

The love stories on Broadway

Written by marilyn abalos

Sunday, 17 December 2017 11:52



Alex Newell, Lea Salonga and Merle Dandridge.

Exclusive to the Filipino Reporter

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The song goes “Love is a Many Splendor Thing.”

Not!?

Was not love magnificent and brilliant in Broadway’s love stories, ONCE ON THIS ISLAND and M. BUTTERFLY?

We’ve got love on the beach with sand, chickens, BBQ and a goat.

There’s love at the opera, pied-a-terre, courtroom and prison.

Magnificent?

Malevolent?

Written by the Tony Award-winning team Lynn Ahrens (Book and Lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (Music), and based on Rosa Guy’s novel “My Love, My Love,” ONCE ON THIS ISLAND is the tale of Ti Moune, a fearless peasant girl who falls in love with a wealthy boy from the other side of the island.

David Henry Hwang’s modern classic, M. BUTTERFLY, charts the scandalous romance between a married French diplomat and a mysterious Chinese opera singer — a remarkable love story of international espionage and personal betrayal.

The prevailing themes of forbidden love, based on class, race, color and even gender identity, froth with duplicity, deception and unrelenting convention, is the makings of a torch song pining

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for love lost.

Ahhh but does not the human condition yearn and relish the drama of love — be it tragedy, comedy or your own life's story?

So we trek to the theatre, the movies, the bookstores and even concerts — to witness, to experience, to celebrate la amore!

Believers and Champions of Love should swim to ONCE ON THIS BEACH and soar to M.BUTTERFLY — for these are classic love stories that even islanders and diplomats dare not miss.

In ONCE ON THIS ISLAND, mysticism and superstition rules as Ti Moune is guided by the powerful island gods, Lea Salonga (Erzulie), Alex Newell (Asaka), Merle Dandridge (Papa Ge) and Quentin Earl Darrington (Agwe), on a remarkable quest to reunite with the man who has captured her heart (their divided cultures keep them apart).

Captivated by Daniel (Isaac Powell), newcomer Hailey Kilgore plays a beguiling Ti Moune whose earnest youth represents hope on the “île d’espoir.”

Alas!

Daniel is bound to family bonds — abandoning the woman who sold her soul (and life) to save this fool.

It is a noted irony that Lea Salonga (a Tony winner from another love story of tragedy and sacrifice) demurely plays Erzulie, the Goddess of Love with serene coolness.

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Directed by Tony nominee Michael Arden and choreographed by Camille A. Brown, ONCE ON THIS ISLAND was cool, compelling and entertaining.

Cool with Caribbean colors and raw musicality, compelling island lore and legend, entertaining rhythms and dance performed by a powerful throng of island voices.

The mythic opera of Puccini's Madama Butterfly has influenced this heartbreaking love story of M.BUTTERFLY.

Written by David Henry Hwang and directed by Tony winner Julie Taymor, this Tony winning play (1988), was inspired by the real-life love affair between French diplomat Bernard Boursicot and Chinese opera singer Shi Pei Pu.

Were these tragic lovers predestined?

Did the characters Rene Gallimard's fixation with Cio-Cio San or Song Liling's Butterfly vogue sway the gods?

Academy Award nominee and Golden Globe Award winner Clive Owen plays Rene Gallimard while Broadway newcomer Jin Ha star in the role of Song Liling.

Song Liling was enticing and oh so sly as she not only kept the shades of her love nest secure but managed to bedazzle her sightless, love-struck paramour.

Gallimard's blissful ignorance or blindness — or denial — be-tells of a dullard diplomat, guileless guy, malleable and prime to manipulate.

For love, he sells his soul — and country.

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It is fascinating to see how this love evolved and unfolded.

Their 20-year relationship (aptly presented in two hours) pushed and blurred the boundaries between male and female, east and west — while redefining the nature of love and the devastating cost of deceit.

Song Liling ceased to vogue and lays bare the basics while Gallimard yields to institutional policy and practice.

Tickets for both ONCE ON THIS ISLAND at Circle in the Square and M.BUTTERFLY at the Cort Theatre are on sale at www.Telecharge.com (212.239.6200).