

Carla Guevarra spells it out



Life

Written by Gab Fab / Jet Valle

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Carla Guevarra, one of the country's finest musical theater performers, received rave reviews from every newspaper in Singapore for playing the dual roles of Kate Monster/Lucy The Slut in *Avenue Q*, which played to packed houses at the Esplanade Theater last November.

She now returns to the Philippine stage in Atlantis Productions' staging of the hit Tony award-winning musical comedy *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, which goes onstage on March 20 and will run until through April 4. (Call Atlantis Productions: 892-7078 for tickets.)



GAB FAB
Jet Valle

Spelling Bee chronicles the experience of six adolescent outsiders vying for the spelling championship of a lifetime. Through the course of the competition, they learn that winning isn't everything and that losing doesn't necessarily make you a loser. Each performance night, *Spelling Bee* will also feature two surprise celebrity guests along with two audience volunteers who will join the cast as onstage guest spellers. Each new foursome guarantees that each night will be a truly unique and unforgettable experience.

You recently won rave reviews in Singapore for your participation in *Avenue Q*. How does it feel?

I feel very blessed that I'm able to work hard to utilize and showcase the talents God has given me, and that people here and abroad are able to appreciate it.

You tried out mainstream showbiz back in the '90s and went back to theater. Why so? Did you get burned-out?

Theater has always been my home. I still do a little bit of TV, mostly as a guest performer or a support character.

What about the past intrigues, like when they pitted you against Vanessa del Bianco when you did a TV series with ABS-CBN. Looking back, how can you sum up your experience in showbiz?

Anything that has to do with the performing arts—theater, mainstream showbiz, concerts or corporate shows—is always an exhilarating experience for me. Intrigues and politics are all part of the job. I'm actually flattered that in the short time that I was in mainstream showbiz, I was being pitted and compared with popular TV personalities.

You first gained fame as Kim in *Miss Saigon* in London. Do you miss doing that role that put you on the map?

I was the main understudy for both the roles of Kim and Gigi. Being able to perform as Kim on the Theatre Royal Drury Lane stage in West End was truly an amazing and incomparable experience. I'd be over the moon if I was given a chance to portray the role again now because at that time, I was very young and inexperienced. There are a lot of things I would like to do with the role now that I have experienced being in love, getting hurt and being a mother. It is very different when you have actually experienced what your character is going through rather than trying to imagine what it would be like, then try to portray it.

You're now a mom of two kids. Is it hard being a mom and a theater actress, considering that theater takes more time than a so-called normal career?

On the contrary, I have the luxury of choosing the productions I take part of. So I make sure I have enough time in my hands to spend with the kids even if I have to be part of a show. It only becomes difficult when I'm not able to attend certain school affairs when these coincide with my rehearsal schedule, and when I'm required to perform abroad. My husband is now based in Jakarta, so I fly there as often as I can. Our house is right beside my parents' and the children's room is connected to my parents' house. I did this on purpose knowing I will be traveling a lot and didn't want my children to feel abandoned every time I did. I normally also try my best to work around my children's scholastic calendar so as not to miss out on the most important school events.

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Tell me about *Spelling Bee*. What attracted you to this musical?

Atlantis is known for producing current and award-winning materials. *Spelling Bee* is no exception. It is about a bunch of overachievers from the age of nine to 15, all vying to win the Spelling Bee Cup, each having their own story to tell. Every performance will be graced by two celebrity and two audience volunteer guest spellers. So expect a lot of surprises from the cast as we ourselves have no idea who our director Bobby (Garcia) has lined up to be our guest spellers. I had one of the best experiences in my life working with Atlantis on *Avenue Q*, and I will always grab the opportunity to experience that again and again. That's why when I got a text message from Bobby asking me if I wanted to read for a part in *Spelling Bee*, I literally fell off my chair and said "yes" without a moment's hesitation.

Do you think Pinoys are ready for this musical?

That is what's great about Pinoys. We're always ready for anything. There's comedy, there's singing, there's dancing and there's drama. Yes, Pinoys will surely love the show.

What's next for Carla Guevarra?

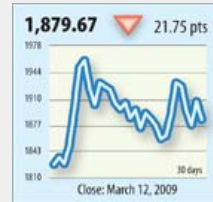
Spelling Bee this March, an ongoing show called *Flow* for Pagcor, *Songs for a New World* for 9 Works in May, *The Wedding Singer* also for 9 Works in October, and hopefully *Sweeney Todd* for Repertory Philippines in December. I also have some corporate shows, TV and film work here and there. And it's still not confirmed but there are talks that we will be taking *Spelling Bee* to Singapore this June, and hopefully an Asian tour. Let's keep our fingers crossed!

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March 12, 2009 Source: Bloomberg Terminal, Bloomberg



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