

Cho finds inspiration for Rumi in travels

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

In the animated Netflix film "KPop Demon Hunters," actor Arden Cho ("Partner Track," "Teen Wolf") provides the voice for Rumi, the leader of the girl group, Huntrix. When they're not slaying on stage, they're hunting down demons.

"This movie has been one of my absolute favorites, because Rumi is legit the coolest character," Cho said in a Zoom interview from Netflix's Los Angeles office. "If I was a teenage girl, I feel like I would want to be Rumi. I'm still kind of geeking out that I get to be her voice."

This interview with Cho has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: This film is set in South Korea. When you were voicing Rumi, did you think back to your previous trips there to get the vibe of playing this pop star?

A: Oh, definitely. I love Korea so much and it was really so special to be able to bring this character to life, playing this superstar who has to carry so much weight on her shoulders. But, you know, I have a lot of friends in the music industry as well, so I probably took a little inspiration from everyone.

Q: What was it like growing up as a visible minority in the United States?

A: I was born in Texas and I am American ... but I'm a child of immigrants. So I sort of experience the world from both sides. The older I get, I'm always questioning (my identity), too. What does it mean to be Korean American



Arden Cho said that voicing the lead character in "KPop Demon Hunters" was one of her favorite jobs. **NETFLIX**

or Asian American? So to have a movie like "KPop Demon Hunters," which is really the first big (western) animated film with Korean history or a Korean story in it, and to be a part of it is so special and really kind of epic. Maybe it can open doors for more Asian American stories (to be told).

Q: After you graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, you went to Kenya for a bit. What were you doing there?

A: It was the summer of 2007 and I was there working with a medical missionary team. I always say mission work is so interesting because we're young and we go there with this idea that we're going to go help people and do all these great things. But it was one of the most life-changing experiences for me.

Q: How so?

A: I think I gained a lot more than I gave. You go hoping to inspire and be of use to help people, but then you come back with a heart full of wisdom and life experiences. You see so much more than what we grow up with, right?

We don't think twice about running water (generally in the U.S.). I remember when I came home, I was so thankful for clean water, ice cubes and toilet paper.

Q: Many Asian Americans have moved to Asia to jumpstart their careers, because they say they didn't see themselves in the media. After you won the Miss Korea Chicago contest, did you consider moving to Korea or Japan maybe to model or act?

A: What's so interesting is that I was 18 at the time, and that was when I actually wanted to be a singer. I almost went down that route. But I think there was such a cultural difference where I would have had to try to fit that specific Korean beauty standard, and I was American. I didn't want to do what was sort of done in that system, which was having to lose a ton of weight and getting plastic surgery (to attain) that certain look and vibe. That was a whole other layer of things to battle, and I decided that if I want to tell stories, I want to tell them as me, without changing myself.

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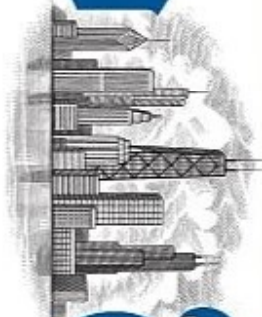


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