

Staging/Representing American History in Lin Manuel Miranda's Hamilton

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Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2020

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Učiteljski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:147:248721>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-06-15**

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**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE**

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DIPLOMSKI RAD**

**STAGING/REPRESENTING AMERICAN
HISTORY IN LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA'S
*HAMILTON***

Zagreb, srpanj 2020.

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UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE
(Zagreb)**

DIPLOMSKI RAD

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TEMA DIPLOMSKOG RADA: STAGING/REPRESENTING AMERICAN
HISTORY IN LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA'S *HAMILTON*

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Zagreb, srpanj 2020.

ZAHVALA

Zahvaljujem profesoricu Nadi Kujundžić na podršci, povjerenju i pomoći u pisanju prilikom izrade ovog diplomskog rada, te svim savjetima i komentarima koji su bili od velike koristi za pisanje ovog rada. Također zahvaljujem profesoricu Mariji Andraki na potpori i otvorenosti za suradnju.

Zahvaljujem svojoj obitelji, roditeljima Ljerki i Mariju, braći Filipu i Mateu te sestri Niki, koji su pokazivali podršku kroz cijelo moje obrazovanje i rad, do današnjeg dana.

Također se zahvaljujem svojim prijateljicama koje sam stekla na fakultetu i izvan njega, koje su mi iskazivale podršku tijekom obrazovanja i pogotovo tijekom izrade ovog rada.

Antonia Milković

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SAŽETAK

U ranim danima formiranja Sjedinjenih Američkih Država, u osamnaestom stoljeću, mnoge povijesne ličnosti pamćene i danas, poput Georgea Washingtona, Thomasa Jeffersona ili Jamesa Madisona, ostavile su svoj trag. U to vrijeme, pokazalo se da osoba može uspjeti bez obzira na podrijetlo te stajati rame uz rame s velikanima, ako ima dovoljno ambicije i mudrosti da tu ambiciju iskoristi. Jedan od takvih ljudi bio je Alexander Hamilton, koji je u New York stigao sa sedamnaest godina nakon odrastanja na Karibima i brzo napredovao u američkom društvu, prvo kao dio vojske, a kasnije kao političar. Iako nikada nije postao predsjednik, doprinos koji je dao američkom financijskom sustavu, kao i njegov rad na Ustavu SAD-a, mogli bi konkurirati postignućima najznačajnijih Očeva osnivača države. Njegov život i rad prikazao je Lin-Manuel Miranda u mjuziklu nazvanom *Hamilton: The American Musical* (2015). Mjuzikl prikazuje vremensko razdoblje od 1776.–1804., kroz sferu života Alexandra Hamiltona. To gledalište nije često prikazano s obzirom na to da se na njega često gleda kao na 'zaboravljenog' Oca osnivača.

Ovaj diplomski rad istražuje odnos povijesnih događanja i njihova prikaza u Mirandinom mjuziklu, pri čemu je fokus na najvažnijim odnosima u Hamiltonovom životu. Kao kompleksan čovjek, imao je mnogo neprijatelja, kao i prijatelja, i svi ti odnosi uvelike su utjecali na tijek njegova života, a u konačnici i smrti, što mjuzikl vrlo dobro prikazuje. Nadalje, ti odnosi imali su i veliki utjecaj na oblikovanje mlade nacije i njenih budućih temelja.

Ključni pojmovi: *Hamilton*, Alexander Hamilton, povijest, Sjedinjenje Američke Države, Očevi osnivači, mjuzikl

SUMMARY

In the early days of the formation of the United States of America as an independent country, during the 18th century, many historical figures still remembered today – such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison – rose to power. In those years, it was proven that a person of any background could succeed and stand alongside the greats if they had enough ambition and used it wisely. One of those people was Alexander Hamilton, who arrived to New York at age seventeen, after spending his childhood in the Caribbean, and rapidly rose in American society, first in the military and later in political circles. Although he never became president, the contributions he made to the American financial system as well as his work on the Constitution could rival the efforts of the most accomplished Founding Fathers. His life and work are staged in Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton: The American Musical* (2015). The musical shows the period from 1776–1804 through the lens of Hamilton's life, a view rarely taken as he is often referred to as the 'forgotten' Founding Father.

This graduation thesis examines the connection between historical events and their representation in Miranda's musical. Special focus is on the most important relationships in Hamilton's life. As a complex man, he had many friends as well as enemies, and those relationships all influenced the course of his life and even his death, which the musical portrays very well. Furthermore, those relationships greatly impacted the development of the young American nation and its future foundations.

Key words: *Hamilton*, Alexander Hamilton, history, United States of America, Founding Fathers, musical

1. INTRODUCTION

The hip-hop musical *Hamilton: The American Musical*, with the book, music, and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda, was in the works since 2009 and ultimately hit the stage for the first time in 2013. The inspiration for the musical came from the biography of one of America's Founding Fathers, Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), written by Ron Chernow (2004). Set in the late 18th/early 19th century, the musical deals with issues of immigration and the rise of a new nation, while shedding new light on all the events that occurred at that time. The story has its roots in history, but also bears some stark differences which can be seen as soon as the actors appear on stage. The participants of the true historical events were predominantly white, with very few immigrants or people of different racial backgrounds finding success. The differences between America then and America now are clearly shown through the casting of the characters, which include some of the most prominent people in American history, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Hamilton himself. These historical figures are played by actors of African American, Asian-American or Latin descent, which was a decision Miranda made while writing the musical, in order to show 'the story of America then, told by America now' (Miranda, McCarter, 2016). The main character of Hamilton is portrayed by Miranda himself, who is of Puerto Rican descent. This shows America as it is today and the way it has changed since its foundation in the 18th century.

Hamilton's life is told as a story of an immigrant child making something of himself in a world that often rejected anyone of non-white heritage and background. He uses all the resources at his disposal to make the most out of what he is given and make people forget where he came from and who he originally was. The musical shows the many changes that occur through history and how just one person can influence its course by being authentic and standing up for what s/he believes in. Since he never became president and died young (at age 47), it is often forgotten that Hamilton was one of the U.S. Founding Fathers, despite his impact on history. Namely, many things that happened in the U.S. after his death were built on the policies he worked hard to implement and enforce. The musical builds a narrative of conflict and contrast between Hamilton and the lawyer and politician Aaron Burr (1756–1836), who became the country's third Vice President. Hamilton is presented as someone prone to conflict as his life moves forward and clashes with different politicians and other prominent figures of the time. Even with the people he was close with, there was never any absence of disputes.

The bonds Hamilton formed with the people around him influenced his life and career and formed the path his life would take. This graduation thesis examines the connection between historical events and their representation in the musical, with special focus on the most important relationships in Hamilton's life. Those relationships show the value of other people in his life story, while also illustrating the impact one person can have just by staying true to their beliefs and working hard. On the other hand, they also show how much friction one person can cause by trying to achieve everything they want and proving those around them wrong. These relationships will be shown through three chapters about the friends (John Laurens, the Marquis de Lafayette, and George Washington), enemies (James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Aaron Burr), and women (Elizabeth Hamilton, Angelica Schuyler/Church, and Maria Reynolds) that influenced Hamilton's life. His friends believed in his abilities and helped him grow, his enemies worked hard to bring about his downfall, and the women in his life changed the view of narrative after his passing.

2. THE CREATION OF *HAMILTON: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL*

Hamilton: The American Musical was created by American composer and lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda. The process began with him reading a biography of the Founding Father while on vacation in 2008. Ron Chernow, the writer of the biography, ended up being the historical consultant during the making of the musical. *Hamilton* “changes the way Broadway sounds” (McCarter and Miranda, 2016, p. 10) and uses the power and emotion of hip-hop, r&b, and other musical styles to tell the story of an important but somewhat forgotten figure in American history, while still connecting it to traditional musical theatre. As Jody Rosen points out, “the wonderful thing about Lin-Manuel’s use of rap is that he’s got one foot in the past. He knows theater. He respects and understands the value of good rhyming, without which the lines tend to flatten out” (2015, [n.p.]). The musical details Hamilton’s life in two acts, each of them consisting of twenty-three songs.

The musical had its first showing in 2013, when it was known as *The Hamilton Mixtape* and was not performed in its full present scope. The off-Broadway debut came in 2015, the same year the show made its way into the Richard Rodgers theater on Broadway, where it remains to this day. In addition to its New York production, the show has since spread to other cities, such as San Francisco, Chicago and even London’s West End, all the while creating U.S. touring productions which have been in effect since 2017. The success of the musical has been enormous, with it winning a Grammy Award and even topping U.S. music charts (Viagas, 2016). Furthermore, *Hamilton* won 11 Tony Awards in 2016, with Miranda winning a Pulitzer Award in 2016 for the writing of the musical. The demand for tickets has not stopped since the musical’s Broadway debut; in fact, the show holds the record for the most money grossed in a single week on Broadway, when it earned 3.7 million dollars for an eight-performance week (Playbill staff, 2017). As of 2020, tickets for the musical remain one of the most sought after in any of the locations where it is being performed.

The musical has also attracted a lot of scholarly interest. For example, Satu Salo (2018) studies the use of the rhythm of hip-hop as the basis of the show’s structure. Promoting hip-hop style as a literary form, the show foregrounds lyrics and language, which, Salo claims, parallels the life of the historical Hamilton, who “was a gifted and prolific writer during his time” (2018, p. 7). The research further connects hip-hop poetics to topic of immigration, a narrative still relevant in contemporary America, which frames the story of Hamilton, who “paved the way for generations of immigrants that came after him to find their own place in the cultural melting

pot of America” (ibid., p. 84). Edited by Renee C. Romano and Claire Bond Potter, the essay collection *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America’s Past* (2018) focuses on the musical’s cultural and political influence, as well as the way in which its “traditional political story, told through Afro-Caribbean music by a multiracial cast, has seemed to capture the political zeitgeist of the Age of Obama” (Romano and Potter, 2018, p. 4). The essays in the edited volume explore the musical’s historical accuracies and inaccuracies, and the way it connects to the current political climate in the U.S. Most of existing research focuses on the broader influence and success of the musical (Herrera, 2018), its treatment of race (Monteiro, 2018; Umehira, 2016) and immigration (Magness, 2017; Silva and Inayatulla, 2017), as well as its musical influences (Salo, 2018), rarely considering the characters and the links to the historical figures they are based on, which is the topic of this thesis.

2.1. Historical context

The events of the musical are set in different U.S. cities, in the time period between 1776–1804. In 1776, America is at the beginnings of the Revolutionary War (also known as the American War of Independence) against Great Britain. As a British colony, America rebelled against British rule and sought to be an independent country, with its own Constitution and government. The conflict was the consequence of many years of growing taxes and laws imposed by the colonizers, which gave them more and more control over the American people. The first fighting which started the war took place on 18 April 1775 (Jenkins, 2017, pp. 33-54). The first act of the musical shows the progression of the war until its final battle, the battle of Yorktown (1781), followed by the surrender of the British army. The second act takes place during the early years of U.S. independence, as its leaders are trying to find their political footing and the way in which the country will develop in the future. During this time, political in-fighting becomes more prominent as two political parties with different visions and ideals are formed: The Republicans and the Federalists.

2.2. Synopsis of the musical

The opening song entitled “Alexander Hamilton” takes us into the early life of the title character and gives us an idea of his early childhood and teenage years, until his arrival to New York City, and the start of his education and political progress. The first person he meets after

his arrival is Aaron Burr, who is portrayed as his first friend in New York. From the beginning they are shown as opposites, as Hamilton seeks action and is not scared to voice his opinion (as expressed in his anthem “My Shot”), while Burr stands on the side lines to see how each situation will unfold (as seen in the title of his signature song, “Wait for It”). Despite their differences, they remain friends throughout the first act, which focuses on Hamilton’s life during the American Revolution and the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). We follow his rise in the military as he demonstrates his leadership skills and forms a bond with future president George Washington. The first act also introduces Hamilton’s wife, Eliza, and her sister Angelica, who, despite being attracted to Alexander decides not to pursue him, partly because of her sister’s feelings and partly because of her obligation to her family. Soon after their meeting, Hamilton and Eliza marry and have their first child, shown to be a big part of his motivation to stay alive during the War.

Set after the War, act two follows Hamilton’s career as a lawyer who transitions into politics, becoming the first U.S. Treasury Secretary. As he thrives and revolutionizes the treasury affairs, he also makes powerful enemies, including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Aaron Burr, who envies Hamilton’s success and is willing to do anything to get it. Thanks to his ambition, Hamilton is on the way to become the next U.S. president; however, his fall from grace comes when he exposes his affair with a married woman while his wife was away. Hamilton retreats from the public eye to get away from the scandal and mourn the death of his oldest son Philip, who is killed in a duel trying to protect his father’s honor. Hamilton stays away from politics until he is forced to choose who to indorse in the election of 1800: Jefferson or Burr. His decision to support Jefferson ultimately leads to him being killed by Burr in a duel. Eliza shows immense loyalty and, with Angelica’s help, spends the next fifty years trying to preserve her husband’s legacy and build something he will be remembered by, as told in the last song of the musical “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story”.

3. THE FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON

Throughout his life, Hamilton attracted many people but also driven many of them away. Some of the most prominent figures in the musical, shown as his friends, are John Laurens, Marquis de Lafayette, and George Washington, his life-long companion and co-worker/boss. These three men are the focus of this chapter as their friendship and cooperation had the biggest influence on Hamilton's life. The chapter will show Hamilton's ability to make friends and political allies that would push his career forward, while showing great loyalty to those he considers friends.

Hamilton had a natural charisma that people were drawn to, and his way of speaking and the fluency with which he expressed his ideas often made people notice him. While growing up on the Caribbean island St. Croix, with little prospects of a successful future, he devoted himself to learning and "probably snatched every spare moment to read" (Chernow, 2004, p. 33). His superior intelligence was quickly noticed when he started working as a clerk at a mercantile house at the age of 13. Even then, he was quick to lecture people much older than himself on things he thought they did wrong or he himself would have done differently. Even though he knew only one person upon his arrival in New York City, it did not take him long to make friends and connections, as he was "smart, handsome, outgoing", and assertive (ibid., 2004, p. 41). The first friend he made was Hercules Mulligan, a tailor who became a spy during the Revolutionary War. Although the musical shows Mulligan as a part of Hamilton's friend group, his impact on Hamilton's life was less prominent (Chernow's biography, for instance, mentions him only in the context of the War; 2004).

As opposition against the British was growing across America, Hamilton was attracting attention with his anti-British pieces, once again using words to impress older and more prominent men. As he formed his closest friendships soon after publicly expressing his patriotic sentiments, the musical introduces those relationships early on. In the song "My Shot", Hamilton expresses his need for friendship and approval by saying: "I never had a group of friends before / I promise that I'll make y'all proud" (Miranda, 2015a) to Lafayette, Mulligan, and Laurens, who all agree they need to "get this guy in front of a crowd" (ibid.). The musical emphasizes the importance of those friendships as they encourage Hamilton to pursue his dreams and make an impact.

3.1. John Laurens

Shortly after joining Washington's camp in January 1777, Hamilton began one of the most intimate and important friendships of his life. John Laurens formally joined Washington's family in October, but the friendship between the elegant, blue-eyed officer (Chernow, 2004, p. 94) and our protagonist began in the late spring 1777. The musical shows their meeting very early on, in the third song of the musical, "My Shot", which takes place before "Farmer Refuted", while in reality Hamilton's rebuttal happened almost three years prior to his meeting with Laurens. Despite adjusting the timeline, the musical uses this moment to show their mutual support and resistance against the British.

Although the two shared a similar ancestry of French and English, they grew up in different circles, as Laurens was the son of one of South Carolina's most influential planters and therefore enjoyed a privileged life of many luxuries. Like Hamilton, he was an accomplished and versatile scholar, who studied law in Geneva and London. Upon his return to America, he joined the Continental Army and gained Washington's trust, which led to his introduction to Hamilton. According to Chernow, the two almost seemed to be "kindred spirits, spiritual twins. They were both bookish and ambitious, bold and enterprising, and hungered for military honor" (2004, p. 94). After their first meeting, they seemed instantly connected and soon became inseparable. Hamilton wrote Laurens letters filled with affection and love, which have since caused speculation about the true nature of their relationship (although nothing has been definitively proven). The musical shows the two bonding while also becoming part of a wider group of friends. This is best seen in the song "The Story of Tonight", as the young men celebrate their efforts in the Revolutionary War: "Raise a glass to freedom / Something they can never take away / No matter what they tell you / Raise a glass to the four of us / Tomorrow there'll be more of us / Sharing the story of tonight" (Miranda, 2015a). The melody and lyrics translate the feeling of hope they share for a better future, which they wish to experience together.

During the Battle of Monmouth (1778), one of the more important conflicts of the war, General Charles Lee disobeyed George Washington by ordering his troops to retreat instead of attacking the British troops. In the musical, he publicly attacks Washington by claiming he "cannot be left alone to his devices / Indecisive, from crisis to crisis / The best thing he can do for the revolution / Is turn n' go back to plantin' tobacco in Mount Vernon" (Miranda, 2015a). Although Laurens urged him to respond ("Strong words from Lee, someone oughta hold him

to it”; *ibid.*), Hamilton shows a rare sense of restraint and decides not to say anything. Laurens therefore challenges Lee to a duel, with Hamilton serving as his second. Both young men showed an affinity towards dueling as a way of preserving honor, be it their own or, as in this case, someone else’s. This conflict is presented in the song “Stay Alive”: as Hamilton and Laurens stand together, they show that they share the same values, thus confirming the magnitude of their friendship (Laurens calls Alexander his closest friend). The duel ends with Laurens shooting Lee in the right side, forcing him to apologize to Washington (Chernow, 2004, p. 117).

In 1779, Laurens left the camp for South Carolina, hoping to organize battalions of black slaves to be used in the war against the British, as shown in his first introduction in the musical: “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” (Miranda, 2015a). Laurens’s abolitionist beliefs were another factor which contributed to his friendship with Hamilton, as both “saw emancipation of the slaves as an inseparable part of the struggle for freedom as well as a source of badly needed manpower” (Chernow, 2004, p. 121). Some critics have pointed out that, despite the fact that the musical repeatedly mentions the fight against slavery, “all of the characters portrayed in the musical are white; there are no people of color featured as characters” (Umehira, 2016, [n.p.]). Following his unsuccessful attempt to form a black battalion, Laurens joined the military service in South Carolina. The two spent much of the rest of the War separated, communicating mainly through letters, many of which reveal Hamilton’s devotion to his friend (“I wish, my Dear Laurens, it might be in my power, by action, rather than words, to convince you that I love you”; Chernow, 2004, p. 124) and reveal his romantic interests. However, after meeting and becoming engaged to Eliza Schuyler, Hamilton forgets to mention this to Laurens for almost three months. When he does share the news with Laurens, Hamilton assures him there is no reason to feel jealous: “In spite of Schuyler’s black eyes, I have still a part for the public and another for you” (*ibid.*, p. 132). The musical departs from these events, as Hamilton’s friends (including Laurens) all celebrate his wedding together. Laurens, shown in the musical as Hamilton’s best man (in reality, he was not present at the wedding), teases the groom: “I’ve seen wonders great and small / Cause if the tomcat can get married / There’s hope for our a**, after all!” (Miranda, 2015a), once again, showing the strength of their friendship.

By their next reunion, in September 1781, Hamilton had left Washington’s camp and was leading his own infantry, while Laurens had just returned from France with arms,

ammunition, and a large French subsidy. As the Battle of Yorktown approached, Hamilton saw it as his last chance to fight and practically begged Washington for the opportunity to do so. Ultimately, he was given command of three battalions, one of which was led by Laurens. Although the pair fought together, the musical tells us that Laurens is “in South Carolina, redefining bravery” (Miranda, 2015a). While historically inaccurate, this moment once again shows the two friends’ corresponding views, as Laurens responds: “We’ll never be free until we end slavery” (ibid.).

The two hoped that following the War they would be able to join forces once more in their efforts to build a new republican union. In his last letter to Laurens, written in August 1782, Hamilton says: “We know each other’s sentiments, our views are the same. We have fought side by side to make America free. Let us hand in hand struggle to make her happy” (Chernow, 2004, p. 172). It will forever remain a mystery if Laurens ever read this letter, as he lost his life near Charleston in a foolish attempt to ambush some of the remaining British forces, thus becoming one of the last casualties of the Revolutionary War. The love Hamilton felt for Laurens was evident in every letter he sent him, so this news came as a shock and caused him great pain. He rarely opened up to anyone as much as he did to Laurens and after his death retreated even more into his work: in the musical, he refuses to talk about Laurens’ death with his wife, saying “I have so much work to do” (Miranda, 2015a). Due to Laurens’ early death, the character is only present in the first act, but, symbolically, the same actor plays Hamilton’s son in the second act.

3.2. Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette

Hamilton met Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette in the early stages of the Revolutionary War, the same way he met his other best friend, John Laurens. Like Hamilton, Lafayette experienced great loss early in life (he was orphaned in his early teen years), but unlike his friend, the Marquis inherited a large fortune and, after marrying the daughter of a wealthy French family, became a member of King Louis XVI’s court. He ultimately decided he wanted to win his glory as a soldier and travelled to America in 1777 to take part in the Revolution, where he soon proved himself a worthy ally and brave soldier. In addition to his connections to the French court, “he agreed to serve without pay, brought a ship to America outfitted at his own expense, and spend lavishly from his own purse to clothe and arm the patriots” (Chernow, 2004, p. 96). People took to Lafayette very quickly, as they found him “full

of poetry and fire and fine liberal sentiments” (ibid.). Among those fond of the French nobleman was George Washington, who quickly formed a father-son bond with him (Lafayette later named his only son after Washington).

Like many of Hamilton’s early friendships, his relationship with Lafayette developed almost instantaneously. The musical shows them meeting (along with Mulligan and Laurens) during “My Shot”. Lafayette shares Hamilton’s and Laurens’ views, and the three encourage each other to take action, as in the case of the “Farmer Refuted”, when Lafayette pushes Hamilton to speak and prove the farmer wrong. Similar to his friendship with John Laurens, there have been speculations about the true nature of the relationship between Hamilton and Lafayette. In a letter to his wife, Lafayette mentions “a (young) man whom I love very much and about whom I have occasionally spoken to you. The man is Colonel Hamilton” (Chernow, 2004, p. 97). In the musical, Lafayette toasts at Hamilton’s wedding (“Raise a glass to freedom! / (...) / Let’s have another round tonight!”; Miranda, 2015a), showing excitement for Hamilton’s new union, but also his continuous support for the Revolution. The song “The Story of Tonight (Reprise)” emphasized another connection between Lafayette and Hamilton, as after Burr shows up, Lafayette sings: “You are the worst, Burr!” (Miranda, 2015a). Although the line is playful, it shows that Lafayette shares Hamilton’s opinion that Burr is too controlled and restrained.

The song “Stay Alive” reveals that Lafayette took the lead in the Battle of Monmouth after Lee’s disobedience and the cowardice shown by Lee. In addition to being an active participant in battle, the Marquis also brought the French army to America. His popularity during the Revolutionary War is emphasized in the song “Guns and Ships” (“He’s constantly confusin’, confoundin’ the British henchman / Ev’ryone give it up for America’s favorite fighting Frenchman! / Lafayette!”; Miranda, 2015a), as are his material contributions to the war efforts (“I go to France for more funds / I come back with more guns / And ships / And so the balance shifts”; ibid.). Lafayette urged General Washington to give Hamilton field command, showing he was willing to risk his own position to help a friend. This is shown in “Guns and Ships”, as the Marquis is trying to convince Washington that the fight without Hamilton would be impossible: “We can end this war at Yorktown / Cut them off at sea / But for this to succeed there is someone else we need / Hamilton! / Sir, he knows what to do in a trench / Ingenuitive and fluent in French” (ibid.). The trio of Laurens, Hamilton, and Lafayette would be reunited during the Battle of Yorktown, although, as previously mentioned, the musical changes this. During their exchange in the song “The Battle of Yorktown”, Lafayette and Hamilton jointly

exclaim: “Immigrants / We get the job done” (ibid.), pointing out that two important generals in the War were two foreigners, who decided to fight for what they thought was right – another trait they have in common. After the Battle of Yorktown, Lafayette returned to France in December 1781 and rejoined the French army. After his departure, Hamilton never saw him again, which is why the character only appears in the first act. The actor who plays Lafayette, however, returns in the second act as Thomas Jefferson, who returns to America from France.

Despite their separation, Lafayette and Hamilton stayed in contact until Hamilton’s untimely death in 1804. Even though the musical does not mention Lafayette much in the second act, their friendship had a great influence on their positions in the army and the musical translates that strive for the freedom into the basis on which they built their friendship. Lafayette was one of the few people Hamilton befriended in his early military career who truly remained a friend for the rest of his life.

3.3. George Washington

It can be said that his relationship with George Washington was Hamilton’s most long-lasting friendship and most fruitful political collaboration. Before their official meeting in 1777, Hamilton had already started taking part in the Revolutionary War, while Washington was already an experienced leader of the Continental Army. Following the death of his father and brother, Washington became the head of Mount Vernon, an estate he would cherish and continue to build until his death, which is mentioned several times in the musical. He was named Major General and Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army on 15 June 1775. The first sight Hamilton got of Washington was just 10 days later when “he crossed the Hudson on the Hoboken ferry, then proceeded along Broadway in a carriage pulled by a team of white horses, the triumphant procession moving grandly past King’s College” (Chernow, 2004, p. 66). It was probably not long before Washington became aware of Hamilton, who had already made an impression on several generals as the captain of his own artillery. Washington mentions this in the song “Right-hand Man”: “you’re a young man of great renown, / I know you stole British cannons when we were still downtown, / Nathaniel Green and Henry Knox wanted to hire you” (Miranda, 2015a). He was also impressed by Hamilton’s work during the retreat from New York and his company’s march into Princeton: “It was a model of discipline. At their head was a boy and I wondered at his youth, but what was my surprise when that slight figure...was pointed out to me as that Hamilton of whom we had already heard so much” (Chernow, 2004,

p. 84). Soon after that, Washington sought Hamilton's assistance as an aide-de-camp: "I'm working with a third of what our congress has promised / We are a powder keg about to explode / I need someone like you to lighten the load. So?" (Miranda, 2015a). This set the tone for their relationship in the musical, just as it did in real life.

Although Hamilton was not initially thrilled with his new position, believing it kept him off the battlefield, that job "won him the patronage of America's leading figure and ushered him into the presence of military officers who were later to form a critical sector of his political following" (Chernow, 2004, p. 87). Chernow points out that Washington and Hamilton worked well together thanks to their (ibid., p. 88):

complementary talents, values, and opinions that survived many strains over their twenty-two years together. Washington possessed the outstanding judgement, sterling character, and clear sense of purpose [...] Hamilton, in turn, contributed philosophical depth, administrative expertise, and comprehensive policy knowledge that nobody in Washington's ambit ever matched.

However, their strong personalities also led to conflicts. Hamilton saw Washington in some of his worst states and losses of temper, which is quite the opposite to the General's public perception. Hamilton also noticed flaws in Washington that others were blind to or ignored. His ability "to project himself into Washington's mind and intuit what the general wanted to say, writing it up with instinctive tact and deft diplomatic skills" (ibid., p. 90) proved very useful and he was soon dealing with confidential information, writing letters to the Congress, generals, and governors, and handling diplomatic missions.

During the War, Washington's position became difficult as the Continental Army lacked resources, food and ammunition: "Congress writes 'George attack the British forces', / I shoot back, we have resorted to eating our horses, / Local merchants deny us equipment, assistance / They only take British money, so sing a song of sixpence" ("Stay Alive"; Miranda, 2015a). Furthermore, he was challenged by members of his own army, especially the previously mentioned Charles Lee. The bravery and composure Washington and Hamilton demonstrated when faced with Lee's behavior during the Battle at Monmouth lifted their status in the eyes of the people. However, Washington did not approve of the duel between Laurens (with Hamilton as his second) and Lee, as expressed in the song "Meet Me Inside": "Lee, you will never agree with me / But these young men don't speak for me / Thank you for your service" (ibid.). This is the first sign of conflict between Hamilton and Washington, as the General states he has nothing to prove, while Hamilton is just starting and does not have the same titles or wealth.

This moment also shows the value Hamilton puts on his reputation and the reputation of those close to him. During this dispute, Washington repeatedly calls Hamilton ‘son’; in real life, the General, who had no children of his own, “often referred to Hamilton as ‘my boy’” (Chernow, 2004, p. 87). The fight ends with Hamilton being sent home and let go from the army (this did not really happen).

Even though the two men shared their frustration with central government and were loyal to each other, there were also disagreements between them. Despite his respect for the General, Hamilton “was too proud and gifted, too eager to advance in rank, to subordinate himself happily to anyone for four years, even to the renowned Washington” (Chernow, 2004, p. 149). Moreover, he resented being tied to a desk and felt angry for repeatedly being passed on for the position of general. That is the root of the conflict which begins in “Stay Alive”: “And ev’ry day ‘*Sir, entrust me with a command*’ And ev’ry day ‘*No*’ He dismisses me out of hand” (Miranda, 2015a). Chernow explains that Washington would not let Hamilton go, because nobody could match his “French or his ability to draft subtle, nuanced letters” (2004, p. 150). After what might be considered a small quarrel, Hamilton decided it was time to leave. Despite their falling out, Washington recognized Hamilton’s value and realized the young man was not fully aware of the realities of war. Similarly, Hamilton never underestimated Washington’s “prudence, character, patriotism and leadership qualities” (ibid., p. 153). This mutual respect and understanding allowed them to reunite and cooperate in the future.

Two months after leaving Washington’s staff, Hamilton requested field command, which he finally received after persisting for a few months. In the song “Guns and Ships”, Washington gives the command to Hamilton: “Alexander Hamilton / Troops are waiting in the field for you / If you join us right now, together we can turn the tide” (Miranda, 2015a). This moment also shows how much Washington values Hamilton and how important he is to bringing the war to an end: “I know that we can win, / I know that greatness lies in you, / But remember from here on in / History has its eyes on you” (ibid.).

After the War, both Washington and Hamilton turned to different things: Washington returned to Mount Vernon and stayed out of politics until 1786, when he was called upon to take part in the Constitutional Convention; Hamilton, on the other hand, was knee deep in political and legal work, cooperating with many prominent politicians of the time and finalizing his legal education. Although rarely communicating during the post-Revolution period, they were quickly reunited at the Constitutional Convention. In 1789, Washington became the first

U.S. President and the executive branch of the country; the second most wanted position – that of treasury secretary – was offered to Hamilton (“Non-Stop”, Miranda, 2015b):

Washington: I’m asking you to be my right-hand man...

Hamilton: Treasury or state?

Washington: I know it’s a lot to ask... / To leave behind the world you know

Hamilton: Sir, do you want me to run the treasury or state department?

Washington: Treasury.

The freedom Hamilton had in this period was like no other in American history. As Chernow points out, “[t]he new government was a tabula rasa on which he could sketch plans with a young man’s energy” (2004, p. 288). Enjoying the President’s full trust, he could shape the treasury any way he wanted. Once again, the pair complemented each other in many areas: Hamilton led with his intellect, while Washington used his judgement to control the often-erratic treasury secretary. They also “offset each other’s personal weaknesses. Washington could be hypersensitive to criticism and never forgot snubs, but he had learned to govern his emotions, making him a valuable foil to the volatile Hamilton. Hamilton could be needlessly tactless and provocative, while Washington was conciliatory” (ibid., p. 290). Since their political views were in tune, the President almost always took the Treasury Secretary’s side in conflicts, becoming “the political shield that Alexander Hamilton needed as he became America’s most influential and controversial man” (ibid.).

The song “Cabinet Battle #1” shows Hamilton’s attempt to assume state debt and establish a national bank, and provides more insight into his relationship with Washington. At the end of the debate, Washington says: “Excuse me? Madison, Jefferson take a walk! Hamilton, take a walk! / We’ll reconvene after a brief recess. Hamilton! / A word” (Miranda, 2015b). While the same words are directed to all three men, the tone changes from Jefferson and Madison (harsh) to Hamilton (disappointed, as if he talking to a child). Instead of just dismissing him, Washington talks to Hamilton and explains he will have to work with these people no matter how much he dislikes it. As tension rose within the Cabinet, attempts to destroy the Treasury Secretary’s reputation only brought him and the President closer together. Washington’s proclamation of neutrality in the discussion on whether the U.S. should get involved in the French Revolution (presented in “Cabinet Battle #2”) was another victory for the Treasury Secretary, proving once again that the President was simply more aligned with the thoughts and beliefs of Hamilton than Jefferson.

At the end of Washington's term, Hamilton had already left position of Treasury Secretary and was busy with his legal back in New York. Even after leaving the Cabinet, Hamilton stayed involved with the Treasury and State Department, often exchanging letters with the secretaries and the President. In the musical, Washington's decision to step down comes as a shock to Hamilton, who has to come to terms with this decision and let him go. Washington is one of the few characters in the musical who appears in both acts, which shows his importance and influence on both Hamilton and the country as a whole. During his final song, he tries to impart advice to his young colleague and get him to listen, while also saying goodbye: "Pick up a pen, start writing, / I want to talk about what I have learned, / The hard-won wisdom I have earned" (Miranda, 2015b). Throughout the musical, Washington took Hamilton under his wing and partially kept him under control but will no longer be around to do that (this will reflect badly on Hamilton's later political career).

The two kept contact until Washington's death on December 14, 1799. Even when Hamilton published the damaging Reynolds Pamphlet (see Chapter 5), Washington sent him a letter of solidarity. Letters from that period show their closeness, with Washington signing his letters as "Your affectionate friend and obedient servant" (Chernow, 2004, p. 555). Their relationship developed from mentorship during the Revolutionary War to collaboration and, ultimately, real friendship and affection. They differed in temperaments and talents, but shared the same outlook, forming a duo rarely matched in American history.

4. HAMILTON'S ENEMIES

Considering his tendency to express his opinions without any filter or censorship, it is not surprising that, along with many friends, Alexander Hamilton also had enemies. They included some of the most notable politicians of that era and it is a shame that they were not able to unite their talents, instead working hard on destroying each other. Hamilton had his first public quarrel when he was only 20 years old and wrote “The Farmer Refuted”, directed against Samuel Seabury. Writing under the pseudonym ‘A Westchester Farmer’, Seabury spoke against the Revolution and the trade boycott against Britain (Chernow, 2004, p. 58). In the musical, the song “Farmer Refuted” shows Hamilton publicly standing up to Seabury with the support of his friends; however, his actual involvement in the quarrel was anonymous, since it could have endangered his position at King’s College. In this situation, he found what he “needed for his best work: a hard, strong position to contest” (ibid.).

Hamilton worked well with controversy and created some of his best work by trying to prove others wrong; however, that kind of mentality also cost him a lot, since he easily lost control and did not know when to stop or let things go. While working for Washington, he was somewhat subdued, as he was not only representing himself but also his superior. His greatest enemies were those with opposing political opinions and stances, such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Aaron Burr, and John Adams. During disputes, Hamilton’s reputation was often at risk and his opponents often brought up his descent, a topic he was increasingly sensitive about, since “he wanted desperately to separate himself from his past and from the ‘rabble’ (as elite Americans referenced the lower and middle classes at the time)” (Smith, 2017, p. 519). This chapter focuses on three individuals Hamilton had the most points of contention with: Jefferson, Madison, and Burr. Some of them were initially his friends and it is interesting to see how those relationships progressed and the impact they had on Hamilton’s later life.

4.1. James Madison

James Madison grew up on a family plantation in Montpelier, Virginia, and, like Hamilton, started college education at what at the time was considered a late age (18). He shared Hamilton’s strict work ethic and ambition, but the two followed different paths during the Revolutionary War (Madison focused more on politics than military service). They did, however, collaborate on a campaign to grant the Congress financial autonomy and fought for

payment for soldiers. It is also interesting that Hamilton's biggest mentor, George Washington, valued Madison's opinion greatly and often exchanged letters with him, even after their political disagreement.

While Madison's role in the musical is not as large, his presence in Hamilton's life was more prominent and they could even be considered friends until their opposing political views came between them. The younger but more worldly Hamilton openly expressed his ideas, while Madison was quieter and tended to think things through; however, "his indomitable force showed once he opened his mouth" (Chernow, 2004, p. 174). They were both strong speakers and used that skill whenever they had the chance. During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which discussed the future design of the U.S. Government, Hamilton proposed "his own form of government! / His own plan for a new form of government! / Talks for six hours, the convention is listless!" ("Non-Stop", Miranda, 2015b). Although completely unrealistic, his plan was brilliant, and Madison was at the time keen on some of its aspects (in later years he pretended that was not the case). As the Convention continued, the first major difference in opinions between Madison and Hamilton began to show: while Hamilton fought for the abolition of slavery, Madison, who owned around 100 slaves on his property in Montpelier, avoided the issue. Their biggest collaboration came in the form of *The Federalist Papers* (ibid.):

Alexander joins forces with James Madison and John Jay to write a / series of essays defending the new United States Constitution / entitled The Federalist Paper. The plan was to write a total of / twenty-five essays that were 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. / Madison wrote twenty-nine. / Hamilton wrote the other fifty-one!

By choosing Madison for this project, Hamilton showed he was looking for people who had the most knowledge on the subject, not necessarily those with whom his opinions aligned completely. Unfortunately, after *The Federalist Papers* the two brilliant minds never collaborated again.

Hamilton and Madison were still in contact during Washington's presidential election and Madison even considered Hamilton the most qualified person for the position of Treasury Secretary. However, when Hamilton expected support for his financial program, Madison made "a speech attacking the funding scheme" (Chernow, 2004, p. 305). According to Chernow, the falling out between Hamilton and Madison was more than personal, as it "precipitated the start of the two-party system in America" (ibid., p. 306). Their relationship was never based on personal fondness but similar ideas; however, their quarrel caused a lot of problems for

Hamilton because Madison aligned himself with Hamilton's biggest political rival, Thomas Jefferson.

In the musical, Madison is seen relying on his longtime Virginian friend Jefferson for help and appears more as an assistant than an independent actor who would later become president. In reality, Madison was autonomous and acted even before Jefferson returned from France. However, he often seemed timid, which confirmed Hamilton's opinion that he was being controlled by Jefferson. The musical portrays this very well, as the character mostly speaks only to support something or finish Jefferson's sentences. As time passed, Hamilton and Madison lost all positive contact and most of their communication came in the form of printed insults. The final nail in the coffin of their relationship was the matter of setting up a central bank: Madison opposed Hamilton's proposal, accusing him of exploiting his power, but the bank bill was ultimately passed. After this, Madison started seeing Hamilton as "the official voice of monied aristocrats who were grabbing the reins of federal power" (Chernow, 2004, p. 350). It is interesting to see how two men who at one point in their lives worked so hard for the same cause ended up on such different ends of the spectrum. They not only saw each other as being in the wrong but thought the other was evil and wanted to destroy the country. Even though the musical does not focus on their relationship, their falling out had a big impact on Hamilton's life, as he never truly recovered from the political and press attacks that Madison supported and often contributed to.

4.2. Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was another successful politician born into a rich family of Virginia's planter elite. After a lengthy legal career, he entered politics and became one of the biggest supporters of America's independence. In 1775, he took part in the Second Continental Congress, led by George Washington, and was chosen (along with four other people) to draft the Declaration of Independence. This document is referenced in the song "Cabinet Battle #1", in which Jefferson uses words taken directly from the Declaration: "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness / we fought for these ideals, / we shouldn't settle for less" (Miranda, 2015b). He served as the Governor of Virginia and later the U.S. minister to France.

The musical introduces him in act two, after he returns from France: "I've been in Paris meeting lots of different ladies... / I guess I basically missed the late eighties... / I traveled the wide, wide world and came back to this..." ("What'd I Miss", Miranda, 2015b). As previously

mentioned, he is played by the same actor who had the role of the Marquis de Lafayette, who left for France at the end of the Revolutionary War, in act one. Jefferson appears as a more extravagant character, dressed in purple to show his wealth and almost aristocratic status. Moreover, since at the time dye for clothing was produced by slaves, dressing Jefferson in a purple suit emphasizes his connection to slavery. However, in reality, Jefferson's dress "was casual, almost sloppy" and "plain" (Chernow, 2004, p. 311).

Even before they met, Jefferson and Hamilton were aware of each other as they were both successful politicians and in contact with Hamilton's sister-in-law, Angelica Schuyler. When they first met, they were cordial and maintained good relations. Jefferson was already in line to become the Secretary of State, but since he arrived later than the other secretaries, Hamilton would often interfere in his business, which Jefferson resented. In the musical, he expresses his ideas and opposes Hamilton in public forums, while in reality he made more calculated moves and "found strength in secrecy, in silence" (Chernow, 2004, p. 311). While Hamilton supported the idea of a union with a strong central government, Jefferson wanted the states to have their own autonomy in making more important decisions. Their first disagreement was over Hamilton's funding scheme, which both Jefferson and Madison opposed. The main problem with the scheme was the assumption of public debt, which Jefferson criticized in "Cabinet Battle #1": "If New York's in debt, / Why should Virginia bear it? Uh! Our debts are paid I'm afraid / Don't tax the South cuz we got it made in the shade" (Miranda, 2015b). Hamilton rebuts: "If we assume the debts, the union gets / a new line of credit, a financial diuretic / How do you not get it? If we're aggressive and competitive / The union gets a boost, you'd rather give it a sedative? / A civics lesson from a slaver. Hey neighbor / Your debts are paid cuz you don't pay for labor" (ibid.). At the end of the song, Jefferson mocks Hamilton for not being able to pass his plan because of a lack of votes, which Jefferson himself would end up providing. This is another difference from Jefferson's real-life persona as he was shrewd and restrained and would not openly mock someone.

Further disagreement surrounded the discussion of the country's capital: Hamilton wanted it to be New York, while Jefferson wanted Philadelphia. This also showed their different visions for the country, as Hamilton envisioned a forward, urban country, while his opponent dreamed "of a nation of small, independent farms" (Chernow, 2004, p. 326). After Hamilton's funding bill was accepted without the assumption part, he realized he needed to act quick and between the issues of assumption and the capital, he gave precedence to assumption as it tied the states together into a permanent union. This resulted in the arrangement of a famous dinner

on 20 June 1790, attended by “Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and perhaps one or two others” (Chernow, 2004, p. 328), and described in the song “The Room Where It Happens” (Miranda, 2015b):

Two Virginians and an immigrant walk into a room / Diametrically opposed, foes / They emerge with a compromise having open doors that were previously closed / The immigrant emerges with unprecedented financial power / A system he can shape however he wants / The Virginians emerge with the nation’s capital / And here’s the piece de resistance : / No one else was in the Room where it happened.

In the end, everyone got what they wanted: Hamilton got the assumption, but gave up his support for New York as the U.S. capital (“What did they say to you to get you to sell New York City down the river? / Did Washington know about the dinner? / Was there presidential pressure to deliver? / Or did you know even then it doesn’t matter / where you put the US capital?”; *ibid.*). Despite this short collaboration, even bigger conflicts and public clashes laid ahead for Hamilton and Jefferson.

As the opening of the first central bank was approaching, Jefferson and Madison, who “adhered to a static, archaic worldview that scorned banks, credit and stock markets” (Chernow, 2004, p. 346) started fearing that “Hamilton was not simply building a structure that dashed their principles but sculpting his creations in stone” (*ibid.*, p. 351). Jefferson’s wish to “preserve a pure, agrarian America” made him see Hamilton as “a menace to the American experiment, one who had to be stopped at all costs” (*ibid.*, p. 361). He wrote to Washington, accusing Hamilton of various wrongdoings and criminal activities. The two also disagreed over U.S. involvement in the second French Revolution in 1792, presented in “Cabinet Battle #2”. While Jefferson argues they should get involved and help the French who supported them in the War (“They didn’t ask for land / Only a promise that we’d lend a hand, / and stand with them if they fought against oppressors”; Miranda, 2015b), Hamilton is against “meddling in the middle of a military mess / A game of chess, where France is Queen and Kingless” (*ibid.*). The song shows more than just the opinions of the two men, illustrating how Hamilton was often accused of being an ‘aristocrat’ by the Jeffersonians and wishing for the country to be organized as such. Jefferson even hired writers to publish defamatory stories and articles about Hamilton. Washington’s constant support of Hamilton (he took Hamilton’s side in the issue of the French Revolution) also infuriated Jefferson. In the song “Washington on Your Side”, he complains: “Somebody give me some dirt on this vacuous mass so we can at last unmask him / I’ll pull the trigger on him, someone load the gun and cock it / While we were all watching he got

Washington in his pocket” (Miranda, 2015b). During the song, Jefferson decides to leave his post as the Secretary of State as he cannot destroy Hamilton while also working with him.

In the following years, Hamilton and Jefferson publicly attacked each other. Jefferson even managed to launch an investigation of Hamilton’s work at the Treasury (Chernow, 2004, p. 427). In the song “We Know”, Hamilton is confronted by Jefferson, Madison and Burr about payments to a Mr. James Reynolds, back in 1791 and 1792 (in reality, James Monroe and Frederick Muhlenberg first had this information). By saying: “We have the check stubs from separate accounts, / Almost a thousand dollars paid in different amounts” (Miranda, 2015b), they accuse him of using Treasury funds rather than his own money to pay for this. Worried about the loss of his political reputation, Hamilton reveals the truth (he was giving money to the husband of his mistress; see 5.3.) in the 1797 Reynolds Pamphlet. His political career went downhill after that, a fact celebrated by Jefferson at the end of the song “The Reynolds Pamphlet”: “Well, he’s never gonna be president now!” (ibid.).

The leading candidates at the presidential election of 1800, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, were both on bad terms with Hamilton. However, despite the hatred and resentment Hamilton felt for Jefferson, he still promoted him, believing he was choosing the lesser of two evils. Soon after, he went back to his old ways, publishing numerous articles about the new President’s wish to destroy the Constitution. Jefferson, however, took a step back and ignored most of the attacks, as it was already evident that Hamilton and the Federalist Party had lost their power. After the song “The Election of 1800”, Jefferson is less prominent in the musical, appearing again in the final song to give credit to Hamilton’s achievements: “I’ll give him this: his financial system / Is a work of genius. I couldn’t undo it if I tried / And I tried” (“Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story”; Miranda, 2015b). During his two terms as President, Jefferson did try to undo some of Hamilton’s financial system, but soon realized how complex and thought out it actually was. As portrayed in the musical, their relationship was explosive from the beginning, their opinions differed on almost every issue, and neither ever tried to understand the other’s point of view. The extreme to which they took their rivalry was one of the major factors contributing to Hamilton’s political downfall and loss of reputation. Despite their opposing views on the country’s future, they both did a lot of good and, in addition to George Washington, might have made the greatest impact on their country’s development.

4.3. Aaron Burr

Appearing in both acts of the musical, the character of Aaron Burr is introduced already in the second song, “Aaron Burr, Sir”, which immediately sets up a contrast between Hamilton’s and Burr’s personalities: Hamilton is more open and asks questions, while Burr keeps his cards close to his chest. Hamilton’s confession “I wanted to do what you did. Graduate in two, / and join the revolution” (Miranda, 2015a) reveals some jealousy of Burr’s accomplishments, which Hamilton wishes for himself. Namely, Burr entered the College of New Jersey (nowadays, Princeton College) at the age of 13 and graduated at 16, an opportunity which Hamilton envies (he was not able to start college until he was 17). This happens only one more time in the musical, when Hamilton wishes he had military command like Burr instead of holding a desk job, but for most of their lives Burr was the one envious of Hamilton.

Burr and Hamilton are presented as almost polar opposites, with different personalities, approaches, and opinions, but similar goals and aspirations which they decide to achieve by taking different routes. The song “Aaron Burr, Sir” also introduces Burr’s repetitive theme, “Talk less, smile more” (Miranda, 2015a), reiterated in almost every song he sings, which truly represents him as “a chameleon who evaded clear-cut positions on most issues and was a genius at studied ambiguity” (Chernow, 2004, p. 192). In the song “Right Hand Man”, Burr approaches Washington, wanting to join his staff. Their discussion is interrupted by Hamilton whom Washington immediately recognizes, even though at the time Burr had a more prominent military background and reputation. This is one of many moments in which Burr is outshined by Hamilton, something he highly resented. It is also the beginning of animosity between Burr and Washington, which never seized, as Washington used every opportunity later in life not to promote Burr.

As the musical continues, Hamilton and Burr are considered friends but are not as close Hamilton is with Laurens, Lafayette, and Mulligan, which is shown through his absence from the song about friendship, “The Story of Tonight”. The song “Wait for It” gives us insight into Burr’s mind as he talks about forces one cannot control, such as love, life, and death. He “waits for it” because he knows that things which are meant to be will come to him, as opposed to Hamilton, who fights for everything: “Hamilton doesn’t hesitate, / He exhibits no restraint, / He takes and he takes and he takes, / And he keeps winning anyway / Changes the game / Plays and he raises the stakes” (Miranda, 2015a). While Burr waits for an opportunity to arise, Hamilton goes out and creates his own opportunities.

During the Revolutionary War, their paths crossed several times before Burr resigned his military position in 1779. In the duel between John Laurens and Charles Lee, Hamilton and Burr serve as their respective seconds (in reality, Lee's second was Evan Edwards). The musical sets the tone for this event in the song "Ten Dual Commandments", which sees the two men on opposite sides, with Burr promoting peace ("Can we agree that duels are dumb and immature?"; Miranda 2015a) and Hamilton supporting the duel ("But your man has to answer for his words, Burr"; *ibid.*). Years later, Burr will be the one demanding satisfaction and insisting on a duel with Hamilton. Since Burr resigned from the military, his character is absent from part of the first act and only returns for the last two songs. The first of them, "Dear Theodosia", highlights one of the similarities between Burr and Hamilton: they are both devoted fathers, proud that their children will be one of the first generations living in this new nation: "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" (*ibid.*). The ballad leads into the first act finale, "Non-Stop", which sees the two men back in New York, working as lawyers. They socialized during their time in Albany, even visiting each other's houses, but in their working life they were always in competition. The song again shows them as opposites, with Hamilton talking profusely and Burr questioning his actions. It also portrays Hamilton's meteoric rise from lawyer to part of the Constitutional Convention and finally the Treasury Secretary. When Burr finally entered politics, he accepted the job of state attorney-general from General Clinton, who Hamilton openly campaigned against, along with Burr. Hamilton felt betrayed by this and their relationship began to shift and become affected by their political standings and opinions.

The second act of the musical starts by focusing more on the relationship between Hamilton and Jefferson, until Burr's song "The Room Where It Happens", which follows the Compromise of 1790 and is the last song in which he and Hamilton talk as friends. Hamilton's question "What do you want, Burr? / If you stand for nothing / Burr, then what do you fall for?" (Miranda, 2015b) is a call-back to "Aaron Burr, Sir", when Burr did not fight for anything, but finally decided to do whatever it takes to be in "the room where it happens". This is the first time we hear Burr express desire for something: he wants to be included in making powerful and historical decisions, and the accompanying glory. The difference between Hamilton, who is not shy about admitting he wants success and goes after it, and Burr, who stays passive until things fall into his lap, is that Burr never expressed any opinions or beliefs that would support

his ambition: he was ambitious for the sake of ambition. In this song, he turns into the antagonist.

In 1792, Burr replaced Hamilton's father-in-law, Philip Schuyler, as a New York senator. This marked the end of their friendship; which Burr did not hesitate to sacrifice in his rise to power: "I've always considered you a friend. / I don't see why that has to end. / You changed parties to run against my father-in-law! / I changed parties to seize the opportunity I saw!" ("Schuyler Defeated"; Miranda, 2015b). Burr became involved with the Republican Party because he knew it would get him the position he wanted, even though it is not certain if his beliefs were in line with theirs. The only opinion he publicly expressed was his approval of the French Revolution (shared by Jefferson, who Burr was trying to get closer to), which Hamilton strongly opposed. Even though the musical shows Burr running for President only in 1800, he had already campaigned twice before. The song "The Election of 1800" shows that the main competition was between Burr and Jefferson. The vote ended up being a tie, so the final decision was up to the delegates. As Hamilton is asked his opinion in the musical, he makes a decision: "Jefferson has my vote / 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" (Miranda, 2015b). This sentiment is supported by a letter Hamilton wrote in December 1800 (Chernow, 2004, p. 633):

My opinion is, after mature reflection, that if Jefferson and Burr come with equal votes to the House of Representatives to support Jefferson, the former ought to be preferred by the Federalists [...] Mr. Jefferson is yet a lover of liberty [...] Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself [...] In a choice of Evils, let them take the least – Jefferson is in every view less dangerous than Burr.

The musical highlights this moment as a real turning point for Burr, who decides to challenge Hamilton to a duel. The actual challenge came four years later, after Burr lost the race for New York Governor, which he believed was the work of Hamilton. He was also convinced Hamilton was behind the harsh media attacks on him. The rising conflict is presented in the song "Your Obedient Servant", which referencing the real-life correspondence between Hamilton and Burr that led to their duel. The song tracks Burr's rising frustration with Hamilton as he sees himself losing many opportunities because of him: "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 failed / And in every place I checked / The only common thread has been your disrespect" (Miranda, 2015b). In response, Hamilton explains to Burr that most of his problems were caused by his lack of

opinions, which led to him switching parties and alliances according to how it fit him in a certain situation (“I am not the reason no one trusts you / No one knows what you believe”; *ibid.*).

The duel, which took place on 11 July 1804 in Weehawken, New Jersey, is presented in the penultimate song of the musical, “The World Was Wide Enough”. The music is somber and relays an anxious mood. Burr was unaware that Hamilton was not planning on shooting him; on the contrary, some things Hamilton did only convinced Burr he was about to get shot: “They won’t teach you this in your classes / But look it up Hamilton was wearing his glasses / Why? If not to take deadly aim” (Miranda, 2015b). As the guns are discharged, the music pulls back and all that is heard is Hamilton’s monologue. He thinks back on his life and all that he has accomplished, saying thank you to his biggest achievement – America: “You let me make a difference / A place where even orphan immigrants / Can leave their fingerprints and Rise up” (*ibid.*). As he announces Hamilton’s death, Burr says: “History obliterates / And every picture it paints / It paints me and all my mistakes / When Alexander aimed / At the sky / He may have been the first one to die / But I’m the one who paid for it / I survived, but I paid for it / Now I’m the villain in your history” (*ibid.*). Throughout the musical, many of the characters think about how they will be remembered and how their actions will be viewed in history. This is the first time Burr does this, as most of his actions were aimed at instant gratification, rather than long-term outcomes. The action which gave the mortal blow to Alexander Hamilton and, at the same time, Burr’s career, is the thing he is most remembered by. Burr never recovered from this and faced a public outcry for killing Hamilton, which caused him to leave New York. In his old age, he said: “Had I read Sterne more and Voltaire less, I should have known the world was wide enough for Hamilton and me” (Chernow, 2004, p. 722). Their contentious relationship marked the two men’s lives and careers, and their opposing approach to success and politics only made them clash more. They both made some questionable choices, which often ended up affecting the other, just as their poor decisions resulted in the death of one and the destruction of the other.

5. THE WOMEN IN HAMILTON'S LIFE

Hamilton engaged in many flirtations over the course of his life, and his dual view of women sometimes affected his judgement. From a young age, he had to deal with the portrait that was painted of his mother in the society they were living in. She was married to a man against her will, divorced him for James Hamilton, Alexander's father, and was later abandoned by him. All this earned her the reputation of "a notorious woman" (Chernow, 2004, p. 21). As already seen in his poems, published in 1771, Hamilton had a dual view of women: on the one hand, he saw them as perfect, pure creatures, and on the other as flirtatious and seductive. After his arrival to New York he found himself surrounded by more women than ever before, which made him "girl crazy and brimming with libido" (ibid., p. 93). He often engaged in flirtations at the most unlikely times and was not shy about expressing his feelings. The song "A Winter's Ball" shows him in this light as well; as Burr informs us, "Hamilton's skill with the quill is undeniable / But what do we have in common / We're reliable with the / Ladies!' / They delighted and distracted him" (Miranda, 2015a).

Despite the important role women played in Hamilton's life, some authors argue that all four named female characters in the musical "exist only in relation to the central protagonist" (Chandler, 2018, [n.p.]), which is partially true, but not strange as the main focus of the musical is Hamilton himself. This chapter focuses on the most prominent female characters in both the musical and Alexander's life: Eliza Hamilton, Angelica Church, and Maria Reynolds. Although all three impacted his life, they brought very different aspects of him to the forefront and greatly shaped his legacy.

5.1. Elizabeth 'Eliza' Hamilton (Schuyler)

Eliza Schuyler was born into one of the most famous political New York families at the time. The song "The Schuyler Sisters" first introduces her along with her older sister Angelica and younger sister Peggy. The song immediately highlights their wealthy background, which is the opposite to poor Hamilton: "Take Phillip Schuyler the man is loaded / But uh-oh, little does he know that / This daughters: Peggy, Angelica, Eliza / Sneak into the city just to watch all the guys at / work, work!" (Miranda, 2015a). This also shows that the sisters wish to be more independent and not ask permission from their father. As the Revolution is starting, they do not want to be passive observers, but be in the middle of the action. Eliza met her future husband,

Alexander Hamilton, in 1777, when he stayed in their family mansion during one of the jobs he was sent to do by George Washington. The musical suggests that their courtship started immediately after their first meeting; however, Chernow points out that the relationship developed over more than two years (2004, p. 103). In 1780, they met again in Morristown, where Hamilton was stationed with Washington's troops. During one of these dances held at the Commissioner's storehouse, Hamilton is brought into close proximity with all of the Schuyler sisters: "Burr: If you could marry a sister, you're rich, son / Hamilton: Is it a question of if, Burr, or which one?" ("A Winter's Ball"; Miranda, 2015a). It is obvious that marrying one of the sisters would bring a soldier wealth, as their family was extremely affluent, and Hamilton was still a man with no financial security. The lyrics also establish Hamilton as a man susceptible to women's charms.

In the musical, the beginning of their relationship is shown through Eliza's eyes, as "A Winter's Ball" flows into "Helpless". She seems smitten with Hamilton from the first moment she sees him, and when he looks at her, she feels "helpless". The song repeatedly mentions Alexander's eyes: "Look into your eyes / And the sky's the limit / I'm helpless / Down for the count and I'm drowning in them" (Miranda, 2015a). Similarly, Hamilton would often talk about Eliza's eyes, which were one of the features he noticed most about her. Soon after their second meeting, they were exchanging letters almost every night: "Two weeks later in the living room stressin' / My father's stone-faced while you're asking for his blessing" (ibid.). After getting permission to marry Eliza, Hamilton speaks up for the first time in the song. He is almost apologetic as he realizes he is marrying into a rich family and will not be able to provide her with the standard she is used to, showing a level of vulnerability not often seen from him: "I've been livin' without a family since I was a child / My father left, my mother died, I grew up buck wild / But I'll never forget my mother's face that was real / As long as I'm alive, Eliza, swear to God / You'll never feel so / Helpless" (ibid.).

Hamilton formed very close relationships with Eliza's family, including her father and sisters. In a letter to Peggy, he reveals that Eliza possesses all the traits he would wish for in a woman: "she was handsome, sensible, good-natured, and free from vanity or affectation" (Chernow, 2004, p. 130). After their honeymoon, Hamilton returned to the war field and Eliza followed, staying in lodgings in a nearby village. Her concern over her husband's well-being increasing after she finds out she is pregnant, described in the song "That Would Be Enough". In it, she explains she is happy with what she has, while Hamilton constantly yearns for more: "I relish being your wife / Look around, look around... / 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" (Miranda, 2015a). It is obvious Eliza would be perfectly content with Hamilton not trying to "rise up": "We don't need a legacy / We don't need money" (ibid.). The couple was reunited after the Battle of Yorktown and their son Philip was born soon thereafter (1782). The birth of his son made Hamilton slow down for the first time ("I lose all taste for the pursuits of ambition. I sigh for nothing but the company of my wife and my baby"; Chernow, 2004, p. 168), but he soon went back to work, leaving Eliza and baby Philip to attend the Confederation Congress. After moving to New York City, Hamilton's work only increased, portrayed in the song "Non-stop". As the song comes to an end, Eliza tries to call out to her husband, but is ultimately left feeling "helpless". As Hamilton sacrifices some of their family life for the sake of his ambition, Eliza feels exactly the way he assured her she never would.

The Hamiltons lived "comfortably enough and entertained often" (Chernow, 2004, p. 204). Eliza ran the household and supervised the education of their children, as mentioned in the song "Take a Break" which shows her tutoring Philip. Despite wanting to enjoy time with his family, the young Treasury Secretary he was often buried in his work, with Eliza trying to coax him "into getting some fresh air and exercise to relieve his overtaxed brain" (ibid., p. 333). In "Take a Break", she begs him to join her and the children on a trip to Albany: "Eliza: Take a break / Run away with us for the summer / Let's go upstate / Alexander: Eliza, I've got so much on my plate" (Miranda, 2015b). During his family's absence, Alexander is faced with the battle within Congress and proves to be very vulnerable at that time, making the biggest mistake of his marriage – starting an affair with Maria Reynolds. He managed to keep the affair secret for five years, until finally exposing it in the Reynolds Pamphlet. Eliza expresses her feelings about Alexander's infidelity in a song entitled "Burn". This is the first time we see her doubting their love; she goes back to his love letters, questioning if those feelings were real ("I'm re-reading the letters you wrote me / I'm searching and scanning for answers / In every line / For some kind of sign"; Miranda, 2015b). She is angry because his words, which drew her to him, also brought her public humiliation: "You published the letters she wrote you / You told the whole world how you brought this girl into our bed" (ibid.). While Eliza was constantly trying to be there for Alexander and understand him, at this moment she steps back and decides to take charge of the role she will play in his story: "I'm erasing myself from the narrative / Let future historians wonder how Eliza / Reacted when you broke her heart" (ibid.). As Clare Chandler points out, "this moment refuses the conventional 'torch song' of unrequited love, instead providing Eliza with a space to articulate her anger and desire for revenge" (2018,

[n.p.]). Many of her letters were actually lost, so no one truly knows her feelings (Schulman, 2015).

While the musical shows the pain Eliza must have felt in those moments, in real life she showed nothing but loyalty towards her husband, protecting his public image in the years to come. After the public scandal, Hamilton became more dependent on his wife than ever before. She became the person who grounded him and kept him sane during his turbulent public life, which is another testament to her strength. However, their relationship was tested by another tragic event, the death of their son Philip. The song “Blow Us All Away” introduces him as a promising young man, intellectually and physically like his father, and determined to defend his father’s legacy. He was killed in a duel defending his father’s honor. The somber number “It’s Quiet Uptown” shows the family dealing with their loss. Hamilton and Eliza are finally reunited as the grief forces him to admit his mistakes and ask for forgiveness: “I know I don’t deserve you Eliza / But hear me out / That would be enough / [...] I’m not afraid / I know who I married / Just let me stay here by your side / That would be enough” (Miranda, 2015b). As they go “through the unimaginable” (ibid.), they hold on to each other, becoming more connected than ever.

For all the horrible events that had happened to her, Eliza found solace in religion, family and friends. She demonstrates her strength once more as even after the complete collapse of her world she manages to pick herself back up again. The last song of the musical, “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story”, shows everything Eliza accomplished after Alexander’s death and in his memory. She dedicated most of the years after her husband’s death to preserving his legacy: “I interview every soldier who fought by your side / I try to make sense of your thousands of pages of writings” (Miranda, 2015b), which she did by organizing his letters, papers, and other writings. Like her husband, she always “had a special feeling for the dispossessed” (Chernow, 2004, p. 464); she helped raise money for the Washington monument and set up the first private orphanage in New York: the New York Orphan Asylum society. She tended to hundreds of children who had the same start in life as her late husband: “I get to see them growing up / In their eyes I see you Alexander / I see you every time / And when my time is up / Have I done enough? / Will they tell our story?” (Miranda, 2015b). These lyrics sum up Hamilton’s life, as his main goal was to be remembered, and it was something he passed on to his wife, who spent decades making sure he would be.

5.2. Angelica Schuyler (Church)

Eliza's older sister Angelica is introduced in the musical as the more open of the three Schuyler sisters and their leader ("The Schuyler Sisters"). She welcomes the coming changes with open arms, hoping it would also bring progress for women. At the time, it was believed that education was unnecessary for women, but Angelica was a well-read young woman, always up-to-date on current affairs: "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" (Miranda, 2015a). She wants to be part of the change and the only thing holding her back "is a woman's place in the world" (Schulman, 2015, [n.p.]). By the time the sisters met Hamilton in 1780, Angelica was already married; otherwise, Hamilton might have proposed to her (Chernow, 2004, p. 133). She was Eliza's opposite: while Eliza pulled back in social situations, Angelica thrived, often engaging in discussions. The connection between her and Hamilton was undeniable, making many people "assume they were lovers" (ibid.).

The events described in "Helpless" are told again from Angelica's perspective in the song "Satisfied", as she thinks back to her first meeting with Hamilton while giving a speech at her sister's wedding. She was immediately smitten by Hamilton ("Alexander, I'll never forget the first time I saw your face"; Miranda, 2015a), even though his first words to her may seem inappropriate: "Hamilton: You strike me, as a woman who has never been satisfied / Angelica: I'm sure I don't know what you mean. You forget yourself" (ibid.). This is a reference to a letter in which Angelica wrote to Alexander: "You are happy my dear friend to find consolation in 'words and thoughts'. I cannot be so easily satisfied" (Church, 1790, [n.p.]), which inspired the song and Angelica's main motif in the musical. As Angelica realizes how similar she and Alexander are, she is elated and asks: "What the hell is the catch?" (Miranda, 2015a), soon noticing her sister's "helpless" face. As she introduces Alexander to Eliza, she recites "three fundamental truths" why she cannot pursue him. First, as the oldest daughter of a rich family she is expected to marry someone of her stature and therefore chooses her duty over her feelings ("I'm a girl in a world in which / My only job is to marry rich/ [...] / Cause I'm the oldest and the wittiest and the gossip in / New York City is insidious / And Alexander is penniless"; ibid.). Second, she realizes that her family's money and land makes her more desirable, especially to someone who grew up with nothing ("He's after me cause I'm a Schuyler sister / That elevates his status, / I'd have to be naïve to set that aside"; ibid.). Third, she has a strong bond with her sister and puts her needs before her own. Ultimately, Angelica realizes she will never be

satisfied with her relationship with Hamilton but is willing to give it up as it is the right thing to do.

Considering Angelica was attracted to intellectual men, her husband John Church appears as a strange choice, as he lacked the characteristic that drew her to Hamilton, such as “intellectual breadth and civic commitment”, but did provide her “with the opulent, high-society life she had apparently craved” (Chernow, 2004, p. 134). After her move to Paris in 1783 (briefly mentioned in the song “Non-Stop”), she continued exchanging letters with Hamilton. The song “Take a Break”, which sees Angelica back in the U.S., shows her affection for Eliza and Hamilton. The song begins with letters between Angelica and Alexander in which she supports his political ventures and advises him how to handle conflicts. Together they sing “And there you are, an ocean away / Do you have to live an ocean away? / Thoughts of you subside / Then I get another letter / And I cannot put the notion away” (Miranda, 2015b), which shows their dissatisfaction at being separated for such extended periods of time. However, when she and Eliza beg Hamilton to “take a break” and join them in Albany (“I know you’re very busy, / I know you’re work’s important / But I’m crossing the ocean and I just can’t wait!”; *ibid.*), he refuses, making Angelica realize that just because he is in their life, does not mean they will see each other often.

The song “The Reynolds Pamphlet” shows Angelica’s reaction to Alexander’s infidelity: “I love my sister more than anything in this life / I will choose her happiness over mine every time / Put what we had aside / I’m standing at her side / You could never be satisfied” (Miranda, 2015b). Once again, she proves that regardless of her feelings for Hamilton, she will always put her sister first. This is the last time the two interact in the musical, although in real life their communication never ceased (she even made allowances for him with Eliza, trying to justify his actions). Angelica was present during all the difficult years in the lives of her sister and brother-in-law, doing her best to support and help them. After Alexander’s death, “Eliza clung to the indispensable support of her sister Angelica, her strongest bond to the past and to her fallen husband” (Chernow, 2004, p. 726). In working with Eliza, Angelica tried to preserve Alexander’s legacy, and she did so until she died herself in March 1814.

5.3. Maria Reynolds

Little is known about the life of Maria Reynolds, apart from her affair with Alexander Hamilton. Born into a poor family, Maria was uneducated and married James Reynolds at age 15. The musical does not provide much background information about her life and she is first introduced in the second act, in the song “Say No to This”. She shows up at Hamilton’s doorstep one night, sharing her story and asking him for financial help: “My husband’s doing me wrong / Beatin’ me, Cheatin’ me, Mistreatin’ me / Suddenly he’s up and gone / I don’t have the means to go on” (Miranda, 2015b). This was not the first time Hamilton was sensitive to a maiden in distress, but it was the first time he entered a relationship with one. After their initial encounter, the relationship continued (“I wish I could say that was the last time / I said that last time. It became a pastime”; *ibid.*) as Hamilton continued to bring Maria into his family house, while his wife and children were away. It was not long before her husband became aware of the affair and decided to take advantage of it. He wrote a letter to Hamilton, blackmailing him.

According to Chernow, Maria played the role of a martyr, responding to Hamilton’s attempt to break off the relationship “with sighs, groans and weepy theatrics” (Chernow, 2004, p. 409), which Hamilton did not resist. This representation of Maria is also present in “Say No to This”, as she begs him not to leave: “Please don’t leave me with him I am helpless / Just give him what he wants, and you can have me” (Miranda, 2015b). Following each of their meetings, Reynolds would request a small ‘loan’ from Hamilton totaling around \$1300. This continued until May 1792, when Hamilton finally saw the danger that this affair could pose to his career. When confronted about his expenses by Jefferson and Madison (in reality, James Monroe and Abraham B. Venable), Hamilton exposes the affair in excruciating detail: “She courted me / Escorted me to bed and when she had me in a corner / That’s when Reynolds extorted me / For a sordid fee / I paid him quarterly / I may have mortally wounded my prospects / but my papers are orderly” (*ibid.*).

The character of Maria Reynolds never shows up in the musical again, just as she was absent from the rest of Hamilton’s life. However, the repercussions of that relationship affected both Hamilton’s private and public life. It is impossible to know why Hamilton fell victim to Maria’s charms, but it was another example of his well-known weakness for women. Sadly, the thing that made him break things off was the fear of getting exposed, not the care for his family.

6. CONCLUSION

In the beginning of this thesis, I set out to examine the representation of true historical events in the setting of a musical which attracted a wide audience and therefore spread historical information as if they were facts. The idea was to look at those historical events through the lens of the relationships Alexander Hamilton formed and the way they influenced the course of his life. It was important to focus on the people who had the biggest impact and with whom he interacted the most. To draw comparisons between the musical and the historical context, the biography of Alexander Hamilton, which inspired the musical (Chernow, 2004), and the lyrics of the musical were the main sources. It was important to see how those relationships functioned in real life and how well the musical translated them onto the stage.

Hamilton's relationships were divided into three categories: friends, enemies, and women. All these people had a different influence on Hamilton and shaped his life as one of the most polarizing politicians of his day. As described in Chapter 3, his friends – John Laurens, Marquis de Lafayette, and George Washington – stayed by his side through everything and he reciprocated their loyalty in the same way. The musical translates these relationships in the same manner and successfully creates a strong connection between them, proving how beneficial friendships can be for a person's career and life in general. On the other hand, Hamilton's enemies – James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Aaron Burr – hated him so much they actively worked on destroying his life and career, detailed in Chapter 4. The musical shows these aversions develop into an open war, which, since it was not in Hamilton's nature to back down and conform to somebody else's opinions, ultimately cost him his life. Hamilton had a soft spot for women, discussed in Chapter 5. With the exception of Maria Reynolds, the women in his life gave him support (Eliza and Angelica Schuyler) and worked on preserving his legacy after his death, which shows how deep their connection was. The musical also shows the far-reaching consequences of his infidelity.

Hamilton shows the way all those relationships intertwined through the life of one person and how much that affected everyone involved. As Hamilton lived in a time where he could influence many generations to come, he was not shy about stepping into that role. He never tried to please everyone and always stayed true to what he thought was right, which made people either love or hate him. The musical presents this polarity very well and shows the complexity of human relationships and their influence on historical context, thus shedding light on an almost 'forgotten' figure in American history.

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IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA

Izjava kojom ja, Antonia Milković, studentica integriranog preddiplomskog i diplomskog sveučilišnog studija primarnoga obrazovanja s engleskim jezikom Učiteljskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, izjavljujem da sam diplomski rad pod nazivom *Staging/Representing American History in Lin-Manuel Miranda's 'Hamilton'* izradila samostalno, uz pomoć stručne literature, vlastitog znanja i uz mentorstvo profesorice Nade Kujundžić i profesorice Marije Andrade.

Antonia Milković

Zagreb, 02.07.2020.
