**PRESS RELEASE**

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**ESSAOUIRA GNAOUA AND WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL - 25TH EDITION**

**25TH EDITION OF THE GNAOUA AND WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL, A QUARTER CENTURY OF HIGHLIGHTING MOROCCO'S CULTURAL RICHNESS**

 The primary aims of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, when founded in 1998, were to reclaim an endangered heritage deeply rooted in Africa, to showcase and redeem the forgotten splendourof Essaouira, and to contribute to shining a light on Moroccan culture throughout the world. Today, we can state with confidence that these objectives have been met and indeed have surpassed our initial expectations.

From the 27th to 29th of this June, the 25th edition of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival will take on a very special format. With the longevity of a quarter century under its belt, this edition will mark the beginning of a new chapter that looks resolutely to the future and new projects that are both structural and sustainable.

For this 25th edition, the Festival will initiate **2 new projects** with big ambitions:

- The launch of **a training program in partnership with the world’s finest music institution,** **Berklee College of Music,**Boston, Massachusetts. This program will take place in Essaouira, June 24-28;

- The creation of **a dedicated chair to Gnaoua culture in partnership with the** **Center for African Studies at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University**(UM6P) in Benguerir.

The first project continues the work undertaken by the Festival for many years, to place Morocco at the heart of global musical excellence and to encourage musicians from the African continent. The second project will join the series of initiatives designed by the Festival since its creation, to deepen knowledge and ensure the transmission of Gnaoua heritage.

“*The ancestral culture of Gnaoua is an inestimable treasure that we have passionately fought to defend for more than 25 years, all the way to inscription with UNESCO. Gnaoua music has forever marked the world’s music scene. This culture and this Festival have served Morocco by delivering the nation’s most emblematic message of peace, coexistence, and openness to the world*,” affirms Neila Tazi, producer of the Festival.

In the current global context, this mission becomes even more essential. Essaouira and the Gnaoua Maâlems will once again welcome musicians, intellectuals, journalists and music lovers from across the entire globe to carry forward, together, the message of brotherhood, tolerance, and peace.

**When music becomes fusion!**

On the grand map of international musical events, the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival stands apart through its unique concept of original fusions.

Among the 400 artists who will perform during this 25th edition, the Festival will feature 34 Gnaoua Maâlems (Masters) and a total of 53 concerts, 6 of which will be fusions.

Among these, the **opening concert** promises a rhythm explosion that will blend **Gnaoua,**Brazilian**Batucada,**Spanish**Flamenco**, and **Zaouli** from the Ivory Coast, highlighting the similarities between these genres. Maâlem Hassan Boussou (Casablanca) and Maâlem My Taieb Dehbi (Marrakech), with La Compagnie Dumanlé (Ivory Coast), Nino de Los Reyes (Spain), and Ilê Aiyê (Brazil) are sure to make this opening a festive celebration!

Another absolutely-not-to-be-missed fusion will reunite Maâlem**Hamid El Kasri with Bokanté** (USA, Canada), the multi-Grammy nominated group founded by guitarist Michael League (Snarky Puppy) that *The New York Times* calls “a captivating and unforgettable experience.”

**Future stars and World rhythms**

This pioneering, avant-gardist and committed Festival has always endeavoured to take audiences on a journey through music from around the world, with both established artists and rising stars.

This year the public will have the pleasure of seeing multilingual **Palestinian rapper Saint Levant**(Marwan Abdelhamid), as well as the **Aita mon amour, the powerful** **duo** of Moroccan singer Widad Mjama and Tunisian musician Khalil Epi, who brilliantly revisit the traditional Moroccan popular genre, taking it into the modern era. This year, festivalgoers will also hear one of the most beautiful voices of flamenco, the Spanish singer of Equato-Guinean origin, **Buika**, hailed by the international press for her unique voice. The concert featuring legendary American jazz trumpetist **Randy Brecker,** winner of 7 Grammy Awards, will also be one of the highlights of this brand-new season.

**Human Rights Forum - 11th Edition**

In parallel to the concert line-up, the 11th edition of the Human Rights Forum of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, organised in partnership with the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (CCME), will take place around the topical theme of “Morocco, Spain, Portugal: a history that looks to the future.”

With the historic joint organization of the 2030 World Cup just a few years away, we explore the rich complexity of relations uniting Morocco, Spain, and Portugal. Bringing together a diverse group of twenty leading figures, the Forum will spend two morning sessions addressing subjects relating to shared history, the place and role of diasporas, mobility, and the impact of World Cup 2030 upon issues related to neighbouring communities.

Over the course of 10 previous editions, the Human Rights Forum has welcomed over 150 prominent thinkers (anthropologists, artists, writers, historians, ministers, politicians, philosophers, researchers, diplomats) from 25 different countries across 4 continents (Africa, America, Asia, and Europe).