Mata Hari was an immediate sensation, not least because her daringly sensual dancing involved throwing off the veils she was wearing, one by one, until she was naked but for a jewelled head-dress and breast-plate. If this taboo-busting display wasn’t enticing enough by itself, she insisted that she was demonstrating authentic Javanese temple-dancing, so audiences could tell themselves that they weren’t paying to see a striptease, but an educational glimpse of a religious ritual from ‘the mysterious East’.

“She was seen as the nude of art, rather than the nude of commerce,” says Julie Wheelwright, the author of The Fatal Lover: Mata Hari and the Myth of Women in Espionage. “Because she started off in private salons rather than music halls, she had respectability. The details of Mata Hari’s life prior to her purported war crimes are more sad than they are glamorous. Born Margaretha Zelle on August 7, 1876 in Leeuwarden, Netherlands, her mother died when Zelle was only 14. Her father remarried, and sent her and her three younger brothers to live with other family members. After being expelled at age 16 for having a sexual relationship with a school headmaster, she ran away to live with her uncle in The Hague. Just two years later, she answered a lonely hearts ad written by a 39-year-old Dutch army captain, Captain Rudolf MacLeod, who lived in Indonesia.