

# Painting a polished portrait

## Review: *Frida K*

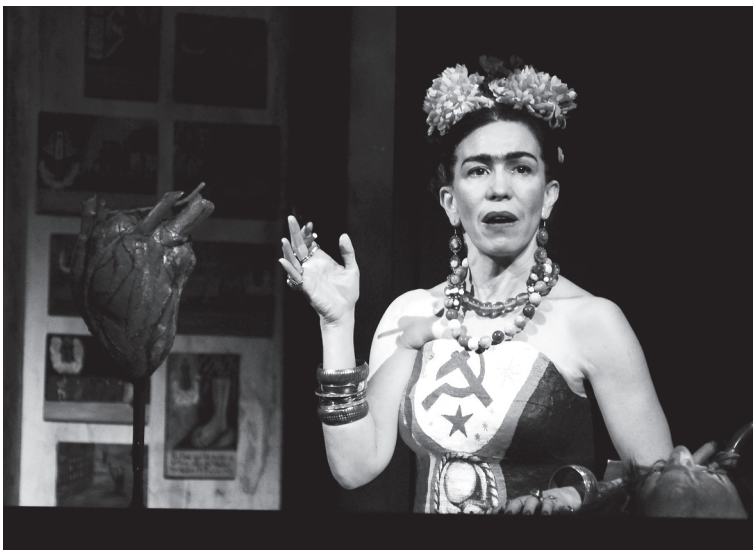
Written by Gloria Montero  
Directed by Peter Hinton  
Starring Allegra Fulton  
Runs 6-25 February  
Citadel Theatre

EAMON MCGRATH  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Attending *Frida K* will not send you to the same realm as Salma Hayek's attempt at feminist iconography. There's absolutely nothing "super-model-turned-Germaine Greer" about Allegra Fulton's frighteningly realistic depiction of the tormented and influential Mexican painter who focused her anger and depression into some of the most powerful and recognizable art of the 20th century. Instead, *Frida K* is as honest as art gets, and manages to evoke the true power of the theatre: it's at once a visual spectacle, an emotional journey and a moving, living, breathing sculpture, anchored in a passionate and engrossing narrative.

*Frida K* opens with a frail Frida Kahlo emerging from behind a set adorned with some rather graphic imagery from her paintings—bleeding hearts, skeletons, aborted fetuses—and continues to enigmatically describe her tragic life, as though Kahlo herself is looking back on it, picking apart the moments, smells, tastes and textures she would have remembered.

From Kahlo's romantic involvement with Leon Trotsky, to the roots of her political motivations to confessional passages describing Kahlo's love for fellow Mexican Marxist-expressionist Diego Rivera, Fulton manages to change herself like human clay, crafting a character so believable and convincing that Kahlo's memories almost become her own in front of your eyes. Fulton attacks the role



with a physically visible conviction and devotion, doing the impossible in making the events of another's life appear truly personal.

*Frida K* doesn't even suffer from the stereotypical shortcomings of modern theatre—over-the-top acting, superfluous set design, saliva onslaughts, et al—and gives an example of how to create gripping, emotional work without pretension or desperation. Fulton is a total natural and her projected honesty makes the play's political and artistic subtleties that much more enhanced and relevant. *Frida K* is as confident as it is modest, humble as it is powerful and relaxed as it is intense, creating a tension felt by everybody in the playhouse, evident by the standing ovation at the play's end.

Gloria Montero, Fulton's mother, is the star behind the scenes. Her elegant script develops the tensions in Kahlo's life with delicacy and care, resulting in a climactic and enveloping drama. Kahlo, constantly torn in two—between attempts at motherhood and sterility, Mexico and Europe, socialism and democracy, Rivera and Trotsky—

was a woman who found a face for her unrest and it was her own. Montero captures these maddening parallels in her script with perfectly pitched intricacy and detail: any more attention given to these tensions would make the play's messages too obvious and overblown, but any less would have made them untraceable. Montero tends to each subject perfectly, and with the perfect amount of time given to each aspect of Kahlo's life, which so tragically pulls it in two.

*Frida K* is an enormous artistic success, polished and perfected to the point where it becomes truly unforgettable. Unlike other attempts at a biography of Kahlo—ahem, major motion pictures starring supermodels pretending to be actresses—*Frida K* is grassroots, independent and unafraid. *Frida K* tackles the tragedies in Kahlo's life worth tackling, without becoming confusing or redundant, even for a second. The bar has officially been raised and it's going to take a lot to get to the same level of greatness that Montero and Fulton have found for themselves here.

# Hipsters, please don't test me



ALYSSA PANKIW

that getting too technical about music might even begin to take away from its true essence.

The direction music is taking today makes for an interesting amalgamation of genres. Various bands have crossed boundaries that bind different sounds, making the definition of "good" music incredibly elusive. It simultaneously makes a "good" fan hard to label, and that's why it's no wonder that the stereotypical Misfits fan of 2006 may not look like they did ten years ago—watch out moms, it'll be harder to spot if they've infiltrated your daughter's lives—and today's Deadheads are wearing suits instead of tie-dyed tees.

**I'm just waiting for the day that I'll be able to express my musical tastes freely and not be quizzed about them by some ostentatious scenester in skinny jeans.**

So don't assume that you'll be able to guess someone's favourite musical genre based solely on what they're wearing: the fact of the matter is, if you love a band, then you should be able to support it by buying their merchandise. Just don't wear a Sex Pistols


shirt to get the attention of the cute guy with the mohawk in science class, or a Bob Marley beanie to impress that babe with the dreads and the bong in residence. If you fake your love of a band, you will be found out. Trust me; some prick at a pub will make sure of it and you'll never live it down.

At times, people's real musical motivation should be questioned, it's true. I'm just waiting for the day that I'll be able to express my musical tastes freely and not be quizzed about them by some ostentatious scenester in skinny jeans. So don't waste my time with vignettes about Bob Dylan's real name, or drop facts like you know the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. It doesn't matter how often you frequent the Starlite Room or how much black eyeliner you wear, you still might not know quality music if it hit you in the face with a guitar. And that girl with the bleached blonde hair might actually know every riff of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* by heart; you can never really tell. So whether it's Britney Spears or Black Sabbath that gets you off, sing along whether you know their stats or not. People should respect you for your passion for music—although maybe not Miss Spears—rather than your memorization of it.

And if you're wondering about the credibility of my "vintage" Zeppelin tee or my opinion, don't worry; it comes with the knowledge that "Bron-Y-Aur Stomp" really was about Robert Plant's dog after all.

Enough is enough. People in Edmonton need to stop being pretentious about music already. Music is supposed to bring enjoyment to our lives, not become just another opportunity to exercise exclusivity. At a bar this weekend, I was shocked by the fact that I was actually interrogated about my musical knowledge by a guy that was trying to buy me a beer. I could not believe that my Rolling Stones T-shirt was being questioned for its authenticity, or that I was being pegged as someone with a less-than-average grasp on the definition of decent music, based on, as far as I could tell, nothing more than my appearance.

The guy asked me about my favourite Stones song, then my favourite album and my defensive answers led to an elaborate set of inquiries into dates, names and bios. Hey, I know enough about bands to realize that their music makes me feel good, but hell if I know what Keith Richards' first pet was named or what month *Beggars Banquet* was recorded in. That has nothing to do with how good it feels to sing along to "Sympathy for the Devil," and I believe



gateway student journalism society  
PRESENTS

**GSJS Special General Meeting**  
Wednesday, 14 February, 2007 at 4pm  
Room 3-04 Students' Union Building

**All members of the Society are encouraged to attend.**

The purpose of meeting is for the election of volunteer representatives to sit on hiring committees. Pizza will be served.

Society Members are those with five contributions in the 365 days prior to the meeting who have opted-in with a Gateway editor. If you have five contributions in the 365 days prior to the meeting but have not opted-in, you may do so at the meeting.

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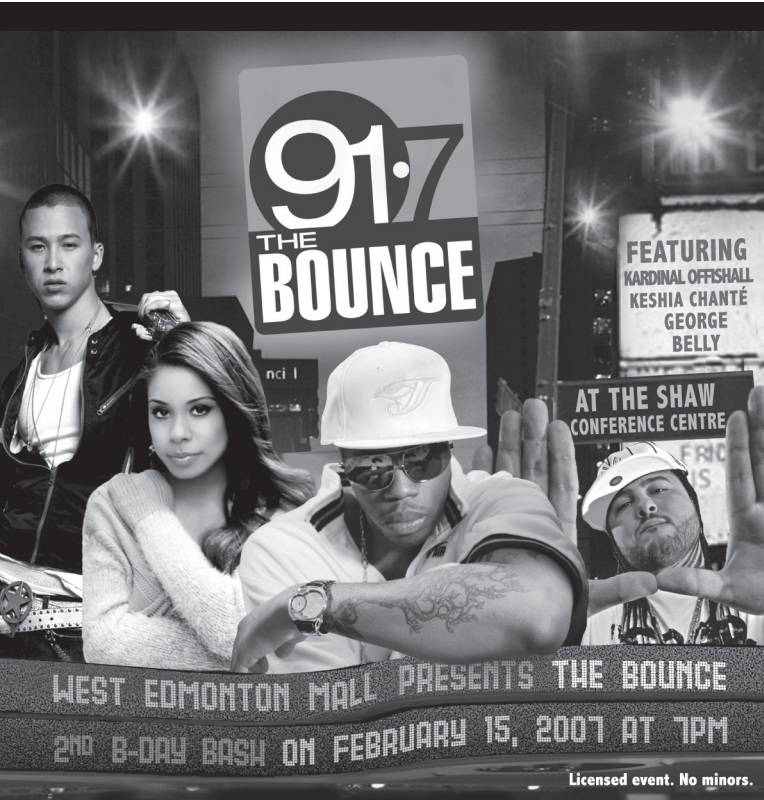
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**WEST EDMONTON MALL PRESENTS THE BOUNCE**  
**2ND B-DAY BASH ON FEBRUARY 15, 2007 AT 7PM**  
Licensed event. No minors.

**Wanna win tickets to The Bounce's B-Day Bash on 15 February at 7pm in the Shaw Conference Centre?**

**You do?**

**Really?**

**Well, then, come up to 3-04 SUB, approach one of the editors and rap some homemade rhymes about Harry Potter.**

**If we like your stylez, you'll get a pass!**

**Is that not funky?**

**WORD.**