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Patricia Kaas Sings Piaf in Moscow

By Peter Beck

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French chanteuse Patricia Kaas **Florent Schmidt**

When the internationally acclaimed French chanteuse Patricia Kaas brings her current show, "Kaas Chante Piaf" to Crocus City Hall in Moscow on Tuesday, she will be renewing the bonds of a musical friendship that has lasted for a quarter of a century.

The Moscow concert is just one of 10 that she is performing in Russia, and though Russia itself is just one of the 45 countries that Kaas is visiting on a lengthy tour timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Edith Piaf's death, she professes a special affection for playing in this country.

"I have had a really strong love affair with the Russian audience for 25 years," she says. "They give me so much love, so much power that I love performing and coming here."

Kaas's introduction to Russia came during the Soviet period, in April, 1989, when she first visited for an appearance on the "Les Marches du Parnasse" television program. Since then, Moscow has been a scheduled stop on all of her tours, and she has even included Russian

songs on her set list.

"On each tour, I used to sing a Russian song," Kaas says. "On my previous tour, "Kabaret," it was "Mne Nravitsya" by Alla Pugachova.

As she is performing only songs recorded by Edith Piaf on the current tour, this practice of including local material will have to be suspended. However, there was still some extra consideration given to her Russian fans for this show.

"I did an avant-premiere show in the Operetta Theater last December," she points out, "and now I'm doing 10 shows in the provinces before I sing at Crocus City Hall."

Kaas acknowledges that performing a show that consists entirely of material associated with the legendary Piaf is quite a daunting task, but she considers it a challenge that she is ready and prepared for. In fact, she believes that the struggles of her own career have given her an insight into the turbulent life that produced the recordings of "La Mome" and the ability to do justice to them.

"Everyone can sing some Piaf songs, but you need to give emotions — not just sing — to give your own emotions, and my difficult life gave me this experience to be able to give those emotions in the Piaf songs."

Perhaps one of the hardest things to do for this show, Kaas thinks, was to make a representative selection from the extensive Piaf song catalogue.

"It was difficult to choose the songs, as she recorded 430, but I chose her famous ones, and some that I think are incredible that I wanted the audience to discover."

She hopes that she got the choices right, and at this point it seems to her that she did.

"We have done 120 shows in 40 countries so far, and the response was very warm and positive everywhere. Since September, I added to the show one song from my own repertoire, "D'Allemagne." It was one of my first hits." She says that this, too, has gone over well.

After nearly a year of touring the world with her Piaf homage, Kaas knows that it is getting close to the time when she will put the current production to bed. Even as she looks forward, though, she is quite clear about the impact that this project has had and will continue to have.

"When this tour will be over, I will work on a new record with new songs. But after singing Piaf, I will never sing my own songs the same way."

It seems entirely likely that the audience at Crocus City Hall on Tuesday will leave feeling that they have a new understanding of both Patricia Kaas and Edith Piaf as well.

Patricia Kaas will give her concert, "Kaas Chante Piaf," on Wednesday at 8 p.m. at Crocus City Hall, 65-66 km MKAD. Metro Myakinino. For tickets and more information, see the Crocus City Hall website at www.crocus-hall.ru/en.

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

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