

'Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well' in a Reorchestrated Revival at the Zipper Theater



By [CHARLES ISHERWOOD](#)

The evening's most quietly enchanting performer is Gay Marshall, who could be said to represent, well, France. Although she is in fact American, the petite, fine-boned Ms. Marshall has lived in France for 20 years. She has played Édith Piaf in a one-woman show seen in the United States and France, and possesses some of Piaf's spirit as well as the throbbing mixture of steel and cotton in the voice. Mr. Greenberg's decision to occasionally season the evening with Ms. Marshall's superb French diction was wise. To hear her sing Brel's despairing "Ne Me

Quitte Pas," in the original French and with heart-stirring transparency, is to experience Brel's art in its purest and most persuasive form.



TIME OUT NY theatre review by Adam Feldman

"Gay Marshall, a polyglot American singer kicks off the show in style with "Le Diable," in which the Devil gloats about the miseries of the modern world. Brel's songs are perfectly suited to Marshall's focused power and rough-edged, characterful voice, notably in the devastated "Ne Me Quitte Pas" and "Marieke."



theatre review by Andrew Gans

"Her throaty power, deeply felt emotion, and her never-wavering sincerity penetrate the heart of the listener. "

“As for Marshall, her performance is the best reason to attend this production. A wisp of a woman, she immediately conjures Edith Piaf -- maybe because she has previously played her. More importantly, she believes every word that Brel etched and therefore finds no call to embellish. When she sings "Marieke" in French, Flemish and English, she achingly reveals Jacques Brel's core message: The heart shatters daily. If this revival enjoys a healthy run, Marshall will be the explanation.”

CABARET SCENES Magazine review Elizabeth Ahlfors

“There is a lot of talent, intensity, humor, and heart in this tiny wallop. She is riveting when she delves into the haunting spirits of Brel and Piaf .

TALKIN BROADWAY Theatre Review by [Matthew Murray](#)

“Marshall’s ability to parse a lyric down to its core and play and sing that truth is immensely welcome in this production of *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris* at the Zipper Theater. Her moments in the spotlight are so enlivening, and attain a powerful, forward emotional mobility, She provides a focus so internal and so intense, it evokes legendary French chanteuse Edith Piaf .”

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY Theater Review by Jason Clark

“Gay Marshall’s textured and moving performance is especially potent singing the haunting “Marieke” and “Ne Me Quitte Pas”.

NJ MEDIA GROUP theatre review By ROBERT FELDBERG

“Gay Marshall, a petite American who has lived in Paris and portrayed Edith Piaf, has the cry-from-the-heart French style that can make a song like "Sons Of" a rousing emotional experience. She achieves the same effect with "Marieke," Brel's nostalgic song about his native country that she performs partly in Flemish.”

City Guide theatre review by Griffin Miller

“...Most significantly, the current production possesses a beguiling French undercurrent that was missing from the original — and this is due largely to the presence of Gay Marshall.

The show opens with Marshall singing the first of two songs she performs in French: “Le Diable (Ca Va),” a striking prelude to the rest of the evening’s numbers hauntingly interpreted by the petite actress/chanteuse. “

THE NEW YORK SUN By JOY GOODWIN

The American actress Gay Marshall, delivering some Brel classics ("Ne Me Quitte Pas," "Marieke") in the original French and Flemish, provides more than just the right accent. She has warm eyes and a throaty Edith Piaf sound, and she suggests the flinty strength of the women who lived through World War II in Europe.

NY THEATER SCENE by Irene Backalenick

“Gay Marshal epitomizes the French mood, evoking Edith Piaf, in such numbers as “Ne Me Quitte Pas” and “Carousel.”

RESURRECTING JACQUES BREL AT THE ZIPPER By **Roberta E. Zlokower**

“The performer with the accent and language skills was Gay Marshall, a Piaf-built waif of a performer, but with taut muscularity, who sang *Ne Me Quitte Pas* (Do not leave me) in the original French with native perfection,

and the opening rendition of *Le Diable (Ça Va)*. Yet, the motif and mood and moment were so European in genre, one could almost imagine the original French lyrics within the English translations.

Ms. Marshall's signature song, mentioned above, was mesmerizing and magical. The last two songs, *Carousel* (Ms. Marshall) and a full cast reprise of *If Only We Have Love*, brought down the house. The first is one of my favorites and one of Brel's most renowned, sending the performer and listener into a whirling dervish of life's flashbacks, and the second highlighted Ms. Marshall in her blazing spotlight of soaring, sensational sound."

SOLO SHOWS

Time Out review by James Gavin

Zipper Theater's recent revival of Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris turned up a heart-tugging discovery who stole the reviews: Gay Marshall. She had appeared on Broadway in *A Chorus Line* (she sang "Nothing" and "What I Did for Love") and from there she brought her touching optimism to the part of Grizabella in the Paris production of *Cats*.

For those who wished that Jacques Brel had been a Gay Marshall concert, here's good news: This Thursday the Zipper will host the Manhattan debut of her solo evening, various versions of which have charmed audiences from France to Missouri. Marshall will dip into her past shows—Piaf: *La vie, l'amour* and *If I Were Me*, and reprise her Brel showstoppers. Along the way she'll explore her life's challenge: How can an American songbird find a place among the notoriously testy French while not vanishing from everyone's mind back home? She needn't worry about the latter; one can only hope this expatriate jewel will spend more time here, where she belongs. — *James Gavin*



Martini talk Zipper Gay Marshall's "*ARE YA HAVIN ANY FUN?*"

The pixyish chanteuse, who has played Diana Morales on Broadway, Grizabella in Paris and was so emotionally devastating in the recent Off-Broadway revival of *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, returns to the Zipper for a four performance engagement. She takes her show's title from the 1939 Sammy Fain/Jack Yellen hit which, like much of her material, has nothing to do with the holidays. Yet Marshall introduces it as a commentary on all the stress that comes to surface during the season and a plea for us all to just relax. Bob Telson's "Calling You" and a gorgeous rendition of Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do" is dedicated to those who we wish we could see this time of year and Jacques Brel's "The Dove" and "Sons Of," which she sings with heart-clutching conviction, are prayers for peace on earth.

The bluesy sexuality she brings to Jimmy Witherspoon's "Nobody Knows You (When You're Down And Out)" is matched by the tongue-in-cheek goofiness of her gangsta rap "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town."

"I will grab any opportunity to sing an Edith Piaf song," she says with glee before tearing into "*La Foule*" and "*Belle Histoire*." Isn't that Christmasy?" she asks with a perky smile after the emotionally soaring performance.

Aside from her singing, as accompanied by music director Mark Hartman at piano, Steve Gilewski on bass and Michael Crioter on percussion and guitar, Marshall also performs four self-written comic monologues where she plays a spoiled wealthy widow (who sings a revised lyric of Cole Porter's "The Laziest Gal In Town" as

"The Greediest Gal On Earth"), a cruelly honest cosmetics counter woman, a Parisian tour guide ("Don't hug the French") and an assortment of famous designers. Her characters are very funny and entertaining.

There were numerous technical problems on opening night, but they only revealed what a funny and charming woman Gay Marshall is when working off the cuff. Watching her perform combines the pleasures of admiring a fine artist and making a new friend.



TOP TEN DIVAS BY ANDREW GANS

GAY MARSHALL

Some of the more exciting vocals of the year were heard Off-Broadway in the current revival of Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris at the Zipper Theatre, where Gay Marshall is still belting up a storm, singing the songs of the late Belgian performer with a mix of power and deeply felt emotion. Marshall, who kicks off the Gordon Greenberg-directed revue with "Le Diable (Ca Va)," has been handed some of Brel's most haunting songs, including "My Childhood," "Sons Of," "Marieke" and "Carousel." She is at her best on the two war-themed offerings, "Sons Of" and "Marieke," her throaty alto and her never-wavering sincerity penetrating the heart of the listener. Marshall also stands out on the new Brel cast recording, which was recently released on the Ghostlight Records label. Just listen to the way she builds "My Childhood," charting early reminiscences that lead to a passionate remembrance of first love: ". . .and his first tender touch, my first taste of love. I wanted to fly. And I swear that I flew. My heart glowed like the sun."

BREL CD REVIEW

★★★★★ **JACQUES BREL AND GAY MARSHALL**, February 14, 2007

By [T. G. Harpster "STAGE MANAGER" !\[\]\(05be7c7a8995decd503647c99211f7c2_img.jpg\)](#) (LAS VEGAS) - [See all my reviews](#)
REAL NAME™

I had heard of Jacques Brel, and I knew two songs from the show. But what made me buy the CD was the performer Gay Marshall who I had seen in the role of DIANA in A CHORUS LINE.

Surprise surprise! She was terrific, of course, and I fell in love with the rest of the show, which I will recommend to community theatres to produce here. I am also buying the DVD---break a leg, Gay! Teri

GAY MARSHALL SINGS PIAF CD REVIEWS



By Andrew Gans

FOR THE RECORD: "Gay Marshall Sings Piaf: La Vie l'Amour"

If Andrea Marcovicci and Michael Feinstein seem destined to keep the Great American Songbook alive and well, perhaps Gay Marshall will do the same for the classic French chanson. After all, the actress spent a year Off-Broadway bringing the songs of Jacques Brel to full life in the recent revival of Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris, and on her new solo recording she has turned her attention to the songs made famous by the late Edith Piaf.

Simply titled "Gay Marshall Sings Piaf: La Vie l'Amour," the single CD includes 15 tracks plus an additional four bonus tracks featuring English adaptations of "The Carnival Crowd," "All in White," "Lost and Lonely Souls" and "The Lady from Pigalle." The English translations were penned by Marshall, who has proven herself to be not only a gifted singing actress but a thoughtful lyricist. I particularly enjoy the imagery she creates in "Milord": "But love has turned the tide/You're drowning on the shore/Your precious jewel sailed from your side/She's gone and worth much more./And the ice from your eyes has become endless tears./Your commands turned to cries./All your plans turned to fears./You thought you had it all, and suddenly it ends./For no one owns a heart/Torn silk is hard to mend."

Marshall wraps her rich, textured belt around a mix of Piaf signature tunes ("L'Accordeoniste," "Milord" and "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien") as well as less familiar ones ("Avec Ce Soleil," "Le Droit d'Aimer"). And, whether she's singing Brel or Piaf, Marshall invests her work with an emotional urgency that is always compelling for the listener. High points of her new disc include a powerful version of "Padam," which begins Marshall's recital; a touching version of "La Belle Histoire d'Amour"; a compelling "L'Accordeoniste" that builds to a wonderful climax; a passionate "L'Hymne a l'Amour"; and a rousing version of Piaf's anthem, "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien."

Arrangements were penned by Marshall and Mark Hartman with additional arrangements by Paul Bevin. Marshall is backed by Hartman on piano and accordion, Steve Gilewski on bass, Peter Sachon on cello, Michael Croiter on percussion and guitar, Entcho Todorov on violin and Alan Won on reeds. For more information visit www.gaymarshall.com.

Gay Marshall Sings Piaf—La Vie L'Amour

By Elizabeth Ahlfors
Cabaret Scenes, N Y

Edith Piaf stands alone in evoking the deepest passions and effervescence of French music. A wisp-like waif of a woman, she was nicknamed La Môme Piaf, in street slang meaning "the sparrow." When she delivered her soul with vibrant musical fervor, however, she was a giant.

Gay Marshall recently released a CD dedicated to Edith Piaf's music, *Gay Marshall Sings Piaf—La Vie L'Amour*, a collection of songs that Piaf made her own. More than a mere dedication, it salutes Piaf's soul and irrepressible spirit which have become identified with France. Marshall does not mimic Piaf but has absorbed her influence. She renders "the sparrow's" signature songs through her own Marshall Plan. When Piaf sang them, she gripped a generation and captured the hearts of her listeners. Like Piaf, the petite Gay Marshall possesses an alto voice to be reckoned with and the dramatic instinct to put across the songs' emotional intensity.

Marshall identifies herself as an actress that sings, and she proves that on this recording. Listen to "L'accordeoniste," "Milord" or "Les momes de la cloche" and you hear the fervent moods that spell Piaf through the zest and sentiment of Marshall. The songs are international and to better communicate them, Marshall wrote incisive English interpretations of many of the lyrics and interwove them with the French, extending the songs' essence to every listener. This works far better than an entire translation in expressing the intent while the French lyrics deliver the song's original character.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Marshall lived in Paris for 20 years and is fluent in French. She knows the songs in their original language and can deliver her heartfelt renditions in both French and English. She interprets the emotion that inspired the song.

She has a sharply edged voice with nuances that harken back to the thrill and wit of Piaf. She possesses a vibrato to boost the music's heat and passion. Her interpretations valiantly display her own style, exploring the joys of romance, and the despair in Piaf's tribute to her lost love in "L'hymne à l'amour." She conveys the guts of determination in "Non, je ne regrette rien," as it builds to its potent denouement with strong breath control and stress. No translation needed for this Piaf anthem. The translation of "Carnival" is a theatrical tour de force, waltzing through the crowded fair, building with a tinge of madness with exhilaration. "Carnival" is one of four English translation bonus tracks, all dramatic stories of the turmoils of women from the Parisian section of Pigalle to the disheartened bride, "All in White."

In 2006, Gay Marshall brought the spirit of Piaf to the Off-Broadway revival of Jacques Brel *Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*. In this CD, the dynamic American songbird grabs the opportunity to strut her own talent and intensity. She aims for the heart and reaches it with sincerity and spark, reflecting a joy of the music and never forgetting the inspiration of Edith Piaf.