



In The Heights

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Director's casting intention:

The character breakdowns provided, especially in terms of how they present, are a framework for the telling of this specific story about a community in Washington Heights; they are not meant as a limitation. I am committed to diversity, inclusion, and representation, and focused on bringing this show to life in an authentic way. I am most interested in actors who can embody the essence, spirit, and energy of these characters. If you identify with/as any part of these characters, I strongly encourage you to audition.

Usnavi de la Vega — Male, Latino, 20's. The protagonist, he owns the corner bodega left to him by his deceased parents, and longs to visit his beloved birthplace, the Dominican Republic. His parents immigrated to New York when he was a child, and he has not returned to DR since then. He has a special relationship with Abuela Claudia, who is not actually his grandmother, but is as close as family to him. He is in love with Vanessa but struggles to share his feelings. Usnavi serves as an unofficial ambassador for his community. He is hard-working and awkwardly-endearing; on his own journey to grapple with where he comes from, where he is, and where he is going. Excellent rap skills are a must. Good mover and singer.

Nina Rosario — Female, Latina, 18. Nina, a first-generation college student, has just returned home from her first year at Stanford University. She is the daughter of Kevin and Camila Rosario, the owners of the local car service. The community looks to her as a symbol of success, as someone who has achieved great things outside "the Heights". She is a do-gooder who struggles with trying to make her community and family proud, and trying to forge her own path and identity. Excellent vocalist; strong belt/mix to an E. Good mover.

Camila Rosario — Female, Latina, middle-aged. Camila is the co-owner of Rosario's Car Service with her husband Kevin. They emigrated to New York from Puerto Rico at a young age, striving to create a better life for themselves and their daughter, Nina. They face the struggles of business-owners in an expensive city. Loving but firm. Great singer.

Kevin Rosario — Male, Latino, middle-aged. The owner of Rosario's Car Service, Camila's husband, and father to Nina. After emigrating from Puerto Rico, he has worked hard his entire life to build his business and provide for his family. He can be stubborn and proud. He is Nina's fiercest champion, and though his intentions are in the right place, this creates pressure on what she expects of herself. Represents the complexities of the immigrant's "American Dream." Great singer.

Abuela Claudia — Female, Latina, mid-60's +. The warm matriarch of the neighborhood, she emigrated to New York from Cuba when she was very young, before the Revolution. She has raised Usnavi since his parents died. She serves as the guiding light and sage for many in the community: everyone's Abuela. Also represents the complexities of the immigrant's "American Dream," of her generation. Her title song "Paciencia y Fe" embodies her ethos of patience and faith. Strong belt to a C. Spanish-speaking a plus.

Sonny — Male, Latino, mid-teens. He is Usnavi's idealistic and optimistic, younger cousin who helps at the bodega. Friends with Graffiti Pete, to the chagrin of Usnavi. He has a genuine desire to improve the inequities of his community and emulate Usnavi. Comedic chops and rap skills. Good singer and mover.

Vanessa — Female, Latina/mixed race/ethnicity, 20's. She works at Daniela's salon and longs to make her way out of Washington Heights. She deals with family issues that make her feel stuck and defensive at times, but she maintains her hopeful outlook. She is close friends with Nina, and is the object of Usnavi's hidden affection, for whom she has a soft spot. Excellent singer/belter and excellent dancer.

Benny — Male, Black/non-Latino, 20's. Benny is best friends with Usnavi, and in love with Nina, even though her father disapproves, in large part due to cultural differences. Benny is a driver for Rosario's, who grew up having to make his own way, and who Kevin took under his wing. Benny hopes to someday own his own car service and represents the hard work and optimism of a hopeful entrepreneur. Excellent dancer and singer.

Graffiti Pete — Open gender/ethnicity. (*This character is traditionally Male but open to change this. For now, breakdown will use "he" pronoun, but this is not fixed.) He is the comedic nemesis of Usnavi, a graffiti artist who tags up Usnavi's bodega, always with a boombox and spray cans in town. He is friends with Sonny, which concerns Usnavi. But he winds up pleasantly surprising Usnavi in the end by lending his artistic talent in a moving way. Excellent dancer, street and salsa styles.

Daniela — Female, Latina, 30's-40's. She is the savvy, strong-willed, straight-talking owner of the salon next to Usnavi's bodega. Her business is also a victim of gentrification and emigrated from Puerto Rico. A mentor to Vanessa and Carla in a tough love style. Spanish-speaking a plus. Great mover and singer with strong belt.

Carla — Female, Latina, 20's-30's. She works at Daniela's salon; she looks up to her and is a loyal sidekick. She can be naive at times but is not a ditz, and always means well. She provides comedic relief with her rose-colored glasses outlook. Great singer/strong belt/mix; great mover.

Piragua Guy — Male, Latino, 30's +. A hard-worker with a buoyant and positive energy, he makes his living selling flavored shaved ice, "piraguas," from his mobile street cart in Washington Heights; has a rivalry with Mister Softee, an iconic NY ice-cream truck, who threatens his business. A very strong presence in the community, his piraguas are a nostalgic

reminder of the flavor of the islands so many of the residents once called home. Spanish-speaking a plus. Excellent singer, tenor. Good mover.

Ensemble - Female/Male/All Gender Identities/Presentation. Residents to make up the strong community of Washington Heights. The ensemble is heavily used in the storytelling of this show. Must be excellent dancers in street and salsa styles, and excellent singers.