

what hamilton teaches us about humanity

By Ellen Mintzer

Dear Hamilton, what to say of you? The national touring company of Lin-Manuel Miranda's theatrical masterwork recently graced the stage of Shea's Performing Arts Center for an eagerly anticipated three-week run. Staged with understated yet versatile wooden sets and performed by a dynamic cast — standouts include Bryson Bruce's charismatic, scene-stealing Lafayette/ Jefferson and Hannah Cruz's vulnerable, passionate Eliza — the show that stole America's heart came to life marvelously right here in Buffalo.

The power of Miranda's show comes not only from its ingenious race-blind casting and innovative blending of popular music with theatrical tradition. *Hamilton's* power is a simultaneously reverent, imaginative, and critical treatment of America's history, and its resonance with our current political era. It weaves a tale of our nation's birth, and the highest ideals on which our nation was founded — liberty, justice, and equality. Yet Miranda does not allow for a straightforward characterization of our founding fathers as mythical heroes; rather, he creates a balancing act of myth-making and myth-busting, demonstrating their fallibility and humanity.

Miranda highlights Alexander Hamilton's status as an immigrant from the West Indies, epitomizing him as the pinnacle of the American success story: a poor immigrant whose life was marked by tragedy (his father's abandonment, his mother's death) but whose ambition, intellect, and work ethic allowed him to overcome all odds and achieve greatness in America. As the ensemble sings in the opening number, Hamilton is "another immigrant coming up from the bottom." Miranda is an immigrant himself, from Puerto Rico, and choosing to emphasize this quintessential narrative of the American dream serves as a reminder of the strength of diversity in the fabric of our nation.

However, *Hamilton* does not simply offer a romanticized take on the men who founded our country. While he portrays an idealized vision of the relentless courage with which our founding fathers fought to secure our independence from England, he also depicts the political realities of our post-revolution country. George Washington counsels Hamilton, "Winning was easy. Governing is harder." Ultimately, the play is more than just a tribute to our venerated forefathers, but a story of the birth of partisanship. Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, two strong-willed men fiercely attached to their beliefs on how best to run the new nation, develop an adversarial relationship. They struggle

to reach compromises without betraying their ideals, and their political rivalry creates two opposing factions. Although Miranda values some aspects of the founding fathers, he does not resolve these very real tensions, and thus represents them authentically.

Miranda's founding fathers are mythologized heroes devoted to their ideals and the good of their country. They are also authentic human beings who fall prey to temptations and their own ambitions. Instead of simplifying characters into either hero or villain, *Hamilton* depicts each man as brave and weak, intelligent and foolish, benevolent and corrupt. With its glorification of American ideals and genuine portrayal of the flaws and fallibility of our leaders, *Hamilton* is both a history lesson and a compassionate lens through which to view our leaders today. It also makes us acutely aware of the fact that we are a nation founded by immigrants.



ARE YOU RH NEGATIVE?

DONATING
LIFE SAVING PLASMA
HAS NEVER BEEN
MORE REWARDING

KEDPLASMA
SOMERSET LABS

a Kedron Biopharma company

**SAVE
AS MANY AS
40 LIVES
IN JUST
ONE HOUR**

As a member of this rare blood group, you may have a special gift that can help families fight back against hemolytic disease of the newborn or HDN.

**DONORS RECEIVE
MONETARY COMPENSATION**

**OVER 40 YEARS IN THE COMMUNITY &
MEMBERS OF BUFFALO NIAGARA PARTNERSHIP**

CRITERIA TO DONATE:

- + Rh negative man or woman
- + Women must be Sterile or postmenopausal
- + Live within 90 miles of Somerset Labs
- + Between the ages of 18-69
- + Be in good general Health

**Walk In or Schedule A
Phone Interview Today
(716) 631-1281**

15 Limestone Drive
Williamsville, NY 14221
kedplasmausa.com