

# Ulla von Brandenburg: Sink Down Mountain, Rise Up Valley

## No ordinary trip to the theatre

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Langside Hall in Glasgow's Southside is a dramatic site for Ulla Von Brandenburg's recent performative piece [Sink Down Mountain, Rise Up Valley](#): the multimedia artist often harvests subject matter from the depths of European history, and the century-old hall comes with an eccentric backstory to match the peculiar topic of the performance. Once a proud building in Glasgow's city centre, it was moved to its more modest home in Queen's park 'brick by brick'.

With this peculiarity in mind, and its mishmash interior décor, it is easy to see why the artist chose it as the site to tell her surreal version of events relating to the Saint-Simonians.

Saint-Simonianism was an astonishingly progressive political and social movement for its time that was founded in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution. The title of the performance is taken from a folk song sung by its followers and alludes to one of their key beliefs: that privilege in all its forms should be abolished. The performance relives some of the rituals and characteristics of the Saint-Simonians, but is far from a straightforward reenactment.

Like a professional theatre production there are ushers, programmes, actors and props. But as soon as the performance begins it is clear that this is no ordinary outing to the theatre. While many contemporary artists implicate the viewer in immersive artworks, Von Brandenburg takes it that bit further. It isn't always clear who is watching whom throughout the hour-long production: the fourth wall that separates performers from audience is dispensed with and we are led (literally) by actors playing their parts as Saint Simonians through the chambers of their 'commune'. The roles are reversed – the actors do not move for us, instead we move for them, and for an hour in the neglected A-list building, it feels like Langside Hall may not be governed by conventional notions of time. With her performance art, Von Brandenburg doesn't so much break the invisible barrier as leave it in tatters.

*Langside Hall, Glasgow 30–31 Jan.*

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Performance inspired by the Saint-Simon commune.