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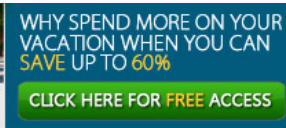
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## Ima is back and haunting 'Aida'

THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2011 16:43 JET VALLE / GAB FAB



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FOR the last 10 years, Ima Castro has been based in London. The artist who popularized the songs "Shine" and "Naniligaw, Naniligaw" packed her bags and transferred to the United Kingdom when she was cast as Kim in Miss Saigon.

But now, Ima is back and in good spirits as she will play the lead in Aida, the musical written by Elton John and Tim Rice. It is about a Nubian princess who falls in love with a captain in the Egyptian army after her capture and enslavement by the Egyptian empire. As forbidden love blossom between them, the young lovers are forced to face death or part forever.

Brought to the Philippine stage by Atlantis Productions, Aida opens tonight and will run at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Makati, until July 10.

**Welcome back! How does it feel to be back in Manila?**



GAB FAB Jet Valle

Thank you! I am very happy to be back home. I didn't realize how much I missed being here. The heat, food, friends and family, showbiz, the car horns! A lot! Of course, I've missed the warmth of the Filipinos

**Have you visited your hometown Tiaong, Quezon?**

Yes, I spent 10 days in Tiaong with my mom, nieces and nephews before I started rehearsing for Aida. It was my first time to be with them since my dearest father passed on. So it was a bit emotional but happy to have spent time with them.

**You're back for Aida. How does it feel playing the lead role?**

A bit nervous but very excited! I love the entire show and music. The cast is amazing! I'm very proud to be a part of this production. Understanding my character, Aida, was exhausting but our director Chari Arespacochaga helped me a great deal to get to know her and get into her heart, body and soul. You will definitely see Aida and not Ima when you come see the show. Her nobility as a Nubian princess, her strength and spontaneity, her love for her people and Radames (the captain), her being very adventurous will all emerge in a little over two hours of great entertainment through this brilliant piece of musical theater.

**What song is your most favorite and why?**

Hmmm...it has to be "Elaborate Lives". It's one of Radames and Aida's duets, which will be heard twice in the show but in two completely different scenarios. I don't want to spoil it for those who don't know the story but I'll put it this way: the first time you hear it is when they show their love for each other for the first time, and the second is when

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they find out what their future will be.

**Tell me about London. You've been based there for 10 years now. How's life there?**

London is beautiful...but it is not home. Everything is fast-paced, people work nonstop, some have two or three jobs. Actors work part time as bartenders, waiters, receptionists, ushers, etc., in between jobs. You won't survive there if you wait for a show to land on your lap. I'm very lucky to be doing concerts around the UK and outside the country, like Dubai and the USA. I've performed in cruise ships, as well, but I've experienced working as a part-time receptionist, café/deli staff member and theater company phone operator, while waiting for auditions and castings, and I'm very proud of that.... I know that I will survive wherever the current takes me but I also know that I will never give up performing and acting. It was in London that I got to meet the director of The Fifth Element, Big Blue and Leon: The Professional, Luc Besson, who offered me to be in one of his films. He was such a cool guy. I never felt like I was being interviewed by this very powerful filmmaker. When it's gonna happen? I don't know but I hope it will be soon!

**Claude Michel Schönberg called you his "Miracle from Manila." How does it feel?**

It was a big confidence boost for me as I was lacking in that department at the time, and everyone who knows Mr. Schönberg would tell you that he is one of the most honest Frenchman in the musical theater world and will bluntly say to your face when he's not happy with what you are doing. So it felt so good.

**What are your other plans now that you're in Manila? Any recording plans?**

I was told about a light CD, which will contain songs from the shows I've been a part of. So fingers-crossed. It would be nice to record another pop album too. Who knows?

**After Aida, you're off to do In The Heights. Tell me more about it.**

When Bobby (Garcia, the head of Atlantis Productions) offered me to be in it, I bought the soundtrack the next day, listened to some of the songs and initially thought that it's not my cup of tea. I was really tempted to say no as I never liked hip-hop and rap music. But then I gave myself time to listen to the whole CD and found out the story of the show and fell in love with it. I am a hip-hop/rap music convert now and I LOVE Lin-Manuel Miranda! What a genius! It's about the Latin community in Washington Heights in New York; it shows their every day lives, their hopes and dreams, and in the center of all that is this corner shop, The Bodega, where people get their coffee, lottery tickets, meet the neighbors, gossip and all. In a way, it's very Filipino, and very my life growing up.

**I heard you refused to have an English accent even if you've based in London for 10 years now. Bakit?**

Hahaha! If required for work, yes, I put on an accent pero kapag Filipino naman ang kausap ko, e 'wag na 'no. Pahirapan ko pa ba ang sarili ko, magdurugo lang ilong ko!

In Photo: Ima Castro

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Singapore, dollar	35.2835
Australia, dollar	46.4603
Saudi Arabia, riyal	115.5748
Saudi Arabia, riyal	11.6002
Brunei, dollar	35.1410
Indonesia, rupiah	0.0250
Thailand, baht	1.4144
United Arab Emirates, dirham	11.8422
European Monetary Union, euro	62.7836
China, yuan	6.7392
Malaysia, ringgit	14.2744
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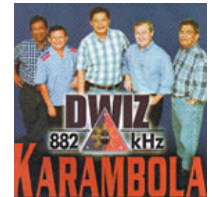
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