

Anaheim High Warms Hearts with Their Production of 'In the Heights'

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With graffiti on the walls and piragua sold on the streets, Anaheim High School brings a new sense of community and family to the audience with their production of In The Heights.

In The Heights, with music by Lin Manuel Miranda, explores the lives of the residents of Washington Heights in New York City. The tight knit residents of the neighborhood all come together for parties and dinners as well as in times of tragedy, and the audience learns what it truly looks like to chase your dreams while staying true to your heritage.

Andrew Gutierrez playing the role of Usnavi, a bodega owner in the neighborhood, stole the show with his use of space. Gutierrez was comfortable with all his choreography and blocking in a way that allowed him to make his interactions both realistic and entertaining. He caught many eyes as he danced with passion during numbers like "The Club," and exuded a vibrant and engaged energy throughout the whole show.

Jasmine Sanchez brought vital chemistry to the show with her character Nina, making her reactions with other characters genuine and clear. Her clear and supported belt during songs like "Breathe" demonstrated her character's strength and dedication as she returns home after losing her college scholarship, and the warm friendly smile she wore around the neighborhood added to the sense of community in the show.

However, this show was truly completed by the ensemble. Every single member of the ensemble executed the choreography with great synchronization and maintained a constant high energy throughout every scene. Company numbers like "96,000" and "In the Heights" were captivating to watch as every actor was sharp with movements and engaged. Ensemble member Jacqueline Escamilla in particular had an enticing stage presence as she always danced with flair and passion.

However, due to both a loud pit orchestra, and some enunciation problems, some lines were dropped, making the plot a bit hard to follow at times. An actor that demonstrated great skill with this enunciation was Kristoffer Mendoza, playing Sonny. Not only were all his lines delivered clearly, but his comedic timing added humor and lightheartedness to the show.

Complete with fierce makeup looks, imitating icons like Selena Quintanilla, the show was brought to life. The energy and commitment of the whole cast brought the barrio to life, reminding the audience what a true community looks like.

