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Disney's THE LITTLE MERMAID Premieres in Manila, 11/18

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Friday, May 20, 2011; Posted: 03:05 PM - by [Oliver Oliveros](#)

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Manila, Philippines, May 20, 2011 -- Filipino theatergoers should feel extra grateful to [Atlantis Productions](#) (Next to Normal, Legally Blonde) for going the extra mile in bringing some of the most recent Broadway shows to the country -- at the same time, for creating new audiences for contemporary theater.

Young, bold and enterprising [Atlantis Productions](#) wraps up its 2011 season with the Asian premiere of Disney's stage adaptation of *The Little Mermaid* from November 18 to December 11 at the Meralco Theatre -- This comes right on the heels of [Atlantis Productions'](#) own productions of Broadway's smash musicals *Next to Normal*, Disney's *Aida* and *In The Heights*.

[Atlantis Productions'](#) upcoming staging of the Disney franchise will deliver a slew of firsts:

- This will be the first international production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* in Asia. The show opened on Broadway in 2008 and ran 685 regular performances and 50 preview performances.
- The production will launch the musical theater debuts of mainstream recording and concert artists Rachelle Ann Go and Erik Santos. Go will play the little mermaid, Ariel; Santos will play Ariel's one true love, Prince Eric.
- This will be the first production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* that incorporates Asian elements into its virtual under the sea scenes. A majority of the cast members will play puppeteer-actors, who control wayang or shadow puppets, bunraku or traditional Japanese puppets and nang kaloung or Cambodian puppets, during certain parts of the show.

The show's Co-Director Bobby Garcia told us that his theater company is so thrilled to be "bringing another beloved Disney classic to the Philippine stage. ([Atlantis Productions](#) staged Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* six years ago) Disney's *The Little Mermaid* had started the renaissance of Disney's animation department and had some of the most memorable songs written for a classic animation such as [Alan Menken](#) and [Howard Ashman](#)'s 'Part of Your World,' 'Kiss the Girl' and the Oscar winning *Best Original Song* 'Under the Sea.'"

"Rachelle Ann possesses all the qualities of Ariel. She's spunky, adventurous, kind, generous and she's a dreamer too. She also has one of the most beautiful voices we've heard. I'm sure she'll thrill audiences the way she thrilled us during the auditions. On the other hand, I've known Erik since he started his show biz career. He's one of the most hardworking and passionate performers around. He has an incredible singing voice. And I'm thrilled that he's finally making his musical theater debut as Prince Eric in *The Little Mermaid*," Garcia, who will be co-directing the show with Chari Arespacochaga, added.

Staging Disney's *The Little Mermaid* is no easy feat to pull off. Even the show's songwriter, Menken, at first, had his doubts.

"I really hadn't thought about *The Little Mermaid* for the stage, for the challenge of being under the sea," he said in a previous interview. "As everyone knows, that was one of the difficulties. But once the show's Broadway director [Francesca Zambello](#) started working with scenographer [George Tsvpin](#) -- his sets use light in this brilliant way that takes it on to look aquatic or look like the sea, along with all the other stage craft that's available to us -- then it became possible."

The expensive production cost also took toll on the original Broadway venture, which had a full-scale ship with sailors on board; lavish sets and costumes; and merfolks strapped on their rollerblades instead of their flying harnesses. The show closed on Broadway two years ago. Its first U.S. national tour was scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010. However, Disney later announced that the tour will be rescheduled this year.

We saw one of the last performances of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway, which starred [Chelsea Morgan Stock](#) as the lovelorn mermaid, Ariel; [Drew Seeley](#) as Ariel's love interest, Prince Eric; [Faith Prince](#) as the sea witch, Ursula; and [Norm Lewis](#) as the sea king, King Triton two summers ago. Even though some of Menken and Broadway lyricist [Glenn Slater](#)'s additional songs were rather plain and unmemorable and the towering King Triton on his rollerblades was downright distracting, the show was perfectly tailored fit for young theatergoers.



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Oliver Oliveros writes for BroadwayWorld.com (Philippines) to promote his home country's vibrant theater scene and excellent practitioners. With over 15 years of professional experience in the fields of public relations and corporate communication, he finds himself most passionate about arts advocacy, especially with programs that advocate for Asian minorities and the arts. Oliver is currently completing a master's degree in public relations at New York University. Follow him at twitter.com/OliverOliveros.

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