

GLADYS
TORSION

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Art Award Voice ★★★★★

«...une très belle écriture»

KODAK TRI-X PAN FILM



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HELLA GRANGER



The Latest ★★★★★

Sharon Drain, une interprète de rêve..

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ÉCRIT ET MIS EN SCÈNE PAR SAMUEL CAPRINI

AVEC SHARON DRAIN



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Remote Goat ★★★★★

«...un succès annoncé...mise en scène de haute qualité par Samuel Caprini
...tour de force»

PRESS RELEASE



HELLA GRANGER-Superstar

With Sharon Drain

Length: 70 mins

Public : 16+

Production : Cie Gladys Torsion

Contact : 00447971 605461 (Sharon)

0033662123472 (Samuel)

Dates : 21st to 28th August 2016

Venue : Sweet Grassmarket 4

Apex Grassmarket Hotel

Tickets : £8/£6

Written and directed by *Samuel Caprini*

MINI RESUME

Hella Granger, famed white soul singer, is aptly named. Because Hell is what she signed up to when put her name to the bottom of a contract with Motown. She tells the rollercoaster story of her career, her life, her addictions, her lost loves and her inexorable slide towards a tragic destiny

RESUME

Hella Granger is the first white artiste to be signed to Motown, where she met and worked with some of the most talented people in the world of music.

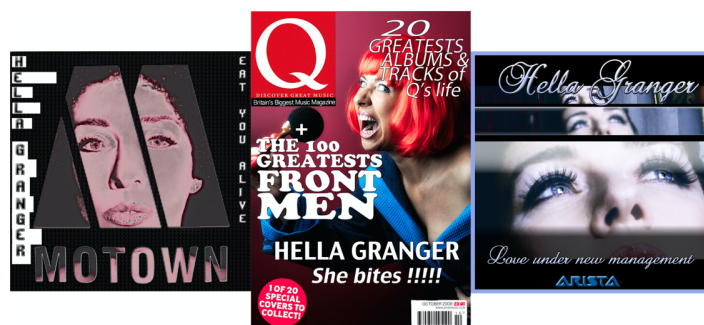
She grew up in a deprived neighbourhood in Brooklyn, where, like so many of her peers, she sang in a gospel choir. It was there she was discovered by the renowned record producer, Barry Kimby.

On stage, she recalls the highs and lows of an incomparable career, from soul queen to gay icon and Disney star. She indulges her various addictions with total abandon- now a kind of superstar syndrome after Amy Winehouse and Whitney Houston et al, clouding the truth that she has cut herself off from anyone who she might have loved and that she is in fact alone.

This dramatic comedy, where music plays a vital role, reveals Hella Granger, showbiz big-mouth, always ready to lash out with ferocious and sometimes shocking humour.

Quote from play

« Everyone admired me, I made them dream a little ... I know that I have a tendency to be admired. What's the problem? I need to be admired, you need to admire, I'm here and you're there, so, it works perfectly. » Hella Granger.



NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

« Hella Granger-Superstar » was born out of an encounter with Sharon Drain during the first show by the company : « She Monster ». I wrote it for her because I wanted to see her alone on stage, embodying this star struggling with her demons. I knew she would be able to find the emotional path of this complex character, and that her range of expressions would allow her to play with the audience and lead the character of Hella Granger to her ultimate downfall.

This show sprang from my love of soul music, the old production houses like Motown or Stax and the artistes who recorded there.

Hella Granger is the first white artiste to record at Motown and of course you could draw a parallel with the singer Teena Marie who suffered the same fate. I was not, however, interested in writing a biopic, wanting rather to explore the universality of this theme.

So Hella Granger is a composite of all the female artistes, actresses or singers, whose fame and addictions go hand in hand, leading in the end to a tragic fate. And into legend... You can't help but think of Amy, Whitney, or Janis when hearing Hella tell her life story.

« Hella Granger-Superstar » is a reflection on humanity, when it is sacrificed on the altar of fame and glory.

There is a lot of humour in this dramatic comedy, but it is often hard, sarcastic humour since the star has a way with words and does not always measure them. She has no hesitation in verbally attacking both the audience and her agent, trying to limit damage from backstage. As she becomes less sober and, due to frequent dipping into her pill box, more confused, the humour becomes increasingly brittle and finally she cracks.

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the show opens, we see Hella in the midst of doing promotion for her book of memoirs. You can tell immediately that this is a sinking ship, and that, however funny the story we're going to be told might be, it's going to end in tragedy.

The more time passes, the clearer it becomes, that the anecdotes retold by the star do not help promote her book, rather they reveal her flaws and failures, the consequence of her overwhelming ambition.

Music is a very important element in the show. It illustrates the span of the star's career from the late seventies to the present day.

The actress performs alone on stage, directly addressing the audience or characters from her past. Consequently, there are two kinds of language in Hella Granger : a performance language of the here and now, for an audience and an introspective language where she could be simply talking to herself.

The set is minimal, which allows for total focus on the character of the star, and it would take very little to reach out and touch her immense talent, her ego and her despair.

The show's lighting alternates between illuminating the whole stage and just the sofa, where Hella tells the most personal aspects of her life. Hella Granger basks in the limelight and has always felt at home there. She always believed she knew how to use it to her advantage. Now she comes to realise that being permanently in the spotlight, without recourse to comforting shade, will ultimately play a part in her undoing. She flourishes in the light but at the same time is haunted by the lack of protective shadow when she is at her most vulnerable.

Gladys Torsion, a Toulouse-based theatre company founded in 2006, is a real fusion of the energies of all of its members : actors, technicians, sound design, photographers...

We came together initially to produce a large-scale show written by Samuel Caprini : « She Monster, at the corner of 42nd and Broadway » This ambitious first outing by the young company sold out at the box office when first performed in 2007, and again in 2008.

The company's philosophy is that they produce shows which can be viewed in broader terms than conventional theatre ; thus the story in these original works is told not only in the text but also in the music and the often cinematic direction.

Gladys Torsion has at present four areas of activity :

Creation - where theatre projects are developped.

Theatr'appart – where projects are adapted to the setting of an individual's home creating a theatre in their living room.

Workshops – where different approaches and experimentation in acting are encouraged.

Image – photography and film.

These activities naturally are at times interactive and interdependent :

For example, the studio images often serve as material for the exciting and innovative visuals and the capture of a moment can aid the actor in finding the essence of a character.

The man behind the philosophy of Gladys Torsion is its Artistic Director, Samuel Caprini, who is the author of all the work produced by the company. It's a strong statement to stage only projects written by one author but we are, nonetheless, always open to new encounters with other creative energies, be they writers, directors, actors or photographers, who share the same spirit of performance and would like to join with us to further enrich the experience.

Samuel Caprini

Artistic Director and founder of Compagnie Gladys Torsion, 2006

Writer, director and actor.

Wrote and starred in:

« Les pages jaunes » (directed by Marinette Montero)

« Je sais qui a tué Loretta Boum Boum » (directed by Laurent Cornic)

Wrote, directed and starred in:

« She Monster, au coin de la 42^{ème} et Broadway »

« Brothery »

Sharon Drain

Actress

Jazz and blues singer

Member of Compagnie Gladys Torsion since 2006

Performed in :

« She Monster, au coin du 42^{ème} et Broadway » (directed by Samuel Caprini)

Starred in :

« Hella Granger » (directed by Samuel Caprini)

Premiered in French in 2012. Performed again in 2013

Appeared in :

« The Positive Hour » (directed by Julian Kerridge)

Brighton Fringe 2015

Contact details

gladystorsion@yahoo.fr

www.gladystorsion.com

Personnel:

Get in/out:

1 stage manager / lighting technician

During show:

1 lighting technician

Playing area:

4 metres 20 (wide)

4 metres 20 (deep)

Set:

Chaise longue

Side Table

Sound:

Sound System (preferably with ipod/iphone connection)

or CD

Stage Lighting:

2 outside side spotlights white (300/500w)

2 inside side spotlights orange gel (300/500w)

1 central spotlight orange gel (650/1000w)

(1 white cut out central)

On stage:

3 white showers

2 side spotlights amber gel

Back of stage:

2 side spotlights blue gel

RemoteGoat *****

There is no doubt that Sharon Drain 's one woman show is a sure fire hit on all levels.

An in depth character study- of " the first white artiste to be signed to Motown" - it deals with a myriad of human issues and gets to the very core of this artist-leaving one feeling as if we have been graced by her very presence over the course of seventy minutes.

There is so much included in this piece and Sharon Drain succeeds in taking us on a roller coaster journey with and creating a tour de force that leaves it's audience stunned, emotionally involved but ultimately wanting more.

Translated from an original French production -the power of this piece leaves us feeling we have indeed met an amalgam of all the great soul singers ,who faced similar triumphs, failures,addiction and downfall. It truly is -" a reflection on humanity, when it is sacrificed on the altar of fame and glory."

Simply staged-with minimal props and furniture-the piece opens with Hella Granger at her book signing-taking us back through her amazing life and recalling the highs and ultimate lows of a momentous career.

Sharon Drain switches effortlessly through the periods of the troubled singer's life-and she has a brilliant ability to make one laugh one moment and despair and cry the next. Her dialect is faultless, her characterisation honed to perfection and her stagecraft relaxed and entirely in control. She is capable of presenting a gamut of emotions and moving the piece forward, never allowing it to be staid or self indulgent.

Particularly moving throughout is the constant need for drugs -and these moments are handled sensitively and with consummate skill.

The direction of the piece is of the highest quality by Samuel Caprini- which only suffers occasionally due to the sight-lines of the venue-but otherwise is concise and ensures the piece has fluidity and eloquence.

In conclusion -Hella Granger's own words mirror what the audience must feel when watching this beautifully constructed piece:

"Everyone admired me, I made them dream a little ... I know that I have a tendency to be admired.

What's the problem? I need to be admired, you need to admire, I'm here and you're there, so, it works perfectly. " Hella Granger.

I urge you to catch this master class as soon as you can.

Art Award Voice *****

Seeing the word 'soul' in the description for this show set it up, for me, to be an audience with a musical superstar with some performances throughout. Alas, there were no performances. However, what Hella delivered was an hour-long monologue from an entirely well thought-out character, who took us through her life from start to end.

Though slightly disappointed that I was not going to be able to 'get down', the performance was very redemptive. Her life story, her character, her highs and her lows would not look out of place in real life or a fictional Hollywood biopic.

It was marvellously written; toying with the audience, testing us as to whether a moment was real, or if she was pulling our leg.

She took us through the intricacies of her career and her personal life – her vices, her relationships, her libido, and, of course, the inevitable rollercoaster that was her musical career throughout the 80s. The matter-of-fact-ness about how she bore her life story to us sucked the audience in immediately. Her narcissism worked with a crumbling exterior of toughness made for a truly three-dimensional character. There was laughter throughout, and I enjoyed the visceral tales of her later life towards the end.

Hella Granger is a character who deserves screen time.

The Latest* ****

This special one woman show was a darkly comic exploration of one woman's brush with fame, taking us on an emotional rollercoaster of highs, lows and more than we bargained for. The way it was presented to us was almost like a confessional at times, using the clever ploy of a book launch to lure us into a false sense of security, before revealing how fragile Hella really was. Sharon Drain had a very strong stage presence with a lovely use of banter and sensitivity. She was a dream performer to watch and is a fringe highlight (so far).