

## *Hamilton: Classical Perspectives on the Musical*

This panel presents original analyses of the award-winning Broadway musical *Hamilton* (Miranda and McCarter. 2016) from the various Classical perspectives of Homeric *kleos*, Greek tragedy, the myth of Icarus and Daedalus, and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Since the premiere of *Hamilton* on Broadway on February 17, 2015, as well as the release of Spike Lee's movie, *Chi-raq*, on December 4, 2015, interest has grown in the Classical antecedents of their language – rap and hip-hop as dramatic verse – and subject matter – contemporary issues of race and violence (Morales. 2015; Wellenbach. 2016). This panel offers a wider and broader analysis of Classical perspectives on *Hamilton*, with a view to engaging the audience in the ways in which Classical texts, subjects, literary devices, and theatrical modes exert both direct and indirect influence on that most American of artistic genres, the Broadway musical.

Panelist #1 analyzes how the Homeric use of *kleos* – glory – to motivate the actions of Homer's warriors is adopted by later Greek and Roman authors and enters literary tradition, where it emerges in *Hamilton*'s characters, particularly Hamilton himself, who are likewise motivated by a search for *kleos* and *aristeia* – excellence – in order to achieve a place in the cultural memory of their society. Panelist #2 maps the prologue of a Greek tragedy onto the opening song of *Hamilton*, "Alexander Hamilton", to explore how both carefully and deliberately define the context of the drama and set the stage for the experience of tragedy, while the Aeschylean use of character development and the force of location, whether Athens or New York City, reveal Miranda's use of Greek tragic technique to achieve a powerful and memorable conclusion. Panelist #3 reveals how the myth of Icarus and Daedalus is inscribed onto the

characters of Alexander Hamilton and his son, Philip, and how the tragic trajectory of the mythical father and son play out in the tragic story of the ever-inventive Hamilton and his lost son. The paper also explores how the contemporary uses of American antiquity that *Hamilton* exploits to inform the present can also provide insights into Roman reuses of Greek antiquity/mythology, likewise, to speak to their own political and cultural moment. Panelist #4 analyzes how *Hamilton* and the *Aeneid* address similar topics of personalities, power, and empire by employing the rhetorical device of prolepsis to retell and reformulate history and myth in order to support, justify, and amplify the present of Vergil's Augustan Rome and *Hamilton*'s American world.

This panel will bring together a variety of illuminating research interests in the Classical world and *Hamilton*, and the respondent, a distinguished scholar of Classics, and Theater and Performance Studies, will present some conclusory remarks before opening the floor to questions and discussion. It is hoped that a lively and rich exchange of views on all aspects of these topics will enable both presenters and audience to come away with new and deeper understandings of *Hamilton* and its Classical antecedents.

If the panel is accepted, the organizer plans to arrange for a free screening of the Disney+ original cast recording of *Hamilton* at CAMWS, so that attendees can view the production before the panel session.

### Bibliography

Miranda, Lin-Manuel and Jeremy McCarter. 2016. *Hamilton: The Revolution*. Grand Central.

Morales, Helen. 2015. "(Sex) Striking Out: Spike Lee's *Chi-raq*." *Eidolon*. December 17, 2015.

<https://eidolon.pub/sex-striking-out-spike-lee-s-chi-raq-f18fe17dd86b#.c9wm9o10c>

Wellenbach, Matthew. 2016. "Hip-Hopera Americana: *Hamilton*, *Chi-raq*, and the Ancient

Greek Roots of Modern Verse Drama. *Eidolon*. January 25, 2016.

<https://eidolon.pub/hip-hopera-americana-8d566195a167>