

## NCC Summer Theatre opens with ‘In The Heights’

This article by Kathy Lauer-Williams originally appeared on the Morning Call website, May 24, 2019:

<https://bit.ly/2K2aorb>



The cast of 'In the Heights' rehearses a dance number. (Contributed photo/Carol Burns)

The show that first put “Hamilton’s” Lin-Manuel Miranda on the charts will open the third season of Northampton Community College’s Summer Theatre on June 5.

The Tony award-winning “In the Heights” will kick off the five-show season, which also will include “Falsettos,” “Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story,” “Jesus Christ Superstar” and children’s show “The Perfect Dog.”

“We’re doing a lot of different shows this season,” says producing artistic director, Bill Mutimer. “I’m really excited.”

Miranda and Quiara Alegria Hudes set the show in Washington Heights, the New York City neighborhood in which Miranda grew up. It is narrated by Usnavi de la Vega, the owner of a small bodega, and the action starts on the hottest day of the year. Over a three-day span, the neighbors experience a weather-related blackout, a winning lottery ticket, loss of family and livelihood, and dreams lost and compromised. The musical score includes freestyle rap, salsa and other genres, and most of the characters move between speaking Spanish and English.

Mutimer says his cast is a mix of professional and local actors, including some who were in Dieruff High School's Freddy award-winning production of "In the Heights" in 2015.

Matias De La Flor, a Peruvian-born student from the University of North Carolina, plays Usnavi, the role originated by Miranda. The neighborhood "success story," Nina Rosario, is played by Angelica Ramirez, a recent graduate of East Stroudsburg University. Nina's parents are played by Equity actor Robert Torres, and Raquel Lopez Clory, a professional actress originally from Florida. The neighborhood's beloved "Abuela" Claudia is played by local professional actress Trish Kane Steele, and Usnavi's cousin, Sonny, is played by Alejandro Navarro, a California native attending Rider University. Daniel Melo, an NCC alum and recent graduate of University of the Arts, portrays Nina's love interest, Benny. Usnavi's love interest, Vanessa, is performed by Victoria Scovens, a DeSales University graduate.

Other characters in the neighborhood include Daniela (Allie Vazquez), Carla (Melody Cruz), Graffiti Pete (Jonathan Cruz, who also serves as Dance Captain), and Piragua Guy (Dedrik Ramos). Twenty additional dancers and singers make up the ensemble cast.

Miranda wrote the first version of *In the Heights* in 1999 while in college, and after going through numerous revisions, and the addition of Hudes to the creative team, it opened off-Broadway in 2007. In 2008 it transferred to Broadway where it got 13 Tony nominations and won three for Best Musical, Best Original Score, and Best Choreography.

Joining Mutimer on the creative team is Lucille Kincaid as music director, leading 12 musicians in the orchestra; Cristina Williams as choreographer and Brett Oliveira as scenic and lighting designer.

At the June 6 performance, there will be a talkback with the cast that will be attended by students from Broughal Middle School, who are doing a “mini version” of “*In the Heights*” and “*Hamilton*” as a fund raiser for the Lehigh Valley Hispanic Center.

Before each performance, the college’s Hispanic Caucus will offer a “block party” in the theater lobby, featuring a Latin DJ, empanadas and piraguas (shaved ice) for sale, and information from community organizations.

**“In the Heights,”** 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays June 5- 16, Lipkin Theatre, Kopechek Hall, Northampton Community College, 3585 Green Pond Rd., Bethlehem. Tickets: \$15, \$10 students. 484-484-3412, [ncctix.org](http://ncctix.org).