

BANYAN

About The Cast

Rhealiza Pira (Ona)

A 2017 alumna of the UH Hilo Performing Arts & English Departments, Rhealiza recently performed her original song, "Annay Pusok," for *Lā Makuahine - Mother's Day 2021*. Though raised on Hawai'i Island, Rhealiza's upbringing and household was built on Ilocano beliefs and culture. She is deeply honored and excited to represent her heritage as a Filipino-American. She dedicates her performance to her family, especially to her late Lolo Saturnino Gallen and late Lolo Francisco Pira, for their love, hard work and sacrifices in order to come to the states. While she hopes that live theatre will return soon, she is thankful for all of those who help provide virtual entertainment to the community.

Jojo Balagot (Ian)

Born in the Philippines, Jojo speaks both Tagalog and Ilocano. He came to Hawai'i when he was eight years old, and graduated from Hilo High in 2018. He is currently majoring in Psychology at UH Hilo, while also pursuing certificates in Education and Filipino Studies. His goal is to become a high school History teacher in Hawai'i. Last year he performed in *The Betrayal*, a UH Hilo student film where the entire cast spoke in Tagalog. He is proud to represent the Filipino community in this project.

Joanne Pocsidio (Ang / Aswang)

Joanne enjoys being a part of the performing arts 'ohana whether she is singing, dancing or acting. She has been on stage in many vocal performances and community stage productions over the past five years. She was last on the UH Hilo stage as Captain Martinez in the 2020 digital production of *Moore: A Pacific Island Othello*.

Dane Dupre (Douglas)

Dane is a freshman at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, majoring in Performing Arts. He has been interested in acting since high school, and would like to pursue acting as a career. This year, he has performed in several digital productions, including "Janis" for *Scary Scenarios 2021*, "Super Spreader" for *Virtually Yours: Valentine Vignettes*, and "The Savior of My World" for *Lā Makuahine* at UH Hilo; *Sanctuary* for Creative Lab Hawai'i; and *Can I Have Your Attention Please* for Waiakea High School.

Landon Ballesteros (Dirk)

A 2018 alumnus of the UH Hilo Performing Arts department, Landon most recently appeared in last summer's filmed production of *Moore: a Pacific Island Othello*. Raised on Maui in a home built by his Filipino grandparents, Landon is excited to honor this part of his heritage through *Banyan*. He dedicates his performance to his mama Naty and late papa Romeo for

their hard work, love, and sacrifice. Landon also thanks Justina, Lee, Rob, Arie, and the creative and technical team for their dedication in providing virtual entertainment to the Hilo community this past year. To all: may all your troubles melt like lemon drops!

Christian Kapono Pa (Cesar)

Kapono is a Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i graduate ('08) and a former Performing Arts Major of the University of Hawai'i - Hilo. In high school, he discovered his love for musical theater playing roles such as *Mayor George Shinn* in Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, and as *Judas Iscariot* in Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He has appeared in many memorable roles in local collegiate and community productions such as the antagonist and marijuana dealer *Jack Stone* in *Reefer Madness: The Musical*, and as the local boy lead character *Alika* in Alani Apio's *Kāmau*. Most recently, he played the role of *Mark Cohen* in the University's last pre-COVID musical production of *RENT*, after a 10 year hiatus from the stage. In real life, he is a real estate broker and Broker-in-Charge at Savio Realty, Ltd. in Pāhoa on Hawai'i Island.

Norman Q. Arancon (Cabing)

A professor of horticulture at the College of Agriculture, UH Hilo. Since his first performance in a musical in 2012 at UH Hilo, as a Baltimorean in *Hairspray*, he has enjoyed playing exciting roles such as the Engineer in *Miss Saigon*, the King in *The King and I*, Agustin Magaldi in *Evita*, Benny in *Rent*, Candyman in *Willy Wonka* and Jafar in *Aladdin*. He is thrilled to be playing the role of Cabing in this exciting project to commemorate the 9-11 anniversary while reuniting with talented co-actors and friends.

Deenie Tagudin Kam (Ella)

Deenie is an alumna of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and a veteran actor/techie of the UH Hilo stage. Her first role, and one of her favorites, was Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, directed by Jackie Pualani Johnson. Had it not been for Jackie and Mary, theatre may not have been such an enduring and beloved part of Deenie's life. Since then, she has played roles ranging from Queen Guenevere in the musical *Camelot*, to Charlene in *Ō'ō: Hawai'i*. Of Filipino, Hawaiian, and Chinese ancestry, Deenie is delighted to honor her Filipino roots with her current role. It's been awhile since she's been on-stage, and she is ecstatic to return to Hilo for the summer to perform with her alma mater. Off stage, she shares her home with her husband and two spoiled kitties, and works as a Medical Speech-Language Pathologist at Straub Medical Center.