

# HEDY! The Life & Inventions of Hedy Lamarr -

## Introductory notes for Auckland Arts Festival 2025

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Audio Described Aotearoa

This solo show is performed in its entirety by actress Heather Massie at Q Theatre Rangatira.

The show lasts around 60-65 minutes without an interval. And will be followed by a 10-15 minute Question & Answer session with the actress. The full event will last 75 minutes.

The theatre is set up with the main seating section facing the stage. The stage is visible to the audience as we enter the theatre. The set is in low light. At the back of the playing area a large piece of sheer fabric called a scrim is hanging, with tall drapes hanging to each side of it. As the audience enters, music is playing of Hedy's era and of the years of WWII. A montage of black & white images and video clips appears on the front surface of the scrim, above the level of the furniture on the playing area of the stage. The images are still photos and video clips of Hedy Lamarr in films such as "The Strange Woman" and "Algiers". There are also images and video clips of the actress, Heather Massie, appearing as Hedy Lamarr in a long silver gown, and images of torpedoes and a submarine. Going back and forth between Hedy, and Heather as Hedy, the two meld into one.

In front of the scrim are several set pieces which sit on top of red and gold carpets. On the far left side of stage as viewed from the audience is a long, dark wood chest of drawers with a glass water pitcher holding water, and a glass, on a silver tray. There are also red flowers in a blue vase, and a cell phone. Next to the chest of drawers is a hat rack. On the hat rack is a man's hat – this hat represents Hedy's father, Emil Kiesler. Also on the hat rack hangs

a rust red, beaded, silk jacket which Hedy wears when she journeys from Europe to America. A black, wooden gentleman's walking stick with a round golden handle rests by the chest of drawers and hatrack.

To the right of the chest of drawers is a dark wooden dining table with 2 wooden chairs with red upholstered seats to each side of the table, facing forward. On the table is a vintage black rotary telephone, a glass of water, a teacup, and a small silver hand mirror that Hedy picks up to examine her face.

To the right of the table, just right of centre stage, is a dark wooden stool. And to the right of that, on the far right side is a long dark wooden bench, with the seat upholstered in red velvet, and wooden armrests on each side. To the right of the bench is a small round side table (which may be covered with a gold tablecloth) with red flowers in a blue vase on its top.

When it is time for the show to begin the music will fade out, at the same time the montage projection will stop playing. The Auckland Arts Festival announcement reminding you to turn off your phones will play, and then lights will go to a full black out. It now feels like a movie house, and a black & white silent film appears on the scrim. The music is now a song in French. The film is titled "The Movie Star & The Ogre". It combines film clips from Hedy's film "Algiers" (with her co-star, actor Charles Boyer) into a short silent film combining the story of the character Hedy plays in the film, with Hedy's own life story. The subtitles on the silent film images are as follows:

"The Movie Star And The Ogre"

There once was a very beautiful movie star.

A rich ogre wanted to marry her...

...and he did.

He told her she couldn't be a movie star anymore.

A rakish rogue told her if she gave him her jewels...

he would help her get away.

She had a lot of jewels.

And he knew a lot about jewels.

True to his word, as rogues often are,

he helped her get away.

She sailed to America,

made a movie,

and this is it.

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After the silent film ends, we are left in darkness for a moment. Then film music plays, and upstage behind the scrim an ethereal light slowly comes up revealing Heather Massie as Hedy Lamarr in a beaded evening gown - visible through the scrim fabric that the projections were playing on a moment ago. She is reliving moments of her life, by enacting lines from her many films while in an other-worldly realm. Her body movements reflect the mood of the lines, from happy to seductive to pleading.

She is wearing a rust-red silk gown with a golden underlining. It is covered in a patterns of beading including a decorative band just under the bust line and has narrow shoulder straps. The jacket hanging on the hatstand matches it perfectly. She is wearing a large silver necklace that sparkles with dozens of Austrian crystals and Austrian crystal earrings peek out behind her very dark brown, almost black, hair which frames her face. Her dark hair is parted in the middle and flows from each side to the level of her shoulders. Her face is a pale white, with bright, sparkling eyes, deep red colour on her lips, and rouge on her cheeks. She wears silver, heeled sandals, a silver Austrian crystal watch, and a rhinestone ring on her right ring finger. Her fingernails and toenails are painted a deep red, to match her red lips.

When she finishes enacting lines from her films, the light fades to full black out. The sound changes from the music to sounds of many types of phones ringing. The sounds build to a cacophony of phones ringing then resolves to a single phone ringing. After two to three rings the lights slowly rise to a warm glow on the playing area of the stage in front of the scrim where all of the set pieces are.

The phone ringing calls Hedy Lamarr to enter the stage area. She crosses curiously to the dining table, contemplates who might be calling, puts the phone to her ear, says “Hello”, and the play begins!

On the other end of the phone is a woman calling from the Electronic Frontier Foundation. When Hedy speaks she holds the phone to her ear. When she becomes The Caller, she turns and holds the phone at waist height.

A bit later, Hedy discovers the audience! When she interacts with the audience, the house lights raise to a low level so Hedy can see everyone.

To tell her story, Hedy needs to elicit the help of some the other characters who graced her life. Many times, as with The Caller on the phone, Hedy enacts scenes with them – playing all of the characters. As Hedy, she moves very smoothly and elegantly. When she plays the other characters, she makes vocal and physical changes to become the other characters and turns her body to one side and then to the other side to change characters, and to enact each scene.

Some of these characters have specific gestures. When Hedy has scenes with her father, the actress holds the hat in her hands in front of her as if it's on her father's head and she is looking up into his face. The actress playing Hedy also plays all of the other characters in Hedy's story – around 30 in total! Actor George

Sanders holds the lapel of his jacket with his right hand. Her mother, Gertrude, often holds her hands together in front of her waist with her fingertips touching. Her first husband, Fritz Mandl, walks with the black and gold gentleman's walking stick. Actor Charles Boyer being French speaks with rounded and protruding lips. Talking with Jimmy Stewart, Hedy must look up to him, and he must look down to her, as he is so very much taller than she. And then there is Hedy's co-inventor, George Antheil - he is shorter than Hedy, so he must look up to her. And more times than not, this George has his arms crossed against his chest while speaking.

Except for the props mentioned in the description, Hedy also mimes several props through the show, including a cigar that film producer Louis B Mayer is constantly smoking. And with the arrival of each child, Hedy mimes carrying and interacting with each of them lovingly.

When Hedy has scenes with George Sanders, with Fritz Mandl, with Jimmy Stewart, and when she reenacts a scene from her film "Ecstasy", all on the right side of the stage, the lights reduce to special lighting to highlight that area. When she has scenes with Louis B Mayer, and with Charles Boyer on the left side of the stage, the lights reduce to special lighting to highlight that area. And when she "stands still and looks stupid" to be glamorous and right at the end when her story is complete, she is centre stage in a single light, posing with her left arm raised above her head, and facing toward her left side (the same way she appears in the publicity photo for the production!).

Hedy also appears in scenes with theatre producer Max Reinhart, film producer Walter Wanger, film star Bette Davis, actor Clark Gable, two more of her husbands, and several other interesting characters, each introduced in the text by Hedy.

After the show, there will be a 10-15 minute Question and Answer session where you can ask the artist about Hedy Lamarr, and about her journey playing Hedy in 19 countries around the world!

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