

CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY PRESENTS
IN THE HEIGHTS

Music and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda

Book by Quiara Alegría Hudes

Conceived by Lin-Manuel Miranda

Directed by Nicholas C. Avila

Musical Direction by Nick Perez

Choreographed by Sara Templeton

May 27 – June 24, 2023 (opening night: May 30)

LESHER CENTER FOR THE ARTS, WALNUT CREEK

WALNUT CREEK, CA (20 April 2023) — **Center Repertory Company** kicks off the summer with **Lin-Manuel Miranda** and **Quiara Alegría Hudes**' exuberant Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *In the Heights*. From the creator of *Hamilton* comes this jubilant story of New York's Washington Heights neighborhood and its vibrant community. A place where the coffee from the corner bodega is light and sweet, the windows are always open, and the breeze carries the rhythm of three generations of music, Washington Heights is also a neighborhood on the brink of change. Bursting with hopes, dreams, and pressures, a cast of diverse characters pursue the American dream while they struggle to decide which traditions they should keep alive, and which can be left behind. This joyous musical full of electric choreography features an ebullient score melding hip-hop, salsa, merengue, and soul music. Directed by **Nicholas C. Avila** with musical direction by **Nick Perez** and choreography by **Sara Templeton**, *In the Heights* will perform **May 27 – June 24, 2023** at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek. For tickets (\$45-\$70) and more information, the public may visit **LesharArtsCenter.org** or call the box office at **(925) 943-7469** (open Wed-Sun, 12:00pm-6:00pm). **Center Repertory Company** offers ASL interpretation for deaf and hard of hearing patrons is offered at the 2:30 pm performance on Saturday, June 24, 2023.

With its first draft written by Miranda while in college at Wesleyan University, *In the Heights* performed Off-Broadway before premiering in 2008 on Broadway, where it won 4 Tony Awards, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and ran for more than 1,000 performances. It has since performed around the globe and was adapted into a film released in 2021. *New York Magazine* called *In the Heights* "one of the most satisfying musicals in years." *Time Out New York* lauded it for its "good old-fashioned Broadway heart [and] the invigorating pulse of modern Latin rhythms, mixed with the percussive dynamism of hip-hop."

For this production, Center REP has assembled an outstanding cast and creative team:

Michel Alejandro Castillo (he/him) makes his Center REP debut as Usnavi, the owner of the local bodega. Castillo has appeared in productions with Artist Repertory Theatre, Artscape Theatre, Oregon Cabaret Theatre, Actors' Playhouse, Triangle Productions, Stumptown Stages, Lakewood Theatre, and Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts, and in workshops with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, National Alliance for Musical Theatre, Portland Center Stage, and Milagro Theatre. **Laura LeBron** (she/her/they) makes her Center REP debut as Vanessa, a hairstylist who dreams of success. LeBron has performed with Rubicon Theatre, Bond 45, GALA Hispanic Theatre, Wheelock Family Theatre, Axelrod Performing

Arts Center, Palacio de Bellas Artes, and Dominican Republic's Teatro Nacional. She won a Helen Hayes Award and was nominated for a BroadwayWorld Award for her performance as Nina in GALA Hispanic Theatre's *In the Heights*. **Jacob Henrie-Naffaa** (he/him) makes his Center REP debut as Sonny, Usnavi's intelligent younger cousin. Henrie-Naffaa has also acted with 42nd Street Moon, Berkeley Playhouse, Utopia Theatre Project, Plotline Theatre, and Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre.

Cristina Hernandez (she/her) makes her Center REP debut as Nina, an ambitious student home from her studies at Stanford. Hernandez's stage credits include performances with Berkeley Playhouse, City Lights Theatre Company, and Opera San Jose. **Noel Anthony** (he/him) returns to Center REP as Kevin, Nina's dad. Anthony won San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) and Shellie Awards for his performance in *She Loves Me* at Center REP in addition to performing in Center REP's *Mamma Mia!*, *Freaky Friday*, *Sweet Charity*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*. He also received Shellie Awards for his performances in *The Music Man* and *Les Misérables*. He has starred in leading roles at many local theatres including American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Broadway By the Bay, Marin Theatre Company, Diablo Theatre Company, American Musical Theatre of San Jose, and has performed with Alameda Civic Light Opera and Symphony Silicon Valley. **Natalie Amaya** (she/her) makes her Center REP debut as Camila, Nina's mom. Amaya has performed at Berkeley Playhouse, Broadway By the Bay, Contra Costa Musical Theatre, Teatro Vision, Post Street Theatre, and Willows Theatre. She appeared in the National Tour of *Selena Forever* and on TV in "Objetivo Fama" and "American Idol."

Seen in Center REP's *Freaky Friday!*, **Dave J. Abrams** (he/him) returns as Benny, a hard-working cab driver employed by Nina's dad. Abrams has acted with Hillbarn Theater, Bay Area Musicals, Berkeley Playhouse, Contra Costa Civic Theatre, Woodminster Summer Musicals, Landmark Musical Theatre, and Tri-Valley Repertory Theatre. He has appeared in workshops at American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, 42nd Street Moon, and SFBATCO. His performances as Benny in Contra Costa Civic Theatre's *In the Heights* garnered him a TBA Award as well as a nomination for a BroadwayWorld Award. He also won TBA Awards for his performances in Bay Area Musicals' *Hairspray* and Berkeley Playhouse's *Ragtime*. **Michelle Navarrete** (she/her/ella) plays Abuela Claudia, the matriarch of the neighborhood. Navarrete has performed with San Francisco Playhouse, California Shakespeare Theater, TheatreFirst, Custom Made Theatre Company, Faultline Theater, Bay Area Children's Theatre, Impact Theatre, and Theatre Cultura.

Ashley Cowl (she/her) and **Deanalís Arocho Resto** (they/he/she) play Daniela and Carla, who work at the salon with Vanessa. Returning to Center REP where she was seen in *Beehive: The 60's Musical*, **Ashley Cowl** has performed with 42nd Street Moon, Woodminster Summer Musicals, Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre, Contra Costa Musical Theatre, Musical Theatre West, Cabrillo Music Theatre, Fullerton Civic Light Opera, and Havok Theatre Company. She received a TBA Award nomination for her performance as Daniela in *In the Heights* at Woodminster Summer Musicals and was nominated for a SFBATCC Award for her performance in 42nd Street Moon's *Dames at Sea*. Making their Center REP debut, **Deanalís Arocho Resto** has performed with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, San Francisco Playhouse, Z Space, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Brown Paper Box Company, Refuge Theatre Project, and Emerald City Theatre.

Tony Wooldridge (he/him) plays Graffiti Pete, a graffiti artist that hangs out with Sonny. **Alex Alvarez** (he/him) plays Piragua Guy, who sells shaved ice to the neighborhood. **Malia Abayon** (she/her), **Jordan Covington** (he/him), **John Diaz** (he/him), **Lillian Kurtz** (she/her), **Danielle Mendoza**

(she/her), **Adora Nzewi** (she/her), **Dane Paul Andres** (he/him), and **Kevin Gruwell** (he/him) perform in the ensemble. **Leilani Ford** (she/her) understudies the role of Carla and the ensemble.

In the Heights features musical direction by **Nick Perez**, choreography by **Sara Templeton**, scenic design by **Leah Ramillano**, costume design by **Courtney Flores**, sound design by **Lyle Barrere**, lighting design by **Wen-Ling Liao**, and props design by **Alyssa Tryon**.

Lin-Manuel Miranda (Music and Lyrics) is a Pulitzer Prize, Grammy, Emmy and Tony award-winning songwriter, actor, and director. He is the creator and original star of Broadway's Tony-winning *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*. His additional Broadway credits include *Freestyle Love Supreme* (2020 Special Tony Award recipient, co-founder, guest star), *Bring It On: The Musical* (co-composer/co-lyricist, Tony nomination for Best Musical), and *West Side Story* (2009 revival, Spanish translations). Miranda is the recipient of the 2015 MacArthur Foundation Award, the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors, and the 2019 Portrait of a Nation Prize. He received an Emmy Award with Tom Kitt for their song "Bigger" from the 67th Annual Tony Awards. His film and TV credits include *In The Heights*, Disney's *Encanto* (2022 Academy Award nomination, Grammy Award for Best Song and Soundtrack), Disney's *Moana* (2017 Oscar nomination, Grammy Award for Best Original Song), *Vivo*, *Hamilton*, "His Dark Materials," "Fosse/Verdon," "We The People," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," "Curb Your Enthusiasm" (2018 Emmy Nomination, Guest Actor), "Saturday Night Live" (2017 Emmy Nomination, Guest Actor), "Sesame Street," "The Electric Company," "House," "DuckTales," *200 Cartas*, *The Odd Life of Timothy Green*, *Mary Poppins Returns*, and his directorial film debut, *tick, tick... BOOM!*. He worked with John Kander on additional lyrics for the musical *New York, New York* featuring the music of Kander and Fred Ebb, opening on Broadway this month. He also worked with Alan Menken on new music for the live action adaptation of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, opening in theaters this May.

Quiara Alegria Hudes (Book) is a playwright, professor of writing and theater at Wesleyan University. Hailed for her work's exuberance, intellectual rigor, and rich imagination, her plays and musicals have been performed around the world. Her works include *Water By the Spoonful*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama; *In the Heights*, winner of the Tony Award for Best Musical and Pulitzer finalist; *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*, another Pulitzer finalist; *Daphne's Dive*; *The Good Peaches*; *Miss You Like Hell*; and *The Happiest Song Plays Last*. Hudes is a playwright in residence at New York's Signature Theatre and alum of Philadelphia Young Playwrights.

Nicholas C. Avila (Director) makes his directorial debut at Center Repertory Company. Avila has directed and developed plays at theatres including Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Chautauqua Theatre Company, Denver Center Theatre Company, La Jolla Playhouse, South Coast Repertory, The Chance Theater, Playwrights Foundation, and Son of Semele Ensemble.

About Center Repertory Company

Center REP is the resident professional theatre company of the Leshner Center for the Arts. Its season consists of six productions—a variety of classic and contemporary musicals, dramas, and comedies, presented with artistic excellence and high professional standards. Center REP's mission is to celebrate the power of the human imagination by producing emotionally engaging, intellectually involving, and visually astonishing live theatre, and through Outreach and Education programs, to enrich and advance the cultural life of the communities it serves. As a producing theatre, its presentations are conceived and developed at the Leshner Center. Whether the production is a Bay Area premiere or a Shakespearean

classic, each is devised to be a one-of-a-kind, artistic creation offering a unique theatre experience for audiences.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **Center Repertory Company** kicks off the summer with **Lin-Manuel Miranda** and **Quiara Alegría Hudes'** exuberant Tony Award-winning Broadway musical ***In the Heights***. From the creator of *Hamilton* comes this jubilant story of New York's Washington Heights neighborhood and its vibrant community. A place where the coffee from the corner bodega is light and sweet, the windows are always open, and the breeze carries the rhythm of three generations of music, Washington Heights is also a neighborhood on the brink of change. Bursting with hopes, dreams, and pressures, a cast of diverse characters pursue the American dream while they struggle to decide which traditions they should keep alive, and which can be left behind. This joyous musical full of electric choreography features an ebullient score melding hip-hop, salsa, merengue, and soul music. **Nicholas C. Avila** directs Center REP's production with musical direction by **Nick Perez** and choreography by **Sara Templeton**.

WHEN: Previews: Saturday, May 27 – Sunday, May 28, 2023
Opening: Tuesday, May 30, 2023
Closing: Saturday, June 24, 2023

ASL interpreted performance: 2:30pm Saturday, June 24, 2023

SHOWS: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays: 7:30pm
Saturdays: 2:30pm & 7:30pm
Sundays: 2:30pm & 7:00pm

WHERE: Leshner Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek)

TICKETS: For tickets (\$45-\$70) or more information, the public may visit www.lesherartscenter.org or call the box office at (925) 943-7469 (*open Wed-Sun, 12:00-6:00pm*).

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PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <http://cbpr.co/press/intheheights>