



*He spent 10 years off the stage before starting the musical "In the Heights"*

Within the plot of *In the Heights*, the piragua guy is one of the characters that most represents the Puerto Rican culture. In the Broadway staging of this show, Tony Chioldes plays the part. However, it is David Baida who plays it from November 30th to December 5<sup>th</sup> at the Luis A. Ferré Performing Arts Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico. His participation in the musical marks a return to the acting profession and he owes this to a friend. "I was away from theater for 10 years because I gave up my dream of reaching Broadway. Then, a friend went to see *In the Heights* and he immediately called me saying: 'You have to audition for that show, it's perfect for you.' "I did not believe him and he pestered me about this for a year", said Baida, whose father is Ecuadorian and mother is Honduran. The actor, who coincidentally lives in Washington Heights, the New York neighborhood where the story of the musical takes place, had a secure job in a law office and a quiet daily routine. Because Baida did not take his advice, his friend Adolpho gave him a ticket to see "In the Heights" on Broadway. But although Baida was delighted with the show, it was not enough to encourage him to audition. "It's a life that can be very difficult, especially the audition process because there are many rejections. But it's a very good show, especially the song 'Useless'. I cried when I heard it. My grandfather came to New York in the 50's from Ecuador and was a taxi driver and his story is very similar to that of the character Kevin. My dad did not get along with him and went to California to go to school. His dream was to obtain a university degree and have a family. So the musical had a similar story to my family and although I adored it, I was not ready to audition. I said to Adolpho: 'No thanks.'"

### **A Happy Ending**

Instead of giving up, his friend took the initiative and one morning called Baida saying, 'I signed you up for the audition, go on your lunch hour!' The artist replied, 'If you stop bothering me, I'll go to the stupid audition! Are you happy?' The actor, who is charismatic in the piragua guy role, went to the audition and felt that he did well but did not hear anything. A month later, Adolpho called him again to tell him that he had signed him up for another open call audition for the show. Baida went again and after that he received a series of callbacks until he was given the role. "It's strange for me to be doing musicals again, but it's amazing to be part of this show because it's the story of my family. There is a part in the song 'Carnaval Del Barrio', which I sing(in Spanish) with Lin-Manuel, 'Raise the flag, raise it wherever you want, I remember my land and when I die bury me in it'. That means a lot to me, because it's the pride of knowing where I come from. In my program bio, I put 'El sueño nunca se muere' (The dream never dies.), because before this, I thought that dream had ended. My friend Adolpho said to me 'I told you so!'