

Surveying

The very best of lockdown culture

FILM

Hamilton

DISNEY+

★★★★

Lin-Manuel Miranda's groundbreaking Hamilton—filmed, NT Live-style, with the original Broadway cast at three performances in June 2020—was meant to hit cinema next autumn. Instead, in response to Covid-19, it's streaming on Disney+.

Stage director Thomas Kail also helms the film, giving us an exhilarating, immersive experience of this musical about America's forgotten Founding Father, who travels from penniless Caribbean orphan to revolutionary and political leader.

Kail's fluid camera work matches the show's constant low, rather than elaborate, sets. It's hard-working. Andy Blankenbuehler—choreographed ensemble that forms the backbone, evoking everything from an army to

a hurricane and even adding dramatic heft to the arrival of a letter.

But that's Miranda's masterstroke: not just showing the duets and sex scandals, but making Hamilton's writing about the Constitution and states' debts somehow cool, accessible, even spectacular. The propulsive, witty score, encompassing hip-hop, R&B, jazz and British Invasion pop, is a major part of that. And though subsequent casts have interpreted the material with aplomb, it's fascinating to see the cast who helped shape this remarkable production.

There's lightning-fast rapper Daveed Diggs's idiosyncratic Lafayette and Rambeaux, formidable foe Jefferson, charming Anthony Ramos as Laurens, who dreams of forming the first black battalion, and Jonathan Groff playing George III as part puff-blow pansy dame, part cold-blooded psychopath. In "Satisfied," Ronin Elias Goldsberry demonstrates that



Angelica Schuyler is every bit Hamilton's intellectual equal as she roasts all the angles in seconds flat.

Miranda himself emphasises Hamilton's new talent and fatal lack of control, but Leslie Odom Jr steals the show, close-ups magnifying his pitch-perfect performance as Aaron Burr. There's a riveting double act: Hamilton trying to outrun death, Burr trying to outwit it. The context has shifted substantially for this optimistic, Obama-era work, yet Hamilton does speak to the present: its interrogation of who tells America's origin

Lin-Manuel Miranda is Alexander Hamilton and Phillippe Seo plays Eliza Hamilton
DISNEY+APP

"story" is timely, likewise seeing actors of colour portraying these mythic figures. "We up" is now firmly a battle cry, while "Immigrants, we get the job done" feels even more pointed, as does the King's "What comes next?" for a splitting — or

Brexit-ing — nation. Could this be a moment of change both for theatre and for society? Hamilton is a reminder that history has its eyes on us.
From tomorrow, **Disney+**

MARIANKA SWAIN
THEARTSDesk.COM

Critics' top picks today

THEATRE

Les Blancs

One thinks of Lorraine Hansberry primarily and crucially as the author of the watershed 1959 drama *A Raisin in the Sun*, which was the first show by a black playwright to be produced on Broadway, and to often receive further subsequent, lesser-known play *Les Blancs* unfinished at the time of Hansberry's tragically premature death from cancer in 1965 aged 29, remains an important work too, and was originally revived by the South African director Vusi Festeri in 2005 at the National. The story of revolution and misrule starred Danny Sapers and Sheila Atim and lives on as this week's National Theatre at Home show.
From 7pm, youtube.com/nationaltheatre

MATT WOLF

DANCE

Celtic Tiger

Remember Michael Flatley, the US-born choreographer who spun Irish dancing into American entertainment gold? First came *Riverdance*, then *Lord of the Dance*, both shows characterised by machine-driven unisons, with lines of dancers jiggling like bobbins on a loom. In 2005 he followed those shows up with *Celtic Tiger*, a music and dance spectacular that set out to showcase the history of Ireland (one critic called it a "mutant hybrid" of *Riverdance*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Ricky Horror*). There are its opening beats and a great deal of posturing, but if that Flatley your boy! This might be worth a look.
From tomorrow, 7pm, to Sunday, youtube.com/theshowseason

JENNY GILBERT

COMEDY

Jason Manford Presents: The Weekly Stand-up

For several years, Jason Manford has supported live comedy through Manford's Comedy Clubs, with 30 venues across the UK. Now he's fronting this live online venture every Thursday for eight weeks for comics who would normally be preparing their shows for the Edinburgh Fringe.

There are some big names, including Rob Brydon and Russell Howard, slated to appear, while this week's line-up includes Harry Hill, Australian one-liner Milton Jones, US comic Ana Friedman and Canadian Debra DiGirolamo.
Tonight, 8pm, theweeklystandup.co.uk

VERONICA LEE

THEATRE

Toast

The stage version of Nigel Slater's 2002 cooking-themed memoir *Toast* had a healthy run at The Other Place in London (and elsewhere around the country) and is now available to stream in a fresh version from the Lawrence Bayley Theatre in Huddersfield.

Henry Filizau-Bennett's play includes animated settings and comes complete with fresh cards so viewers can immerse themselves in the sensory experience. Giles Cooper will recreate his winning stage performance as Slater, who was played by Freddie Highmore in a 2010 screen retelling of his life.
To 31 July, theat.com

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HOLIDAYS