



## ***A Portrait of Ludmilla as Nina Simone***

**The French Institute in Scotland, W Parliament Square, Edinburgh EH1 1RF**

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023, 20:00**

Actress Ludmilla Dabo, accompanied by Moliere Award-winning author, director, composer and musician David Lescot, presents a moving portrait of Nina Simone at The French Institute in Edinburgh this August. A unique theatrical and musical work, accompanied by David Lescot on guitar, Ludmilla Dabo sings chapters of Simone's life; men's violence, religion, her study of music, a career built on a shattered dream and her political commitment are all reflected through the rhythm of some of her strongest songs.

Ludmilla Dabo is one of the most recognised actresses on the contemporary French stage, and a favourite performer in David Lescot's plays. Her collaboration with Lescot has been particularly fruitful over the last few years, with leading roles in his last two musicals. Dabo was awarded the Best Actress Award by the Prix du Syndicat de la Critique Littéraire, the highest theatrical award in France, for Lescot's *Une femme se déplace* in 2019.

In this play, a personal ode to Nina Simone, Lescot and Dabo retrace the stages of Simone's life and the bitterness and anger that led to the success of soul's greatest priestess. A young musical prodigy, Eunice Waymon aspired to become the first black pianist to perform in a classical concert, but she was refused entry to Philadelphia's celebrated Curtis Institute – she was black, and for the rest of her life she mourned the loss of her destiny.

Finding refuge in the creation of her own jazz music, she became 'Nina Simone', an iconic singer and one of the most influential artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An activist and major figure in the civil rights movement, Simone used her music to fight relentlessly for equal rights, with songs such as *Mississippi Goddam* and the Emmy Award-nominated '*Nuff Said!*

Written by Lescot for Dabo, who grew up with Simone’s songs, this piece weaves together the story of Nina Simone with Ludmilla’s life journey, a tribute Ludmilla pays with brio and great sensitivity. Dabo also shares her own experience in a fight that has lost none of its relevance. In a personal interview within the piece, Ludmilla shares her difficulties and questions about her time at the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts in Paris, shifting the stakes from Nina to Ludmilla. The play ends with a sublime duet between Ludmilla Dabo and David Lescot, a moment of grace and reparation.

*Nina Simone reincarnated... a talent that explodes* – Le Monde

*Both on stage, David Lescot and Ludmilla Dabo leave us an impression of sumptuousness* – Libération

*A Portrait of Ludmilla as Nina Simone* has been highly acclaimed by French critics and makes its UK debut at Edinburgh Fringe, performed in English, for 11 performances only, before a major US tour this autumn (Chicago, Princeton and Hollyhoque).

## Notes to Editors

Title	<i>A Portrait of Ludmilla as Nina Simone</i>
Performance Dates	Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> – Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> August, 20:00
Running Time	60 minutes
Location	The French Institute in Scotland, W Parliament Square, Edinburgh, EH1 1RF
Box Office	Tickets are available from <a href="https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/portrait-of-ludmilla-as-nina-simone">https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/portrait-of-ludmilla-as-nina-simone</a> £14 (£11)
Writer/Director	David Lescot
Songs	Nina Simone
Performers	Ludmilla Dabo and David Lescot
Notes	Ages 12+, contains distressing or potentially triggering themes

Social Media Handles

@lescotdavid @ludmilladabo @ifecosse #ninasimone  
@sftwshows

## David Lescot

David Lescot is a Moliere Award-winning writer, director, composer and musician. His writing mixes music, song, dance, text and poetry and has been staged extensively in France and around the world. Lescot seeks to constantly reinvent and question theatrical forms and to create new perspectives for audiences. Current work includes *Dough* (Edinburgh Fringe 2023), *La force qui ravage tout* (Théâtre de la Ville, Paris).

## Ludmilla Dabo

Ludmilla Dabo is a writer, actor, singer and director. She studied at the Conservatoire Hector Berlioz du 10ème Paris, Conservatoire du 5ème de Paris and the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts in Paris. Dabo has worked extensively with David Lescot, and won the Syndicat de la Critique Award for Best Actress for her role in Lescot's *Une femme se déplace* in 2019.



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