



This self-confessed 'flip flops' girl can justify spending hundreds of dollars on tech, but she can't bring herself to buy something to wear that will cost her \$150 to \$200.
TREVOR TAN

MUSICAL THEATRE

Video-game geek with a big voice

Lea Salonga talks about *Cinderella*, motherhood and why it is cool to play video games ...

LEA Salonga has one of the most powerful sets of lungs this side of Broadway and West End.

And guess what, her hand-eye coordination ain't too bad either, all thanks to video games.

The 37-year-old Filipino-American performer, best known for her role as Kim in *Miss Saigon*, told TODAY on Tuesday at the Plaza Parkroyal: "Not too many people would peg me for a video game geek, but I am."

By this she means playing *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy 7* for the third - yes, third - time on her PlayStation Portable, which she always brings around in her travels. Along with a Nintendo DS Lite game console.

It also means that when she's back at home in Manila, she's probably getting competitive with her husband on either their PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360.

"The only thing we don't have is a Nintendo Wii. When he gives me a video game, I'm screaming as if he's given me a diamond ring," said Salonga, who was briefly in town to promote the Rodgers and Hammerstein

musical *Cinderella*, which will be staged in January 2 to 22 at the Esplanade Theatre.

Between fashion and tech, it's a no-brainer for the Tony Award winner. "I can justify spending hundreds of dollars on tech - because it's tech.

"But I can't wrap my mind around buying something to wear that will cost me \$150 to \$200 - it's a pair of shoes!" quipped this self-confessed "flip flops" girl who can, for some reason, justify spending \$50 on a pair of Havaianas.

The only thing we don't have is a Nintendo Wii. When he gives me a video game, I'm screaming as if he's given me a diamond ring.

Salonga is no stranger to Singapore audiences, who last saw her in a concert in 2005. She still remembers performing opposite Adrian Pang in Neil Simon's *They're Playing Our Song* in 1999.

"He was one of the most fun leading-men I've ever worked with. It was very hard keeping a straight face on stage. If I ever do a comedy here in Singapore again, I'd do it with him."

Following in the footsteps of previous Cinderellas like Julie Andrews and *erm*, Brandy, Salonga said the musical is same same but different. For one thing, the Fairy Godmother is apparently less vanilla and considerably more ... Queen Latifah?

"Yes, she (Afro-American actress Charlie Parker) is incredibly tall, buxom and an imposing presence onstage. But with the kind of advice she dispenses to Cinderella, I think it's more Oprah-ish than Queen Latifah," Salonga said, with a laugh.

When she isn't performing, Salonga enjoys spending quality time with her two-year-old daughter, Nicole, who apparently has developed a taste for musicals. You know, the usual Disney cartoons ... and the occasional *West Side Story*.

"She loves to sing *Maria*. It's actually something for a two-year-old to already develop a taste for Bernstein's music," said the beaming mother, who jokingly blames her husband, a Chinese-Japanese entertainment software manager, for introducing their daughter to the musical.

"But only the musical numbers when people are smiling, dancing and singing," she pointed out. "She's only, two after all."

Cinderella runs from Jan 2 to 22 at the Esplanade Theatre. Tickets from Sistic.

From the Plus inbox ...

ON 'THE MANY FACES OF TAY PING HUI' (SEPT 29)

Tay Ping Hui is a lousy actor with the same few expressions on his face. He is snobbish in person and thinks he is handsome. How much did he pay you to write an article for him in TODAY? ISAAC

ON 'LIFEHOUSE FAMILIES' (OCT 3)

Thank you for Christopher Toh's interview with Lifehouse ... I truly enjoy their music and was looking forward to their gig until I found out that it was to be held at St James Powerhouse.

I'm turning 17 only next month, which means I'll be denied entry to the venue. I was really disappointed and upset about it - having to miss my favourite band's gig just because I'm under-aged is a huge pity.

I did everything within my means: Called up the venue, emailed the event organisers, contacted the record label and also emailed the band themselves about bending the rules a bit - but to no avail. I just feel that under such circumstances, it'd be good if clubs exercise some flexibility.

Take the example of Ministry of Sound. Last year, The Click Five's private showcase was held at MoS and they allowed fans under 18 to attend until 9pm, when club rules were applied. EUNICE

ON 'ABSTRACT SCHMABSTRACT' (OCT 3)



I read Phin Wong's article with amusement, and it thoroughly made my day. Although I haven't seen him "being a tree", I do like his writing style. He may not 'be water', but his writing flows. Just wanted to voice a note of appreciation (which is getting so rare now. All we read are complain letters!).

RICHARD TAN

In many respects, Phin Wong's piece made me think of the current contemporary art scene which I am involved in. None of the art collectors I know actually understand what they're buying.

It's because of the current fashion that art has to be abstract to the point of unintelligible that these collectors hang the paintings on their walls - the spin on the content of the painting comes much, much later ...

Plus, he verbalised publicly what most people would only whisper about (undeniably under the influence of alcohol). Most people I know in the theatre circle, even in passing, would sooner dramatically slit their wrists rather than admit that they didn't quite "get" the play they're a) acting in, or b) watching. LEENA

<p>COACH PACKAGE</p>		<p>Worldwide Hotel</p> <p>Online Instant Confirmation www.luxury.com.sg</p>
<p>2D MALACCA frs98 (Coach Direct) Hotel Choice: Equatorial, Renaissance</p>	<p>2D KUALA LUMPUR frs99 (Coach Direct 1900h) Grand Continental (Jalan Raja Laut)</p>	<p>MASPRO </p> <p>3 Days PENANG frs249 3 Days LANGKAWI frs249 3 Days KUCHING frs289 3 Days KOTA KINABALU frs339</p>
<p>3D KUALA LUMPUR SHOPPING SPREE frs169 (Coach Direct) Hotel Choice: Crown Princess, Hotel Istana, Impiana KLCC, Dorsett Regency</p>		
<p>Luxury TOURS & TRAVEL PTE LTD TA496 Incentive / Group enquiries are welcome! 100 Orchard Road Concorde Hotel & Shopping Mall #02-46 Singapore 238840 enquiries@luxury.com.sg since 1985 Tel: 6235 1911</p>		

Redeem your **GENTING POINT (GP)**
@ Konsortium for all Genting Products

GENTING HIGHLANDS

FREE BREAKFAST

2D1N fr. 81 GP

Two-way coach ticket fr. 60GP
Genting Holiday Card @ 38GP
Concert & Show tickets also available!!

联营假期 TA1210 konsortium 6392 5000
* Terms & conditions apply • www.konsortium.com.sg