


ENTERTAINMENT

A surefire recipe for fun

By Adrienne Sarmiento-Buenaventura (The Philippine Star) Updated March 15, 2010 12:00 AM



Rachel Alejandro sizzles in sugary-sweet and sexy roles Kate Monster and Lucy the Slut

MANILA, Philippines - Avenue Q is back in Manila!

There are obvious reasons why Manila can't get enough of Avenue Q.

Since its initial staging in 2007, it has been making audiences laugh for over three years now, with three sold-out runs in Manila, and a sold-out month-long run in Singapore.

You've got richly talented performers breathing life into the cute Sesame Street-like puppets. Definitely not your ordinary furry friends, since they spew hilarious risqué lines, and reveal more than a bit of puppet nudity. It's boldness at its funniest!

And then there you have the music and lyrics that blend silliness and sensitivity, making you misty-eyed for a second, and then left in stitches with its hard-hitting quips.

Quite the delicious sonic and visual brew, it's a musical guaranteed to make you leave the theater laughing your cares away. There's puppet madness and zany characters like the people in your neighborhood. You'll find that the funny and inspiring story could very well be your own.

Princeton is a bright-eyed college graduate who comes to New York City armed with big hopes and dreams. Since he can't afford to pay rent for a place in Avenue A, he settles for an empty place in Avenue Q, where he encounters outrageous neighbors with whom he gets to share dreams, frustration, friendship, love and a whole lot of laughter.

Those who caught the preview night of Avenue Q restaged by Atlantis Productions were treated to a wickedly delicious combination of satire and sweet song. The musical's performers (both the humans and the hairier ones) did not disappoint with this dynamite recipe for fun.

Leading the 2010 cast are the ladies director Bobby Garcia calls "the angels of Atlantis:" Rachel Alejandro, back onstage as Kate Monster/Lucy the Slut, again showed sizzle in sugary-sweet and sexy roles. The veteran theater actress thinks the beach is her idea of fun, while she shares, "The theme closest to my heart from this musical is how anything can change. One of my favorite songs is For Now, which reminds us that even if it happens that your life sucks now, it's not always gonna suck."

Aiza Seguerra once again plays child star Gary Coleman, and attacks the role with gusto and adds dimensions to her character as never seen before. Her idea of fun is being with friends, and eating out. When Asked which message struck her the most from the musical, she says simply, "Acceptance — it's the acceptance of how things change."

Frenchie Dy is a complete joy to watch as Christmas Eve, and hearing her sing how to "ruv" someone reminds us why she is a star in a million. Frenchie, who considers time with her family, friends, and boyfriend fun, also loves the message of the song For Now and how so many things are temporary, and how "we should treasure what we have."

Thea Tadiar, who works with the most puppets in the show, is the amazing trooper who makes dishing out the music and lines and complicated puppetry a complete breeze.

Their male counterparts are Felix Rivera, who plays Princeton, considers “not having to worry about anything and not hurting anybody” as his idea of fun, and can truly relate to the feeling of an eternal search for a purpose. He kept the audience gawking at his puppet and vocal skill.

Joel Trinidad, who makes Trekkie Monster come alive, finds movies and books fun, and relates the most to “valuing the things you have while you have it.” His comedic timing and skill kept the laughs coming during preview night.

Calvin Millado being his outgoing self, highlights his appreciation for friends, and how we should all have fun, as he thinks “life is too short.” In the musical, he plays Brian, hubby of Christmas Eve. Calvin still sounded good after a brief respite from theater.

The audience clearly appreciated the broad spectrum of life experiences the human characters and puppets lived out on stage, with titters, giggles and guffaws filling the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium in RCBC Plaza.

Sighted on the musicals preview night were commercial model and host Lexi Schulze, TV actress Sarah Christophers, musical theater actress Cris Villonco, Billy Crawford and Nikki Gil.

Avenue Q serves up a sweet treat: Touching life lessons sandwiched between huge helpings of comedy about racism, Internet porn, fantasies and making love, money, and being gay.

There will be no surprise when all roads lead to Avenue Q in the next few days. Don't miss this year's run.

Directed by Bobby and Chari Arespacochaga, the musical runs until March 27, Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Makati City.

For details, call Atlantis Productions at 892-7078.

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