and our 'rest of our time' jobs were working on *In the Heights*.

TOMMY: Yeah.

HRISHI: So, in the transition from the original version to the Broadway version, did this love of *The West Wing* - did you find it had an influence on you beyond the shared love of it and saying things like "It doesn't go away"?

LIN: Yeah, I think so. You know, I think one of the things that attracted us to *The West Wing* is it's - it's your dream of what people at such a high level would work at. It's flawed people doing their best. And I think it's something that I think informs both *In the Heights* [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] It was us.

LIN: That was us! Flawed people doing our best! But that's sort of what I love about the show is that they make mistakes, but they're trying to do the right thing in a very fractious political atmosphere. And I think that informs both *Heights* and *Hamilton*. I think that's... everyone's got their reasons.

TOMMY: Yeah, and I think the other thing that it probably influenced was our ability to not run from sentiment. I think that there's something that I learned from watching the show over and over again and the comfort of revisiting a certain episode or a certain scene in the same way you'll listen to a song over and over again and you can hold on to it. And I think that audiences love sentiment. I think sentimentality is a different thing. But I think the idea of allowing us to engage emotionally and say that it's ok to feel something right after a laugh, or right before a laugh - not separating these things as kind of comedy/drama. Separation, I think, is false. It's a dichotomy that doesn't exist in real life, and so I think that is something - cause *Heights* is full of sentiment, and it's full of feeling. And it's one of the things that people that didn't respond to the show as much said "ah well - it's sentimental". It was something that was very inspired by *It's a Wonderful Life*. There's a Capra quality to a lot of the stuff that Sorkin writes, and I think that that gave us permission to not be afraid to try to make people feel.

LIN: Yeah.

HRISHI: Lin, when did you first consciously realize that maybe your writing was being influenced by Aaron Sorkin's writing?

LIN: I think before *Hamilton* really got under way, I think it's actually the Tony closer that we wrote together. I had the weirdest gig. It was 2011, or 2012?

TOMMY: 2011

LIN: Yeah. Neil Patrick Harris contacted me - he said "I want to try this magic trick. I want to basically do a rap recap of everything that happened at the Tonys, but it means you're gonna have to write it during the show." And he said "My skill is that like, I can read a prompter and make it look like I'm not reading a prompter". And I was like "Alright, well I'm going to bring Tommy with me" because Tommy is amazing at the instant take, like, can synthesize it down to the nugget of what we should talk about. So Tommy and I sat in the basement of - was it the Beacon?

TOMMY: Yeah yeah

LIN: and just our thinking of rhymes for Sutton Foster and John Larroquette, and doing it in real time. And I kept the camera on my computer on

[*Writing The Closing Number--Backstage at the Tonys* excerpt]

LIN: "Anything Goes *took best revival in stride. We didn't see it. We were singing Side by Side by Side.*

Anything Goes. *Ah. It's like missing a beat"*

[end excerpt]

LIN: And so, there's a lot of us pretending we're Sam Seaborn and Toby Ziegler

[*Writing The Closing Number--Backstage at the Tonys* excerpt]

LIN: "He's Toby Ziegler. I'm Sam Seaborn. And we're writing a rap."

TOMMY: "Josh Lyman. Josh Lyman."

LIN: "He's Josh Lyman"

[end excerpt]

TOMMY: [laughs] The disappointment on Lin's face that I have to try to correct him on this. He's going, like, with this speech, where I was like "I am who I am. Bring me the finest bagels and muffins..." and like let's stop it with your thing.

LIN: Well it breaks the metaphor if you're Lyman. Lyman wasn't one of the speech [cross talk] writers

TOMMY: [cross talk] But I understand that, but like, this shirt is pure Lyman, the attitude is pure Josh, and the disappointment on Lin's face that I'm, like, ruining his little [cross talk] thing makes me so happy!

LIN: [cross talk] spiel

HRISHI: [laughs]

TOMMY: And, you know, for Lin, who has the ability to also perform the things that he's written, there was something about that, because I remember both being down in the basement; having Neil come down during the commercial breaks and running through...

LIN: [interrupts] just to read what we'd written so far.

TOMMY: Yeah, because we'd written this stuff that we thought might happen, and then there were five things, you know, that you have to leave space for. And you can allow them to fill in with the moment: this person curses; that person trips on the way to the stage; this speech really lands. And those were the things we would grab and then slot in, and Neil would come down during the commercials. And what I remember, which felt a lot like this sort of 'speech writing off to the side' scenes, is when we went up to actually do the thing at the end, it was me and Lin standing in the wings watching Neil do it. And I've spent a lot of time working with Lin and then watching him do something, but to have us stand together watching the president in that moment deliver the thing. That, to me, felt like - I can see the shot - you know of what Schlamme would have done there, or Misiano or someone like that.

LIN: Yeah, that was the most *West Wing* gig we've ever had, where we're like the speech writers and Neil Patrick Harris is the president.

HRISHI: [laughs] Right!

[*Neil Patrick Harris Closing Rap Tony Awards 2011* excerpt]

NPH: "...it's what we lot live. We're changin' some lives tonight, and theatre thrives because we live to give it, so to speak. This ain't reality TV - this is eight shows a week. Every chorus member that you saw tonight tappin' had to make miracles happen for a chance to see you clappin' and applaudin' in the audience. What's next? Who knows. Anything goes. Now go see a mother huhhuh Broadway show! Thank you - Goodnight!"

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: was that 'what's next?' a *West Wing* 'what's next?'

LIN: Yeah I guess it was! I guess that crept in. I mean we were fully in our Seaborn-Ziegler cosplay...

TOMMY: I'm not sad...

LIN: I'm not sad... so yeah, I think so.

TOMMY: Guilty? Is the mic on?

LIN: By *Hamilton*, I mean, *Hamilton*, now we're dealing with politics. Sometimes we are actually writing for the members of the West Wing of the 1790s.

HRISHI: Right

LIN: So like, we were calling our creative team 'The Cabinet' by that point. Like with *In the Heights*, with Bill and Quiara, we were Voltron. That was our name for [cross talk]...

TOMMY: [cross talk] With Alex Lacamoire and Andy Blankenbuehler. So Alex is our choreographer and Andy's our music director.

HRISHI: Right

LIN: Yeah, and by the time we're with *Hamilton*, we wanted a slightly different one - we didn't wanna like, you know, Voltron was its own thing. So we started calling ourselves 'The Cabinet'

HRISHI: At what point did you first start working on *Hamilton*?

LIN: Well I started working on *Hamilton* in 2008. That was when I picked up the Chernow book. It was on my first vacation from *In the Heights*. You know - fell in love after the second chapter, and realized 'oh this is about a writer; this is about an immigrant; and it's about, like, just a [expletive deleted] relentless dude', and I felt that's the thing great musicals are made of and I felt like I know this guy. It took me about six months to write the opening number which I performed at the Obama White House in 2009. At that point I had just written that one song with - I don't know what level hubris [laughs]. With Hamiltonian hubris, I said 'I'm working on an album' and sort of performed the one song, and really with the thinking like 'if it doesn't work in this room, like I can just put this on the shelf and work on something else'.

HRISHI: Right

LIN: I just felt like that was uniquely suited to kill in the East Wing of the White House. And it did - I mean everyone's laughing at me the whole first... and they think it's like a joke. And then they get sucked into the story. I mean you can see it happen in real time in that video.

[*Lin-Manuel Miranda Performs at the White House Poetry Jam: (8 of 8)* excerpt fades in]

LIN: ...you get from whence you came / The world is gonna know your name / What's yo' name, man? / Alexander Hamilton [audience laughs] / His name is Alexander Hamilton [audience laughs] / And there's a million things he hasn't done / But just you wait. Just you wait. / When he was ten his father split / full of it / debt ridden...

[excerpt fades out]

LIN: And so that was a great sign of encouragement that it worked so well, and then they put up the video like six months later and then it started going viral - among teachers. You know, you'd see in all the YouTube comments like 'my teacher showed us this'; 'We saw this in AP history'. So I kind of knew we'd be okay with school groups [cross talk] if I ever finished writing this and writing it as a play. It took a year to write "My Shot," and then I performed that at a benefit for Ars Nova, which is a theatre we've both done a lot of work at.

HRISHI: [cross talk] yeah

LIN: And that's when Tommy was like 'you need to write this faster', like 'let's start setting deadlines'. That's when he, like, wrote my name on a napkin and stuck it on a board, and fully Leo McGarry'd *Hamilton* into existence.

[West Wing Episode 3.09 excerpt]

LEO: Everywhere I go: planes, trains, restaurants, meetings - I find myself scribbling something down.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: What?

[end excerpt]

TOMMY: And that was in June of 2011 where we did this little benefit, and Lin performed "My Shot" for, like, 97 people - it was a very small theatre.

LIN: And at that point "My Shot" was just Hamilton's two verses.

TOMMY: Right. Yeah, and it was quite different from the thing that exists now. And when we were upstairs afterwards, and everyone was patting him on the back, I saw my moment: "Ah man, people really love you - hey! Let's go." And so it was, like, you know, more than one song a year [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] That's what's on the napkin?

TOMMY: That's on the napkin, yeah

LIN: That's on the napkin - 'more than one song a year' [laughs]

TOMMY: And so, the next day, because in that conversation, was you know, two songs a month. Let's just see if...[cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] ...two songs a month, and let's find a deadline to work towards [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] six months from now, and then Lin said - he called me the next day, and he said 'there's an availability at the Lincoln Center. On Hamilton's birthday.'

LIN: Yeah, they'd asked me to be part of their *American Songbook* series, and the date they offered me was January 11th. And so I was like "okay! [laughs] So we'll do that..."

TOMMY: Sometimes there's God so quickly. And so, that really set us on our course. And then the next few months were really - were fun - because what I asked Lin is for one clean read. "Let me go and read this without you in my head. And you go read again, and let's just make our

list: What's interesting to you? What's a song? Who's a character? What's a moment? And let's both just write everything down and then see where the Venn diagrams overlap. And so that's what the next six months were.

LIN: Yeah. Yeah we were just writing the parts which felt they were like a musical.

HRISHI: Let me backtrack for one second. When you picked up the Chernow book, I wonder if you had a similar experience to what I have when I get into stuff like this. For me, when I was in school, Revolutionary History was my favorite part of US history. That was one of my favorite subjects. I loved that stuff. And then, when I started watching *The West Wing*, there was a direct line from the things I was excited about - you know the idea of Benjamin Franklin founding - you know - the library system - to the kind of things I would see in *The West Wing*. That would make me...[cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] Cartographers for Social Justice

HRISHI: exactly, yeah - the idea of what you can do with government and the, sort of, idealism from the founding fathers to these people in a modern day, fictional, *West Wing*. So, since you'd already been watching the show, I was wondering if there was any of that when you picked up that book. Were you already into politics and history and things like that, or did that show create that for you or did it amplify it for you?

LIN: Yeah, well, that's interesting. My dad's been in politics for as long as I've been around

TOMMY: His dad is Bruno Gianelli

LIN: My dad *is* Bruno Gianelli

TOMMY: That's for real

LIN: That's actually the best way to describe it. My dad worked in community organizing for a really long time, and then when I went to college. He, like, went from 'non-for-profit' to 'for-profit' so that he could help me to, like, pay for college.

HRISHI: Yeah

LIN: And he started his consulting group, and he'd consult... he's basically a democratic political lobbyist. And so, when I watched Bruno Gianelli I goes "that's the character of my dad". And so I love watching fictional things about politics more than I love real politics, but really when I picked up that book all I knew about Hamilton was that his son died in a duel and that he died in a duel three years later. And I remember having the itch of 'how does that happen? How do you walk into the same trap when you know what's coming?' And so that was the curiosity, along with, like, the great reviews on the back of the book. That was enough to, sort of, pull it off the shelf for me as opposed to any of the other biographies at that Borders in Columbus Circle. But yeah,

I think what I liked about *West Wing* was I kind of understood the way politics worked because I'd seen it first hand, with my dad's work - being the kid dragged to a meeting on a weekend, and doing my homework in a corner while they're deciding who's going to run in a district. Yeah, so between my upbringing and *West Wing*, I was interested in how politics works, without actually being interested in working in politics.

HRISHI: Thinking about all the facts of his life - that he was an immigrant, I sometimes think about Josh Lyman discovering in *Noel*:

[West Wing Episode 2.10 excerpt]

JOSH: This guy - the pilot

DONNA: What about him?

JOSH: He's got the same birthday as me.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And the proximity of your birthday date and Hamilton's

LIN: Yeah

HRISHI: I always thought that was a funny coincidence, or I don't know if it's a coincidence. If there's anything to astrology [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] We're both just Capricorn AF! [laughs]

HRISHI: Yeah [laughs]

TOMMY: Yeah - supes caps. When I think about *The West Wing*, not only something that just existed, like it was an influencer - whether consciously or un- - there are a couple of things that really pull out. One is the idea of being some who can speak truth to power - the way that Leo responded, and could speak to the president, was something I took as a lesson plan. You know, what I learned from Leo was: it wasn't just what you said. It was when you said it and how you said it. And so, that's something that's obviously - with our dynamic - that I think about very consciously. That I'm often someone who's trying to create a situation for Lin to have all the information to go out there and feel like he can succeed, and also know that afterward that we're going to have a very real conversation about how that thing might have gone. And my relationship to politics, in a way was adjacent to Lin's but quite different, because I grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, and two doors down from us was my family's very good friend Paul Tsongas. And I went to Sidwell Friends, which was another place where there were a lot of kids of people who worked in government. These were people. They were people who tried to effect change or do something. They were also sometimes home on the weekends, and that's

annoying'. They weren't just these exalted anythings to me, and I think that was, at the core when we started talking about *Hamilton* was like 'get these people on the ground'. Get 'em off the bills; get 'em off the temples; get 'em off the elevated plane and put them on the ground.

HRISHI: Hmmm. Your relationship at this point - the two of you - so back to Lincoln Center

LIN: Yeah. War of the Roses. They do all the Shakespeare history plays.

HRISHI: In a moment like that when you say 'give me a clean read' and you're working on these things side by side. To each of you: how do you characterize your working relationship at that point? Is it writer/director? Is it more nebulous than that?

LIN: I think it's writer/director, but it's also writer/editor. You know, I think what's great about working with Tommy as a writer is I love bringing in stuff - like to me, the fun of... I can be very often Toby throwing the [expletive deleted] handball alone, but for me, the fun is in, sort of, bringing it in and then having people who I really trust and respect kick it around. And what's great about our room is that it's never "you should write it like this." It's "I don't understand this" or "this could be clearer", and so, you know that happens on, sort of, every song I bring in - first with just Tommy, and then with Alex Lacamoire and Andy Blankenbuehler, who has to set movement to this. And so that's, to me, the most *West Wing*-y, cabinet-y thing we do is like - I get to be - you know, what's the section in the... he's like...

[West Wing Episode 3.10 excerpt]

LEO: ...he likes teams. I love him so much

[end excerpt]

LIN: That's the part I love is being part of a team. Now I may be coming in and being the guy at the podium, but, like, I love getting input and just kicking around the song itself and what's going to work best about it.

TOMMY: What I think one of the things that's distinct and remarkable about Lin's writing process is that it a) varies from song to song - he'll bring in things, and it's like 'Print that. We're done'. Right? Like you'll be back. Like that's the song. I don't know if anything changed. Whereas the song "Paciencia Y Fe" from *Heights* was probably a 12 minute song that became crystallised over time [cross talk] to like a 6 minute song.

LIN: [cross talk] to like a 6 minute song.

TOMMY: So, his ability to come in and say 'here's what I have', that allows you as a fellow collaborator to understand that there's a foundation of trust that is so deep - because by the time we got to *Hamilton*, he knew all I wanted was to try to help him make the clearest and truest expression of what was in his head. That was it. There was no ego involved about any of

it. Like, we've been through so much stuff that I can tell... you know, the relationship gets relatively subliminal, like I remember one time being in an early rehearsal for *Hamilton*, so this is ten years into our working relationship and someone else was singing something that Lin had just brought in, and I looked up at him, and he nodded. And I kinda looked at him as if 'you don't know what I'm going to say', and he's like 'I got it'. I said "write down what you think I was going to say". He wrote it down and I was like 'ok. Another guess.' [laughing from all]. And so - I mean - it's like that.

[West Wing Episode 4.03 excerpt]

TOBY: That's exactly what I was going to tell you.

JOSH: No it wasn't.

TOBY: Exactly.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: At this point in these early versions of the songs - or you know, some of them being final versions of the songs, were you already sprinkling in *West Wing* references?

LIN: I have to say, a good amount of them are subconscious. Like [cross talk] I had to find out from the internet that they were *West Wing* references.

HRISHI: [cross talk] really? Like what?

LIN: Like *Mind at Work*, which is - it seems deliberate

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "The Schuyler Sisters" excerpt]

ANGELICA & COMPANY: ...*Eliza I'm lookin' for a mind at work (work, work)*
I'm lookin' for a mind at work (work, work)

[end excerpt]

LIN: And I know that's where you're going to cut in Rob Lowe saying it

[The West Wing Episode 3.16 excerpt]

SAM: Because before I look for anything, I look for a mind at work.

[end excerpt]

TOMMY: So handsome!

LIN: He's so handsome, he's so dreamy! So that was one. We were talking about it on the way here - what other *West Wing* references were there, and they keep showing up. The other one that was *totally* subconscious because the song wrote so quickly is in "That Would be Enough." I mean, "That Would be Enough" has no historical precedent, there's no textbook I got that from. It was just a very real moment between a person and their spouse, and sort of 'I love you no matter what'.

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "That Would be Enough" excerpt]

ELIZA: *So long as you come home at the end of the day
That would be enough*

[end excerpt]

LIN: Then I'd later see Bartlet saying that to Ellie, and I'd be "Ah [expletive deleted]! She did that too!"

[*The West Wing* Episode 2.15 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: *The only thing you ever had to do to make me happy was come home at the end of the day.*

[end excerpt]

LIN: It's a testament to how many times I've seen all these episodes. Yeah, that and "Mind at Work" totally crept up on me. The only really deliberate one is something called 'The Redcoat Transition', which is not on the album, but it's the transition between "You'll be Back" and "Right Hand Man", and the drum fill is the 'previously on *The West Wing*' drum fill [performs approximate vocal drum fill with excerpt underneath]. You know, it's this sort of army drum diddle.

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* instrumental "Red Coat Transition" excerpt]

[end excerpt]

LIN: That one was, like, every time I was backstage, I'd go "previously on *The West Wing*". I'd like, whisper that to Chris Jackson who's also a huge *West Wing* fan. And the other ones sort of popped up and were pointed out to me.

HRISHI: That's incredible! I feel... it completely rewrites my sense of how all this went. I thought that these were, for sure, deliberate little nods, and...

LIN: No. I'm a dope [laughs]

TOMMY: One of the things that I think *The West Wing* provided for us was how a structure of how cohesion can make something beautiful. So I'm of one mind about this. You can make excellent things from harmony. You don't need antipathy and acrimony to create great art. I think that's a load of [expletive deleted]. So, what I wanna do is - in anything that I work on - and I know that with Lin, there's a good chance this can happen - is surround myself with people who believe that, and try to make something of really high quality, and say, and know that we did this in a harmonious fashion. So then when they tell you on the next one 'well that's not how it goes', you can call 'em on it. [cross talk] 'That's not true - I just did it'.

HRISHI: [cross talk] yeah

TOMMY: And that's really important, because this is a business that tells you how things should be, and how they must be.

LIN: Yeah. Lots of strong conversations lead to great art, which is a pseudonym for, like, fighting.

TOMMY: Yeah, and I just... I don't subscribe to that. I don't, I've never raised my voice in talking to anyone ever in fifteen years. I think, that's something I certainly found, watching the relationship between Leo and the president, which is an incredibly formative one for me, especially in my dynamic with Lin. Like, those are two people that had such a deep affection and love for each other, and it just was. So it means you don't have to say it all the time - you show it in a gesture - you give somebody a napkin.

LIN: That was awfully nice of you.

HRISHI: I think one of the reasons why I was so clearly convinced that these were references in the [cross talk] show...

TOMMY: [cross talk] It's because you hate musical theater. [laughs]

LIN: [laughing] And you don't know anything about it

HRISHI: [laughing] yeah... is because, I mean there are so...[cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] you maybe got the pirate king reference

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "Right Hand Man" excerpt]

WASHINGTON: *Now I'm the model of a modern major general
The venerated Virginian...*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: That's what I was about to bring up. I mean, there are so many ref... I mean, and then Biggie, and Big Pun, there are, like, actual references, and it's so hip hop - just that tradition of layering these things in, referencing things, you know, without even necessarily calling attention to it, because it happens so quickly - I was going to ask you about the 'modern major general' is Gilbert and Sullivan, but were you also thinking about in "Inaguration," when Will Bailey has that conversation? Are you? [laughs]... in my mind, at least, I'd like to think it's like a two-way [cross talk] action.

LIN: [cross talk] yeah, but I also came to Gilbert and Sullivan in 9th grade. Like, I'm talking to you because I got cast as the pirate king as a freshman, and like, beat out a senior for it, and so, like, I was doing theatre, like, younger than most people. And so, you know, when they referenced Gilbert and Sullivan, I lost my mind.

HRISHI: Right

LIN: I was like, "Oh my God, they're singing, you know, singing *Pinafore* to [cross talk] the Republican in the basement.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah!

[The West Wing 2.05 Episode excerpt]

*JOSH, C.J., SAM: ...other nations,
He remains an Englishman!
He remains an Englishman!*

[end excerpt]

LIN: So, yeah, but I also... for me the fun in peppering all those thing in is, like Tommy said, it's a love letter to musical theater; it's a love letter to hip hop, and we knew there'd be people coming into that theatre with their arms crossed - like this - being like 'alright, prove it to me', and so, just providing them as many 'on-ramps', and a realization that we're all speaking the same language is possible, so I throw in as much hip hop as I can; I throw in as much musical theatre as I can. And then *The West Wing* comes in by accident because we love that show. You know, one of the other scenes we're talking about - to me the scene that feels the most Sorkinesque, and I can't approach that level - particularly when I'm trying to rhyme at the same time - is the scene in "Meet Me Inside" where George Washington and Hamilton are fighting, and he keeps going:

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "Meet Me Inside" excerpt]

WASHINGTON: *Son*

HAMILTON: *Don't call me son*

WASHINGTON: *This war is hard enough without infighting*

[end excerpt]

LIN: George Washington is trying to, like, make this very serious point, but he keeps saying the word 'son', not understanding that that's a tripwire, and every time he says it, like, Hamilton's, like, listening to him less and less and just seeing red, and I was thinking of, you know, Josh Lyman with the "you have to listen to me"

[The West Wing 2.10 excerpt]

JOSH: (yelling) You need to listen to me. You have to listen to me. I can't help you, unless you listen to me! You can't send Christmas cards to everyone...

[end excerpt]

LIN: These two people who care about each other very much, and they're just speaking at cross purposes, because he keeps using this word that is like, not a word that Hamilton's accustomed to hearing from someone who's higher up. This is not someone who had a father figure in his life, so it just makes him really angry. And to me, that's sort of Sorkin at his best is when he's got these two people fighting with each other, and then there's the nugget that reveals what the conversation's really about under what they're talking about. You know, whether it's in "Someone's Going to Emergency, Someone's Going to Jail." You know, those are like, to me, like Sorkin at his finest, when, you know, you're not talking about a napkin - you're talking about this other thing. And so that's like, a musical theater scene I'm really proud of, because I was going for that.

HRISHI: Yeah.

TOMMY: The other scene I think about a lot in the, sort of, *West Wing*-iness of it is after the second cabinet battle before *Washington on your Side*, when Jefferson and Hamilton are left alone. And I think about *The West Wing* for a couple of reasons. One is, well *The West Wing* reminds you is a lot of these decisions happen in some corridor; in some hallway. And I think about that a lot with the work we make. Directing doesn't just happen in the room. You might get on the subway with someone, or in the elevator on the way up, like, that's still the work. So that last exchange between Jefferson and Hamilton there-

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "Right Hand Man" excerpt]

JEFFERSON: *So quick-witted*

HAMILTON: *Alas, I admit it*

JEFFERSON: *I bet you were quite a lawyer*

HAMILTON: *My defendants got acquitted*

[end excerpt]

LIN: That's a very Sorkin [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] And so you can see, it's one of those, you know, Republican Senators who comes in, or someone from the other side of [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] that's what I got in the last election - what do I get in this one?

HRISHI: [laughing] Yeah, yeah

TOMMY: So - that back and forth, and then the 'daddy's calling' moment. It's like, you can imagine someone saying that to one of these West Wingers, like, 'ok - go run to Leo, go run to the president', and so that felt like it had some of that DNA in as well.

LIN: Yeah.

JOSH: These guys really seem to be enjoying each other. It would have been fun to be there. But it's time now to take a break, and we'll be right back with more Hrish, Lin and Tommy.

HRISHI: And Peggy.

JOSH: And Peggy! That's good...

[Ad break]

HRISHI: There's one other moment in *The West Wing* that I think of. In the line "The Room Where It Happens", I think about when Sam is talking about wanting to get back to staffing the president after Josh is stuck in "20 Hours in America," and he asks Sam to go in to the Oval Office. Sam says:

[The West Wing Episode 4.02 excerpt]

SAM: I've worked here three years and eight months, and until you sit in the room all day, you can't comprehend the chaos of the Oval Office.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And then, towards the end:

[The West Wing Episode 4.02 excerpt]

SAM: I gotta get back in there. That's where it's happening.

[end excerpt]

LIN: Oh wow. That's really interesting.

TOMMY: So you're saying that the word 'room' and 'happening' are in the same...[cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] [laughing] You've run a wordsearch - you've LexisNexis'd our libretto

TOMMY: [cross talk] To great effect. And I think that's neat to see - laid bare like that - but the idea of that real moment in history...

HRISHI: Right

TOMMY: ...is something that's, you know, you feel like, Sorkin knows about: two people walk into a room. 'You think want this. I'm going to give you this low-hanging fruit', when really there's the long play that Hamilton has about 'Who cares about the Capital?'

HRISHI: Right

TOMMY: 'I'll give you the Capital'. Trading what you don't actually care about...[cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] 'I know all the moves on your board, I know all the moves on his board...'

TOMMY: There's certainly something about, you know, that feeling. I also say the word 'thing' - probably between 17 and 28 times a day. We're like 'we're going to go do the thing'. I mean, it has *really* permeated, in a way that [cross talk]

LIN: Yeah - also 'pick-up meeting'. 'I'm looking for a pick-up meeting - I was late to the *last* meeting!

HRISHI: There's a lot of clear evidence about how Sorkin, as a playwright, is in *The West Wing*. Even though it's on TV, it feels like a play so often, and the characters speak like they're on stage in the theater. Are there things about the way that the show was directed - in the pilot from Tommy Schlamme, or later - that you felt you were drawing on as a theatre director?

TOMMY: Yeah. And, I would say, most of it is trusting the words and the people saying them. There's not a lot of scenery in *Hamilton*. There's actually nothing on stage for most of the show. It's people talking; it's people listening; it's people reacting, and there are some gorgeous set pieces in *The West Wing* throughout the series, but what we really remember is two people having a conversation, or four people having a conversation: 'I want this. You want that. Who's going to get it?' The gathering of momentum of how an idea becomes action, I think, is absolutely something that's baked into the show, but I also realize with this, just get out of the way. Get the right people saying the right words, and look what can happen - and I think that's clearly, you know, one of the all-time great casts, you know, when people look at television history, and you know, our job was to try to create that sort of energy and craft in whomever it is that's delivering the show. And obviously we have lots of iterations of the show now. I do hope that people look at that original company with the kind of reverence that we look at - with the

first season of *The West Wing*, and the beauty of both these - and then you add, and you add, and you add.

HRISHI: In the staging of *Hamilton*, there is a, you know, a circle in the middle of the stage that spins around, allowing you to have what I think must be the first walk-and-talk in...[cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] Oh, we're not the first

HRISHI: No?

TOMMY: No. There are some pretty good ones throughout history, and, you know...[cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] yeah, *Les Mis* had a turntable [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] *Les Mis* has one of the great turntables, you know, with the barricades [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] This is what happens when I don't know about musicals [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] Which is why I wanted two.

LIN: They have one turntable? We want two turntables!

TOMMY: I mean, two turntables and a microphone did come up as well

LIN: Indeed.

HRISHI: Did you talk about the Sorkin-Schlamme relationship while you were working on *Hamilton*?

TOMMY: You mean the real Tommy, as I refer to him? I don't know if we talked about it as much as just - I will say I've had the great [cross talk] good fortune...

LIN: [cross talk] we'd *be* about it

TOMMY: Yeah, we 'were about' about it. You know, I've had the opportunity to get to spend a little time with the real Tommy over these last couple of years, and in fact, had him as our guest for the opening of the show in LA. And to be sitting near him - he had seen the show at that point - was incredibly moving for me. What I found in getting a chance to speak with him a little bit is that the way he would talk about Aaron just felt like you could substitute Lin's name in there. I understood in a very deep way immediately what kind of bedrock the two of them had; what kind of singularity that relationship was.

HRISHI: What was something that he said that made you feel like - that clicked for you - that there was some similarity or mirroring of what you and Lin have?

TOMMY: You know, I don't know if there was a specific thing. I do have this sense from talking to him that...

LIN: I think we've both come up against a deadline. [laughs] That's certainly true!

TOMMY: Yeah. Yes.

LIN: I write *to* and just past the deadline [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] yeah yeah - that is potentially true [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] It takes pressure to make a diamond, Tommy [laughs]

TOMMY: It takes pressure to apply pressure, but I do think that one of the things I got a sense of is that there were conversations that Tommy could have with Aaron that no-one else could have. And I do think there are conversations I can have with Lin that are different from other conversations that people can have with Lin. And so, that was something I really, sort of, perked up when he started talking about it - 'oh so it was you, Charlie'. You know, so that's something that was certainly present when I was speaking with him about that. And also [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] You handed him a really old knife and everyone started crying

TOMMY: Yeah. It was like 'It's not even Thanksgiving!'

[laughing]

TOMMY: Also - the way Tommy spoke about Aaron, like he was so filled up when he spoke about him, and I think that's what resonated with me, too.

HRISHI: There's a picture of the two of you with ties that Bradley Whitford sent - the 'Game On' ties. Can you tell me about the back... how did that happen?

LIN: Well one of the joys of once *Hamilton* was up, was like, one-by-one getting every member of *The West Wing*, or anyone involved in *The West Wing* to see the show, and like, freaking out.

HRISHI: And how did that happen? At that point you'd been in theater - you'd both been in theatre a long time. At what point did you start, and how did you start, meeting some of these *West Wing* actors?

LIN: Well Bradley's a Wesleyan alum, actually, so, I think I met him...

TOMMY: He's the class of 1888

LIN: Yeah, something like that. I think we're doing Malina's work for him [laughs], and so I actually met him because I spoke - I was a commencement speaker at Wesleyan - sort of the summer after we opened at The Public. And I'll never forget because, again, I'm writing the speech last minute, like literally in the library at Wesleyan 'til four in the morning, writing my commencement speech, and Bradley Whitford's on campus, and he's like 'hey, let's get coffee' - like popping in and ... it was probably as *West Wingy* as real life got - here comes Bradley Whitford to take me out for coffee while I'm trying to write a speech. And so he became, like, an instant friend - like, he just loved the show and was like an early town crier for it. Then Richard Schiff came, and became a literal crier and we both, like, burst into tears in each other's arms when he came to see the show, and so it's been kind of amazing, sort of person by person in the company coming to see it, because, you know, we freak out when we see those guys.

TOMMY: There's a picture - I have to try to find it, although I don't know if we ever want the internet to see it of Lin and I meeting Allison Janney

LIN: Oh god, it's already out, I'm sure [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] it's from 2009, maybe. Whenever *9-to-5* opened on Broadway, which she was in, we were at the opening night party, and we're smiling so hard, like I mean, it's embarrassing for us. She has no idea who these two knuckleheads are...

LIN: No idea

TOMMY: I mean, none. And it's like [cross talk] you've never...

LIN: [cross talk] Cheshire Cats on either side of her

TOMMY: Just like two, like just sets of broken cheeks. You know, like 'you were in this show we love!', and like a little skull and crossbones

LIN: And they call it the Jackal

HRISHI: How did you and Josh first meet?

LIN: Josh and I met really... so, when I - well, listen - you know better than me that Josh is a 'Twitter Provocateur' writ large [cross talk]

TOMMY: Lin is also now on Twitter as of the last three weeks

LIN: Yeah yeah! I just started. I'm really enjoying it. I don't know how to @ people. And he was really one of the first, sort of, celebrities who kinda started talking to me, because he's just a big musical theater fan. And so he had seen "In the Heights," and started engaging me, and we

would, like, make jokes about stuff while we would watch him get, like, blocked by Deepak Chopra, and, like, get into actual fights with people. He was always really nice to me - I was like 'what's behind this?' And then he invited me to be part of this very weird thing called *Sad Sad Conversation*, which was a video series he did with Michael Ian Black, that sort of, you know, they just talked to each other by sending YouTube videos, and like, whatever's going on in their life, and it grew to Phil LaMarr and so many people - I mean BD Wong was in it at some point. [cross talk] Steve Agee...

TOMMY: [cross talk] Steve Agee...

LIN: It was really funny, and I kind of - I was sort the end of it. Like, I kinda came in at the tail end of this. At its peak they were all sending ten videos a day. By the time I came aboard they were sending maybe a video a week. So I'm actually the Josh Malina of *Sad Sad Conversation*. I came in, like, late in the seasons.

TOMMY: Not your FedEx guy

LIN: Not your FedEx - did you take an awkward pill? Nah, they're not going to get this - it's way later in the season. AAAH! Not your FedEx - there's blood going to it 12 different ways. And so yeah, that was like my way of getting to know Josh, and then I was workshopping a musical I was working on out here at the Ahmanson - I was workshopping *Bring it On*, and that's when we met for the first time - and he gave me the bike! He gave me like a *West Wing* bike that was like a season wrap gift that they all got and [cross talk]

TOMMY: You went and crashed it into a tree, and then the series started.

LIN: I came to a sudden arboreal stop. And time reversed in on itself. But that's how I met Josh was through Twitter.

HRISHI: But eventually you transitioned off Twitter and would email or something like that, right?

LIN: Yeah. I emailed him, and he was like one of the first people to see *Hamilton*. He came to the - second preview?

TOMMY: Very early, yes

LIN: Yes, very early. And that was the beginning of what I call, like, the 3am emails. That's when we realized we were sort of onto something, like you send someone to see a show, or you get them tickets, and usually, like, the next day you'll get a really nice note, or on the way home, like 'man we really loved the show'. But with *Hamilton* we found we were getting these, like, 'man that really made me think about my life, and what I'm doing with my time on this planet. And that's when we realized, like, that the show was hitting people on a way deeper level than, like, 'this is a well-crafted thing' - it was - when you have to reckon with how much Hamilton and his

wife got in their lifetimes, like it forces you to think about what you're doing with your life, and I think that's sort of the reason it stays with people.

HRISHI: Wait, so Josh saw it in previews...

LIN: At The Public

HRISHI: Not on Broadway

LIN: He saw it the second preview [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] So that's January 21st [cross talk] 2015

LIN: [cross talk] He saw it when it was still three hours long. I think he may even [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] It was two fifty-four. Ok? Don't come for me - that was probably because you were crying on stage too much.

LIN: [Laughs] Well anyway, I think he saw the John Adams. No we cut John Adams from one day to the next.

TOMMY: Yeah, that might have been cut in the second then, yeah.

LIN: But he saw stuff that's not in the show any more. He saw "Let it Go."

TOMMY: Yeah, there was much. You know, the thing about making [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] That song from *Frozen* was originally from *Hamilton*?

LIN: I had a song with the same name in *Hamilton*. And I realized [cross talk] they totally won.

TOMMY: [cross talk] They won. Yeah, that one went away. There's something about the process of making a musical where you arrive, eventually, at your first performance. And then what happens over the next three weeks is you have a show at night and you have four hours of rehearsal the next day. And that's when you can really create a feedback loop with the audience that is so particular to that time, and you're out of the vacuum of rehearsal. And so the motto that we always adopted was one that was co-opted from Jerome Robbins when he was out of town on *Fiddler* in Detroit - Austin Pendleton's playing a small character - Motel - not a very nice role.

LIN: Even a poor tailor is entitled to some happiness. You will not get that. You don't watch musicals [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] MALINA! Where are you? And he was [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] That's *Fiddler on the Roof*

TOMMY: That was *Fiddler on the Roof*

HRISHI: I know *Fiddler on the Roof*

LIN: He's seen movies

HRISHI: Exactly!

TOMMY: [laughs] So there's this moment where Jerome Robbins is out of town with the show, and *Fiddler* is really struggling. And Austin Pendleton says 'what are we gonna do?'. He's a young actor, and Robbins said '10 things a day'. And that's such a *West Wing* idea. Just do [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] There it is - the ten words

TOMMY: Yeah, like, do the thing - like, do the stuff that's in front of you. What can you accomplish today? So we would come in after a show, and Lin and I would have been talking to each other, and we'd be talking to Andy, talking to Alex, and our designers, and say 'ok. What can we accomplish in this time?' And you just start chipping away. So you're doing this in front of people who are paying for the tickets, so you want to deliver a show that is of high quality, but you're also making it, right? And it's not just one speech and then it's done and it's out there. It's ephemeral, it's gone. Like you're writing messages in the melting snow, as Peter Brook said.

HRISHI: So you're in town for the Oscars. You're presenting. Do they let you write what you're going to say?

LIN: They wrote a draft of it - I mean it's really easy lifting today. It's just I get to give an award and change someone's life, and then we're done, and we go back home. Which is lovely. So, I think, they wrote a first draft, and I sort of tinkered with it to make it feel like something I would humanly say, and that's it. I mean you saw it happen - it was like five minutes yesterday. What's weird is, the people who work on award shows work on all the award shows, so it's the guys we worked with at the Tonys, so like, I've worked for the guys who run the Oscars and direct it every year. I've been that writer who has to create the thing, so yeah - it's very easy for me.

HRISHI: Tommy, even on something like that, do you have feedback for Lin?

TOMMY: I mean, look - I'm here for you. And I'm not looking at Lin when I say that. I'm here for the pod. There happened to be the Oscars.

LIN: We're here because we realize we can make 'a visit'

TOMMY: I mean, look - the chance to come out and be around other people working at a high level, when I don't have to work, is a particular kind of joy, so I like going in and high-fiving, and 'oh - I can't wait to - yeah, I'm just gonna cheer as loud as...'

LIN: And Tommy worked with all these people on *Grease Live*, you know, so, there's people who are highly specialized at creating live events for television, and like, Tommy's high-fiving them all backstage, while I have to, like, go up and say my two lines.

TOMMY: Yeah, and then I say something that might make Lin laugh, or cry, at the wrong time and I leave. You know?

LIN: He cuts my necktie off and I go out on stage.

TOMMY: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. It's much more civilized for me than really anyone there. I mean, no-one has less stakes than me. [laughing] I hope that my tie matches the thing... that's about it.

HRISHI: Chris Jackson performed - can I call him Chris Jackson? [cross talk] Is that okay?

LIN: [cross talk] Sure you can.

TOMMY: Hang on - what would you call him instead?

HRISHI: I don't know! Christopher Jackson?

TOMMY: Ok

HRISHI: You brought up the first performance that you did at the Obama White House in 2009, then there's another performance from another time, I think, right? Of Christopher Jackson doing "One Last Time" at the very end?

LIN: We got invited back, basically, in the last six months of Obama's administration.

TOMMY: March 14th 2016. My nephew's birthday. Don't look at me like that.

LIN: And we basically performed an hour of the show. Tommy was like "we have to finish with "One Last Time". I mean the resonance between the end of this administration...

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song "One Last Time" excerpt]

WASHINGTON: *One last time / Relax, have a drink with me / One last time / Let's take a break tonight / And then we'll teach them how to say goodbye / To say goodbye / You and I...*

[end excerpt]

LIN: To be performing with like the portrait of the historical George Washington looking down on our George Washington. There were so many just echoes of things in that room. Also my relationship with Chris Jackson as someone who is - I've worked with - you know, he's one of the first actors we met in New York and I've been writing to his voice my entire career. And so, that feeling of him playing Washington and me playing Hamilton - Hamilton writing Washington a speech. And the literalization of me beginning to deliver the speech, and him making it soar is such a metaphor for our actual relationship, so there's also that resonance on top of it, so we're crying our brains out in the west wing, because it's so many echoes on echoes on echoes.

TOMMY: That was quite a day. That was an actual bit of a day - another... there you go, for your reference.

LIN: Mrs. Landingham - sorry!

TOMMY: I mean that day was a moment that was crystallized. As it was happening I was saying to myself "you'll never forget this, you'll never forget this". And I wasn't telling myself 'never' - I was just acknowledging it. So that day started in a kind of funny way for me. I had this new suit I was going to wear - because we were at the White House - and I was getting dressed that morning and I was... I put my pants on, went to go get my shirt, something dropped, I went to go pick that up and my pants split. And I mean split like the whole thing.

LIN: Soup to nuts!

TOMMY: Ok. Your words, Mr. President.

[laughing]

TOMMY: Don't talk to me anymore.

And so, it was like if you wanna talk about like a tie being cut before you have to go on, I was due at the White House in like 15 minutes and had no pants. I did happen to bring a backup suit, so I throw on the backup suit and I'm like "if that's the one - where are we going after this?" Well, we're in the East Room, back where you did the first one.

LIN: Right

TOMMY: There's the portrait - that I think was the one Dolley Madison saved from the White House when it was burning - of George Washington, is above the company. Now, I have two things about this that are really etched. One is: I was standing behind Chris Jackson as we were being greeted by President Obama, and the president looked at Chris and said, "Mr. President..." and it took everything in me not to start weeping. I mean, it was... and watching them sort of embrace, and there I was. And we then went to do this thing we call the 'group

click'. We all, like, stand - we're all waiting there. So I'm standing next to Chris, and we're staring ahead, waiting for the president and First Lady to step in, and Chris is standing there, staring ahead, and I know that if I look at him, I'm going to get emotional. So I'm just staring ahead and I say "Just for the record..." and he said "do *not* make cry in this picture".

HRISH + LIN: [Laughter]

TOMMY: And then we go in to do the concert, and I'm sitting with the company, but I also have this vantage point where I can see both the President, I can the performers, I can see the band. And then I have this view of Lin, setting up his dear friend. I see Chris, eight feet from the president, who is thinking about legacy - who is moving to this next phase, and so Lin's very emotional, the cast is melting, and I see Chris, and as he sings the last note, his head is back so far, a tear from his left eye goes into his left ear. And I see that, and I see the president with his jaw clenched, and Lin crying and Chris, and I'm like 'that's the limit', like 'that's it', like 'that's what'll be in my brain', and those kinds of moments - to do that with your peers in this incredible company, and it started because Lin scribbled some stuff down, that he then performed somehow in that same room. It was all [cross talk] whirring around, and that was, you know, one of those days.

LIN: [cross talk] It was intense. It doesn't go away.

TOMMY: [garbled] I was going to say something - that does not go away.

HRISHI: Tell me about the song itself.

TOMMY: Well, you know, I love hearing Lin talk about it, because what he's saying is absolutely true. And Chris can do things that Lin can't do. Lin understands that voice and can give Chris a chance to elevate to a place that maybe on his own might not be possible. It's that kind of synergy - what Lin brings out in Chris, what Chris brings out in Lin. And of course, I watch it, and I think 'well, Lin is the president there, and I'm Hamilton'.

LIN: And also, to rewind, that was one of the biggest rewrites from off-Broadway to Broadway. Off-Broadway, it encapsulated too much. We tried to work the whiskey rebellion in there, too, so there's just like, a lot of events happening in the song, and we sort of - on our transition to Broadway said 'let's distill this to the most important thing he did', and the most important thing he did was: step down. And I'm struggling with it. We're in rehearsals for the show, and I'm still figuring out what the language is that gets us to that next level, and this is where our collaboration comes in. Tommy goes 'well, what Washington's reaching for is his thing about vine and fig tree.' And I went 'what?' And he goes "you know, his vine and fig tree thing", and I went 'I didn't grow up in Virginia. I don't know what you're talking about', and he said 'he used - there was a bible quote that he always used - that he used several times, about everyone getting to, like, have their own vine and fig tree, and I was like 'get out of the room'. And he went to rehearse some actors, and I looked up the bible quote, and it was so perfect for the moment, and I knew exactly how Chris would sing it.

[*Hamilton: An American Musical* song “Your Own Vine and Fig Tree” excerpt]

WASHINGTON: *I wanna sit under my own vine and fig tree / A moment alone in the shade / At home in this nation we've made / One last time.*

[end excerpt]

LIN: So I wrote that bridge, and that was what unlocked, sort of, getting to church; getting to the next section of the song, but it was a piece of information that Tommy had that I just didn't have, because I didn't know that.

TOMMY: And this - I mean, I remember this moment very clearly, because when you're rehearsing, there are three rooms going. I was in, sort of, the big room, and Lin was off googling himself and pretending to write in the other room...

LIN: Tweeting with Malina

TOMMY: So I walk in the room, and he, like, minimizes the window - I was like 'I know what you're doing!' [laughter from all] So he's over there, and he's just banging his head against the wall, and I'm just, like, walking around the room. He's sitting there at the desk, and we have this conversation that unfolds - as he said - and, you know, I grew up in the shadow of Mount Vernon. I grew up 15 minutes from Mount Vernon, and this thing was somehow stuck there, and it was in my brain, and I pulled it out in that moment, and I just put it into the air - I mean, it could not have been more casual. It's not like I ran in and be like 'this is it!' [cross talk] You know...

LIN: [cross talk] 'I've got it!'

TOMMY: It was like, 'hey - maybe it's something like that. And again, this kinda gets back to the subliminal understanding. I saw Lin sit up. And Lin does this thing where he sits up. And you're like 'Oh. Something's happening.' And he sort of asks me to repeat it, and I repeated it again, and he was like 'I got it. Ok, ok, ok, ok I got it, I got it, I got it.' And then my job is to get out of the room. My job is to go and continue with the other stuff I need to do, and he walked in the room - and I don't mean he walked in the room like two days later. He walked in the room a short while later, and he was like 'I have it'. But of course, he'd been writing that song for three years. Like, it was just packed in in a way, and so, sometimes if you move one little thing, it just un... like, it moves the dirt around. And then it starts to float.

HRISHI: If you say 'joy cometh in the morning' at the right time

LIN: If you were to say 'Joy cometh in the morning' - oh yeah! I love, like, talking to you and seeing you. Watching your brain be like 'this is maybe that thing where they...' [laughter] the math of your brain is - you know, having heard your voice for quite a while, it's actually pretty crazy [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] That's awesome.

HRISHI: I have a list compiled with help from Lizzy, from *The Hamwing*, [cross talk] who've put together a list of as many *Hamilton/West Wing* crossover moments that I could find on the internet.

LIN: [cross talk] Hey! Amazing.

TOMMY: So what's the internet?

LIN: [laughs] The internet people have gone crazy! This is on LemonLyman.com

HRISHI: Let me start with, I think this was from maybe 2011, on Twitter, Lin - you started casting [cross talk] *The West Wing* as a musical.

LIN: [cross talk] Yes! I forgot! That was actually the first thing I ever did on Twitter, was...

TOMMY: This is the Rosetta Stone?

LIN: This is the Rosetta Stone! I'd had an account for, like, two years, but I was just an egg. I just used it to read Twitter occasionally, and then I thought I have something I can contribute to Twitter!' And so I started just doing the musical theater equivalents of who would play what in *The West Wing*. I was like 'here are two things I love that I can talk about.' And, I mean, I made friends with people that are still my friends from fighting about this! Like @scamandalous who was like 'Lin Miranda's tweeting a lot about *West Wing*, like casting's my thing!' And I was like, ok, well check this out. I think Josh Henry should play Charlie Young, which I stand by. So yeah. That's a pretty good list.

HRISHI: It *is* a pretty good list, and there are things here - references that I don't understand, like that Alice Ripley and Brian d'Arcy James, as the President and First Lady, would be a *Next to Normal* reunion?

LIN: Yes - they were both in the company of that show

HRISHI: I mean, I guess I understand that, I just don't [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] He is a person, Lin, who can read.

HRISHI: But then Brian d'Arcy James was in *Hamilton*, he was [cross talk] King George

LIN: [cross talk] yeah he was our King George

TOMMY: Yeah, he was King George downtown, and then came back, ultimately, yes.

HRISHI: Right - are there other people in this dream casting list that ended up actually being in [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] Or as we like to say it: [singing] Intelligent eyes in a hunger pang frame / This is not a game / Brian d'Arcy James!

TOMMY: Josh Henry played the role of Aaron Burr in Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles - who is on that list. And the rest of those people...

HRISHI: Ok, here's some other stuff that I found. Oh - Josh gave me the bicycle is actually one of the videos from *Sad Sad Conversation*.

LIN: Yeah. It was one of the first videos where anyone from *Sad Sad* was in the same frame at the same time.

[*Sad Sad Conversation* episode "Lin 10-19-11 Part II - - with JOSH MALINA" excerpt]

JOSH: *If I'd known that filming this would include admitting that I drive a Volvo station wagon*

LIN: *Oh, I didn't shoot that! You just admitted it yourself!*

JOSH: *Can you believe I got this on top of my Porsche?*

LIN: *There's one commenter...[fades out]*

[end excerpt]

LIN: He, like, pulls it off his roof rack, and I ride off. And it was perfect, because I was living at the Westin Bonaventure, which was like ten blocks from the Ahmanson, so it was a bike ride away, and so I was biking to work - thanks to *The West Wing*.

HRISHI: Do you still have that bike?

LIN: I gave it to a friend who is here in LA - and I visit it.

HRISHI: Oh, I see, yeah, because otherwise you'd have to fly back to New York with a bike, yeah.

LIN: And I'm terrified of riding a bicycle in New York.

TOMMY: As is Thomas Kail - meaning of Lin riding a bike.

[laughter]

HRISHI: Ok, so, for real. 'More than one song a year'. You wrote that on a napkin?

TOMMY: I didn't write that on a napkin [cross talk]

HRISHI: [cross talk] He wrote it on a napkin

TOMMY: *He* wrote it on a napkin and gave it to me, sort of distilling what I'd said to him that fateful day of [cross talk] January 11th 2012.

LIN: [cross talk] That was my opening night present for him.

HRISHI: That's awesome. And Lizzy from the *Hamwing* gave you a 'Miranda for America' napkin?

LIN: Yes she did! It was so nice to meet her because she was, sort of, on her own, independently, any time I'd Tweet something, she'd find the *West Wing* equivalent of it.

HRISHI: Oh right

LIN: It was very entertaining

HRISHI: And your dressing room on Broadway had a bunch of *West Wing* things in there

LIN: Yeah, well it had the napkin Lizzy gave me. It had these 'Bartlet for America' posters with me in my, like, Hamilton getup. That's what when Richard Schiff came to see the show, he came back and saw all this stuff - he just, like, started bawling.

TOMMY: There's also - in *One Last Time* - to that end - there's a moment with Hamilton, when Hamilton and his family are standing off to the side, where he does the Richard Schiff 'heart moment'. And that was something that's not prescribed in all the companies, but that was for Lin and Chris [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] Yeah, that's how we do it

TOMMY: This moment - I mean, we sort of have some other gesture, but that was, I mean - that's a steal. And I think he saw it during the show, right?

LIN: Yeah he saw it during the show. I definitely did it on the night he was there.

HRISHI: And you knew he was in the audience already, yeah

LIN: Yes. Yeah.

HRISHI: Can you explain what Ham for Ham is, for people who might not know?

LIN: Sure! It happened quite by accident and then became our show-within-a-show, whereas my spotlight-shy wife likes to tell me 'you found *another* audience outside the audience for your show?! What's wrong with you?' But we had this in-person lottery - all the tickets in the front row are ten bucks. And now it's the first two rows - we've expanded to two rows in all of our companies. But we were placing bets on how many people would show up: 100 people are going to show up; 200 people - with all the excitement from off-Broadway, and 730 people showed up to our first Lotto. And Tommy, in his alarm-bell way, said 'we're about to send 710 people into a very hot New York city, very angry. We should get out there and do something, and so I got up, and I said... I just, like, did a little impromptu speech, and then it became 'oh man, we saw Lin', and so everybody had a happy story, rather than sending 710 losers out into the world, and Tommy said [cross talk]

TOMMY: [cross talk] He means that they lost the lottery

LIN: That they lost the lottery

TOMMY: Not that they were playing the lottery

LIN: Yeah, and Tommy was like, 'well as long we're in previews, and we're all in the building, we should do something like that every day'

TOMMY: Yeah - it was about narrative. So, I was standing there. We'd finished rehearsal at 5; our show was at 8, and we went to go peep out, because at 5.30 they were going to do this lottery. Downtown, we get maybe 150/200 people show up. And it became a little bit of a badge of honor: 'oh I lost the lottery!' and people post their, you know, stuff online. And we open the door - and it was a little like that scene in the cartoon, where it's like [makes gaspy door noise], and, like, the door closes because, there's like, there's a lot of people of there. And then the doorman says 'look to the left', and we looked down 8th Avenue and on 46th Street to 8th, there were 4 deep for, like, 300 yards. And so the door closes, and Lin looks at me, and was like 'I gotta go out there.' And I was like 'yeah yeah yeah, go go go go'. So he goes out there, so now I'm watching from the side, right, that's like a very *West Wing*-y shot, like over-the-shoulder. And I see him get to talk to these people that are just coming to try to connect to our show, and he's really happy, and they seem really happy to see him, so as he came back in, Lin's like 'ok that went well', like 'that was really fun', and I said 'we have 30 previews. Let's let the story be 'I got to see Chris Jackson play the ukulele; I got to see Pippa sing this song; I got to see Anthony and Jasmine do this arrangement of this other thing. And then Lin had the generosity of spirit to, like, let's broaden this out. Let's get that really cool tap dancer from that show to [cross talk]

LIN: [cross talk] yeah we started pulling in people from other shows

TOMMY: Yeah, and then it became, like, this free theater [cross talk]

LIN: [unintelligible]... have a show to plug, like, come to sing some stuff

TOMMY: Yeah, and that just made us feel like we were, you know, plugged into this community we loved so much, and so it started like that.

LIN: It also became, you know, once the show was frozen, it became my creative outlet after the show. So 'ok, Wednesday I can get Patti LuPone to be there, and Oak can do his, like, singing Idina Menzel songs like Minnie Mouse on Saturday. And so it was like, a way to promote the talent that's in our building, and also a way to reach out to all the shows that we share real estate with.

HRISHI: And the reason I bring it up is because - I'm curious if you feel this way - but I think, probably, that the clearest crystallization of *The West Wing* and *Hamilton* is one of the digital versions that you did, where you did the actual walk and talk.

[*Digital #Ham4Ham 3/23/16 --The West Wing Cabinet Battle excerpt*]

HAMILTON: *We plant seeds in the South. We create. / Yeah, keep ranting / We know who's really doing the planting. / And another thing, Mr. Age of Enlightenment / Don't lecture me about the war, you didn't fight in it / You think I'm frightened of you, man?*

[end excerpt]

TOMMY: It's like an 'awk and talk', it's so awkward. Because it's like we're just saying these words really fast because we're in the West Wing, and we're like 'well we have to do it', and so we just do the cabinet battle as dialogue

LIN: Yes! That's right

TOMMY: And we're like 'end with them looking out of the window!'

LIN: And we were hoping - we were trying... we were angling to get the Situation Room, like, we were angling to get...

TOMMY: The answer was no?

LIN: The answer was **NO!** You do not get to go in the real Situation Room. But, like, they gave us a really nice room!

TOMMY: Yeah, yeah

HRISHI: So can you set up what this is, and how it all happened?

TOMMY: This is the day of... So this is the day that's fateful March 14th, and we had a little bit of time in the morning, and so we wanted to make a couple *Ham4Ham* videos, because we started realizing that we weren't going to do them live all the time

LIN: We weren't going to do them live in the winter, because we didn't want to make people suffer

TOMMY: Yeah, and like, stand outside in the cold. So, we were going to do this one with the women in our show. It was going to be in this really, particular spot in the White House that had portraits of... all of the First Ladies, [cross talk] I believe?

LIN: [cross talk] Yeah

TOMMY: And this is when we were downstairs, and we're like 'let's get our Jefferson; let's get our Madison; let's get the president, and Lin here, and let's just start the thing out. Let's walk through a door. You know, we're shooting it on a phone, or something like that, and it really was just, 'let's take advantage of this' because at the end of the day, they let us in the West Wing.

LIN: Yeah, we're never going to be here again

TOMMY: There's no, like, second invitation, so let's try it, and they were really cool about it. And they were like 'yeah, and you can shoot your stuff', so we made a couple of those, and that was one that - I think we did it, like twice, because we had to be somewhere else in 17 minutes. So we just kind of, like...we were like a bunch of, like, idiot kids, running around the West Wing, like, trying to grab as much stuff as we could

LIN: Just making...

TOMMY: Not stuff, like steal it - I mean make stuff!

HRISHI: But you also come to the decision that you're going to use the walk-and-talk format of *The West Wing* [cross talk] for that piece.

TOMMY: [cross talk] oh, yeah - I mean how else are we? I mean we're not going to cover the thing! [laughter from all] like, yes. We are definitely doing that. I think there's one cut at the end when he looks out of the window, or something like that. Yes we were going to try the best we could. And we made a video with the British company about two months ago, when we opened there in December, and we mashed up a lot of British rock n roll songs

LIN: Yeah. British songs with songs from *Hamilton*. *Help!* and *Helpless*. *Satisfied* and *Satisfaction*

TOMMY: And like Adele with *Say No to This*. And we did that in one. And that was to show our whole company; to show our orchestra, and we started down in the pit and went all the way up.

It was like a three and a half minute shot. And I think we did four of them. And that was like the day before we opened. And also like, burn off energy, to try to put your head in something else, and again, to share the show with as many people as we can, and let them know that we're here because of those songs; we're here because of so many other things.

LIN: Tell me the story - so you posted this...

TOMMY: Oh we posted this thing. I did get an email from Mr. Tommy Schlamme, aka, the Real Tommy, and he basically said, very generously 'we might have mastered the walk n talk, but I think you guys really handled the walk n sing', and I was like 'gentlemen [cross talk] - I'm done'. So thanks! The career was...

LIN: [cross talk] That's framed. That email's framed.

TOMMY: You know, when he was elected to be President of DGA, I just wrote him an email, and I just said 'I serve at the pleasure of the President'. Send. I mean, that was definitely happening.

HRISHI: And Lin, how did your first meeting with Aaron go? We saw some stuff online. You posted a picture of you were wearing a Bartlet t-shirt.

LIN: I did. He sent a very generous email after he saw the show and then, like, I - I'm never out here in LA, so the first time we had breakfast was - probably about a year ago? Was it the Oscars this time last year? No, it was more recent than that. We had breakfast, and I actually had a Bartlet for America shirt on under my hoodie, and I was like, I can't actually reveal that I'm wearing this! Oh, and I didn't reveal it until after. But again, it was like, there were so many weird similarities. We both played Judas in *Godspell* in high school which, you know, I don't think there's a direct line between that pattern and the way we write, [sings] but 'some men not born to live at ease / doing what they please / richer than bees are in honey.' That we both...

TOMMY: That's from a musical?

LIN: That's from *Godspell*. That's the Judas track, and I think it's funny that we both played that role.

HRISHI: I also am so thrilled that you're both wearing *West Wing Weekly* t-shirts under your hoodies right now!

LIN: Hell yeah!

TOMMY: Let's make it official

LIN: In the words of Chris Jackson: 'Dress like you've been there'

[laughter]

TOMMY: Or they asked you to go once, and then never again.

LIN: Exactly.

HRISHI: Well, can we read the words on your shirt there, Tommy?

TOMMY: Well obviously I'm going with the classic: Ok, Ok. What's Next?

LIN: And that'll be the end of the episode. And then I've got the hand for safe passage.

HRISHI: Thank you guys so much for doing this. Thank you for spending your morning with me.

LIN: It is our true - our treat.

TOMMY: Our what?

LIN: [cross talk] Our Troot? Our Truth? OH!

TOMMY: [cross talk] He's such a good talker, and such a bad writer.

LIN: The Flent!

[cut back to studio]

JOSH: Well that was pretty fantastic. Well done, Hrishu.

HRISHI: Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening, Josh!

JOSH: There are other interviews we've done where I've asked a similar number of questions.

[both laugh]

I mean, usually I get something in there, but there are times where I haven't had much to say. I let you take the lead usually. This is now what it feels like when I'm just completely gone. It wasn't jarring or a step down.

HRISHI: Thanks so much to our guests. You can follow Lin @Lin_Manuel. Tommy Kail is not on Twitter. My co-host Josh Malina is @JoshMalina.

JOSH: You have a co-host?

HRISHI: [chuckles] I'm @HrishiHirway. Our show's @westwingweekly. Lizzy from the Hamwing is @thehamwing. *Hamilton* is also on Twitter @HamiltonMusical

JOSH: *The West Wing Weekly* is a proud member of *Radiotopia* which is a collection of fabulous podcasts. I'm a big fan of the other offerings on *Radiotopia*, and you can check them out at radiotopia.fm

HRISHI: Thanks as always to Zach McNeese and Margaret Miller for helping us make this show.

JOSH: Indeed. They're the best. And we're leaving for a tour! Very, very exciting!

HRISHI: That's right. And as such, we'll be off for a little bit. When we come back, you'll hear our live episode that was recorded in Dublin with Richard Schiff, coming up soon.

JOSH: Ok

HRISHI: Ok

LIN & TOMMY: What's next?

[Outro Music]