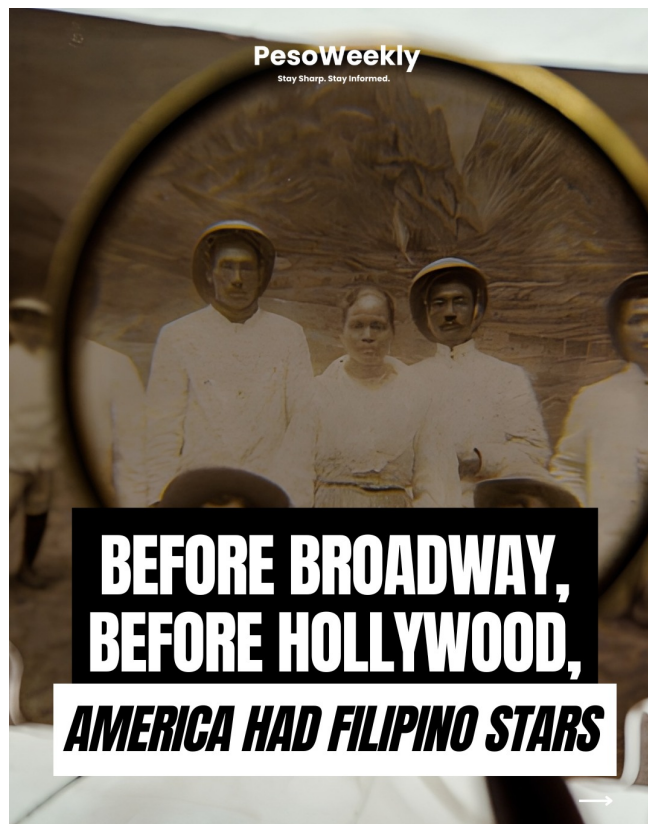


We Will Ride

A Short Play Riding on a Gust of Wind and Courage
Inspired by the 1899 Filipino Rough Riders of the
Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

By Conrad A. Panganiban



Contact:
Conrad A. Panganiban


conradap@gmail.com
@consplayspace

SYNOPSIS

On the eve of a pivotal race at Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in 1899 Chicago, three Filipino performers must choose between Ysidora's defiant bid to beat the U.S. Cavalry and the Pony Express on horseback and Gerónimo's dangerous plan to escape the colonial spectacle that imprisons them — and claim a freedom that America had promised but never delivered.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

YSIDORA ALCANTARA: 19. Fillipina. The only female of the original Filipino Rough Riders from the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show recruited in the Philippines and brought to the United States in 1899. She was recruited because of her horse riding skills. Determined to beat all of the other riders in the show's highlight event, the International Riders Relay Race. Felix Alcantara's younger sister.

FELIX ALCANTARA: 21. Filipino. One of the two males in the original Filipino Rough Riders. Was recruited because he knew and can teach Ysidora and Geronimo Filipino songs and dances as a demonstration for American Audiences. He's has a happy-go-lucky personality.

GERÓNIMO YNOSINCIO: 24. Filipino. The other Filipino male of the Rough Riding team from the Philippines. He was recruited because of his intellect and ability to speak English and act as a translator to Buffalo Bill's recruiter. He's a dreamer and idealist wanting an independent life in America. His name is pronounced, "heh-ROH-nee-moh".

REPORTER #1 and #2: Males. American. A pair of Chicago newspaper reporters acting as the storytellers for the masses as they create the history and spectacle of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. These roles should be doubled for the actors: REPORTER #1 / GERONIMO and REPORTER#2 / FELIX.

SETTING

Time: August 14, 1899

Place: In an open lot converted into an Show Arena on 35th Street and Wentworth Avenue, Chicago, IL, USA

Scene Locations:

- The Reporters can either be in the stands or in a reporters' booth.
- The Filipino Rough Rider scenes takes place in a tent considered to be their dressing room.

Lights up on REPORTERS #1 and #2. They are wearing hats from the turn of the 19th Century. They are also holding reporter's notepads.

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

After wowing audiences in Bloomington and Peoria, the incomparable Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show comes into Chicago on this warm August day in 1899!

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

Hundreds lined the streets of Wentworth Avenue as Buffalo Bill Cody rode atop a horse-drawn carriage to lead his merry band of performers up Wentworth Avenue, 31st Street, down Michigan Avenue, before returning to the spectacular site at 35th Street and Wentworth!

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

And what a sight it was! As they rode along the carriage, Sioux Warriors followed the all mighty Cowboy Band led by William Sweeney.

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

The pounding of drums and wailing trumpets parted the crowds like the Red Sea to make way for the amazing sharpshooters of Annie Oakley and Johnnie Baker with rifles at the hip.

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

But the grandest sight of all appeared on display as the Congress of International Rough Riders from Germany-

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

Named The Cuirassiers.

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

From France

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

The Dragons

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

And the latest conquests on display:

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

From Cuba, Hawaii, Costa Rica...

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

And the newest collection of savages from the Philippines.

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

The Filipino Rough Riders!

REPORTER #1 / GERONIMO

All of America's Manifested Conquests!

REPORTER #2 / FELIX

Treasures.

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

Property.

Appearing behind The REPORTERS walks in YSIDORA ALCANTARA a Filipina in her 20s wearing a white dress. She enters carrying two salakots--traditional woven Filipino hats.

In a choreographed fashion, REPORTERS #1 and #2 put their reporter notepads away, trade their American caps for the Filipino Salakots with YSIDORA.

YSIDORA gives GERÓNIMO a newspaper.

GERÓNIMO

Can you believe this rubbish?!
SAVAGES?! DO I LOOK LIKE A SAVAGE!

FELIX

Ano nang problema mo, Gerónimo?! *[What's the problem, Geronimo?]*

YSIDORA

Oo nga! Tagalog ka na kasi - hindi namin maintindihan 'yan! *[Yeah! Say it in Tagalog so that we can understand!]*

GERÓNIMO

Limang buwan na tayo dito, 'di ka pa rin marunong mag-Ingles kahit konti?! *[We've been here for two months, and you still can't even learn a little English?]*

FELIX and YSIDORA stare at GERÓNIMO with annoyed eyes.

GERÓNIMO

Sige na. Gusto mo ba sa Tagalog... *[If you want me to speak in Tagalog so you can understand...]*

O, 'di ba - better?

YSIDORA

Yes. Thank you. Now, what are you shouting about?

GERÓNIMO

Here! In the newspaper. They're calling us Savages!

WHAT ABOUT ME MAKES ME LOOK LIKE A SAVAGE?!

FELIX

(the first of many sarcasms spoken by
Felix)

You?! No. You're the model of perfect peace and harmony.

GERÓNIMO

It says right here,

"From the latest acquisition from the Philippines, an archipelago of islands halfway around the world, comes three native savages who've been tamed by the Great Buffalo Bill Cody assembled to sing and dance for all of Chicago."

FELIX

What did they say about my vocal arrangements and choreography?

YSIDORA

They're not yours, Kuya. The songs belong to tatay and the dances were taught to us by inay.

FELIX

Then, they'd both be proud. It's our first show review in America!

GERÓNIMO

A review that calls us savages!

I'll show them how savage I can be!

YSIDORA

Gerónimo, calm down. Mr. Cody has never called us that. If there's anyone to blame, it's those reporters-

FELIX

Who gave me a good review.

YSIDORA

But without that review, we would still be home

GERÓNIMO

Back home, we weren't being boo'd or having food thrown at us.

YSIDORA

But we're alive. And together. That's what matters.

FELIX

Ysidora is right. This show gave us a place to sleep. They feed us. And most of all, we get to perform.

GERÓNIMO

Like circus animals.

YSIDORA

Gerónimo, what Kuya Felix is saying is that life could be worse. We are in America seeing new lands. You can't deny the look on your face the first time you saw a locomotive pull into San Francisco.

GERÓNIMO

I had more control over my Kalesa and Caballo in Intramuros than that ungodly machine.

FELIX

You're lucky that Mr. Cooke saw Ysidora ride a horse first. If he knew how bad we were at riding compared to her, he might have never recruited us.

GERÓNIMO

Then you're lucky that I'm the only one could speak to him in English for us to be recruited.

YSIDORA

But Kuya Felix is the one who taught us those songs and dances to show Ernest what we can also bring to the show.

FELIX

Ernest?

YSIDORA

He said I could call him that--Mr. Ernest Cooke.

GERÓNIMO

It's better than what I've been called here since our first show in New York: boy, goo-goo,

FELIX

Monkey.

YSIDORA

Only the people in the crowd said those things. Nobody in the show has ever called us those things.

GERÓNIMO

Not to our face.

But you see how they look at us, all of us, as lower than them. The Hawaiians, the Cubans, the Arabs, the Mexicans... as long as we are paraded as possessions to this country, we'll always be looked down on.

FELIX

Not for Ysidora.

YSIDORA

Felix.

FELIX

Every time she wins a race, she forces the crowd to look up...
At her.

GERÓNIMO

That's because they think she's cheating.

YSIDORA

Excuse me?

GERÓNIMO

They may look up, but they will never cheer.

YSIDORA

Until I make them.

GERÓNIMO

And how are you going to do that?

FELIX

She's not only going to race against the other international riders today, she will also be riding against the soldiers from the U.S. Cavalry and even against the riders from the Pony Express!

YSIDORA

Do you think I made some of the gamblers in the stands nervous? To think of anyone in the crowd betting on a little brown sister to beat one of their own.

GERÓNIMO

Buffalo Bill would never allow those groups into the race.

FELIX

Who do you think thought of the idea?

YSIDORA

I'm good.

You don't think I hear what they call us?

You don't think I remember what the Amer-canos did to our cities? To our people?

They're the ones who promised us that after the Spanish left, we would finally be free to stand on our own two feet, under our flag--in our own nation.

Until they didn't.

How dare they think that after 300 years of being ruled by one country, we would allow another one--a place none of us knew about, or much less wanted--to move into our home?

That's why itay taught me how to ride.

To ride faster than the spread of the scent of sampaguitas during an evening breeze.

To ride quieter than the whispers surrounding a newborn's mid-afternoon's naps.

To ride sharper than a bolo cutting through bamboo poles used to move nipa huts after a typhoon carried by the spirit of bayanihan.

And to ride with more possessed courage than any man, enkanto, or aswang as I delivered secret plans for the Katipunan from Manila to Caloocan. From Bulacan to Mabitac. And from here in Chicago, United States back to our hometown, Cavite, Philippines...

I will ride.

GERÓNIMO

To prove what?

You winning won't change anything for us or for anyone who died back home.

And you know that they wouldn't let you win. They'd probably shoot you before you even sniffed the finish line.

YSIDORA

At least I'll die with them knowing that I beat them.

FELIX

Jusko po! Why are you being so melodramatic?!

(mockingly)

“At least I’ll die with them knowing I beat them!”

(switching back)

I’m the maarte one in the family. Not you!

GERÓNIMO

It's better to be an example of a person living their dreams than someone pretending to be a dead martyr.

We are here. We can build something out of the ashes that was left behind by the Americans. We can build something better, stronger, and our own.

FELIX

Is that what our three-hundred year oppressors taught you with their education?

GERÓNIMO

What I learned was to use their education to be better than them.

And to someday be someone who’ll be the best for the Philippines.

YSIDORA

You spent too much time hanging around Jose Rizal... and look what happened to him.

GERÓNIMO

Noli Me Tángere taught us that the size of our intellect, imagination, and the daringness to dream will lead to our freedom.

FELIX

We gave up our freedom when you signed our names to a contract.

GERÓNIMO

I signed us up for a chance to start over.

YSIDORA

In a country not ours?

GERÓNIMO

To make this land our own. Remember when I told you about La Liberté éclairant le monde?

FELIX

Ooo yes... The La Lube Eclare Less Mound!

I love speaking Italian!

GERÓNIMO

Let's just call her The Statue of Liberty.

YSIDORA

The giant statue of the Virgin Mary holding a flame of fire in her hand?

FELIX

That's a real thing? I thought that you were making it up to keep me from throwing up on the ship that brought us to San Francisco.

GERÓNIMO

The base of that statue reads, "A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name, Mother of Exiles."

FELIX

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses"

YSIDORA

"Yearning to breathe free."

GERÓNIMO

(surprised)

You *were* listening!

FELIX

Because there was NOTHING else to do on that tang ina boat that kept rocking up and down... up and down. "Give me your tired and vomit covered floors" is what your Statue of Freedom should have said.

GERÓNIMO

The Statue of Liberty!

YSIDORA

There is no Statue. And there is no Liberty.

The only freedom I have is when I ride Bagyo in the arena where thousands boo and hiss as I beat their riders.

GERÓNIMO

The only freedom we will have is when we escape before the final races.

FELIX

What are you talking about?

YSIDORA

We're not going through with your stupid plan.

FELIX

There's a plan? I didn't know about this plan!

GERÓNIMO

I told you about it in June during our stop in Boston.

YSIDORA

It was a stupid plan back then and it's a stupider plan now.

FELIX

What was the plan?

GERÓNIMO

When we come to Chicago, my friend will meet us near the arena entrance and take us to a place called the Union Stock Yards in a horseless carriage-

YSIDORA

I'm not leaving without my horse!

GERÓNIMO

Where we'll have new clothes, jobs, and paperwork to start a new life here.

FELIX

We're going to get caught!

GERÓNIMO

Not if we escape before the final relay race when everyone will be in a frenzy. No one will even notice we're gone.

YSIDORA

Not when they come looking for me.

FELIX

And who is this "friend"? For all we know, this could be a trap to send us back on a boat back home. And you know my stomach can't take another month on the ocean!

GERÓNIMO takes out a letter from his pocket.

GERÓNIMO

My friend, Edward, owns a cigar store called...

(reading the letter)

E. Hoffman & Company at the Sherman House. That's where he met Jose Rizal in 1888.

(MORE)

GERÓNIMO (CONT'D)

Since Jose met his death three years ago, Edward and I have been corresponding and after knowing our burden in the Philippines through Jose, he's offered us a way to make a new life here... in Chicago. Starting with meeting him at the gates before your race.

FELIX takes the letter.

YSIDORA

You don't know how to read.

FELIX

I just wanted to know if this paper felt real.

FELIX gives the letter back to Gerónimo.

YSIDORA

I'm not leaving.

GERÓNIMO

(To Felix)

Talk some sense into your sister.

I'm going to find Edward.

(To Ysidora)

I know how much winning that race means to you.

But believe me, you will--we will--win so much more by leaving this circus.

If you won't leave for you, then leave for your brother. He will never be more than a servant if he stays.

(To Felix)

No offense.

FELIX

Oh, I'm totally offended.

GERÓNIMO

Even as much as we both know how talented Felix is, they're never going to want to see him on one of their stages. And you know it.

Ysidora, taking our freedom back will lead to a greater future for not only us, but for everyone who will come here after us--to those who dare to become more than they can ever dream of.

(to both of them)

I better see the both of you at the entrance gates before the race.

GERÓNIMO exits.

FELIX

He's always been a bundle of joy.

YSIDORA

Can you believe the nerve of him?

FELIX

He has a point.

YSIDORA

About you only being a servant because of your lack of talent?

FELIX

Uh, no. And I'll let that slide because you're being so talagang passionate right now.

YSIDORA

Then what point are you agreeing with since you didn't even know about this plan until now?!

FELIX

Until now, I wanted to believe that being a part of this show could make a difference. Not only for our lives, but for the lives of everyone back home. I thought that by seeing our humanity, our culture... They would be able to accept us as equals. At least that's what I've kept believing since our first audience at Madison Square Garden in New York to Chattanooga to Philadelphia to here. It's funny to have a heart wish of visiting places that I never even knew existed Yet, I never knew how living out this adventure would bring so much hate, anger, and hurt with each name, look, or indifference our existence would bring. So, really, Ysidora, how much of a difference can we make being here when we're only seen as trophies to a people who don't even see us as humans?

YSIDORA

And you think by leaving this show to live out there will be any different?

FELIX

At least WE can make the difference. And not by the hands of a circus leader. But by our own hands where we can control... create... live. To become the best we can be.

YSIDORA

But what if my best is to be the best rider here?

FELIX

And then what are you after that?

Everyone will still call us savages... googoos... little brown brothers and sisters.

If we leave, we can prove to all of them that we are more than that.

On our own terms.

YSIDORA

But if we're caught, we'll be shipped back to the Philippines with nothing... as nothing.

At least when I win today, I'll have the satisfaction in knowing that I beat their best. No matter the color, the nationality, or gender--I am better.

FELIX

What about for me?

Sure, I can maybe sing and dance better than any of them... But at least out there, I can find out what I can be the best at, instead of being part of a collection in America's conquests.

And knowing that... Knowing father... I couldn't live with that shame... and neither could you.

I'm going to make sure that Gerónimo doesn't leave without us.

FELIX exits.

YSIDORA

I wish I could, Kuya.

YSIDORA exits.

Enter REPORTER #1 wearing the same cap he wore at the beginning of the play holding a reporters notepad and writing...

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

A spectacular display of American bravery and skill as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show came and went through Chicago. The sellout crowd of 8,000 people that filled the stands at 35th and Wentworth could be heard for miles as they Ooooo'd and Aweee'd as a hunt of Wild Buffalo stampeded around the makeshift arena. Live rounds of gunfire electrified the masses as Buffalo Bill Cody and the U.S. Cavalry rescued the Deadwood Mail-Coach from attack. And after a demonstration of the riding prowess of post carriers of the Pony Express, the SHOWSTOPPER of the entire event began--the International Relay Race.

Enter YSIDORA as she mimes riding her horse Bagyo. During the race description, YSIDORA mimes the actions.

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

Rounding station after station was the fastest rider this reporter has ever witnessed--a rider from the Philippines named Ysidora Alcantara.

Enter FELIX waving his hat.

FELIX

Go Ading Ko!

REPORTER #1 / GERÓNIMO

Watching her, she looks like a blur flying on a gust of wind-
A mixture of freedom and ferocity-
An unbelievable sight to witness until-

FELIX

Until...

YSIDORA

Until...

REPORTER #1 / GERONIMO

The crack of a bullet escaping a gun's chamber rang throughout the arena causing a collection of gasps to be heard as she fell...

FELIX

My sister fell...

YSIDORA

I fell...

REPORTER #1 / GERONIMO

It was a gunshot from what sounded like a 45 caliber revolver that pierced an already tense summer midwest afternoon in an open lot that caused a Galloping Palomino named Bagyo to stumble and throw its rider onto an already cracked earth and back to a reality of what could have been a triumph for the United State's newest possession...

Enter FELIX as he picks YSIDORA up and
carries her downstage as REPORTER #1 exits.

YSIDORA

(waking up)

Did I win?

FELIX

Didn't you see the winners trophy at the entrance of our tent?

YSIDORA

No.

FELIX

Then you didn't win... but you won in my eyes.

YSIDORA

So maarte.

Oh my God! What happened to Bagyo? Is he alright?

I need to check on him.

YSIDORA tries to move, but stops in pain.

FELIX

He's fine. Rest muna.

The Mexican Vaqueros are looking after him.

Bagyo was just startled. Like the rest of us.

YSIDORA

Why are you here? I thought you left with Gerónimo to be the best that you could be.

FELIX

And miss seeing my sister be the best rider steal the show on the biggest stage?

YSIDORA

You're just jealous.

FELIX

A little.

Okay, a lot.

I hope you at least heard the crowd cheering for you.

Enter GERÓNIMO.

GERÓNIMO

That's what made me stop and turn around.

YSIDORA

You said they'd never cheer for me.

GERÓNIMO

Technically, they were cheering for Bagyo. You only have 2 legs. He has four. Now, if you were to carry Bagyo on your back, then I can't wait to hear the crowd at our next tour stop.

FELIX goes to hug GERÓNIMO.

FELIX

Next stop?! I knew you couldn't leave us.

GERÓNIMO

And miss seeing the best rider in the world fly on a dust of wind and courage?

YSIDORA

But not brave enough to join you at the gates.

GERÓNIMO

There will always be other gates.

FELIX

Like the ones at the Statue of the Lubyed eClaire!?

GERÓNIMO

Sure. That one.

They all laugh until YSIDORA stops from the pain her body is in after the fall.

YSIDORA

Aray! No more jokes.

FELIX

Who was joking?

GERÓNIMO

I don't even know how to joke.

YSIDORA

I'm sorry I ruined your plan.

GERÓNIMO

The only plan I have right now is to make sure you're okay. We can think about what our best will be like when you get better.

YSIDORA

But if I won, at least I could have done something for others to remember me by...
To remember *us* by.

FELIX

Do you really think people will remember us?

GERÓNIMO

Maybe one day.

YSIDORA

One day...

Blurring the façade between character and actor
by using third-person voices...

FELIX

Felix Alcantara, the artist-

YSIDORA

Ysidora Alcantara, the rider-

GERÓNIMO

And Gerónimo Ynocensio, the thinker-

YSIDORA

Became the first Filipinos to be recruited in the Philippines and go on tour in the United States with the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show from 1899-

FELIX

To Nineteen-hundred.
They were later joined by five other Filipinos...

YSIDORA

Gregorio Azarraga, Eustaquio Caliz, Ysidoro Constantina, Lorenzo Eman, and Filimon Ermoso.

GERÓNIMO

But they were the original three-

FELIX

The original Three Filipinos to tour the United States.

GERÓNIMO

To show the United States that they were more than savages.

Or possessions.

FELIX

Or trophies.

YSIDORA

They were the Dreamers,

FELIX

The Fierce,

YSIDORA

And the Important.

GERÓNIMO

They were The Filipino Rough Riders.

ALL

END OF PLAY