

## **Live Spectacles, Paratexts, and Ancillary Outlets**

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How does a fan become committed to a live spectacle they are unable to view in person? Digital technology and the internet enable the delivery of fragmented pieces of that spectacle for fans to consume at a distance, but a consistent and powerful brand is needed to unify those pieces and supply a centripetal force for fans to rally behind. In the case of *Hamilton*, its primary brand arguably circulates not around its titular character but instead his inaugural portrayer and the musical's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda. Specifically, Miranda's star persona has functioned as a compelling narrative to fuse together the *Hamilton* brand in numerous ways, each of which ties in with larger principles of media stardom.

### ***“Oh, let me be a part of the narrative”***

Manuel's creation of *Hamilton* has a compelling artistic evolution, documented along the way to underscore its authenticity. We have a summer 2007 photo capturing the earliest part of *Hamilton*'s origin story, as Miranda lounged in a hammock reading Robert Chernow's biography while on a beach vacation. We have a YouTube video from 2009 of Manuel singing “Alexander Hamilton” at the White House in front of Barack Obama and an audience whose initial reaction of amusement quickly turns to open-mouthed awe and ends in a President-led standing ovation. We have news reports touting the frenzy that grew around the show's workshops, test runs, and off-Broadway preview. We have a *60 Minutes* interview with Manuel in which he speaks of his childhood obsession with Broadway cast recordings and then invites CBS's cameras into the studio to record him creating his very own. And, of course, we have over 130 #Ham4Ham videos led by Manuel to attest to the creativity, talent, and passion invested in the show day after day, week after week. In these ways, the documentation of *Hamilton*'s creation and execution centers around the authenticity of Manuel's creative genius. Of course, Manuel had already birthed success with the Tony Award-winning *In the Heights*, but *Hamilton*'s dispersed fan base (as opposed to its Broadway fan base) likely knew little of the previous play initially. For them, Manuel was an out-of-nowhere success story, one of the most compelling star narratives of all, as it fosters a feeling of personal discovery and ownership.

### ***“I'm just like my country, I'm young, scrappy and hungry”***

Another key factor in perpetuating stardom is the meshing of star performer and character, and Manuel has encouraged the emphasis placed upon biographical parallels between himself and Alexander Hamilton. [One chronicler](#) of *Hamilton* fandom describes that Manuel “recognized themes in Hamilton's story that echoed his own life. Both were immigrants with an underprivileged upbringing, natural genius, a feverish work ethic, and the unfailing ability to piss people off.” Many of these elements are expressed in the musical's most frequently-recited lyrics, like “Write like you're running out of time” or “Immigrants, they get the job done,” ensuring that the Manuel-Hamilton connections become entrenched in everyday consumption of the text and its star.

### ***“He seems approachable? Like you could grab a beer with him.”***

A linchpin of stardom is the mix of the ordinary and the extraordinary and the assurance that a star off-screen is the same as their public persona. Throughout the spectacular success of *Hamilton*, Manuel has remained outwardly humble and as in awe of his accomplishments and those of his fellow castmates as the musical's most ardent fans. Fellow Flow participant Kristen Warner has described Manuel as like the president of the *Hamilton* fan club, and he has expertly used Twitter and Tumblr to connect with fans and harness their enthusiasm. In photos, #Ham4Hams, Periscope streams, and TV appearances, Miranda expresses an almost childlike enthusiasm and wonder for everything he comes across. One [tweet](#) aptly describes that "Lin-Manuel Miranda always looks like he's watching his daughter's first steps." If stars are expected to be "just like us" to cement our fascination with them, Manuel comes across as a giddy *Hamilton* fan just like any other, rather than a pretentious artiste, despite also being touted repeatedly as an extraordinary genius.

***"Look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now"***

Pinpointing compelling Manuel/*Hamilton* narratives eventually leads one to take note of the timeline from Manuel performing for President Obama in 2009 to departing *Hamilton* during Obama's final full year. Miranda attempted to reframe the political founding of America through actors of color and did so across the same timeframe as the term of the first American president of color. If one wrote this up as a fictional story, an editor might reject the confluence as too convenient to believe. Would Manuel and *Hamilton* have achieved such prominence in another era, or is this the way that narrative becomes history?