

The Ecstasy of Victoria Woodhull – first woman to run for US President

She was the first woman to run for President of the United States in 1872 – before women even had the vote.

This absorbing play is inspired by Victoria Woodhull's remarkable life, which tells of her rags-to-riches rise from an impoverished and exploited child to the leader of the American Suffrage movement who ran her own prosperous Wall Street firm and a liberal newspaper.

As well as fighting for women's rights and labour reforms, Victoria scandalised nineteenth century society by advocating 'free love' – the right to marry and divorce without Government interference – after eventually divorcing her abusive and alcoholic husband.

In *The Ecstasy of Victoria Woodhull*, a one-woman production at the 2022 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Victoria's spirit is summoned by modern clairvoyant, Celeste, to tell how she was peddled out by her snake-oil salesman father as a child clairvoyant.

Victoria later joined the Spiritualist movement – popular in the US following the devastating loss of life in the Civil War – before she and her sister started a newspaper and a stock brokerage, which made them a fortune advising wealthy clients, including the richest man in America, Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Victoria was sensationally nominated as a Presidential candidate of the Equal Rights Party and her running mate was to be the African American abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. Days before the election, Victoria was arrested on obscenity charges for the 'improper' calling out of a prominent clergyman for his alleged adulterous affair.

Dogged by scandal, and following her divorce from her second husband, Victoria fled to England where she married for the third time, established a village school in Worcestershire and championed rural educational reform.

The Ecstasy of Victoria Woodhull was conceived by wife and husband duo Ashley Ford (Performer/Producer) and Theo Salter (Writer/Producer) for the Owl & Pussycat Theatre Company.

"When I learned about Victoria, I was fascinated by her courage and her extraordinary life and wanted to bring her amazing achievements back to the public's attention," said Ashley. "Too often women are written out of history."

Victoria Woodhull quote: "I am a free lover. I have an inalienable, constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can; to change that love every day if I please."

- Venue: theSpace on North Bridge (Venue 36)
- Time: 19:45
- Dates: 5-13, 15-20, 22-27 August 2022
- Previews: 5-7 August
- Duration: 50minutes
- Ticket prices: Previews £5 (£3 concessions). Aug 8-13, 15-20, 22-27 £9 (£7 concessions).
- Advisory: Age 12+
- Box office: edfringe.com and 0131 6233030
- Fringe listing: <https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/ecstasy-of-victoria-woodhull>

