


## Entertainment

### Sacrifice bridges the gap of east and west

By Adrienne Sarmiento-Buenaventura (The Philippine Star) Updated December 03, 2010 12:00 AM Comments (0) 



Broadway/West End film producer Toby Simkin (left) chose our very own musical theater director Bobby Garcia to helm the first-class West End production

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MANILA, Philippines - Two formidable figures in theater are working together to come up with a full-scale, first class West End production, revolving around the themes of love, duty to one's country and one's destiny, greed, betrayal, and ultimately *Sacrifice*. This is what the upcoming musical *Sacrifice* is all about.

These two men are Toby Simkin, Broadway / West End film producer, and our very own multi-awarded [musical theater](#) director Bobby Garcia.

The synopsis on the official *Sacrifice* website is as follows: "*Sacrifice* is the [story](#) of China's greatest emperor meeting the last of China's four ancient beauties who adopts China's most ruthless villain. Together they create China's greatest love story... and *Sacrifice*."

This is most certainly something to watch out for, since there has never been an Asian musical that has focused on Western audiences. In the telling of the beautiful and historical love story that is *Sacrifice* it will hopefully inspire audiences in the way they feel about Asia.

Here are some thoughts shared by these two key players who are shaping this gargantuan of a show that proves to be lush, tragic, emotional, and powerful.

Bobby Garcia is at the directorial helm for this huge project. Toby, who's Broadway and West End producing credits include *Victor/Victoria*, *Death of a Salesman*, and the Tony Award winning *I Am My Own Wife*, shares why he chose Bobby for the task: "*Sacrifice* is an Asian story that goes through complicated themes. The important thing when you're trying to develop a musical that is Asian and designed for foreign audiences is that you've got someone who can bridge the gap with Western sensibility but with an Asian background, somebody with the right mix and the right balance.

Bobby and I have known each other for five or six years, and over that time, it's been a friendship, but also a trusted creative relationship. I think he's a very astute director. He's got the love and passion in the development of new [musicals](#), and he's got that Asian sensibility and Asian background. He's young and aggressive. Putting all these together, I ignored everybody else and just went with Bobby, my number one choice."

Bobby Garcia expresses his own thoughts about being picked as director: "It is a thrill to be brought on board by Toby Simkin to direct *Sacrifice*. I haven't started directing it yet as we are very much in the early stages of developing the material and the music. It is so wonderful to be brought in this early in the process and to work with the writers on shaping *Sacrifice*. It will be like second skin to me by the time we actually get into rehearsals in a year or two."

He also shares about the themes that are bound to hold audiences spellbound. "Like all of the greatest stage musicals, *Sacrifice* is a timeless love story.

That is, for me, what is most appealing about the musical. It is lush, romantic, tragic and, ultimately, quite powerful."

Toby Simkin is quick to point out that while the setting of the story is in China, he stresses that in *Sacrifice* he has found a property that has an Asian base that could work for foreign audiences that isn't just about China. "I don't even like to call it a Chinese musical, it's more about the love, passion, and betrayal from an Asian perspective as a whole, not just about China, it's about Asia.

There are hauntingly beautiful songs on the *Sacrifice* website [www.sacrificeworldwide.com](http://www.sacrificeworldwide.com) that are posted for everyone to listen to.

These are actual demos that aid in the development of the production. Toby relates that "This allows me to garner feedback from our fan base, both Asians and Westerners, which allows me to understand what they particularly love, and how I can get back to the authors and tell them what really works. It isn't just about putting on a show, this is about putting together a show but first writing it the right way. It's important to me that this show doesn't just open for two weeks, but to aim for an open-ended run, not just on Broadway or at the West End, but later on, in other parts of the world. With that in mind, you really have to make sure you're doing things right, we are methodically going through the creative process, to study what works and what doesn't."

Filipina singer and theater actress Ima Castro's voice can be heard singing the lead in the demos, having been picked by Bobby: "I asked Ima if she could do our *Sacrifice* demos because I knew that her talent and star quality would help us develop the material further. Ima sounds amazing singing the songs. It's a perfect match. The demo recording phase of a new musical is a very important stage in its development and I am so thrilled that Ima has graciously joined us for this."

*Miss Saigon* alumnus Miguel Diaz also recorded some demo tracks and soon Leo Valdez and Felix Rivera will lend their voices to the demo recordings.

Both Bobby and Toby are facing the challenges of building every creative element and molding the pieces together to produce a stunning product.

Bobby, who is the Creative Director of his own theater company, Atlantis Productions and is currently directing *A Little Night Music* starring Dawn Zulueta is optimistic and eager about this new directorial endeavor.

"Every musical is a challenge to a director. Whether musical comedy or a dramatic musical, you have to really work on making sure the [story](#) is clear and is being told in the best way possible. That's never easy. But it's what I love to do."

Toby sees that the biggest challenge in putting together *Sacrifice* is simplification of the material. "We're trying to find a way to be true to the history of the material, but at the same time, really make it simple for everyone to understand.

The goal is to do this right, make sure that we have the right cast in place using an authentic Asian creative team, that we can showcase that Asia can do this even better than Westerners can."

With Bobby Garcia and Toby Simkin and their team pooling together their resources and creativity, it looks like *Sacrifice* will open doors for Asia to be a training ground for international world-class talent.

Toby encapsulated what audiences and ticket-buyers can expect from this amazing creative effort: "They can expect to be moved. Our particular focus is that young girl from South Dakota, that 17-year old girl who may be sitting in her house in South Dakota without a single inkling or knowledge about Asia. It's a goal to get her and the rest of the westerners inspired. The goal is to teach, educate, and inspire people about Asia."

A vision not at all far-fetched, we can anticipate *Sacrifice* the Musical to set up foundations for the future, and slowly aid in bridging the gap between East and West. Watch out for *Sacrifice*, which will make its world premiere in London's West End at a date soon to be announced.