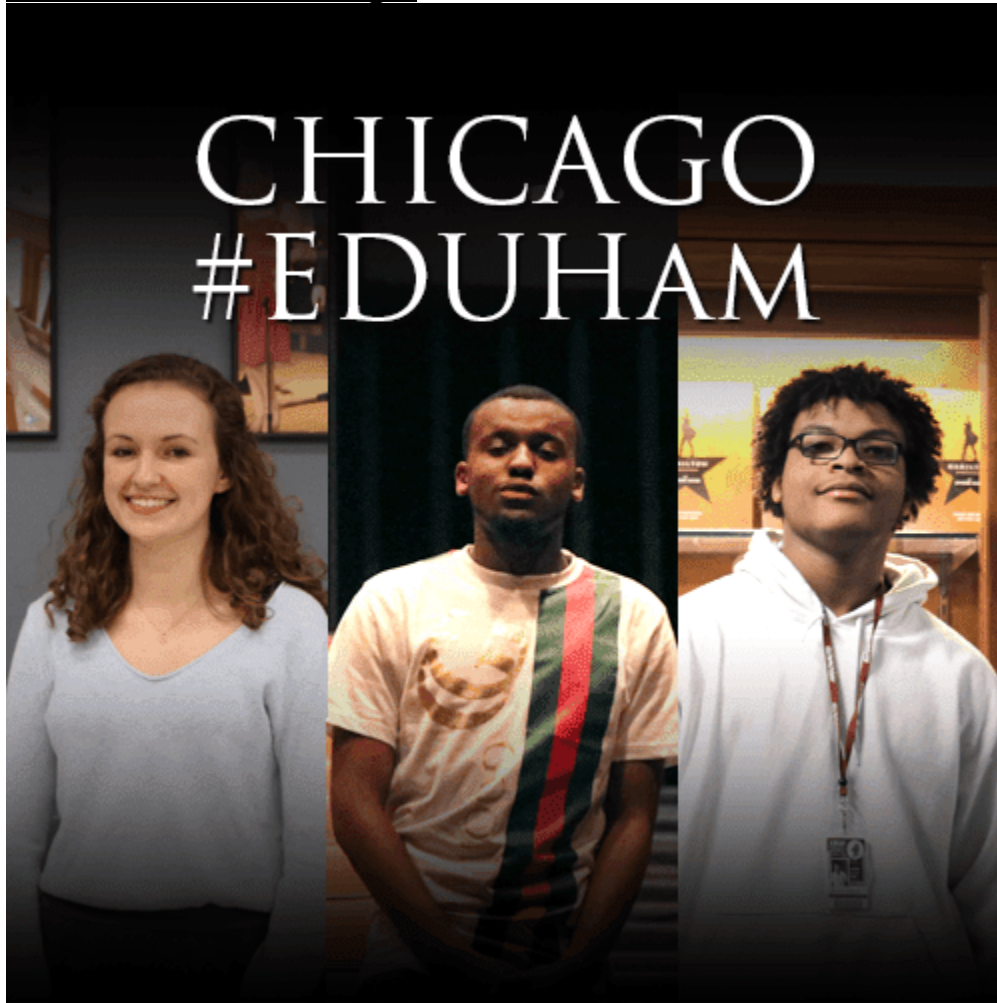


## Hear From 3 Chicago #EduHam Students Who Performed On the CIBC Stage



By Jessica Steans-Gail

#EduHam gives high school students the opportunity to perform original work on ‘Hamilton’ stages across the country. Last week, we took you ‘Behind The Scenes’ of an NYC #EduHam event, and this week we’re introducing you to three Chicago students who performed on the CIBC stage. This fall, DerrianSamuels, Emily O’Brochta, and Michael Fraction each performed a self-written rap or poem based on the history of the American Revolution in front of hundreds of high schoolers from around the city. I met Derrian, Emily, and Michael at their respective schools to find out how they came up with their pieces, and what it was like to perform on the CIBC stage. Here are their answers side-by-side:

Jessica: How did you come up with the idea for your piece?

Derrian Samuels: I did a poem/rap. I have an American Studies class and we [read] a piece about a slave named Equiano and I lost it. It was cool. He was one of the original slaves from Africa, he got his freedom, and just worked his way up and changed British opinion of slavery. I read that excerpt over and over again.

Emily O'Brochta: I wrote it about Phyllis Wheatley who was an African-American slave and poet. I wrote it from her perspective. Poetry is my favorite type of writing. I wanted to do a subject that wasn't necessarily touched on in the 'Hamilton' musical, itself. When you read your history books, she doesn't come up very often. I had never heard of her, but I researched and her poems are beautiful. Her life story is amazing and influential, and I feel like it's just not a story that's often told.

Michael Fraction: I first learned about Private Montgomery when we were talking about the Boston Massacre. Someone hit him in his ear, and he just discharged his musket. He discharged his musket, so I was like "okay, let me get a little more creative, and do the voice of the discharged musket." I wanted to give a voice to the people who died. It was a poem. [I like to write poetry] very much.

Jessica: Do you have a favorite poet?

Derrian Samuels: I think my mom. [She] taught me how to do poetry, and taught me how to rap. That's the only person who could beat me in a rap battle. She's my favorite rapper, and my favorite poet. Beyond her, a man named Saul Williams. He's nice.

Jessica: Did you get to talk to members of the cast?

Emily: Right away, I went backstage and I got to meet the woman who plays Eliza. Me and this one other girl were talking to [her] about college decisions. She talked about how she used to be a bio-med major and then switched to theatre, and I just thought that was really cool.

Jessica: What was it like to perform on the CIBC stage?

Derrian Samuels: I can honestly say I have never felt so at home in my life. When I stepped on that stage, I thought I was going to be so nervous, but I felt so comfortable. I felt like this is what I'm supposed to do, this is where I'm meant to be, [and] this is who I am.

Emily O'Brochta: It was amazing. Just looking out, it's very cool because [the theatre] has so many different levels. Being on the stage, the set is incredible. It's so detailed. It was really cool. It felt very empowering.

Michael Fraction: It was natural. It was like I was made for that stage. At first, I had a little jitterbugs, but when I went on stage, it was over.

In case you missed it, be sure to check out more of our 'Behind The Scenes' coverage of an NYC #EduHam.