

NOTTINGHAM
PLAYHOUSE

Insight Pack

NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE THEATRE COMPANY AND LEEDS PLAYHOUSE PRESENT

PIAF

BY PAM GEMS



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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Introduction

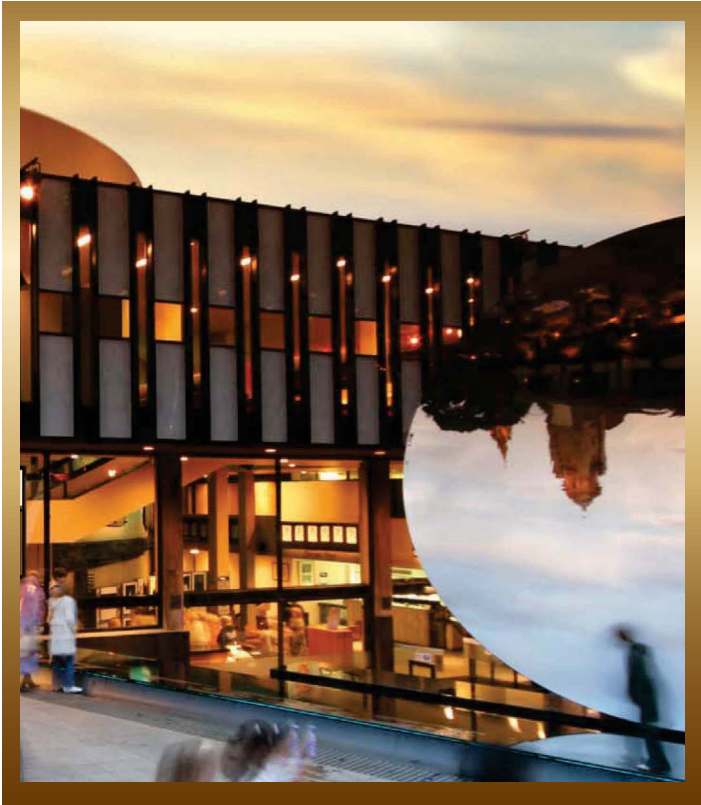


Photo: Drew Baumohl

Nottingham Playhouse makes bold and thrilling theatre, proudly created in Nottingham.

Awarded Regional Theatre of the Year 2019 by The Stage, we create a range of productions throughout the year from timeless classics to innovative family shows and adventurous new commissions. Not to mention the legendary Playhouse Panto. Touring work nationally and internationally, we always remain firmly rooted in our vibrant home city, where our spacious modernist building – fronted by Anish Kapoor’s Sky Mirror – is one of the region’s most popular landmarks.

We want our theatre to be a space where everyone feels they belong, and we use our stage to tell diverse stories that reflect our city. Our wide-reaching participation programmes create life-changing experiences for our community and we also support the next generation of theatre-makers in the East Midlands through our extensive Amplify programme.

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Director's Note

"Piaf is a play with songs about the life of Edith Piaf, a world-famous French singer. She had the most amazing life – from starting out with nothing and busking on the streets of Paris, to travelling the world and becoming the most popular female performer.

In our production, Jenna Russell is the actor playing Piaf. She has to act the character from aged 14 to 47. We also have a cast of 7 other actors, who each play many different characters.

I hope the audience enjoy the music and the exciting life of Edith Piaf!"

Adam Penford
Director

Cast List

Jenna Russell as Edith Piaf

Sally Ann Triplett as Toine

Garry Robson as Louis Leplée

Samuel James as Bruno

Louis Gaunt as Theo

Matthew Woodyatt as Raymond

Joseph Prowen as Louis

Laura Pitt-Pulford as Marlene Dietrich/Madeleine



Photo: Marc Brenner

Go Digital

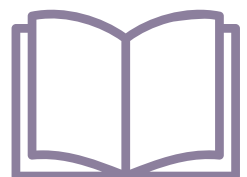
Click on the icons to take a look at these articles about Edith Piaf and her illustrious life...



[Piaf biography](#)



[Piaf romance](#)



[Piaf E-book](#)

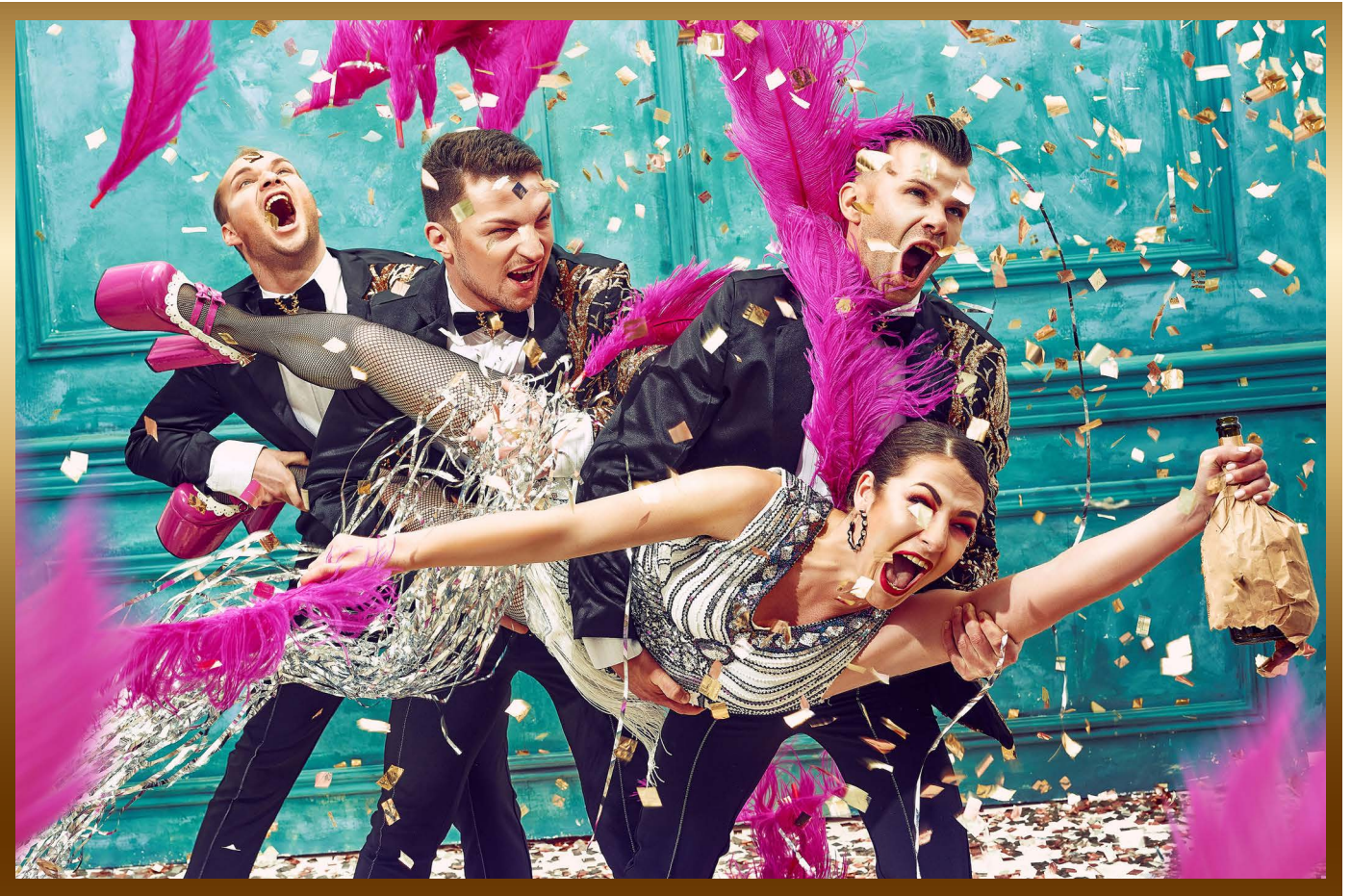


Photo: 123rf.com

Cabaret

Cabaret is a type of theatrical performance that has origins tracing back to French taverns in the late fifteenth century. It is an art form that was continually developed throughout the years but, at the point of Edith Piaf's career in the 20th century, had become a staple of French culture with many prominent cabaret venues, such as Le Chat Noir and the Moulin Rouge, having been established.

Cabaret can feature music, dance, recitation, or drama, but it is defined more specifically by the venue in which it is performed. This venue could be a variety of hospitality or entertainment businesses, but it had other defining factors: it would have a stage for performances; the audience would typically be seated as they dined and drank; an ensemble of actors would perform; the performances are usually aimed at adult audiences. Performing at famous or well-known cabarets helped to advance the careers of many significant artists, such as Edith Piaf, Mistinguett, and Maurice Chevalier.

In 1889, Joseph Oller established the Moulin Rouge, a cabaret that still exists as a tourist attraction to this day due to its long-lasting fame and legacy. The name, meaning 'red mill', denotes the fake red windmill attached to the building's roof, which drew in audiences and visitors. This cabaret venue is credited as the birthplace of the modern Can-can dance, a style of dance inspired by the quadrille and characterised by fast rhythms, high kicks, and revealing costumes. The legacy of the Moulin Rouge continues to live on and it has been the subject and setting of several films, songs, and stage adaptations, the most well-known being Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!*. Here at the Moulin Rouge, Edith Piaf performed numerous times and the venue helped her build her fame, but one particularly notable performance was in 1944 when, a few days after the Liberation of Paris from under Nazi rule, Piaf performed with Yves Montand, despite many considering her a traitor during the German occupation.



France Under Occupation

From 1940 to 1944, certain areas in the North and West of France were occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The German occupation spread further around France throughout this period: the initial *zone occupée* ('occupied zone') later became known as the *zone nord* ('North zone') when the southern *zone libre* ('free zone') was taken over.

From the beginning of this occupation, civilian life suffered many shortages, one of these being a shortage in food, as the German military had seized around 80% of France's food production. This led to rationing, which further led to black markets and a malnourished population. This was just a section of the various sufferings French civilians had to endure. Tens of thousands of people were taken to concentration camps and many of them died there. Additionally, Nazi propaganda and censorship was rife throughout the occupation and the German authorities issued groups of *propagandastaffel*

('propaganda squadron') to control the press and publishing industries.

As Paris, being in the Northern region of France, was occupied for the majority of the four years, Piaf spent this time living under Nazi administration. Despite two-thirds of the population of Paris fleeing to the countryside and the south, Piaf and many other artists stayed and continued their careers. During the occupation Piaf actually gained further fame and capital, performing largely to new audiences of German officers and French collaborators. As such, Piaf was considered by many to be a traitor to France. Thus, when France was liberated, she was made to testify before a panel to allow her to continue transmitting songs and performances on the radio. However, Andrée Bigard, a member of the *résistance* (the French resistance), stood up for Piaf and acclaimed her as an instrumental figure in helping prisoners escape while she performed at prisoner of war camps.

Theatre Practitioners

Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1953)

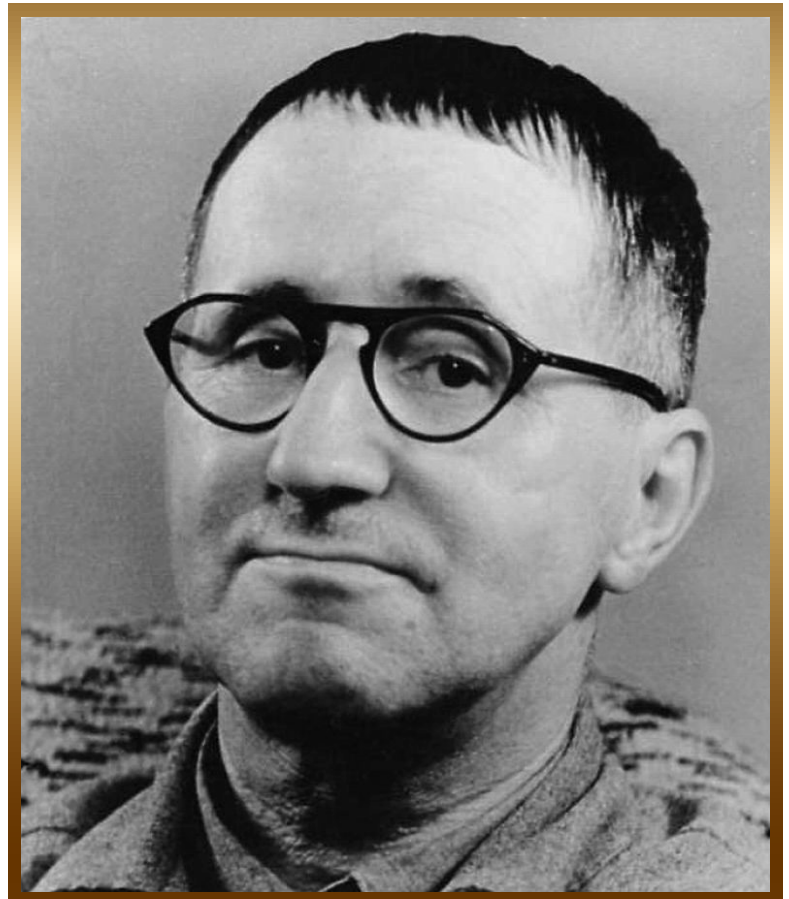
Born in 1898 in Augsburg Germany and sickened by the impact of the First World War, Bertolt Brecht began studying theatre in 1917, and wrote his first plays *Baal* and *Drums in the Night* in 1918. By 1921 he had arrived in Berlin where he soon became involved with a large number of Berlin's leading actors and directors.

When discussing Brechtian theatre, we are fundamentally examining **theatre of Politics**. Brecht was reacting directly against the Fascist regime and, following the teachings of Karl Marx, Brecht's writings were focused on a **Marxist ideology**.

Brecht was a Playwright, Director and Poet who created what we now know as Epic Theatre. Epic Theatre was a reaction against Naturalism, and aimed to provoke the audience into action. This was a theatre of change. He believed that theatre should not only reflect the world, but change it. After watching one of his plays, Brecht hoped that the audience would leave the theatre determined to take action against the unfair society they were living in. He did this through the development of the *Verfremdungseffekt* – or **Making Strange**.

The V effect is also known as the A effect, or **Alienation effect**, and is essentially a range of devices that Brecht used to prevent the audience becoming emotionally attached to the characters within the plays. He wanted them to maintain a '**distanced objectivity**' so that they could see things as they really were. An example of these techniques were: **Audience interaction (breaking the fourth wall)**, **Narration**, **Montage**, **Gestus (Gesture with attitude)**, **Spazz**, **Song**, **Mime** and **Third Person Dialogue**.

Brecht's impact was so pertinent that he had to flee from the Nazi regime in 1933, only to return to Germany in 1948 after the end of the Second World War. In 1949 Brecht created the **Berliner Ensemble** where he continued to develop his work until his death in 1956.

**Notable Works**

- **The Threepenny Opera**
- **Life of Galileo**
- **Mother Courage and Her Children**
- **The Good Person of Szechwan**
- **The Caucasian Chalk Circle**
- **Mr Puntilla and his Man Matti**
- **The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**

Highlighted Information

- Fundamentally examining theatre of Politics
- Writings focused on a Marxist ideology
- Created what we now know as Epic Theatre
- A reaction against Naturalism
- Aimed to provoke the audience into action
- Not only reflect the world, but change it

Theatre Practitioners

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863 – 1937)

Konstantin Stanislavski, born to one of the richest families in Russia in 1863, is widely credited with the development of the first form of formal actor training in the modern world, most commonly referred to as his System. Set out across three major books, *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character* and *Creating a Role*, Stanislavski was the first to document a process which trainee actors could follow in order to create the image of **truth on stage**.

Stanislavski's privilege and wealth enabled him to create an alternative theatre to the melodramatic and declamatory style which was prevalent in Russia at the time. He dedicated his life to changing outmoded practice with a desire for perfection that led to international success. With barely any training, he embarked on a quest for truth in art and devoted his whole life to this journey. In 1897, he and **Nemirochov-Danchenko** created **The Moscow Art Theatre** to develop and shape his ideals.

The System that he developed aimed to be a systematic approach to lay down ground rules for approaching character, and for how an actor could use their voice and body effectively to **fully embody a character** on stage. Working closely with playwright **Anton Chekhov**, Stanislavski was able to experiment with text and actors in order to hone and develop his teachings.

Exercises that are included in The System and that are still widely used in actor training today include: **Emotion Memory**, **The Magic 'If'**, **Circles of Concentration**, **The Method of Physical Actions**, **Imagination**, **Relaxation** and **Action with a Purpose**.

These exercises still form the basis of most actor training in the western world which is a testament to how truly influential Stanislavski has been in the development of actor training.

**Notable Works**

- **Founder of the MAT Stanislavski's 'system'**
- **An Actor's Work**
- **An Actor's Work on a Role**
- **My Life in Art**

Highlighted Information

- The first form of formal actor training
- Create the image of truth on stage
- An alternative to the melodramatic and declamatory style
- Fully embody a character on stage
- A systematic approach

Theatre Practitioners

Steven Berkoff (1937 – present)

Steven Berkoff is a British Actor, Director and Playwright who was born in London in 1937. Berkoff trained as a mime artist at the **Lecoq School** in Paris before he began developing his own work. Alongside the many plays that he has written, Berkoff has also had a successful career in film; often playing the sinister 'bad guy' character.

Berkoff's approach to theatre is incredibly **physical and non-naturalistic**, often focusing on **movement rather than voice**. According to him, the only purpose of a script is to help '**minimalise and physicalise**' the story; stripping it down to its most basic components.

The theory of **Total Theatre** is key to Berkoff and stemmed from Artaud's theatre style. Total Theatre maintains that every aspect of theatre must have purpose: every movement, that is choreographed; to each line, that is learned perfectly; to each lighting effect, that is used to convey a mood or message; to each sound effect, that enhances the audience's experience; to each prop that has a use.

The aim of Total Theatre is to create extreme moods to give the audience an overwhelming experience and to shock, amuse, scare, or amaze them. Berkoff particularly embraced this in his **Kafka adaptations** such as *Metamorphosis*, *The Trial* and *In the Penal Colony*. Total Theatre performances are often stripped back and minimalist with bare stages and little language, so that the focus remains on the physical movement. This serves to detach the audience from the play and make them think about what was being said.

Berkoff likes to use **stereotype and cliché** in order to examine human behaviour. These stereotypes require the actor to demonstrate the character in a heightened manner, through **exaggerated physical movement** and often base, foul language.

**Notable Works**

- Sink the Belgrano!
- Shakespeare's Villains
- A Clockwork Orange
- Beverly Hills Cop
- War and Remembrance

Highlighted Information

- Physical and non-naturalistic
- Minimalise and physicalise the story
- Every aspect of Total Theatre must have purpose
- Create extreme moods
- To detach the audience from the play

Theatre Practitioners

Augusto Boal (1931-2009)

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1931, Boal is most renowned for creating the **Theatre of the Oppressed**, a form of interactive theatre intended to transform lives. Boal's theatre invited **spectators to become performers**, acting out solutions to their own social problems. Boal (like Brecht) believed that theatre should be a **vehicle for social change**, and his Theatre of the Oppressed aimed to show the people what was possible and give them a voice for action.

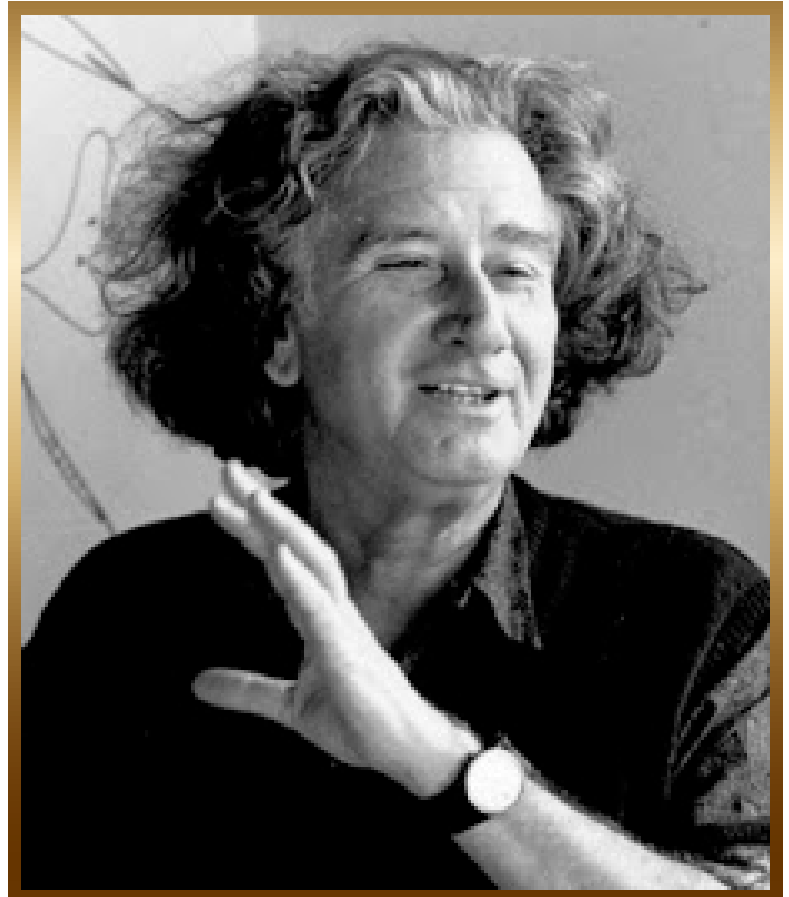
Theatre of the Oppressed begins with the idea that everyone has the capacity to act in the 'theatre' of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator. Boal called his audience '**Spect-actors**'.

Theatre of the Oppressed encompasses three key forms:

Image Theatre invites spect-actors to form a tableau of frozen poses to capture a moment in time dramatising an oppressive situation. They are then asked to reflect critically on this situation before being asked to depict an ideal outcome, or to reshape an image to show different **perspectives**.

Forum Theatre is a short play that dramatises a situation, with an oppressive ending that spect-actors cannot be satisfied with. After an initial performance, it is shown again, however this time the spectators become spect-actors and can at any point yell 'freeze' and step on stage to replace the protagonist(s) and take the situation in different directions.

Invisible Theatre is public theatre that involves the public as participants in the action without their knowing about it. The objective is to unsettle passive social relations and spark critical dialogue among the spect-actors. Several actors rehearse a scene which they then play in an appropriate public space in order to provoke a reaction from the public who think they are watching a spontaneous event.

**Notable Works**

- Torquemada
- Theatre of the Oppressed
- Games For Actors and Non-Actors
- The Rainbow of Desire

Highlighted Information

- Interactive theatre intended to transform lives
- Acting out solutions to their own social problems
- Everyone has the capacity to act in the 'theatre' of their own lives
- Give people a voice for action

Theatre Practitioners

Frantic Assembly

Frantic Assembly are a **physical theatre company** who were formed in 1994 by Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett, and Vicki Middleton, who had all met whilst studying at Swansea University. They aimed to create physical theatre, using **dynamic and engaging movement** with storytelling at the heart of the work.

Scott Graham is still the Artistic Director of the company, who have developed and created a wide range of work. Notable productions include, *Pool (No Water)* by Mark Ravenhill, *Beautiful Burnout* by Bryony Lavery, *Things I Know To Be True* by Andrew Bovell and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Simon Stephens.

Frantic Assembly devise most of their work in **collaboration with a playwright**. Taking the movement as the basis for action, they use a series of exercises to develop physical theatre. Speech and dialogue is then added in order to **create a narrative structure**. The movement and the dialogue go hand in hand to create

visually dynamic and engaging theatre. It is essentially **directing through movement**.

Scott Graham describes their way of working as '**The Frantic Method**'. He says: 'The Frantic Method is approaching devising as a series of tasks, each broken down into building blocks. This is designed to establish progress from the **simplest discoveries**.

Performers are encouraged to **take a moment back to its simplest truth and build from there**. This places dancers, actors, students, teachers and all participants on the same starting point. Using these building blocks they are empowered to find and create complex work through a process that is safe, fun and constantly illuminating.'

Performers who work with Frantic Assembly have to have extremely high levels of physical fitness, as their work is very demanding. They do lots of outreach work with schools and colleges to share their methods and encourage participation in physical theatre.



Highlighted Information

- Dynamic and engaging movement with storytelling at the heart of the work.
- Devise most of their work in collaboration with a playwright
- Movement as the basis for action
- Visually dynamic and engaging theatre - Progress from the simplest discoveries

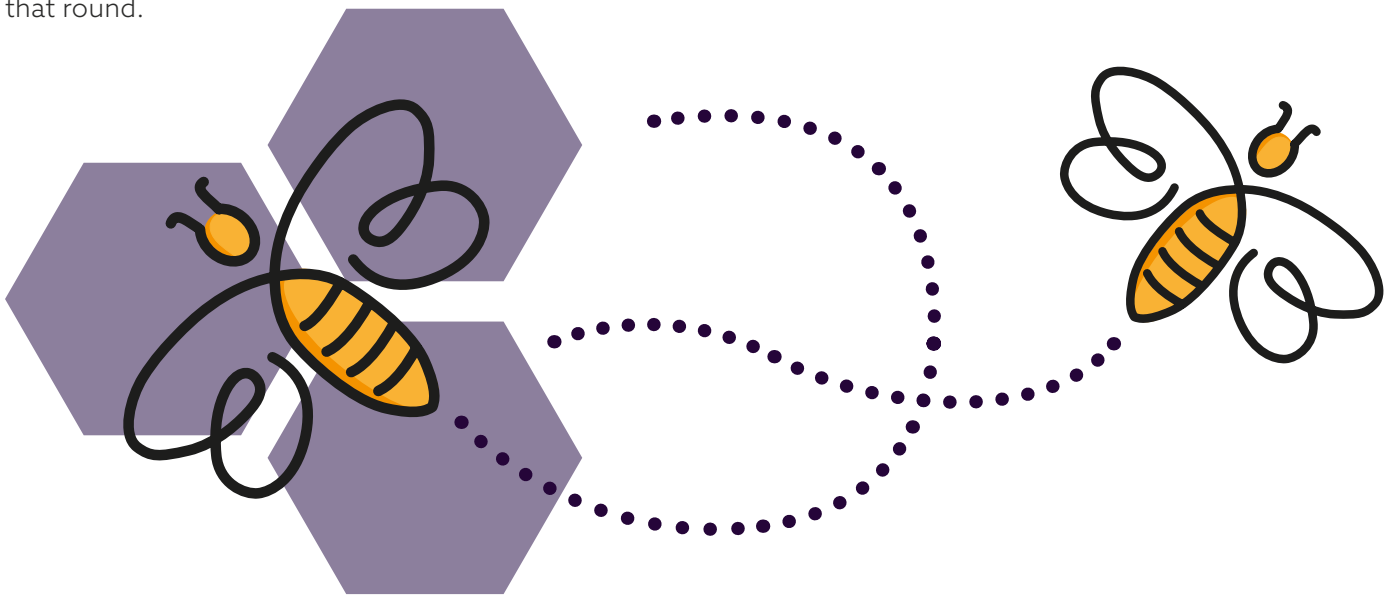
Rehearsal Techniques

Warm Up Games

• **Grandma's Footsteps** is a great one.

You can use it at every stage of rehearsal to build group co-hesion, play with character relationships, or build obstacles that they have to overcome. Fun and great for focus. Try changing the shape of the space, playing the game as characters or playing in pairs on piggyback!

• **Buzzy Bees:** Walk around the space, 'buzzing' like a bee and flapping your wings. On the call, get into groups (which can be determined at the beginning of the game). Once in the groups, form an image starting with a specific letter of the alphabet. This image could be random, or it could be something from the text they are working on. (eg: Create something beginning with the letter D that you might find in Romeo's bedroom!) The best image is deemed the winner by the facilitator, and if you create the same thing as another group, you lose that round.



Text

• **Facts and Assumptions:** Starting with your script, and working in groups if preferable, find out all the facts about a specific character. Once they've done that, assumptions can also be made based on these facts, building a set of Given Circumstances for each character in the play. This can then be shared with the group so that the Given Circumstances for the whole play can be set.

• **Bite Size Storytelling:** In groups, take a short scene from the play. The group have to tell the story of the scene in whatever way they feel fit. They can take key lines that highlight the main events, or they can create a series of freeze frames depending on the ability of the group. The scenes need to be kept short and the stories within the scene isolated. You can then stick the whole show (or chunks of it) together so that you create the whole thing in their own way.

Rehearsal Techniques

Devising

• **One Word Storytelling:** In a circle, a story is created using only one word each. You can give each story a theme or a stimulus, or you can see where the story goes and use that as an idea for devising. (Beware of rude stories!)

• **Improvisation With Object:** Each group is given an object. They have to create a short scene with the object as the central focus. You can do this in a couple of ways. First – they have to use the object as it actually is (a brush must be used as a brush) , or the object cannot be used literally (the brush becomes a microphone or a spade).



Character/Plot Development

• **Acting The Objectives:** Each actor plays a scene that they have rehearsed, but instead of speaking the dialogue, they state what they WANT to do to the other people in the scene, for example 'I want to make you jealous'. This is useful if you have been able to action the text first, and it also helps with the reactions of the other actors in the scene.

• **Warm Up Games in Character:** Playing warm up games such as Grandma's Footsteps or Name Volleyball can be really useful for character development to help explore attitude and relationships with other characters. Competition can help to highlight status of characters and can provide an interesting discussion when things don't follow the same outcomes as the play.



Polish/Final Stages

• **Line, Scene, Go:** The director shouts a random line to the company. They are instantly expected to get themselves into position and pick up the play at the point of the line. Run a couple of moments – then shout another line which they all then run to. Great for keeping things fun and fresh – and for highlighting points of confusion or those who are less sure of their lines.

• **Peer Note Taking:** Whilst the director is focusing on the overall vision of the piece, peer note taking can be a really useful tool for each actor. Pair people up with others who aren't in the scene. The actor can tell their note taker if there is any specific thing that they'd like their note taker to focus on (such as diction or intonation), or specifics can be stated by the director. Positive notes and room for improvement can be highlighted. You will generally find that they are really positive about each other's performance and it is a great way of developing self-reflection too.



Piaf's Life

Edith Piaf was a French singer, performer and actress of the 20th century, who specialised in chanson ('lyric-driven French song') and ballads. Some of her most famous songs include *Non, je ne regrette rien* (1960) and *La Vie en Rose* (1946), which was later famously covered by Louis Armstrong. Many biopics, biographies and productions have been developed based on her life, however many of the exact dates and details of this life are somewhat disputed.

Rough Timeline:

- 1915** Édith Giovanna Gassion was born on 19 December in Belleville, Paris – it is rumoured that she was born on the pavement of the Rue de Belleville.
- 1916** Her father returned from the war and found that Piaf's mother had abandoned her. He found her being poorly cared for by her maternal grandmother, so he took her to be raised by his own mother, who ran a brothel in Bernay.
- 1922** Around the time Piaf was seven years old, her father took her with him to Paris to join his street act – here she sang in public for the first time.
- 1930** Aged about 14 or 15, Piaf began her own street singing career.
- 1932** Piaf fell in love with Louis Dupont and they had a daughter, Marcelle, together, who died at the age of two.
- 1935** Piaf was discovered by a cabaret owner, Louis Leplée, who nicknamed her *la Môme Piaf* meaning 'the kid sparrow'. This year she made her theatrical debut.
- 1936** Piaf was a regular act at Leplée's cabaret until he was murdered in his apartment in 1936. Piaf was questioned for this and accused of being an accessory to murder, but was acquitted.
- 1936** Some months after Leplée's death, Piaf became professionally and romantically involved with songwriter and businessman Raymond Asso, who changed her stage name to 'Édith Piaf' and commissioned songwriter Marguerite Monnot to write songs based on Piaf's experiences.
- 1940** Piaf starred in *Le Bel Indifférent* by Jean Cocteau and started to make connections with important artists and individuals.
- 1940** Nazi Germany began occupying areas of France and Piaf continued her career singing for German soldiers and French collaborators.
- 1944** German occupation left France.
- 1945** Piaf wrote *La Vie En Rose* – her signature song.
- 1947** After WW2 Piaf began to gain international recognition and when the *New York Herald Tribune* positively reviewed her in 1947, her international fame grew.
- 1949** Boxer Marcel Cerdan, with whom Piaf was having an affair, died in a plane crash on the way to meet her – many suggest this event furthered her alcoholism.
- 1951** Piaf was in the first of three car crashes that left her seriously injured and began a troubling morphine addiction.
- 1952** Piaf married fellow singer Jacques Pill.
- 1955-62** Piaf performed several series of concerts at Bruno Coquatrix's Paris Olympia music hall, from many of which excerpts were recorded and sold on record.
- 1957** Piaf divorced her first husband, Jacques Pill.
- 1962** Piaf married performer Théo Sarapo.
- 1963** Piaf recorded *L'Homme de Berlin* – her last recording.
- 1963** Piaf died reportedly of liver failure, but having suffered numerous illnesses stemming largely from her alcohol and substance abuse.

Who's Who?



Édith Piaf

Édith Piaf was a French singer-songwriter, cabaret performer and film actress noted as France's national chanteuse and one of the country's most widely known international stars. Piaf's music was often autobiographical and she sang about love, loss and sorrow. Piaaf sang for the troupes in world war two and was one of Frances strongest Allies during the Second World War. Edith lived a life full of hardships and triumphs and would express such in her powerfully emotive music. Famed for her passionate ballads and chanson Piaf rose to iconic stardom.



Click on the link above to watch Edith perform her world famous song, 'Je ne regrette rien'. Can you recognise it?



Marlene Dietrich

German born Marlene is revered as one of the leading ladies of stage and screen during the 1920s to 1930s. Famed for her roles in silent movies Marlene is also known for her humanitarian efforts during the Second World War, she provided shelter for French exiles and also provided financial support and advocated American citizenship making it easier for them to seek refuge. With a shared ambition and so much in common, she and Piaf were dear friends.



For more information click on the link above.



Louis Leplée

Louis Leplée was a French nightclub owner who discovered the French singer Édith Piaf singing on a Paris street corner in 1935. Louis became Edith's mentor and friend although she was accused of being affiliated with his murder!



For more information click on the link above.



Raymond Chasso

Often using Edith as his passion or muse, Raymond Chasso was a highly acclaimed Chanson lyricist. He and Piaf collaborated to make timeless pieces of music. Like Louis Leplée, he became a mentor for Edith and helped her develop her artistry and talent, even teaching her what to wear. He fell in love with Piaf and for a time they too were lovers.



Hear Piaf sing a song written for her by Raymond.



Theo Sarapo

Theo Sarapo, Piaf's second husband was a famous French singer. He was remembered for his handsome face and stage presence. Theo also starred in films. It is said that Piaf did indeed encourage him to pursue a singing career. He was the final love in her life. Theo died in a tragic car accident seven years after marrying Edith Piaf.



Have a look at the footage of their wedding using the link.

Timeline of Making a Show

Assembling the Creative Team

Theatre making is a collaborative process, and appointing the right creative team is essential to the success of a production. Usually the Producer will appoint the Director first, as the Director will want to play a part in selecting the other members of the team. These are likely to include a Designer (set, costume or both), Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Stage Manager(s) and Specialists (such as Choreographer, Musical Director, Fight Director etc), depending on the needs of the show.

Casting

Some people say that theatre-making is 90% about the casting. Certainly getting the right actors to play the roles and to work with in rehearsal is vitally important. Bigger shows work with a Casting Director, who helps the team to find the right actors. The most common way of finding actors is to run auditions, where the actors will present their skills to members of the Creative Team. Sometimes there may be a 'straight offer' where the actor is so perfect for the role, or quite famous, or well known to the Director, that they don't have to audition.

Pre-Rehearsal Meetings

The Creative Team will meet regularly before rehearsals begin, to plan and develop the vision and designs for the show. The Director will usually be at all of these meetings to ensure an overall coherent vision.

Script Preparation

Long before rehearsals begin, the Director will do a great deal of work on the script and in researching the play and context. This ensures she/he is highly knowledgeable about the play and can run the process and the rehearsal room calmly and effectively. Sometimes the Assistant Director will help with this preparation.

Model Presentations

The Designer will usually create a detailed small-scale model of the set to aid visioning and discussion. There are 2 stages to this process: the white card and the full model. The white card model is made of card and is a very basic model that allows for lots of changes to happen easily. The full model is painted and contains lots of detail – at this stage there are unlikely to be many further changes. The full model will usually be shown to the actors at the start of rehearsals to help them imagine the set in rehearsals.

The Read Through

The cast, creative team, producer and often others with an interest in the process will sit around a large table and hear the play read aloud by the cast. This is very exciting and quite nerve-wracking for the actors who may have only just met one another. The read through may be the only time some of the stage management team and technical team will hear the play before they work on it in the theatre space – so it is an important part of the process.

Rehearsals

The period of time – usually between 3 and 5 weeks – when the cast, Director and creative team work intensively to make the show, often including table work (where the script and research are examined), blocking (where the moves for the actors are decided), games, exercises and run-throughs of scenes, acts and the whole show. The Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) is a crucial member of the rehearsal room team, keeping notes, organising schedules and acting as a conduit between the producing team and the rehearsal room. The DSM will usually also be in charge of cueing the lighting and sound for performances, so they create and keep the 'bible' – a version of the script with all the cues and notes needed to operate the performances.



Photo: Marc Brenner



Technical Rehearsals

Always happening on the stage – the technical rehearsals usually take between 3 and 5 days, and are a chance for the lighting, sound, set, costume, projection, and all other elements to be carefully brought together – all under the watchful gaze of the Director. Technical rehearsals are vitally important and can be very slow and laborious, but also a really exciting chance to bring all the collaborators and their work together.

Dress Rehearsals

These are the final rehearsals – a chance to run the show as if it were in front of an audience. Unless something goes very wrong – the dress rehearsal would not be stopping for notes or to alter anything. Instead the creative team will write lots of notes, and then share these with the cast and DSM in a meeting straight after the dress rehearsal.

Previews

Some shows have preview performances. These are performances in front of an audience, but where everyone understands that the show is very new and one or two things might not go quite to plan. The tickets are usually cheaper to attend these performances. The Director and creative team will always give notes to the cast and team after a preview show so that it keeps getting better before the opening night.



Job Roles in Making Theatre

You may have heard the phrase 'get a proper job' in relation to working in theatre. But this is very out of date. There are many job roles with good salaries in theatre and culture. Nottingham Playhouse has over 100 permanent staff! Here are just a few...

Actor

Actors bring characters to life on stage with their performances, using speech, movement and expression to act a script or improvise their roles.

Agent

Agents are often the first point of contact for anyone looking to hire actors. Few actors work without the support of an agent. Agents can also supply artists for corporate and private events. Their clients may include actors, singers, dancers or supporting artists.

Administration

Administrators deal with customers, run offices, and take care of the day-to-day running of the business.

Artistic Director

The artistic director makes sure their theatre is putting on the kind of shows that fit with the artistic aims of the organisation.

Arts Journalist

Every show hopes for good reviews. Journalists get the word out about the show to the public. They make sure people know what shows are on offer and what is happening in the world of theatre.

Backstage Crew

Building sets, helping create props and operating equipment, the backstage crew support the designers and performers with the running of the show.

Box Office Staff

Box office staff work in cinemas, theatres and concert halls. They are responsible for taking bookings and payments for tickets. Box office staff also arrange for group visits and discounts. They may also advise on seating for people with disabilities or special needs.

Carpenter

Carpenters and joiners in the theatre and dance sector and crafts sector work with wood. They work in theatres or in workshops. In the theatre and dance sector, they specifically make, fit or repair scenery and props that are part of a play or show.

Choreographer

Choreographers create routines and movement sequences for singers and musicians to perform.

Costume Designer

The costume designer is responsible for designing all the costumes to be worn in a production. This can involve a mix of designing from scratch, and sourcing existing items of clothing.

Dance Teacher

Dance teachers educate and instruct on different forms of dance. They work with individuals and groups of all ages and abilities to help them learn dance practices.

Dancer

Dance is a term for describing ways of using the body to tell stories, interpret music and express emotion. Some dance forms require an intense training starting from an early age; others can be learned later.

Dialect Coach

Dialect coaches or voice coaches work with actors to develop and improve their vocal technique, and help them adopt convincing character accents.

Director

Theatre directors take responsibility for the overall creative production of plays.

Dramaturg

A dramaturg is a theatre practitioner who focuses on how to convey the particular message the director wants to highlight.

Participation and Education Staff

Arts education staff in the creative industries support teachers and development workers in cultural venues. They work in art centres, galleries, theatres and other venues to provide an educational experience. They may work with individual children or visitors, small groups or a whole class.

Events Staff

Events staff work with centre and gallery and theatre managers to deliver an event. They manage, organise and oversee the running of a venue or function. They are responsible for coordinating all the arrangements such as room bookings, catering and special effects or promotional items.

Finance Staff

Finance staff officers in the performing and visual arts sectors provide administrative support to organisations.

Front-of-House Work

The 'front-of-house' of a theatre refers to all areas accessed by the public, including the auditorium. Front of house staff look after the public to make sure their visit is safe and enjoyable.

Hair, Make-Up and Wigs

People that work in hair, makeup and wigs for the theatre and dance sector help to style performers. The style of makeup needed depends on the type of production. The hair, make-up and wigs may be contemporary and straightforward or require more creative approaches. Performers may need to appear from a different nationality or historical period. The makeup artist will also need to dress wigs and attach them correctly to the actor or performer.

Lighting Designer

Lighting designers work to ensure effective lighting for a commercial or residential property. They aim to enhance a building's environment through lighting.

Lighting Technicians

Lighting technicians are vital to theatre. Their work may involve design, operating lighting rigs, and looking after equipment.

Marketing Officer

Marketing is about understanding what a customer wants and promoting this product, event or service. It is also making sure the public is talking about a brand, which for the arts sector could be a theatre, museum, art gallery or community arts project.

Playwright

The playwright or dramatist is the author of a production, the writer or adapter of the original play. Often they work alone, but sometimes they also collaborate with a director and the cast.

Producer (Live Events)

Producers of live events are responsible for running successful live spectacles. The producer works on live shows and events in the music industry such as concerts and music festivals. They must coordinate technical staff and performers to ensure everything runs smoothly. They have to have high quality acts and performers for a successful event. Live events may be one-offs or regular annual events. They can be held in indoor and outdoor music venues of all sizes.

Props Manager

A props manager supervises the building, making and buying of the props needed for a production.

Puppeteer

Puppeteers animate and manipulate puppets as part of a theatre, television or film production. Puppetry is a performing art used to entertain adults or children.

Sound Designer

Sound design can involve making sure the mix of sounds is correct at a live event, designing the sound effects on a mobile phone, and many other things.

Sound Engineer

Sound engineers work in the theatre and dance sector to handle all aspects of a production's sound. They ensure that speech, music and sound effects can be heard to the best effect in a theatre production.

Sound Technician

Sound technicians ensure that the best sound possible is available in a variety of venues for performances. They prepare, operate and maintain technical equipment to amplify, enhance, mix or reproduce sound. They work in recording studios, films, radio and television programmes (on set or location) and live performances, including theatre, music and dance.

Special Effects

Special effects and pyrotechnics staff are responsible for special effects and pyrotechnics required as part of a production. In some shows, for example using magic, special effects may be an integral part of an act.

Stage Designer

Stage designers are responsible for designing stage settings for productions. This can range from single scene dramas, to complex scenery and scene changes required by major productions.

Stage Manager

Stage managers coordinate all aspects of a theatre production or event, including actors, technical staff, props, scenery and costumes. They make sure technicians and performers alike are in the right place at the right time and ready to meet their cues.

Stagehand

Stagehands in performing arts are the behind scenes support staff for a production. They carry out a wide variety of jobs backstage to ensure a production is successful.

Technical Manager

A technical manager in the theatre and dance sector coordinates a production's technical staff. This could include the set making staff, lighting staff and props making staff.

Wardrobe Assistant

Wardrobe assistants work to provide support with costumes and accessories. Performances like plays and musicals rely on a strong wardrobe team to make the production look credible.