

# Theatre Review: ‘Looking for Lightning’ at United Solo 2016

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Elise Hudson as Ilsa in “Looking for Lightning”. Photo credit: Brown/Trinity Archive  
“Looking for Lightning” is a luminous one-woman supernova show that sees Elise Hudson being a conduit for stories of cyclic existence. I had casually arrived at Theatre Row eating my yogurt ice-cream with decadent toppings to watch one of the United Solo performances. I was already ordering my sesame beef Sichuan meal in my head for after the show, across the road. Little did I know I was about to be catapulted into the stratosphere by the performance of a Southern Belladonna capable of equal parts charisma and explosive big bangs.

**. . .Hudson ricocheted around the stage like a shooting star in a meteor shower.**

This red giant talent landed on the stage like an overachieving Mars Rover – on a serious mission, undeterred by any obstacles. I felt I was present at the birth of a star, but not a tame ingénue full of submissive posturing and air brushed perfection – no, more like the force of “Kali-esque” nuclear fission that splits your atoms in equal parts creation and destruction. A radiant force of a performer!

Yes, there was this great, clever text that orbited around concepts of reincarnation, love, and continental drift, but every word was just a trampoline for Hudson’s stellar theatrical leaps into characterization and emotional roller coasting.

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We meet a questioning, self-reflective, impassioned young woman who is musing on concepts of parallel lives, soul mates, reincarnation, and other existential concerns. She earnestly dissects her life, questioning her belief systems and formulating her own code around all areas philosophical and spiritual. Through the course of her musings, she will transmigrate to three different women whom we discover in a heightened state of love-induced fever. The impetus for her writing of these roles emerged from a true story, a repeating dream, and a past-life epiphany. She channels Susanna, an Elizabethan-era handmaiden to the Queen, Ilsa, a pre-WWI Russian cabaret singer, and Mary-Jane, an ex-socialite of 1960s Atlanta. Each character is beautifully captured in their moment of life-defining tragedy. Hudson cushions the aftermath of each past-life regression with the buoyant optimism of a young woman seeking the meaning of the cosmos. Hudson ricocheted around the stage like a shooting star in a meteor shower.

Director Sophie Netanel has kept the blocking simple and effective, allowing Hudson’s talents to shine. Transitions between characters were precise and skillfully done. She has kept a tight ship with no extraneous ramblings or indulgent emotionality. It’s clean and sharp and captivating. This production was birthed at Brown University/Trinity Rep in Providence, Rhode Island, and has grown into a hardy succulent, straining for the sun. Elise Hudson might be “Looking for Lightning,” but in the process, she strikes you with a thunder bolt of subsonic past-life pleasure.

**This production has been awarded an additional show at the festival due to its popularity.**

Running Time: 40 minutes, with no intermission.

“Looking for Lightning” played on September 16, 2016 at Theatre Row in New York City as a part of United Solo 2016. The show has been given an additional performance TBC. For more information, click [here](#). For more information on the festival, click [here](#).