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FIRST NIGHT ARTISTS ALL HAVE A STORY TO SHARE WITH AUDIENCES

Opening acts wow packed theatre

BY JOHN FISHER

STORYTELLING appeared to be the theme of all five shows on the opening night of the Leeds Jewish International Performing Arts Festival.

It was left to Libby Skala to bring a rattling good story to life.

Her funny-sad account of life with grandmother Lilia, was one of the highlights of the festival.

The accomplished Canadian actress gave a fascinating performance in *Lilia!* whizzing across the dramatic events which moulded her late grandmother's life.

Forced to flee Austria under Nazi invasion she arrived in the US with not a word of English to her name.

Lilia Skala eventually reinvented herself and became best known for playing opposite Sidney Poitier in the film *Lilies of the Field*.

Lilia, the first female architect in Austria, received fame and an Oscar nomination for her role as a feisty nun, but nevertheless was found working in a city's Lost and Found department when the nomination was announced.

Apparently she continued playing mother superior throughout her life, acting for Hitchcock, and



TOUCHING DRAMA: Lilia

appearing with Ethel Merman and Jennifer Beales.

Her talented grandchild certainly appears to have inherited the family matriarch's keen eye for drama.

Has there ever been a more charming performer than Libby Skala and a more enchanting story packed with gentle wisdom?