Photos Matthew Cohen

song, dance, and spoken word via rap. The form is akin to that of

"Hamilton," but the story is one

Page:

SMC performs 'In the Heights', a sliceof-life play From Lin-Manuel Miranda

www.lamorindaweekly.com

By A.K. Carroll



Saint Mary's students perform "In the Heights," by Lin-Manuel Miranda.

seeing a photo or post about a re- from the perspective of Usnavi, a cent performance of "Hamilton." The rap-happy musical about U.S. founding father Alexander Hamil- randa), the story unfolds over the ton won a Pulitzer Prize, Grammy Award, and 11 of its 16 Tony nominations in 2016. It's still a hot ticket, with premium seats going for over \$1,300 in San Francisco and hitting \$1,900 a pop in New York board," said Leamy, who joined City. But while "Hamilton" may be the best-known of Lin-Manuel Miranda's creations, it isn't his first a substantial Broadway career. "I award-winning work.

When Miranda was a college sophomore at Wesleyan University, he punched out a first draft of "In the Heights," a slice-of-life story that hit Off-Broadway in 2007 and went on to win four of 13 Tony nominations in 2008. Though the show left New York in 2011, it's about to hit the stage of the LeFevre Theatre at Saint Mary's College, thanks to a dedicated cast of level, but that doesn't mean they're students and the expert guidance not as capable," she said. "It's just of guest director Nick Gabriel, artist and educator at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater the process, which has delighted (A.C.T.).

Manuel Miranda) even before in a lot of ways too." he broke through with 'In the form."

Although Gabriel was impressed by Miranda's fresh and innovative approach to the musical format, what really drew him in ber of the work is kind of extraordiwas the show's depiction of community. "All of the characters have a little moment, but it's largely freshmen to seniors who are studyabout their relationships with one ing psychology, sociology, political another despite their different aspirations and goals," said Gabriel. have really stepped up to meet the "They're all trying to connect with level of the musical theater maone another."

scribes Miranda's "In the Heights" as a modern-day "West Side Story."

hese days it's hard to scroll Set in the Manhattan neighborhood tendees can expect to see music, through social media without of Washington Heights and told young Dominican-American bodega owner (originally played by Micourse of three days, during which the audience is privy to the joys and struggles of Usnavi's Latino com-rial," said Gabriel. "It's based on munity.

> "I was so thrilled to come on SMC's production team at the invitation of Gabriel, and who boasts have a personal connection to the original choreographer, Andy Blankenbuehler; we worked together on 'Fosse.'"

Bringing her high-caliber training to the undergraduates of SMC was both a challenge and an opportunity, for the students as well as for Leamy. "Anytime you work with young people as opposed to professionals it's at a different different. Their caliber has been quite high, and it has risen through us. They're young and still quite "I remember admiring (Lin- green in a lot of ways, but knowing

"We worked really hard to find Heights," said Gabriel, who saw students with a passion for the mathe show when it first hit Broad- terial and who love performing," way. "It felt as significant as any said Gabriel, noting that most of tion starts at 7 p.m. in the Delphine landmark piece that defines an art the cast is comprised of nontheater Intercultural Center, and will end majors. "Theater is not their life the prior to the 9 p.m. performance. way it is for a lot of aspiring actors. But they're so committed to getting it right and to authenticity. The cali-

The 16-member cast includes science and other subjects. "They jors in very surprising ways," said Choreographer Deb Leamy de- Leamy. "It wasn't easy, but I think they have all risen to the occasion."

During the performance, at-



"In the Heights" is a modern "West Side Story."

Let the flowers say the words





Can you easily walk across a lawn or other uneven surface without having trouble with your balance?

balance? Can you do it on the other leg?

Can you easily walk up or down stairs without relying on your arms to pull you up the railing?

Please be careful when trying these balance challenges.



Balance can affect safety and independence. If you answered "No" to any of these questions it may be time for a balance tune-up.

complimentary consultation on your balance.

3468 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite B110 Lafayette, CA 94549





- Balance Challenge -

How does your balance measure up?



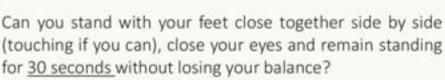
experiences I've had."

631-4670.

Can you stand-up and sit down from a standard chair without using your arms 5 times in a row in less than 15 seconds? Controlled movement - no plopping!

Can you stand next to your counter without holding on and stand on one leg for 10 seconds without losing your







Call our office today for a

925-284-6150