

Meet The Actors

Old Lines New Meanings
Mid-Process Documentation

A series of short interviews with the 5 actors of OLNM and how they instinctively react to basic questions about their characters.



Introduce your character.

My character's name is Esther. She is the Christian group leader of the church and a close friend of Grace who tries to help Grace to walk in the faith. Her main concern is that Grace may steer away from Christianity.

Describe your character in one word.

Caring.

How do you think you relate to your character?

I think I relate because I really care about my friends as well.

How do you not relate to your character?

I don't relate to the musical aspect of the play - as in, there are certain musical passions to my character that I don't relate to. For instance, the Sound of Music part - I personally don't relate to that musical.

How has your character grown or changed

I think my character stays consistent throughout the play, I didn't discover anything new about my character.

Introduce your character.

My character is Jean. She's Grace's 'best friend', but really her partner/lover. They were together and then they broke up. She wants to be with Grace but at the same time, she needs a lot more from her for the relationship to work. She doesn't want to be the trigger for Grace to abandon her faith. She's okay with not being public about her relationship with Grace but she doesn't want to be the source of Grace's guilt. She has her own dreams but it's hard. She wants to be accepted.

Describe your character in one word.

Passionate.

How do you think you relate to your character?

In a sense, yes. This idea of her being willing to follow Grace but realising she needs boundaries to be her person, to put her foot down on what she wants from the relationship, especially about the breakup. I am done being the second 'thing', Jean doesn't want to possess Grace but wants to be present and I relate to those feelings.

How do you not relate to your character?

One thing is that I've never really been with a girl. I'm queer, but I have never really been in a relationship with a girl. In my previous relationships, I've also never dealt with religion as an issue.

How has your character grown or changed?

At first she was really just in the relationship. But we realised she cannot just be the love interest and we tried to find more depth in her character.





Introduce your character.

I'm Allen. I play the brother of grace. I am very surprised that she is queer and try to reconcile that.

Describe your character in one word.

Conflicted.

How do you think you relate to your character

I guess in a way I do. I don't relate in the sense that I have experienced the exact same things before, but more because I'm a sibling, I can engage as if I am actually interacting with real-life siblings.

How do you not relate to your character?

I am not the younger sibling.

How has your character grown or changed?

It started off as trying to show the binary between the church and sexuality. But now I ground it more in family, and the character took on an aspect of its own, rather than just a vessel to talk about the church.

Introduce your character.

My character is Leslie; not the lesbian haha. He is our main character's best friend, not sure if he is foreign yet. He is a gay man. He believes very much as queerness as a community as a form of resistance and solidarity.

Describe your character in one word.

Fabulous. Wait no, flamboyant.

How do you think you relate to your character?

Yes and no. I think if we are talking about the other queer characters, actual queer women are embodying them. But I myself am not a queer man. Which makes it more difficult to identify with Leslie. The method through which I have been exploring Leslie is through both aesthetics and movement. I also try to pay more attention to queer culture. A sense of community is also very important to me just like Leslie. Wills and Succession lacks this, whereas in our piece we establish that there's more than just the Grace and Ellen dynamic. I fervently agree with this viewpoint, something that I brought to the character. I guess what's not discussed in Wills and Succession is our need for a sense of community. What Leslie brings to the table is the wider range.

How do you not relate to your character?

I'm not gay. And I'm not so outwardly flamboyant. I do not speak like Leslie.

How has your character grown or changed?

Absolutely. Leslie changed the most. In the beginning, we wanted a foreign queer character from the West. But if Leslie is the type of person championing queerness, then we are putting forth a very Western conception, where coming out is a very big thing, whereas Asian perception of coming out is geared more towards reconciling the queerness with family. We also scrapped the school setting just...because.

We haven't decided if Leslie is foreign or not because I don't know if it really matters.

Dennis





Celine

Introduce your character.

My character's name is Grace. She is in Junior College, 17-18 years old. She is struggling to find a balance between her faith and her sexuality. She feels guilt from both of them and is torn. She wants what's right.

Describe your character in one word.

Confused.

Do you relate to your character?

In a lot of ways, yes. I think because the character came from improvisation. My own faith comes into it and my own understanding of Christianity comes into play. Being fervently a Christian but yet so critical of the church.

How do you not relate to your character?

I think she has a lot more struggles with her identity than I do. I never really struggled too much about my faith and sexuality. Grace lets these things define her way more. I eat strawberries haha Grace orders strawberry cakes but removes the strawberries.

How has your character grown or changed?

Mmm. The way that we portray Grace has changed but I think it's mostly because the form of the performance has changed. The process isn't very narrative-driven but more of sympathising with the character. We did a lot of early groundwork about her story, her relationships with brother Allen and Esther. A lot of that possibly came from wanting to explore binaries - moving away from binaries or towards them. I think because we had that goal, we had a clear idea of what grace needed to be.

Comments from the Interviewers:

There were several things that stood out to us as not only interviewers, but spectators of their evolving performance. It was interesting to sit down and ask them for their views, as we'd never had a chance to before.

Victoria is naturally a reserved person, but it is interesting that she speaks about her character as if describing a close friend. There is simplicity in her words, but a forwardness and excitement in her body language.

It is interesting that so much of Grace was inspired by Celine's life. It added a huge personal touch to the character. It was also refreshing to hear how Celine was able to reconcile her sexuality with her faith, something her character never seemed to be able to do (sadly).

Dennis spoke about his character confidently and affectionately and it is obvious that he loves his character. Despite being extremely different from Leslie, it is amusing and admirable that Dennis is able to feel so strongly for his character.

Even though the relationship dynamics of Jean is not the most familiar, Like Celine, Ella resonates with her character on a personal level as she also identifies as a queer. With an obvious background in acrobatics, Ella expresses herself fluidly through her physicality. Through her physical performance, it seems that Ella strives to portray the struggle and hidden voices of queer women in Singapore's theatre scene.

A poet, Jed expresses his thoughts in few words, yet in a strikingly concise manner. It is fascinating to witness how he uses his mastery of words and his own personal experience of grappling sibling relations to discover a connection to his character, who is struggling to communicate with his sister.