

Adaptation Notes for Si Medea

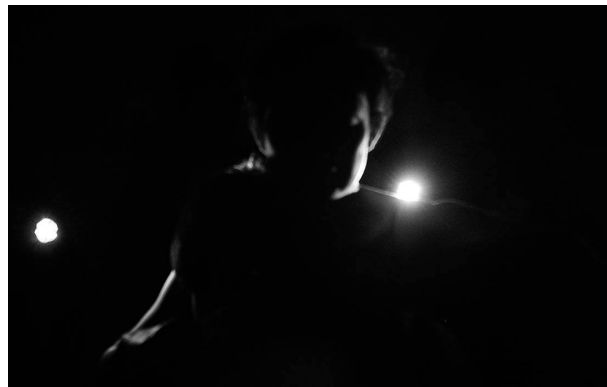


Jenny Logico-Cruz
Madiya / Jayson

Jenny is a performer, writer, director, theater teacher, and co-founder of Langgam Performance Troupe. She has had over 10 years of professional experience in the field, having had worked in major cities around the world including Manila, New York City, Honolulu, San Francisco, London, and Kyoto. Jenny is interested in pushing the boundaries of performance practice by utilizing it as a tool for critical social research.

Adaptation Notes on Madiya

While researching on the history of Medea (as a play written by Euripides) and Medea (as a myth or legend of a long withstanding oral tradition), one of the many details that got me fascinated with her story and character was the constant mention of her as a “barbarian”. However, “barbarian,” during the Classical Greek period, actually had a different meaning from how we comprehend the term today. Based on the Greek word, *barbaros*, it originally referred to someone who was a foreigner, a person who is neither a Greek nor Latin speaker. This led me to realize that one of the reasons why Medea was discriminated against was not necessarily because she was a person of backward, viscous, and uncivilized upbringing—but because her mother tongue was simply not Greek. And anyone who was *not* native Greek was then considered to be beneath culture, to be of inferior race.



Out of the many similarities I’ve surveyed between Greek and Filipino culture, the most palpable one for me is the tendency for both cultures to build ethnic and social hierarchy based on the language/s spoken. This led me to re-imagine *Medea* into *Madiya*, not only as a Filipino, precolonial counterpart to the original Greek version, but also as a theater of psycho-linguistic workout and battle. The challenge I bestowed on the character centers mainly on the use of her tongue, built upon in two layers: First is the labor to compromise her birth language to accommodate the new. She is a Kabikolana native and priestess (babaylan), who is also the grand-

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daughter of Gugurang, deity of the Mayon Volcano. She has moved to the Katagalugan region with her husband Yoson (Jason) where the locals speak a language that resonates the Batangueño tongue (considered by most historians as the original Tagalog language). Her struggle begins as she tries to assimilate to this new Katagalugan language, while the unavoidable Kabikolano accent still throbs in her diction. Second layer is the labor of being the host, the vessel of multiple otherworldly voices in her. Since she is a priestess whose work involves summoning and exorcising many spirits into her body, the creative team and I imagined that her voice is not merely of a singular entity but a hybrid one, as it must have also contained residues of multiple phantoms that have entered and exited her system over time. Therefore, her second struggle stems from the nature and after-effects of her spiritual work. As a result, we approached Madiya as a character whose emotional, mental, and spiritual burden are all collectively shown through her struggle in speech. She becomes a *barbaros* through and through: a foreigner to the Katagalugan language, and a foreigner to her own voice.

Madiya was co-written with Ian Lomongo. The Bicolano and Batangueño languages were further honed throughout the development and rehearsal process with the help of the cast and crew members.



Alexandra Toyhacao
Maida / Yoson

Alex has worked with Langgam Performance Troupe on *Swear Not By The Moon* and *ROOMS*. She majored in English at St. Scholastica's College, Manila and was part of the college theater group *Sining Tanghalan*, where she joined *Ora et Labora* (2012, 2011), *A Woman of No* (2011), and *Panunuluyan* (2010). She was also among the ensemble cast that performed a dramatic interpretation of Genaro

Gojo Cruz's "Barong-Barong" and Mark Angeles' "Bayong" for the 25th anniversary launch of ANI LITERARY JOURNAL at the CCP. Alex is also a writer and a reading teacher to K-12 students.

Adaptation Notes on Maida

It is not often for a staging of a classical play to bend its own context for the actors bringing it to life. That said, a dramatic piece does not necessarily have to abide to the conventions of its time for it to endure, and this has proven itself true for the Euripidean tragedy *Medea*. In its essence, *Medea* is the story of a woman wanting of a home, scorned, hated, left alone, and cast aside, nevertheless possessing of an intense passion, ferocious rationality, and unceasing self-determination. Combined with the actor's personal context, it is this essence that this translation attempts to focus in order to bring this particular interpretation of the Greek tragedy further into familiarization.

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In this version, Medea, renamed as Maida, was re-imagined as a young mother – ambitious, intelligent, and complex in her own right – living in contemporary times, who was left by Jayson for his own socio-economic motives. The monologues and dialogues between the two principal characters were initially translated into Filipino, but a further modernization of the language was attempted through improvisation.

The language of contemporary times is not literary in the same way as language used in previous periods. Never in the history of mankind has there been a variety in methods of communicating. Getting the message across no longer merely relies upon what was spoken or printed, but, in many cases, in what were not. The language of contemporary times – our language – is dynamic not in its descriptive, effusive, or poetic quality, rather in its silences, pauses, and code-switches – a nuance that manifests more distinctly through improvisation. Such a consideration was allotted for this version that what became was a translation, not of the word, but of the emotion.



The concept of the trial was a manifestation of the translator's questions about the moral and emotional implications of Medea's horrific act. Three of Medea's monologues were adapted into a conversation with the chorus, two of which were deliberately set up in the style of a jury questioning a defendant. In the original version, Medea departs Jason in a Deus ex Machina sequence

common in Greek tragedy, yet any further clues regarding what could be the repercussions of Medea's actions upon herself are not shown. By making this alteration, Medea's character, or Maida, is placed after the murder. In doing so, not only do Maida's spectators – as represented by the chorus – investigate her actions, but Maida herself examines her own motives, emotions, and actions, adding yet another layer to this complex and enduring Greek tragedy.