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TRUST



PIAF

by Pam Gems

Tuesday 15 –
Sunday 20 March 2022



Altrincham Garrick
PLAYHOUSE



INTRODUCTION

When *Piaf* was first produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1978, with Jane Lapotaire giving a memorable portrayal of the iconic singer, it was a new kind of play for the time - somewhere between a musical and a play with music - telling the story of the iconic French singer, a troubled soul searching for love and belonging, whose flame burned very brightly despite her turbulent upbringing and tragic events throughout her life. With Piaf's songs being still as relevant and moving today as when they were first written and performed, it has been a joy for me to work with such a young and talented cast in creating our new staging of this brilliant piece.

Pam Gems - a large, straight-talking woman with a wicked laugh - found her voice in the burgeoning feminist theatre movement in the early 1970s, and is now considered to be one of the pioneers for subsequent generations of female playwrights. Alongside *Piaf*, her most successful works and adaptations focused on the lives of iconic women, from Marlene Dietrich to Sweden's Queen Christina. If Pam Gems was still alive today, it's hard not to think that she would be reconsidering the stories of more recent female performers who, despite their turbulent lives, were able to reach the stars - the likes of Whitney Houston and Amy Winehouse come to mind. Wonderful performers who passed on far too early - not unlike Édith Piaf.

Charlie Tomlinson

Director, *PIAF*

WELCOME

Hello, and welcome to the Lauristion Studio.

Pam Gem's *Piaf* was first produced by the RSC in 1979 and has since seen notable revivals, including the Donmar Warehouse in 2008, the Curve in Leicester in 2013 and most recently at Leeds Playhouse in 2021.

The play charts the life of Edith Piaf; from her childhood on the streets to her many relationships, to her appetite for alcohol and drugs and above all her overriding desire to sing. Presented in the intimate space of our Lauristion Studio, I am excited by, and thankful to, this company for breathing new life into this layered and emotionally-charged piece.

Piaf sees the return of director Charlie Tomlinson, whose recent productions of *Cleo*, *Camping*, *Emmanuelle And Dick*, *Blackadder Goes Forth*, and *Hairspray!* still regularly receive praise and it is excellent to welcome Charlie back into the Studio.

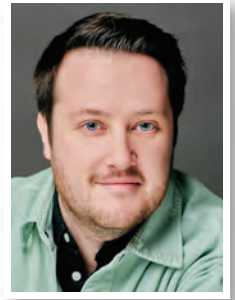
I am also delighted by the array of talent within this vibrant and energetic company of actors who have shaped an authentic and connected retelling of the true story of Edith Piaf.

Our final production of the Lauristion Studio's 2021/2022 Season will be James Fritz's *Ross and Rachel*. This modern drama tells the story of a familiar couple after one of them "got off the plane" and explores the world beyond happily ever after. It asks disturbing questions, contains strong language and is at times painful to watch... but it is unlike anything you will have seen before, and I urge you to experience it.

Thank you for coming, have a safe journey home after the performance, and we hope to see you back at the Garrick soon!

Joseph Meighan

Artistic Director, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse



This production of **PIAF** is sponsored by:

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ÉDITH PIAF

Édith Piaf was born Édith Giovanna Gassion in Belleville, Paris, on December 19, 1915. Much of her past is shrouded in mystery and may have been embellished during her time as a celebrity. It is believed she was named after the World War I British nurse Edith Cavell, executed for helping Belgian soldiers escape from German captivity. Her mother, Annetta Giovanna Maillard, was a café singer of Moroccan Berber descent who performed under the name "Line Marsa." Piaf's father, Louis-Alphonse Gassion, was a highly skilled street acrobat.

Annetta abandoned Édith after the birth, and the baby went to live with her maternal grandmother, where she grew malnourished. On joining the French Army in 1916, Édith's father took her from there and passed her care onto his own mother, who ran a brothel. Édith suffered greatly from impaired vision for a time, yet also became renowned for her voice at a young age. At the age of 7, she was collected by her father and joined a circus caravan to travel to Belgium, eventually participating in street performances all over France.

Édith later separated from her father, who was often a temperamental, abusive taskmaster, and set out on her own as a street singer in and around Paris. At 17, she and a youngster named Louis Dupont had a daughter, Marcelle, who died of meningitis at 2 years old.

In 1935, Édith was discovered by Louis Leplée, who owned the successful club Le Gerny off the Champs-Élysées. Her nervous energy and small stature inspired the nickname that would stay with her for the rest of her life: *La Môme Piaf* ("The Little Sparrow"). Édith received guidance in the literary arts from French poet / historian Jacques Bourgeat, while Leplée ran a major publicity campaign promoting Piaf's opening night, which was

attended by the likes of Maurice Chevalier. She was popular enough to record two albums that same year.

Leplée was murdered the following spring. After authorities investigated her as a potential accomplice to the crime, a new team took charge of her career. She began to work with Raymond Asso, who also became her lover, and adopted her stage name Édith Piaf permanently. Continuing the tradition of performing chansons réalistes, she commissioned songs that romanticised her life on the streets, passionately emphasizing her inner strength. The singer worked closely with composer Marguerite Monnot during this time.

Revered by luminaries like Jean Cocteau, Piaf was one of the most popular performers in France during World War II. Her concerts for German servicemen were controversial, although it was later believed that she had been working for the French Resistance and helped Jewish comrades escape Nazi persecution.



After the war, her fame spread quickly. She toured Europe, South America and the United States, garnering glowing reviews and ultimately achieving enough of an audience to warrant several performances on The Ed Sullivan Show throughout the 1950s.

Édith's personal life was characteristically dramatic. In 1951, she was in a serious car accident that left her with a broken arm, two broken ribs, and severe bruises for which she was given morphine to ease the pain. Thereafter she had serious difficulties arising from morphine and alcohol addictions, both of which would remain with her for the rest of her life.

Living through the hurts and abandonments of her early life, Édith had high-profile romances with many of her male associates and some of the biggest celebrities in France. Known for intense dalliances that fizzled out, she married several times, firstly to boxer Marcel Cerdan, whom she met in 1947, who was considered to be her deepest love. Their time together was cut short when he perished in a 1949 plane crash, with the singer recording "*L'Hymne à L'Amour*" the following year in his honour. In 1952 she married singer Jacques Pills, a union which lasted until 1957. Her 1962 marriage to Théo Sarapo, a Greek hair-dresser and performer 20 years her junior who was gay, lasted until her death the following year.

Piaf remained professionally active until the final years of her life, performing frequently in Paris between 1955 and 1962. In 1960, though aiming to retire, she had a resurgence of sorts with the recording of the Charles Dumont and Michel Vaucaire tune "*Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien*," which would become her latter day anthem.

In April 1963, Piaf recorded her last song. With an array of health hardships over the years, Édith Piaf died from liver failure at her French Riviera villa on October 10, 1963. (Other potential causes of death have been suggested as well.) She was 47. Although Piaf was refused the Roman Catholic rite of burial by the archbishop of Paris, due to her unrepentant wild lifestyle, the entire city essentially shut down for her funeral. More than 100,000 people attended her burial at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Her grave there, beside her daughter Marcelle and Sarapo himself, who died less than a decade later in a car accident, remains a pilgrimage point for fans to this day.





CAST

Emily Leeland	Edith Piaf
Olivia Riley	Toine
Scarlet Newton	Marlene
Liam Dodd	Bruno / Lucien / Theo
Steven Finney	Louis Leplée / German Soldier
Charlie Gallagher	Louis / Emil / German Soldier
Calum Goring	Eddie / Marcel
Sam Evans	Jean / Charles
Tom Broughton	Georges / Yves / Inspector
Elise Melvin	Madeleine / Nurse
Angela Wetherill	Madame Vaimbert
Ollie Tomlinson	Drug Dealer / Walter

All other parts played by members of the company

CREATIVES

Charlie Tomlinson	Director
Pete Grimshaw	Musical Director & Arrangement
Angela Wetherill	Assistant Stage Manager
Ollie Tomlinson	Assistant Stage Manager
Mike Shaw	Costumes & Hair
Angela Wetherill	Costumes & Hair
Geoff Scullard	Lighting Design
Pete Grimshaw	Sound
David Ades	Properties

Without our incredibly dedicated, enthusiastic team of **Volunteers** and **Staff**, whose sheer hard work often goes unnoticed, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse would simply be unable to continue providing such a range of top quality productions for you to enjoy.

With their continuing commitment to excellence, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

SONG LIST

(Performed by Édith Piaf, unless stated)

ACT ONE

No Regrets

Padam

Autumn Leaves

(Lepée)

Autumn Leaves (Reprise)

Tu Me Fais Tourner La Tête

L'Accordeoniste

Under Paris Skies

La Vie en Rose

Milord

Mon Dieu

ACT TWO

La Vie en Rose (Reprise)

Deep in the Heart of Texas

(Yves)

Volare

(Yves)

Padam (Reprise)

She

(Charles)

Hymn to Love

Hymn to Love (Reprise)

La Vie en Rose (Reprise)

(Piaf and Theo)

No Regrets

There will be one interval
of 20 minutes

Please ensure all mobile phones and
alarms are switched off before
entering the auditorium.
Photography and video/audio
recording are not permitted.

PIAF by Pam Gems

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PAM GEMS



Pam Gems was born Iris Pamela Price in Bransgore, Hampshire, on 1st August 1925. Having grown up in relative poverty, she won a place at Brockenhurst Grammar School before joining the WRNS. She subsequently studied psychology at Manchester University as an ex-servicewoman, and married the architect Keith Gems after she had taken her degree.

She began writing as a response to the isolation of bringing up her four children, and in the 1970s moved with Keith to London where she encountered the new wave of feminism. Gems's early plays reflected the changing roles of women, and were typified by *Go West, Young Woman*, produced by the newly formed Women's Company at the Roundhouse in London in 1974, which looked at the experience of the early American female pioneers who began in crinoline and ended up in buckskin. Writing about women's lives was a deliberate decision: "It's not that I don't feel that I can write about men, but when you see the great uncharted waters, the notion of dealing with 2,000 years of men's history just isn't very tempting. When I came to the theatre in the early 70s, I realised that there was no authentic work about women: they were occasionally celebrated but never convincingly explored."

Her first commercial success was *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival in 1976 and transferred to the West End. It was one of the first plays to examine what it felt like to be a young woman living through times when the influence of the women's movement and the availability of the pill offered liberation from traditional roles as housewife and mother but threw up other issues of self-fulfilment. The play was included in the National Theatre's list of 100 plays of the 20th century.

Alongside *Piaf*, which premiered in 1978, Gems's long association with the RSC included *Queen Christina* (1977), in which she explored a filmic style of writing and the sadness of childlessness through the life of the Swedish monarch, who was raised as a boy. *Camille*, produced by the RSC in 1984, echoed Piaf's storyline of a woman seeking sexual and economic independence. Her RSC productions included *The Danton Affair* (1986) and *The Blue Angel* (1991), a version of the story made famous by Josef von Sternberg's classic film starring Marlene Dietrich.

Pasionara, produced at Newcastle's Playhouse Theatre in 1985, drew parallels between the contemporary miners' strike and the uprising of the Asturian miners in northern Spain in 1934, just before the Spanish civil war. A big and big-hearted play, it proved Gems's belief that "all theatre is political in a profound way. It can, without resort to the vote or the gun, alter climate, change opinion, laugh prejudice out of the door, soften hearts, awaken perception."

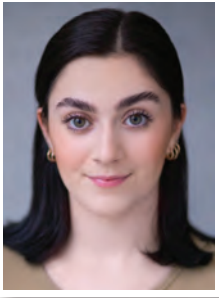


Stanley, based on the life of the painter Stanley Spencer, was staged at the National Theatre in 1996, with Antony Sher in the lead. After that production, Gems never again achieved a major success with an original new play, although she never stopped writing. *Mrs Pat*, about the relationship between the actor Mrs Patrick Campbell and George Bernard Shaw, was produced by the Theatre Royal in York in 2006. At the Drill Hall in London in 2009 there was a rehearsed reading of *Winterlove*, about the relationship between Elisabeth of Austria and Ludwig II of Bavaria. She had also tried her hand at novels and may well have written a partial self-portrait in *Mrs Frampton*, about an overweight, middle-aged woman who becomes virtually invisible.

Pam Gems was undoubtedly a pioneer, storming theatre's main stages at a time when Agatha Christie was still the most frequently performed female playwright in Britain. Often a lone voice in a predominantly male theatre world, she showed the way for subsequent generations of female playwrights, proving that it is possible to be popular and pungent at the same time. She died on the 13th May 2011, aged 85.



THE COMPANY



Emily Leeland

Édith Piaf

Emily is currently training in Musical Theatre and is auditioning for Drama Schools to continue her studies and training. Previous credits include Ensemble in *Urinetown*, Heather/Ensemble in *Our House* and Ursula March in *Sweet Charity* at the RNCM. This is Emily's third show at the Garrick after finishing *Curtain Up* and *Disney's The Little Mermaid* playing Ariel, which she loved doing.

Emily says that to portray such an icon like Édith Piaf, and to tell her story in this production has been a true honour. She has thoroughly enjoyed the whole process, and being around such an immensely talented cast and creative team!



Olivia Riley

Toine

Olivia Rose Riley is a recent graduate of the Arts University Bournemouth, graduating last year with an honours degree in Acting. Whilst she has attained a long list of performing experiences, this is her first performance debut as an actress. Olivia has loved every moment exploring the character of Toine, as well as the extraordinary life of Édith Piaf. She is very excited to be making her mark at The Altrincham

Garrick and is looking forward to seeing what else her future holds.



Scarlet Newton

Marlene

Piaf marks Scarlet's debut at the Garrick Theatre and she hopes it will be the first of many! She has been a member of Actor Tribe since the age of 14, and recently featured in their film *Little Boxes* which is currently being shown at Festivals around the world - and has even won several awards. Scarlet is currently seeking representation, and her long-term goal is to work in film and TV.



Liam Dodd

Bruno / Lucien / Theo

Liam has recently achieved a BA Honours Degree in Theatre and Performance Practice, and is currently studying his Masters Degree in Contemporary Theatre. A performer for 6 years now, Liam made his Altrincham Garrick debut as Timms in the 2016 production of *The History Boys*. Since then he has performed in a variety of shows, including playing Buttons in *Cinderella* and being

part of the Ensemble for a variety of different musicals such as *Grease* and *The Secret Garden*. With this production of *Piaf* being his Lauriston Studio debut, Liam loves the intimacy of the small space and being able to be apart of a challenging and entertaining piece of theatre. He hopes you enjoy the show - and that you will have no regrets!



Steven Finney

Louis Leplée / German Soldier

Steven studied singing and acting at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM). Past television credits include Jimmy McGovern's *Sunday* and *The Forsythe Saga* (both ITV), and *Being April* (BBC One). London theatre credits include Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins* (Landor Theatre), *Nostalgia Brand Chewing Gum* (Pentameters Theatre), and *They Shoot Horses Don't They?* directed by Matthew Ryan

(RAM). Other theatre credits include Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Freddie Eynsford-Hill in *My Fair Lady* (Theatre Royal, Hanley).

Steven made his debut at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse in 2014 playing the role of Herbie in Paul Kerryson's production of *Gypsy*. He has since gone on to play Fagin in *Oliver*, Joe Gillis in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard*, and Prime Minister William Pitt in *The Madness of George III*. Steven played Edmund Blackadder in *Blackadder The Third* and reprised the role in the Garrick's production of *Blackadder Goes Forth*, which was staged in November 2018 to commemorate the Centenary of the end of the Great War. In February 2019, Steven made his debut in the Lauriston Studio, playing the role of Henry in *The Secret Lives of Henry and Alice*, returning to the main stage in November 2019 to play Kenneth Williams in *Cleo, Camping, Emmanuelle and Dick*.



Charlie Gallagher

Louis / Emil / German Soldier

Charlie is delighted to be back on stage at Altrincham Garrick so soon after playing the part of Billy Bibbit in last month's acclaimed Garrick Ensemble production of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*. Some of Charlie's previous credits at the Garrick have included *The Lieutenant Of Inishmore*, *Beautiful Thing*, *Stags & Hens*, *The History Boys* and *Corrie!*. Charlie is delighted to be working

with such a talented cast, director, crew and has loved every minute working on such a brilliant play. He would also like to thank the front of house team for all their help. He hopes you enjoy the show!



Calum Goring

Eddie / Marcel

Originally from a village in Sussex, Calum has previously performed at Liverpool Playhouse as part of the *Blackfest New Writing* showcase (2021) and also appeared at the Edinburgh Fringe in the play *H5* (2019). Having been President of the University of Liverpool Drama Society, 23-year-old Calum is now auditioning for drama schools. He is really excited to be making his debut at the Garrick in this brilliant production of *Piaf*.



Sam Evans

Jean / Charles

Sam is a 22 year old northern actor, writer, filmmaker and musician. This will be Sam's eighth appearance at the Garrick, having most recently been seen in our acclaimed main-stage production of *Frankenstein*, in which he played a variety of roles including *Whore's Client*, *Felix* and *William*. Prior to that, Sam played the role of Adam in Geoff Holman's production of Neil LaBute's *The Shape of Things* in

the Lauriston Studio last November

Selected theatre credits include:- Keith Richards in *Out of Time* (North West Tour), *A Matter of Law* (Birmingham Blue Orange), *Corrie* (Garrick), *Blackadder Goes Forth* (Garrick), *The Curious Incident of The Dog In The Night-Time* and *A Doll's House*. Sam's new feature film *Another Day* is being released on Amazon Prime Video this month - look out for it!



Tom Broughton

Georges / Yves / Inspector

Tom is delighted to be making his fourth appearance at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, with *Piaf* being his debut in the Lauriston Studio. Tom made his Garrick debut in September 2021 in an acclaimed run of musical revue *Curtain Up*, when he received praise from critics for his performance of *Suddenly Seymour* from *Little Shop of Horrors*. This was followed by the roles of *Young Collector/Doctor* in *A Streetcar Named*

Desire in November 2021, and *Dr Spivey* in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in February 2022. Prior to making his Garrick debut, whilst taking Theatre Studies at Knutsford Sixth Form (2009-2011), Tom's theatrical credits included *Tom Collins* in *Rent* and *Billy* in Shelagh Stephenson's *Five Kinds of Silence*. Tom has also performed at Manchester's Contact Theatre, including leading a stage adaptation of Xue Xinran's non-fiction epic *Sky Burial*.



Elise Melvin

Madeleine / Nurse

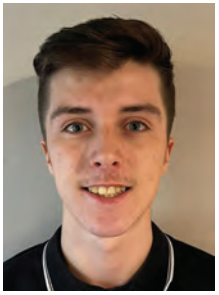
This is Elise's first show at the Garrick and she's so excited to be working alongside an amazing cast. Elise is currently studying Musical Theatre on the HNC Course at Pendleton School of Theatre, and is also currently auditioning for Drama Schools.



Angela Wetherill

Madame Vaimbert

Piaf marks Angela's return to one of the Garrick's performance spaces, having recently returned to the area. A hugely experienced actor and director with a long list of accomplishments at the Garrick, we're delighted to welcome her back.



Ollie Tomlinson

Drug Dealer / Waiter

This is Ollie's 3rd production at the Garrick having appeared in the 2018 production of *Blackadder Goes Forth* and *Cleo, Camping Emmanuelle and Dick* in 2020. He is delighted to be working for the first time in the Lauriston.



Charlie Tomlinson

Director

Since joining the Garrick in 1993, Charlie has appeared in a wide variety of productions. Notable credits include: *Death of a Salesman*, *Strangers on a Train*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Chicago*, *Dead Funny*, *Tom Jones*, *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, *Brassed Off*, *Corpse* and more recently *Oliver!*, *42nd Street*, *Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *Hindle Wakes* and *Things I Know To Be*

True. His directing credits include *Blackadder the Third*, *Blackadder Goes Forth*, *Hairspray* and *Cleo, Camping Emmanuelle and Dick*.

Credits elsewhere include: *Guys and Dolls*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Comedians* and *Saturday, Sunday, Monday* (all Bloomsbury Theatre, London) "1913" and *Death Watch* (Man in the Moon Theatre, London), *Blues for Mister Charlie* (Shaw Theatre, London), *Private Wars* (Oldham Coliseum Studio).

Charlie has also worked in television, radio and opera and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Garrick.

COMING SOON:

THE LAURISTON **STUDIO** **Tues 17 - Sun 22 May 2022**

ROSS AND RACHEL

by **James Fritz** Directed by **Carole Carr**

Nobody told them life was gonna be this way...


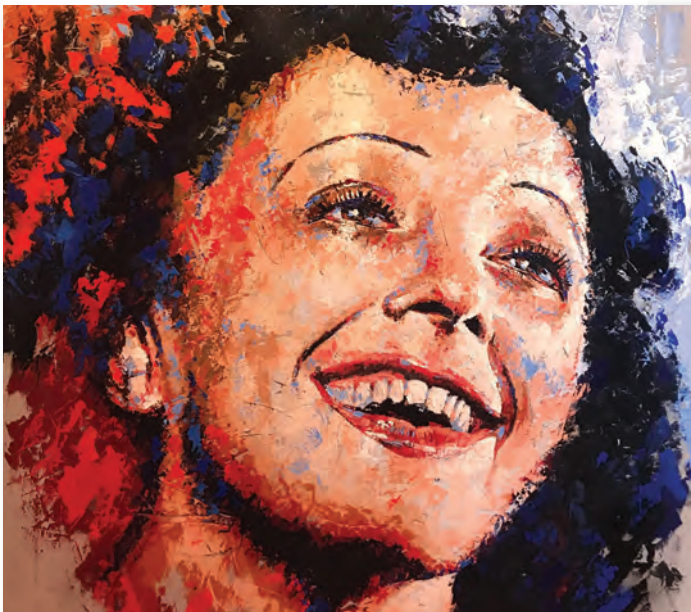
Ross & Rachel. You know the ones. Will they? Won't they? On. Off. On again. Off again. On a break. Vegas. Emma. "I got off the plane"...

Ross & Rachel tells the mind-bending, heart-breaking story of what happens when a couple that was always meant to be together, gets together. And stays together. James Fritz's play isn't about Ross Geller and Rachel Green, the ultimate Friends-turned-lovers. But it's not - not about them.

A dark and uncompromising play that explores romance, expectation and mortality, and the idea of happy-ever-after' - sold to us by rom-coms and sitcoms, whether it's Ross and Rachel or Romeo and Juliet - and how this affects our real-life relationships.

Suitability: 14+. Contains strong language and scenes that some may find disturbing.

Presented by arrangement with Nick Hern Books.

Monday 9 - Saturday 14 May 2022

A hilarious and heart-warming comedy about football, friendship and finding your way



Altrincham Garrick
PLAYHOUSE

jumpers for goalposts by tom wells

Directed by **Joseph Meighan**

"Barely Athletic"

are part of a four-team five-a-side LGBTQ+ football league which Viv, their bullish head coach, is desperate to win. Or if they can't win, at least they should try not to lose. Chucked out of the "Lesbian Rovers" for being too bossy, she desperately tries to instil some competitive spirit into the boys. Problem is, Beardy Geoff is copping off with the opposition, Danny is nursing a painful secret, Luke only joined because he fancies Danny, and Viv's brother-in-law Joe is trying to cope with his grief after losing his wife. Together, they might just be able to claw their way back up from the bottom of the league...

Tom Wells' drama bears the hallmarks of his warm comedic style, which were displayed in his previous hit play **The Kitchen Sink**, and is a paean to the virtues of friendship and love.

In aid of

GEORGE
HOUSE+ TRUST
HIV POSITIVE LIVING

An amateur production performed by arrangement with Nick Hern Books