

STOP 2: Le Divan Japonais 1893, Henri de TOULOUSE-LAUTREC



Music: from *Music-Témoignages musicaux autour de Toulouse*, 05 *Je suis pocharde*, Yvette Guilbert

Narrator:

That was the voice of Yvette Guilbert, who we glimpse on stage in the background of this poster. – She is recognisable by her long black gloves.

Lautrec created the poster to advertise the Café-concert Divan Japonais - a venue decorated entirely in the fashionable Japanese style. In the foreground, dressed in black, is the dancer Jane Avril – a friend of Lautrec's, with

whom he became rather obsessed. Beside her is the music critic Édouard Dujardin - an enthusiast for anything Japanese.

The Divan Japonais could hold up to 200 customers - but the performance space was cramped. Guilbert complained that she found it hard to raise her arms – and the lights were so close to her that she sweated profusely!

With the popularity of café-concerts came a new cult of celebrity. By the time Lautrec created this poster, Jane Avril was so well-known that she was recognisable even when depicted off-stage, in silhouette.

The critic, Frantz Jourdain described her as: *This exquisite creature, nervous and neurotic, the captivating flower of artistic corruption and of sickly grace.*

Narrator

In truth Avril was the illegitimate daughter of a courtesan, who ran away from home at 13, and suffered from chorea – a condition that caused irregular, jerky movements that she managed to disguise through her dancing.

The success of this image, which was pasted onto walls across Paris, did much to increase both Lautrec's and Avril's fame.