

APOLAKI

Opera of the Scorched Earth

Libretto and Score by Micaela Tobin

Presented by Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

Director & Composer/Bakunawa	Micaela Tobin
Choreographer/Apolaki	Jay Carlon
Percussion	M.A. Harms
Electric Bass & Guitar	Stephen McNeely
Elder Chorus	Rhea Salta-Amador Willie Lopez Naila Lapus Miguel DeGuzman Ginny DeGuzman Yolanda Damian Lorna Jean Chip Aquino
Installation Design	Carlo Maghirang
Apolaki & Bakunawa Costume Design	Vinta Gallery
Lighting Design	Ric Zimmerman
Lighting Assistant	Derek Jones
Lighting Programmer	Marcus Mathews
Sound Design	Josephine Shetty
Audio Engineer	Cordey Lopez
Stylist & Associate Costume Design	Patria
Technical Direction	Preston Productions
Stage Manager	Lanae Wilks
Producer	Brian Sea

LACE Team

Executive Director	Sarah Russin
Deputy Director and Interim Curator	Fiona Ball
Assistant Director of Programming	Juan Silverio
Communications Coordinator	Camille Wong
Getty MUI Interns	Theresa Kim Corey Solorio LoDuca

LACE recognizes our presence on Tovaangar (Los Angeles county), the unceded ancestral lands of the Gabrielino-Tongva people, who are its rightful caretakers and whose connection to the land, water, and culture we benefit from. LACE is committed to stand in solidarity with the Gabrielino-Tongva community, and to create a more inclusive environment that uplifts Indigenous voices and native sovereignty through contemporary art and performance, and fights white supremacy. We strive to understand our place within the structures of settler colonialism, and act with allyship as we each have a social responsibility to Tonvaangar and to its ancestors and descendants.

Special Thanks

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SUPPORT

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LACE



Andy Warhol



Director's Note

"To the Illocano...the sky is no other than the blue and concave dome that covers us...It is a circular plane where mountains support the sky which they believe to be much bigger than its actual size. As such, it is unreachable and if it could be reached, it would take a whole lifetime of running nonstop towards the horizon."

— **Isabelo de los Reyes, El Folklore Filipino**

Our interlocking histories are in constant (dis)harmony, but there is also an intimate and beautiful poetry in these stories that I am seeking to sound out. How each of us came to be here is complicated, noisy, and nuanced. For instance, the land we gather on tonight is the unceded ancestral lands of the Gabrielino-Tongva People that was violently stolen by settler colonialists, and eventually ended up in the hands of a gentle artist named Jirayr Zorthian—a refugee who was forced from his own ancestral lands by genocide. Jirayr went on to turn this place into a refuge for artists, philosophers, and dreamers from all walks of life, and today the land is taken care of by his living descendants and a large community of people dedicated to tending and transforming this place.

Jay's, Carlo's, and my ancestors first landed on the California Coast in 1587 against their will—forced aboard the Manila Galleon by Spanish colonizers, and forced to make first contact with the Northern Chumash Tribe in Morro Bay. Their brown bodies were pitted against other brown bodies as tools of colonization. Four-hundred years later and a mere 120 miles from that very spot, Manong Larry Itliong began the Delano labor strike, uniting Mexican and Filipino farm workers (including Jay's own father—a Manong who worked in the strawberry fields!) against the oppressive and racist policies of the white farm owners, changing, and in many ways, healing, the course of our history.

As for me, I grew up in these foothills, a few miles east of Zorthian Ranch. As a child, I would hike these mountains with my father, where he taught me the art of walking these trails in a quiet, graceful reverence to the natural environment. I soon came to learn that these mountains speak, if you listen, and ever since, these mountains have been a safe place for me to escape the noise of Los Angeles. So tonight, I am deeply honored to finally be able to reverberate back into them, sounding out the noisy (dis)harmony of our collective diaspora. Tonight, we will walk with Apolaki over the horizon and into the dark abyss. Tonight, our liberation will become a joyful dance.

In the labyrinth, there is one winding path that leads towards the center—follow it there, and you shall be transformed."

— **Micaela Tobin**

Notes from the Collaborators

"When Micaela asked me to be Apolaki in her new opera, I questioned whether I can live up to the strength and resilience of the Filipinx god of sun and war. I imagined the fire inside of me — the energy that fuels and sustains me, as well as the fire that fills me with rage, a necessary fury to hold onto our dignity.

'The Healer and the Warrior are but two sides of the same coin.'

— **Philippine Proverb**

The Philippine people have fought for hundreds of years over their land and agency over their bodies, so much that it has become normalized for us to accept the confines of white supremacy. I ponder, what happens if we stop fighting?

I imagine the sun displaced and reemerged as a disco ball in a dark warehouse space for queer folks and people pushed to the fringes of society to seek refuge. And amidst the glittery, solar flares of that disco ball sprayed upon our beautiful brown bodies, liberation thrives. A space for the body to express itself, fully. A space to commune with unbridled joy. This is the future for Filipinx people. Apolaki lives in me."

— **Jay Carlon**

"Our reimagined Apolaki travels the world from his ancestral home to escape the reaches of the Sun in hopes of escaping the grips of colonization. He marks his landing with a symbol: a sigil of his own name. Once on the ground, a path emerges. Apolaki's Labyrinth is born, and with it a path back home.

Four characters in the precolonial script of Baybayin spell Apolaki's name. These characters are then diluted through short-hand gestures from their truest meaning and creates an architectural form that tells the story of Apolaki's own displacement: an identity that has been lost through transit, time, and translation."

— **Carlo Maghirang, Apolaki Installation Designer**

Libretto

Scene I: Prologue

Lumuluha ako sapagkat natupad na ang malao ko ng inaasahang mangyayari, na tatanggapin ninyo ang mga taga- ibang lupa na may mapuputing ngipin at mga talukbong sa ulo. Maglalagay sila sa inyong mga bahay ng dalawang kahoy tulos na magkasalisi upang ako ay lalong pahirapan. Kaya ngayon, ako ay yayao na upang maghanap na matatapat na kalahi. Sapagkat ako ay tinalikuran 'nyo, ipinagpalit sa mga taga ibang lupa. Ako na inyong sinaunang panginoon.

*I weep to see the completion of what I expected for many years, namely that you would welcome some foreigners with white teeth and hooded heads, who would implant amidst your houses crossed poles (Crosses) to torment me all the more. I am leaving you to seek people who will follow me, for you have abandoned me, your ancient lord, for foreigners.**

*Translation edited by
Rhea Salta-Amador

— Isabelo de los Reyes re-wrote this passage from a Spanish report, "The entry of the religious into Pangasinan", dated at Magaldan, a village of Pangasinan, November 8, 1618.

Scene II: Building the Labyrinth

*Farewell, my adored Land,
region of the sun caressed,
Pearl of the Orient Sea,
With gladness I give you my life **

*Slowly, and in one direction
I step
Let the burning sun dry my tears
I cannot rest
Slowly and in one direction
I step*

*Let the dawn send forth its fleeting,
brilliant light,
I will never forget
Farewell, my adored Land,
region of the sun caressed,
Pearl of the Orient Sea,
With gladness I give you my life **

*Textural extraction from
Jose Rizal's last poem, "My
Last Farewell", before his
execution in 1896.

*Slowly, and in one direction,
I step.
I am trying to remember
What was stolen from us
By them
Long ago.*

*Slowly, and in one direction,
I am trying to find home.*

Scene III: Apolaki's Aria

*I have been displaced
I am reborn
Motherless, I wander
Wondering
Who was here before?*

*Frozen in the grand geology of time
I ask: May I step here?
For I am only passing through...*

*We forget ourselves
We have been taught
To erase ourselves
Over and over and over
Like precious pearls scattered at sea.*

*I am trying to remember what was
stolen from us
If I may step here,
Maybe I could build us something new...*

*I am trying to escape
From the empire
Where the sun never sets!
So, take me now, take me now
Over the horizon
Into the dark abyss...*

Scene IV: Apolaki Rises

***Original song from the
album, "BAKUNAWA" by
Micaela Tobin (White Boy
Scream) featuring guitarist
Rhea Fowler.**

*Still here
They can't erase me
No fear
They can't erase me
Rise in the sky
They can't erase me
Blind light eyes
They can't erase me...**

Scene V: Liberation Disco

***Text extracted from Jose
Rizal's "Kundiman" poem,
written in 1891.**

*And so, In spite of everything
The sun will return to dawn;
And our people will be liberated;
The Filipino name will return
And again become
In vogue in the world.**

*The sun has set on the empire
We hold the light
The sun has set on the empire
And we will rise*

*Beyond the horizon, we are free
A space for you and me*

*Beyond the horizon, we are free
A space for you and me*

*For those whose blood was shed
For those whose land was stolen
We are to stand with you
And we will go together*

*Beyond the horizon
We are joyful and free
Beyond the horizon
We are Joyful and free*

This is liberation disco (x2)