

# Go Ahead, Touch Someone. You Just Might Take Her Home

By Neil Genzinger



photos by Yana Paskova

Roslyn Hart, as a sex therapist, pairs up audience members in her one-woman show, "Never Sleep Alone," at Joe's Pub.

Usually when a couple say they met in the theater, they mean they were in the cast or on the stage crew together. Patrons who venture to the show at Joe's Pub on Thursday night may find themselves constituting a different class entirely: audience members who were more or less ordered to couple up by the performer.

The show is called "Never Sleep Alone," and that performer may look familiar to Joe's Pub devotees. She is Roslyn Hart, who since 2007 has been turning up periodically on the pub's stage in a one-woman comedic soap opera called "Shells." For her new production she has shelved that character and rolled out a new one: Dr. Alex Schiller, a brassy, foul-mouthed sex therapist who is determined to make sure that those on the prowl find one another and know what to do once they connect.

Judging from the first "Never Sleep Alone," on Nov. 10, Dr. Schiller is darned good at what she does. It was a raucous evening in which people ended up on strangers' laps, chanted ribald phrases, found themselves onstage doing unseemly things.

"It was beyond my wildest expectations," Ms. Hart, who also wrote the show, said of that first performance. "I mean, I knew it was going to be a good show, but I didn't know it was going to be that good of a social event." Her director, Peter James Cook, was also a bit surprised. "It really felt like you were at the Roman circus," he said.

The bookers at Joe's Pub took notice. Initially slotted as a monthly show — Thursday night's performance will be the second — "Never Sleep Alone" has already been penciled in to go weekly in March.

The conceit is simple: Dr. Schiller is hawking a sex-advice book whose title can't be printed here, and the audience is hearing her promotional lecture. But this lecture is nothing like those dry ones your college professors delivered. There is singing. There are on-stage encounters in which strangers get to know one another really, really quickly. There is an after-party.

And above all there are abbreviations. Dr. Schiller favors the alphabet-soup approach to sex therapy, serving up a saucy collection of abbreviations that will be burned into theatergoers' brains by the show's end. Some are reinventions of familiar Internet shorthand, beginning with the show's title: "Never Sleep Alone" — N.S.A., more commonly used to mean "no strings attached," which is the kind of liaison Dr. Schiller recommends. Others the doctor created herself. To repeat them here would spoil the fun, and besides most are unprintable.

The therapy seems to be effective: Ms. Hart, who encourages audience members to report back on any dates that resulted from the show, said that as of this week she had heard of 46 "hook-ups" — define it however you like — that resulted from that Nov. 10 performance. (The club, which seats 192, was full for the first show.)

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“People have been leaving me voice mails, actually, almost like they’re in character, but with their true stories,” she said. “It’s like, ‘Hey Dr. Alex, it’s a me, a single male....’”

One such story belongs to Valissa Yoe, a 28-year-old fashion stylist in the East Village who has now had two real-life dates with a man Dr. Schiller paired her with onstage. “She liberated me,” Ms. Yoe said of the doctor’s therapy.

Ms. Hart’s earlier show, “Shells,” which she wrote with Nick Chase, involved the love life of a character named Michelle Hoffman, a self-absorbed woman whose preoccupation with one particular date she had bordered on obsession. Fans of “Shells,” which had a bit of audience participation, may be surprised at just how much more of that there is in the new show, and at the contrast between the inward-looking Shells and the brazen Dr. Schiller.

‘Shells’ always ended in a puddle of shame,” Mr. Cook said. “Something we decided in working on this show is that this character was going to be a winner. That this woman had a product that she was very proud of.” And Dr. Schiller is certainly proud, and fearless. A cage match between this woman and Fiona Wallace, Lisa Kudrow’s character on “Web Therapy,” wouldn’t last two minutes. In a production this free form, traditional rehearsals can take the performer only so far. Ms. Hart, 30, said she ran the show a couple of times for an audience of supporters and crew members (she has a number of interns from New York University), but the live show ended up being a different animal.

“Everything that happened onstage the night of the show happened totally differently than it ever happened in rehearsal,” she said.

Mr. Cook said that he had tried to anticipate a problem — a timid audience — that ended up not being a problem at all.

“The thing I kept saying in rehearsal is, ‘Well, if nobody gets up, if nobody volunteers, we should do this, that or the other,’” he said. “The thing that shocked me was how readily people leapt into what for all they knew was the abyss.”

Part of the success involved seating: audience members can buy a ticket for the “singles” section, up front, or the “voyeurs” section, in the back. No shy people in the prime seats, please.

“I tell people, if you’re sitting up front, you may get pulled onstage,” Ms. Hart said. “You may be asked to touch someone. You may be touched. So be O.K. with that.”

Some of those interns, dressed as Dr. Schiller’s lab assistants, help set the tone with a preshow survey of the audience that signals this is not a place for inhibitions.

“Most people can’t help but giggle through their answers,” said Marc Sauv , a lab assistant at the November show. “Equal parts blushing, laughing out loud and getting down and dirty.”

Ms. Hart said the unpredictability of the evening was, for her, the appealing part.

“One of the reasons I stopped trying to do straight musical theater or straight stand-up and why I’m more attracted to cabaret is that it’s not perfect,” she said. “It is different every time. I like not knowing what’s going to happen as a performer.”

For Mr. Cook, the after-party, which for the first show was at Pravda, a nearby bar, held as many surprises as the performance did.

“It was a real wild, swinging after-party,” he said. “I guess I didn’t realize to the degree Ros realized that there are people who wanted this event to be real, and that they therefore treat it as a real event, and that it therefore becomes real.”



Spectators are game at Roslyn Hart’s one-woman show, “Never Sleep Alone.”



Audience members at “Never Sleep Alone,” at Joe’s Pub.

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[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/01/theater/never-sleep-alone-leads-to-audience-relationships.html?\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/01/theater/never-sleep-alone-leads-to-audience-relationships.html?_r=3)



## Your Best Weekend

# CONFIDENTIAL

*Written by David Goldberg*

08/09/2017



Photograph: Courtesy of Gaia Squarci

It all begins when you buy your ticket. While most of NYC's immersive nightlife offers parlor tricks for bored dilettantes, this endlessly creative adventures serves a bespoke espionage fantasy for only the most fabulously daring. Accept your mission from Headquarters (unimpeachable producers Roslyn Hart and Alfredo Guenzani), dress in your finest Bond attire and attempt to complete your top-secret task among a crowd of sexy strangers at a

lavish cocktail affair. The first agent to complete their mission earns \$100, a bottle of champagne and bragging rights among the city's most mysterious elite. Opt for the \$100 "Believe" ticket to engage in a wider web of intrigue, with side-missions and custom-made plots going weeks before the party even begins; or experience the fun with the \$50 new-user-friendly "immerse" option. Suit up, stay sharp and forget your expectations: you're in for a night of surprises.

## Top 10 NYC Events

# MASQUERADE *on the*TOWN

Written by David Goldberg

06/21/2017



*Never Sleep Alone's* Dr. Alex Schiller (Roslyn Hart) and performer Alfredo Guenzani invite you to join mysterious strangers for a wild adventure through some of of downtown's most decadent bars, restaurants, and party spots. Show up in a mask and fancy getup - and don't bring friends who aren't open to making out with strangers. Buckle up.



# NUDE

Written by David Goldberg

06/21/2017



Designed by the wickedly ingenious pairing of *Never Sleep Alone* and *Masquerade on the Town's* Roslyn Hart and Alfredo Guenzani, this drawing night gives you the chance to sip limitless champagne and try your hand at illustrating beautiful, unclothed models performing before you.

Instructors will guide you through the process while DJ Alexander Gentil spins stimulating beats. Keep your eyes open and hands loose.



• Irresistibly funny. But, above all, effective. With the show at Joe's Pub in New York, the stand-up comedian Dr. Alex Schiller spreads her sexy mantra: "Never Sleep Alone". Which is now a self-titled book ([simonandschuster.com](http://simonandschuster.com))

• Irresistibilmente divertente. Ma, soprattutto, efficace. Con gli show al Joe's Pub di New York, la stand-up comedian Dr. Alex Schiller diffonde il suo sexy mantra: "Never Sleep Alone". Che ora diventa un omonimo libro ([simonandschuster.com](http://simonandschuster.com))

THE POWER OF STYLE

Never Sleep Alone and Dr. Alex Schiller (aka Roslyn Hart) recently went viral in Italy because of a humorous posting Dr. Alex wrote urging single women looking for mates to go to Napoli, Italy.

The posting was titled: [Have a Vagina? Want To Use It? Go to Napoli.](#) Though most readers understood Dr. Alex's hyperbolic statements were intended to entertain and bring tourism to the city she loves, thousands took the posting seriously, and it sparked a fierce national debate about sexuality, morality and gender politics. Check out the hundreds of comments from Italian readers!

The article was translated and featured in countless Italian media outlets, and made the front page of [Il Mattino](#) and [Corriere Del Mezzogiorno](#). Il Corriere also did a video about Dr. Alex and Never Sleep Alone, which you can watch by clicking [HERE](#).

Vogue Italia featured Never Sleep Alone in their February 2015 issue, calling the book and show, "Overwhelmingly hilarious. But, above all, effective."

Due to her thousands of new Italian-speaking fans, and her intense love for Italy—where she resides half the year and hopes to one day become a permanent resident— Dr. Alex is now doing her [blog in Italian](#), as well as in English.

She intends to bring her live show to Italy within the next year. Each show will be followed by an after-party where Dr. Alex will be signing books and greeting fans. The book will be packaged along with the show ticket—If people want to attend the show, they must also buy the book.

To watch a short video of the live show, click [HERE](#).

Keep in mind, all of those people were strangers when they walked into the theatre.

A full-length video is available upon request.

## NEVER SLEEP ALONE BECOME THE ONE EVERYONE WANTS

HOME • COME TO THE LIVE SHOW • ABOUT NSA • BUY THE BOOK • CONTACT DR ALEX • MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH DR. ALEX

NSA LIFESTYLE

### Have a Vagina? Want to Use It? Go to Naples.



Photo Credit: Federica Di Lorenzo

If you are a single woman who loves men, motorcycles, and music, go to Napoli, Italy. Not only is it one of the most beautiful and magical cities on this planet, not only is it on the most stunning part of the Mediterranean, not only is it the best pizza and pasta in the world, not only is it way cheaper and sexier than Rome, Milano or Florence, not only is it a short train ride or motorcycle ride to Vesuvius, Pompei, the Amalfi Coast, Rome, and a million other things you must see before you die- the big secret about Napoli that none of the guidebooks mention is-

There are about 10 single men for every single woman.

And they are all beautiful. And they all know how to cook. And they all know how to sing. And they all know how to kiss you. **And they all want to kiss you.**

Everywhere.

Napoli gets a bad rap because of graffiti and Gomorrah, but I have been living here off and on for almost 2 years and I have NEVER once felt unsafe.



Photo Credit: Federica Di Lorenzo

Sure, the scugnizzi like to throw water on you when you're wearing a white shirt, but just kick their ass in soccer once and you'll become their best friend. If you decide to come to Napoli, write to me and I will help you create a kickass itinerary, take you around the city myself, or have one of my beautiful and magical Neapolitan friends do it. To discover the magic of Napoli, you only need to know the right people. You know me. And I know people.

Where To Stay: NSA at my best friend's B and B. This was the first place I stayed in Napoli

# Never Sleep Alone

Roslyn Hart's new cabaret crafts laughs to get you laid.

By Matthew Love



Roslyn Hart in Never Sleep Alone Photograph: Pavel Antonov

The woman next to me is laughing a little too loudly. We're talking about the minutiae of our respective entrances: the champagne we were given, the mysterious seating arrangements, the hot young things in lab coats who handed us masks of different colors after prodding us with suggestive questions. When my fellow showgoer puts her hand on my arm, her eyes giving just a flash of interest, I realize that Dr. Alex Schiller is already working her magic, and her self-help seminar hasn't even officially begun.

Comedy rarely has an overt mission; most performers are satisfied to point out the absurdities of the world and the way we live in it without prescribing a course of action. Never Sleep Alone, a new comedic cabaret created by and starring the dynamic Roslyn Hart, is different. It wants to get its audiences not just chuckling but copulating.

The show's title gives a clue to its modus operandi: In Dr. Alex's world, the colloquial meaning of the acronym NSA (no strings attached) goes one cheeky step further. When she hits the stage, evoking at once an authoritarian evangelist and

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a smoldering hot boss in business formal, she belts pop mash-ups in between a series of rigorous experiments in what one might call inhibition reduction—and in doing so, wins over both the crowd’s participants and “voyeurs” (those seated safely away from the stage) to the cornerstone principles of her forthcoming book *Get Laid or Die Trying*.

The laughs arrive in two varieties. The first is a response to the jokes, including more absurd acronyms—BDSM, for example, does not mean what you think—which mock the bullet-point mentality of so many learning seminars held in hotel ballrooms. The second is a knee-jerk reaction to discomfort, the sort of laughter that wards off nervousness when one is made to, say, sit on a stranger’s lap or point to someone in the crowd they find hot. This is Dr. Alex’s brand of therapy: helping the crowd to lower their guard, come together and prepare for, if not a bacchanalian rite, then at least the possibility of snogging a proximate pan.

All this encouragement and potential grappling is especially interesting when considering Hart’s last project. Her highly successful recurring serial, *Shells*, trailed a shiraz-swilling New York career gal who pined for Mr. Wrong and took loving abuse from her fans when she called or texted him from the stage. Though she swears *Never Sleep Alone* is not a direct reaction to *Shells*, the steely “sexual psychologist” running the show is in many ways a photonegative of her earlier creation. Whereas *Shells* the character was a pitiable, drunken mess seeking corroboration from drinking buddies, Dr. Alex is a laser-focused, sober taskmaster making demands of new true believers.

What emerges has been strangely helpful in delivering on the morale-boosting promises of the programs it satirizes. “Originally, Dr. Alex was not supposed to be so effective. She was supposed to be kind of a fool and every exercise was built to fail,” says Hart. “I expected people to laugh, not to be quoting my advice back to me.” That said, part of Hart’s mission was to see New Yorkers—primarily in the show’s target age group of 21 to 45—overcome their awkwardness, be bold and make some kind of connection without expectation. “If you are looking for the one, I can’t help you,” Hart says. “But tomorrow, no one will want to touch you. While they still want to, you should let them.”

Joe’s Pub has held only three shows so far, but the word is out: Each show has been packed and, thanks in great part to the after-parties, which take place at a secret location after each show, attendees have ample chance to practice what Dr. Alex preaches. Hart has even established an anonymous “hookup hotline,” which gets flooded with messages praising the name of this new guru. (One from a caller identified as “Emma,” shyly details a post-show experience with a “smoking hot Brazilian” before announcing, “Clearly, [Dr. Alex’s] advice really worked.”)

Thanks to its success, *Never Sleep Alone* is moving to a weekly schedule in March. Each Friday, Dr. Alex will spread her gospel to any number of lost souls burned out by Internet dating. I’d reveal more, but Hart reminds me that NSA also stands for no spoiler alerts; surprise is essential, both in comedy and in an evening with the potential to change your sleeping habits.