



Sheila Alonzo



Q: Of all the characters you play, which one is your favourite and why?

A: My favourite is the "early Filipino" or Babaylan in the prologue. She represents the indigenous farmers and healers.

Q: Which other character would you like to play or explore more and why?

A: I would like to play and explore the character of Inang Bayan (mother land) because she represents the idea of a nation from the gaze of Europeans. With an academic background in political science who is studying Philippine history, I wonder how things would have been different if Jose Rizal's wish for reform (for more Spanish government rule of the Philippines) came true.

Q: For the audition, we were asked to bring a body of work, what did you bring for your audition and why?

A: I tore a piece of writing from my journal, edited and performed it as spoken word. The piece was titled "Of Minarets and Green Parrots" about the feeling of displacement and belonging. Jose Rizal travelled through Europe (and exiled) like I did growing up as an expat and later, for my education. I can relate with the feeling of not belonging and constantly having to reinvent oneself.

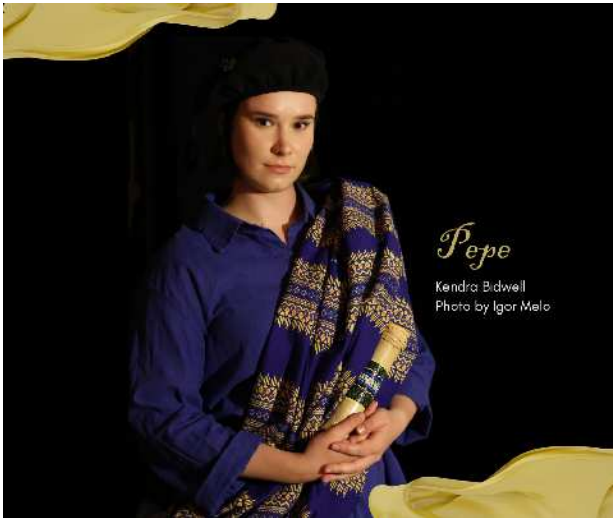
Q: What do you have to say about the movement pieces or the process of using drama therapy for the choreography?

A: I enjoyed the process of using drama therapy or collaborative theatre to reach the choreography for the movement pieces in the play. It helped bring the ensemble together in an organic way that also gave a certain freedom of expression and surprise.

Q: What outfit, accessory or prop would you like to keep and why?

A: I would like to keep the maria clara top as a formal wear because when I wear it, I move differently in it and feel the familiarity of the fabric and butterfly-wing sleeves on my skin.

Kendra Bidwell



Q: Of all the characters you play, which one is your favourite and why?

A: Josephine Bracken is my favourite! She has incredible strength, passion, and a caring heart; she even joined the Katipunan!

Q: Which other character would you like to play or explore more and why?

A: Also Josephine Bracken. I would love to further explore her backstory and how that plays into the choices she makes in the show.

Q: How much did you know about Jose Rizal before joining the cast?

A: I did not know much about Jose Rizal beforehand. It has been a great experience getting to dive into this play and learn about him, Filipino history, and Filipino culture.

Q: What do you have to say about the movement pieces or the process of using drama therapy for the choreography?

A: I really enjoy collaborative theatre, so I appreciated that creating the movement pieces for Pepe were also a collaborative experience.

Q: What outfit, accessory or prop would you like to keep and why?

A: I would love to keep Josephine's wig—just to throw on whenever I need a fancy updo!

James Gonzales



Q: Of all the characters you play, which one is your favourite and why?

A: Mos def it'd be the Katipunero. As I've seen in history books and pics, Clara found the right shirt and even dyed it for a much used shirt in the rice fields and in bloody battles. The pants to weapons were the completion of the outfit. In each play, I saw myself as a real Katipunero. And outside the stage, I'm still a Katipunero.

Q: Which other character would you like to play or explore more and why?

A: It's a tie between the Mango vendor and the Katipunero with the Filipino martial arts fighting sticks and the blade.

Mango vendor was simply a funny, light-hearted scene. However, it was a challenge for me to express without words to the mostly Caucasian audience how in the Philippines, the people will always serve anyone with a smile.

Katipunero was a great chance for me to share with the audience that we can fight with our soul... to the end.

Q: Name the "Top 3" things that you'll take away from this experience.

A: - Resilience

- The legend and history continues

- Coolest friendship!! With the cast and production, I have met new friends who've got the same heart for motherland. "Mabuhay ang Pilipinas".

Francis Matheu



Q: Which other character would you like to play or explore more and why?

A: What interests me are the antagonists in the play. They are the ones who give drama and colour to an already complicated narrative. I love the idea of fleshing out the inner monologue of Pepe and seeing through his eyes how he saw and felt about his enemies. Pepe, as told in history books, experienced their wrath in varying degrees throughout his lifetime. From as a child of ten; to as a teenager; as a college student; as a medical practitioner; as a balik-bayan; as a prisoner, until his dying moment. His enemies were definitely the characters I loved exploring.

Q: How much did you know about Jose Rizal before producing the play?

A: Throughout all my scholastic years, from elementary to college, I was bombarded with history subjects and current events courses. In each grade level, at least during my time, we frequently revisit Jose Rizal and the history of the Spanish colonization in the country. As part of our curriculum, in our version of grades 8 and 9, students are required to read the Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo novels respectively, and we will go on field trips to watch professional play versions of these novels. Every Filipino child learns about the life and times of Jose Rizal early on.

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Q: What do you have to say about the movement pieces or the process of using drama therapy for the choreography?

A: I would say we have accomplished something unique in terms of our process and our final product. We have customized the movement pieces based on many factors -what's accessible and available to us, strengths and limitations- all of these made up the composition of what we have now for Pepe which I am pleased.

Q: What outfit, accessory or prop would you like to keep and why?

A: I am not sure what this question is for but my answer would be - the costumes and properties belong to the past. We have different and rather complicated needs now. But if there is something I would like to retain, they are the books. I still find it difficult and less interesting to read electronically. I still enjoy flipping pages, underlining poetic lines and quotes, and smelling the pages. If there is something I would like to revive though, it's the vintage chain watches. They can still tell time and look elegant when worn.

Q: Name the "Top 3" things that you'll take away from this experience.

A: To continue to trust my artistic process, because it works.

I realized that I know more than what I think I know. (Thank God!)

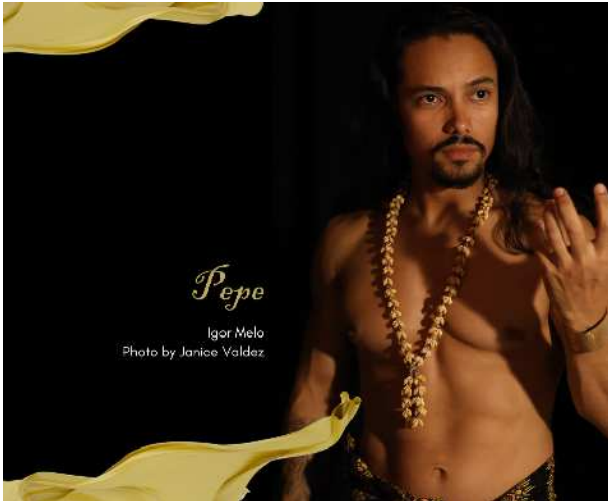
Learn. Learn. Learn. The abundance of lessons learned in this production is unprecedented. You become unlimited when you learn your lessons.

Spoiler alert

Q: What do you think is the main message in Pepe?

A: Oh, I wouldn't want to give it away early on in this interview. The answer to this question is, unfortunately, another pertinent question that the audience will discover as the story of Rizal unfolds on stage. Isn't that exciting? They have to watch the play not only to know the answer, but so they will understand as well.

Igor Melo



Q: Of all the characters you play, which one is your favourite and why?

A: My favourite character is "Mayor Vivencio del Rosario, slave of the friars, who frequently dined at home." He is the perfect example of a respected figure, a wealthy powerful man who was close to the people and even used to have dinner with them. Who was thought to be a friend turned out to be just one more Spanish sadist by sending Teodora, Jose Rizal's mother, to jail for two years, and after that, forced her to walk a 50km distance from Calamba to Santa Cruz, Laguna. This kind of villain is for me the best representation of how they used to use people from other nations for their own benefit without getting their hands dirty.

Q: Which other character would you like to play or explore more and why?

A: Andrés Bonifacio, although he was only mentioned and not played by any actor during the play, I would like to explore the other face of the Philippine revolution that he represents. Whereas Jose Rizal used his pen as weapon, Bonifacio, the founder of the Katipunan, would wield machetes to fight for

Q: How much did you know about Jose Rizal before joining the cast?

A: Honestly, I barely knew anything about the Philippines history or Jose Rizal before joining the cast. I knew about their natural beauties and warm people's culture. What I did not expect was their culture and even history would be so like mine. As a Latino, I can say that Brazil had a similar history regarding colonization and exploitation by Europeans countries. I could relate with several points that I learned about Jose Rizal and his history, and that was somehow comforting to know.

Q: Name the "top 3 things" you'll take away from this experience.

A: The life experience of being an actor in a play and the people I met.

The knowledge about the Philippines history, and their people and culture.

The acting skills learned and developed by going on a theater stage for the first time, especially playing several characters, which demanded quick changes of outfit, emotions, and mindset.

Spoiler alert

Q: What do you think is the main message in Pepe?

A: For me, the main message in Pepe is "today nothing has changed". It highlights how our society still works in a white supremacy mode. It might not be too obvious in some scenarios, but it is there, it exists, it happens everyday. It is frustrating to observe that if you do not behave how they expect, if you do not "want to be white yourself" you are seen as a weird being. Most of the things that used to happen during José Rizal's time still happen today in a veiled way. Our science and technology have greatly evolved, but we are still far from catching up that evolution as human beings.

Janice Valdez



Q: Of all the characters you play, which one is your favourite and why?
A: Let's see: The Modern Child was super fun to dance and express youth, Inang Bayan involved looking like royalty which was fun for how unreal it is to my everyday life. A mysterious message in a lamp with Sister and holding a gun as Sisa are compelling moments. I can't say I have a favourite because I appreciate each of them distinctly. But if I were to choose one I looked forward to playing most each show it would be, for a variety of reasons, Leonor Rivera. For one, hers was the most elaborate costume of them all and I enjoyed the ritual of doing her hair, getting help with her jewellery, and playing with her fan and handkerchiefs. Her dance opposite Pepe was flirtatious and playful with a touch of restrained fire. To play a character who dwells in childhood love and melancholic longing, Leonor was a pleasant departure from heavier moments I had with Sisa and Sister.

Q: Which character would you like to play or explore more and why?
A: I would like to explore / learn more about women who upheld and inspired José Rizal - his mother, Josephine Bracken, and Leonor Rivera.

Q: What do you have to say about the movement pieces or the process of using drama therapy for the choreography?

A: This could be a thesis, but in short - I employed a blend of strategies from my dama, acting and dance/movement experiences. Ensemble Thinking exercises mentored to me by Julie Lebel of Foolish Operations in Vancouver was a key guide in how I composed with the cast. While I have a drama therapy background, I would not say drama therapy was applied to our composition processes.

Q: Name the "Top 3" things that you'll take away from this experience.

A: - A renewed appreciation of old friendships and gratitude for new ones.

- I would say memories making the ensemble pieces but over time there's a good chance I'll forget the details of our process. What I do believe will last are the lessons that will live on in my body from having danced the characters to life.

- Joey Ayala's voice singing "Ultimo Adios".

Spoiler alert

Q: What do you think is the main message in Pepe?

A: The play illustrates a man who was called a hero yet considers himself to be ordinary and imprisoned still in death. For me, the main message is in one's answer to the last line of the play "Are you prisoner still?"