

Barbara Fernandez - Singing, Sagging and Shagging: Synopsis

One woman, armed with American ignorance, French arrogance, and a chest that some say she grew on purpose, bursts onto the stage in sparkles and stilettos: meet Liza Minelli and Debbie Harry's love child. This pro-singer-turned-musical-comedian is ready to sing at you: to land her cheeky, unbelievable, and sometimes tear-jerking true-life stories into your lap.

Barbara Fernandez, born in the US but made in Paris, dreams of finding out who she is to finally be able to live a fulfilled life. Fed up of Americans at university playing down Europe as 'only a tourist destination', she arrives in Paris age 22, armed with a degree in theatre and determined to live and work there (without a French passport or any other working papers). 10 years of a variety of cash-in-hand jobs follow (no, it's not what you're thinking, some are singing jobs – though the producer is a bit satanic). Barbara also is on a search for love, where she discovers that trench-digging husbands, cult-loving husbands and pillow-wielding boyfriends will only help her discover who she is NOT.

Eventually Barbara meets her nemesis: a rather late-in-life diagnosis of borderline personality disorder which, though it explains quite a lot about her aborted relationships, identity crises and professional hopscotch, is quite difficult to deal with and treat. Diagnosed at the start of lockdown in 2020, Barbara embarks on a path to rewire her brain that has been described as "climbing out of hell on a ladder...but the ladder's on fire".

And a fiery ladder it is: Barbara grapples with full-on ADHD, bipolar, psychosis and PTSD, with an illness where 1 in 10 sufferers take the only way out besides treatment. At the end of two years of daily mindfulness, emotion regulation, intense physical exercises and other brain-rewiring activities – no distractions during lockdown, so no escape from her brain – Barbara emerges with, finally, a sense of who she is. She is someone who wants to make a difference to the world in the only way that will enable her to use her favorite talents: she is a musical comedian.

Armed with this empowering knowledge, Barbara throws herself into the comedy world like a dieter into a forbidden dessert. She writes jokes, songs and parodies about her life, she collates resources for people to better understand or deal with BPD, and she takes to the stage to share herself unashamedly, for the first time in her life being fully herself, in a performance that some describe as "fearless, endearing, and unflinching".