

CAPITAL BUZZ

Broadway star's good call brings Marlene back to Capital stage

IT was an unexpected call that led West End and Broadway star Ute Lemper to write *Rendezvous With Marlene*, her critically acclaimed one-woman show, which she tours to the Queen's Hall on Saturday 8 February.

Awarded the Molière Award for her performance as Sally Bowles in the musical *Cabaret* in Paris, the young Lemper wrote a postcard to Hollywood legend Marlene Dietrich, who was also living in the French capital, to apologise for all the media attention she was garnering, much of which compared her with the legendary icon.

It was 1988 and Lemper was just at the beginning of her career while Dietrich, then at the grand old age of 89, was looking back on a long, fulfilled life of movies, music, love stories and global stardom.

Somehow Dietrich tracked Lemper down and phoned her

out of the blue. She stayed on the line for an "unforgettable" three hours sharing stories with Lemper.

Three decades on and direct from a sold-out critically acclaimed London season, the musical theatre star recalls that conversation in *Rendezvous With Marlene*.

For 35 years, Lemper has been compared to Dietrich and this is her personal homage to the star.

The evening is a dialogue between the two, exploring Dietrich's career and life from the beginning, in a timeline that eventually meets Lemper's timeline with a continuation of their parallel stories.

Along the way, Lemper sings Dietrich's most beautiful songs and reveals some her captivating secrets.

Lemper said: "Rendezvous

with Marlene means a lot to me – it is my personal homage to that great lady.

"There are many portraits of Marlene out there, but this one is coming from my heart.

"Audiences are in for an incredible story; history, fate, courage, style, politics, glamour and sex, talent and a huge career."

Six days before Lemper's opening night playing the part of Lola in the 1992 production of *Blue Angel* in Berlin – the role that had made Dietrich a star in 1928 – Dietrich passed away in Paris.

In the show, Lemper recalls all the chapters of Dietrich's amazing life, from the Berlin cabaret years to her fabulous Burt Bacharach collaborations.

It was those collaborations that brought Dietrich to Edinburgh in 1964 for the Interna-

tional Festival. Lemper says, "Fifty-six years after Marlene Dietrich last sang in Edinburgh at the Royal Lyceum with Burt Bacharach, I am coming to your glorious city to tell her true story.

"I have personally waited 30 years to reach an age that is closer to her at the time when we spoke on the phone some 30 years ago and to channel her sorrow, spirit and courage.

"Marlene's story is everything from personal and symbolic, political and glamorous, sad and entertaining and spreads through a century until the present.

"Marlene was a woman of the future, who broke all the rules of her time. A woman of today."

Ute Lemper: *Rendezvous With Marlene*, The Queen's Hall, Clerk Street, Saturday 8 February, 7.30pm, £12-£32, www.thequeenshall.net

LIAM RUDDEN

1964

The year Marlene Dietrich played the Royal Lyceum