

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:00:11	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:00:14	Music	Music	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team plays. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Jesse	Host	Lin-Manuel Miranda grew up in a working-class neighborhood, north of Harlem. He went to a fancy school for gifted kids, on the Upper East Side. He went to college at Wesleyan, and not long after he graduated, he had a hit Broadway musical—
			<i>["Huddle Formation" fades out to be replaced with "In the Heights".]</i>
00:00:34	Clip	Clip	<i>In the Heights.</i> "In the Heights" from the Broadway musical <i>In the Heights</i> plays.
			<i>ENSEMBLE:</i> <i>In the Heights</i> <i>I can't survive without café</i>
			<i>USNAVI:</i> <i>I serve café</i>
			<i>ENSEMBLE:</i> <i>'Cause tonight...</i>
00:00:41	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades out as Jesse speaks]</i> He's also the creator and star of <i>Hamilton</i> : the award-winning, massively influential musical about the founding f—well, you know what. This is a little silly. I'm explaining the plot of <i>Hamilton</i> on NPR. You know what <i>Hamilton</i> is.
			These days, Lin-Manuel is in a spot where not many artists find themselves. He can do pretty much whatever he wants! He can take on almost any project. So, what does that mean? Well, for one, he's got another show on Broadway. <i>Freestyle Love Supreme</i> is an improvised hip-hop performance where the performers get their prompts from the audience. I got to go see it, the other day. It is the best of short form improv comedy married to the best of freestyle rap. It's really—it's really a very fun show.
			He's also starring in the new HBO show, <i>His Dark Materials</i> . It's a fantasy series, based on the book of the same name. It centers around a young girl named Lyra, who is trying to find a kidnapped friend. Lyra grew up in Oxford, in England. But her journey takes her far from her home, to a desolate and dangerous region known as The North.
			There, she meets a guy named Lee Scoresby, played by Miranda. And in this clip, Lyra and Lee realize they're looking for the same thing: a bear.

00:01:52	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:53	Clip	Clip	<i>[Sounds of a crowd—voices and clanking in the background.]</i> Lee Scoresby: <i>[Yelling over the din of sound.]</i> Has anyone seen a bear?! <i>[The crowd chatters and shouts among itself but does not answer.]</i> Lyra Belacqua: What do you want with a bear? <i>[Beat.]</i> You're bleeding. Lee: Hazard of the job. Lyra: And what job do you do? Lee: I'm in Aeronautics. Lyra: What part of being an <i>[sounding it out phonetically]</i> air-o-naut— Lee: Let me give you a tip, kid. Never upset a seagull. <i>[He sits down with a heavy thump and a sigh.]</i> Lyra: <i>[Exasperated.]</i> You're not serious. Lee: <i>[Strained.]</i> Not if I can help it. Lyra: <i>[Beat.]</i> Will he want to see you? This bear? Lee: I hope so. You know where he is, don't you? Town's no place for you— Lyra: How do you know him? Lee: <i>[Amused.]</i> Well, she's just a sprung box, isn't she? She just keeps asking questions. Lee Scoresby. Can you tell me where to find him? 00:02:31 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades. 00:02:32 Jesse Host Lin, welcome to <i>Bullseye!</i> I'm so happy to have you on the show! 00:02:35 Lin-Manuel Guest Thank you! Long-time listener, long-time fan. Happy to be here. 00:02:39 Jesse Host Aw, that's very kind of you. And I apologize for canceling on you, the last time, <i>[chuckling]</i> when my child was born. 00:02:45 Lin-Manuel Guest That was—that was a very valid excuse and I was happy to have the hour. It was during a very hectic time in my life, too. <i>[Laughs.]</i> 00:02:52 Jesse Host Is <i>His Dark Materials</i> another one of these things where you weaseled your way in because— 00:03:01 Crosstalk Crosstalk <i>[Lin-Manuel laughs in surprise.]</i> Lin-Manuel: <i>[Breaks into startled laughter.]</i> Jesse: —it was something that you've always loved? Lin-Manuel: <i>[Completely shocked, his voice pitched high from laughing.]</i> I <u>weaseled</u> my way—!?

00:03:09 Lin-Manuel Guest **Jesse:** Or is this a regular acting job, where you—you know... This was a straight-up offer out of the blue. I was in London at the time, filming *Mary Poppins Returns*, and Jane Tranter—the producer of the series—and Jack Thorne—the writer—invited me to dinner and sort of thought of me for it. And I would not think of myself as a natural fit for this role. I don't think I'm anyone's first choice [*chuckling*] for a Texan aeronaut. But Jane Tranter said she had seen me at a thing. She was—she was a fan of my work, but she had seen me at the closing night of *In the Heights*, in London, and she said that she saw me bound up on the stage and she said, "You looked like a human rabbit, and I thought—is that Lee Scoresby?"

[*Jesse chuckles.*]

00:03:56 Jesse Host So, I guess the answer to your question is yes. I was a big fan of these books before I got this offer.

00:04:12 Lin-Manuel Guest There was movies of these books, before. You know, five years ago or seven years ago. And the part that you play was played by a guy who I'm sure you're all constantly sitting next to at auditions, in one of those things: Sam Elliott.

[*Teasingly.*] Sam Elliott. I mean, he was almost *Hamilton*. He was almost Usnavi.

[*Jesse laughs.*]

00:04:18 Jesse Host I mean, we just constantly [*laughs*]—going in for each other's gigs. Why did you not think of yourself as this kind of guy?

00:04:23 Lin-Manuel Guest Well, honestly, I'd seen the movie and I thought Sam Elliott's about as perfect as it gets! And what was—what was interesting about their take on it was, they're big fans of *Once Upon a Time in the North*. Which was this novella prequel that Philip Pullman wrote, where Lee is much younger and it's, sort of, where he meets Iorek Byrnison—who's the armored bear in the series. And so, they were—they were just sort of thinking in an entirely different way, and I was a big fan of Jack Thorne's *Harry Potter* adaptation, for the stage. So, I was like, "Well, if he sees it, I'm gonna—I'm gonna fake it 'til I make it."

00:05:01 Jesse Host I mean, it—I think it... speaks to your relatively unusual priorities, in having, perhaps, accidentally gained what here in Hollywood they call heat—

[*Lin laughs.*]

—by making, you know, the biggest hit musical of the last 20 years, or whatever. Which is, like, I think most people would just go straight to, "Yeah, I guess I should try and be a movie star!" And you starred in a movie, but it feels like you are making choices on an entirely different basis, and a little bit—maybe—it feels like you have—you have decided to, like, take this moment and... almost play, like, you know, show business fantasy camp.

[*Lin-Manuel laughs.*]

00:06:01 Lin-Manuel Guest You know what I mean? Like, just do little things that you would always have loved to have done.
If it had—you know, *In the Heights* was a successful show that recouped its money and won the Tony. And that’s about as good as you can expect from a Broadway musical. We don’t get off the Arts and Leisure page, necessarily. But, you know, we get done in high schools and the show lives on. And I thought that was as big a success you got, and then *Hamilton* happened. And by then I was married with a kid. I had done some TV shows, with mixed success. I’d done a little movie stuff. And... frankly, I don’t have to do anything ever again. I know it’s the first line of my obituary!

00:06:49 Jesse Host That’s what *Hamilton* is. So, okay. So, if that’s—that line is handled, then what else can I do with my time here?
Is it hard when opportunities present themselves that are, like... public-facing, famous-person opportunities to maintain the part of your identity that is... maybe even more a writer and composer than a performer? Though, you certainly have always been both.

00:07:16 Lin-Manuel Guest At this point, I know who I am, and I know what is for me and then what is not for me. Or what will stretch me or what I can learn from. I mean, I’ll give you an example. Like, I did get a Marvel call that I said no to. And I may kick myself about it forever.

[Jesse laughs.]

But I got the call and it was for a part *[chuckling]*, that will remain nameless, and I said—and I was still in *Hamilton*, at the time. And I said, “When does it film?”

And they said, “We’d probably start immediately after you finished. Like, July.” I finished the show July 11th of 2016, and it would—I would, like, be getting into costume July 12th. And I said no! ‘Cause I want to stay married!

[They both laugh.]

00:08:09 Jesse Host And I, you know, realized I just—I really need to get off the merry-go-round, because the year of *Hamilton* was such a loud year.
I think if I got you to reveal what Marvel part you had turned down, that would be the first line of my obituary.

00:08:17 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Lin-Manuel breaks into delighted laughter.]* Well, I—

[They both chuckle.]

00:08:25 Jesse Host I would hate for that to be the first line of your obituary, so let’s leave it at that.
Let’s talk a little bit about your growing up. So, you grew up in pretty far uptown New York and you went to Hunter College, elementary and high school. Which is like a fancy school for smart boys. And girls. And you went there with, like, a—with other fancy people.

00:08:49 Lin-Manuel Guest Yeah, we were—I mean, we were eating paste like everyone else. We were subsequently fancy *[laughing]* when we got out of school.

00:08:54 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* At what point did you realize that your life at home and in the context of where you grew up was kind of a different lane from your life at school and your peers there?

00:09:11 Lin-Manuel Guest When I was five, because the pronunciation of my name changes *[laughing]* depending on where I am. So, to be Lin at school—because I couldn't take Lin-Manual or Lin-Manwell. I was like, "Lin—Lin is fine." And then Lin-Manuel, in my house, and speaking mostly Spanish at home and English at school.

So, my first musical—*In the Heights*—there's a character named Nina and it's her first time off to college. And she's so at sea with the, like, cultural code-switching that has to happen. Because she grew up and went to school in her neighborhood and is now in this, like, elite school. That happened to me at a really young age. So, I learned the two languages when I was in kindergarten.

00:09:53 Jesse Host And I think I probably have mentioned this on *Bullseye*, before, but I had a friend come visit me, from my middle school. He came to my house, in San Francisco, and he lived in the suburbs south of San Francisco.

My mom gave us some money to go get ice cream, literally, and we were walking down San Jose Avenue, in San Francisco, and... he looked at me and he was like—and he said something like, "Hey, is this okay? Like, is—are—I'm a little nervous," or something. And I wasn't upset with him for being nervous in my neighborhood—maybe I was, a little bit.

But what I—what shocked me, in that moment as a 12-year-old or 11-year-old or however old I was, was I was like, "No, dude. If we had gone left at the corner, not right—"

[Lin-Manuel laughs.]

00:10:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk "That's when you should be *[chuckling]* nervous."
Lin-Manuel: Right, right.

Jesse: Who, like—like there's places to be nervous!

Lin-Manuel: It's that block, not this block!

00:10:56 Lin-Manuel Guest **Jesse:** Exactly! Like everyone knows, this is—this block is FINE! Totally. *[Laughs.]* I had my version of that. It was like, "Don't go down Academy! What are you, crazy?!"

[Jesse laughs.]

"Go up this street!" Um, yeah. I had my version of that, but my school was so far that I just—I did—my—kids really, very rarely came to my house. Like, everyone lives—lived on the Upper West Side or Upper East Side, or there—or there were, like, outliers who lived all the way downtown. But, yeah. I mean, it was just—the playdates were one-sided. I was going to the kids who lived closer to school.

00:11:28 Jesse Host Did you notice that, at the time?

00:11:30 Lin-Manuel Guest Yeah! It's funny. Someone was—asked me, "What's the significance of 96,000?" Which is the—it's sort of the arbitrary number I picked for the lotto winning, in *In the Heights*, my first musical. And, one it just sings nicely, "ninety-six thousand." But I think—I think subconsciously, the reason is 96th Street is just, like,

such—was such an invisible... like, barrier of, like, rich versus less so.

00:11:56 Clip Clip “96,000” from the musical *In the Heights* plays.

USNAVI:
... thousand!

SONNY:
Dollars? Holler!

USNAVI:
Ninety-six thousand!

BENNY:
[Spoken]
Yo, somebody won!

USNAVI:
Ninety-six thousand!

BENNY:
Yo, if I won the lotto...

00:12:04 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Music fades out as Lin-Manuel speaks]*
I remember getting a McDonalds meal on 86th Street for \$3.49. And then you cross the street to 106th Street McDonalds, and it’s \$2.99. Like, *[chuckling]* it’s literally—that’s the jump between ten blocks, from our school. So, like, that’s always been this line of, like, “Will you cross it to come to my house?” Where, you know, folks don’t have as much money and it’s not the richest zip code in America?

00:12:29 Jesse Host I didn’t know until I read it, today, that you directed a high school production—when you were in high school—of *West Side Story*. I mean, that’s a little on the nose, Lin.

00:12:41 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Laughs in surprise.]* Little bit! Lil’ bit!

00:12:46 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* I—like, so on the one hand—here’s the thing about it, right? Like, on the one hand, *West Side Story* is as good as it gets! You know what I mean? Like, *West Side Story*—it rules!

[Lin-Manuel laughs.]

00:13:01 Crosstalk Crosstalk You know?
Lin-Manuel: Yeah!

Jesse: It’s spectacularly good. On the other hand, what a weird... what a weird thing—

Lin-Manuel: *[Amused]* To make my largely white and Asian class—cast—class play Puerto Ricans? *[Laughs.]*

Jesse: Yeah! I mean, like, I feel like it might even be better if—it feels to me like it could even be better if you were, like, getting them to record their own version of a Big Pun album or something like that.

Lin-Manuel: *[Laughs.]*

Jesse: You know? Like something that is—

00:13:32	Jesse	Host	Lin-Manuel: <i>[Rhythmically]</i> Come on, guys! It's hard to analyze which guys espise be advised, people!
			<i>[Giggles.]</i> But, like, to be directly responsible for translating something that is directly of your experience as a Puerto Rican American, in New York, right? But to be responsible for—both for translating that experience to these, you know, white and Asian kids in your high school—and hopefully some Latino kids, too.
00:13:51	Lin-Manuel	Guest	Two, I think. I think I had two, female, Latina Sharks. And I would have had Dane Martinez, but he did <u>basketball</u> that year! And I may <u>never</u> forgive him.
00:14:00	Jesse	Host	Aw. But the other piece—the other piece of it, Lin, is that—like—you are—you're responsible for that translation, but you're already—you're already translating, you know, a secondary text. You know what I mean? Like, this is something that's already translated through a bunch of white Broadway dudes in 1955, or whenever that musical was written.
00:14:23	Lin-Manuel	Guest	Fully. Fully. And that's always what I say is sort of the great blessing and curse of <i>West Side Story</i> , is it's one of the great musicals. Full stop. And for a large segment of <u>the world</u> —and I literally mean the globe—that's their first image of a Puerto Rican character, is a Greek guy with brown makeup on, in the movie!
			So, it's a <u>false</u> representation, not an authentic one. But that becomes the default stereotype. Because of the success of the show. And so, yeah. I mean, directing it my senior year was <u>enormous</u> fun! But I also used it as a teaching experience. I brought my dad in to do dialect work <i>[laughing]</i> with the white and Asian Sharks that I had at my disposal. Because, again, Dane Martinez—who was great as Paul, in <i>A Chorus Line</i> , the year before—decided to basketball!
			But, yeah. I mean, that was—that was—I guess it is a little on the nose. <i>[Laughs.]</i> But it was also so interesting, for me, because it was the beginning of my pulling Lin-Manuel from Uptown into Lin at school. And integrating those and using theatre to do that and I don't think it's an accident that I started writing <i>In the Heights</i> two years later—my sophomore year in college—because I also recognized the limits of using an existing show to... try to get anything close to an authentic experience, onstage. I realized, "I'll never dance well enough to play Bernardo, and that's about it, in the canon, if I really wanna do this for a living." So, no one's gonna write your dream show.
00:16:02	Jesse	Host	It's pretty audacious to... write your own musical.
00:16:07	Lin-Manuel	Guest	Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:16:09	Jesse	Host	I have a buddy in—I had a buddy, in college, who—he, like, disappeared into his room for four months and when he came out, he had made a rock-n-roll EP? And—we didn't really know that was a thing that he did. Like, we knew he played guitar.
00:16:28	Lin-Manuel	Guest	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Uh-huh.
00:16:29	Jesse	Host	But we didn't know he wrote songs or anything. And I remember just being like, "Who has the temerity to think that their creativity <i>[laughing]</i> is worthwhile?"

[Lin laughs in the background.]

00:16:39 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** You know what I mean?

00:16:41 Lin-Manuel Guest **Lin-Manuel:** Well—I, but—
I felt the same way for so long. But I thought nothing of people who started their own rock band or started their own hip-hop groups. It's sort of like that barrier is lower, right? But somehow musicals are, *[mockingly]* "Oooh, la-de-da! You write musicals! Look at you, Mr. Bernstein!" And the thing that tore that barrier down, for me, was seeing Johnathan Larson's *RENT*, for my 17th birthday.

RENT was the first musical that truly felt contemporary. For better or for worse, it felt like, "Oh! This guy wrote this downtown. And it—some of these songs only have three chords. And he's writing about his own experience and he's writing about being scared of selling out and being an artist and being scared of dying. I'm scared of all those things!" And that—after I saw *RENT*, I started writing 20-minute musicals for this thing we had at our high school called Brick Prison. We have a windowless school, and so Brick Prison is the name of the theatre program that's all student directed, and student written.

But, again, it's that, "Who are you to have the temerity to write a musical, the great American art form!" And *RENT* was the thing that was like, "It's—why is this different than your friends who are making, like, their own mixtapes in the basement?"

00:17:59 Jesse Host I went to performing arts high school, and I—we're about the same age. So, *RENT* came out and became a cultural phenomenon at a similar point in our lives. Even as, at the time, an actor, I definitely was deeply uncomfortable with the *RENT* people.

[Lin-Manuel cackles in the background.]

Like, becoming a *RENT* guy—at the time—was a real line in the sand.

[Lin-Manuel laughs.]

It meant that you were willing to commit to a level of musical theatre... I'm speaking from the perspective of an anti-*RENT* person. I'm probably in the middle, at this point in my life. But, like, a level of musical theatre corniness...

00:18:46 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Jesse agrees several times as Lin speaks.]* I think as you grow up—and I wasn't there yet, in high school. Like, I sang *RENT* with my friends in jazz chorus.

But I wasn't playing *RENT* out of my boombox on the courtyard steps. I was playing Marc Anthony and Big Pun. You know? I also could read—you know, part of code-switching is reading the room *[laughs]*, and I wasn't bringing all of myself into every room, when I was still in high school. It was sort of like, "I play theatre with these kids and then I can go hang out and, like, freestyle with my friends—terribly—with these friends." And then, you know, the one memory I share with my wife, from high school, is that she remembers me blasting Marc Anthony on the steps and we had, like, a dance together. 'Cause she was another, like, Latina in a school with not many Latinos in it.

And so... I could contain all these things, but with separate cliques, in high school. And then as you grow up, you kind of say, "[Censored] it." And you just try to bring all of yourself in the room. And *In the Heights* was my first attempt at that. It was my first attempt at writing the Latin music I'd grown up with, but also mixing it with a storyline that—in the college version—was pretty RENT-arific! I mean, [laughing] it was just sort of this love triangle that was set in this neighborhood. And it wasn't until I started working with Quiara, years later, that it became its own thing and that really became about the neighborhood itself.

00:20:08 Jesse Host
00:20:09 Lin-Manuel Guest

When did you start rapping?
Oh. I have—I mean, I have, like... crappy little kid raps, when I was little, that were modeled after Run-D.M.C. and all the stuff we were fed, in the 80's. And I really liked Fat Boys and *Disorderlies*. I liked funny rappers. Like, I loved Biz Markie and I loved Slick Rick. And then I started, like, earnestly writing not very good raps in high school. Like, during far—you know, it's funny. Like, I think of '91, '92—I listened to your interview with Daveed, which was so fantastic, but the East Coast, West Coast divide means we really listened to different [censored] on the radio.

[Chuckling] Like, it was very—I did not know UGK existed until college.

00:20:55 Jesse Host
00:21:03 Lin-Manuel Guest

Were you mostly doing writtens or were you freestyling, when you were a kid?
I was—I was doing poor writtens. And then when my friends would freestyle in high school, I would beatbox. And be like, "Pass it, pass it, pass it." [Laughs.] "Don't pick me. Don't pick me." And then it wasn't—it wasn't 'til college that I started freestyling seriously. 'Cause I realized—well, one, I was just writing a lot more and so I found that when I freestyled, it was better.

00:21:27 Jesse Host

We'll wrap up with Lin-Manuel Miranda when we come back from a quick break. Still to come: so many times, *Hamilton* fans would tell him how much they love the show, despite the fact that they didn't like rap. He'll tell me why that didn't always feel great. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:21:47 Music Music
00:21:49 Jesse Promo

Rhythmic interstitial music plays.
Support for NPR and the following message come from Collette Travel.

On their small group explorations tours, you'll go deeper into a destination with an average of 15 travelers. Stay in a Tuscan villa or embark on an African safari. Combined with Collette's industry leading tour managers, authentic cuisine, and 102 years of guided travel expertise, you can trust that the perfect travel experience is here for you. Visit Collette.com or call (855)212-2045.

00:22:27 Promo Promo

[Music fades out.]

Music: Slightly discordant music plays.

Speaker: I know we'd all love the holidays to be this happy, stress-free, joyful time—but let's be real. That is not always the case. NPR's *Life Kit* is answering your holiday questions and helping you navigate family dynamics all season long. New episodes every Tuesday and Thursday.

[Music ends abruptly.]

00:22:46	Jesse	Host	Listen and subscribe to <i>Life Kit</i> . Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Lin-Manuel Miranda. He's the creator of <i>Hamilton</i> . He now stars on <i>His Dark Materials</i> , on HBO. He also has a new live show, on Broadway: <i>Freestyle Love Supreme</i> . It is a totally improvised, hip-hop theatre performance.
00:23:11	Lin-Manuel	Guest	Were you auditioning for stuff when you got back to New York, from college? I was teaching at my old high school. I taught fulltime, the first year. And then I basically became a professional sub, while I was writing <i>In the Heights</i> . 'Cause I found I could—if I subbed like five times a week, I could cover rent. Six, I could pay for cable. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And, yeah. And then I was doing—I was doing some voiceover auditions. I was very rarely getting called in on, like, musical theatre auditions. I think I remember auditioning for <i>The Wedding Singer</i> , the musical?
00:23:43	Jesse	Host	Mm-hm. To play the rapping granny?
00:23:46	Lin-Manuel	Guest	<i>[Stuttering.]</i> I—uh, of <u>course</u> ! Type-cast, as usual! No, I sang half a ballad, and I don't think they even looked up. And they said, "Thank you so much." And, oh <i>[laughing]</i> I actually auditioned for <i>Shrek</i> , too! But that was a little later. I think <i>Heights</i> had already existed. I really auditioned for that because I'm a fan of Jeanine Tesori and I wanted to hear, "What <i>[censored]</i> does Jeanine Tesori's <i>Shrek</i> music sound like?!" And so, I got to hear some of it, and I got a call back and I didn't get it, but I got to hear, like, her pretty <i>[laughing]</i> cool songs for <i>Shrek</i> ! I wanna play you performing... a song from—when at the time was something you were working on.
00:24:15	Jesse	Host	<i>[Lin-Manuel laughs.]</i> Called <i>The Hamilton Mixtape</i> . Which you performed at a—at a night of performance poetry and spoken word at the White House.
00:24:34	Lin-Manuel	Guest	Yep.
00:24:35	Jesse	Host	And...
00:24:37	Lin-Manuel	Guest	Not many of those happening, these days! But...
00:24:39	Jesse	Host	It's—yes. Fair.
00:24:40	Lin-Manuel	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> It used to happen!
00:24:41	Jesse	Host	It's a great performance and, you know, everyone is liking it. But I wanna talk a little bit about what it was like to do it, after we hear a bit of it. And this is—this is, like—the Obama administration was relatively new when you're doing this.
00:24:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:25:01	Clip	Clip	Music: Lin-Manuel Miranda singing "Alexander Hamilton" from <i>The Hamilton Mixtape</i> . <i>Well, the word got around, they said, "This kid is insane, man"</i> <i>Took up a collection just to send him to the mainland</i> <i>"Get your education, don't forget from whence you came, and</i>

The world's gonna know your name. What's your name, man?"

Alexander Hamilton

[Audience laughs and claps]

His name is Alexander Hamilton

And there's a million things he hasn't done

But just you wait, just you wait...

00:25:27 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:25:28 Jesse Host

So, here's the thing I wanna ask you about, Lin. It's not... it's not what's it like to perform at the White House for the President. 'Cause I bet that's great. I don't know. You know. I presume it's great. He enjoyed it. He obviously enjoyed it, so there you go. You're winning at the game of life when you're doing that. But the bigger question I had was—there's a lot of laughter, in the room, as you're doing that.

[Lin-Manuel agrees.]

00:26:03 Lin-Manuel Guest

And... you've got a line ready. You—when everyone laughs when you say what it is. I mean, you kind of...

I—which I—I mean, honestly, if you wanna see what I look like at my most terrified, play the first minute of the tape *[laughs]*, because I've never stammered that much in my life.

00:26:12 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:26:13 Clip Clip

Lin-Manuel: I'm actually working on a hip-hop album. Uh, it's a concept album about the life of someone I think embodies hip-hop. Treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton.

Audience: *[Chuckles and murmurs amongst themselves.]*

Lin-Manuel: YOU LAUGH! But it's true! Um. He was, uh. He was born, uh, a penniless orphan, uh, in Saint Croix, of illegitimate birth. Um. Became George Washington's right-hand man, uh. Became treasury secretary. Caught beef with every other founding father!

Audience: *[Laughs.]*

Lin-Manuel: Uh, and all on the strength of his writing. I think he embodies, uh, the word's ability to make a difference. Uh, so...

00:26:46 Sound Effect Transition

[Clip fades out.]

Music swells and fades.

00:26:47 Lin-Manuel Guest

This is a thesis. I'm presenting a thesis that I'm testing out... in *[laughs]*—in the—in front of the leader of the free world.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:27:07 Jesse Host

But also, weirdly, Zach Braff and George Stephanopoulos and Saul Williams and Spike Lee. It was a pretty Madlibs-y room. I actually—I won't perform unless Zach Braff is there.

00:27:11 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Laughs.]* Oh, I think that's a great rider to have. But yeah, it was—it was... I needed to push through it. And I'm nervous until the music starts. Because I'm really proud of what I've written, and I think it presents a case for—this guy went through a lot of *[censored]* and he wrote his way out of it. And that's what... most of my favorite rappers have managed to do, is go through some kind of struggle and rap about it so eloquently that people all over the world can understand it, or *[censored]* with it.

And so that was—that was the thesis. The thesis was, "He's a writer. And my favorite hip-hop artists are writers. And so, there's a connection, here."

00:27:57 Jesse Host You heard my interview with Daveed Diggs, who starred in *Hamilton*, in the original cast, and is a professional rapper, otherwise, in addition to being an actor. And one of the things that he and I agreed upon, immediately, is that if anyone said to you, "I'm doing a rap musical about Alexander Hamilton," your first reaction would be "what a horrible idea."

00:28:21 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Laughing through his words.]* Yeah! He had the grace not to say that to my face.

[They laugh.]

00:28:28 Jesse Host I'm sure he said it to Tommy, but uh... I think what he described saying to your face was, "Does it pay?"

[They laugh.]

00:28:32 Lin-Manuel Guest Yeah!
00:28:33 Jesse Host I think if we're hungry enough, we'll take our—we'll take our jobs. But I wonder if you—how, where you were that you were like, "Oh my god, I'm—" Like, I mean, certainly we all tip our caps to *Carmen: the Hip-Opera*, the MTV television musical starring Mos Def and Beyoncé. But, like, this is a terrible idea! I understand all the reasons why it's a good idea, as well, and I agree with them. And I saw it and I thought it was great. I'll—so, I'll also stipulate that. *[Laughs through his words.]* But, like! At every point in this, you have to convince people to give you money to do this, and stuff! What a bananas thing to dedicate your life to, Lin! I guess that's my question.

00:29:17 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Chuckles.]* One of the—one of the—my favorite—or, one of the most moving pieces of writing on it was actually—Mike Schur wrote an essay about *Hamilton*. And he wrote a description of it where he said, "I'm sure, for six months, Lin's friends would all kind of check in with each other being like: Is he alright?"

[They laugh.]

And it is to the eternal credit of my wife that I finished the second chapter of that book and thought—and pitched it to her. I'd be like, "Oh my god! This guy wrote his way from the Caribbean to New York!"

And she went, "*[Beat.]* Cool!" Like, just totally nonfazed. Not, "That's a terrible idea." Not, "That's the best idea you've ever had." Just like, "Alright, cool. Write it." Because, I think, that's—you know, you look to your loved ones first, but again, at the same time I saw—I

had that idea two chapters into the book, and then it kept proving me right. You know? And then I get to the Revolution, and he's writing under a pseudonym: Publius. Not the best hip-hop name, but pretty good pseudonym.

[They chuckle.]

As pseudonym's go. And he's writing revolutionary tracts. That thesis was strong enough to pull me through the worried looks of my friends.

00:30:31 Jesse Host What was it like for you—and this another question that I also asked Daveed Diggs—what was it like for you to deal with the consequences of making a hip-hop thing in a social context where many of the people who are... watching it and listening to it are not... hip-hop people? And may, literally, have no experience with hip-hop.

00:31:06 Lin-Manuel Guest Yeah. I mean, I think you actually put it more bluntly to Daveed, which is—you know—what do you say to people who go, “I don't like hip-hop, but I love this?”

00:31:14 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** Yeah.

Lin-Manuel: And my answer to that was...

Jesse: I'm trying to be nice to you, Lin. *[Laugh.]*

Lin-Manuel: Yeah, no, no, but my answer to that—'cause I got that a fair amount—and my answer to that is, “I'm so sorry you're missing so much of the show.”

00:31:26 Lin-Manuel Guest And I would say that to them. Because this is a show with a lot of on-ramps. And, again, it gets back to that “bringing all of yourself into the room”. There are as many musical theatre references in this as there are hip-hop references.

00:31:42 Jesse Host Didn't you ever... Let me restate this. Lin, you are famous for your generous spirit and warm spirit. And in the time that you and I have interacted, in life, I have found that to be accurate.

00:32:01 Lin-Manuel Guest *[Laughing.]* Why does this sound like an insult?

00:32:03 Jesse Host But—no. It's not leading to an insult. But, like... didn't you ever just run out of patience with that mess? Like... with, just... people's weird sideways talk about hip-hop that was disguised as a compliment to your, like, *[laughing]* the culmination of your life's work? The thing that's gonna be on your tombstone?

00:32:31 Lin-Manuel Guest Yeah. But, again, at the same time we're inviting everyone into the room. And, uh *[laughs]* you know, I think that throughout my career, I've run into purists and snobbery from purists from both sides of, “This is hip-hop; this isn't hip-hop. This is musical theatre; this isn't musical theatre.” And I think the vast majority of us... the silent majority, if that weren't such a politically loaded word, the silent majority of us just like good *[censored]* that speaks to us.

And—in whatever form that comes in. And I just, you know, I really—sort of—if there's any side-mission I have in this career, in terms of writing for theatre, it's that popular music and theatre music used to be the same thing. I wasn't alive during it. It's 70 years before us, but the Gershwin's—you'd hear them on the radio and then you'd hear their song in the Broadway show, that night. Or you'd hear Rodgers and Hammerstein on the radio. And at certain

point, those things split. But I think it's my side-mission to be like, "I wanna play musical theatre music you can listen to loud in the radio. Or loud in your car stereo."

00:33:58 Jesse Host And so, I just bring everything I love to what I'm writing. So, you are a producer and sometime member of *Freestyle Love Supreme*, who have a show on Broadway, right now. This is on the long list of things that you and your colleagues have pulled off that I read about—once was happening in New York—and thought, "What a terrible idea."

00:34:18 Lin-Manuel Guest
00:34:20 Jesse Host *[Laughing.]* Thank you. *[Laughs.]* This is theatrical performance group grounded in freestyle rapping. And since you're on my show, I'm gonna make you rap. I hope that's okay.

00:34:33 Lin-Manuel Guest
00:34:35 Jesse Host You didn't make Daveed rap. But... That's true! I didn't! I should have. Well, you know what? Can I tell—

00:34:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Lin-Manuel:** Yeah, go ahead.

Jesse: Can I tell you the truth?

00:34:40 Jesse Host **Lin-Manuel:** Yeah. I asked Daveed if he would—if he would go off the dome and he said, "No." *[Laughs.]*

[Lin-Manuel cackles in the background.]

00:34:49 Lin-Manuel Guest You made the mistake of saying yes, Lin! Daveed's incredibly good at it, but he gets—he's still really nervous about it, before every show.

00:34:54 Jesse Host Well, we're gonna drop a beat that you will hear over the telephone. You and I are separated, right now, by 3000 miles. So, this will be like—this will be like one of those rap records that somebody records while there's—you know, this is like one of those Shine albums that he recorded while he was still in prison.

[Lin-Manuel dissolves into startled laughter.]

00:35:09 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** 'Cause you're rapping over the telephone.

Lin-Manuel: Okay.

Jesse: It will sound—it will not sound like that, to our audience, 'cause there's microphones on both ends, but—

00:35:17 Jesse Host **Lin-Manuel:** Alright, don't you—don't you link me up off-beat, man. Yeah, no. No. We'll get you on beat. Kevin—my producer Kevin's a drummer. He gets it. So, Kevin—and you can rap about what—you can rap about whatever you want. Do need any—do you want anything more than that?

00:35:29 Lin-Manuel Guest How 'bout I just sort of sum up what we've talked about in the past hour?

00:35:32 Jesse Host Gorgeous.

00:35:33 Music Music A thumpy, steady beat plays, interspersed with claps and snaps.

00:35:36 Lin-Manuel Guest Can you turn it up? *[Doing a nasally voice.]* Where's my snare?

[Laughs.]

[*Rhymically*] Okay. Before I was I was in bloom,
we talked about what do you bring to the room?
Do you stay up late nights, wondering who you are
when you're in [*censored*] Washington Heights,
or do you go down to the Upper East Side?
When they say Lin-Manwell,
do you let that [*censored*] slide?
Or do you say Lin to get real excited, and say
"Okay, one day, I'll be a writer."
00:36:03 Lin-Manuel Guest Then you figure it out
and you [*censored*] push through your fear and your doubt.
You go to college and you realize,
"I like musical theatre and hip-hop."
I'm scared to go off the top, like Daveed was.
Because that's the [*censored*] buzz.
You just say whatever it is,
because you keep going!
You try to write a [*censored*] show,
because you can't be Bernardo.
You don't have that flow,
and you don't have that extension in your leg.
You're not a Greek guy with brown makeup up on your face.
You just [*censored*] keep going until you write *In the Heights*.
Turns out nice.
The beat's coming in and out,
but I'm trying to stay light. And on it.

00:36:35 Jesse Host Is that enough?
00:36:38 Lin-Manuel Guest Yeah! Absolutely. More than enough. God bless you, sir.
00:36:41 Jesse Host Sorry, I was—I was—the beat was coming in and out while I was
doing it.
That was technical—that was technical difficulty level 12 out of 10.

[*Lin-Manuel laughs.*]

00:36:55 Crosstalk Crosstalk You know what, that's like—that's like when... when my man
from—uh, what's the dude from *Kimmy Schmidt* called?
Lin-Manuel: Tituss?

00:36:56 Jesse Host **Jesse:** Yeah, Tituss.
That's like when my man Tituss was in *Guys and Dolls*—

[*Lin-Manuel laughs.*]

00:37:03 Lin-Manuel Guest —on the *Tony Awards*, on television and his mic went out.
Yeah.

[*They laugh.*]

00:37:06 Jesse Host Yeah, it was very tough to hear that. [*Laughs.*]
You—you killed it, Lin. God bless you for—god bless you for doing
that. And I sure appreciate you taking the time to come be on
Bullseye. I'm glad we—I'm glad we made it happen and thanks
for—thanks for all your kindness and support over the years.
00:37:20 Lin-Manuel Guest Awesome. Thanks, man.

00:37:21 Jesse Host Okay. Talk to you later, Lin.
00:37:23 Lin-Manuel Guest Kay. Bye!
00:37:24 Jesse Host Bye!

Lin-Manuel Miranda. *His Dark Materials* is on HBO, right now. Go watch it. *Freestyle Love Supreme* is a blast! It's running on Broadway through January 12th at the Booth Theatre and you will—I guarantee, you will never get to see this on Broadway again. Unless *Freestyle Love Supreme* has a return engagement. So, if you've always wanted to see a theatric—improvised theatrical performance based in freestyle rapping... this is your big shot, folks! *[Laughs.]* Book tickets for the Booth. It's a really fun show.

00:37:56 Music Music
00:37:59 Jesse Host

Brassy interstitial music plays.
That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* produced at MaximumFun.org world headquarters, overlooking MacArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California—where we had rain and hail, this week! You know, they say it never rains in southern California. But this week gave the lie to that claim. Also, there was a lot of really intense thunder that freaked out the seagulls.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien, here in our office. Our production fellows are Jordan Kauwling and Melissa Dueñas. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. If you like the music on our show, he made a collection of it on Bandcamp that you can pay what you want for. Just search for DJW *Bullseye* on Bandcamp and you can grab it, there. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it. Go! Team rule! You should buy their albums.

And one last thing! There are so many interviews in the *Bullseye* and *Sound of Young America* archives. Alice Waters and I talked about Jonathan Gold, for example. Jonathan was kind enough to come over to my house, in Mt. Washington, Los Angeles—when I still recorded this show at home—and he was—he was a true genius. He's gone, now, but he was a true genius and a special dude and a wonderful interview subject. And we fought about burritos. And he told me that he hates eggs, but he still cooks them for his children.

Anyway, you can find that at our website, MaximumFun.org. You can also find lots of past interviews on your podcast app. Just open up your podcast app. We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. We post our interviews there, as well. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*.

00:39:49 Promo Promo
And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.
Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]