

British Theatre Guide

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Standing In the Shadows of Giants

Lucie Barât

Traverse Theatre and The Hale

Traverse Theatre

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In the centre of a shiny, red platform is a microphone. A wall of mirrors and a wall of lights and a cluster of white chairs set the stage for *Standing In the Shadows of Giants*. Lucie enters and, with a clear and powerful voice, she starts to sing. She has us from the beginning.

She interrupts herself to address the audience with the lure of a little personal history. Lucie wants to be an actor. Like most emerging actors, she is nurtured by a few smaller roles in movies. She confides: “small” is in evidence in the size of the trailer she has been assigned, the place where actors wait to be called to the set.

But when she is not acting, she is lured by the music and the life of a rockstar which, still today, holds the illusions of the easy abundance drugs and alcohol, a rumour of the rockstar life that she confirms here. She claims, in hindsight, to have been very aware of having no control of her addictions, but, like all addictions, the siren is finally all-powerful.

And for Lucie, the rockstar life is easy and accessible; her brother is Carl Barât from the band The Libertines. Lucie indulges in these perks. As the acting jobs become scarcer, the rock life and the peripheral addictions ensnare her. Her addictions to drugs and alcohol become the music to the poetry she writes. Like many addicts, it takes many trips to drug treatment and an intervention before she reaches bottom. And in one of her last attempts at sobriety, she meets a woman who opens a door to her elusive identity.

There is a lot going on in this one-woman show. Lucie struggles to be an actor. Lucie is a singer and writer. Lucie is an addict. Lucie goes through an intervention. And, finally, Lucie discovers that she is a lesbian. (This should be not a surprise as *In the Shadow of Giants* is describe as an LGBTQ production.) If Lucie’s self-discovery is the focus of the play, it come very late in the production.

Barât, the actor, singer and writer, is very engaging. We even get a taste of her poetry. With the sparse and sure hand of director Bryony Shanahan, playwright / actor Barât has mastered her text and space. She moves the mic stand and bottles and chairs almost invisibly. There are no wasted moves, everything fits snugly.

Although we do get a slice of the unique Barât as she discovers what love is to her and, hanging in the air, may be something that happened when she was eleven years old, the story is a little predictable, almost sterile. We are left feeling that we know the clichés but not really Barât.

Standing in the Shadows of Giants is a good, polished production—even though it takes on too many giants.

Reviewer: [Catherine Henry Lamm](#)