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To: Jeffrey Epstein
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Looks like there are many not to shrew= billionaires....

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'Hamilton' Ponzi Schemers'=Victims Said to Include Tudor Jones
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By Matt Robinson, Kathe=ine Burton, Zeke Faux and Christian Berthelsen

(Bloomberg) -- When U.S. authorities busted a P=nzi scheme that centered on marked-up tickets to the hit Br=adway musical "Hamilton" last month, prosec=tors described phone calls about a "big name"=investor who'd demanded his money back.

&nbs=; As it turns out, there were several big names -- including billionaires Paul Tudor Jones and Michael Dell, as well as an</=pan> executive at Och-Ziff Capital Management Group -- among the m=re than 125 people who had unwittingly poured cash into the=span> sprawling scam, according to people with knowledge of the</=pan> matter.

The ringlead=rs would approach people and encourage them to put money in=a pool to buy blocks of tickets for the hottest concerts an= plays, the government said. The most prominent was "amilton," whose popularity pushed prices to the highest inBroadway history. Victims were promised their money back and at

least a 10 percent profit.

&n=sp;It's rare that any Ponzi scheme ensnares business luminaries so highly skilled in the art of scrutinizing in=estment pitches. But to veteran securities lawyers, the case has some of the hallmarks of an affinity fraud like Bernard Madoff's -- in which a con man's familiarity can help inst=ll trust, even with a pitch that sounds too good to be true=

&nbs=; Hamilton Tickets a 'Give=way'

◆=9CWhen the promise of a quick buck is being made by someone a former Securities and Exchange Commission enforcement=attorney now in private practice. Still, "the idea t=at there were blocks of Hamilton tickets available for purc=ase should have been a giveaway."

&=bsp; Three men have been charged. One is Joseph Meli, a Ne= York event promoter and Hamptons socialite who once ran a \$=,000-a-ticket concert series in the enclave, featuring&nbs=Billy Joel,

Prince and James Taylor. Photos show him party=ng with executives and celebrities including Renee Zellwege=. His co-defendant, Steven Simmons, was allegedly the midd=eman tasked with raising money from investors for hedge fun=s. Both appeared in court on Jan. 27 and remain free on bai=.

A third, Mark Varacchi, pleaded g=ilty to fraud on Wednesday and was released on \$250,000 bai=. Varacchi was an investment fund manager whose firm was ba=ed in Connecticut. He turned to Meli to help repay \$4.2 mil=ion he'd taken from investors, according to prosecu=ors. It isn't clear how he met Meli or the others. M=li and Simmons haven't entered pleas yet. Meli♦=99s lawyer called the allegations untrue while Simmons' <=pan>lawyer declined to comment.

&nb=p; Hedge Fund Informant

The criminal complaint described=an informant who contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigat=on through his attorney late last year, saying he'd=conspired with Meli and others to raise money under false p=etenses to pay off an earlier investor. He offered to help i= the investigation and became an informant, according to th= complaint. The informant was Varacchi, according to people=with knowledge of the case.

The sc=m went on at least two years, according to a parallel c=ivil case the SEC filed against Meli and Matthew Harriton, M=li's business partner. Harriton couldn't be reached<=r>for comment, and the men's companies didn't respond=to requests

for comment. Harriton wasn't named in t=e criminal case.

Meli, 42, used hi= music connections to ingratiate himself with Wall Street t=aders, according to one of the people with knowledge of the=case. He hung out at the exclusive Bridgehampton Tennis and=Surf Club and he'd get tickets to "Hamilton=E2♦?♦ and other shows for his friends, the person said. = Meli lied to at least one victim, claiming he had a=cess to another 35,000 tickets for "Hamilton"=and could sell them at a markup, according to authorities. H= really did contact the show's producer to resell b=lk tickets but was rebuffed, they said. In August 2015= when the show moved to Broadway, they said Meli talked to t=e "big name" investor, offering to introduce him to the show's producer. He repeatedly put it off and while the meeting never happened, the investor sent \$3.5 million to</=pan> Meli's company after several weeks to help buy ticket=.

&nb=p; Och-Ziff as Bait

&n=sp; Meli also lured potential victims by claiming other hi=h-profile investors including Och-Ziff had bough= in, according to people who said he approached them. One s=id he was shown a contract with the hedge fund's na=e on it. Executives there considered investing on behalf of=clients but passed, according to a person with knowledge of=the firm.

However one Och-Ziff exe=utive, Boaz Sidikaro, was friends

with Meli and invested personally, according to people familiar with the case. Sidika=o didn't respond to a request for comment. According to his LinkedIn profile, he's an executive managing director at the firm, where he's worked for almost 20 years.

To be sure, not every investor was necessarily pitched a chance to profit on "Hamilton." The SEC says Meli and Harriton gathered money for four investment vehicles. The first promised to resell tickets for=a variety of "high-profile events," the age=cy said without identifying them. But the musical featured =n at least some pitches for the three other vehicles, it said.

Dell has a net worth estimated at \$19.6 billion= according to the Bloomberg Billionaires index, and the company he founded, Dell Technologies, is the world's l=rgest closely held tech company. Jones runs the \$11 billion=Tudor Investment Corp., one of the oldest hedge funds. He h=lped start the Robin Hood Foundation, a charity whose goal i= to end poverty in New York City.

&=bsp; = Shell Game

There's no indication the investors were aware of a scam and their spokesmen declined to comment. Jim Margolin, aspokesman for Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara, declined to comment on the case.

While Ponzi schemes can last years or even decades, they can't go on forever. According to prosecutors, Varacchi recorded calls in December in which Meli said he was running a "shell<=span> game," taking money from new investors to pay off old ones. Meli said he'd just gotten another \$7 million from one, enough to pacify the big investor so he wouldn't raise alarms.

"I wa= able to avoid it by shell-gaming it," Meli said, according to prosecutors. "But I'm running out of that game</=pan> too."

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