

## 'MEDDLING MOM'

### CAST BIOS

**Sonia Braga (Carmen Vega)** - After years of success in her native Brazil, Braga gained international acclaim and recognition playing the seductive figment of William Hurt's film memory (as well as Raul Julia's girlfriend) in "Kiss of The Spider Woman." She had previously starred in "Dona Flora and Her Two Husbands."

Her stateside success continued with the comedies "Moon Over Parador" for director Paul Mazursky and "The Milagro Beanfield War" for director Robert Redford. She was next featured in "The Rookie" with Clint Eastwood and was teamed with Raul Julia again in "The Burning Season." She has starred in the mini-series "Streets of Laredo" and "A Will of Their Own." She also recurred on the critically acclaimed series "American Family" and on "Sex In The City" as Kim Cattrall's lover and recurred on ABC's "Alias."

Some of her independent feature credits include "Sea of Dreams," "Marilyn Hotchkiss's School of Ballroom Dancing," "CHE," "The Hottest State" and "Bordertown."

Sonia will next be seen in the independent feature film "The Wine of Summer" opposite Marcia Gay Harden, Elsa Pataky and Ethan Peck.

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**Tony Plana (Luis)** – Tony Plana was educated at Loyola High School, Los Angeles and Loyola-Marymount University, where he earned a Bachelor's degree through the Honors Program in Literature and Theatre Arts, graduating magna cum laude. He received professional training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, England.

Plana recently starred as Ignacio Suarez, the widowed father to America Ferrera's "Ugly Betty," in ABC's landmark, groundbreaking hit series for which he received the 2006 Golden Satellite Award from the International Press Academy and an Alma Award nomination for best supporting actor in a television comedy. It is the first Spanish series to be adapted to English for a major American network and has received the highest ratings and the most critical acclaim of any Latino-based show in the history of television. Early into its first season, "Ugly Betty" garnered People's Choice and Screen Actors Guild nominations and Alma, NAACP, Writers Guild, Directors Guild, Art Directors Guild, Best Family Series, Golden Satellite and Golden Globe Awards. Previously, he also starred in Showtime's original series, "Resurrection Boulevard" and was nominated for two Alma Awards for best actor.

"Resurrection Boulevard" was the first series to be produced, written, directed and starring Latinos, the first of its kind to be renewed for three seasons on a television network and the most awarded series in Showtime's history including an Alma Award for the best television series of 2002.

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Having co-directed and co-produced the film "A Million to Juan" with Paul Rodriguez, Plana celebrated his solo directorial debut in December 2000 with "The Princess and the Barrio Boy." It represents the first Latino family film to be produced by Showtime and stars academy award nominee Edward James Olmos, Maria Conchita Alonso, Pauly Shore and two of Plana's co-stars from "Resurrection Boulevard," Marisol Nichols and Nicholas Gonzalez. The film received two 2001 Alma Award nominations for Best Made for Television Movie and Best Ensemble Acting and won the 2001 Imagen Award for Best Made for Television Movie. Plana's television episodic debut was 2001's "Resurrection Boulevard's" "Saliendo," which garnered critical acclaim, receiving a GLAAD Award for best dramatic episode of the year and a SHINE Award nomination for sensitive portrayal of sexuality. He has directed several episodes of Nickelodeon's hit series, "The Brothers Garcia," receiving a Humanitas award nomination and winning the Imagen Award for its third season finale, "Don't Judge a Book by its Cover." He also directed the season finale of "Greetings from Tucson" for the Warner Brothers Network.

Plana is also the co-founder and executive artistic director of the East L.A. Classic Theatre, a group comprised primarily of Hispanic American theatre professionals. For the past 10 years, the East L.A. Classic Theatre has been dedicated to serving the Latino community through educational outreach programs to primary and secondary schools and through bi-lingual productions of traditional and contemporary classics.

Plana is also committed to developing new works. He has directed several critically acclaimed theatre pieces, including Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Don Jose de la Mancha*, Nancy De Los Santos' *The Answer to My Prayer*, Rick Nájera's *The Pain of the Macho* for the HBO New Writer's Festival, Guillermo Reyes' *The Seductions of Johnny Diego*, *A Heart's Eye*, adapted from James Agee's book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, for the mark Taper Forum and Rogelio Martinez' *Adrift* for South Coast Repertory Theatre.

As an actor, Plana has starred in more than 70 feature films, including "JFK," "Nixon," "Salvador," "An Officer and a Gentleman," "Lone Star," "Three Amigos," "Born in East L.A.," "El Norte," "187," "Primal Fear," "Romero," "One Good Cop," "Havana," "The Rookie," "Silver Strand" and "Picking Up the Pieces" with Woody Allen. He recently appeared in the action thriller "Half Past Dead" with Steven Segal, Morris Chestnut and JaRul, "The Lost City" with Andy Garcia, Bill Murray and Dustin Hoffman and Disney's highly acclaimed "GOAL, The Dream Begins!" His soon-to-be-released feature film projects include "El Muerto" starring Wilbur Valderama, *Justified*, "Towards Darkness," and "American East" with Tony Shaloub.

On television he recently starred in the Showtime Original Miniseries, "Fidel," as the notorious Cuban dictator, Batista, as well as Showtime's "Noriega: God's Favorite." He has portrayed leading roles in four critically acclaimed television series "Veronica Claire" for Lifetime, "Bakersfield P.D." for FOX and Steven Bocco's "Total Security" and "City of Angels" for ABC. He has also appeared in several Emmy award winning programs such as "Sweet Fifteen," "Drug Wars: The Camarena Story," "The Burning Season: The Life and Death of Chico Mendes" and a special episode of "L.A. Law," which also received an Imagen Award.

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Plana has portrayed recurring roles on NBC's award winning drama "The West Wing" as the U.S. Secretary of State, FOX'S "24," "CSI," "Monk," "Almost Perfect" and "The Closer" for TNT.

Plana has been very active in live theatre. On Broadway, his credits include *Zoot Suit* and *The Boys of Winter*. He has performed leads at the Mark Taper Forum in *Zoot Suit*, *Richard III*, *Widows* and *The Reader*.

He has appeared in a wide variety of productions in many venues, including *Figaro Gets a Divorce* at the La Jolla Playhouse, *Rum and Coke*, *Cuba and His Teddy Bear* and *Bang Bang Blues* at the New York Public Theatre, *Rum and Coke*, *Charlie Bacon and His Family* at the South Coast Repertory Theatre, *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit* (The Musical) at the Pasadena Playhouse, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* at the California Shakespearean Festival, *Fugue* at Syracuse Stage Company, Ariel Dorfmann's *Mascara* at the Arizona Theatre Company and most recently received high critical acclaim for his portrayal of Santiago in Nilo Cruz' *Anna in the Tropics* at South Coast Repertory, the first Latino play to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

He is the recipient of two Nosotros Golden Eagle awards for outstanding work in film and television, as well as five Los Angeles Dramalogue Awards for Theatre. In 2005 he was honored a Educator of the Year by Loyola Marymount University's Department of Education and in 2006 received the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Millennium Momentum Foundation at the Music Center. In addition to his extensive involvement in the media arts and education, he also serves on various boards including the American Red Cross, the Center Theatre Group Diversity Advisory Committee, Loyola High School Board of Regents and the Latino Alumni Society, Latino-Byzantine Quarter Foundation and the Young Musicians Foundation created by Henry Mancini.

He is married to actress, Ada Maris and is the proud father of Alejandro and Isabel.

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**Mercedes Renard (Ally)** – Mercedes is an award-winning actress of the screen and television. She started her career as a model at the age of 16, working with such celebrated photographers as Bruce Webber and Albert Watson. After modeling in Europe, Renard began her career as an actress. She landed her first feature role in "Hitch" alongside Will Smith and Eva Mendes. Renard most recently shot "Far Away Eyes" in Hong Kong and had a supporting role in "The Breakdown." She can be seen as the lead in "Hermosa y Fuerte" directed by Carlos Anibal. She has guest starred on several television series, including: "House," "Law and Order" and "NCIS." Outside of acting, Renard is a strong supporter of Women for Women International, a charity that helps woman survivors of war rebuild their lives.

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**Sandra Santiago (Valeria)** - Having worked in television, movies, as well as the Broadway stage, this versatile actress, Sandra Santiago, was last seen on stage at The Cherry Lane Theatre in *Manipulation* as *Dona Beatrice* and Lincoln Center's production of the musical, *Bernarda* opposite Phylicia Rashad, as "Angustias."

Her first love, the stage, Santiago made her Broadway debut in Arthur Miller's 1st Tony award nominated revival of *A View from the Bridge* as "Catherine" opposite Tony LoBianco. She has continued to move in and out of theatre and TV, last seen in CBS's "Person of Interest" and the short lived series "The Unusuals." She had a recurring role in the 1st season of FX's "Damages" starring Glenn Close. She played the recurring role of "Carlotta Vega" on ABC's "One Life to Live." Her most memorable TV role, was that of "Dt. Gina Calabrese" on the cult NBC show, "Miami Vice" for five seasons. She also portrayed twins, "Jeannie Cusamano" and "Joan" on David Chase's critically acclaimed HBO series, "The Sopranos". In between TV gigs, such as "Law and Order," she's done several small films, including Spike Lee's, "25th Hour" and even some shorts, such as "Bruja" filmed entirely in Panama in a remote Indian village. She's most happy working with her longtime mentor, Broadway director & choreographer, Graciela Daniele, who has utilized her musical talents in the Tony nominated musical *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Lincoln Center's musical production of *Hello Again* and the musical production of *Smile*. She even toured throughout the states playing "Eva" in the musical *Evita*. She has played opposite the likes of the great Sidney Poitier, the lovely Elizabeth Montgomery, the ever so talented, Antonio Banderas in the Tony award winning revival of *Nine* on Broadway, to the sublime Kevin Bacon, Off-Broadway.

On Daytime, Santiago created the role of "Carmen Santos" on CBS's longest running soap opera, "Guiding Light." For her role, Santiago was the 2002 recipient of an Alma Award for Outstanding Actress in a Daytime Drama and nominated several times. She's a member of the famed Actor's Studio in New York City. Santiago holds a BFA from the University of Miami and an MFA from Southern Methodist University. She was born in the Bronx. On occasion she performs her cabaret show at such NYC nightclubs as Dannys Skylight Rm. and the Metropolitan.

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**Rose Abdo (Marisol)** - Rose Abdo is best known for her television roles as "Gypsy" in 25 episodes of "Gilmore Girls" and Senorita Rodriguez on Disney's "That's So Raven." Other notable TV appearances include "2 Broke Girls," "Pretty Little Liars," "Malcolm in the Middle," "Monk" and "Curb Your Enthusiasm." Abdo is an alumnae of Second City, Chicago's famous improvisational theatre, and she's the recipient of an L.A. Weekly Solo Performer of the Year award. Her film appearances include "Bad Teacher," "My Best Friend's Wedding" and the Oscar nominated "Good Night & Good Luck." Abdo can be seen in the upcoming film "My Mother's Curse" with Barbra Streisand.

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**Ana Ayora (Yolanda)** – Ana Ayora has worked with the likes of Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson in the movie adaptation of “Marley & Me” for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and was also seen in ABC’s “Castle” with Nathan Fillion. Her big break was playing the role of Ana in the ABC Family drama “Lincoln Heights.” From there, she has continued to work in such independent features as “Phoenix Falling,” “The Big Wedding” and recently finished working on “Where Were You When the Lights Went Out in Rio?”

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**Rafael Amaya (Pablo)** - Born in the City of Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, Rafael Amaya began his journey to stardom. At an early age, he took a special interest in both theatre and music. Eager to share his talents with the world, he searched for work as an actor and musician, ultimately joining the music group Banda Almalafa. When the group eventually disbanded, Amaya took the opportunity to study at the Center for Arts Education Televisa (CEA) in Mexico City, which led to the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to audition and then join the mega successful group Garibaldi. While he was a member, they recorded two well-known hits: *Casado* and *Punto G*. Following his musical ventures, Amaya focused his attention on his true calling: acting. He soon became a familiar face on several soap operas, including, “Sin Pecado Concebido” (Conceived Without Sin), a performance for which he was nominated for two of Mexico’s highest honors- an El Heraldo Award for the Male Revelation of the Year and a TV y Novelas Award for the same category.

His success continued as he worked on a string of hit soaps. Among them were “Salome” alongside heavyweights Guy Eckerred and Edith Gonzalez, “Amar Otra Vez” (Loving Again) featuring Angelica Rivera, Valentino Lanus and Iran del Castillo and “Las Dos Caras de Ana” (The Two Faces Ana).

During this time, Amaya also began to segue into films, starring in “Desnudos” (Naked) with Karyme Lozano and “Así del Precipicio” alongside Ana de la Reguera and Gabriela Platas. Ultimately, his passionate turn as a homosexual man in the latter film garnered him Mexico’s highest cinematographic honor, “La Diosa de Plata” (The Silver Goddess - awarded by Mexico’s Film Journalists) for Best Actor in a Movie Role.

Amaya’s rise to stardom only continued from there. He enjoyed working behind the scenes as a producer for the short film “El Descubrimiento” (The Discovery) and again on the feature “Pepe & Santo vs. America.” He stepped back in front of the camera in the highly rated Telemundo soap “Alguien Te Mira” (Someone’s Watching You) and then starred as El Güero Dávila opposite Kate del Castillo in the wildly anticipated “La Reina del Sur” (Queen of the South), based on Arturo Perez Reverte’s critically acclaimed novel of the same name. The series debuted as the highest rated soap in Telemundo’s history and maintained top ratings throughout its run.

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Hot on the heels of these hits, Amaya had the honor of co-hosting the prestigious Billboard Latin Music Awards in 2011 and began to branch out internationally. In Spain, he took over the airwaves with two national TV series "Hospital Central," a show that is best described as the "Grey's Anatomy" of Spain and "Doctor Mateo."

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**George Contreras (Rico)** - Born and raised in East Los Angeles, George L. Contreras is the 8<sup>th</sup> of 9 children. In 1969 his parents Cruz and Florina Contreras came to the United States from a small "Rancho" in Sianore de Topia, Durango, Mexico in search of a better life. With humility and a strong work ethic, Contreras was raised to pursue the American Dream. After graduating high school, while attending Mt. San Antonio College, Contreras started his career as a fashion model and commercial actor. After obtaining his AA degree in Film, Contreras decided to take time off from school and dedicate himself fully to his dream of being a film actor. He enrolled in a two year conservatory at the Laura Henry Acting Studio in Santa Monica, CA. Since then, he's continued to develop his technique through a combination of attending various Master Classes and working on set of independent feature films and commercials, gaining as many perspectives as possible.

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