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Prior to its Memorial Day weekend release, Top Gun: Maverick was riding high on positive buzzthe same buzz that fuels the surely, it cant be that good skepticism of past blockbuster masterpieces like Mad Max: Fury Road. Most film studios allow critics to publish reviews a handful of days before a films release to generate hype. When Paramount
lifted their review embargo weeks before the Mavericks opening, that show of confidence only built up the movies expectations. Paramount was smart to flex: Top Gun: Maverick is fantastic, truly delivering the blockbuster highs that drive audiences en masse to the theater. Who saw this coming? As someone with near indifference to the 1986
original, the nostalgia of seeing Tom Cruise return to this role would not be the nostalgia trip needed to carry a mediocre greatest hits. That first Top Gun plays more like a sports movie, manufactured conflicts crafted to showcase the hottest upcoming stars motoring around at perpetual dusk. Somehow Maverick uses a fun but shallow movie as a
springboard into a sequel that is equal parts breathtaking action and genuine emotional drama. Maverick doesnt coast on goodwill towards 86 Top Gun, and isnt a a lazy exercise in callbacks to that we all remember. Top Gun: Maverick is, without asterisks, an amazing time at the movies. Maverick is directed by Joseph Kosinski (Tron: Legacy, Only
the Brave), from a screenplay by Ehren Kruger, Eric Warren Singer, and longtime Cruise collaborator Christopher McQuarrie. Obviously this entire venture is shepherded by Cruise himself, and the level of craft employed in the storytelling is impressive. Its hard to pace out a story with well-communicated stakes and consistently-rising tension, and its
even harder to make it look so effortless! Others have compared the central mission in the movie to the trench run in Star Wars, a comparison that highlights how clean and understandable the plot mechanics of Maverick are to the audience. In retrospect, every story set-up and pay-off should have seemed obvious, but the execution is so clean that it
never becomes distracting or predictable, just an impressive economy of storytelling. The set pieces are breathtaking, plentiful, and expertly packaged. Much like Cruises and McQuarries recent Mission: Impossible installments, they are playing on the audience awareness that so much of what were seeing on-screen are practical stunts and effects,
captured within the actual frame. It is forever the superior way of action filmmaking. Thats also Cruises thing; hes increasingly seen as a steward of practical filmmaking that is sadly rarer and rarer for blockbusters in general, but a great news for Cruise as a brand. When he pioneers a project, were at least guaranteed stunts that will leave us on the
edge of our seat. Maverick is no exception, ramping up tension and fireworks that culminates in a bonkers rollercoaster of a third act. Something that gives this film a huge edge over the 1986 original is that the external military conflict is woven completely into the DNA of the main plot. The first Top Gun is mostly melodrama with spurts of
tangential, unrelated sky action. For Maverick, the top secret mission is the thrust of the film, with all the energy and interpersonal drama feeding directly into and building tension nears, the friction between the characters equally escalates. While I
was ready for outstanding set pieces, I was caught off-guard by how well these dramatics worked. Were still dealing with broadly-drawn caricatures, but theyre played by performers with such charisma and talent. Everyone is so effortlessly compelling to watch, especially Miles Teller and Glen Powell. Its still Cruises show (he even joins in with
shirtless beach games with co-stars 30 years his junior), but for someone synonymous with anti-aging, the film capitalizes on his age and the time passed between movies. These elements are central to his storyline and imbue actual weight and gravitas into the emotional scenes. Cruise and his co-stars play everything with such straight-faced
earnestness, resulting in surprising amounts of dramatics and gut-punch, Dad Movie catharsis. Top Gun: Maverick is Exhibit A in the case for the theater-going experience. Its the kind of joyous entertainment that makes you side-eye its blockbuster compatriots and ask, We know the bar can go this high, so whats your excuse? See it on the biggest
screen possible, and then immediately buy tickets for the next showing. Top Gun: Maverick is currently playing in theaters. It runs 130 minutes and is rated PG-13 for sequences of intense action, and some strong language. Ive always been a fan of classic movie musicals like Singing in the Rain and The Sound of Music. Seeing the actors sing and
dance on top of their usual emoting reveals incredible extra layers of talent that leave me in awe. These days, there are only a couple of big musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals each year, if that, so when I heard that the smash-hit was also window to the small extra that the smash-hit was also window to the small extra that the smash-hit was also window to the small extra that the smash-hit was also window to the small extra that the small extra that
the chance to catch it on stage. Not only was I floored by its sense of spectacle, but I was thrilled to find that it offered some really profound messages to consider as well. For one, the lead characters are driven by a sense of spiritual purpose that sets In The Heights apart from other blockbusters, outside of a few faith-based films that often take a
heavy-handed approach to cinematic evangelization. It tells the story of a diverse, tight-knit immigrant community in Washington Heights whose dramatic life decisions are inspired by a simple motto learned from a wise old woman in their neighborhood: paciencia y fe, meaning patience and faith. Based on the 2008 smash hit Broadway musical
written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, who also created the all-time blockbuster Hamilton, In the Heights follows the lives of four young immigrants, Usnavi, Vanessa, Sonny and Nina. Each of these dynamic and ambitious characters believes theyre called to leave their working-class neighborhood of Washington Heights for brighter futures in better
places.RELATED: Spiritual Streaming: 5 Catholic-Themed Films for Your Next Movie NightTheir ambitions transcend their ethnic backgrounds, and are shared by people of all backgrounds who feel their dreams require them to relocate and leave the life of their childhoods behind. But Heights powerfully shows the impact of realizing the beautyperformed their ethnic backgrounds, and are shared by people of all backgrounds who feel their dreams require them to relocate and leave the life of their childhoods behind. But Heights powerfully shows the impact of realizing the beautyperformed their ethnic backgrounds.
found in your present, everyday circumstances and the inherent value of the people and experiences that shape you. For me, it sparked thoughts of how I never thought in my life that I would work at Wal-Mart, for a myriad of reasons. But when I lost a job I loved at a newspaper after 17 years and couldn't find other media work, I applied and found
that I love it more than I ever enjoyed being an editor. Being a cashier and joking with customers eight hours a day sparked my creative side and has helped me become a better comedian (another career path of mine). It also led to my doing funny store-closing announcements over the PA system every night, which I film and put on TikTok
(@thatfunnywalmartguy). I wound up getting over 60,000 views in my first month alone. Now, Ive been invited to submit my proposals for a humorous new national ad campaign and the company is also likely to sponsor a new radio show Im launching in July. So, the last job I ever thought Id have is now possibly the best job Ive ever had the kind of
attitude the movie spotlights. My journey took the same kind of patience and faith the movie sings about. The values are a recurring theme throughout the story, as sung by the wise abuela (grandmother in Spanish) who is loved by everyone, including those unrelated to her. She repeatedly cites those virtues as the keys to happiness in life. Those key
words paciencia y fe appear throughout the story: from dialogue exchanges to a powerful song she sings, to a painted mural that brings the film to a touching conclusion. I loved the message of those words because I realized that patience and faith were qualities Ive been experiencing a lot in my major career transition.RELATED: Praying for
Patience: What I Learned From Gods Time Vs. My OwnI have never set foot in Washington Heights, yet I found In the Heights to be such a bracing experience that I saw it twice in its first week and loved it even more the second time. The films vibrant, emotional portrayals of the immigrant experience deeply affected me because I myself am the son of
a Polish immigrant who pursued his own American Dream to become a Veterans Affairs doctor. In showing the challenges these characters face on a daily basis, the movie moved me to have a more open heart towards immigration issues than I normally harbored as a political conservative. I could see myself in the four lead characters. Growing up in
Little Rock, Arkansas, I was driven by a love of comedy and couldnt wait for my eventual moves to Chicago and Los Angeles to pursue a career as a standup comedian and writer. But when I was laid off from my job at the weekly newspaper in 2019, I moved back home and was surprised to find that I now appreciated myriad things about life in a
smaller city and surrounded by family.LISTEN: Mark Wahlberg on Faith and FilmI also was inspired by the fact that these young people are all immigrants or the children of immigrants or the children of immigrants, just like I am. Watching one father in the movie give up everything so that his daughter could achieve a dream education at a top university made me appreciate how
my parents managed to put me and my three siblings through college even after my dad started in America with nothing. Its refreshing in a time when so much of media can be cynical, to find a movie that finds beauty and value in family and faith. In coming home myself, I thought I had to leave all my dreams of performing behind yet instead, Ive
managed to find some amazing new opportunities here in this small city that I grew up thinking had none to offer. God had a plan for me right where I was if I paid close enough attention. In the Heights has the magic ability to make any viewer appreciate the life and family they have, while calling them to find their own higher purpose. Thats a pretty
impressive feat any time of year, and hopefully one that will leave all theatergoers as inspired as the film left me. Each year in the spring, I go back to my Midwestern roots and shake off the dust of winter with a good spring cleaning. More read more The smell of fresh basil and tomato vines still brings me back to my grandmothers garden, where I
learned my first lessons about faith. It read more June 10, 2021Image via Warner Bros. The film adaptation of Lin-Manuel Mirandas Tony Award-winning musicalIn the Heightshit theaters on June 10, and it is the kind of production you just have to see on a big screen. The larger-than-life dance numbers, the bright colors, and upbeat music should be
enough motivation to run to a movie theater near you, but in case its too soon for all that, its also available to stream on HBO Max. When I watched the movie a few months back, it was clear to me that the message of chasing dreams, love, hope, and community is exactly what peoples spirits need after a year filled with trauma, grief, and anxiety. The
film was scheduled to arrive in 2020, but it wouldn't have fit with the overall mood that the country and world were in at the time. Now In the Heights arrives at a moment when things are coming alive again, people are reuniting with their loved ones and trying to get back on their feet after a year that rocked so many peoples foundations. The In the
Heights musical premiered on Broadway in 2008, and for many Latinos, including the films star Anthony Ramos, it was the first time watching a show with a story that mirrored their own upbringing. The story follows the lives of people living in the New York City neighborhood of Washington Heights who are at a crossroads regarding their future.
They are deciding between staying in New York or moving back to the Dominican Republic, going back to college or dropping out, or choosing whether or not to leave uptown for a new life downtown. The film centers around characters who are first-generation Americans or immigrants who planted roots in NYC in hopes of building a better life. This
movie is a love letter to a neighborhood that breeds people who grow up proud of who they are and where they come from. No matter how deep their struggles are, there is happiness to be found on every corner. Even when people are dealing with gentrification, poverty, unemployment, and whatever personal hurdles theyre facing, their music is
loud, the energy is high and a warm, comforting meal is always ready. Those aspects of the movie and the Heights wont feel familiar to everyone, though, unless they experienced it themselves. The cultural references could be too specific perhaps for a wider audience to fully comprehend or be moved by, but in the end, the movie was ultimately
made for those who wont need an explanation. The five to 10-minute long musical numbers might get exhausting a times, but stick with ittheres magic to be found there. In the Heights is likely to have a deep cultural impact, and the cast members were well aware of the responsibility of telling this story accurately and representing a neighborhood
whose people and culture are so unique. The team was passionate about making a film that the fans of the musical would enjoy but also one that shows Hollywood what Latinos are capable of creating right inside their own neighborhoods when theyre given a chance. We spent our summer on 175th street and Audubon. [Jon M. Chu] was committed to
the authenticity of being in the neighborhood and really grounding us in the neighborhood you know, that I know, that we grew up and we love. But when it comes to the production also dreaming so big. This is a big movie musical. I think were so used to asking for less, ask to occupy space as Latinos, and Jon every step of the way was like, No, this is
a big movie, were allowed to go that big, Miranda told Angie Martinez during a virtual trailer eventin March. I love it here, the whole thing is a love letter to this neighborhood that I think is incredible. Crazy Rich Asians director Jon M. Chu helmed the movie and he brought the same colorful, eye-pleasing aesthetic to this film, while also showcasing
the beauty of the areas of New York City we dont often see. In the Heights is one of the biggest productions Ive ever seen in regards to Latinx representation, and I do hope it continues to receive the amount of celebration and attention it has been getting so far. Theres no telling whether or not it will be decorated with trophies at next years award
season, but if all it does is inspire the next Anthony Ramos to pursue acting, then it was a job well done. Growing up in New York as a Latino is a unique experience. A Latino New York as a Latino is a unique experience. A Latino New York as a Latino is a unique experience a multitude of cultures, styles, accents, and stories inside of them everywhere they go. Their group of friends can contain people from all over the Caribbean
and Central America down to the most southern tip of South America. They adopt different traditions, food, music, slang, and more, from each other as they go. The term melting pot is overused but its not wrong. Watching the cast sing Carnaval del Barrio as they waved their respective flags in the air felt surreal. Not every Latin American flag was
shown, unfortunately, but seeing so many countries from Jamaica to Colombia to Venezuela represented in one of the biggest movies of the year was enough. The film focuses mostly on the Dominican-American and Caribbean experience but its overall a celebration and a tribute to the countless Latin communities that have taken shape in New York
and how they come together to support and love one another, regardless of where they come from. Spending much of 2020 in solitude helped a lot of people understand the value of having a community. That alienation is the constant reality for many people who move to a foreign land leaving all that is familiar to them behind in the rearview. Its not
easy to fend for yourself, knowing your loved ones are far from youway further than a mere six feet. For some lucky people, moving here from other countries to communities like Washington Heights or Jackson Heights in Queens makes the transition so much easier. Those neighborhoods feel a lot like home, the food they love can be found down the
block, and neighbors who look and talk just like them can be seen at every turn. Others arent as fortunate. Growing up in these diverse neighborhoods no doubt comes with its own troubles, but assimilating to a new life in the suburbs where no one speaks your language or understands you can be daunting. If only I knew communities like these
existed in New York when I was growing up on Long Island. I wonder what it would have done for me to have a film, and a community, like this one when I was a child. The In the Heights cast is the whos who of up and coming Latinx stars. For the past 20 or so years, it seemed like Jennifer Lopez, Salma Hayek, Eva Mendes, and Michael Pea were the
only Latin actors who got callbacks for roles. This film is introducing a new batch of actors who are deserving of that same spotlight. Ramos kills it as Usnavi de la Vega. He took over Lin-Manuel Mirandas role from the play, and although Miranda wrote it for himself, Ramos breathes new life into it. Melissa Barrera, who plays aspiring fashion
designer Vanessa, is also on her way to becoming a household name. The Mexican actress has already starred in her own show Vidaand shes now set to have the lead role in Netflixs upcoming drama series Breathe. Singer Leslie Grace made her acting debut as Nina, Dascha Polanco and Stephanie Beatriz add so much humor and vibrancy, while
Vampires vs. the Bronx star Gregory Diazs role as Sonny puts him high on the list of ones to watch. Seasoned actors like Olga Merediz and Jimmy Smits add so much value to the film in their roles as Abuela Claudia and Kevin Rosario. Meredizs award-worthy performance of Paciencia y Fe is one of the most beautiful scenes Ive seen in years. It was
also a painful reminder that we also dont get to see many older Latinos in movies or TV shows outside of the stereotypical roles like Lydia in One Day at a Time played by the great Rita Moreno.) I hope this film opens more avenues for them as well. [Ed Note: Massive spoiler ahead.]
Marc Anthony makes a quick appearance in the film as Sonnys father. The salsa singer was spotted on the movie set in 2018so his involvement in the film was no secret, but no one knew what his role would be. The Grammy winner is considered royalty in the Latin music world and it was only right to include him in the film since he grew up in NYCs
Spanish Harlem. The scene with him and Ramos is among the best and most surprisingly moving moments in the film to represent the undocumented people within the community, a real issue that is affecting a large number of young people across the country. Nina Rosario (Leslie Grace) is
the barrios best student, the genius, the one who made it off the block, heading to the West Coast to attend Stanford University. After her first year away, she is suddenly lost and not sure of what her future holds. She is a daughter of immigrants and the first in her family to go to college but after she returns, with a desire to drop out, she feels like a
disappointment to her community by letting down the people who believed in and cheered for her along the way. Any child of immigrants can relate to the insurmountable pressure Nina is under. The people in her neighborhood see her as the golden child and the one whose success is a source of pride for anyone who knows her. After her first year at
Stanford, she realizes theres nothing like being home with a support system like the one she has. She deals with microaggressions and racism while in school, while her dad struggles to keep up with the tuition payments, making sacrifices so his daughter can succeed. Everyone is counting on Nina to make it, she represents her people wherever she
goes and that type of pressure can cause a lot of people to stay in places and situations where theyre not happy. Ninas every accomplishment, triumphs, and failures werent only her own but her peoples too. Its a storyline that not everyone can relate to, but for those who have been in her place, this particular character hits home. This might have been
Graces first acting gig but her portrayal of Nina was spot on. The inner turmoil shes going through is visible in her facial expressions and she does a solid job at representing what many young women deal with when having to live up to impossible standards and not having space or freedom to fail. Ninas troubles are universal and its what a lot of
minorities deal with when they are in spaces that werent initially built for people of color. In the end, her father reassured her that she had no reason to doubt herself and that she was deserving of being at Stanford, just like anyother person there. Thats a message that will resonate with anyone dealing with any level of imposter syndrome, whether at
school or in their careers. I went to see In the Heights on Broadway my freshman year of college in 2009, and its hard to believe that the big screen adaption took more than a decade to make. The story had a huge impact on me, and it was one of the reasons I chose a career that was in a field I knew my immigrant family wouldnt really understand or
and they take precedent over original stories the world actually needs to see. This movie is proof that there in our own communities. We need diversity not only with casting but also in what type of stories get to be told. In the Heights might be too over the top for some, but its just right for those
who have been waiting years to watch a movie that makes their realities seem less foreign. Many have expressed their urgency for Hollywood to produce more Latinx content and stories, but theres no need to paniethese are already well on their way. Jennifer Lopezs Nuyorican Productions recently signed first-look deal with Netflixthat includes
feature films, TV series, and unscripted content. Eva Longoria signed another three-year, first-look deal with 20th Television Studios signed an overall dealwith One Day at a Time co-creator Gloria Calderon Kellett in 2019. So the future looks bright. It all wont happen
overnight but there are people working behind the scenes to push the culture and its people forward. In the Heights is out in theaters now and available to stream on HBO Max. In the Heights, the new movie musical directed by Crazy Rich Asians Jon M. Chu and based on a Tony-winning Broadway musical by Hamiltons Lin-Manuel Miranda, is widely
expected to be one of the summers biggest movies. As the horrors of a plague year begin to ebb away, what could be more suited to the moment than a gorgeous, joyous spectacle of a musical, one with talented and beautiful young people singing and dancing their hearts out on a giant movie screen? In the Heights isnt only timely: Its also based on a
beloved existing property, and its early reviews have been mostly raves. Industry observers are nearly unanimous in saying it will be a smash. Thats a lot of hype for a show that started so small. The story of In the Heights begins in 1999, when an unknown Lin-Manuel Miranda was a sophomore at Wesleyan University, decades before he received a
MacArthur genius grant and won a Pulitzer. He was just a kid, high on awe for Rent (which had opened three years earlier) and a longing to impress Wesleyans big man on campus. Under their combined influences, Miranda developed material for a musical set in his old neighborhood, the Latino community in Upper Manhattan known as Washington
Heights. This new musical would tell the story of a raw, fraught love triangle: Washington Heights boy Benny is in love with Yale student Nina, his best friend Lincolns little sister but Lincoln, a closeted aspiring songwriter, is in love with Yale student Nina, his best friend Lincolns little sister but Lincoln, a closeted aspiring songwriter, is in love with Yale student Nina, his best friend Lincolns little sister but Lincoln, a closeted aspiring songwriter, is in love with Yale student Nina, his best friend Lincolns little sister but Lincoln, a closeted aspiring songwriter, is in love with Yale student Nina, his best friend Lincolns little sister but Lincoln, a closeted aspiring songwriter, is in love with Yale student Nina, his best friend Lincolns little sister but Lincolns literation little sister but Lincolns little sister but Lincolns li
moment. Which, in Mirandas case, meant not the rock of Jonathon Larsons Rent score but the Latin salsa and hip-hop on which he grew up. The student audience at Wesleyan went wild for that early campus production. (Among its fans was the BMOC the young Miranda wanted to impress, who told Miranda that he made an audience feel so cared for.
Miranda wasnt yet satisfied; he loved the show but thought it needed more work a lot more work. He would continue to refine it for nearly a decade after he left school before bringing it to Broadway. When In the Heights made it to Broadway. When In the Heights made it to Broadway in 2008, its debut marked the start of a stratospheric trajectory. The show would, eventually, become a smash
but only after an endless, tortured series of workshops and revisions saw it heavily transformed from its origins at Wesleyan. It would be another 13 years before In the Heights imminent release in 2021, just
as America begins to emerge from its long and painful quarantine. Suddenly all those setbacks have begun to look like serendipity. Only three words from the score of Mirandas 1999 In the Heights remain in Chus electrifying 2021 film adaptation: the en Washington Heights! the cast sings in unison to close out the shows opening number. The story,
too, has been revamped: Though Benny and Nina still exist, albeit in heavily revised forms, Lincoln is gone. An arc involving a winning lottery ticket and a blackout provides the skeleton of the new plot, and theres a heartbreaker of a death scene. The movie narrative is built around a character who barely featured in Mirandas earliest college drafts:
Usnavi the bodega owner, the role Miranda originated on Broadway, played in the film by Anthony Ramos in a star-making turn. Miranda himself is no longer the face of In the Heights (he has a sweet cameo in the film by Anthony Ramos in a star-making turn.
country, poised to become the film of the summer. Heres the 22-year story of how In the Heights got from there to here and how it changed Broadway run in 2002, shortly after graduating from Wesleyan. As he shaped the show in the basement of Manhattans
Drama Book Shop, he began to assemble a team of trusted collaborators, people he would work with again across his career. By the time he began creating Hamilton in 2009, he would have given the group an official name: the Cabinet. The
in 2005. One year later, as In the Heights mounted its off-Broadway production, choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler came on to create the shows distinctive swirl of movement. As the creative team formed, the version of In the Heights that would have Broadway sitting up and talking began to take shape. Miranda had stayed offstage when he put
together his campus production of In the Heights at Wesleyan, but in 2002, Kail suggested he might as well play supporting character Usnavi. Usnavi had to be able to rap, which Miranda could, and which wasnt necessarily a common skill among aspiring Broadway stars at the time. Moreover, Miranda had a nervy, rangy stage presence that worked
well with the shows underdog energy. Miranda agreed to take the part, although he didnt particularly identify with Usnavi was at the center of the storys community. He saw everyone else clearly and narrated their lives, and Miranda didnt feel like hed ever been at the center of any community. Nina, who feels out of place at her elite college
and in her own neighborhood, was the character he felt closest to. But early audiences responded strongly to Mirandas Usnavi. In In the Heights: Finding Home, producer Kevin McCollum describes seeing a workshop in 2003 and thinking, Every time this character Usnavi spoke, I was really hooked in. At intermission, he conferred with another
producer, who agreed: I really dig that guy. Every time he comes onstage, I want to know more. In 2004, Miranda added another major collaborator to the process: Playwright Quiara Alegra Hudes came on as a book writer who could help shape that
In the Heights had to be about the community of Washington Heights itself rather than any one particular character. And in her hands, the shows focus on class became sharper and clearer. The show continued to evolve from workshop to workshop. Usnavi grew from a supporting role to a main character, and his longing for inaccessible dream girl
Vanessa became more prominent as a result. Nina moved from Yale to Stanford as the distance between her home life and her school life widened. Lincoln stopped being a lothario and developed into an aspiring
businessman. But the show was still too cluttered, producers said. There were too many main characters, too many competing plot lines. In 2005, they gave the creative team an ultimatum: One of the lead characters had to go, and it should probably be Lincoln. It was the right call, Miranda says now. The moment we cut Lincoln, Nina inherited his
fraught relationship with Kevin [her father], and it instantly made Nina so much richer and more complex, he writes in Finding Home. Lincoln died so that Nina could thrive. Thanks, Lincoln. The newly streamlined In the Heights; Hudes decided, would focus on three businesses on a single block in Washington Heights: Usnavis bodega; the car service
where Benny works, run by Ninas dad; and the beauty salon where Vanessa, Usnavis love interest, works. All three would be threatened by the menace of gentrification, and the communitys response would form the action of the show. Within this structure, the two central love stories could flit in and out of focus. The result would be a show animated
by the political problem of whether gentrification would destroy this vibrant community and by an optimistic set of human-scaled romances. It had heart, but it also had genuine class concerns. And it would break new ground on
Broadway. In the Heights had its off-Broadway premiere in 2007. It was a modest success, but not an overwhelming one. Regardless, in 2008 it transferred to Broadway was in 2008. At the time, the biggest roles for Latino actors in the
Broadway songbook were in West Side Story, written by an all-white creative team. And although West Side Story gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that: gestures toward Latino musical traditions, its efforts are just that the properties of the properties toward toward Latino musical traditions.
emphasis on flamboyant wordplay, should be a natural fit for the lyrics-heavy sound of musical theater. But barely anyone had successfully put hip-hop on Broadway before Miranda came along. Legendary composer Stephen Sondheim loosely nodded toward the idea with a singsongy little ditty about beans called The Witchs Rap in 1986s Into the
Woods. Otherwise, the emo rock of Spring Awakening, which came to Broadway in 2006, was as edgy as the Great White Way ever got. In the Heights changed all that. It proved it was possible to put hip-hop and genuine Latin music on Broadway, that American musical theater had room for sounds that werent thoroughly whitewashed, and that those
sounds could be performed by actors of color. In one night, writes theater critic Chris Jones in Rise Up, his 2019 history of Broadway, you could see how limited and exclusionary Broadway had been, what stories it had told, and who had been chosen to tell them. In the Heights would start to change that reality, but it would do so while genuinely
welcoming everybody to Washington Heights. Even those who had their doubts about making changes to the traditional Broadway sound found themselves charmed. Although I was sometimes struggling to keep up with the hip-hop and Spanish-infused lyrics, the exciting set and choreography paired with excellent acting held my interest in the
storyline, a critic for the Cleveland Plain Dealer wrote in 2010 as the shows tour passed through Ohio. Although not the traditional choreography and music of time-tested musicals that tells a realistic story of life, love and the pursuit of dreams. In the
Heights was nominated for 13 Tonys. It won four of them, including Best Musical. It was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It won a Grammy. It recouped its costs and then some. By the time its Broadway run ended in 2011, it had grossed more than $105 million in ticket sales. The shows heartfelt optimism was part of what made it so effective.
In the Heights seemed to herald the dawn of a triumphant new era of a vital, urgent, and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and multicultural Broadway. It matched the mood of the country as commentators gladly announced a period of urgent and urgent and
the first musical of the Barack Obama era, wrote Time magazine in 2008, shortly before the shows Broadway opening. It represents change on Broadway to reach out to new audiences with contemporary, heartfelt shows like thesecrying Yes, we can. In the
Heights transition from stage to screen would be even more tortured than its transition from Wesleyan to Broadway, marked by a series of coincidences, accidents of lucky timing, and near disasters. As In the Heights was declared the toast of Broadway, Hollywood started putting out feelers. In November 2008, just months after the show premiered,
Universal Studios announced it had acquired the screen rights to In the Heights. Miranda was set to reprise his role as Usnavi, and Hudes would direct. The film adaptation stalled. Studios wanted star power to go with it, but
where were the Latino stars of the right age for a project like this one? The film rights reverted to Miranda and Hudes in 2012. In the Heights, which by then had been off Broadway for a year, was starting to look like old news. Then in 2015, Mirandas new musical Hamilton became a phenomenon not only on Broadway but also around the world, and a round the world and a round the world.
film adaptation of In the Heights once again became a hot property. Hamilton wasnt going to get a film adaptation anytime soon, not while the Broadway production was still selling so well. But an In the Heights movie wouldnt cannibalize Hamilton ticket sales, and Miranda was now an extremely bankable name. In 2016, the Weinstein Company
acquired the In the Heights film rights, and Jon M. Chu, who had directed some of the films in the Step Up franchise, signed on to direct. In the Heights movie. The first happened in October 2017, when Harvey Weinstein, head of the
Weinstein Company, was revealed to be a serial sexual predator and forced to retire in disgrace. The second occurred in the summer of 2018, when Chus romantic comedy Crazy Rich Asians was released and became a huge hit. In 2016, the still-developing In the Heights was a project with a relatively unknown director but a production company that
could offer credibility. By 2018, it was a project with a newly minted hitmaker of a director and a production company that was worse than a liability. Hudes publicly demanded that the film rights be returned to her and Miranda. The Weinstein Company declared bankruptcy in March 2018, and all the films to which it held the rights were frozen into
place until the bankruptcys outcome was decided in court. The ensuing delay could have lasted years. But In the Heights escaped bankruptcy-induced stasis on a technicality: When the Weinstein Company didnt start production before the end of 2017, the rights once again reverted to Miranda and Hudes. In the Heights has effectively caught the last
 helicopter out of Saigon, Deadline reported in April 2018. The next month, Warner Bros. bought the film rights for $50 million at auction. At last, things were moving quickly. Chu had a cast assembled within months. By then, Miranda had aged out of playing 20-something Usnavi but the young Anthony Ramos, who originated the dual role of John
Laurens and Philip Hamilton in Hamilton, had taken a turn playing Usnavi in the Kennedy Centers Broadway Center Stage production in March 2018, and Mirandas son on Broadway would take over the role that first made Miranda famous. In
November 2018, Chu announced that Ramos would star in the film version of In the Heights reopening isnt all that different from
the version that electrified Broadway 13 years ago. Nothing anywhere near as drastic as cutting out Lincoln has happened this time around. Instead, Hudess revised screenplay has gently, lovingly streamlined the stage production. A few songs have been cut or rearranged, a few minor characters have been dropped, a few roles have been expanded.
Mostly, though, the storylines that have always been at the center of the show have deepened. Benny and Nina have a bittersweet backstory to their romance: Theyre now high school sweethearts who split up when Nina left for college, rather than new lovers slowly coming together over the course of a summer. Usnavis dream girl, Vanessa, has a
stronger arc; on Broadway, she was driven solely by a longing to move downtown to the Village, but onscreen shes an artist in her own right, who wants to move downtown so she can make it as a fashion designer. The most pointed changes to In the Heights are also the most political ones, largely centering on the minor character of Sonny. Sonny is
Usnavis 16-year-old cousin and sidekick who helps him out at the bodega, and onstage, he has a couple of solos about the disenfranchisement of Washington Heights. What about immigration? he raps in one song. Politicians be hating. Racism in this nations gone from latent to blatant. You are so cute, Vanessa coos in response. Onstage, Sonnys radical
idealism was sweet, funny, and nonthreatening. In the Heights has always been interested in examining American racism and xenophobia, but amid declarations in 2008 that it was the first great musical of the moment. So at the time, the only character to explicitly name
the shows villain as gentrification was a comic side character who did so by rhyming gentrification with edjumication. In the movie, Sonnys role has been expanded. Now he goes to protests in defense of DREAMers, and when he starts to talk about the plight of undocumented immigrants, the moment is very far from a joke. Like much of the rest of
America, In the Heights came out of the Trump era radicalized. The show is more certain than ever that the status quo is untenable and a lot less willing to be circumspect about that idea. Yet In the Heights in its newest form is still a heartfelt show. It is a musical that celebrates home, family, and community, debuting after a
historical event that made us more aware of those values than ever. When the cast comes together behind Usnavi to announce in unison that they are en Washington Heights! well, the moment will give you goosebumps. Just like its been doing for audiences since 1999. See More: Culture Explainers Movies Music Theater 2005 musical by Lin-Manuel
MirandaThis article is about the stage musical. For the film adaptation, see In the Heights (film). For the film soundtrack, see In the Heights (soundtrack). In the Heights (soundtrack). In the Heights (film). For the film soundtrack, see In the Heights (soundtrack). In the Heights (film). For the film soundtrack, see In the Heights (film). For the film soundtrack, see In the Heights (film). For the film soundtrack, see In the Heights (film).
Theater Center, Waterford, ConnecticutProductions 2005 Waterford 2007 Off-Broadway 2008 Broadway 2008 Broadway 2009 US tour 2015 London 2022 Poland Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Tony Award for Best Original Score Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Tony Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Tony Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Tony Award for Best Musical Show Album Laurence Olivier Award for Best 
is a musical with concept, music, and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda and a book by Quiara Alegra Hudes. The story is a romance as well as a celebration of community, culture, and aspirations. It is set over the course of three days, involving characters in the largely Dominican American neighborhood of Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan, New
York City. The score blends hip-hop, salsa, merengue, and soul. After a 2005 tryout in Waterford, Connecticut and a 2007 Off-Broadway run, the show opened on Broadway in March 2008. It was nominated for thirteen Tony Awards and won four, including Best Musical. A film adaptation of the musical was released in June 2021. [1] As the sun rises on
the hottest day of the summer, Usnavi de la Vega, the owner of a small bodega in Washington Heights, chases away a small-time vandal, Graffiti Pete, before introducing the audience to the corner he lives on and some of its many residents: Abuela Claudia, an elderly Cuban immigrant who raised Usnavi after the death of his parents; Sonny, Usnavi's
younger cousin who works in the bodega; Daniela and Carla, who own the local salon; Kevin and Camila Rosario, a married couple who own the cab company; and Vanessa, an employee at the salon and aspiring fashion designer ("In the Heights"). As the day begins, the
 Rosarios' daughter, Nina, arrives home from her first year at Stanford University. Often considered the "one who made it out" and the pride of the corner, Nina dreads telling her parents and neighbors the truth of her return home: that she dropped out of Stanford because she had to work two jobs to maintain her tuition, leading to her getting poor
grades and losing her scholarship ("Breathe"). As she tries to find her parents to tell them the news, she runs into Benny. Clearly harboring latent romantic feelings for one another, Benny and Nina reconnect ("Benny's Dispatch"). Elsewhere, Vanessa dreams of one day leaving the corner and getting an apartment in the West Village ("It Won't Be Long
Now"). While she is on a break at the salon, Sonny asks her out on a date on Usnavi's behalf, and she accepts; Usnavi rejoices at his success, as he has been in love with Vanessa for years. However, he worries that Vanessa may forget about him and the rest of the community when she moves. Nina reunites with her parents and is ultimately forced to
reveal that she dropped out. Her parents are stunned at this revelation, as well as her dishonesty. Kevin grows devastated by his father, a poor tenant farmer ("Intil"). Nina goes to the salon to seek comfort from Vanessa, but Daniela and Carla insist on
giving Nina a makeover and subjecting her to their gossip about the happenings in the neighborhood, specifically regarding Benny and Usnavi. Daniela, Carla, and Vanessa then praise Nina and her successes. Nina reluctantly reveals to them that she dropped out, then leaves exasperatedly. ("No Me Diga"). As Usnavi closes up shop, he, Benny, Sonny, Sonny
and Graffiti Pete discover that the bodega has sold a winning lottery ticket worth $96,000. The news gets out and the entire block begins to fantasize about what they would do if they had that much money ("96,000"). After the excitement dissipates, Abuela Claudia sits down to feed the birds and reminisces about her childhood in Cuba and her life in
relative poverty, and the events that have led her to where she is today. She reveals that she holds the winning lottery ticket, and expresses gratitude for her patience and faith ("Paciencia y Fe"). Benny comforts Nina by walking with her and discussing their memories of growing up in the neighborhood. Nina expresses her doubts about her own self-
worth to Benny, but he reassures her that she is destined for greatness ("When You're Home"). As they head to Nina's house for dinner, the local piragua merchant (referred to in the script as "Piragua Guy") pushes his food cart through the neighborhood, but all of his prospective customers would rather buy frozen treats from a nearby Mister Softee
truck ("Piragua"). Kevin and Camila host Nina, Benny, Usnavi, Vanessa, and Abuela Claudia for dinner, where Kevin announces that he has sold the car service, is outraged and confronts Kevin over his decision. Kevin insists
that Rosario's is a family business, and he does not consider Benny to be part of his family. Benny is furious and abruptly leaves. Nina, refusing to accept Kevin's money, follows Benny. Usnavi soon arrives at a local nightclub for his date with Vanessa, but is overly nervous and aloof. Vanessa begins dancing with other men, aiming to make Usnavi
jealous. In response, Usnavi dances with another woman as an attempt to make Vanessa jealous. Nina follows Benny to the club as the two couples cope with their own jealousy, culminating in Benny punching a man dancing with Nina, causing a
 fight to break out ("The Club"). Suddenly, the power goes out throughout the city as a result of the intense heat and humidity. The neighborhood descends into chaos as Usnavi and Vanessa, as well as Benny and Nina, desperately try to find their way back to one another. Sonny and Graffiti Pete, fearing looters, set off fireworks to distract potential
robbers as well as to light everyone else's way home. Usnavi reunites with Abuela Claudia, who reveals her lottery ticket to him. Benny and Nina find each other amid the chaos, and despite initially arguing, they finally kiss ("Blackout"). Kevin spends the night everyone else's way home. Usnavi reunites with Abuela Claudia, who reveals her lottery ticket to him. Benny and Nina find each other amid the chaos, and despite initially arguing, they finally kiss ("Blackout"). Kevin spends the night everyone else's way home. Usnavi reunites with Abuela Claudia, who reveals her lottery ticket to him. Benny and Nina find each other amid the chaos, and despite initially arguing, they finally kiss ("Blackout"). Kevin spends the night everyone else's way home. Usnavi reunites with Abuela Claudia, who reveals her lottery ticket to him. Benny and Nina find each other amid the chaos, and despite initially arguing, they finally kiss ("Blackout"). The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. Usnavi reunites with Abuela Claudia, who reveals her lottery ticket to him. Benny and Nina find each other amid the chaos, and despite initially arguing, they finally kiss ("Blackout"). The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. When the chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The chaos is a spend of the night everyone else is a spend of the night everyone else's way home. The night else is a spend of the night everyone else is a spend of the night everyone else is a spend of the night else is a spen
 worries about whether Kevin will approve of him dating Nina, but is happy to spend time with Nina regardless ("Sunrise"). Usnavi's bodega has been robbed. Usnavi each a third of the money and urges Usnavi to use his money
to achieve his lifelong dream of returning to his home in the Dominican Republic. While Usnavi shares some doubts, he eventually decides to go ("Hundreds of Stories"). Nina eventually returns home, and discovers her parents have been frantically searching for her. Kevin grows furious when he learns Nina was with Benny and disapproves of their
relationship, partially because he wants Nina to date a Latino man, which Benny is not. Nina and Kevin loudly argue before Camila intervenes, criticizing Kevin for throwing Benny out and Nina for not coming home. She urges them to come together and work things out as a family ("Enough"). As the neighborhood copes with their frustration over the
heat and blackout, Daniela urges them to dispel the negativity and muster up enough energy for a neighborhood celebration. Daniela leads the crowd in playfully teasing Vanessa for not realizing Usnavi's feelings for her, and Benny for his tryst with Nina the previous night. Usnavi arrives and announces that Abuela Claudia had won the lottery, and
that he has booked a flight for the Dominican Republic, which will leave the following day. Vanessa is visibly upset by that news of Usnavi's impending departure. Sonny had a crush on Nina himself. Usnavi calms Sonny down by revealing that he and Abuela Claudia are
   ving him third of the lottery winnings. Usnavi encourages the neighborhood residents to celebrate before everything changes ("Carnaval del Barrio"). During the celebration, Nina arrives and pulls Usnavi holds an impromptu memoria
for Abuela Claudia, revealing that she died of "a combination of the stress and heat," and Nina leads the entire block in mourning Abuela Claudia ("Alabanza"). Afterward, Usnavi and Nina go through Abuela Claudia played in her education and motivation, and in memory
of Abuela, she resolves to accept her parents' money and give college another try, returning to Stanford at the end of the summer ("Everything I Know"). As Vanessa prepares to move out, Daniela gives her a final piece of news: Usnavi convinced Daniela to cosign Vanessa's lease for her new apartment ("No Me Diga (Reprise)"). As the blackout
continues, many neighborhood residents patronize the Piragua Guy, partially because the Mister Softee truck broke down; the Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have good business ("Piragua Guy is overjoyed to finally have 
quietly suggests to him that he should stay in the neighborhood, saying that if he leaves, she will never see him again. Usnavi, overwhelmed, firmly decides to leave. Vanessa kisses him, lamenting that she was too late in realizing her feelings for him ("Champagne"). As Nina tells Benny of her decision, they agree to spend the summer together before
pursuing a long-distance relationship when she returns to school; Benny reaffirms his faith in her, and they promise to keep contacting each other ("When The Sun Goes Down"). Benny confronts Kevin for a final time, insisting that he was always there for him while Kevin never did the same. As the night winds down, Sonny approaches Graffiti Pete
with a secret proposition, which Pete accepts. The next morning, the neighborhood has visibly changed and wonders if any of his
neighbors in Washington Heights will miss him after he leaves. Sonny approaches Usnavi and, having fixed the bodega's grate, pulls it down, revealing a graffiti mural of Abuela Claudia painted by Pete. Seeing the mural, Usnavi has an epiphany and tells Sonny approaches Usnavi has an epiphany approaches Usnavi has an epiphany approaches Usnavi has an epiphany approaches Usnavi has a population of the usnavi has a population o
neighborhood's storyteller, Usnavi ponders a potential future with Vanessa, declares he will commit himself to protecting the legacy of his family (as well as Abuela Claudia), and accepts Washington Heights as his true home ("Finale").Act I"In the Heights" Usnavi and Company Benny's Dispatch Benny and Nina It Won't
Be Long Now" Vanessa, Usnavi, and Sonny"Intil (Useless)" Kevin"No Me Diga (You Don't Say)" Daniela, Carla, Vanessa, and Nina"96,000" Usnavi, Benny, Sonny, Vanessa, Daniela, Carla, Graffiti Pete, and Company"Piragua" Piragua
Guy"Siempre (Always)" Camila and Bolero Singer "The Club" Company"Blackout" Company"Blackout" Company"Blackout Il"Sunrise" Nina, and Company"Blackout Il"Sunrise" Nina, and Company Usnavi, Nina, and Company Usnavi, Nina, and Company Itencin Indicate Itenation Indicate Itenation Indicate Itenation Indicate Itenation Itenation Indicate Itenation Indicate Itenation It
Daniela, Carla, and Vanessa "Piragua (Reprise)" Piragua (Reprise)" Pir
small bodega in Washington Heights called De La Vega Bodega. He was originally played by Lin-Manuel Miranda, songwriter of the musical. He was named after one of the first sights his parents saw when they arrived in America, a ship with the sign "US Navy" on it. Abuela Claudia, the neighborhood matriarch, "practically raised" him when his
parents both died during his early childhood. He dreams of moving to the Dominican Republic. He is in love with Vanessa. Nina Rosario is an intelligent girl, and the first in her family to go to college (Stanford University), and everyone in the barrio admires her as the "one who made it out." However, she returns home from school for the summer to
reluctantly tell her parents that she has become overburdened and dropped out. She is the typical "good girl" and always got along with her parents. Upon arriving back home, though, she loses patience constantly over her father's overprotectiveness and his refusal to accept Benny, with whom she gets into a romantic relationship. Benny works at the
dispatch of Nina's father, Kevin. The only character in the play who does not speak Spanish, Benny falls in love with Nina. He dreams of opening his own business. Vanessa Garca is Usnavi's love interest who works at Daniela's salon. She is stunningly beautiful and catches the eye of every guy in the Heights; however, she takes interest in Usnavi. She
lives with an alcoholic mother and dreams of getting out of the barrio and getting an apartment downtown but cannot vet afford it. Abuela Claudia (abuela" means "grandmother" in Spanish) is the loving matriarch of the barrio who is like a grandmother to all. She is the one who looked after Usnavi when his parents died. She and her mother moved
from Cuba to New York in 1943 while she was a child. She worked as a maid for several years but never earned the money for her and her mother to travel home. Sonny de la Vega is Usnavi's younger cousin who works with Usnavi in the bodega. He is a jokester, and has an intelligent and thoughtful side that yearns for social justice. Daniela is the
owner of the salon where the neighborhood girls come to gossip. She is very bold and loud and
overprotective father, who, coming from a long line of farmers, has worked hard to resist following in his own taxi cab service: Rosario's. Camila Rosario is Nina's strong-willed mother, who wants what is best for Nina. She is typically tolerant of Kevin's control issues, but in the course of the show, reveals her
real feelings. Piragua Guy (Piragero) is the owner of a small piragua stand that competes with Mister Softee. Graffiti artist. He is good friends with Sonny and is one of the few characters who acknowledge Sonny's dreams. Usnavi believes Pete is a trouble-making vandal (constantly referring to him as a 'punk'), until Pete reveals his
amazing skills as an artist. Character Connecticut Off-Broadway Broadway Broadway First US tour [2] London [3] Kennedy Center [4] 2005 2007 2008 2009 2015 2018 Usnavi De La Vega Javier Muoz Lin-Manuel Miranda Kyle Beltran Sam Mackay Anthony Ramos Nina Rosario Natalie Cortez Mandy Gonzalez Arielle Jacobs Lily Frazer Ana Villafae Benny Christopher
JacksonRogelio Douglas Jr. Joe Aaron ReidJ. Quinton JohnsonVanessaSheena Marie OrtizKaren OlivoYvette Gonzlez-NacerJade EwenVanessa HudgensAbuela ClaudiaDoreen MontalvoOlga MeredizElise SantoraEve PolycarpouSaundra SantiagoKevin RosarioRick NegronJohn HerreraCarlos GmezDanny BoleroDavid BedellaRick NegronCamila
 RosarioNancy TicotinPriscilla LopezNatalie ToroJosie BensonBlanca CamachoSonnyRobin de JessShaun Taylor-CorbettCleve SeptemberMateo FerroDanielaMonica SalazarAndra BurnsIsabel SantiagoVictoria Hamilton-BarrittEden EspinosaCarlaJanet DacalGenny Lis PadillaSarah NaudiArianna RosarioGraffiti PeteMatt SaldivarSeth StewartJose-Luis
LopezAntoine Murray-StraughanVirgil GadsonPiragero (Piragua Guy)Eliseo RomanUsnavi Javier Muoz, Corbin BleuNina Janet Dacal, Jordin Sparks, Arielle JacobsVanessa Marcy HarriellDaniela Justina Machado, Bianca MarroqunSonny David Del Rio, Jon RuaCarla Gabrielle RuizGraffiti Pete Jon RuaVanessa
Christine AlladoDaniela Aimie AtkinsonMiranda wrote the earliest draft of In the Heights in 1999 during his sophomore year of college. After the show was accepted by Wesleyan University's student theater company Second Stage, Miranda added "freestyle rap ... bodegas, and salsa numbers."[5] It played from April 27 to 29, 2000, as an 80-minute,
one-act show that reportedly sounded like "A hip-hop version of Rent".[6] After seeing the play, two Wesleyan seniors and two alumni, John Buffalo Mailer, Neil Patrick Stewart, Anthony Veneziale and Thomas Kail, approached Miranda and asked if the play could be expanded with a view to a Broadway production. Miranda started working with
director Kail in 2002 and wrote five separate drafts of In the Heights.[7] Book writer Quiara Alegra Hudes joined the team in 2004.[8]A new version of In the Heights was presented at the National Music Theater Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut between July 23 and July 31, 2005, directed by Thomas Kail and
with music director Alex Lacamoire.[9][10] The cast featured Natalie Cortez, Janet Dacal, Robin de Jess, Huey Dunbar, Christopher Jackson, Doreen Montalvo, Javier Muoz, Rick Negron, Sheena Marie Ortiz, Matt Saldivar, Monica Salazar, and Nancy Ticotin[11]The musical then opened at the 37 Arts Theater off-Broadway, running from February 8,
2007, through July 15, 2007. Directed by Thomas Kail, with choreography by Andy Blankenbuehler and music direction by Alex Lacamoire, it was production was nominated for nine Drama Desk Awards, winning two, as well as winning the Outer Critics'
Circle Award for Outstanding Musical. [12] The musical premiered on Broadway, starting in previews on February 14, 2008, at the Richard Rodgers Theatre. The Broadway production was again directed and choreographed by Kail and Blankenbuehler, with most of the off-Broadway principals reprising
their roles. The creative team included set design by Anna Louizos, costume design by Anna Lou
had recouped its $10million investment after 10 months.[13] The cast recording was released on June 3, 2008, by Ghostlight Records and won the Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album, beating the recordings of The Little Mermaid, Young Frankenstein, and the revivals of Gypsy and South Pacific. The Broadway production celebrated its
1000th performance on August 2, 2010.[14] The Broadway production closed on January 9, 2011, after 29 previews and 1,184 regular performances.[15][16] The final cast included Lin-Manuel Miranda, Arielle Jacobs, Marcy Harriell, Shaun Taylor-Corbett, Olga Merediz, Andra Burns, Christopher Jackson, Tony Chriroldes, Priscilla Lopez, and Jon Rua
(understudy for the roles of Usnavi and Sonny for most of 2010).[17]The first national tour of In the Heights began on October 27, 2009, in Tampa, Florida.[18] The musical ran in San Juan, Puerto Rica descent.
Miranda played this engagement.[19] The tour closed on April 3, 2011, at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, Florida.[20] At the time of its closing, the tour closed on April 3, 2011. The new production was directed by Bobby
Garcia and starred Nyoy Volante as Usnavi, Ima Castro as Vanessa, K-La Rivera as Nina Rosario, Felix Rivera as Benny, Calvin Millado as Kevin Rosario, Jackie Lou Blanco as Camila Rosario, Jackie L
non-Equity United States national tour of In the Heights ran from October 17, 2011, until June 2012.[24][25][26] The tour played in Chicago in January 2012, with Virginia Cavaliere as Nina, Presilah Nunez as Vanessa, Kyle Carter as Benny, and Perry Young as Usnavi.[27]In Panama, In The Heights was performed by Instituto Alberto Einstein's
student body from June 20 to June 25, notable performances by Valerie Cohen, Isidoro Cherem and Alegrita Angel, acting was made entirely in Spanish and songs sang in their original lyrics. Carnaval del Barrio (In the Heights) was staged at the famed Teatro en Crculo, from the October 3 to 31, 2013, produced by Top Line Events and directed by
Aaron Zebede, who also adapted the book and songs to Spanglish. Jose "Pepe" Casis was the musical director, who also played the part of Piragua Guy. [28] The Brazilian premiere of Nas Alturas was staged at Teatro Bradesco from April 17 until May 25, 2014. The cast featured Myra Ruiz (Nina), Ricardo Marques (Benny), Mauro Gorini (Kevin),
Germana Guilherme (Camila), Renata Brs (Daniela), Milena Martines (Carla), Lola Fanucchi (Vanessa), Thiago Vianna (Graffiti) and Rafael Dantas (Piragua Guy). The UK premiere of In The Heights was staged at Southwark Playhouse from 9 May until June 7, 2014. The cast featured Sam Mackay as Usnavi, Christina Modestou as Nina, Emma Kingston
as Vanessa, David Bedella as Kevin Rosario and Victoria Hamilton-Barritt as Daniela, with direction by Luke Sheppard and costumes by Gabriella Slade. [29] The Japanese premiere played in Bunkamura's Theatre Cocoon from April 9 until April 20, 2014, and featured Yuya Matsushita, Ayaka Umeda, Chihiro Otsuka, and Motomu Azaki, among others.
[30] The Australian premiere of In The Heights, produced by StageArt, opened at Chapel Off Chapel on Feb 20 and ran for a short season of 21 shows, closing on March 8. Directed by James Cutler, Musical Direction by Cameron Thomas and choreographed by Yvette Lee, Starring Stephen Lopez in the lead role of Usnavi. The show received
overwhelming critical acclaim. [citation needed]Poster for the 2015 London production was directed by Luke Sheppard, choreographed by Drew McOnie with musical supervision by Tom Deering. The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was nominated for four awards at the King's Cross theatre, London on October 3, 2015. [31] The production was not a contraction of the King's Cross the Alberta Cross the 
2016 Olivier Awards: Best New Musical, Best Theatre Choreographer (Drew McOnie), Outstanding Achievement in Music and Best Actor in a Supporting Role in a Musical (David Bedella).[32] The performance of the production at the Olivier Awards was introduced by Jonathan Groff, in character as King George from Miranda's musical Hamilton.[33]
Following the end of his run in Hamilton, composer Lin-Manuel Miranda made a surprise visit to the production on September 4, 2016, while he was in London working on Mary Poppins Returns. [34] The final show
was concluded with speeches by actor Sam Mackay and producer Paul Taylor Mills, and a surprise appearance by Lin-Manuel Miranda. [36] The Canadian premiere of In the Heights, produced by The Arts Club, opened at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage on May 6, 2015. Directed by Bill Millerd with co-direction and choreography by Lisa Stevens
and musical direction by Ken Cormier. The cast featured Luc Roderique as Usnavi, Elena Juatco as Vanessa, Kate Blackburn as Nina, Chris Sams as Benny, Sharon Crandall as Abuela Claudia, Caleb Di Pomponio as Sonny, Francisco Trujillo as Kevin, Caitriona Murphy as Camila, Irene Karas Loeper as Daniela, Julia Harnett as Carla, Michael Culp as
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Graffiti Pete and Michael Antonakos as Piragua Guy. The South Korean production opened in the Samsung Card Hall, Blue Square, Seoul on September 4, 2015. The production was scheduled to star numerous K-pop and hip hop musicians including Jeong Won-young, Yang Dong-geun, Jang Dong-geun,

to Mr. Blankenbuehler, and presented by GALA Hispanic Theater, In The Heights had its Spanish Premiere in the US in April 2017. While Spanish Premiere in the Heights had its Spanish Premiere in the United States, it is the first Spanish translation sanctioned and approved by Lin-Manuel Miranda, and it is directed and choreographer on the original English, as well as an English anchor through the character of Benny. The production offered English and Spanish subtitles. The production combined a varied Spanish speaking cast from countries including the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Spain, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Switzerland and the USA. It starred Juan Luis Espinal (Usnavi), Vernica lyarez Robles (Vanessa), Laura Lebrn (Nina), Vaugh Midder (Benny), Scheherazade Quiroga (Daniela), Shadia Fairuz (Camila), Rafael Beato (Sonny), Michelle Ros (Abuela Claudia), Jos Fernando Capelln (Kevin), Gabriella Prez (Carla), Myriam Gadri (Graffity Pete) and Felix Marchany (Piragua Guy). The ensemble included: Ximena Salgado, Melinette Pallares, Natalia Raigosa, Amaya Perea, Aaron Cobos, Jos Ozuna and Hector Flores. The production garnered 18 nominations to the 2018 Helen Hayes Awards (the DC equivalent to the Tony Awards), more than any other DC production in the season, [42] including Best Musical, Best Ensemble, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actor, Best Actor, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress and Best Supporting Actor among others.[43]The first ever Nordic performance took place in January and February 2018 at Bastionen theatre in Nyborg, Denmark. It was an amateur production by the Musical Talent School of Nyborg. It was translated into Danish and directed by Jesper Nielsen.[44]The musical premiered in May 2019, in Teatro Fernando Soler. It was a semi-professional production in Spanish directed by Saul Martnez and produced by Cuarta Pared Teatro.[45]Produced by the Jefferson Performing Arts Society, directed and choreographed by Michelle Pietri with Assistant Choreographer AJ Hernandez, In The Heights had its Regional Premiere in The Jefferson Performing Arts Center on October 7, 2022. Maestro Dennis Assaf conducted The Jefferson Performing Arts Society Pit Orchestra. The Scenic Designer was Eric Porter, the Lighting Designer was Jonathan Michael Gonzales and the Sound Designer was Arturo Hernandez Jr., and the Props Designer was Olivia Winter. Mona Naswari was the Stage Manager. The production combined a varied Spanish speaking cast from countries including the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. It starred Alcee Jones (Usnavi), Gia Martinez (Vanessa), Kelly Laines (Nina), Neal Eli (Benny), Skylar Broussard (Daniela), Elizabeth Lowry (Camila), Claudio Venancio (Sonny), Elana Polin (Abuela Claudia), Paul Bello (Kevin), Rachel Carter (Carla), Clarence Smith (Graffity Pete) and Adriel Aviles (Piragua Guy). The ensemble included: Gabriella Vazquez Harlamert (Dance Captain), Aubry Snipes, Graciela Gonzales, Aaliyah Thompson, Alejandra Dollis, Shiquita Brooks, Yorkel Ballesteros, David Hidalgo, Cal Desmith, Fransheska Pea, Joshua "Juice" Hernandez, AJ Hernandez, AJ Hernandez, AJ Hernandez, AJ Hernandez, Aleyla Ybarra, Sophia Christilles and Stefan Armando Hernandez, AJ Hernandez, Aleyla Ybarra, Sophia Christilles and Stefan Armando Hernandez, AJ Hernandez, A "Adria" (Teatr Muzyczny Adria).[46]YearAward CeremonyCategoryNomineeResult2007Drama Desk AwardOutstanding MusicalThomas KailNominatedOutstanding Ensemble PerformanceWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding MusicalThomas KailNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding Director of a MusicalThomas KailNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding ChoreographyAndy BlankenbuehlerWonOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNominatedOutstanding MusicLin-Manuel MirandaNom LyricsNominatedOutstanding OrchestrationsAlex Lacamoire and Bill ShermanNominatedOutstanding Sound DesignAnna LouizosNominatedOutstanding Sound DesignAnna L MusicalWonBest Book of a MusicalQuiara Alegra HudesNominatedBest Featured Actor in a MusicalNominatedBest Featured Acto BlankenbuehlerWonBest OrchestrationsAlex Lacamoire and Bill ShermanWonBest Scenic DesignAnna LouizosNominatedBest Costume DesignPaul TazewellNominatedBest Costume DesignPaul TazewellNominatedBest Costume DesignPaul TazewellNominatedBest Costume DesignPaul TazewellNominatedBest Sound DesignPaul TazewellNominatedBest Costume DramaFinalistYearAward CeremonyCategoryNomineeResult2016Laurence Olivier AwardsBest New MusicalNominatedBest Actor in a Supporting Role in a MusicalNominatedBest New Music Actor in a MusicalSam MackayNominatedBest Actress in a MusicalDavid BedellaWonBest Supporting Actor in a MusicalDavid BedellaWonBest Supporting Ac DesignHoward HudsonNominatedThe reviews for the show were positive to mixed (the median grade of 9 major reviews was "B+").[47] Charles Isherwood's review in The New York Times said that "when this musical erupts in one of its expressions of collective joy, the energy it gives off could light up the George Washington Bridge for a year or two.' [48] Heather Bing of The Cleveland Plain Dealer wrote, "Although I was sometimes struggling to keep up with the hip-hop and Spanish-infused lyrics, the exciting set and choreography paired with excellent acting held my interest in the storyline."[49] David Rooney's Variety review said, "That depth of feeling, together with the wit of Miranda's lyrics, the playful dexterity of his rhymes, his dynamic score and a bunch of truly winning performances, make the show an uncalculated charmer."[50]Hudes' book received mixed reviews. Charles McNulty's The Los Angeles Times review mentioned that "the downside to In the Heights is the book...which is overstuffed and oversimplified."[51] The New York Post's Clive Barnes also gave negative comments about the book, saving that "Hudes' work is droopily sentimental and untruthful," [52] Ioe Dziemianowicz of the NY Daily News also disliked the book, but added that "what it lacks in story and believability it makes up for in a vibrant rap- and salsa-flavored score, spirited dances, and great-looking design."[53]On May 27, 2009, PBS' Great Performances aired an episode entitled In the Heights: Chasing Broadway Dreams. It documents the journey taken by the cast and crew to bring the show to Broadway and to later win the Tony Award for Best Musical.[54] Producer Andrew Fried and director Paul Bozymowski captured footage of the cast and creative team for over two years, from the off-Broadway production to their Tony Award wins. The special previewed at the Paley Center for Media in New York on May 4, 2009.[55]Main article: In the Heights (film)In November 2008, Universal Pictures announced that they had acquired the rights to adapt the musical as a feature film for release in 2011.[56][57] Kenny Ortega was set to direct it, and Quiara Alegra Hudes would write the screenplay.[58][59] However, Universal opted not to develop the film, and the project was canceled.[60] In January 2012, Lin-Manuel Miranda said the adaptation was back under discussion.[61]In May 2016, it was announced that The Weinstein Company would distribute the film.[62] The following month, it was reported that Jon M. Chu was in talks to direct.[63] In September 2016, Chu was confirmed as director, with production potentially beginning in spring 2017. Lin-Manuel Miranda said he would not return as Usnavi, the role he originated, but could return in another role.[64]In October 2017, Hudes revealed that she had asked The Weinstein Company to permit her to take the production elsewhere, in light of the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations. [65] In April 2018, the film rights reverted to Miranda and Hudes. [66] In May 2018, Warner Bros. Pictures acquired the film rights in a \$50million deal after a bidding war with several other studios.[67] Warner Bros. originally set a release date of June 26, 2020.[68] In October 2018, Anthony Ramos was cast as Benny.[70] In April 2019, Jimmy Smits was cast as Kevin,[71] Leslie Grace as Nina, Melissa Barrera as Vanessa,[72] Stephanie Beatriz as Carla, Olga Merediz as Abuela Claudia (reprising her Tony nominated role from the original Broadway cast), Gregory Diaz IV as Sonny, Daphne Rubin-Vega (who did one of the radio voices in the original Broadway production) as Daniela, Lin-Manuel Miranda as Piragua Guy, and Dascha Polanco as Cuca. Filming began on June 3, 2019, in New York. [73][74] A teaser trailer was released on December 11, 2019, followed by a full trailer the next day.[75][76] The film was scheduled to be released on June 26, 2020, in the United States, and on August 7, 2020, in the United Kingdom.[77] However, it was delayed to June 10, 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[78] The film had an opening weekend box office of \$11.5 million worldwide.[79]Dominican AmericansNuyoricanPuerto Ricans in New York City^ Rubin, Rebecca (June 11, 2021). "In the Heights Tour Cast".^ "Exclusive: Casting announced for In the Heights". September 2, 2015.^ First Look at Anthony Ramos, Vanessa Hudgens, Ana Villafae, and More in Kennedy Center In the Heights ^ "The Conceiver". In the Heights Archived from the original on February 8, 2008. A Scheps, Leigh (March 6, 2018). "In the Heights Archived from the original on February 8, 2008. A Scheps, Leigh (March 6, 2018). "In the Heights Archived from the original on February 8, 2008. A Scheps, Leigh (March 6, 2018). 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"In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." "In The Heights London - 40th Olivier Awards 2016: Christine Allado (April 4, 2016)." 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Seeing the actors sing and dance on top of their usual emoting reveals incredible extra layers of talent that the smash-hit, Tony Award-winning Broadway musical In the Heights was coming to life on the big screen, I knew I had to see it opening night since Id never had the chance to catch it on stage. Not only was I floored by its sense of spectacle, but I was thrilled to find that it offered some really profound messages to consider as well. For one, the lead characters are driven by a sense of spiritual purpose that sets In The Heights apart from other blockbusters, outside of a few faith-based films that often take a heavy-handed approach to cinematic evangelization. It tells the story of a diverse, tight-knit immigrant community in Washington Heights whose dramatic life decisions are inspired by a simple motto learned from a wise old woman in their neighborhood: paciencia y fe, meaning patience and faith. Based on the 2008 smash hit Broadway musical written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, who also created the all-time blockbuster Hamilton, In the Heights follows the lives of four young immigrants, Usnavi, Vanessa, Sonny and Nina. Each of these dynamic and ambitious characters believes their working-class neighborhood of Washington Heights for brighter futures in better places. RELATED: Spiritual Streaming: 5 Catholic-Themed Films for Your Next Movie NightTheir ambitions transcend their ethnic backgrounds, and are shared by people of all backgrounds who feel their dreams require them to relocate and leave the life of their childhoods behind. But Heights powerfully shows the impact of realizing the beauty found in your present, everyday circumstances and the inherent value of the people and experiences that shape you. For me, it sparked thoughts of how I never thought in my life that I would work at Wal Mart, for a myriad of reasons. But when I lost a job I loved at a newspaper after 17 years and couldnt find other media work, I applied and found that I love it more than I ever enjoyed being an editor. Being a cashier and joking with customers eight hours a day sparked my creative side and has helped me become a better comedian (another career path of mine). It also led to my doing funny store-closing announcements over the PA system every night, which I film and put on TikTok (@thatfunnywalmartguy). I wound up getting over 60,000 views in my first month alone. Now, Ive been invited to submit my proposals for a humorous new national ad campaign and the company is also likely to sponsor a new radio show Im launching in July. So, the last job I ever thought Id have is now possibly the best job Ive ever had the kind of attitude the movie spotlights. My journey took the same kind of patience and faith the movie spotlights. My journey took the same kind of patience and faith the movie spotlights. My journey took the same kind of patience and faith the movie sings about. The values are a recurring theme throughout the story, as sung by the wise abuela (grandmother in Spanish). who is loved by everyone, including those unrelated to her. She repeatedly cites those virtues as the keys to happiness in life. Those key words paciencia y fe appear throughout the story: from dialogue exchanges to a powerful song she sings, to a painted mural that brings the film to a touching conclusion. I loved the message of those words because I realized that patience and faith were qualities Ive been experiencing a lot in my major career transition.RELATED: Praying for Patience: What I Learned From Gods Time Vs. My OwnI have never set foot in Washington Heights, yet I found In the Heights to be such a bracing experience that I saw it twice in its first week and loved it even more the second time. The films vibrant, emotional portrayals of the immigrant experience deeply affected me because I myself am the son of a Polish immigrant who pursued his own American Dream to become a Veterans Affairs doctor. In showing the challenges these characters face on a daily basis, the movie moved me to have a more open heart towards immigration issues than I normally harbored as a political conservative. I could see myself in the four lead characters. Growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas, I was driven by a love of comedy and couldnt wait for my eventual moves to Chicago and Los Angeles to pursue a career as a standup comedian and writer. But when I was laid off from my job at the weekly newspaper in 2019, I moved back home and was surprised to find that I now appreciated myriad things about life in a smaller city and surrounded by family.LISTEN: Mark Wahlberg on Faith and FilmI also was inspired by the fact that these young people are all immigrants or the children of immigrants, just like I am. Watching one father in the movie give up everything so that his daughter could achieve a dream education at a top university made me appreciate how my parents managed to put me and my three siblings through college even after my dad started in America with nothing. Its refreshing in a time when so much of media can be cynical, to find a movie that finds beauty and value in family and faith. In coming home myself, I thought I had to leave all my dreams of performing behind yet instead, Ive managed to find some amazing new opportunities here in this small city that I grew up thinking had none to offer. God had a plan for me right where I was if I paid close enough attention. In the Heights has the magic ability to make any viewer appreciate the life and family they have, while calling them to find their own higher purpose. Thats a pretty impressive feat any time of year, and hopefully one that will leave all theatergoers as inspired as the film left me. Each year in the spring, I go back to my Midwestern roots and shake off the dust of winter with a good spring cleaning. More read more The smell of fresh basil and tomato vines still brings me back to my grandmothers garden, where I learned my first lessons about faith. It read more

What is the message of in the heights. In the heights hear me out.