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**“Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?”**

**Lin-Manuel Miranda’s**

***Hamilton: An American Musical***

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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this final project will be to analyze and comprehend the relevance and impact of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015) on musical theater as well as in society in general. The focus will be put on both the creative process and the critical reception the show has received since its premiere. To do so, I will provide a complete and detailed summary of the plot and the main characters, as well as a close-reading analysis of five specific songs: "My Shot," "One Last Time," "Non-Stop," "Dear Theodosia," and "The Schuyler Sisters." The methodology used to achieve these goals will include, firstly, the study of *Hamilton: The Revolution* by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, which is the main source of information on which this dissertation will be based on and, secondly, a compilation of interviews given by the members of the creative team which include the actors and actresses as well as Miranda himself. The conclusions reached are that *Hamilton: An American Musical* has marked a before and an after in the history of musical theater and the way in which history is taught. Consequently, it will serve as an inspiration for future works of similar (or greater) importance.

**Keywords:** musical theater, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, hip-hop, history, US, revolution, slavery, race, use of language

“Legacy. What is a legacy?

It’s planting seeds in a garden you never get to see.”

Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton: An American Musical*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Spanish philosopher George Santayana once said that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (*The Life of Reason*. Vol. 1. Chapter XII). This affirmation may seem outdated today, given that one can have access to the history of the world from every possible viewpoint through a quick Internet search. The truth, however, is far from that: the education system in developed countries such as the United States is systematically biased when it comes to their own former times, thus, depriving their citizens from properly learning about the truth of where they stand. *Hamilton: An American Musical* is Lin-Manuel Miranda’s attempt to retell the story of the United States from a more attractive and accessible point of view.

Despite the numerous liberties taken for the sake of storytelling, Miranda achieves a point of truth in his most ambitious work to date: he gracefully captures Hamilton’s rivalry with Thomas Jefferson (which eventually prompted the death of his career in politics), the scandalous affair he had with Maria Reynolds, also known as the first sexual scandal in politics in the history of the United States, as well as the fact that his wife, Elizabeth Schuyler, carried on with his legacy after his death in 1795, this being the main reason why so many of his documents are available today for the world to read. The veracity of these powerful plot-points in the story, however, does not imply that the show should be taken as a history lesson: it does not claim to be one, as taught by Benjamin Park in his “Age of Hamilton” course at Sam Houston State University. Park states that “[several lines] raise the

question in your mind that history isn't direct facts from the past where we know exactly what happened, but it's actually crafted by people and it's framed" (Park 2019). This inevitably includes the show itself as somewhat unreliable, as it should. Christopher Jones, teacher of Early American History at Brigham Young University and renowned theater critic, concludes in his book *Rise Up! Broadway and American Society from Angels in America to Hamilton* (2018) that "You're not getting an objective history when you go and see *Hamilton*. You're getting an interpretation of Hamilton and his life and its significance" (Jones 19).

Based on the above statements, it must be addressed, before proceeding to the analysis of other aspects of the play, that *Hamilton* does not discuss in any detail the question of slavery. "Slavery is acknowledged in a handful of lyrics, but you can never really sense that enslaved individuals were active participants in the American Revolution itself. They were, and I think that their actions were crucial to understanding that period" (Jones 27). A flaw noted by critics and historians alike is the fact that Hamilton is portrayed by Miranda as an abolitionist: in the song "Cabinet Battle #1," in which Jefferson and Hamilton have a rap-battle-style debate, Hamilton recriminates Jefferson's enslaver practices by saying:

"A civics lesson from a slaver, hey neighbor  
Your debts are paid because you don't pay for labor.  
'We plant seeds in the South. We create.'  
Yeah, keep ranting,  
we know who's really doing the planting."

This comes off as quite ironic considering that, while Hamilton may have had moments in which he questioned the belief that POC ("people of color") were inferior to white people (in 1779 Hamilton wrote a letter to fellow Founding Father John Jay where he states that "their [people of color] natural faculties are probably as good as ours," which is

terribly problematic), he was definitely part of the problem. The financial system that he created was built on the trade of slaves, especially in the South of the country, and it has also been attested that, as stated by researcher Jessie Serfilippi in her paper “‘As Odious and Immoral a Thing’: Alexander Hamilton’s Hidden History as an Enslaver,” Hamilton’s own cashbook proves that he bought and sold black people in various occasions, both for his own household and for his in-laws.

Now that this has been clarified and, thus, leaving it aside, the main aim of this dissertation will be to thoroughly analyze the impact of *Hamilton* in the world of musical theater, the way it has changed the methods by which certain historic episodes are taught (especially at schools) and, more importantly, the conversation it has started about race, inclusion, politics, feminism, and the value of history. This will be achieved through the study of articles, essays, and interviews to historians, critics, members of the cast and the creative team and, finally, Lin-Manuel Miranda himself.

To reach my goals, I have divided this essay in five main sections: in the first one, called “THE CREATIVE PROCESS,” I cover the creation of *Hamilton* —that is, the way Lin-Manuel Miranda came up with this way of telling the story of a historical figure such as Alexander Hamilton, as well as the way he uses the English language contributed to the making of such a remarkable piece— and the concept of color-blind casting, a practice widely used in the Broadway scene that attempted to give all actors the same opportunities, regardless of their physical appearances. In “CRITICAL RECEPTION” I refer to the different controversies that this play has generated due to the topics it touches, such as slavery or the —sometimes— wrongful glorification of historical figures. As for “PLOT AND CHARACTERS,” I thoroughly explain the entirety of the play, referencing the songs that coincide with the different moments in Hamilton’s life. Later on, I briefly describe the most

important characters, such as Hamilton's family, his friends, his allies and, also, his enemies. Lastly, in "THE MUSICAL: A SELECTION OF SONGS," I analyze five songs that carry great significance in both the story and the reception of the public: "My Shot," in which Hamilton's intentions are introduced; "One Last Time," Washington's farewell letter to his position as president; "Non-Stop" which marks Hamilton's political ascent just as his personal life begins to fall apart; "Dear Theodosia" where Hamilton and Burr explore the similarities being a parent and being a political leader; and, finally, "The Schuyler Sisters" which introduces two of the most important women in Hamilton's life.

As for the reasons behind the choosing of this topic for my final year project, it goes without saying that I feel personally inclined to musical theater in general. However, I consider this play in particular to be much more than *just* a musical: it can be enjoyed from a linguistic perspective, as well as a way to get closer to the history of the US (despite its inaccuracies) while creating new dialogues about what we can learn from the past.

## 2. THE CREATIVE PROCESS

### 2.1 Lin-Manuel Miranda, the Hamilton Mixtape, and the power of language

Born in New York City in 1980, Lin-Manuel Miranda is an American actor, singer, rapper, songwriter, playwright, and producer of Puerto Rican descent. After reading a copy of the biography *Alexander Hamilton* (2004) by Ron Chernow while on vacation in Mexico, Miranda was inspired to write a rap about the founder of the Federalist Party (that he would later perform as a single act for the White House Evening of Poetry, Music, and the Spoken Word on May 12, 2009, invited by former President of the United States, Barack Obama). This song would become the opening number of Act I of *Hamilton*, titled "Alexander

Hamilton” in which the main character is introduced, and the audience gets a first glimpse of what his life was like, including his death by gunshot wound at the hands of Aaron Burr.

Before the musical, however, there was what Miranda called the *Hamilton Mixtape*. This concept album took him six years to make, “My Shot” being the song that required the longest time to be created (a whole year) as it was intended to portray how “the headlong rise of one self-made immigrant becomes the story of America” (Mead 2015). As explained by Spanish musician and YouTuber Jaime Altozano in his video “HAMILTON: ¿Por qué ha sido una revolución?,” a characteristic feature of the storytelling in *Hamilton* is the presence of “leitmotifs” inspired by Wagner’s operas, which serve the purpose of introducing characters and plot-points in a way that it is easier to identify and recognize by the audience. This practice is undoubtedly innovative and creates its own brand in the world of musical theater. The creative process behind *Hamilton* is certainly unique, as stated by Jeremy McCarter, co-writer of *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016) when he wrote: “[...] A bunch of people from a bunch of backgrounds had to come together to make it work, and they did this so well that an even bigger bunch of people from yet more backgrounds flocked to see it” (7). Art is unifying and doesn’t discriminate regarding social class or ethnicity, but what makes *Hamilton* so game changing is the fact that it brings together two ways of expression that might have seemed impossible to intertwine so seamlessly in the past: hip-hop and musical theater. McCarter calls it “[...] a musical that changes the way Broadway sounds, that alters who gets to tell the story of our founding, that lets us glimpse the new, more diverse America rushing our way” (8).

When seen as a fictional piece, *Hamilton* could be denominated as a period drama of sorts: the costumes, the events, and the story itself as a whole contribute to this depiction. What makes this play the complete opposite to the classic format in which the audience



consumes these stories is the way in which the story is told. This is probably the most obvious aspect that differentiates *Hamilton* from other plays. Miranda’s skills as a songwriter and his neatness in the art of rhyming are present from the opening number to the last one (called “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story”, which gives name to this essay). An example of his skills when it comes to writing rhymes can be seen in the following example, which belongs to the opening number of the show:

“How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore  
and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten  
spot in the Caribbean by providence,  
impoverished, in squalor,  
Grow up to be a hero and a scholar?”<sup>1</sup>

“The brilliance of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s wordplay and the complexity of rap as a form just allows for a much wordier kind of exposition than you could do in any other sung format,” as told by University of Utah professor Eric Hinderaker to online magazine *Deseret News* (2020). But not everything is rap and hip-hop in *Hamilton*: the show also features numbers that draw heavily on R&B (“Helpless”), ballad (“It’s Quiet Uptown”), soul (“Say No to This”), pop (“You’ll Be Back”), dancehall (“Wait for It”), and other sounds that fit more seamlessly into the traditional musical theater scope (“Dear Theodosia” or “History Has Its Eyes On You”).

Following on the topic of Miranda’s Pulitzer-winning skills<sup>2</sup> when it comes to creating lyrics, it is necessary to mention how the vocabulary he used when writing *Hamilton* played a role of utmost importance in the way the show was received by the general audience: the fact

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<sup>1</sup> This excerpt has been analyzed by Jennifer Harding for the feature of *Babel Magazine* titled “The Poetics of Hamilton,” published in May 2017. The different colors are to differentiate the stress that is put on the different syllables in order to make them follow a specific rhythm.

<sup>2</sup> Among the many awards, Miranda’s *Hamilton* won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2016.

that the characters communicate, most of the time, in a colloquial way (“The Reynolds Pamphlet”), using bad language (“Cabinet Battle #1 and #2), and many constructions that belong to the American slang (as it is common in rap and hip-hop) makes this show all the more attractive to unconventional audiences that perhaps have never felt any interest towards musical theater before but somehow find that *Hamilton* is something they actually like. This use of language also humanizes the characters even more, makes it easier for the audience to sympathize with them and helps them to see themselves in the characters’ shoes in the different situations that take place during the almost three hours it lasts. Ben Zimmer argues in his article for the online magazine *Slate* “Hamilton Through the Lens of Language” that “the language of *Hamilton* swings vertiginously from literary to colloquial, from high-flying to down-and-dirty. But at its root, it reflects Lin-Manuel Miranda’s lifelong fascination with the power of words in two seemingly disparate cultures: musical theater and hip-hop” (Zimmer 2016).

## 2.2 Broadway and the Old Concept of Color-Blind Casting

If there is something that usually characterizes musical theater casts in general is the way it rarely pays attention to the actor or actress’ physique: it is their performance what matters, their voices, and their ability to move the audience. In *Hamilton*, this plays a key role in the construction of the show: the cast is, almost in its entirety, non-white. This includes a black George Washington, a half-Chinese Elizabeth Schuyler, and a Puerto Rican Alexander Hamilton, among many others. This practice is obviously done on purpose: Miranda claims that this show is “America then, as told by America now,” and casting these actors and actresses of different ethnicities as white historic figures is his way of showing it. This is a provocative move on Miranda’s part considering the gaping wound of racism that still exists in America, and it has been widely praised. Nevertheless, he tends to be rather elusive when it comes to the true nature of this decision.

What is clear is that *Hamilton* is not just another example of what was previously known as “color-blind casting,” but it would be asserted to go deeper into this subject in order to properly understand the importance it holds. A color-blind casting, also known as nontraditional casting, integrated casting, or blind casting is, according to Adam Eisemberg’s 1988 article for *The New York Times* “NONTRADITIONAL CASTING: When Race and Sex Don’t Matter,” “[...] defined as the casting of ethnic minority actors in roles where race, ethnicity, or gender is not germane” (Eisemberg 1988). This concept worked in the past, when the point that casting directors and creatives were trying to make was that anyone was welcome to play any role and that, as aforementioned, art is inclusive. Society has changed ever since, and so have the reasons behind these decisions: inclusion and representation have always been important for POC and other minorities, but the issue is currently on the table. For example, the choice of making a live-action version of *The Little Mermaid* with a black actress playing Ariel should not be seen as a case of integrated casting (which it is, in a way), but more as a statement against all-white practices in the media industry that systematically excluded POC when it came to major roles. It is something that black children will hold on to, something that will shape their childhoods and make them feel seen and appreciated. Something similar happens in *Hamilton*, as stated by casting director Bernard Telsey for *Indie Wire Magazine*:

the term [color-blind casting] wasn’t wrong at one time. It was created with the idea that anyone can do anything, and we should be open to that. But now it’s much more about consciously making a choice to do something, being seen for the color you are. *Hamilton* does that. (Telsey 2020)

Furthermore, Leslie Odom Jr., who plays Aaron Burr (*Hamilton*’s antagonist in the show), adds: “There is irony, dissonance, and boldness attached to the way Lin [Miranda] and

Tommy [Kail] chose to populate the stage. That is done consciously. There's nothing blind about it" (Odom 2020).

### 3. CRITICAL RECEPTION

Generally speaking, *Hamilton* has been an instant success. Whether one talks about the original production or the ones that took place later on, no one is left indifferent after watching the show. Just like it happens with everything in life, however, especially in the world of the arts, there was some criticism that still made its way to the tabloids. This mostly had to do with the issue of slavery. As African American feminist critic and scholar Roxane Gay tweeted in 2020, in the midst of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, "I have a lot of thoughts about Hamilton and the way it idealizes the founders, and how such a brilliant musical dangerously elides their realities of slavery, but Leslie Odom Jr. put his FOOT in that performance. So talented." Nevertheless, she also stated that "it's a brilliant show. [...] It's not some vulnerable upstart. The show can handle critical engagement and the performances and book and music will still be absolutely incredible." During this open debate, Twitter user @GianmarcoSoresi said: "Loved *Hamilton*, but its near erasure of slavery in the narrative is like a musical about Hitler that focuses on the painting." Another user, @egertonsbucky added: "With [*Hamilton*] being released on Disney+ tomorrow, here's a reminder to never romanticize or glorify these characters since many of the founding fathers were slave owners. [Hamilton] wasn't an abolitionist, he was an anti-immigrant elitist who believed in slavery as an institution." Critic David Crow wrote for *Den of Geek*:

Slave owners Thomas Jefferson and George Washington are given a mostly positive depiction in the show, with the latter being glorified for his leadership and choice to cede power as the first American president. It was a monumental precedent Washington set, but the musical fails to mention the men and

women he also owned as property at Mt. Vernon (or where his teeth came from), nor does it explore Alexander Hamilton's own murky history with slavery, including that he married into the slave-owning Schuyler family and at least helped procure slaves for his in-laws, even if he personally disliked the institution." (Crow 2020)

To this justified backlash, Lin-Manuel Miranda responded through his Twitter account (@Lin\_Manuel) that "all the criticisms are valid. The sheer tonnage of complexities & failings of these people I couldn't get. Or wrestled with but cut. I took 6 years and fit as much as I could in a 2.5 hour-musical. Did my best. It's all fair game" (Miranda 2020). Moreover, in a 2016 interview for the *Rolling Stone* magazine, he explained that a third meeting song (which would thus have been titled "Cabinet Battle #3") had been written but never made the cut for the final product because "it was Hamilton and Jefferson and Madison knocking it from all sides of the issue... and in the end, no one does anything. Which is what happened in reality! So, we realized we were bringing our show to a halt on something that none of them really did enough on" (Miranda 2016).

Leslie Odom Jr., who has already been mentioned in this essay as he has always been very involved in the *Hamilton* phenomenon, told Den of Geek in 2020 the story of how a woman contacted him to tell him the following: "My friends and I talk about Hamilton a lot, and we talk about the fact that we don't think it's revolutionary at all. We just think it's a bunch of People of Color telling white people's story again. What do you think of that?" To this, Odom replied:

Here's what I know: Lin wrote the story that was on his heart to write. I signed on to be a part of the show that I believed in. That was our leg of the race. Now it's your turn. There's no doubt in my mind that some young kid is going to look at Hamilton and write the show that makes what we did look quaint.

That might be happening at this very moment. A show's going to come along that makes this look cute at some point. But [*Hamilton*] was meaningful, there was protest in its time. The fact that it's been so successful and it's so ubiquitous, things are taken for granted about this show. The fact that it is the language of the streets; the fact that it is people that have historically been disenfranchised and shut out of a story taking ownership of it and retelling the story in their own words. There's protest in that. So, there was power in it. All I said to the young woman was, 'I can't wait to see the show that you write.' This is the beginning of a conversation, and I can't wait to see the show that it inspires. (Odom 2020)

## 4. PLOT AND CHARACTERS

### 4.1 Plot<sup>3</sup>

To learn about the plot of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*, roughly speaking, one only needs to listen to the opening song titled "Alexander Hamilton." In Act I, the audience learns about the protagonist of this story: Alexander Hamilton, a young man in his twenties that, after being left an orphan at the age of ten (his mother was a prostitute who died of yellow fever), begins his quest to emigrate to a new-born America to find a better future for himself. Hamilton's childhood and early years are not easy: he moves in with his cousin after his mother's passing, but he commits suicide. He is then alone in the world, which prompts his drive to rise in the social scale and become someone important. He eventually travels to New York, after the people from his birthplace, Charlestown (then part of the British West Indies), help him collect the money he needs to do so. Once he arrives ("Aaron Burr, Sir,"

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<sup>3</sup> This is, by no means, what happened in real life. It is just the fictional plot of *Hamilton: An American Musical*.

“My Shot,” “The Story of Tonight”), he meets four men: Marquis de La Fayette, John Laurens, Hercules Mulligan, and Aaron Burr. Hamilton becomes good friends with the first three but shows an evident clash of personalities with Burr (he later on refers to him as “my first friend, my enemy”). He explains his plans to them: he says that he’s “just like [his] country; young, scrappy, and hungry” and that he wants to study at King’s College. Hamilton is aware of his abilities and his power of speech, and so he displays it to his new friends’ content. He also reflects on the concept of death, something that is very closely linked to him during the entirety of the show: “I imagine death so much/It feels more like a memory/When’s it gonna get me?/In my sleep?/Seven feet ahead of me?/If I see it coming, do I run or do I let it be?/Is it like a beat without a melody?/See, I never thought I’d live past twenty/Where I come from some get half as many/Ask anybody why we livin’ fast and we laugh/Reach for a flask/We have to make this moment last/That’s plenty.”

After this scene, “the Schuyler sisters” (Angelica, Eliza, and Peggy) are introduced. These characters are of high social class, which is clear from the way they dress, the way they speak, and the references they make to topics that were probably unknown to women of lower status (like reading Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*). Their father, Philip Schuyler, is a war general who eventually becomes Senator of the city of New York.

Following the introduction of the sisters, other important characters appear: the first American Episcopal bishop and known Loyalist Samuel Seabury (“Farmer Refuted”), King George III (“You’ll Be Back”) and, most importantly for Hamilton’s storyline, George Washington (“Right Hand Man”). It is during this last number that the audience witnesses again the animosity between Hamilton and Aaron Burr, as the latter is clearly jealous of the immigrant’s relationship with his admired general.

At a party (“A Winter’s Ball”), Hamilton officially meets the Schuyler sisters and, despite feeling instantly attracted to Angelica, the eldest and wittiest, he eventually proposes

to Eliza (“Helpless”). In a magnificent display of creativity and just pure talent on Miranda’s part, the story of Alexander’s and Eliza’s engagement is subsequently retold from Angelica’s perspective (“Satisfied”), where the audience learns that despite these two characters’ chemistry, the fact that both of them need to marry rich makes it impossible for them to be together.

Alexander’s wedding to Eliza takes place and, while he is celebrating with his friends, Aaron Burr confides in him that he is in a relationship with a woman named Theodosia that is married to a British officer. Despite this, Burr is determined to continue with the affair, and reflects on his reputation as a man who does not act upon anything (“Wait for It”). Burr sings: “Hamilton doesn’t hesitate/He exhibits no restraint/ He takes and he takes and he takes/And he keeps winning anyway/He changes the game, He plays and he raises the stakes/And if there’s a reason/He seems to thrive when so few survive/Then goddammit— I’m willing to wait for it.”

Already fighting for the independence of America, Hamilton writes letters to Eliza and Angelica, telling them about the hardships they endure on the battlefield (“Stay Alive”). At a given moment, General Charles Lee speaks ill about Washington and, due to Hamilton being unable to challenge him to a duel because Washington warned him against it, Laurens volunteers (“Ten Duel Commandments”). He shoots Lee, which angers Washington as his men fighting each other should be the least of his problems given the circumstances (“Meet Me Inside”). After this event, Washington decides to send Hamilton home, partly due to the conflict, and partly due to the news that Eliza is expecting (“That Would Be Enough”). The war continues, and Hamilton eventually returns to the battlefield (“Guns and Ships”), where Washington reminds him of the importance of the role they are playing (“History Has Its Eyes on You”), and Hamilton regains his confidence and self-purpose at the Battle of Yorktown, the last battle (“Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down).”



King George III wonders what will happen now that Britain no longer holds power over America (“What Comes Next?”). Some time passes and the audience now learns that both Hamilton and Burr have had children of their own: Hamilton has a son, named Philip after Eliza’s father, and Burr has a daughter, named Theodosia after her mother, who passed away (“Dear Theodosia”). Fatherhood makes both of them very happy and they are proudly willing to make the world a better place for their children. They sing: “You will come of age with our young nation/We’ll bleed and fight for you/We’ll make it right for you”. Sadly, news that John Laurens, Hamilton’s dear friend, has been killed in a gunfight against British troops that were retreating from South Carolina (“Tomorrow There’ll Be More of Us”) reaches the Hamilton household shortly after. Far from allowing this to undermine his morale, Hamilton goes back to New York to finish his studies and become a lawyer, as does Burr (“Non-Stop”). At this point, Hamilton asks Burr to help him write a series of anonymous essays meant to elaborate the new Constitution of the United States. Burr refuses out of his struggle to be part of important matters (Hamilton sings: “Burr, we studied, and we fought, and we killed/For the notion of a nation we now get to build/For once in your life, take a stand with pride/I don’t understand how you stand to the side”). He later on learns that Hamilton has found two partners for the job: James Madison and John Jay. Of the eighty-five essays they write, titled *The Federalist Papers*, Jay wrote five, Madison twenty-nine, and Hamilton the other fifty-one. Burr keeps on wondering: “How do you write like you’re running out of time? / How do you write like tomorrow won’t arrive?/How do you write like you need it to survive?” It is also during this number that the audience sees how Hamilton and Angelica still have feelings for each other despite her being now married, as well as Eliza’s failed attempts at regaining her husband’s attention. Adding to this the pressure of living up to Washington’s expectations, Hamilton has a breakdown.

Act II begins with Thomas Jefferson's arrival in the United States after his time in France as the American Ambassador ("What'd I Miss?") and receives a letter from Washington asking him to be the Secretary of State. It is during this number that the show references Sally Hemings,<sup>4</sup> the slave owned by Jefferson with whom he had ("allegedly") six children: "There's a letter on my desk from the President/Haven't even put my bag down yet/Sally, be a lamb, darlin', won'tcha open it?"

From this point forward, Hamilton's political career is constantly challenged by Jefferson's presence, and both men engage in heated debates in which they insult each other and try to bring the other down ("Cabinet Battle #1"). Seeing her husband overtaken by the situation, Eliza asks Alexander to go on holiday with her, Philip Jr. and Angelica, who has come from London to see them ("Take a Break"). Hamilton refuses, stating that he has to get his debt plan through Congress. Feeling tired and frustrated, Hamilton meets a woman named Maria Reynolds. Maria sings: "I know you are a man of honor/I'm so sorry to bother you at home/But I don't know where to go/And I came here all alone/My husband's doin' me wrong/Beatin' me, cheatin' me, mistreatin' me/Suddenly he's up and gone/I don't have the means to go on." Alexander Hamilton and Maria Reynolds initiate a secret relationship until her husband, James Reynolds, finds out. He sings: "Dear sir, I hope this letter finds you in good health/And in a prosperous enough position to put wealth in the pockets of people like me/Down on their luck/You see: that was my wife who you decided to— [...] Uh-oh! You made the wrong sucker a cuckold/So time to pay the piper for the pants you unbuckled/And hey, you can keep seeing my whore wife/If the price is right/If not, I'm telling your wife." Being afraid about his reputation and his marriage being destroyed in one blow, Hamilton agrees to Reynolds' blackmail and gives him the money.

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<sup>4</sup> In the song that did not make it to the musical, "Cabinet Battle #3" in which slavery is discussed, Hamilton says: "Sir, even you, you have hundreds of slaves/Whose descendants will curse our names when we're safe in our graves/How will the south find labor for its businesses? / How will Thomas Jefferson find his next mistresses?" The last line is a clear reference to Sally Hemings.

Some time passes and Hamilton is back in the political scene (“The Room Where It Happens”) and, for the first time, the audience sees Burr taking action and siding with Jefferson after Hamilton sings: “When you got skin in the game/You stay in the game/But you don’t get a win unless you play in the game/You get love for it/You get hate for it/You get nothing if you *wait for it, wait for it, wait!*/What do you want, Burr?/What do you want, Burr?/If you stand for nothing, Burr/What do you fall for?”

Following this, Philip Schuyler Sr. is defeated by Burr as Senator of New York City (“Schuyler Defeated”). Hamilton is furious at Burr for changing parties just to run against Schuyler, but Burr is proud of his decision because he got what he wanted. Fighting again against Jefferson (“Cabinet Battle #2”), the protagonists discuss whether America should aid France as they are on the verge of war against England. Jefferson thinks that they should, as France also helped them when they were in need: “JEFFERSON: When we were on death’s door/When we were needy/We made a promise/We signed a treaty/We needed money and guns and half a chance/Who provided those funds? MADISON: ...France.” Hamilton, however, believes that America is not strong enough to put themselves in the midst of war again. He sings: “We signed a treaty with a king whose head is now in a basket/Would you like to take it out and ask it? /’Should we honor our treaty, King Louis’ head?’/’Uh... do whatever you want, I’m super dead.”

Aware that Washington has a soft spot for Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, and Burr plot against him (“Washington on Your Side”), followed by Washington telling Hamilton that he does not want to run for president again (“One Last Time”). Washington sings: “If I say goodbye, the nation learns to move on/It outlives me when I’m gone.”

King George III appears once again to let the audience know that John Adams is the new President (“I Know Him”), and states that “they’re gonna eat him alive.” Hamilton despises Adams despite both of them being of the same party and writes an angry pamphlet

against him (“The Adams Administration”), calling him a “fat, arrogant, anti-charismatic national embarrassment.” It is at this point that Jefferson, Madison and Burr decide to let Alexander Hamilton know that they know something about him: he signed some checks worth almost a thousand dollars to a Mr. James Reynolds in 1791. Thus, accused of speculation, Hamilton decides to salvage his reputation by writing *The Reynolds Pamphlet*, where he confesses his relationship with Maria and therefore exculpating himself as a thief only to frame himself as a cheater. Hamilton is at one of the lowest points of his life, and he reevaluates his decisions and the mistakes that brought him to the dead-end in which he finds himself now (“Hurricane”). This is another high point in the show, in which the audience hears Burr singing his characteristic tune (“wait for it, wait for it, wait for it”), but this time to Hamilton who is about to ruin his life by publishing the pamphlet. Hamilton sings: “This is the eye of the hurricane/This is the only way I can protect my legacy.”

After the publication (“The Reynolds Pamphlet”), everyone gives their backs to Hamilton, including Angelica, who tells him that she will stand by her sister’s side. Jefferson, Madison and Burr celebrate: “He’s never gon’ be president now/That’s one less thing to worry about.” After this, the audience witnesses Eliza’s perspective (“Burn”), how humiliated and hurt she feels, and the decision she makes of burning all the letters that Alexander sent her (“I’m erasing myself from the narrative/Let future historians wonder how Eliza reacted/When you broke her heart [...] I’m burning the memories/Burning the letters that might have redeemed you”).

More time passes and Philip Jr. is nineteen years old (“Blow Us All Away”). Lawyer George Eacker insults Hamilton, and Philip challenges him to a duel. Advised by his father not to shoot his opponent (“Alright/So this is what you’re gonna do/Stand there like a man until Eacker is in front of you/When the time comes, fire your weapon in the air/This will put an end to the whole affair.”), Philip aims at the sky, but Eacker shoots him anyway. At the

arrival of his parents (“Stay Alive (reprise).”), Philip dies. Both Eliza and Alexander are shattered by this loss. In “It’s Quiet Uptown”, Hamilton sings: “If I could spare his life/If I could trade his life for mine/He’d be standing here right now/And you would smile, and that would be enough.” The song suggests that, after moving uptown, a good amount of time passes (Hamilton’s hair has gone grey) and Eliza is still traumatized by the death of her son. However, by the end of the song, she takes her husband’s hand as they walk and speaks to him again (she simply sings “It’s quiet uptown”). To this, the company responds: “Forgiveness/Can you imagine?/ Forgiveness/Can you imagine?”

Sometime later, the election arrives (“The Election of 1800”). Burr is fully invested in his campaign, even sings (to Hamilton): “I’m chasing what I want/And you know what? /I learned that from you.” Hamilton, tired of the endless ambition that has only brought him pain, turns his back on Burr and publicly gives his vote to Thomas Jefferson, stating that “I have never agreed with Jefferson once/We have fought on like seventy-five different fronts/But when all is said and all is done/Jefferson has beliefs. Burr has none.”

Thus, begins an exchange of letters between Burr and Hamilton (“Your Obedient Servant”) in which they blame each other for their respective problems and difficulties. Burr sings: “Dear Alexander/I am slow to anger/But I toe the line/As I reckon with the effects/Of your life on mine/I look back on where I’ve failed/And in every place I’ve checked/The only common thread has been your disrespect/Now you call me ‘amoral’/A ‘dangerous disgrace’/If you’ve got something to say/Name a time and place/Face to face/I have the honor to be Your Obedient Servant/A dot Burr.” To this proposal, Hamilton responds: “Mr. Vice President/I am not the reason no one trusts you/No one knows what you believe/I will not equivocate in my opinion/I have always worn it on my sleeve/Even if I said what you think I said/You would need to cite a more specific grievance/Here’s an itemized list of thirty years of disagreements/Hey, I have not been shy/I am just a guy in the public eye/Tryin’ to do my best

for our republic/I don't wanna fight/But I won't apologize for doing what's right/I have the honor to be Your Obedient Servant/A dot Ham." With this, the duel between Hamilton and Burr is settled.

Hamilton says goodbye to Eliza ("Best of Wives and Best of Women"). In "The World Was Wide Enough," Burr decides that he will not make an orphan of his daughter and, thus, shoots Hamilton. Before the bullet hits him, the action freezes and so does the music. Hamilton begins what could be described as the moment in which "his life flashes before his eyes," and a compendium of every single character that has had any sort of impact on his life is recalled as he sings: "Legacy/What is a legacy?/It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see/I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song/Someone will sing for me/America, you great unfinished symphony/You sent for me/You let me make a difference/A place where even orphan immigrants/Can leave their fingerprints and rise up/I'm running out of time/I'm running and my time's up/Wise up/Eyes up."

Alexander Hamilton dies with Eliza and Angelica by his side. Burr laments his decision: "I should've known/The world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me."

The show ends with Eliza "[putting herself] back in the narrative." In "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story," she tells directly to the audience how she spent the fifty years she lived after Hamilton's death. The song focuses on the concepts of time, memory and the type of love that is endless.

## 4.2 Main Characters

### a. Alexander Hamilton (originally played by Lin-Manuel Miranda):

He is the center of the story. Hamilton is the ultimate "rags-to-riches" example, a young man that thanks to his intelligence, hard-working nature and perseverance manages to rise through the social scale to the point of becoming one of the most important people in

America in his time. He marries Eliza Schuyler and has an affair with Maria Reynolds, which ultimately decimates his career in politics and as a public figure.

b. Aaron Burr (originally played by Leslie Odom Jr.):

Hamilton's eternal rival. Burr's personality clashes with Hamilton's from the very first moment they meet, and part of it is because Burr envies Hamilton's ability to get involved without hesitation and the way he's always willing to fight for what he wants.

c. George Washington (originally played by Christopher Jackson):

Portrayed as a father figure to Hamilton, Washington represents the fulfillment of one's duty and the will to sacrifice whatever is necessary for the greater good. He leaves an unerasable imprint in Hamilton, which remains even after his death.

d. Elizabeth Schuyler (originally played by Phillipa Soo):

"Best of wives and best of women." Elizabeth "Eliza" Schuyler is Hamilton's life companion and the very reason why his legacy has lived on for so long. She admires her husband and, while she is aware of his flaws as a person, she is able to see the good in him.

e. Angelica Schuyler (originally played by Renée Elise Goldsberry):

Angelica is Eliza's older sister. She is shown from her very first appearance as someone who knows what she wants and that will not stop until she gets it, which is a trait that she shares with Hamilton (with the difference that he is allowed to follow his ambition; she is not).

f. Thomas Jefferson and Marquis de Lafayette (originally played by Daveed Diggs):

While it could be said that Lafayette represents success in battle, Jefferson represents success in politics. Lafayette is Hamilton's friend, the Ambassador of France in America and

one of the reasons why the war was won. Jefferson, on the contrary, is not Hamilton's friend and both of them clash constantly regarding politics.

g. King George III (originally played by Jonathan Groff)

Despite having only three interventions during the entirety of the musical ("You'll Be Back," "What Comes Next?" and "I Know Him."), George III steals the show. His childish/disturbing ways characterize him, and he helps to show the audience what the relationship between America and Great Britain was like.

h. Maria Reynolds and Peggy Schuyler (originally played by Jasmine Cephas Jones)

Peggy's role is as iconic as it is short. Real-life Margaret Schuyler had a friendly but platonic relationship with her brother-in-law, thus, she did not really have much influence in Hamilton's life. On the other hand, Maria Reynolds is probably the character that sets the first turning point in Hamilton's life following their affair.

i. John Laurens and Philip Hamilton (originally played by Anthony Ramos)

John Laurens, one of Hamilton's best friends, had the dream of recruiting 3000 men for the first all-black military regiment, in hopes that fighting for America would grant these men their freedom. Due to his assassination, the project was never carried through. Philip Hamilton, Alexander and Eliza's eldest son, dies in an attempt to defend his father's honor at the age of nineteen. Hamilton blames himself for it.

j. Hercules Mulligan and James Madison (originally played by Okieriete Onaodowan)

Hercules Mulligan was an Irish-American tailor and spy that worked for the American side of the war and played a key role in the Battle of Yorktown. On his part, James Madison (fellow Founding Father) was the fourth President of the United States. During Hamilton, he has a



close relationship with Thomas Jefferson and both are often seen together. A peculiarity that is very well depicted in the show is the fact that Madison was extremely hypochondriac.

## 5. THE MUSICAL: A SELECTION OF SONGS

### 5.1 My Shot

The third song of the musical, “My Shot,” is performed by Hamilton and his new friends Laurens, Mulligan, Lafayette and Burr. Here, Hamilton describes himself as someone who “[Has] a lotta brains but no polish/I gotta holler just to be heard/With every word I drop knowledge/I’m a diamond in the rough/I shiny piece of coal/Tryin’ to reach my goal/My power of speech, unimpeachable/Only nineteen, but my mind is older.” As he states numerous times during the show, Hamilton is aware of his capacities, which makes him come off as slightly annoying and abrasive, especially to Burr, with whom he has a kind of love-hate relationship during this period of his life. In “My Shot” the audience also learns about Hamilton’s friends: Marquis de Lafayette, a Frenchman that “[dreams] of life without a monarchy” in his country and is willing to help America in its quest for freedom; Hercules Mulligan, a tailor and a spy who is “joining the rebellion/‘Cause [I] know it’s my chance to socially advance/Instead of sewing some pants;” and John Laurens, a soldier who dreams of creating the first all-black battle regime and who claims that “we’ll never be truly free/Until those in bondage have the same rights as you and me.”

The song escalates with a fast pace, but is suddenly interrupted by Alexander’s intrusive thoughts: “I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory/When’s it gonna get me?/In my sleep?/Seven feet ahead of me?/If I see it comin’, do I run or do I let it be?/Is it like a beat without a melody?/See, I never thought I’d live past twenty/Where I come from some get half as many/Ask anybody why we livin’ fast and we laugh/Reach for a flask/We have to make this moment last/That’s plenty/Scratch that, this is not a moment, it’s the

movement/Where all the hungriest brothers with something to prove went?/Foes oppose us, we take an honest stand/We roll like Moses, claimin' our promised land/And?/If we win our independence?/Is that a guarantee of freedom for our descendants?/Or will the blood we shed begin an endless cycle of vengeance and death with no defendants?/I know the action in the street is excitin'/But Jesus, between all the bleedin' 'n fightin'/I've been readin' 'n writin'/We need to handle our financial situation/Are we a nation of states?/What's the state of our nation?/I'm past patiently waitin'/I'm passionately smashin' every expectation/Every action's an act of creation!/I'm laughin' in the face of casualties and sorrow/For the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow." This monologue piece is repeated during Hamilton's last moments alive after getting shot by Burr, which dotes this part of the song of even more significance: what worried Hamilton as a young man full of dreams, still accompanies him as a man who has been through unimaginable events. Hamilton is terrified about the future and what will become of him. Still, he is determined to follow his passion and "not throw away his shot," which is a defining aspect of his character along the play. This is also a way of thinking that resonates significantly with the mentality of North American society: the concept of the "American dream" and its image as the "land of opportunities" favors the belief that every day is a new chance to achieve whatever is desired because, in America, *everything* is possible. Artistic pieces such as this contribute, in one way or another, to the continuance of this nationalistic view of the country while it glorifies it in a propagandistic manner.

## 5.2 One Last Time

"One Last Time" is the ninth song in Act II and the thirty-third in the whole show. It is sung by George Washington and Alexander Hamilton and recounts the moment in which Washington tells Hamilton that he wants to retire. This song is based on George Washington's *Farewell Address*, a letter in which he publicly explains the situation to those

who believed in him. After a life dedicated to his country, Washington just wants to spend the rest of his days at home, reflecting on his achievements and rejoicing in the fact that America is free thanks to him. The song begins with Hamilton arriving at Washington's office, where the President explains to him that he will not be running for president again; he also informs Hamilton that Jefferson will. In an attempt at preventing the future generations from making the mistakes he made, he talks about neutrality and about how to say goodbye. About this song, Miranda says: "Reading Washington's *Farewell Address*, this section jumped out at me. In it, Washington seeks to do exactly what we aim to do with this musical: paint himself as human, and capable of mistakes."

Washington quotes the Bible when he says "Everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree/And no one shall make them afraid." To him, America is like a child that he has raised and now he just wants to sit and watch how it grows on its own. It is a moving feeling that is masterfully transmitted throughout the song, partially thanks to Miranda's and Jackson's performances that usually bring tears to the eyes of the audience. This is the last time that we, as an audience, see Washington as an active character; the next time, he has already passed away and is part of a different kind of number, which makes it even more special. It must also be noted that Washington addresses the audience when he sings "history has its eyes on you" which is supposed to inspire the people watching to do anything they put their minds into. Ironically, the effect that this song has on the audience is as beautiful as it is problematic. The fact that a song like this is sang by Washington, a man who should not awake in today's people feelings of empathy or compassion, contributes to the almost canonization of his character. This raises the question of whether certain events, actions, or words should be forgotten, if not forgiven, for the sake of moving forward and closing old wounds, though perhaps the answer to said question might not please all members of the American society.

### 5.3 Non-Stop

Erratic, nerve-wracking and simply extraordinary, “Non-Stop” is the twenty-fourth song in Act I as well as in the musical as a whole. This musical number is made of several other songs from the show, specifically “Aaron Burr, Sir,” “Wait For It,” “Satisfied,” “That Would Be Enough,” “Right Hand Man,” “Helpless,” “The Schuyler Sisters,” “History Has Its Eyes on You,” “My Shot” and “Alexander Hamilton.” The aforementioned “leitmotifs” are obviously present in this piece.

In the finale of Act I, Hamilton’s desperate need to change the world makes him extremely unhappy, especially when joined by his desire to be liked. While not wanting to disappoint Washington, he still wishes to do his own thing, more precisely in regards to his career as a lawyer. A positive aspect of this is that people start listening to him, but this only increases the pressure he naturally feels when faced with the idea that he might fail. Following this section, Burr introduces himself in the song, defending himself from Hamilton’s accusations for “[standing] to the side.” It is also at this point that the relationship between Angelica and Alexander is explained in detail, with Angelica singing: “I am sailing off to London/I am accompanied by someone who always pays/I have found a wealthy husband who will keep me in comfort for all my days/He is not a lot of fun/But there’s no one who can match you for turn of phrase/My Alexander... Don’t forget to write.”

This is immediately followed by Eliza recriminating her husband that what they have should be enough. She sings: “[...] if your wife/Could share a fraction of your time/If I could grant you peace of mind/Would that be enough?” Eliza was perfectly aware of her sister’s peculiar friendship with Alexander (in fact, the playful line from “Helpless” “I’m just sayin’/If you really loved me/You would share him” is actually based on the following paragraph from one of Angelica’s letters to Eliza (from the collection *Women in American*

*History* at the American Experience website) : “I love him very much and if you were as generous as the old Romans, you would lend him to me for a little while” (Schuyler 1780), but it has been stated that she never really felt threatened by it.

The song continues with Washington’s intervention, adding even more pressure to Hamilton’s personal and professional situation when he asks him to become the Treasury Secretary. This leads to the peak moment of the number when all the aforementioned characters start singing their own songs at the same time, all of them trying to convince Hamilton that they need his attention more than the others. Visibly upset due to being constantly questioned, Hamilton exclaims that “[he is] Alexander Hamilton” and that “[he is not] throwing away [his] shot, which means that he is going to focus on his own goals and his own needs as an individual. A remarkable moment in the last part of the song is the fact that the full company sings to him Burr’s tune “wait for it” for the first time, which indicates that Hamilton’s impulsive ways are starting to become troublesome. The mixture between Hamilton’s “just you wait” and Burr’s “wait for it” is a constant during the entire show, which creates an even more evident contrast between these two characters. When Burr says it, it sounds wary or insecure. When Hamilton does it, it sounds like a dare: wait and see what I’m capable of.

#### 5.4 Dear Theodosia

This song, which is the fifth in Act I and the whole musical, is a love letter to Burr’s and Hamilton’s children. As stated by Miranda in *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016): “It’s the calm in the storm of our show.” (34) Burr talks about his daughter as follows: “Dear Theodosia/What to say to you?/You have my eyes/You have your mother’s name/When you came into the world you cried/And it broke my heart.” Burr’s wife, the woman he was having an affair with that was married to a British officer, died after twelve years of marriage when

their daughter was only eleven. Being a widow and a single father shaped Burr's decision-making to the point of shooting Hamilton in their duel because of how much the idea of leaving his daughter alone in the world scared him: "It's him or me/The world will never be the same/I had only one thought before the slaughter/This man will not make an orphan of my daughter."

On his part, Hamilton sings about his son Philip. He says: "My son/Look at my son/Pride is not the word I'm looking for/There is so much more inside me now/Oh Philip, you outshine the morning sun/My son." What these two men have in common (as can be seen in this number) is the fact that both of them lack a father figure while they were growing up, which makes them even more invested in the task of being there for their children. This feeling is later on extrapolated to the aforementioned concept of America as a child that needs to be raised, as can be interpreted in the line "If we lay a strong enough foundation/We'll pass it on to you/We'll give the world to you/And you'll blow us all away."

Something quite remarkable about this song is the fact that it portrays two men in the 1800s unashamedly admitting that they love their children. Not so long ago, witnessing a man express his feelings was something quite uncommon which makes this performance even more interesting from a psychological point of view. Hamilton and Burr can be seen crying on many occasions and, despite how insignificant this gesture might seem nowadays, the truth is that it gives them a level of depth that could not have been achieved had Miranda decided to portray them as two more "traditionally masculine" men.

It is also worth mentioning that the "You'll blow us all away" motif is also present in the song with the same name, which happens to be the one in which Philip Hamilton dies at age nineteen.

## 5.5 The Schuyler Sisters

The last song in this close-reading analysis is “The Schuyler Sisters,” which is the fifth number in Act I. Through this song, three of the four female main characters are introduced: Angelica, Eliza, and Peggy. The Schuyler Sisters come from a very wealthy family, as sung by Burr when trying to flirt with Angelica: “Excuse me, Miss/I know it’s not funny/But your perfume smells like your daddy’s got money.” Angelica is the lead of the song, which is characterized by the repetition of the word “work.” At a given point, she sings to Burr: “I’ve been reading *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine/So men say that I’m intense or I’m insane/You want a revolution?/I want a revelation!/So listen to my declaration/’We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal/And when I meet Thomas Jefferson/I’m going to compel him to include women in the sequel/Work!” This statement is quite modern for the late 1700, but definitely holds a powerful message and the hope of a feminist future: with “the sequel,” Angelica expresses her hopes that the text following the Declaration of Independence (which reads “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal”) will also include women as part of the new American identity as a country.

One of Eliza’s most important “leitmotifs” is introduced during this song: “Look around/Look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now.” Despite being more of a secondary character during this performance, the audience learns two very important things about Eliza here, which are that she values her relationship with her sisters more than anything, and that she is excited for what the future holds, both socially and romantically (which sets the tone for “Helpless.”)

As for Peggy, the third Schuyler sister, she plays more of a “Jiminy Cricket” role towards her sisters. Peggy sings: “Daddy said to be home by sundown/Daddy said not to go

downtown [...] It's bad enough daddy wants to go to war/It's bad enough there'll be violence on our shores." Her purpose is to represent innocence and she acts as an occasional comic relief for the audience with her now iconic "And Peggy!" every time her sisters introduce themselves. Peggy is much more naïve than her sisters and can be often seen following Angelica around or holding Eliza's hand as they walk.

## 6. CONCLUSION

*Hamilton: An American Musical* does not leave anyone indifferent: from musical theater all-time-lovers to newcomers that are more interested in hip-hop than they are in costumes and choreographies, the truth is that this show, with its undeniable flaws and also its countless virtues, has set the precedent for a new form of entertainment. The performances, the songs, the impeccable cast—all of this contributes to the creation of *Hamilton* and the special spot it holds in the hearts of everyone who has had the chance to see it or listen to it. Its most important deed, perhaps, is that of starting a conversation about topics that may make the audience feel uncomfortable, but which nevertheless need to be talked about: no one wants to think about George Washington's 317 slaves at his Mount Vernon estate in Virginia after listening to Christopher Jackson's beautiful "One Last Time," but it is a conscious effort that must be made out of respect and consideration for the sake of history and remembrance. These facts need to be addressed in order not to turn a blind eye towards other situations of injustice and/or the vulnerability of Human Rights and, thus, prevent history from repeating itself in the most gruesome way. It is a collective responsibility and something in which everyone can participate. In the end, and as sung multiple times during *Hamilton*, "History has its eyes on you/us."



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## ANNEXES

- Pictures taken from the original production corresponding with the aforementioned songs.



Lin-Manuel Miranda (Alexander Hamilton) during “My Shot.”



Christopher Jackson (George Washington) during “One Last Time.”



Lin-Manuel Miranda (Alexander Hamilton) during “Non-Stop.”



Lin-Manuel Miranda (Alexander Hamilton) and Leslie Odom Jr. (Aaron Burr) during “Dear Theodosia.”



Phillipa Soo, Renée Elise Goldsberry and Jasmine Cephas Jones during “The Schuyler Sisters.”

- Lyrics of the aforementioned songs.

## 1. MY SHOT

LAURENS MULLIGAN LAFAYETTE Ooh,  
Ooh, Ooh,

Who are you?

Who are you?

Who are you?

MULLIGAN/LAFAYETTE/LAURENS Ooh,  
who is this kid? What’s he gonna do?

HAMILTON

I am not throwing away my shot!

I am not throwing away my shot!

Hey yo, I’m just like my country,

I’m young, scrappy and hungry,

and I’m not throwing away my shot!

I’m ‘a get a scholarship to King’s College.

I prob’ly shouldn’t brag, but dag, I amaze and  
astonish.

The problem is I got a lot of brains but no  
polish.

I gotta holler just to be heard.

With every word, I drop knowledge!

I’m a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of  
coal

tryin’ to reach my goal. My power of speech:  
unimpeachable. Only nineteen but my mind is  
older.

These New York City streets get colder, I  
shoulder ev’ry burden, ev’ry disadvantage

I have learned to manage, I don't have a gun to brandish, I walk these streets famished.

The plan is to fan this spark into a flame. But damn, it's getting dark, so let me spell out the name,

I am the—

HAMILTON/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN/LAURENS

A-l-e-x-a-n-d-e-r—we are—meant to be...

HAMILTON

A colony that runs independently.

Meanwhile, Britain keeps shittin' on us endlessly. Essentially, they tax us relentlessly, then King George turns around, runs a spending spree. He ain't ever gonna set his descendants free, so there will be a revolution in this century.

Enter me!

LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN/LAURENS (He says in parentheses)

HAMILTON

Don't be shocked when your hist'ry book mentions me. I will lay down my life if it sets us free.

Eventually, you'll see my ascendancy,

HAMILTON

And I am not throwing away my shot. I am not throwing away my shot.

Hey yo, I'm just like my country,

I'm young, scrappy and hungry

and I'm not throwing away my shot.

LAURENS My shot! My shot!

And I'm not throwing away my shot.

HAMILTON/MULLIGAN/LAURENS/LAFAYETTE I am not throwing away my shot.

I am not throwing away my shot.

Hey yo, I'm just like my country,

I'm young, scrappy and hungry

and I'm not throwing away my shot. It's time to take a shot!

LAFAYETTE

I dream of life without a monarchy.

The unrest in France will lead to 'onarchy? 'Onarchy? How you say, how you say, 'anarchy?' When I fight, I make the other side panicky.

With my—

HAMILTON/LAURENS/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN Shot!

MULLIGAN

Yo, I'm a tailor's apprentice, and I got y'all knuckleheads in loco parentis.

I'm joining the rebellion cuz I know it's my chance to socially advance, instead of sewin' some pants! I'm gonna take a—

HAMILTON/LAURENS/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN Shot!

LAURENS

But we'll never be truly free

until those in bondage have the same rights as you and me, you and I. Do or die. Wait till I sally in on a stallion with the first black battalion have another—

HAMILTON/LAURENS/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN Shot!

BURR

Geniuses, lower your voices.

You keep out of trouble and you double your choices. I'm with you, but the situation is fraught.

You've got to be carefully taught:

If you talk, you're gonna get shot!

HAMILTON

Burr, check what we got.

Mister Lafayette, hard rock like Lancelot,

I think your pants look hot,

Laurens, I like you a lot.

Let's hatch a plot blacker than the kettle callin' the pot... What are the odds the gods would put us all in one spot, poppin' a squat on conventional wisdom, like it or not, a bunch of revolutionary manumission abolitionists? Give me a position, show me where the ammunition is!

Oh, am I talkin' too loud?

Sometimes I get over excited, shoot off at the mouth. I never had a group of friends before,

I promise that I'll make y'all proud.

LAURENS

Let's get this guy in front of a crowd.

HAMILTON/LAURENS/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN/ENSEMBLE I am not throwing away my shot.

I am not throwing away my shot.

Hey yo, I'm just like my country,

I'm young, scrappy and hungry

and I'm not throwing away my shot.

I am not throwing away my shot.

I am not throwing away my shot. Hey yo, I'm just like my country, I'm young, scrappy and hungry

and I'm not throwing away my shot.

LAURENS Ev'rybody sing: Whoa, whoa, whoa Hey!

Whoa!

Wooh!!

Whoa!

Ay, let 'em hear ya!

Let's go!

I said shout it to the rooftops! Said, to the rooftops!

Come on!

Come on, let's go!

HAMILTON/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN  
Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

Whoa! Whoa! Yea!

COMPANY

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

Whoa!

Yea!

LAURENS

Rise up!

When you're living on your knees, you rise up.  
Tell your brother that he's gotta rise up.

Tell your sister that she's gotta rise up.

LAURENS AND ENSEMBLE

When are these colonies gonna rise up? When are these colonies gonna rise up? When are these colonies gonna rise up? When are these colonies gonna rise up?

Rise up!

COMPANY Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!  
Whoa!

Rise up!

HAMILTON

I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory  
When's it gonna get me?

In my sleep? Seven feet ahead of me?  
If I see it comin', do I run or do I let it be?  
Is it like a beat without a melody?  
See, I never thought I'd live past twenty.  
Where I come from some get half as many.  
Ask anybody why we livin' fast and we laugh,  
reach for a flask, we have to make this  
moment last, that's plenty.  
Scratch that,  
this is not a moment, it's the movement  
where all the hungriest brothers with  
something to prove went?  
Foes oppose us, we take an honest stand,  
we roll like Moses, claimin' our promised  
land.  
And? If we win our independence?  
'Zat a guarantee of freedom for our  
descendants?  
Or will the blood we shed begin an endless  
cycle of vengeance and death with no  
defendants?  
I know the action in the street is excitin',  
but Jesus, between all the bleedin' 'n fightin'  
I've been readin' 'n writin'.  
We need to handle our financial situation.  
Are we a nation of states? What's the state of  
our nation? I'm past patiently waitin'. I'm  
passionately  
smashin' every expectation,  
every action's an act of creation!  
I'm laughin' in the face of casualties and  
sorrow,

for the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow,  
HAMILTON AND COMPANY  
And I am not throwing away my shot. I am not  
throwing away my shot.  
Hey yo, I'm just like my country,  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
and I'm not throwing away my shot.  
HAMILTON/LAURENS/LAFAYETTE/  
MULLIGAN  
We're gonna rise up! Time to take a shot!  
We're gonna rise up! Time to take a shot!  
We're gonna  
HAMILTON  
Time to take a shot!  
ENSEMBLE  
Not throwing away my shot. Not throwing  
away my shot. We're gonna rise up! Rise up!  
HAMILTON/LAFAYETTE/LAURENS/  
MULLIGAN  
Time to take a shot!  
Take a shot!  
Shot!  
Shot!  
A-yo it's  
time to take a shot! Time to take a shot! And I  
am—  
Rise up! Rise up!  
Rise up! Rise up!  
Ri— ri— ri—  
Time to take a shot! Time to take a shot! And I  
am—  
HAMILTON/LAFAYETTE/MULLIGAN/LA  
URENS



Not throwin' away my—

COMPANY

## 2. ONE LAST TIME

HAMILTON

Mr. President, you asked to see me?

WASHINGTON

I know you're busy.

HAMILTON

What do you need, sir? Sir?

WASHINGTON

I wanna give you a word of warning.

HAMILTON

Sir, I don't know what you heard,

But whatever it is, Jefferson started it.

WASHINGTON

Thomas Jefferson resigned this morning.

HAMILTON You're kidding.

WASHINGTON I need a favor.

HAMILTON

Whatever you say, sir, Jefferson will pay for his behavior.

WASHINGTON Shh. Talk less.

HAMILTON

I'll use the press,

I'll write under a pseudonym, you'll see what I can do to him—

WASHINGTON

I need you to draft an address.

Not throwin' away my shot!

HAMILTON

Yes! He resigned. You can finally speak your mind—

WASHINGTON

No, he's stepping down so he can run for President.

HAMILTON

Ha. Good luck defeating you, sir.

WASHINGTON

I'm stepping down. I'm not running for President.

HAMILTON I'm sorry, what?

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.

HAMILTON No, sir, why?

WASHINGTON

I wanna talk about neutrality.

HAMILTON

Sir, with Britain and France on the verge of war, is this the best time—

WASHINGTON

I want to warn against partisan fighting.

HAMILTON But—

WASHINGTON

Pick up a pen, start writing.

I wanna talk about what I have learned. The hard-won wisdom I have earned.

HAMILTON

As far as the people are concerned,

you have to serve, you could continue to serve—

WASHINGTON

No! One last time

the people will hear from me

one last time

and if we get this right

we're gonna teach 'em how to say goodbye.

You and I—

HAMILTON

Mr. President, they will say you're weak.

WASHINGTON

No, they will see we're strong.

HAMILTON

Your position is so unique.

WASHINGTON

So I'll use it to move them along.

HAMILTON

Why do you have to say goodbye?

WASHINGTON

If I say goodbye, the nation learns to move on.

It outlives me when I'm gone.

Like the scripture says:

“Everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid.”

They'll be safe in the nation we've made.

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.

HAMILTON One last time.

HAMILTON

Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. I shall also carry with me

HAMILTON

The hope

that my country will

view them with indulgence;

And that,

after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal

the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as I myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws

Under a free government, the ever-favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust,

Of our mutual cares, labors, and dangers.

WASHINGTON One last time.

ALL WOMEN

George Washington's going home!

HAMILTON

Teach 'em how to say goodbye.

WASHINGTON You and I

Going home

History has its eyes on you

We're gonna teach 'em how to say goodbye!

### 3. NON-STOP

BURR

After the war I went back to New York.

HAMILTON

A-after the war I went back to New York.

BURR

I finished up my studies and I practiced law.

HAMILTON

I practiced law, Burr worked next door.

BURR

Even though we started at the very same time,  
Alexander Hamilton began to climb.

How to account for his rise to the top?  
Maaaaan, the man is

non-stop!

HAMILTON

Gentlemen of the jury, I'm curious, bear with  
me. Are you aware that we're making hist'ry?

This is the first murder trial of our brand-new  
nation.

Teach 'em how to

say goodbye!

To say goodbye! Say goodbye! One last time!

COMPANY

George Washington's going home

George Washington's going home George  
Washington's going home George  
Washington's going home Teach 'em how to  
say goodbye! Teach 'em how!

Say goodbye! Say goodbye! One last time!

HAMILTON

The liberty behind deliberation—

HAMILTON

I intend to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt  
with my assistant counsel—

ENSEMBLE Non-stop!

ENSEMBLE Non-stop!

BURR

Co-counsel.

Hamilton, sit down.

Our client Levi Weeks is innocent. Call your  
first witness. That's all you had to say!

HAMILTON Okay!

One more thing—

BURR

Why do you assume you're the smartest in the  
room? Why do you assume you're the smartest  
in the room? Why do you assume you're the  
smartest in the room? Soon that attitude may  
be your doom!

ENSEMBLE Awwww!

BURR

Why do you write like you're running out of time? Write day and night like you're running out of time? Ev'ry day you fight, like you're running out of time.

Keep on fighting. In the meantime—

Non-stop!

HAMILTON

Corruption's such an old song that we can sing along in harmony and nowhere is it stronger than in Albany.

This colony's economy's increasingly stalling and

HAMILTON

Honestly, that's why public service seems to be calling me.

HAMILTON

I practiced the law, I practic'ly perfected it.

I've seen injustice in the world and I've corrected it. Now for a strong central democracy,

If not, then I'll be Socrates

HAMILTON Throwing verbal rocks at these mediocrities.

BURR

Hamilton, at the Constitutional Convention:

HAMILTON

BURR AND ENSEMBLE He's just

Non-stop!

ENSEMBLE

Why do you write like you're running out of time?

Ev'ry day you fight, like you're running out of time.

ENSEMBLE Awwww!

I was chosen for the Constitutional Convention.

BURR

There as a New York junior delegate:

HAMILTON

Now what I'm going to say may sound indelicate...

BURR

Goes and proposes his own form of government! His own plan for a new form of government!

What? What?

BURR

Talks for six hours! The convention is listless!

ENSEMBLE MAN Bright young man...

ANOTHER ENSEMBLE MAN Yo, who the f is this?

BURR

Why do you always say what you believe?

Why do you always say what you believe?

Ev'ry proclamation guarantees free ammunition for your enemies!

COMPANY

Why do you always say what you believe?

Awwww!

ALL WOMEN

Going out of style, hey!

Going out of style, hey!

BURR AND MEN

Why do you write like it's going out of style?

Write day and night like it's going out of style?

BURR AND COMPANY Ev'ry day you fight like it's going out of style.

Do what you do.

BURR Alexander?

COMPANY Awwww!

HAMILTON Aaron Burr, sir.

BURR

It's the middle of the night.

HAMILTON

Can we confer, sir?

BURR

Is this a legal matter?

HAMILTON

Yes, and it's important to me.

BURR

What do you need?

HAMILTON

Burr, you're a better lawyer than me.

BURR Okay.

HAMILTON

I know I talk too much, I'm abrasive.

You're incredible in court. You're succinct, persuasive. My client needs a strong defense. You're the solution.

BURR

Who's your client?

HAMILTON

The new U.S. Constitution?

BURR No.

HAMILTON Hear me out.

BURR No way!

HAMILTON

A series of essays, anonymously published, defending the document to the public.

BURR

No one will read it.

HAMILTON I disagree.

BURR

And if it fails?

HAMILTON

Burr, that's why we need it.

BURR

The constitution's a mess.

HAMILTON

So it needs amendments.

BURR

It's full of contradictions.

HAMILTON

So is independence.

We have to start somewhere.

BURR

No. No way.

HAMILTON

You're making a mistake.

BURR Good night.

HAMILTON

Hey.

What are you waiting for? What do you stall for?

BURR

What?

HAMILTON

We won the war.

What was it all for?

Do you support this constitution?

BURR

Of course.

HAMILTON Then defend it.

BURR

And what if you're backing the wrong horse?

HAMILTON

Burr, we studied and we fought and we killed for the notion of a nation we now get to build. For once in your life, take a stand with pride. I don't understand how you stand to the side.

BURR

I'll keep all my plans close to my chest.

I'll wait here and see which way the wind

will blow.

I'm taking my time, watching the

afterbirth of a nation, watching the tension grow.

ENSEMBLE

Wait for it, wait for it, wait...

Which way the wind

will blow.

I'm taking my time, watching the

afterbirth of a nation, watching the tension grow.

ANGELICA

I am sailing off to London. I'm accompanied by someone who always pays.

I have found a wealthy husband who will keep me in comfort for all my days.

He is not a lot of fun, but there's no one who can match you for turn of phrase.

My Alexander.

HAMILTON Angelica.

ANGELICA

Don't forget to write.

ELIZA

Look at where you are.

Look at where you started.

The fact that you're alive is a miracle.

Just stay alive, that would be enough.

And if your wife could share a fraction of your time, if I could grant you peace of mind,

would that be enough?

BURR

Alexander joins forces with James Madison and John Jay to write a series of essays defending the new United States Constitution, entitled The Federalist Papers. The plan was to write a total of twenty-five essays, the work divided evenly among the three men. In the end, they wrote eighty-five essays, in the span of six months. John Jay got sick after writing five. James Madison wrote twenty-nine. Hamilton wrote the other fifty-one!

BURR

How do you write like you're running out of time?

Write day and night like you're running out of time?

BURR AND MEN Ev'ry day you fight, like you're

running out of time, like you're

running out of time, are you

running out of time?

ALL WOMEN Running out of time?

running out of time?

running out of time, running out of time,  
Awwww!

FULL COMPANY (EXCEPT HAMILTON)

How do you write like tomorrow won't arrive?

How do you write like you need it to survive?

How do you write ev'ry second you're alive?

Ev'ry second you're alive? Ev'ry second  
you're alive?

WASHINGTON

They are asking me to lead.

I am doing the best I can

to get the people that I need,

I'm asking you to be my right hand man.

HAMILTON Treasury or State?

WASHINGTON

I know it's a lot to ask,

HAMILTON Treasury or State?

WASHINGTON

To leave behind the world you know...

HAMILTON

Sir, do you want me to run the Treasury or  
State department?

WASHINGTON Treasury.

HAMILTON Let's go.

ELIZA Alexander...

HAMILTON

I have to leave.

ELIZA Alexander—

HAMILTON

Look around, look around at how lucky we are  
to be alive right now.

ELIZA Helpless...

ELIZA

Look around, isn't this enough?

HAMILTON

They are asking me to lead.

ANGELICA

He will never be satisfied,

he will never be satisfied,

satisfied, satisfied...

He will never be satisfied,

satisfied,

satisfied...

Why do you fight like history has its eyes on  
you...

HAMILTON

I am not throwin' away my shot!

I am not throwin' away my shot!

I am

Alexander Hamilton!

I am not throwin' away my shot!

ELIZA

What would be enough

To be satisfied, satisfied, satisfied...

Look around, look around!

Isn't this

enough?

What would be enough? Why do you fight like  
history has its eyes on you...

MEN

Just you wait!

FULL COMPANY

Just you wait! Alexander Hamilton Hamilton,  
just you wait!

WASHINGTON History has its eyes... on...  
you!

#### 4. DEAR THEODOSIA

BURR

Dear Theodosia, what to say to you?

You have my eyes. You have your mother's  
name.

When you came into the world, you cried and  
it broke my heart.

I'm dedicating every day to you.

Domestic life was never quite my style.

When you smile, you knock me out, I fall  
apart. And I thought I was so smart.

You will come of age with our young nation.

We'll bleed and fight for you, we'll make it  
right for you. If we lay a strong enough  
foundation

we'll pass it on to you, we'll give the world to  
you,

WASHINGTON/ MULLIGAN/ LAURENS/  
LAFAYETTE History has its eyes... on...

you...

history has its eyes on you...

BURR

Why do you assume you're the smartest in the  
room? Why do you assume you're the smartest  
in the room? Why do you assume you're the  
smartest in the room?

Soon that attitude's gonna be your doom! Why  
do you fight like you're running out of time?

Why do you fight like history has its eyes on  
you...

ENSEMBLE Non-stop!

Non-stop! Non-stop! Non-stop!

history has its eyes on you...

and you'll blow us all away...

someday, someday.

Yeah, you'll blow us all away,

someday, someday.

HAMILTON

Oh Philip, when you smile I am undone.

My son.

Look at my son. Pride is not the word I'm  
looking for.

There is so much more inside me now. Oh  
Philip, you outshine the morning sun. My son.

When you smile, I fall apart.

And I thought I was so smart.

My father wasn't around.

BURR



My father wasn't around.

HAMILTON

I swear that

I'll be around for you.

HAMILTON

I'll do whatever it takes.

BURR

I'll be around for you.

BURR

I'll make a million mistakes.

## 5. THE SCHUYLER SISTERS

BURR

There's nothing rich folks love more  
than going downtown and slummin' it with the  
poor. They pull up in their carriages and gawk

at the students in the common

Just to watch them talk.

Take Philip Schuyler: the man is loaded.

Uh-oh, but little does he know that

his daughters, Peggy, Angelica, Eliza

sneak into the city just to watch all the guys  
at—

COMPANY Work, work!

ANGELICA Angelica!

COMPANY Work, work!

ELIZA Eliza!

PEGGY And Peggy!

COMPANY

Work, work!

BURR/HAMILTON

I'll make the world safe and sound for you...

...will come of age with our young nation.

We'll bleed and fight for you, we'll make it  
right for you.

If we lay a strong enough foundation

we'll pass it on to you, we'll give the world to  
you, and you'll blow us all away...

someday, someday.

Yeah, you'll blow us all away,

someday, someday.

The Schuyler sisters!

ANGELICA Angelica!

PEGGY Peggy!

ELIZA Eliza!

COMPANY Work!

16

PEGGY

Daddy said to be home by sundown.

ANGELICA

Daddy doesn't need to know.

PEGGY

Daddy said not to go downtown.

ELIZA

Like I said, you're free to go.

ANGELICA

But—look around, look around, the  
revolution's happening in New York.

ELIZA/PEGGY New York.

COMPANY Angelica

SCHUYLER SISTERS AND COMPANY  
Work!

PEGGY

It's bad enough daddy wants to go to war.

ELIZA

People shouting in the square.

PEGGY

It's bad enough there'll be violence on our  
shore.

ANGELICA

New ideas in the air.

ANGELICA AND MALE ENSEMBLE Look  
around, look around—

ELIZA

Angelica, remind me what we're looking for...

ALL MEN

17

She's lookin' for me!

ANGELICA

Eliza, I'm lookin' for a mind at work. I'm  
lookin' for a mind at work!

I'm lookin' for a mind at work! Whoaaaaaa!

ELIZA/ANGELICA/PEGGY Whoaaaaaa!

Work!

COMPANY Work, work! Work, work! Work,  
work!

Work!

BURR

Wooh! There's nothin' like summer in the  
city. Someone in a rush next to someone

lookin' pretty. Excuse me, miss, I know it's  
not funny

But your perfume smells like your daddy's got  
money. Why you slummin' in the city in your  
fancy heels

You searchin for an urchin who can give you  
ideals?

ANGELICA

Burr, you disgust me.

BURR

Ah, so you've discussed me.

I'm a trust fund, baby, you can trust me!

ANGELICA

I've been reading *Common Sense* by Thomas  
Paine. So men say that I'm intense or I'm  
insane.

You want a revolution? I want a revelation

So listen to my declaration:

ELIZA/ANGELICA/PEGGY

"We hold these truths to be self-evident That  
all men are created equal"

ANGELICA

And when I meet Thomas Jefferson,

COMPANY Unh!

ANGELICA

18

I'm 'a compel him to include women in the  
sequel!

WOMEN Work!

ELIZA

Look around, look around at how Lucky we  
are to be alive right now!

ELIZA/PEGGY

Look around, look around at how Lucky we  
are to be alive right now!

ELIZA/ANGELICA/PEGGY

History is happening in Manhattan and we just  
happen to be in the greatest city in the world!

SCHUYLER SISTERS AND COMPANY In  
the greatest city in the world!

ANGELICA

Cuz I've been reading *Common Sense* by  
Thomas Paine.

So men say that I'm intense or I'm insane.

ANGELICA

You want a revolution? I want a revelation

So listen to my declaration:

ANGELICA/ELIZA/PEGGY We hold these  
truths to be self evident that all men are  
created equal

Whoo!

ELIZA/PEGGY

Look around, look around

The revolution's happening in—

ELIZA/PEGGY New York!

In New York!

FEMALE ENSEMBLE Look around

Look around

At how lucky we are to be alive right now

MEN

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

WOMEN

Look around, look around the revolution's  
happening

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

FULL COMPANY

Look around, look around at how lucky we are  
to be alive right now! History is happening in  
Manhattan and we just happen to be

ALL WOMEN

In the greatest city in the world

ALL MEN

In the greatest city—

COMPANY

In the greatest city in the world!

COMPANY Work, work!

Work, work!

Work, work!

Work, work! Work, work!

Work, work! Work, work!

COMPANY Work, work! Work, work!

Work, work!

COMPANY

In the greatest city in the world!

ANGELICA Angelica!

ELIZA Eliza!

PEGGY And Peggy!

ANGELICA/ELIZA/PEGGY The Schuyler  
sisters!

We're looking for a mind at work! Hey!

ANGELICA Whoa!

In the greatest city in the world

ELIZA/PEGGY

In the greatest city in the world

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!