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ENGL 281: Award-Winning Playwrights

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Award-Winning Playwrights

What is the purpose of an award? Should awards serve as recognition for prestigious individuals in a field, and if so, how can you define “prestigious?” Furthermore, in what ways must you constrain the scope of a field, an industry, or an art when giving an award? In 2016, Bob Dylan controversially won the Nobel Prize in Literature “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”¹. The controversy lends itself to several disputes, including if songwriting is applicable to the award category,² if Dylan matches the talent of his contemporaries,³ and even if the award is unnecessary and Dylan’s achievements stand on their own.⁴ Without a consensus on the matter, why do we bother with the prize at all? Perhaps one answer is to observe a moment, or a trend, in the timeline of literature. Take for instance the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, which is “for a distinguished play by an American author, preferably original in its source and dealing with American life.”⁵ By definition, Pulitzer-winning works meditate on contemporary society, but they also play a role in America’s literary narrative. In this paper, I will analyze the critical and commercial feats of Pulitzer-winning playwrights Tony Kushner, Paula Vogel, and Lin-Manuel Miranda to argue that each writer’s decorated work is not an isolated success and instead embodies an influential succession in the great canon of American theater.

Theater most directly contrasts other arts with its integral ephemeral performance-centric approach,⁶ and so theater awards must account for a performance’s time and place. The vast number of types of theater pieces also exacerbates the selection process, especially when American theater is mostly relegated to musicals and plays.⁷ This is most clearly seen on Broadway, predominantly in the

Tony Awards, whose categories are divided between musicals and plays. Similarly, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama might ostensibly seem myopic and nationalistic, but it is extremely difficult (i.e. impossible)⁸ for one establishment to account for all international forms of theater. Unlike with the Tony Awards, a Pulitzer-winning theater piece does not have to be on Broadway,⁹ and thus the Pulitzers have a chance of relating a broader range of national interests. Thus, the Pulitzers are able to recognize playwrights with unique cultural backgrounds and voices, especially with the salad of various cultures in New York City. Even though the Pulitzers, like the Tonys, only focus on musicals and plays (albeit mostly plays), these voices translate ulterior worldviews into a popular, digestible medium for a commercialized American audience to understand.

Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, a "gay fantasia on national themes"¹⁰, pioneered a shift in commercial and artistic standards on and off Broadway. *Angels* won the Pulitzer in 1993 and earned a spotlight unprecedented for "a medium that has been eclipsed by movies and television" (Weber 2). At the heart of the attention was Kushner's two-part magic realist epic that uncompromisingly discusses AIDS and homosexuality. *Angels*, equipped with an unprecedented style and subject matter, is undoubtedly an American play, as it deals directly with contemporary politics and political figures in American society.¹¹ However, due to its popularity and political agenda, *Angels* had two disparate quotas to meet. First, the play had to recuperate its large investment, and second, the play had to educate as large of an audience as possible. The resulting dilemma involved ticket prices, particularly because a play's popularity directly correlates to its cost of entry. As such, *Angels*' tickets were priced around \$50 or \$60 dollars, which was extremely high for a Broadway play, but Kushner's principal role allowed him to offer many tickets as low as \$7.50.¹² With these unparalleled commercial and artistic liberties, the question arose, "If this show doesn't make it, what will?" (Weber 11).

If we judge solely by awards, nominations, and cultural impact, *Angels*' legacy remains mostly untarnished. The two parts won consecutive Tony awards in 1993 and 1994, and the admired HBO miniseries faithfully eternalizes the technically challenging production in a polished, accessible medium. Outside of theater studies though, *Angels*' widespread cultural popularity does not clearly translate to 2016. This can probably be attributed to its sexual themes requiring a mature audience as well as its specific social message, but another work of the same subject still reverberates in youthful society. In his article on political art, particularly art related to AIDS, Jesse Green stated, "As a case study in how art about AIDS most profoundly changed America... ['Rent'] can't be topped. In 'Rent'... AIDS is primarily experienced and observed—and survived—by heterosexuals" (74). Although musicals usually receive little recognition as scholarly works (in a society where even drama is often considered wasteful)¹³, Jonathan Larson's *Rent* won critical and popular attention, which we can attribute to its pop appeal and Kushner's breakthrough efforts several years prior. *Angels* laid the groundwork for *Rent*, but *Rent* got stuck in people's heads.¹⁴

With Larson's posthumous Pulitzer in 1996, over a decade after the previous musical win, we can start to observe a pattern amongst Pulitzer winners. Larson triumphed with *Rent* by translating acclaimed ideas, specifically those of Stephen Sondheim and Kushner, into a palatable product for the masses. Sondheim, who won the Pulitzer in 1985 with his musical *Sunday in the Park with George*, focused on reinventing the Broadway musical to make it accessible to all classes and audiences. In Paula Vogel's words, "[New playwrights are] like Sondheim dismantling the Broadway musical, speaking to people 20 or 30 years younger than [they are]" (Savran 103). In the same vein, Vogel attempts to subvert the standard theater space and bring light to new subjects through her work.¹⁵ No Pulitzer was given the year after *Rent*'s win in 1997, but Vogel won in 1998 with *How I Learned to Drive*, a nonlinear narrative that explores a litter of polemic subjects including pedophilia,

sexuality, abuse, and misogyny. With Vogel's Pulitzer, we can see that each award-winning playwright utilizes previous dramatic achievements to actualize a new theatrical voice.

Vogel most directly personifies the overarching Pulitzer narrative through her performance as both playwright and teacher. *How I Learned to Drive* did not achieve the depths of international renown that *Angels* did,¹⁶ but instead applied similar methodologies to a smaller scale. Additionally, Vogel still has not made her Broadway debut as of 2016, since *How I Learned* only reached Off-Broadway. Regardless, *How I Learned* works on a more intimate level than *Angels* to portray an initially obscene character in a sympathetic light. The objective is to confront an issue, namely sexual abuse, that lays dormant in society and undiscussed, akin to Kushner's focus on raising AIDS awareness. The playwrights differ in their heavy-handedness, wherein Kushner purports the tireless cultural effort to raise awareness for an unavoidable issue, while Vogel elucidates a pervasive-but-discreet crime. Kushner's work explicitly calls the audience to action, and he ends with the statement, "You are fabulous creatures, each and every one. And I bless you: *More Life*. The Great Work Begins" (Kushner 280), but Vogel calls upon the audience to observe a perpetual cycle of abuse when she writes, "Who did it to you, Uncle Peck? How old were you? Were you eleven?" (86). We can see that Vogel teaches through her work by focusing on sympathy and empathy, gently urging her audience to recognize necessary complex perspectives.

Similar to Sondheim's mentorship of Larson, Vogel uses her plays and profession to equip numerous playwrights with tools to vocalize their cultures and interests. Vogel recognized the importance of reading and studying before one starts writing¹⁷ and although she was repeatedly rejected from Yale,¹⁸ she was able to secure a teaching position at Brown University. Now observe that in 2003, Nilo Cruz won the Pulitzer for his play *Anna in the Tropics*, beating the thrice-decorated Edward Albee. Furthermore, Cruz's production did not premiere in New York, but in Florida, and the committee selected the play based on the script alone.¹⁹ Cruz, who was born in Cuba, was the

first Latino American honored with a Pulitzer and a student of Vogel. Vogel directly contributed to Cruz's talent and hence his subsequent work, but Sondheim, Kushner, and Larson helped to lay the floor for Cruz's international subject matter and decentralized (i.e. not in New York) performance space. Although Cruz opened a door for new cultures in American theater with his Pulitzer win, Suzan-Lori Parks became the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer a year before in 2002. Vogel recognized this achievement as well, stating, "Suzan-Lori Parks... [is] understood with perfect ease by 20-year-olds in our classes at Brown. We have to explain... Suzan-Lori to our own peers in their mid-forties because they're saying, 'I want a tune that goes bum-bum-bum-de-dumb'" (Savran 104). The Pulitzers were reflecting a new type of drama that expressed the diverse population and interests in America to better define what an American is, and with Sondheim, Kushner, and Larson's efforts to make theater more accessible, we begin to see that theater, more than anything else, is an art by and for the people.

Vogel's students continued to advance the narrative and win more Pulitzers. In 2009, Lynn Nottage won with her play *Ruined*, which did not feature an American setting but continued to expand what American themes meant in a global context. The same year, another one of Vogel's students, Quiara Alegria Hudes, was nominated for writing the book to the musical *In The Heights*, a rare honor for a musical. Through her students,²⁰ Vogel demonstrated a path by which individuals could effectively convey their cultures and stories, and she continued to demonstrate that award-winning plays did not have to pander to a rich, white, straight male audience. With *In The Heights'* near win, we can see the musical as the remaining hurdle in this narrative. Musical theater was (and still is) mostly constricted to Broadway, and the expensive and limited productions drastically increase ticket prices. Shows consequently remain fairly inaccessible, especially with few opportunities to experience the work outside of the theater space.²¹ And yet, in the words of Vogel's father, "...only through the American musical theatre can this country ever approach what Bertolt

Brecht did in Germany” (Savran 105), by which he implies theater can disillusion its audience and disrupt a false perception of idealized reality. Although the spectrum of Pulitzer-winning plays expanded alongside American theater, these works needed to reach the same popular domains as Sondheim and Larson’s musicals.

In 2016, Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, “a landmark American musical,”²² won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. *Hamilton* is the second musical to win a Pulitzer this decade, following *Next to Normal*, which won in 2010. *Next to Normal* follows Sondheim’s disruption of the white middle-class by presenting uncomfortable themes, namely mental illness, in a usually safe environment.²³ Meanwhile, Miranda follows more in the path of the late Jonathan Larson by approaching his audience without a promise of traditional escapism. In all aspects, *Hamilton* is a culmination of the last twenty-five years of Pulitzers, as the musical builds upon accomplishments by previous playwrights to translate American themes into an informed perspective whilst still employing unmatched accessibility. Moreover, *Hamilton* is well on its way to become the most commercially successful musical ever produced, both on Broadway, nationally, and internationally.²⁴ So, how did we get here?

As the capstone to America’s theatrical narrative, *Hamilton* derives its revolutionary aspect from Sondheim, Kushner, Larson, Vogel, Vogel’s students, and everyone in-between. We can regard Lin-Manuel Miranda, who made his Broadway debut with *In The Heights*, as a metaphorical apprentice to his Pulitzer-winning predecessors. Miranda’s work with Quiara Alegría Hudes (on *In The Heights*) connects him to Paula Vogel, while Miranda’s role as Jon in Larson’s auto-biographical *Tick, Tick...BOOM!* connects him to Larson, and subsequently to Kushner and Sondheim.²⁵ In *Hamilton*, we see the prototypical American story framed through an unstoppable immigrant hero’s perspective, complete with a conscious juxtaposition of casting and musical style with the expected traditional revolutionary tale. Miranda, who plays the eponymous Alexander Hamilton, leads the

predominately non-white cast and fundamentally uses lyrical poetry (i.e. rap) to climb his way from the bottom to the top. Miranda achieves what Vogel has longed for, "...both in her own writing and that of her students, to unleash confusion, to make sense out of a world—and a society—gone terribly awry" (Savran 17).

Thus, perhaps we finally have an answer to Jesse Green's question, "Could something so clearly political... be art? And if it was art, could it really do anything?" (69-70). *Hamilton's* runaway critical and commercial successes are testament to Miranda's popularization of the musical art form, which is further corroborated by his record sixteen Tony nominations, of which the musical won eleven. Miranda's use of rap²⁶ and hip hop themes, predominately hip hop's association with underrepresented groups, brings international attention to the musical theater form such that standard music review websites are unable to ignore the musical, and many, such as the widely influential Pitchfork.com,²⁷ have thusly reviewed *Hamilton's* soundtrack. In doing so, these review outlets essentially review the libretto as well, since the entirety of *Hamilton's* dialogue is interwoven into its music.²⁸ Miranda's use of rap is therefore musical and dramatic, and the soundtrack rectifies the unfortunate commercial situation that the show's tickets are traditionally sold out and priced unreasonably high on resale websites.²⁹ Hence, *Hamilton* is paradoxically the least and most accessible musical to date. Through its universal acclaim and attention, *Hamilton* has reinvigorated interest in early American political figures and the musical art form, even unintentionally forcing the US government to reverse its decision to remove Alexander Hamilton from the ten-dollar bill.³⁰ *Hamilton's* unique popular position as a cultural icon³¹ allows it to essentially convey whatever message it desires, as its audience is eager to listen and ready to act.³²

With its subject matter and casting choice, *Hamilton* is integrally political,³³ and with its fame, the show has proven its tangible influence, so where does this put us in the Pulitzer narrative? As we have observed, the Pulitzers occupy a trend in American theater rather than a single subject matter.

After *Hamilton*'s theatrical conquest, we most likely will have to again reckon with the fragile relationship between artistic and commercial interests. Miranda's achievement is comparable to Kushner's *Angels*, but in one case the New York Times review begins with, "Yes, it really is that good," and in the other case, "History is about to crack open." *Hamilton*'s fame has almost eclipsed its larger role as an artistic and industrial leader, since the show currently serves as the face and name of the musical theater industry. We now encounter a similar impasse Jesse Green faced with *Angels*. Green pondered, "What's most chilling about the AIDS works I have been watching and mulling recently... is that if they represent the most successful politicized arts movement in the history of America, it may also be the last" (74). *Hamilton*, while currently an isolated moment, may very well give voice to new perspectives in and on theater, but like *Angels*, the show currently pressures others to compete for attention.

Paula Vogel stated, "[Theatre is] art, it's not a money-maker, and we've developed a notion of entertainment which has confused the two. That's not to say you can't have theatre that makes money and isn't also art" (Savran 100). In line with Vogel's argument, not every idea makes money or attracts national or international attention. After Vogel's Pulitzer win, Alex Witchel observed, "Along with winners everywhere, Ms. Vogel can expect to face people free to sniff, 'She won a Pulitzer and this is the best she can do?'" (1). Referring to the lukewarm response to Vogel's follow-up play *The Mineola Twins*, Witchel inadvertently questions what the Pulitzers mean for individuals. For Kushner, there has been no sequel to *Angels*, but he has found success in several blockbuster films. For Vogel, her theatrical insight survives in her students' works, and she is expected to make her Broadway debut in 2017.³⁴ Now that Miranda has proven musical theater is a commercially viable art form, he is writing music for film (with Disney's recently released *Moana* and upcoming *The Little Mermaid* remake). In the current moment, *Hamilton* is self-sufficient, but Miranda's indefinite departure from the stage leaves an unfilled role on Broadway.

What is the next chapter in American theater, and subsequently in the Pulitzers? We have yet to see a landmark play that sufficiently discusses the advent of the Internet, and maybe the contemporary setting of the up-and-coming musical *Dear Evan Hansen* will satisfy this discrepancy. Otherwise, our focus should be on the individuals who discover these works, such as the ubiquitous Oskar Eustis. If no other connection between Kushner, Vogel, and Miranda seems convincing enough, then look towards Eustis. Eustis is an artistic director and dramaturg whose career spans many theaters, especially those of our Pulitzer winners. In 1987, Eustis commissioned a play from Kushner, which ultimately became *Angels in America*. As artistic director of the Eureka Theater in San Francisco (where *Angels* premiered), Eustis played a pivotal in the play's creation and subsequent acclaim.³⁵ Later, Vogel worked with Eustis to create the Brown/Trinity Repertory Company Consortium, since Eustis was artistic director for Trinity at the time.³⁶ Now artistic director of the Public Theater in New York, Eustis oversaw the Off-Broadway premiere of *Hamilton* and was an early advocate of Miranda's expensive and risky work.³⁷ Whomever and whatever wins the next Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Oskar Eustis' influence will play some sort of role.

In *Hamilton's* pivotal fight song, "Yorktown", characters Hamilton and Lafayette briefly meditate on the line, "Immigrants: / We get the job done" (McCarter 121). Miranda explains in the margin that the audience reacted so positively (and loudly) to the line that he had to add a pause, such that the following lines would be audible. Contemplating on the moment, Miranda writes, "Why does it get such a delighted response? Because it's true" (121). Miranda's declaration echoes the sentiment that American theater is one narrative with many stories and backgrounds, and *Hamilton* is currently the most popular culmination of multicultural voices. Sondheim, Kushner, Larson, Vogel, and Miranda equip others with the tools to actualize their voices and struggle with the often unsatisfactory framework of commercial theater, and we have awards like the Pulitzers to chronicle this collaborative journey. Every playwright embarks on the same path, at one point

playing the apprentice and at the next the mentor.³⁸ The relationship is similar to that of a writer and director. Upon finally watching *Angels*, Kushner said, “It had blossomed in a way that hadn’t seemed possible. And what I learned is that directing is not sculpting. It’s about releasing energy, not imprisoning it” (Webber 6). Vogel similarly reflected on the “marriage” between writers and directors, saying, “Much better [than marriage] is a kind of resistance, and a vibrancy, in which at times the playwright is speaking and a times the director responds...” (Savran 19). It is less surprising then that Miranda was a student at Wesleyan University with his longtime collaborator and director Thomas Kail. Together, they have extended the limits of American theater and the musical art form, following in the steps of playwrights who sought to engender change through performance. Thus, we can see that the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, with its impressive roster of writers and teachers, validates the notion that isolated theatrical success is nonexistent in America and instead each playwright embodies an influential succession in the great canon of American theater.

Notes

¹ This is the official prize citation from Nobelprize.org.

² Lebanese-American author Rabih Alameddine communicated this sentiment in his tweet, “Bob Dylan winning a Nobel in Literature is like Mrs [sic] Fields being awarded 3 Michelin Stars. This is almost as silly as Winston Churchill.” His parallel to Churchill is in reference to Churchill’s reputation as a political figure and speaker rather than as a writer. Churchill was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953 “for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values” (prize citation from Nobelprize.org).

³ Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgård communicated this sentiment during a webchat hosted by The Guardian. In response to Dylan’s win, Knausgård stated, “I love that the novel committee opens up for other kinds of literature... But knowing that Dylan is the same generation as Pynchon, Philip Roth, Cormac McCarthy... I think one of those three should have had it, really. But if they get it next year, it will be fine.”

⁴ Fellow songwriter Leonard Cohen communicated this sentiment stating, “To me, [the award] is liking pinning a medal on Mount Everest for being the highest mountain.” Additionally, English writer Will Self wrote on the matter, “...my only caveat about the award is that it cheapens Dylan to be associated at all with a prize founded on an explosives and armaments fortune, and more often awarded to a Buggins whose turn it is than a world-class creative artist.” Self’s opinion on the matter is in direct opposition to that of Karl Ove Knausgård.

⁵ This is the official description from Pulitzer.org.

⁶ As said by Paula Vogel, “There is a live connection between the audience and the stage. That’s the most terrific asset” (Savran 99).

⁷ One “non-traditional” approach to theater is site-specific performance, which is often political and thus mainly pertains to a specific audience and period of instability. Please see Diana Taylor’s essay, “‘You Are Here’: The DNA of Performance”, in which Taylor essentially defines site-specific theater using the terms “repertoire” and “performance.” Griselda Gambaro’s *Information for Foreigners* is a more concrete example of a site-specific play, which discusses the same subject as Taylor’s essay, of government censorship, torture, and manipulation in Brazil. Taylor also explores Gambaro’s work in her review, “Theater and Terrorism: Griselda Gambaro’s ‘Information for Foreigners’”.

⁸ It makes no sense to have some theater forms, like Japanese Kabuki theater, represented in the Pulitzers since western theater differs drastically with many other cultures. If the Pulitzers included all forms of performance, the award would be meaningless and instead resort to a competition of apples and oranges.

⁹ While Paula Vogel’s *How I Learned to Drive* was never on Broadway, it did premiere Off-Broadway. However, Nilo Cruz’s *Anna in the Tropics* premiered in Florida and still won the Pulitzer. It is true that most Pulitzer-winning theater pieces premiere in New York City, but the award does not explicitly require a New York-based production.

¹⁰ Taken from the subtitle of *Angels in America*.

¹¹ Specifically, Roy Cohn and Ethel Rosenberg.

¹² “Most tickets have been priced at \$50 or \$60, a record high for a nonmusical. But to accommodate Kushner’s insistence that the show must not be out of economic reach of people who should see it, second balcony seats are to be offered for prices as low as \$7.50 for Wednesday matinees” (Weber 11).

¹³ Paula Vogel initially attended Bryn Mawr, where she studied dramatic literature. She had to ultimately leave because her scholarship was cut, since “the school decided that her concentration in dramatic literature was... ‘not intellectually valid’” (Witchel 3).

¹⁴ *Rent*'s long-lasting appeal is observable through its outspoken fans as well as numerous references to the show in film and television, most recently in the film *Deadpool* where a character wears a *Rent* T-shirt.

¹⁵ From David Savran, "...all of [Vogel's] plays endeavor to stage the impossible. They defy traditional theatre logic, subtly calling conventions into question or, in some cases, pushing them well past their limits. What other playwright would dare memorialize her brother who died of AIDS in a play filled with fart jokes and riotous sex? What other feminist would dare write so many jokes about tits?" (17).

¹⁶ Jason Steven Cohen stated, "I believe ['Angels'] will be seen as perhaps the most important theatrical event of the latter part of the century" (Weber 2).

¹⁷ Vogel spoke on writing, "I do a lot of reading and research. For example, I read a lot about the '50s, '60s, and '80s when writing *The Mineola Twins*. I did a lot of reading about automobiles for *How I Learned to Drive*, which I really enjoyed" (Savron 18).

¹⁸ Vogel was adamant about getting into Yale, commenting, "I've charted the impact that being admitted to Yale has had in people's lives, and it seemed in one more way I was outside the club when Yale turned me down" (18).

¹⁹ From Bruce Webber's New York Times article, "Tapping Cuban Roots For American Drama." Webber writes, "Unlike the other [Pulitzer] finalists, which appeared on Broadway..., ['Anna'] had not been seen by any of the five Pulitzer drama jurors, nor by members of the Pulitzer board who made the award. 'Anna' won on the strength of its script alone."

²⁰ Hudes was nominated in 2007 for her play *Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue*, and she won in 2012 for *Water by the Spoonful*. Another of Vogel's students, Sarah Ruhl, was nominated in 2005 for *The Clean House* and again in 2010 for *In the Next Room or the vibrator play*.

²¹ Musical librettos cannot encapsulate the live performance, and soundtracks almost always leave out key dialogue. Additionally, many adaptations of musicals cheapen the material to a lesser commercialized product (see: reception of the Pulitzer-winning musical *A Chorus Line* versus its film version).

²² This is the official prize citation from Pulitzer.org. The full citation reads, “A landmark American Musical about the gifted and self-destructive founding father whose story becomes contemporary and irresistible.”

²³ Sondheim’s *Company* explicitly intends to disillusion its audience. Sondheim spoke on *Company*, saying, “Broadway theater has been for many years supported by upper-middle-class people with upper-middle-class problems. These people really want to escape that world when they go to the theatre, and then here we are with *Company* talking about how we're going to bring it right back in their faces.”

²⁴ *Hamilton* is currently playing on Broadway and in Chicago, it will soon be in England (West End), and it will go on tour in 2017.

²⁵ Additionally, Miranda translated Sondheim’s *West Side Story* to Spanish for its Broadway revival.

²⁶ Actor Daveed Diggs, who originated the role of Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson, is also a highly acclaimed rapper under the group “clipping.” [sic].

²⁷ Pitchfork has gained a sort of notoriety for dramatically affecting various artists’ careers. Most notably, the seminal indie rock group The Dismemberment Plan received a rare perfect score for their album *Emergency & I*, bolstering the group’s career and allowing for the lead singer, Travis Morrison, to release an independent album. Pitchfork subsequently gave the album, *Travistan*, an even rarer lowest possible score, which nearly halted sales of the album and caused Morrison to go into an indefinite hiatus.

²⁸ According to Miranda's Tumblr, only one scene/song was left out from the show. The song, "Tomorrow There'll Be More Of Us" is a brief reprise that details character John Laurens' death, such that the actor can double as Philip in the second act. Miranda provides his reason for leaving the scene out in his Tumblr post, as well as in a footnote on page 131 in *Hamilton: The Revolution*.

²⁹ Tickets are unavailable to purchase for any date on *Hamilton's* official website, and tickets on reseller organization StubHub's website usually start at around \$400 to \$600.

³⁰ According to Fortune.com, "The decision to keep [Hamilton] on the \$10 bill, however, did not result from an attack of historical awareness. Rather, it was urged by a surge of angry Americans at the original announcement that he would be removed."

³¹ A few final notes on *Hamilton's* overwhelming commercial success: the album reached the third position on the US Billboard 200, the album has been certified 2x platinum by the RIAA, and continues to chart highly on the Billboard 200 alongside traditional pop artists. Additionally, the show's unexpected popularity spawned a spinoff album, *The Hamilton Mixtape*, which features numerous highly acclaimed pop artists. *The Hamilton Mixtape* reached the top position on the US Billboard 200, and marks the largest single-week sales for a compilation album since 2012.

³² We can observe *Hamilton's* omnipresence in American culture when Vice President-elect Mike Pence attended the show. Post curtain call, leading actor Brandon Victor Dixon relayed a message to Pence about Donald Trump's upcoming presidency, which spurred tweets from Trump denouncing the show, referring to it as "overrated" and calling for the cast and producers to apologize. Two trends consequently dominated social media, one in support of the show and one against it.

³³ *Hamilton's* relationship with and acknowledgement by contemporary politicians most clearly demonstrates the show's effective political nature. As detailed in Chapter I of *Hamilton: The Revolution*, Miranda first revealed his "Hamilton Mixtape" project at the White House, with Present Barack Obama in attendance. Obama made a video appearance at the 2016 Tony Awards to

introduce *Hamilton*, during which he referred back to the “White House Raps.” Additionally, the PBS documentary *Hamilton’s America* featured appearances by President Obama, President George W. Bush, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Hank Paulsen, and Secretary Timothy Geithner.

³⁴ Vogel premiered her play *Indecent* at the Yale Repertory Theatre on October 2, 2015, and the play will premiere on Broadway at the Cort Theatre on April 4, 2017.

³⁵ Information taken from Bruce Webber’s article on *Angels*.

³⁶ Eustis directed the premiere of Vogel’s *The Long Christmas Ride Home* at Trinity Rep, and he directed numerous premieres at the Eureka theater, including a work by Suzan-Lori Parks.

³⁷ Eustis’ relationship with Miranda and *Hamilton* is detailed firsthand by McCarter in *Hamilton: The Revolution*. In the book’s introduction, McCarter reveals that he introduced Eustis (who was McCarter’s boss at the Public Theater) to *Hamilton*. Eustis quickly became a major proponent of Miranda and *Hamilton*, even directly comparing Miranda to Shakespeare (103). A side note: the Public Theater also premiered the musical *A Chorus Line*, which won the Pulitzer in 1976, followed about ten years later by Sondheim’s win. *A Chorus Line* is suitably about a diverse set of individuals trying to survive in the performance arts industry.

³⁸ Larson was apprentice to Sondheim, and Sondheim was also apprentice to the critically acclaimed Oscar Hammerstein II, who won the Pulitzer for his musical *South Pacific* in 1949.

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