

Bobby Garcia tapped to direct new West End musical

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WORLD CLASS DIRECTOR Bobby Garcia of Atlantis Productions

Bobby Garcia has quietly amassed a whole range of successes in fields that extend from television to film, live concerts, theater production to direction through his company Atlantis productions.

“It has been a great year for us at Atlantis, which is now 12 years old! I am so proud to be a part of the theater industry and I am so lucky to have had the opportunities I have had. ‘Blessed and grateful’ is an understatement to describe my current state of mind,” Garcia said.

And he has done this shuttling between Manila, Singapore and New York, which he loves to death, and anywhere else in the world where opportunities await him.

Garcia has amassed quite a CV as a theater director. He was also an associate director for “Miss Saigon” in Manila and was Hong Kong Disneyland’s first show director, opening the park in 2005.

Upcoming and future projects include the forthcoming West End musical “Sacrifice” (www.sacrificeworldwide.com), “In The Heights” and Disney’s “The Little Mermaid.”

It is apparent Bobby has conquered the Asian market, which makes his directorial

debut at London's West End something new and exciting.
The project is the new musical "Sacrifice."

"I have known Bobby for years and I greatly respect his unique ability to retell a foreign story to Asian audiences with his Asian productions of "The King and I," Rodgers & Hammerstein's "Cinderella" and "Hairspray," lead producer Toby Simkin was quoted as saying. "I have been searching for a director with an Asian sensibility to tell our love story to Western audiences. Bobby is the perfect choice."

Greatest love story

Bobby is naturally most excited to work at London's West End.



"Sacrifice," which presents a fusion of ancient Chinese and modern Western sounds in its score, is the story of Emperor Xuanzong (Tang Dynasty 618-907 AD) who steals the wife of his son.

In a quest to win back his wife, the son aligns himself with China's greatest villain. Together they create China's greatest love story and sacrifice, which shall only be revealed when the musical opens.

Bobby has a tight Manila schedule. Atlantis has just mounted the Elton John-Tim Rice rock musical "Aida."

"After that, I will be directing "In the Heights," which will star Nyoy Volante and then Chari (Arespacochaga) and I will be co-directing Disney's "The Little Mermaid" to end the year. We are also hoping for a repeat run of "Next to Normal" later in the year."

We had watched many of Bobby's productions in Manila and Singapore, particularly those involving our talent Anna Fegi before she opted to join Hong Kong Disney, then cruise-ship entertainment. Our latest was "Next to Normal" and must confess this was

more impressive, more daring in terms of material and direction for Bobby, and for his leads, Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo as the manic depressive wife, and the embattled husband Jett Pangan in his most demanding role ever.

Love affair

Bobby's love affair with musical theater began with "The King and I" with Yul Brynner in 1980 of London's West End. He initially didn't want to go but his mom dragged him to the theater.



"From the moment the overture started playing, I was hooked and didn't want to leave," he said. "It was really special for me to direct the Broadway Asia tour of "The King and I" in 2007. It was like I came full circle with how it all began for me."

Bobby's academic career started with undergraduate theater courses at Fordham, and Master in Directing for Theater from University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

He has directed 20 musicals and seven straight plays and if he had to choose, "the three shows closest to my heart are 'Rent,' 'A Little Night Music' and 'Next To Normal.'"

"'Next to Normal' is probably the one that has carved a permanent place in my heart. I am enthralled by the music and by the story of that show, and I adore and love everyone involved with our production from the cast to the crew."

Best in the world

We asked him if he believes the Filipino actor was at par with those on Broadway and the West End.



“I have always believed in the talent of the Filipino artist and have always, always done my best to showcase that talent whenever and where ever I can,” he said. “I brought the first batch of Pinoys to Hong Kong Disneyland and I cast Pinoys in my Asian tours of ‘The King and I’ and ‘Cinderella.’ Atlantis has also been successful in bringing our shows to Singapore and showcasing our talent there, too. The Pinoy performer rocks! We rank among the best in the world, as far as talent is concerned.”

Bobby said casting was one of the most crucial parts of production. “You can’t save a show that is miscast... I’d like to think that I have spotted talent and cast them in the right roles. I have also prided myself in integrating cast members from different mediums, be it theater artists, recording artists, TV stars, film actors, or rock singers. To throw them in a show with theater artists always gives the show a different energy. As for casting, it is always a combination of both acting and singing that I look for when I cast musicals.”

Bobby has definite ideas in casting he will not compromise. In “A Little Night Music,” he declared Dawn Zulueta was his one and only choice for the female lead.

Clearly, Bobby Garcia is on the brink of realizing what many other Filipino directors and producers would give their right arm for.

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