



AWARDS

You knew they had talent, but did you know these actors could sing?



With "Tick, Tick ... Boom!," Andrew Garfield joins a number of actors who take a surprising turn at singing in musicals this season. (Macall Polay / Netflix)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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A tidal wave of actors bursting with song has been unleashed this award season — and those doing the warbling are not exactly the usual suspects. Think Javier Bardem

(“Being the Ricardos”), Marion Cotillard, Adam Driver and Simon Helberg (“Annette”), Jessica Chastain (“The Eyes of Tammy Faye”), Andrew Garfield (“Tick, Tick ... Boom!”), Peter Dinklage (“Cyrano”) — just for a start. Here’s how some of those actors-turned-singers dealt with brushing up for a different kind of spotlight.

Andrew Garfield (“Tick, Tick ... Boom!”)

As “Rent” creator Jonathan Larson, Garfield admits he was intimidated: “I’ve never sung before [on camera].” And watching Larson do his thing was not soothing: “He was always turned up to 11; there was no other setting. He wasn’t just performing for the back row [of the theater] — he was trying to perform for the back row of the universe.” Garfield worked with vocal coach Liz Caplan for a year and a half, “until I could get to the place where I’m not going to offend people’s ears,” he adds. “I have this newfound profound respect for musical theater performers now.”

Peter Dinklage, here with his “Cyrano” co-star Haley Bennett, sings as the title character in the musical. (Peter Mountain)

Peter Dinklage (“Cyrano”)

As the lovelorn Cyrano de Bergerac, Dinklage first sang his role in the off-Broadway adaptation, written by his frequent-director and wife Erica Schmidt, who wrote the screenplay for Joe Wright’s feature. But although the musical wasn’t originally written for Dinklage, Schmidt says that once she heard him read it, she realized “I had written it in his voice.” She notes, “Peter is naturally musical. He was in a band after college, so he has an ear. But I think he felt very aware of his range, which he considers not to be the range of a singer. But I think he’s wonderful.”

Marion Cotillard studied singing for her work in “Annette.” (Kris Dewitte / © 2021 Amazon Co / Amazon Content Services)

Simon Helberg, Marion Cotillard (“Annette”)

Helberg so badly wanted to be in “Annette” that he became a French citizen to work on the project (he now has dual citizenship). The late Miah Im, then-assistant conductor of the Los Angeles Opera, taught the actor to wave the baton (as did Australian composer Tim Davies) and sing — although there was so much “mystery” in the film, Helberg didn’t know what would even be asked of him until Day 1 of shooting. “You have to train at a high altitude, so when Adam Driver is throwing you against things at 1 a.m. in a house in the woods in Belgium, you don’t have to worry about your soft palate or anything,” he says. Meanwhile, Cotillard had just 2½ months to train to sing opera (her voice was mixed with a professional’s) and sing as her offstage character, Ann, as well. “The way Ann sings onstage is very deep, powerful, huge,” Cotillard writes in an email. “But the way she expresses herself in life is different.”

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