

DanceBeat

an **arts**JOURNAL blog

Piaf Lives!

May 22, 2015 by Deborah Jowitt

Pascal Rioult celebrates the centennial of Edith Piaf's birth in a nightclub setting.



Christine Andreas and dancer Charis Haines in Pascal Rioult's *Street Singer*. Photo: Paul B. Goode

To get myself in the mood to write about Pascal Rioult's *Street Singer*, a work celebrating what would have been Edith Piaf's hundredth birthday, I dug up a relic from my family's past: a 10-inch LP from the 1940s, *Chansons Parisiennes* (it had cost three dollars) and listened to Piaf sing "La Vie en Rose" (by Louis Louiguy, Mack David, Marcel Louiguy, and Piaf). How enthrallingly that voice—now raw-edged, now defiant, now mournful—hymned and cursed love's ecstasies, pitfalls, and tragedies. When I was a teenager, listening to her made me shake in anticipation.

Pascal Rioult must have had a similar encounter with Piaf (plus he's French), and *Street Singer*, a the music-dance-theater piece that he created in collaboration with Drew Scott Harris (dialogue and staging) and music director Don Rebic, vividly evokes her power. It's always a treat to see a choreographer push himself in a new direction, and who would have imagined that a one-time member of Martha Graham's company and a choreographer of works set to masterpieces of music or edgy works by contemporary composers would enter so boldly and so affectionately into an intimate relationship with cabaret?

Street Singer was not presented by RIOULT Dance in a theater. Instead, the audience members in 42West Nightclub sit at tables on either side of a runway that leads to a very small stage, part of which is occupied by Rebic (at the piano), Patrick Farrell (accordion), John Miller (bass), and Chris Parker (percussion). Projections (by Brian Clifford Beasley) of grainy old photos and newsreels occasionally appear on the back wall. The bar lounge (with live entertainment) opens an hour before curtain time. I'm feeling happy already, and a man sitting at my table has ordered one too many glasses of wine (merci, Monsieur).

<http://www.artsjournal.com/dancebeat/2015/05/piaf-lives/>