

SIT-DOWN COMEDY



Smilng mischievously, Adelina Anthony announces at the start of a performance, “Many of the jokes tonight will go over your head.” In the following 90 minutes, Anthony mocks Bill O’Reilly’s panic over “lesbian gang epidemics,” deconstructs *The L Word*’s depiction of Latinas (“It’s like Hollywood wants to represent all Latinas from the East Coast to the West Coast in one *pinche* character.”), and laments her own inability to get a date on a Sunday night. Anthony even squeezes in a lesson in colonialism and indigenous history, by

the simple act of sitting during a stand-up show. (“Don’t you know your history? Chicanas don’t stand up. We do sit-ins.”)

Anthony’s pieces—like the three-part dramatic performance *The Xicana Xronicles*, as well as her comedy—work in the spirit of her mentor, Chicana feminist heavyweight Cherríe Moraga, with performances that celebrate queer Chicanas even as mainstream culture demonizes or ignores them. But this much-needed representation is only part of her aim. Despite her effortless hilarity, Anthony is less interested in relaxing her audiences through laughter than in reminding them to agitate for a more just world. Audiences who witness her captivating stage presence will find it difficult to say no. —**Erica Lies**

You label your comedy shows as both stand-up and solo performance. What’s your reasoning behind using both terms?

I’m an absolute *teatrista*, working with body, voice, character, and story; so even if an overall piece is couched in the stand-up comedy form, I’m not just standing up

in front of a crowd and delivering one-line jokes.

What effect do you think it has for queer Chicana audiences to be able to laugh about their experiences in a group setting?

Making queer Chicana experience comedic affirms our pains and glories—*hijole*, just the fact that we exist and thrive. If I flip the dynamic around and poke fun at whiteness or heterosexuality, that’s the work of resistance, because I’ve inverted the paradigm and I’m using comedy to laugh at those same power structures that work to make us invisible. Since I’m writing with a queer Chicana audience in mind, it’s meant for us. We recognize the stereotype[s]—even how we sometimes play into them ourselves. If I poke fun at lesbians of color (with a progressive agenda, of course), then it’s the work of healing—and that’s the best effect of laughing in a group setting. The roar of the audience on some jokes points to that collectivity of experience and culture.

When did you come into your identity as a political artist, as someone who (as you joke) engages in “political *putiando*”?

Some might assume I was born and bred as a hard-core Xicana from day one. In fact, I was a typi-

cal Hispanic girl raised in Texas. But in my early 20s, around the same time I was coming into my queer sexuality, my ethnic identity really started to matter to me. Probably because I was surrounded by whiteness and knew it not to be my entire culture, and knew that if I was ever going to do something of value in this world, I had to honor where I/my family really came from—that’s connected to the history of Mexico, of colonization, and the Southwest. So I read Chicana literature and other ethnic literature like a wolf. Those pivotal works by Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Lorde saved my life.

Committing to a queer Xicana experience means being the Pablo Nerudas of our lives—we have to find the poetry in our existence, witness it, document it, and then create art from it meticulously and passionately. My artistic freedom is intricately connected to my liberation as a lesbian Xicana-Indígena. [Our community] has to believe that the details that mark us as queer Xicanas actually make our recollections of our experiences palpable and fresh.

For more on Adelina Anthony, check out adelinaanthony.com.