



Heartland Film Society presents

## The La Vie en Rose (2007)

December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 2009



Marion Cotillard won an Oscar for her performance as 'the Little Sparrow' in this biopic following the ups and downs of Edith Piaf's melodramatic life.

Edith Piaf came to symbolise the indomitable spirit of France, with her tiny figure and huge voice, and her life story is a classic journey from poverty and deprivation to stardom and adoration. The film jumps between different decades and, in classic biopic style, starts at the end of her life. The ageing and drug-addicted Piaf has collapsed on stage in New York in the 1950s and as staff panic backstage we flash back to her desperately poor childhood. Her early life was almost a parody of hardship. Her mother sang for pennies in the street and her dad was a circus performer and contortionist who left for the trenches in 1916, leaving Edith in the care of his brothel keeping mother. She made a miraculous recovery from blindness after a motherly prostitute offered prayers to Saint Theresa. With a childhood like that what could she be but a gutsy showbiz fighter? And, true to form, her path to stardom was unlikely and melodramatic. Like her mother she sang in the streets of Paris, a chanteuse belting out the pop songs of the day to scrape a living. Until one day an impresario, played by who else but Gérard Depardieu, takes her off the street and into a life of fame and sometime fortune. The film darts around her subsequent life from Paris to California, from love affairs to drug degradation, though skipping over the episode that made her most famous, when she entertained the Nazis whilst supporting the French resistance.

### What the critics said

The music of Edith Piaf and Cotillard's transition from alley cat to arthritic wreck make Olivier Dahan's love-letter to the 'Little Sparrow' a must-see. Louise Ruisseau, Channel 4

'There is much to applaud but plenty to regret in La Vie en Rose ... The distilled elements ... provide intoxicating source material, an open bottle of heady inspiration from which this tale of intertwined tragedy and triumph quaffs most heartily, with drunkenly chaotic results.'

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

**Length and certificate:** 140 minutes, 12A      **Language:** French

**Starring:** Marion Cotillard, Gerald Depardieu      **Director:** Olivier Dahan

**Next film:** 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> January 2010      **Far North**

For more information about our programme of films see

[www.heartlandfilmsociety.org.uk](http://www.heartlandfilmsociety.org.uk)