

A Filipino Debut, Reimagined

CIRCA Pintig stages a new queer Filipino American comedy at three Chicago venues, November 5–December 4

CHICAGO — CIRCA Pintig presents *Debut: Coming of Age in Filipino America*, a new one-act comedy by Nate Cozens directed by RJ Silva. A Filipino drag queen nearing 30 throws himself a traditional debut party—and learns that family love may be more transformative than a perfect celebration. The production plays 11 performances across Filament Theatre, Bughouse Theater and the Rizal Center from November 5 through December 4, 2026.

Jomar, a 29-year-old drag performer at a crossroads, reclaims the debut—a Filipino celebration traditionally marking an 18-year-old young woman’s entry into adulthood—as his own fresh start. His family rallies around his extravagant plans, but as the party venue falls through and the lechon never materializes, the celebration takes on a different meaning. The result is a funny, flamboyant and deeply affectionate look at queer identity, generational expectations, belonging and the people who help us begin again.

Cozens drew on his own experience of approaching 30: “If anything, I felt like I was just getting started.” For director Silva, Jomar’s story suggests “at any age, we can always find ourselves and find our home.” AJ Lingad, who plays Jomar, describes representing queer Asian experiences as central to his work: “It has always been my mission as an artist to tell stories that represent the queer/asian community.”

The cast features AJ Lingad (Jomar), Stephanie Fongheiser (Ysabel), Ginger Leopoldo (Gloria), Larry Leopoldo (Regino), Nina Mae Vidal Howard (Lola Corazon) and Steven Cristi (Zack), with understudies Rich Adrian Lazatin, Mari Joy and Jill Raz. The production is stage-managed by Alishiana Uyao, with production design by Noel Henry, Mikael Silan and Larry Leopoldo.

Performance information

FILAMENT THEATRE • 4041 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60641

Nov. 5, 7:30 PM (press preview); Nov. 6, 7:30 PM (opening); Nov. 7, 2 & 7:30 PM; Nov. 8, 2 PM; Nov. 9, 7:30 PM (industry night).

BUGHOUSE THEATER • 1910 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60613

Nov. 12, 7:30 PM; Nov. 13, 7:30 PM; Nov. 14, 2 PM.

RIZAL CENTER • 1332 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60613

Dec. 3, 7:30 PM; Dec. 4, 7:30 PM (season gala performance; tickets \$40 including dinner, per the official production page).

TICKETS, CURRENT DETAILS & OFFICIAL PROMOTIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS:

<https://www.circapintig.org/productions/debut/>

PRESS: November 5 is the designated press preview. Journalists may contact Larry Leopoldo at larryleopoldo@gmail.com to request review access, interviews, and original high-resolution photos. Production photos are credited to Ty Yamamoto.

ABOUT CIRCA PINTIG • CIRCA Pintig is a Chicago Filipino American theater and community arts company celebrating its 35th season, developing and producing work rooted in Filipino and Filipino American stories. More: <https://www.circapintig.org/>

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DEBUT | Media Fact Sheet

Coming of Age in Filipino America • CIRCA Pintig • 2026 Chicago run

Story in one sentence

A Filipino drag performer on the cusp of 30 throws himself an extravagant traditional Filipino debut—and discovers the love of family is the celebration that matters most.

Five reasons this is a story

- A queer Filipino American lead character reimagines a traditionally gendered cultural milestone.
- An original one-act comedy by Nate Cozens, staged by CIRCA Pintig during its 35th season.
- A multigenerational Filipino family story combining flamboyant party comedy and emotional warmth.
- Eleven performances at three Chicago neighborhood theaters rather than a single fixed venue.
- Press preview on Nov. 5; Dec. 4 closes with a community gala and dinner at the Rizal Center.

Dates, venues and times — all Chicago local time

- FILAMENT THEATRE — 4041 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago IL 60641: Thu Nov 5 7:30 PM press preview; Fri Nov 6 7:30 PM opening; Sat Nov 7 2 PM & 7:30 PM; Sun Nov 8 2 PM; Mon Nov 9 7:30 PM industry night.
- BUGHOUSE THEATER — 1910 W Irving Park Rd, Chicago IL 60613: Thu Nov 12 7:30 PM; Fri Nov 13 7:30 PM; Sat Nov 14 2 PM.
- RIZAL CENTER — 1332 W Irving Park Rd, Chicago IL 60613: Thu Dec 3 7:30 PM; Fri Dec 4 7:30 PM season gala; \$40 including dinner per official website.

Who to interview

Nate Cozens — playwright; RJ Silva — director; AJ Lingad — Jomar; Ginger Leopoldo — Gloria and CIRCA Pintig executive director. Interview availability and press seats are subject to confirmation.

Production credits

Cast: AJ Lingad, Stephanie Fongheiser, Ginger Leopoldo, Larry Leopoldo, Nina Mae Vidal Howard, Steven Cristi. Understudies: Rich Adrian Lazatin, Mari Joy, Jill Raz. Stage management: Alishiana Uyao. Production design: Noel Henry, Mikael Silan, Larry Leopoldo.

Images, tickets, and press contact

Official production page, ticket buttons and two marketing photographs:

<https://www.circapintig.org/productions/debut/>

Photo credit: Ty Yamamoto. Contact CIRCA Pintig to request original high-resolution files, confirm usage rights and request press seats or interviews.

Press coordination: Larry Leopoldo • larryleopoldo@gmail.com

Artistic director: RJ Silva • rj@circapintig.org

All dates and details current as of October 19, 2026. Please check the official production webpage for updates.