

TALA

Written by Kyoung H. Park

Tala was written with support of a Vermont Studio Center Artist grant and received a public reading at the Ma-Yi Theater's Summer LABFest (July 9, 2011), a roundtable reading at the Lark Play Development Center (Nov. 9, 2011) and was workshopped at the Mabou Mines Studio (Dec. 19, 2011) and received a workshop production in Columbia University's New Plays Now 2012 Festival at ToRoNaDa Theater on Apr. 8, 9, and 10, 2012 under the mentorship of Lee Breuer. TALA received an additional workshop production at HERE Arts Center's Summer Sublet Series on Jul. 28, 29, 30, 31, 2012, produced by Kyoung's Pacific Beat.

The World Premiere of TALA was presented by The Performance Project @ University Settlement, directed by Kyoung H. Park and produced by Kyoung's Pacific Beat. The choreography is by Yin Yue, original composition by Svetlana Maras, illuminated props by Jason Krugman, video design by John Knowles, set design by Marie Yokoyama, lighting design by Chuan-Chi Chan, sound design by Lawrence Schober & Chris Barlow, dramaturgy by Sarah Rose Leonard and costume design by Elizabeth Barrett Groth. TALA was produced by Kyoung's Pacific Beat with support of a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

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THE PLAYERS

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|------------------------------|---|
| RAFAEL / PEPE / KYOUNG | A Latino actor, mid-20's, playing Pepe, a Chilean revolutionary. |
| FLOR / LUPE / KYOUNG | A Latina actress, mid-20's, playing Lupe, a Chilean paralegal secretary. |
| DANIEL / KYOUNG / MATT..... | A Korean-American actor, mid-20's, playing Kyoung, a Korean-Chilean playwright/director. |

In the second Act, Rafael plays Pepe as Kyoung and
Daniel plays Matt, Kyoung's ex-boyfriend.

TIME AND PLACE

A rehearsal room for "TALA,"
a play set in a desert
in the middle of a Chilean island called
Chiloé

Now.
In "TALA," Sept. 10th, 1973.

ACT I

A rehearsal room for “Tala,” a play set in the middle of a desert in a Chilean island called Chiloé.

The principal staging area is the Pepe and Lupe world, a fourteen by fourteen feet square made out of a collage of paper, which are previous drafts of this play. In the middle of the square, there are four rectangular cubes made out of steel and colored plexi-glass. These cubes stand in for sand dunes in a desert. Upstage center, there’s a projection of an island shore. A yellow balloon representing the moon hangs from above.

The second world is the Kyoung world, created with a desk and rolling chair stage left. There are also three landmines scattered around the space, designed progressively more surreal to resemble explosions of red cables and chunks of origami cranes made out of brightly colored paper. An industrial, black bucket sits downstage left with a “Flammable” sign.

The third world is the Tech World, created stage right. John, the Video Designer, and Lawrence, the Sound Designer, sit at a tech table covered with laptops and cables. Meanwhile Luis, the Stage Manager, sits behind the audience holding a bull-horn. Additionally, Irfan, the Camera Operator stands house-left with a video camera set on a tripod.

Rafael, Flor and Daniel enter and stand in front of the audience. Rafael is dressed in red army pants and a red-shirt. Flor wears a yellow evening gown with a mouth drawn with zipper chains. Daniel wears a modern suit and light-blue tie.

DANIEL: Hello.
My name is Daniel.

FLOR: My name is Flor.

RAFAEL: My name is Rafael and
I will be playing Pepe.
Pepe is a poor peasant living
in a small Chilean island
called Chiloé.
My character’s poetry is inspired by
Pablo Neruda—the Chilean poet;
the one who won the Nobel,
the one who was a diplomat,
the one who gave his
nomination to the Chilean Presidency to
Salvador Allende,
the world’s first, democratically elected
Marxist President.
Neruda died soon after Allende’s
Presidency was overthrown by

Augusto Pinochet's military coup on
September 11th, 1973.
The popular myth is that Neruda
died of a "broken heart."
The reality is that his body was
exhumed in 2013,
thirty years after he died.
Forensic examiners were asked to
determine whether Neruda was poisoned.
The results were negative.

FLOR: My name is Flor and
I will be playing Lupe.
Lupe is a former revolutionary.
She now has a day job as
a paralegal secretary.
Lupe's poetry is based on the Chilean poet
Gabriela Mistral,
the first person from Latin America
to win the Nobel.
Mistral was also a Chilean diplomat,
who spoke out against war, and
Mistral spent many years of her life
educating children in Chile and Mexico,
before she immigrated to the States to
live in a gay, domestic partnership
with Doris Dana, an American woman who
worked for the US Department of State.
Mistral was a mentor to Neruda and
they wrote letters to each other for decades.
Pepe and Lupe's dialogue in this play
are based on those letters.

DANIEL: The three of us are going to tell you
Kyoung's immigration story,
a story about a lesser-known,
Chilean, Korean, playwright who
came to America to
become an artist.

*(Rafael and Flor move to exit and Daniel follows them into the Pepe and Lupe world.
Radio static.*

*Rafael and Flor stop Daniel from entering their space, so Daniel interrupts with the
following:)*

DANIEL: Actually, it's more about how
Kyoung got lost in the bureaucracy of
the immigration system,

how he went in search of his
true “Asian” identity in Korea, but
realizing how being gay in Asia sucks,
Kyoung came back to America and
got stuck in a broken, immigration system.

LUIS: *(on bull-horn.)*
Places for the run-through!

(Flor and Rafael run back-stage to gather their costumes and props. Daniel sits at his desk.)

LUIS: *(on a bullhorn.)* Stand-by Music.

LAWRENCE: Standing by.

LUIS: *(on a bullhorn.)*
Kyoung:
go!

(Daniel rolls next to the Pepe and Lupe world. Svetlana Maras’ “Pepe and Lupe Song” begins to play.)

KYOUNG: At rise,
Chiloé.
A Southern Chilean island.
It is September 10th, 1973:
the night before
the first 9/11.

(Lights rise as the Video projects stars.)

KYOUNG: Pepe and Lupe enter between
the sand dunes.

(Rafael and Flor enter the primary play-area. Pepe carries a military green backpack and a neon green and orange toy rifle on-stage. Lupe puts on a surreal hat made out of a shoe.)

KYOUNG: Pepe’s on a secret mission.
Lupe thinks she’s on a date.

(Sounds of a crack. Pepe grimaces. Lupe checks what he stepped on.)

PEPE: You stepped on a snail.

LUPE: What?

LUPE: Here,

look...
You crushed it.

PEPE: Is it dead?

(Lupe nods. Pepe buries the snail.)

LUPE: ...what are you doing?

PEPE: We can't leave its body
festering in the open air.
There.
It's gone.

(Lupe looks down.)

PEPE: I should say a few words.

LUPE: About the snail?
This date is going to be
a disaster!

(Pepe looks down at the mound and crosses himself.)

PEPE: *(praying.)* The snail and I were unacquainted.
Our encounter was short-lived.
But I pray that this snail is
in a better place now,
one of plenty and joy.
(crossing himself.) En el nombre del
padre,
hijo, y
el espíritu santo.
Amen.

LUPE: *(crosses herself.)*

DANIEL: *(to Lawrence, via Walkie-Talkie.)*
Ocean waves, Lawrence,
ocean waves!

(Lawrence nods. Sounds of an ocean wave. Lupe sits seductively.)

LUPE: The ride on your dinghy was rocky.

PEPE: El Niño must be coming.

LUPE: You mean, La Niña.

PEPE: If the air is warm, and
the sea is turbulent,
that's El Niño—

LUPE: But La Niña
is what makes things dryer.

PEPE: If you say this is La Niña, and
I say this is El Niño, how
will anyone know who's right?

LUPE: I am.

PEPE: Let's just enjoy the scenery.

LUPE: What scenery?

PEPE: This desert and the moonlight.

(An owl hoots—both sound effects and Daniel.)

LUPE: *(alarmed.)* Pepe, did you hear that?
That's a peuchén!
Half snakes, half vampires,
they suck human bodies
dry of their blood.

PEPE: You can't believe in those folktales,
Lupe—

(An owl hoots and Lupe gasps.)

LUPE: When my neighbor Cano got sick,
my sister Gigi called in a Machi.
The Machi arrived,
beating drums with branches
from an Araucaria, chanting
“Machi-tun,
Machi-tun,
Machi-tun,”
but nothing.
Cano just got worse.
His eyeballs sunk into their sockets;
his teeth lost their color, and
you know what happened?
Gigi found a Peuchén,
nesting in his pillow.
It had crept through his window and
snuck under the bed;

it was slurping his blood,
straight from the head!

(An owl hoots. Lupe jumps on Pepe. He holds her with one hand.)

LUPE: *(whispering.)*
 Pepe—give me your rifle!

(Lupe takes the rifle from Pepe.)

LUPE: That thing doesn't know
 who he's messing with!
 Come out here,
 you heartless rat!
 Come listen to the music of
 my rifle's rat-a-tat-A-TAT!

KYOUNG: 9/11 fucked me up.

(Kyoung snaps his fingers, cueing the live camera operator and Svetlana Maras' "Kyoung Song." Kyoung leaves his desk to disarm a landmine, carrying a landmine detector—a used kendo stick.)

KYOUNG: NYU informed me that due
 to the terrorist attacks,
 the university had to comply with
 new government policies and
 disclose students' personal information.
 I believe in government regulation—
 especially in terms of security—
 but I wasn't prepared for
 the paranoia that would ensue.
 I stopped going to my therapist,
 believing the events at large
 made my issues with sexuality irrelevant.
 Instead,
 I bleached my hair,
 pierced my eye-brows, and
 painted crazy images on my walls.
 When I started to miss classes and
 failed to do my work,
 I contemplated suicide.
 I was red-flagged by the university and
 asked to leave housing
 within twenty-four hours.
 I stormed to the office of
 Student Affairs, where
 I was told that there were
 two people in the university

enrolled with my name, and
that the other student was
being kicked out.
Not I.

(Kyoung deactivates the landmine and illuminates his face with the lit landmine. He points at Rafael and Flor with his landmine detector to illustrate his story.)

KYOUNG: I graduated early to work at a
not-for-profit theatre company,
where the Artistic Director decided to
sponsor my visa to keep me on staff.
But preparing my application to
Homeland Security,
my paranoia started to haunt me again.
Bush had cut the quota of immigrant visas
by 66% percent, and
there was a backlog of applicants
from the previous year.
My company also hired a new manager,
and as she established herself
in the community,
the entire company had a staff turnover
in three months.
As I looked at my new colleagues,
she used to say:

FLOR: “How wonderful to see women so
well represented at this table!”

KYOUNG: Looking at the Artistic Director,
the only other man on staff,
I thought to myself:
I’m the next one to go,
(echoing) go, go,
go....

(Rafael pushes Daniel away from the Pepe and Lupe world. The Video returns to projecting stars.

Drop. Daniel imitates the water drop.)

PEPE: Listen... can you hear the river?

(Drop. Daniel imitates the water drop.)

PEPE: When the spring arrives and
the snow starts to melt,
the water flows from the mountains

with such haste!
Where do you think that river is headed to;
where do you think it goes?

(Drop. Daniel imitates the water drop.)

LUPE: I don't know, Pepe!
Why do you ask questions like that?
You're always asking these
metaphorical questions that
I don't understand.

(Drop. Daniel imitates the water drop.)

LAWRENCE: Daniel, you don't
have to do the sound effects—

(Daniel turns off his landmine sticking out his middle finger and takes his seat.)

PEPE: I brought us a bottle of wine,
cheese, and
warm empanadas.

(Pepe's food props have been replaced with a pink dildo (wine), a measuring tape (cheese), and two, giant, Styrofoam eggs (empanadas). Rafael and Flor stare at Daniel, who laughs from his desk.)

FLOR: *(to Daniel.)* Did you switch our props?

DANIEL: Props are Stage Management.

LUIS: *(on the bullhorn.)* I heard that!

PEPE: Lupe,
can't you see?
Now that our brothers have
taken over the factories,
we're finally making the food that we need!
This cheese: it's a sign a progress.

LUPE: Can we go back to your dinghy?

PEPE: You want to go back?
But don't you find this romantic?

LUPE: I think Raul Ruiz's new movie is romantic!
I heard *Palomita Blanca* is great.
Whenever I watch movies on the big screen,
I project myself living glamorously,

out there in the world.

PEPE: Why do you want to go out there,
when people from abroad
travel to see what we've got here?

LUPE: What's so wonderful about this?

(Pepe sits Lupe on a cube and he snaps his fingers, cueing the tech table. Svetlana Maras' "Pepe and Lupe Song" plays as Pepe produces a "magic box" from Lupe's ears.

Pepe dances a modern version of "El Pavo," or "The Turkey," a traditional Chiloé dance based on the mating of turkeys. The dance is built primarily on a theme of flickering fingers.)

PEPE: *(while dancing.)*
Out there, there's sadness,
a beetle of seven legs;
a headless vermin
covered in spider-webs that
here, it can't nest.
Our Sister Liberty is
safe from sadness' feathers
because here,
we live with freedom's magic,
here, anything can happen—

(Lupe takes the "magic box" from Pepe. The music stops. Pepe takes back the box and the music resumes. Lupe takes the box, the music stop, and she smashes the box and throws it into the thin air.)

LUPE: You know what's going to happen?
Those mountains will be flattened and
become condominiums.
The river bank: a heated swimming pool.
That's what's going to happen, and
there's a certain magic to that, as well!

PEPE: We can't stand here and
watch them come destroy us.
Look out into that Erebus.
(referring to Lawrence and John.)
I can see them.

LUPE: The mummies?

PEPE: The Gallos Culebrón:
they're waiting for us

to let our guards down,
so they can salivate poison
into our mouths.

LUPE: Don't provoke them!
Why are you such an instigator?

PEPE: 'Cause I'm angry!
Don't you get angry about this, Lupe?
Whenever they come from
the mainland with their
bulldozers and cranes,
they wave a little bit of money
in front of us and
get away with whatever they want!

LUPE: Gigi says
they're just building infrastructure to
make better use of the land.

PEPE: Our people lived here before
the arrival of the
Spanish conquistadores.
We've made our lives from
gathering seaweed and hunting sea lions;
everything from
that mountain to the Gulf of Sorrows
belongs to us.

LUPE: *(walking away.)*
This date is going awful.

PEPE: This is not a date!
Lupe...
the last time we tried this—

LUPE: The last time was your fault!
What were you thinking, Pepe:
bombs?
bombs?!
Like you're a bandit,
or a guerilla—?!

PEPE: I'm a revolutionary!

LUPE: You went up to the bridge and
blew it up with dynamite.

PEPE: That bridge was colonialism,
hidden in design.

(Pepe retrieves a New York subway map from his back-pack and sets up a picnic.)

PEPE: While the mummies built that bridge,
look at what our brothers have done.
When have you seen a government
redistribute land, or
provide remote places like this
substantial food at
reasonable prices, so
the hungry can eat?

(Lupe makes farting noises with her mouth and lies on the sand.)

PEPE: If you had more skills
in the art of revolution,
I could explain to you our
strategic plans to liberation!
Our brothers and I have
a dream that unites all of Latin America,
the way Che sought to unite us,
the way Castro fought for independence—

LUPE: I know that dream, Pepe.
But just look around us:
the revolution you speak about
can't come true.
These are no longer
the times of Bolivar,
we cannot follow Bolivar's
Decree of War to Death.
Pepe...
There's a big,
fat,
commie girl inside me.
But I can't let her eat!

PEPE: Empanada?

(Pepe gives Lupe an empanada. She takes it, and stares at it, as the egg lights up and intermittently changes to different colors.)

LUPE: I forget to eat these days.
I get up in the mornings,
do the house-chores with Gigi, and
I bolt to work.
All day long, my boss has me

typing, printing,
archiving documents, and
then,
when it's lunch time,
I stare at the food
laid out in the cafeteria and
I alphabetize it and
color-code it into
categories in my mind.
I go insane, you know?
I go insane, doing my job.

PEPE: Then quit your job, Lupe.

LUPE: I can't!
My boss, he's a good man.
Sometimes, Jefe comes to work and
he looks like he's getting no sleep.
He does twice the work that I do—

PEPE: But when the day's over,
he drives his car to
his private home,
on top of the mountains.

LUPE: Jefe's earned that;
he's a *lawyer*.

PEPE: He's a traitor like the Millalobo!
He thinks he can direct the
currents of the ocean from
the bottom of the sea!

LUPE: Just because
he works for the mummies—

PEPE: Which makes *both* of you traitors—

LUPE: How can you say that?
There are boundaries.
Set some boundaries!
You can be really inappropriate sometimes,
do you know that?

PEPE: ...

LUPE: You're ruining this for me, Pepe!

PEPE: You're not the same.

You've changed since you started
working for him.

LUPE: Well, the times are changing and
I changed with the times.

*(Lupe cues music with a finger snap. Svetlana Maras' "Pepe and Lupe Song" plays
as Flor dances her "Unhappy Dance.")*

LUPE: *(while dancing.)*
I grew tired of being made
of stone and sky,
my feet, my shoulders,
they stopped seeking
the water's eye.
Whenever I slept,
the grass would twist
beneath my mouth and
the tree-branches
didn't know how to bend, so
I used to bend for them.

DANIEL: I bent and I bent.

LUPE: *(while dancing.)*
I bend no more!

PEPE: Who am I talking to?

LUPE: *(while dancing.)*
To an other.
If you want the old Lupe,
go up the ravines in search
of another burning eagle.
This one has been left
to rot, and I stole
Lupe's burning
heart's blood.

(Lupe stomps on the ground and ends her dancing with a body wave.)

THIS PLAY HAS BEEN PRODUCED.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ THE READ, PLEASE EMAIL ME AT
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THANKS!