



Office of the President

October 29, 2015

Subcommittee on Honorary Degrees
Academic Senate
The College

Dear Subcommittee Members,

I write to nominate Lin Manuel Miranda to be the recipient of this year's honorary degree at Queens College. Mr. Miranda is a composer, lyricist, and performer who has not only contributed to but reimagined American musical theater by incorporating popular culture and the stories of individuals and communities not usually presented on Broadway stages. He is also a product of this great city and of the City University of New York system. Miranda is of Puerto Rican descent and a graduate of Hunter College High School. He grew up in the Inwood section of Manhattan and lives with his family in New York City, where he continues to do voluntary work in several CUNY campuses, like Hostos, supporting education and youth causes.

Among his many accomplishments are *In the Heights* (2007), a musical written by Miranda when he was in college and set in Manhattan's Dominican district, Washington Heights. The musical was nominated for thirteen Tony Awards, winning four: Best Musical, Best Original Score, Best Choreography (Andy Blankenbuehler), and Best Orchestrations (Alex Lacamoire and Bill Sherman). It also won a Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album and was nominated for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Miranda's most recent work *Hamilton* (2015) continues to illustrate his continued quest to expand American theater conventions by using hip-hop and the vibrancy of an urban soundscape to tell the story of Alexander Hamilton's rise from an orphaned West Indian immigrant to America's first Treasury Secretary.

A 2015 recipient of the MacArthur Genius Award, Miranda has been recognized nationally for his extraordinary originality, dedication, and promise as well as for having exercised his creative pursuits for the benefit of human society. His exceptional talent and community engagement has also been acknowledged locally by higher educational institutions in New York City, where he has received honorary degrees from Wesleyan, his alma mater, and from Yeshiva University.

Miranda currently serves as a Council Member of The Dramatists Guild and serves on the board of Young Playwrights Inc. His dedication both to his field and to meaningfully contributing to the life of all New Yorkers in particular, is exemplified by his appointment in April 2015 to the Theater Subdistrict Council (TSC) by Mayor de Blasio to help advance the organization's mission to allocate grants to promote the production of new theater work, develop new audiences, and showcase Broadway's role in the history of American theater. Through these grants, the TSC has supported 37 theater education, audience development and accessibility programs as well as new theatrical works.

Miranda's latest effort to open doors to those least likely to be able to afford and therefore attend the theater is his involvement with the Rockefeller Foundation and the producers of his most recent musical. The Foundation has agreed to finance a program to bring 20,000 New York City 11th graders, all from schools with high percentages of students from low-income families, to see *Hamilton* (2015) at a series of matinees beginning next spring and running through 2017. Student tickets will be subsidized and educational materials will be developed to help students contextualize the show. While there are many initiatives to expose children and adolescents to Broadway with their families, arts programs and schools, this program is the largest for a single production and the first to so fully involve the school district.

Mr. Miranda's body of work coupled with his on-going civic commitment to make theatrical performances not only accessible but relevant to the lives of individuals generally at the socio-economic margins of traditional theater-going mainstream, uniquely exemplifies the College's tenets of excellence and service. For these reasons, I believe Lin Manuel Miranda is especially suited to receive this important College recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Felix", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Félix Matos Rodríguez, Ph.D.
President

LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA BIOGRAPHY

Lin-Manuel Miranda is the Tony-winning composer-lyricist of Broadway's *In the Heights*. *In the Heights* received four 2008 Tony Awards (including Best Orchestrations, Best Choreography and Best Musical), with Miranda receiving a Tony Award for Best Score, as well as a nomination for Best Leading Actor in a Musical. Off-Broadway, *In the Heights* received 9 Drama Desk Nominations (including Best Music, Best Lyrics) and an award for Outstanding Ensemble Performance. *In the Heights* also won the Lucille Lortel Award and Outer Critic's Circle Award for Best Musical. Additionally, Miranda received an Obie Award for Outstanding Music and Lyrics for the show. *In the Heights* also took home a 2009 Grammy Award for its Original Broadway Cast Album and was recognized as a Finalist for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

Mr. Miranda is also the co-composer (with Tom Kitt), and co-lyricist (with Amanda Green) of Broadway's *Bring it On: The Musical* (2013 Tony nomination - Best Musical, 2013; Drama Desk nomination, Best Lyrics in a Musical). His latest musical, *Hamilton*, had its world debut production (with book, music and lyrics by Mr. Miranda, in addition to him playing the title role) at a sold-out run at the Public Theater in 2015. The production received a record-breaking 10 Lortel Awards, 3 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 7 Drama Desk Awards, the 2015 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best New Musical and the 2015 OBIE Award for Best New American Play. Songs from *Hamilton* were performed throughout its development, first for President Obama and the First Family at the White House in 2009, then at Lincoln Center Theater's 2012 American Songbook Series, and finally New York Stage and Film's 2013 Powerhouse Theatre Season at Vassar College. *Hamilton* has now transferred to Broadway for an open-ended run at the Richard Rodgers Theatre where previews started July 13, 2015 with an official opening night on August 6, 2015.

As an actor, Miranda received a 2007 Theater World Award for Outstanding Debut Performance, and the 2007 Clarence Derwent Award for Most Promising Male Performance courtesy of Actor's Equity Foundation for *In The Heights*. Miranda also received the ASCAP Foundation's Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award. He is a National Arts Club Medal of Honor recipient. In May of 2009, Miranda received the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from Yeshiva University, the youngest recipient of such an honor in the University's 123-year history. He also received an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Wesleyan University, in 2015. Miranda is currently a Council Member of The Dramatists Guild, serves on the board of Young Playwrights Inc. and has been recently appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio to New York City's Theater Subdistrict Council.

Miranda appeared as Charley Kringas in the 2012 City Center Encores! production of *Merrily We Roll Along* directed by James Lapine, and can be heard on the 2012 Cast Recording released by PS Classics. He also appeared in the 2014 City Center Encores! Off-Center production of *tick, tick... BOOM!* in the role of Jon.

Miranda is a co-founder and member of Freestyle Love Supreme, a popular hip-hop improv group that performs regularly in New York City. The group has toured the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, as well as the Aspen, Melbourne and Montreal Comedy Festivals. The group's eponymous television series premiered on Pivot TV in 2014.

Miranda has contributed new songs to the revival of Stephen Schwartz' *Working* and worked with Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim on Spanish translations for the 2009 Broadway Revival of *West Side Story*.

Miranda has lent his voice to the audiobook recordings of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. He also provided the voice of Zak in Coca Cola's 2013 *Polar Bears* animated short film. His TV and film credits include *The Electric Company*, *Sesame Street*, *The Sopranos*, *House*, *Modern Family*, *Do No Harm*, *Smash*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Sex and the City Movie*, *The Odd Life of Timothy Green* and *200 Cartas*. He received his B.A. from Wesleyan University in 2002. He lives in New York City with his wife, son and dog.