

ESSAOUIRA Gnaoua & World Music Festival



P R E S S B O O K

PRODUCED AND ORGANIZED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH



**27th TO 29th
JUNE 2024**
ESSAOUIRA - MOROCCO
FESTIVAL-GNAOUA.NET



SUMMARY

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NEILA TAZI

*Producer,
Essaouira Gnaoua and
World Music Festival*



ÉDITO

One day, in the 2000s, a musician friend told me: “I’ve toured all over the world, I’ve played in hundreds of festivals and I’ve never seen anything like this...What you’ve created in Essaouira is rare. Here, cultural barriers vanish into thin air and we can actually feel what peace, communion and tolerance among people really means.” My friend’s kind words came at a difficult time, as we were struggling to put on the Festival year after year, and they were more than comforting. They confirmed that the values we had always stood for were being understood; that our actions had made real impact and that the Festival, whatever the cost, must continue on a permanent basis. Because, from the start, this festival “like no other” has transcended simple entertainment to echo something more powerful. To make space for an ancestral art form to renew and reinvent itself; to provide proof that development through culture is possible; to contribute to Essaouira’s rise as a destination among the world’s great capitals of music; and to become one of the greatest emblems of Moroccan and African culture on the global stage.

This edition is special because we’ll be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival. And my emotions run high when I think back over the artistic and human adventure that we have experienced during these 25 years. Strong images enter my mind, and I’m also thinking of all the extraordinarily talented women and men who have marked the history of this Festival: artists, team members, journalists, sponsors and partners, both public and private. I cannot thank them all individually as the list is dizzyingly long, but I would like to pay particular tribute to the genius of the great Maâlems who are no longer with us: Mohamed Sam, Abderrahman Paco, Hamida Boussou, Cherif Regragui, Mahmoud and Abdellah Guinea.

25 years ago, we were young and passionate about a music form threatened by oblivion, and we had immense faith in the future. Today, despite the years, challenges and obstacles we have faced, our enthusiasm and passion remain intact and we turn even more resolutely to the future of this essential project. Our dream of raising awareness and renewal for this culture has come true, with the crowning achievement of inscription on UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019. And we have more dreams and grand ambitions to fulfil for this project.

In the words of a famous theorist of the last century, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” Recognising new talent has always been one of our primary objectives.

Over the years, we have set up workshops, training sessions and programs to support young musicians. We have brought forward a new generation of maâlems, and notably women, who now thrive in a field once dominated exclusively by men. This year, for the 25th anniversary of the Festival and with the intention of providing support for the next generation of musicians from Morocco, the African continent and beyond, we are launching a new training program in partnership with the world's finest music institution, Berklee College of Music, based in Boston, USA. A partnership that is the fruit of many years of discussion with this prestigious music institution, the proof of the serious and credible international reputation enjoyed by the Festival, and the beginning of a collaboration that we hope will be long and beneficial to the development of new talent.

We will also launch the first phase of another major project during this 25th edition: the establishment of a university chair dedicated to Gnaoua culture at the heart of the Center for African Studies at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Benguerir (UM6P), under the direction of Professor Ali Benmakhlouf. The objective of this chair, which will be inaugurated in 2025, is to create space for research to deepen the knowledge of Gnaoua culture, its origins, and its meaning.

For this 25th edition, we have whipped up a very high-quality program for you. Over 400 artists will set fire to the Festival's stages for 3 days of massive celebration from Essaouira's medina to the beach. Like every year, the Gnaoua Maâlems and their guests from all corners of the planet will create unprecedented fusions, which have become the trademark of the Festival. For 3 days, festivalgoers will be invited to dance to rhythms from Spain, Senegal, the US, Ivory Coast, Brazil, Algeria and Palestine.

I would like to conclude by extending our deepest gratitude to the media who have been by our side since the first edition in 1988, and who have largely contributed to the Festival's success. We had no communications budget, and we have not forgotten that well before the emergence of social networks it was the media that ensured promotion and built the reputation of this Festival in Morocco and internationally.

And also many thanks to our partners, old and new, without whom the miracle of this prodigious adventure would not return, year after year.

We look forward to seeing you in Essaouira, June 27-29, to celebrate the first quarter-century of this unique in the world event!



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25 YEARS OF PASSION
AND COMMITMENT
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OF PASSION AND COMMITMENT

When the Gnaoua and World Music Festival first came to life in Essaouira in June 1998, no one expected such an artistic and human outpouring. It was a powerful wind that shook the ancient city of Mogador, which had fallen on hard times over the years.

Guided by a sense of urgency to preserve an ancestral heritage threatened by extinction, the handful of friends who dreamed up the Festival had no idea that what they had created would change the city forever, revolutionise the Moroccan cultural landscape, and showcase Gnaoua music around the entire world.

The popular success of the Festival was immediate: tens of thousands of people flocked to Essaouira from the start, and some of us remember the scarcity of food during that first edition. The city's restaurants and shopkeepers were unaccustomed to receiving crowds of visitors, and after the Festival's opening day, food has hard to come by.

What a long road we have travelled.

This special anniversary, which marks the first quarter-century of our passion project, is certainly an appropriate time to look back and remind ourselves of this Festival's many accomplishments.





GNAOUA ON THE WORLD STAGE

For 25 years we have often repeated that the Festival was born out of a sense of urgency. To preserve and make well-deserved space for an extraordinary culture with sub-Saharan roots, which, in 1990s Morocco, had become marginalised, ignored, and-let's be frank-disrespected, due to negative association with begging and trance rituals.

The first success of the Festival was to restore dignity and distinction to this tradition of untold wealth, carried forward by the descendants of slaves, and which constitutes a precious piece of Morocco's musical heritage. Today, Maâlems collaborate with the greatest international musicians, performing in the most prestigious venues and most significant festivals in the world, from New York to Tokyo, by way of Sydney, Dubai, London and Paris.

In 2009, the Festival team founded the Yerma Gnaoua Association to expand the active work of preservation and promotion. It would take 4 years of titanic effort to edit the first anthology of Gnaoua music, which integrated all the songs, music, and texts of this secular art form.

But the crowning achievement for these long years of effort came in December 2019, in Bogotá, when Gnaoua culture finally entered the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. To celebrate this inscription, all of Morocco's Maâlems gathered for the first time in November 2021, appearing onstage for a special musical broadcast on the Al Aoula channel and enjoyed by millions.

The other great source of pride for the Festival is to create possibility for a new generation of Gnaoua talent, many of whom are women, to flourish. Indeed, since it's very first years, the Festival has put in place training and support programmes to benefit young musicians, in addition to programming appearances and promoting them with each edition. Today, the next generation is well established, and this music that has survived for centuries will continue to do so.

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CULTURE

At the end of the 1990s, the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival is the first event of its kind to appear in Morocco. A pioneering festival, popular and free of charge, that was such an immediate success that it would open the way for other festivals and cultural events to pop up across the Kingdom.

In addition to exercising a major influence on the Moroccan cultural and festival landscape, the Festival has definitively proven that development through culture is possible. In 2014, the Festival's contribution to the development of the city of Essaouira was the subject of a study conducted by Valyans, which concluded that every dirham invested in the Festival brought a return of at least 17 dirhams to the city.

In 2020, Essaouira joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, in recognition of the numerous cultural initiatives hosted there, including the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, as well as the upcoming Complex for Arts and Culture, designed by the renowned Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer.



A DESTINATION BOOM

The Festival has established Essaouira on the global map of musical cities, much like Montreux and New Orleans, home cities to prestigious festivals that have amply contributed to their reputations. The city of tradewinds was on life support in the 90s and yet, due in part to the influence of the Festival, would experience a spectacular renaissance. By the 2000s, as the Valyans study confirms, the number of housing units had tripled. Same for restaurants, shops, and establishments offering tourist activities. Not to mention the new roads built and expanded flight service on offer.

Today, Essaouira and Gnaoua culture are closely connected in spirit, and the city has made a powerful outreach to attract more visitors every year. Without doubt, Essaouira has become one of the most desirable tourist destinations for travellers to Morocco.

MUSIC AS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Morocco has always been a source of inspiration for foreign musicians, particularly rock and Jazz artists. Essaouira still echoes with passing legends such as Jimi Hendrix, who spent time there. But we think most of collaborations between Jimmy Page and Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin) with Maâlem Brahim El Belkani, Randy Weston with Maâlem Abdellah El Gour, or Carlos Santana with Maâlem Mahmoud Guinea. When the Festival creators decided to build upon their concept, the fusion of Gnaoua rhythms with world music was at the heart of the project. This fusion concept, chosen from the start, quickly established the Festival as a musical laboratory unique in the world, underscoring the cousinhood between Gnaoua music and other music forms born of slavery such as the blues, Jazz and Santería. The Festival is also unique in that its artistic directors are musicians: Maâlem Abdeslam Alikkane, one of the undisputed masters of the Gnaoua world and the Algerian drummer Karim Ziad, who has played alongside the greatest international musicians.

Both are behind the magic that takes place, every year, during the original fusions in which Gnaoua encounter musicians from all corners of the world. "We don't speak the same language, but we understand each other musically. We are part of the same family," confirmed a Cuban saxophonist. In Essaouira, we have long understood that music is a universal language.





SOCIAL MIXITY AND THE FREEDOM OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The Festival is also known for its multicoloured audiences. The commingling that takes place in Essaouira is rather unique and completely joyful. Indeed, rare are the places in the world where social mixity of this kind takes place, where festivalgoers of such diverse backgrounds come together in an atmosphere that is peaceful, energetic and festive all at once. Young or old, poor or rich, neo-hippies, Western and Asian tourists, mothers dressed in djellabas, Rastafarians, African musicians... Here, all ethnic and social origins disappear and everyone is equal in communion with joy and music.

The Festival has always attracted a multigenerational following, from all walks of life, and it remains a space like no other for young people to give free reign to their freedom and creativity: Essaouira is also all the young people who come by the thousands to attend the Festival, with their extravagant and colourful style, their festive and contagious joy.

And what is also striking is that, despite 25 years of history, the Festival continues to attract new generations.

AN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA IMPACT

“Moroccan Woodstock”, “Cannes Festival of mystical vibration”, “Tagnaouite World Cup”, “G20 of therapeutic trance”, the press-and in particular the international press-never runs out of comparisons and allegories when seeking to define the Festival.

Because longstanding and faithful connections exist between the Festival and the media. Each year, more than 300 Moroccan and international journalists make the trek to Essaouira, and make the Festival one of the most publicised Moroccan events in the world.

Last year, “60 Minutes”, the flagship program of American channel CBS News, delivered a story about the Festival, underscoring its impact and importance.

Over the years, the world’s leading international media (The New York Times, CNN, Le Monde, El País, The Guardian, La Razon, National Geographic, BBC, and more) have covered the Festival.



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A PROMISING
FUTURE
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A PROMISING FUTURE

When news spread of the inscription of Gnaoua on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the culmination of many years' efforts, we were relieved and immensely happy to see this recognition finally arrive, but we also had the feeling that a long chapter of our history was coming to a close.

We will have to write a new history now, with different ambitions and objectives. The primary goal of the Festival at its creation was to preserve this heritage, and this ambition has been met, exceeding no doubt our initial expectations. Today, Gnaoua have become archetypes who have transcended folklore to become identifiable around the world. We quickly became aware that our mission could not stop there, and that it was time to launch new structural challenges.

And one challenge we have defined is to help new talents to flourish. This is why we will increasingly emphasise training programs, which we are developing this year with Berklee College of Music, whose prestige and renown bear witness to the excellence of its teachings.

On another note, in order to deepen the understanding and knowledge of Gnaoua culture, we will also encourage research on the subject by associating the Festival with the African Studies Center at UM6P to create the first university chair dedicated to Gnaoua culture.

Finally, we will commit to infuse greater meaning and depth into the various projects associated with the Festival over the next few years. As for the future, we are currently deliberating how to develop and extend the duration of the Human Rights Forum, which continues to grow in stature and we hope will become a major global event for cultural dialogue. In 10 editions, the Human Rights Forum, which is organised in partnership with the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (CCME) and has welcomed over 150 leading figures (anthropologists, artists, writers, historians, ministers, politicians, philosophers, researchers, diplomats) hailing from 25 countries and 4 continents (Africa, America, Asia and Europe).





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A FESTIVAL TO PREPARE
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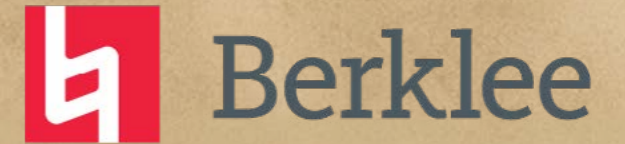
into a partnership with the prestigious Berklee College of Music, one of the most renowned institutions in the fields of music and the performing arts.

For the 25th edition, the Festival is launching a new educational opportunity through our partnership with Berklee. The program will create an opportunity for aspiring musicians from Morocco, Africa and across the globe who demonstrate artistic and musical potential to immerse themselves in a rewarding learning experience taught by Berklee's most recognized artist and educators.

"Berklee on the Road" is a Berklee College of Music initiative. The objective of Berklee on the Road is to bring the Berklee classroom to the world.

This strategic partnership represents an exceptional opportunity to support and train musicians from Morocco, Africa and beyond. The collaboration aims to combine the resources, skills, and opportunities offered by Berklee on the Road to enrich the educational, cultural, and artistic initiatives of the Festival.

This partnership also makes it possible for Berklee College of Music to draw upon the world-renowned reputation of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, a one-of-a-kind event that benefits from a strong global reputation and exceptional media coverage. And also to raise awareness of new talent and offer musicians a singular experience.



It is important to highlight that in February 2024 Essaouira joined the UNESCO Network of Learning Cities. Already recognized for its significant role in the world of music, the city expands its influence with this new label, underscoring the importance of continued learning in all fields. This distinction echoes the partnership between the Gnaoua and World Music Festival and Berklee College of Music.

Under the title of "Berklee at the Gnaoua and World Music Festival", this program will take place in Essaouira from June 24th to 29th (6 days), designed for Moroccan and foreign musicians who wish to learn from professors from the world's greatest music institution. Candidates must be at least 18-years old to participate in the program, and must have played their instruments for at least two years. All must apply online with links to three videos to demonstrate their technical and musical skills on their primary instruments. The application period will open on March 22, 2024 and close on May 24, 2024.

Candidates will then be selected by professors from Berklee College of Music after a rigorous evaluation process.

Application fees for the program are \$420 US dollars per participant.

To submit an application, just click on the following link from March 22, 2024
and follow the posted instructions : www.berklee.edu/berkleeontheroad

ABOUT BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

Berklee is the preeminent institute of contemporary music and the performing arts, offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs at its campuses in Boston, Massachusetts and Valencia, Spain, and through its award-winning distance-learning program, Berklee Online. Dedicated to nurturing the creative and career potential of the world's most inspired artists, Berklee's commitment to arts education is reflected in the work of its students, faculty, and alumni-hundreds of whom have been recognized with Grammy, Tony, Oscar, and Emmy Awards.

At Berklee College of Music and Boston Conservatory at Berklee, students explore interdisciplinary approaches to music, dance, theatre, film, business, healthcare, education, technology, and more. Our pioneering youth programs reach underserved classrooms throughout the U.S. and beyond. With students and alumni from more than 100 nations and educational partners across the world, we are forging new connections among art forms, musical traditions, and technologies to build a dynamic, diverse, and collaborative global arts community.

The Berklee on the Road (BOR) program offers the participants the opportunity to experience Berklee world-renowned teaching methodology through classroom engagements, music labs, master classes, ensembles, jam sessions, special lectures, performances and more.



SAMPLE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

The Improviser as Composer

- Where composition meets improvisation
- A survey of the great composers and improvisers (from classical to contemporary)
- Melody, harmony, and rhythm

Building Your Creative Vocabulary

- Chords scales and how to use them to create melodies and harmonies
- A survey of styles, rhythmic feel, and grooves
- Approaches for improvisation practices

Styles, Grooves, and Accompaniment Labs

- A survey of popular styles and how to play them
- Stylistic interpretation and musical expression
- Groove playing: how to listen, lock in, and support
- Accompaniment skills-building

Special Lectures (sample topic)

- Gnaoua Music and the Connection to Contemporary Music
- Music technology for Performing Musicians
- The Business of Music for Performing Musicians
- Approaches for Songwriters, Composers, and Arrangers

The program will be taught in English with Arabic translation.

THE INSTRUCTORS



RON SAVAGE,
DRUMS

VICE PRESIDENT
AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC



LEO BLANCO,
PIANO

PROFESSOR OF AFRICANA
STUDIES AND ACADEMIC
DIRECTOR FOR BERKLEE
AT THE GNAOUA AND WORLD
MUSIC FESTIVAL



JAVIER VERCHER,
SAXOPHONE

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



VIKTORIJA PILATOVIC,
VOICE AND PIANO

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



JASON CAMELIO,
TROMBONE

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT,
BERKLEE GLOBAL



GNAOUA CULTURE ENTERS UNIVERSITY

Over the past 30 years, Gnaoua culture has been the subject of much academic research. Rich in history, tradition, and singular musical practice, this culture continues to interact with other musical genres, both in Morocco and on an international level.

Gnaoua culture has roots in sub-Saharan Africa and is intimately connected to the history of the slave trade, and also incarnates a therapeutic dimension, often associated with the practice of healing through trance.

In the past, ethnologist Viviana Pâques, historian Jean-Louis Miège, psychoanalyst Abdelhafid Chlyeh and anthropologist Zineb Majdouli have all devoted research to Gnaoua.

Today, we are witnessing an ever-growing sense of the need for precise knowledge of this musical and extra-musical world, and a renewed interest on the part of anthropologists, historians and doctoral candidates. Current research projects, conducted in Morocco and throughout the world, contribute without a doubt to a better understanding of Gnaoua. The incorporation of Gnaoua into Moroccan popular culture is real and visible, and deserves in complement to be addressed in future research projects.

The Gnaoua are a direct illustration of this intangible heritage that has forged transatlantic relationships, between Africa and the Americas: a heritage that continues through essential music forms such as the blues, Jazz, and gospel music.

In the logical flow of the work we began 25 years ago, after the Festival's launch in 1998, the creation of the Yerma Gnaoua Association in 2009, the edition of the first anthology of Gnaoua music in 2014, and the inscription of Gnaoua on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019, we wish to bring yet another dimension to this work of preservation through connection with the world of university research.

To celebrate this 25th anniversary, then, the Gnaoua and World Music Festival will associate with the Center for African Studies at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Benguerir (UM6P), to create a university chair dedicated to Gnaoua culture, under its aegis.

The principal objective of this chair is to create a space for research in view of deepening understanding and knowledge of Gnaoua culture, its origins, its history, and its evolutions.

Under the direction of Professor Ali Benmakhlof, the Center for African Studies at UM6P is a centre for teaching and research dedicated to studies related to the African continent and oriented toward 3 actions: promoting studies conducted on the continent; documenting studies produced elsewhere and relating to Africa; and teaching studies that will make it possible to view the world from an African perspective (website: <http://cas.um6p.ma>).

The creation of this first university chair dedicated to Gnaoua culture will take place over several phases in the next few years.

The first phase is the organisation of 2 round tables, next June 29th in Essaouira during the Festival. These round tables, organised under the direction of Ali Benmakhlof, will bring together renowned academics with young student researchers.

Alongside Tarik Sabry, Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom, and Omar Fertat, Lecturer at the Université Bordeaux-Montaigne (where he teaches Arab-Muslim Arts at the Department of Arab Studies and Arab performing arts at the Department of Theatre), we will welcome students from the MAHIR centre at UM6P.

The first-round table will be on the subject of "Gnaoua Studies: popular culture and related issues", while the second will address "Gnaoua Studies: the intellectual commitment of young researchers."

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PROGRAMMING
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THE OPENING PARADE

ESSAOUIRA IS A CELEBRATION

Truly a moment of sheer happiness and conviviality, the opening parade sets the tone for three days of celebration to come. The prelude to an exceptional getaway, where time stands still, giving way to a rare communion, where international artists, Gnaoua maâlems, young audiences, families, music lovers and foreign tourists live a unique musical and sensorial experience, in a city known for tolerance and good living. A colourful spectacle like no other, led by the Gnaoua maâlems through the streets of Essaouira to meet the inhabitants and festivalgoers, and together celebrate the launch of the 25th edition.



THE OPENING CONCERT

TRANSATLANTIC BROTHERHOOD SET TO RHYTHM

Essaouira/Mogador, the city of tradewinds, is open to the world and ready to celebrate all of its influences. Moroccan, African, Hispanic and even trans-Atlantic. The opening concert is the fruit of an exceptional residency and a veritable hymn to mixity, bringing together Maâlems Hassan Boussou and Moulay Tayeb Dehbi with La Compagnie Dumanlé, Nino de Los Reyes, Sergio Martinez & Ilê Aiyê.

The very eclectic Hassan Boussou and his soul-piercing music, and the fiery Moulay Tayeb Dehbi will exchange spiritual notes with their Brazilian alter-egos, the very active Ilê Aiyê. The scenic performances of the Ivorians of La Compagnie Dumanlé will face off with the tempo of Nino de Los Reyes and Sergio Martinez, two of the brightest stars of today's Flamenco scene. A fusion of cleverly balanced multicoloured influences that reunites Morocco, Ivory Coast, Brazil and Spain in a concert that will surely go down in history.

THE FUSIONS

UNIVERSAL IN THE PLURAL AND ACCORDANT ALCHEMY

Each year, for the past quarter century, a musical event that exists nowhere else in the world happens in Essaouira. This exceptional alchemy brims with intense moments of musical fusion and improvisation. Though maâlems are the stewards and masters of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, we take great care to include the happy encounters and mixes that are essential to our programming.



MAÂLEM MOHAMED KOUYOU, RHANI KRIJA, GUIMBA KOUYATÉ, JON GRANDCAMP, KIKE PERDOMO, MEHDI CHAIB & HBS TRUMPET, AUDACITY AND RIGOR

(Morocco/Mali/ Spain/France)

Following their explosive performance at the opening concert for the 24th edition of the Festival, Mohamed Kouyou is back on the scene for a new concert; the fruit of a residency for where rigour and audacity go hand in hand. And for good reason! Take two brilliant artists: Moroccan Rhani Krija, who hangs with stars like Sting, Herbie Hancock, or Al Di Meola, and Frenchman Jon Grandcamp, who draws inspiration from African music, soul and funk. Put them together and add the ascetic playing style of trumpeter HBS, the haunting sax melodies of Kike Perdomo, and finally add the technical genius of electric guitar, Guimba Kouyate from Mali! The result is a dialogue between artistic and cultural streams that hear each other, exchange, fuse, and amaze us.

MAÂLEM ABDELMALEK EL KADIRI AND ALUNE WADE, THE WINDS OF AFRICA

(Morocco/Senegal)

This is the meeting of two exceptional talents. The first, Alune Wade, is well-accustomed to the most prestigious collaborations: Youssou N'dour, Cheick Tidiane Seck, Bobby McFerrin, Joe Zawinul, Aziz Sahmaoui, and Marcus Miller. Senegalese bass virtuoso, composer and singer Alune Wade will cross notes with young Maâlem Abdelmalek El Kadiri, the spiritual son of great master Gnaoua like Maâlem Abdallah Guinea, Maâlem Abderrahman Paca, Maâlem Cherif Regragui and others.



ABLAYE CISSOKO AND MEHDI QAMOUM, MOROCCO/SENEGAL, NOW AND FOREVER

He is probably one of the best kora players in the world. With his limpid, modern musical style, Ablaye Cissoko is part of a new generation of Senegalese artists who incarnate the coming together of Mandingo tradition and contemporary musical creation. Mehdi Qamoun digs deep into his own roots and the rich musical heritage of his country - Gnaoua, Houara, Isemgan, Reggada, Daqqa merrakchiya - moving them toward modernity with his electric guembri. A musical conversation between two authentic and very contemporary artists.

MAÂLEM TARIQ AÏT HMITTI WITH BCUC, MOROCCO/SOUTH AFRICA, A DOSE OF GOOD VIBES

Heir to the “Hmitti” clan, Tariq Aït Hmitti is part of this young generation of artists raised in Gnaoua tradition, yet very open to innovation and different music genres through fusions of Gnaoua music and western rhythms. Like electro, a genre he has explored since 2011. For this 25th edition of the Festival, he will take the stage with the veritable bombshell South African group, BCUC. Between African sounds, soul, and punk rock, this concert promises a moment of rare intensity.



MAÂLEM HAMID EL KASRI AND BOKANTÉ, TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTIONS

(Morocco/USA)

It seems inevitable, that Hamid El Kasri and Bokanté should meet. Two artists known for their exceptional vocal performances (Hamid and Malika Tirolien), an atypical instrumentation that explores the rich sounds of Creole music and the spiritual depths of Gnaoua music. In 2018, Hamid El Kasri opened the festival in fusion with the famous Brooklyn-based jam Jazz group, Snarky Puppy. This same group’s musical director, Michael League, is the founder of the Bokanté project. A family reunion.

THE LILAS AND INTIMIST CONCERTS

UNVEILING THE MYSTERIES

Far from the wild energy of the main stages, there exists a different way to experience the Festival. More, intimate, almost secretive, in exceptional venues where music fans, purists, and acoustic sound lovers gather to hear maâlems who give themselves over to tradition, allowing themselves to return to the magic of the past and the power of their ancestors.





ZAOUIA ISSAOUIA, WHERE KNOWLEDGE MEETS SPIRITUALITY

A place of worship, but also of knowledge, exchange, and meeting among zaouias, Zaouia Issaouia has played an essential role in the spiritual lives of Souris for centuries. Along with the zaouias of Hmadcha and Sidna Bilal, Zaouia Issaouia is one of the most important in the city. Tucked away in the medina, the Zaouia is the gathering place for the Issaoua brotherhood, founded by Sidi Mohammed Ben Aïssa. This is the venue for intimate and authentic lilas. Performing artists: Maâlems Abdelkader Hadada, Abdelaziz Soudani, Brahim Belkani, Ahmed Baqbou.



ZAOUIA SIDNA BILAL, RETURN TO THE ORIGINS

The spiritual birthplace of Gnaoua, Sidna Bilal Zaouia is home to one of the oldest Moroccan brotherhoods in the city of Essaouira, built upon the founding myth of Gnaoua, the divine Baraka of Sidna Bilal, the slave freed by the prophet Sidna Mohammed, who made him the first muezzin of Islam. This sanctuary has played a very important role in the preservation and perpetuation of Gnaoui rite and ritual in both processional and confessional aspects. Performing artists: Maâlems Abdelkader Amlil, Seddik Laarch, Said Borqi, Abdellah Moukit.



DAR SOURI, THE HOUSE OF CONFLUENCE

Located at the heart of a magnificent 19th century riad in the Kasbah El Jadida district, Dar Souiri is a space dedicated to the city's living artistic, musical, and literary culture. The space is also a place for exchange, encounter and discussion, as well as the headquarters of the Essaouira-Mogador Association. Dar Souiri welcomes several concerts during the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival, as well as other cultural activities throughout the year. Performing artists: Maâlems Abderrahim Oughessal, Abdenbi El Guedari, Hamid Dkaki, Mokhtar Guinea, Abdellah Akharaz, Hossam Gania.



BAYT DAKIRA, RESTORED MEMORY

Absolutely one of its kind in the Mediterranean region and the Islamic world, Bayt Dakira bears witness to the Essaouira's Judeo-Muslim past, and the exceptional destiny of the Jews of Mogador, their profound and benevolent relationships with Muslim populations. An historic and spiritual space, located within a 19th century building typical of Souiri architecture. Performing artists: Maâlems Abdellah El Hommadi, Rachid Ladhass, Ahmed Baalil, Said Boulhimas, Said Tahlaoui, Hamid El Hadri

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MOROCCO • SPAIN • PORTUGAL

A HISTORY THAT LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

JUNE 28-29, 2024 ESSAOUIRA

In alignment with its mission to encourage dialogue and exchange, and in parallel to the concert series, the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival has always sought to create spaces for discussion and debate. Created in 2012, the Human Rights Forum has quickly become one of the highlights of the Festival. Each year the Forum invites researchers, politicians, artists and civil society leaders to come together to debate topical issues in total freedom.

Organized in partnership with the National Human Rights Council and later with the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad, the Forum has addressed diverse themes over the course of 10 editions, including: culture and youth; Africa, its future, its women creators and entrepreneurs, and its diasporas; creativity and cultural policy in the digital age; the equality imperative; and the power of culture against the culture of violence, among others.

Leading figures have participated in the Forum, such as: Leila Shahid (Palestine), Oumou Sangaré (Mali), Edwy Plenel (France), Marco Martiniello (Belgium), Minino Garay (Argentina), Patrick Boucheron (France), Ali Benmakhlouf and Mohamed Tozy (Morocco), Yacouba Konaté (Ivory Coast), Laure Adler (France), Maïmouna N'diaye (Guinea), Mahi Binebine (Morocco), Kamel Jendoubi (Tunisia), Aomar Boum (Morocco-US), and more.

The 11th edition of the Human Rights Forum of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira will take place next June 28-29, under the theme of “Morocco – Spain – Portugal: a history that looks to the future.”

In 2030, less than six years from now, Morocco, Spain and Portugal will jointly organize football's World Cup. This shared candidacy bears witness to continually developing political relationships and economic relationships that grow stronger every day: Spain, for example, is and has been Morocco's principal trading partner for over ten years. This joint World Cup is also the fruit of increasingly varied and significant human relationships, as reflected in the numbers of Moroccan tourists (nearly one million per year) who travel to the Iberian Peninsula as well as Moroccan migrants in both nations. On this level, the three governments seem optimistic about the future, and intend to develop agreements concerning issues such as circular migration.

The three neighbouring countries know each other well; indeed, they share a thousand year-old history filled with varied yet constant human, economic, and cultural exchanges. This shared history has nonetheless seen its share of friction and conflict, even armed conflict, as well as tensions of all kinds. Though their neighbours' influence remains strong in all three nations, the effects of this long history are real and misconceptions persist. Public opinion, so to speak, is not definitively appeased.

In this context, the strengthening of economic and political relations between Morocco, Spain and Portugal as well as the joint organization of the 2030 World Cup constitute real advances and assured opportunities. But the challenges facing the three nations have changed over time, requiring even more mutual cooperation, comprehension, and respect.

What effects might this joint organization of the 2030 World Cup have on the future relations between the three countries? What role will there be for civil society, for intellectuals, artists and athletes? How will modes of mobility between the nations evolve? And in what way will each of these diasporas speak of exile, community, and country?



ROUND TABLE 1

1000 years of history, what do we carry within us?

Muslims have been present on the Iberian Peninsula since the 9th century. The Portuguese and Spanish presence would later play a role in shaping the contours of contemporary Morocco. Heritage, culture, traditions...what parts of this history do we carry within us, on both shores of the Mediterranean Sea? How does this history contribute to shaping who we are today, and influence perceptions of our neighbours, whether next-door or across the sea? This round table will also decipher elements of recent and contemporary history, built upon crises and tensions as well as major accomplishments.

ROUND TABLE 3

Sport, art, and culture ... Fatum Nostrum (Our common destiny)

And finally, what if the tunnel connecting Morocco (and Africa) to Spain (and Europe) began to resemble this shared organization of the World Cup? And if, in the end, the appeasement and serene development of these relationships were the work of athletes, artists, and intellectuals from both sides of the Mediterranean?

ROUND TABLE 2

Human mobility, economy, diasporas ... neighbouring histories

Over approximately 1000 years, the flows between the three nations have never ebbed. Whether conquerors (centuries ago), migrants, intellectuals, merchandise or cultural productions, the Mediterranean bears witness to these exchanges and crossings. This mobility should be considered in both directions. And there is yet another new aspect to the flux: the mobility of students, skills, capital, knowledge, tourists, and more. What has changed in the modes of mobility between these three countries? How can their bonds grow stronger? What new countenance will they present in the future?

ROUND TABLE 4

The Mediterranean ... a border or junction between Africa and Europe?

How can we strengthen connections, making them more resistant to crises, to future changes? How can we see the same way forward, and privilege shared interests? What effects will the 2030 World Cup organization ultimately have upon relations between Morocco and the European Union, between Africa and the European Union? And what will be the future state of equilibrium between the Mediterranean and Morocco's Atlantic vision?

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

Abdallah Saaf, Writer

Anouar Majid, Editor in chief of Tingis and English professor at the University of New England, USA

El Arbi El Harti, Writer, playwright, and professor

Farida Benlyazid, Producer, film director and screenwriter

Ivan Martin, Adjunct Professor at Universit  Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona, Spain) and Universit  Mohammed VI Polytechnique (UM6P)

Mohamed El Morabet, Writer and translator

Mohamed Haidour, Unionist, Confederation of Workers' Commissions, specialised in immigration and development cooperation

Muriel Nieves, Writer

Nadia Hafid, Book and comic book illustrator

Oumama Aouad, PhD and scholar of Iberian and Iberian-American literature, former ambassador of H.M. the King to Peru and to Panama

Youssef El Maimouni, Writer and educator, specialist in social issues

THE TALKING TREE

In every village in Africa, there is a space dedicated to meeting, exchange, and the transmission of knowledge. In the shadow of the Talking Tree, this traditional meeting place, people gather to speak of social life, village concerns, politics. It is this spirit - which corresponds so clearly with the Festival's philosophy - that we seek to recreate and which has over the years become one of the highlights of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival. A relaxed space for discussion where artists, musicians, journalists and festivalgoers join in an artistic conversation. Located at the heart of the medina on the terrace of the Institut Français, the Talking Tree offers a pleasant interlude between concerts, when artists, cultural advocates, Gnaoua and musicians come together to share and exchange freely with festivalgoers. The is animated every year by its founder, Emmanuelle Honorin, journalist and world music expert for Geo magazine.



OFF IN THE CITY THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES

Being in Essaouira during the Festival is learning to experience a truly unique and immersive experience for three whole days. Three days of communion, celebration, and encounters in an atmosphere of benevolence and conviviality. Mingling with joyful crowds in the city's narrow streets, from discussion panels at the Forum, to the rhythms of mainstage performances, to spiritual lila concerts. At the heart of this festive vibe that takes over the stages and the city itself, the Off Festival programme adds a note of colour and swing to your afternoons. Find your way to Clock Square, El Khaima Square, or La Sqala at 5:30pm to enjoy the lively rhythms of the Issaoua of Essaouira, the power of drums and qraqebs from the Ganga of Tinghir, the intricate choreographies of the Ahwaches of Essaouira, the frenzied rhythms of Ilê Aiyê, or the aesthetic strength of La Compagnie Dumanlé.

THE FESTIVAL WORKSHOPS

The Gnaoua Festival is a place for learning, sharing, and opening. Organised outside of concert events, workshops offer the public an opportunity to take advantage of the knowledge of invited artists. Set up as spontaneous ateliers, these workshops make exchange happen, bringing together artists and the public.



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BIOGRAPHIES
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ARTISTS OF THE 25TH EDITION

WORLD ARTISTS



ABLAYE CISSOKO & CORDABA

Based in Saint-Louis in Senegal, Ablaye Cissoko is a Mandingo griot, one of the great virtuosos of the kora. This superb musician has performed for many years in Africa, Europe and the rest of the world. His mastery of the instrument is a prodigious demonstration of musicality and generosity, so much so that he has shared the stage with international heavyweights such as François Jeanneau, Majid Bekkas, Richard Galliano, Eduardo Egüez, Eric Bibb, Constantinople & Kiya Tabassian, Omar Pene, Cheikh Tidiane Seck, Simon Goubertou, and Randy Weston (at the St Louis Jazz Festival). With his limpid, modern play complimented by an enveloping voice and serene lyrics, Ablaye Cissoko is part of a new generation of Senegalese artists who represent the intersection of Mandingo tradition and contemporary musical creation. Ablaye Cissoko is accustomed to performing world music, Jazz and even classical or baroque, and is recognised as one of the finest kora players in the world. Since the release of his first album *Diam* in 2003, he has performed on every continent, in diverse musical genres. His 2009 album *Sira* is the result of an encounter with New York-based German trumpeter Volker Goetze. Both men combine modernity and tradition, Jazz and African music, in an album steeped in purity.



ALUNE WADE

Senegalese bass virtuoso, composer and singer Alune Wade is celebrated throughout the world of Jazz and Afrobeat as a «super-talent» (DeutschlandfunkKultur, 2022). Born in 1978 in Dakar, Alune Wade was trained in classical piano by his father, a symphony conductor. At the age of 13, he began to play the bass in local groups, recording in a friend's music studio at 15. Three years later, Alune Wade auditioned for Ismaël Lô, one of the most respected musicians on the African continent, with whom he would play for eight years. Since then, the artist's career has taken a remarkable path, leading him to collaborate with many international artists. He was personally selected by Marcus Miller in 2015 to contribute to his album *Afrodeezia*. He has also collaborated with an impressive list of contemporary music legends like Salif Keita, Oumou Sangaré, Bobby McFerrin, Joe Zawinul, Fatoumata Diawara, Paco Sery, Bela Fleck, Cheick Tidiane Seck, Deep Forest, and Gregory Porter. His 5th album, *Sultan* (Enja & Yellow Bird, 2022), incarnates multiculturalism, blending unique rhythms shaped by Afrobeat, the melodic maqams of Arab music, and the sincere essence of Jazz.



BCUC

Between African music, soul, and punk rock, the rare intensity of the South African collective BCUC (Buntu Continua Uhuru Consciousness) inundates the world in good vibes. They call their style «Africangugu»; a concentration of percussion, traditional Zulu and Sotho songs, and a slogan that says it all: «For the people, by the people, and with the people.» After a modest start of rehearsals in a maritime container a few doors down from the church where Desmond Tutu would preach, BCUC quickly rose to celebrity, playing on the world's greatest stages: Glastonbury West Holts, Roskilde, Afropunk Brooklyn, Dour, Worldwide, Womad, Fusion, Sziget, FMM Sines, Beaches Brew, Boomtown, Couleur Café. In 2023, they won the prestigious Womex Artist Award - a distinction usually reserved for more mature artists - in recognition of their work ethic and prodigious stage performances. Heirs to legendary musicians such as Philip «Malombo», Tabane and Batsumi, they replace the Jazz sounds of the 1970s and 1980 with hip-hop influences and punk rock energy. Africa as seen by the BCUC is not a place of poverty, but rich in traditions, rituals, and beliefs.



BOKANTÉ

The term “Bokanté” means exchange in Creole, the mother tongue spoken by Malika Tirolien, who grew up on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. In 2013, while recoding Snarky Puppy’s first Family Dinner, Michael League invited the young singer, now based in Quebec. She dropped her sun-soaked, Jazz and soul-filled voice on the songs “I’m Not the One” and “Sew”. The accomplices have now joined up in Bokanté, amid a Snarky Puppy contingent that includes the group’s two guitarists: Chris McQueen and Bob Lanzetti. They are joined by percussion legend Jamey Haddad (Paul Simon, Sting), lap-steel guitar virtuoso Roosevelt Collier (Lee Boys, Karl Denson), and percussionists André Ferrari (Väsen) and Keita Ogawa (Banda Magda, Yo-Yo Ma). An atypical instrumentation that intertwines sounds from the desert and the delta, blues and Caribbean Kaladja, a diverse ensemble that is rich in melody and groove. Singing both in Creole and in French, Tirolien’s lyrics echo the struggles we face in today’s world - racism, refugee crises, a planet in agony, and indifference to human suffering.



BUIKA

María Concepción Balboa Buika, known as Buika, is a Spanish singer of Equato-Guinean origin, born in 1972 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. She grew up among Romanies, developing a voice with the raspy inflections of flamenco, copla, Jazz, soul, and funk. She is, according to her record label Warner Music Spain, one of most singular singers on today’s Spanish music panorama. During a trip to London, she was invited to a Pat Metheny concert. Since then, her life has taken a major turn. She began to perform with local groups. In 2005, this Jazzwoman released her first album, simply titled Buika. In 2006, she released Mi Niña Lola, which went on to win two Grammys and a certified gold award in Spain. She came back two years later with Niña de Fuego. Between soul, Jazz, and flamenco, Buika stands out with her passionate interpretations and a singular voice; a voice that conveys lived experiences. Buika has worked with influential musicians, producers and DJs such as Carlos Santana, Rick Rubin, Cindy Blackman, Seal, as well as the renowned Spanish film director Pedro Almodóvar, to name a few.



COMPAGNIE DUMANLÉ

Created in 2012, La Compagnie Dumanlé is an artistic ensemble of actors, dancers and musicians, most of whom were trained at the Institut National Supérieur des Arts et de l’Action Culturelle (INSAAC) in Ivory Coast. The company aims to provide collectives and individuals with the means to communicate through the performing arts, and works on choreographic productions inspired by Ivorian heritage culture. Under the direction of Ivorian choreographer Hermann Nikoko, this organisation has distinguished itself with a capacity to bring authentic patrimonial values to the international stage. Combining song, percussion, and movement, the Compagnie Dumanlé delivers a positive energy that soothes the soul of its audience. The company won the 19th edition of the national festival “Vacances Culture”, organised by the Ministry of Culture and Francophony, and later participated in the International Dance Festival in Ouagadougou with the “Blahon” (panther men) project. Other shows include “Mask Encounter” in Beijing and “Komian World” at Journées Théâtrales in Carthage, as well as an extended tout in Germany and Holland in 2022.



GUIMBA KOUYATÉ

Djeli master and prodigy Guimba Kouyaté descends from a prestigious lineage of Malian djelis. Born in France, he grew up between Paris and Bamako, forging his artistic identity at the crossroads of cultures. He has established his reputation as an eclectic artist: virtuoso guitarist, ngoni player, composer, producer, and musical director.

Nurtured by a rich musical tradition, with his ngoni master grandfather Djéli Baba Sissoko and parents Mamaye Kouyaté (great storyteller and guitar and ngoni virtuoso) and Mah Damba (renowned diva of Mali), he does not hesitate to experiment with a diverse range of genres such as pop, electro, rock, jazz, or folk. In this way, he has honed his gift of fusing tradition and modernity.

He began to accompany his mother to traditional ceremonies (sumus) and on tour from the age of 12, thus opening the path to collaborations with icons and major international artists such as Cheick Tidiane Seck, Toumani Diabaté, Oumou Sangaré, Salif Keita, St Germain, Jacob Collier, Damon Albarn, Tony Allen, Sampha, and many others.

Guimba Kouyaté is considered a “passeur” artist, or maestro, making the connection between the West African music scenes and its diaspora, and playing an essential role in intergenerational transmission and dialogue. He incarnates the living link between the timeless authenticity of djeli music and avant-garde artistic creation, with an exceptional career of performance and collaborations that bear witness to the remarkable influence he exerts upon the global music scene, making him a true ambassador of Malian culture around the world

“He is probably the best guitarist I have heard in recent years.” - Brian Eno



ILÊ AIYÊ

The first 100% Afro percussion group from Salvador, at the origin of “samba-reggae”, Ilê Aiyê has revolutionised Bahian music and “re-Africanised” its carnival. This mythical collective has become a source of inspiration for many of Brazil’s Afro-descendants, like godfathers of Brazilian music Gilberto Gil, Margareth Menezes, and Carlinhos Brown. In the early 1970s, two young people from the Curuzu-Liberdade district named Vovô and Apolônio formed an initiative that spoke of an Afro-Brazilian renaissance, echoing Black Power in the US. Their idols were James Brown and Bob Marley, and they felt an urgency to reaffirm Black consciousness through cultural manifestations such as candomblé, afoxé (its musical version), and capoeira, silenced for too long by figures of white authority. From recording Gilberto Gil on one of their songs (on the album Refavela), to Caetano Veloso’s tribute-song to them, the prodigious reputation Ilê Aiyê has grown steadily over time. Five decades after their first days, the collective has grown to include 3000 members. Today, Ilê Aiyê is considered “cultural heritage of humanity”, and continues to be a source of inspiration for the diaspora and for generations to come.



JON GRANDCAMP

Jon Grandcamp grew up in an environment of artistic inclination, surrounded by his father’s vinyls and his mother’s paintings. He was drawn to the world of rhythm and percussion as a child. At the age of 9, Jon took his first drum classes the percussion master Denis Dionne, with whom he worked intensely for 7 years, forging a solid background in drums as well as classical percussion. Jon left school at 16 to devote his time to music.

He demonstrated curiosity toward a variety of traditional forms of music (Afro-Cuban music, West and Central African music, flamenco, and music from the Arab world), which would greatly influence his career choices and current projects. Jon collaborated with many artists, such as Charles Pasi, Oumou Sangaré, Manu Dibango, Eric Serra, Pierce Faccini, Aziz Sahmaoui, and Etienne M’Bappé, among others. As an accomplished rhythmist and inspired composer, Jon works with “the body” to explore different sound matter, from blues to rock, groove to African roots, by way of world music.



KIKE PERDOMO

Musician, producer, arranger, sound engineer, educator and composer Kike Perdomo received a scholarship to attend Berklee School of Music (Boston) in 1989, and later earned a degree in Jazz at the ESMUC school of music (Barcelona, Spain). He met up and studied with musicians like Luis Vecchio, Bill Evans (sax), Eric Marienthal, and Dave Schnitter. In the field of classical music, he studied at the Conservatorio Superior de Canarias under the direction of Maximiano Vera. In parallel to his Jazz career, he has collaborated with great Spanish artists such as Luz Casal, Miguel Rios and Joaquin Sabina, with whom he toured across Spain and most of Latin America. On the international scene, he has played, collaborated and recorded with top tier musicians such as Richard Bona, Bill Evans, Tom Coster, Rocky Bryant, Jon Herrington, Pedro Iturralde, Jim Beard, Chuck Loeb, Dick Oatts, Joe Magnarelli, Karim Ziad, and finally «Big Band de Canarias», the group he founded and continues to conduct to this day.



LABESS

The group Labess found its musical identity on the road to exile. Plural, free, and alive, with the combined influence of artist Nedjim Bouizzoul’s Algerian roots and global wanderings. Labess is a journey that begins in Algiers, in the working-class district of Hussein-Dey. Nedjim Bouizzoul grew up amid the chaâbi of his “big brother” musicians, seeking his own voice and his own vocation. A calling echoed in his heart for the guitar, and for North America. He emigrated to Canada with his mother and sisters at the age of 18. There he would play in the street or in the metro. He considers himself a self-taught street musician, and would soon discover café concerts, and his first musical collaborations. Then came Labess, the name of his group and their first album (2007), Arabic for “everything is ok”. Their music is open to the world’s winds: sounds from Africa, Gypsy rumba, flamenco... The voice rises in several languages: Algerian Arabic dialect, Spanish, French. Deep, committed. Nedjim spent two years in Colombia. 2021 saw the release of 4th album Yemma, a tribute to his mother who sacrificed everything to give him the chance to fly. The journey continues, and Labess brings joy to concert halls in North Africa and across the world. He now lives in France.



@Javierenriquefdez

NINO DE LOS REYES & SERGIO MARTINEZ

The Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival proposes one of the most engaged duos of the Flamenco Jazz universe, bringing together Nino de Los Reyes and Sergio Martinez. This is not the first time these two have shared a stage. Nino is a rising star of contemporary flamenco, the first dancer to receive a Grammy Award for Best Latin Jazz Album with Antidote, in collaboration with legendary jazz artist Chick Corea. Corea also invited him to participate in his 75th birthday presentation at the Blue Note Club and Madison Square Garden in New York. Nino has shared the stage with Joaquin Grilo, Milagros Mengibar, Antonio Reyes and his brother Isaac De Los Reyes. He also collaborated with Paul Simon on his Stranger to Stranger album. As for Sergio, he is one of today's most internationally-recognised Spanish percussionists. This versatile artist has developed his career through collaboration with great figures from the global scene, artists such as Paul Simon, Al Di Meola, John Patitucci, Joe Lovano, and Terri Lyne Carrington. He has performed with his mentors - Danilo Pérez, Jamey Haddad and Jose Antonio Galicia - on the best jazz stages and has participated in the major festivals around the world.



SAINT LEVANT

Marwan Abdelhamid, AKA Saint Levant, was born in Jerusalem to a French-Algerian mother and Serbian-Palestinian father during the second Intifada. He spent 10 years growing up in Gaza, to which he would dedicate his first EP From Gaza with Love. In 2007, Marwan and his family were forced to flee to Jordan, where he would live out the remainder of his youth until moving to Los Angeles. Drawing inspiration from his origins with influences that combine traditional Arabic music, R&B and hip-hop, the young artist embraces the plurality of his own cultural heritage, the Arab community worldwide and the Palestinian struggle. His songs - written in Arabic, French, and English - have captivated a global audience with their international appeal. His latest release, Deira, evokes a hotel overlooking the sea in Al-Rimal, Gaza City, designed and operated by his architect/entrepreneur father. Hotel Deira was one of the most beautiful structures in the city and the place where Marwan called home as a child - it has since been destroyed by IDF bombings over recent months.



SIMON SHAHEEN

Palestinian artist Simon Shaheen excels on the violin as well as the 'oud, stunning audiences as he passes easily from traditional Arab sounds to Jazz and classical Western styles. His searing technique, melodic ingenuity and unequalled grace have earned him international fame. Among his many distinctions, Shaheen received the prestigious National Heritage Award at the White House. He is a professor of music at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and one of the most significant musicians, singers and composers of Arab music of his generation. Born in the village of Tarshiha in Galilee, Shaheen grew up surrounded by music. His father, Hikmat Shaheen, was a professor of music and master of the 'oud. He began to play at the age of four, and began to study violin at the Haifa's classical Western music Conservatory a year later. Since the mid-1990s, Shaheen has focused on Qantara. This group, whose name means "arch" in Arabic, sums up Shaheen's vision of an unbridled fusion of Arab music, Jazz, and classical Western and latino-American music, forming a perfect alchemy that allows music to cross the borders of genres and geography.



THE BRECKER BROTHERS BAND REUNION

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, trumpeter Randy Brecker and his younger brother saxophonist Michael Brecker opened a pathway to musical reinvention with a mix of sophisticated Jazz harmonies and fired-up solos with stunning funk grooves and a rock-like energy. On the strength of their eponymous first album in 1975 and the subsequent series of hit albums - Back To Back (1976), Don't Stop The Music (1977), Heavy Metal Be-Bop (1978), Détente (1980) and Straphangin' (1981) - these heavyweights of funk fusion known as the Brecker Brothers would define a new sub-genre of Jazz, clearing the way for a young generation of musicians. After the Brecker Brothers broke up in 1982, Randy went on to record and tour with Jaco Pastorius's big band, Word Of Mouth. In 2001, Randy reconnected with his brother Michael for a European tour, performing an acoustic version of the Brecker Bros, and promoting his own album Hangin' In the City. Michael died on January 13, 2007. Four years later, while Randy was putting together a group to perform at the Blue Note in New York, he realised that all the musicians he had contacted had each played in different editions of the Brecker Brothers Band. In tribute to Michael, he named the group The Brecker Brothers Band Reunion.

MOROCCAN ARTISTS



AITA MON AMOUR

Aita Mon Amour is a duo composed of Widad Mjama and KhalilEPI. This contemporary, electronic musical project explores a rich tradition that dates back to the 12th century: La Aita is a popular music genre rooted in the Moroccan countryside, sung by Chikhates, women-singers and guardians of traditions. Widad Mjama is one of the first rappers in Morocco. She trained at the Casablanca Conservatory in classical dance and the dramatic arts, and learned her way around the stage on Morocco's underground scene with major figures from the world of hip-hop. She founded N3rdistan with Walid Ben Selim, with who she toured the world together and shared their love of poetry. Tunisian-born producer, composer, and multi-instrumentalist Khalil EPI is classically-trained (Arab music and Jazz), and learned heritage popular and traditional sounds from different cultures with his father, curator of Tunisia's national sound archives. Aita Mon Amour has exchanged onstage and in the recording studio with N3rdistan, Deena Abdelwahed, Arabstazy, and Ammar 808, and collaborated with contemporary dance and opera projects.



HBS TRUMPET

Hamza Bennani Smires (HBS) is a Moroccan trumpeter and composer. His musical world lies somewhere near the intersection of Miles Davis and Rabih Abou Khalil.

This Jazz and world music-inspired artist studied the classical trumpet with Jean Louis Masson, working in the French tradition introduced by Robert Pichereau. Impressed by the magic of Jazz, Hamza enrolled at the IMEP (International Music Educators of Paris), where he followed a free curriculum of Jazz/modern music, composition, and arrangement. Between compositions for images, live performances and concerts, he is constantly seeking purity of sound, and melodies guide his own artistic pursuits. Hamza has initiated original projects such as “les douces folies de Satie” (Satie’s sweet follies) at the Festival Printemps musical des Alizés in 2019, as well as the HBS Moderntet, the artist’s brand-new project that combines Jazz and traditional Moroccan music. His highly-anticipated first album is expected to be released in summer 2024.



ISSAM KAMAL & MAZAGAN

The emblematic group of today’s Maghreb music scene, Issam Kamal & Mazagan have revolutionised popular Moroccan music with the initiation of “Chaâbi-Groove”: an explosive blend of traditional song with rock sounds. The group has toured the world since 2008, winning over increasingly large audiences (Canada, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, France, Belgium, Spain, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Senegal, Cape Verde, Mauritania, UAE) and collaborated with major artists such as Khaled, RedOne, Alpha Blondy, Maher Zain, and Outlandish. They are the perfect ambassadors of Morocco’s millennial culture, rooted in Africa and open to the world. Issam Kamal & Mazagan were decorated by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in recognition of their efforts to modernise the Kingdom’s musical heritage.



MEHDI CHAÏB

Mehdi Chaïb studied saxophone at conservatory from the age of 8. He discovered Jazz and improvisation at 17, and moved to Paris in 2000 to study at the American School of Modern Music, and join two musicians' collectives: Tarace Boulba and Zetlab. His 2003-2008 African tour (Mali, Senegal, Morocco, Comoros) represented a major development in terms of expression. Mehdi has participated on many album, creation and tour projects around the world, with artists such as Naïssam Jalal, Fanfarai Big Band, Bab L'bluz, Jazz Liberatorz, Hamid Khan, Artefact, Doudou N'Diaye Rose, and more. He has also collaborated with Gnaoua master musicians Hamid El Kasri, Hassan Boussou, Karim Ziad, Amazigh Kateb, and Mehdi Nassouli, among others. Mehdi is always on the lookout for sounds from different continents, percussions, songs, and complex metres, and he enjoys the pleasure of sharing and listening. For the past 10 years he has undertaken the transmission of both oral tradition and written music, training amateur and young professional in internships and masterclasses.



MEHDI NASSOULI

Mehdi Nassouli is exceptionally gifted, talented and passionate, and one of the most eclectic artists of his generation. Born in Taroudant, Mehdi soaked up the town's brotherhood traditions at an early age, taking its rhythms to heart. His first school was his family, who introduced him to Gnaoua culture, rhythms and trances, but his musical curiosity took him to the school of Malhoune. He also sought initiation into the ancestral art form of Deqqa, part of Roudani culture, where he learned from several different maâlems. He would go on to spend years with other Gnaoua schools, guided and supported in his apprenticeship by the great Maâlems of Morocco (Abdelkbir Merchane, Mustapha Baqbou, Abdeslam Alikkane). He has since performed on stages around the world in the context of artistic residencies and international collaborations. He has been invited to share the stage and tour with many world-renowned artists such as Titi Robin, with whom he toured for 8 years, Benjamin Tobkin, Omar Sosa, Andy Emler, Karim Ziad, Hindi Zahra, Para one, Nneka, Justin Adams, and Alpha Blondy. Following the release of his first album Taroudant, Mehdi is currently working on a second album with special guests.



MEHDI QAMOUM

Mehdi Qamoum (AKA MediCament) is a young artist from Agadir, born in 1991. His stage name alludes to the capacity of Gnaoua music to heal souls through its powerful spiritual energy. Mehdi Qamoum is a singer, author/composer and musician, with roots in Gnaoua music and a love of World Music. In 2006 he founded his first traditional music group, «Ouled Bambara», then went on to collaborate with Jazzawiya, the platform that has launched artists such as Mehdi Nasouli, Foulane Bouhsine, and Hicham Issawi, among others. Mehdi has collaborated with a variety of artists and is currently developing his own personal project, based on Moroccan culture (Gnaoua, Houara, Isemgan, Reggada, Daqqamerrakchiya) as well as African sounds and harmonies mixed with more modern tones of rock and the blues. As a master of the guembri, Mehdi has created his own 4-string electric version, and has participated in national festivals such L'Boulevard in Casablanca, Timitar in Agadir, and the Mama Africa festival in Merzouga. On the international level, he has performed at the N'Sangu NdjiNdji festival in Congo and the OneBeat residency in the US.



RHANI KRIJA

Genius percussionist Rhani Krija was born in Essaouira, at the heart of Gnaoua culture. During his teen years, he began to listen to traditional musical styles from North Africa, which formed the base of his current musical style. Recognised for his knowledge and ability to play authentic Andalusian, Arab, African and Latin American rhythms, Rhani has become a highly sought-after percussionist on the international scene.

Rhani is based in Germany, where he spent the two past years recording samples of high-quality percussion for major record labels as well as performing around the world. Rhani has performed, recorded and toured with legends that include: Sting, Dominic Miller, Herbie Hancock, Al Di Meola, Plácido Domingo, Peter Gabriel, WDR Big Band, SWR Big Band, Annie Lennox, Prince, Klaus Doldinger, Vince Mendoza, BAP, Xavier Naidoo, Sarah Connor, Herbert Grönemeyer, EMEL, Hindi Zahra, OUM, Max Mutzke, Martin Grubinger, Royal Symphony Orchestra of London, WDR Orchestra, ZüricherKammerorchester, and many more.

GNAOUA MAÂLEMS



ABDELAZIZ SOUDANI

Born in 1960 in Essaouira, Abdelaziz Soudani is the third of renowned Maâlem Hajoub Goubani's six children. He followed in his father's footsteps and began to train at a very young age. In 1993, he participated in the creation of the Tyour Gnaoua group with Abdeslam Alikkane. He travelled all around the world, performing in many festivals (Festival des Vieilles Charrues in France, Rio de Janeiro Festival in Brazil), until 2002, when he met guitarist Olivier Owen, with whom he founded Gnawa Family X, a fusion group of Gnaoua and electronic music. Abdelaziz Soudani has developed a unique style by using both the guembri's strings and skin equally, which gives a raw, forceful sound. He continues to train and initiate most young musicians of Essaouira into the art of Gnaoua, in music and in dance.



ABDELKADER AMLIL

Rabat native Abdelkader Amlil, or Maâlem Abdelkader, is a singer, musician and master of the Gnaoua arts. He is considered to be a guembri virtuoso, and has made a name for himself alongside great masters such as Oulad Abdenbi and H'mida Boussou. He has participated in multiple national and international events, including the "Sons d'hiver" festival in Paris. Leading his own troupe, Maâlem Abdelkader Amlil has played guembri with the Majid Bekkas group, in Gnaoua Blues musical style. Abdelkader Amlil has been a regular at the Gnaoua and World Music Festival for many years, and has often performed acoustic, intimist and traditional concerts there, during lilas and in fusion.



ABDELKADER HADADA

Tangier native Maâlem Hadada (Abdelkader El Khelify in real life) was always surrounded by Gnaoua culture in his family home in Tangier's medina. Maâlem Hadada learned his craft from the great maâlems of the north: M'Barek Elkasri, Brahim Baha, Tayeb Ouazzani, Abdelkader Zefzaf and Abdoulouahed Stitou. He spent his youth amid these great masters, with whom he learned the spiritual essence of the Tagnaouite. In 1996, he began his collaboration at Maâlem Abdellah El Gourd's Dar Gnawa Tanger. They collaborated on many projects with internationally-known music groups such as Randy Weston, Archie Shep, and others. He participated in several concerts at festivals in the US, UK, Canada, Europe and Africa. In 2007, Maâlem Hadada decided to leave Dar Gnawa to pursue a solo career, and created his own group, "Mlouk Gnawa".



ABDELKEBIR KBIBER

Born in 1946, Abdelkebir Benseloum has performed with many artists, including the B'net Houwariyat group in Marrakech. He has toured abroad (Hollande, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain) and participated in multiple festivals in Morocco: Agadir, Rabat, Marrakech. His participation at the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival is always an opportunity for him to affirm his artistry, whether in acoustic concerts like in 2007, or in unforgettable fusions. Like his performance during the 12th edition in which Reunion Jazz, Brazilian and Moroccan percussion harmonised perfectly with the guembri and crotales, setting the audience alight on Moulay Hassan Square.



ABDELKEBIR MERCHANE

Born in 1951 in Marrakech, Abdelkebir Merchane did not at first seem destined to enter the world of Gnaoua. For his mother, who had undergone eleven miscarriages, he was her miracle child. She entrusted him to the care of a black nanny, who took him with her to lilas. By the age of 9, the Tagnaouite held no secrets for him, thanks to Maâlems El Ayachi, Baqbou, and Mohamed Sam, who initiated him according to tradition. His preferred styles: marsaoui (Essaouira) and marrakchi (Marrakech). He has participated in many international festivals across Europe, the Arab world, and Japan. He currently leads the Oulad Sidi H'mou group.



ABDELLAH AKHARAZ

Steeped in Gnaoua culture since childhood, Maâlem Akharaz received his training from Maâlem Boubker Guinea. After playing with Maâlem Paca, this 100% Souiri continued his musical education with Tyour Gnaoua, under the direction of Maâlem Abdeslam Alikkane. He joined the group to perform in many musical happenings across five continents, over a period of nearly 15 years. In 2010, he created his own troupe. A Festival regular, his shows offer the purest Gnaoua tradition to his audience.



ABDELLAH EL HOMMADI

Born in Marrakech in 1980, Maâlem Abdellah El Hommadi was initiated into the art of Gnaoua at the age of 8 by his grandfather, who brought him to ceremonies and Gnaoua lilas. Abdellah later joined the Maâlem Brahim Osman troupe, where he remained for eight years. This participation offered him the opportunity to perform onstage in European concerts, notably in France, the Netherlands, and Finland. After working for some time with other great maâlems such as Mohamed Koyou, Abdallah created his own group. He has participated in multiple national events such as the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival, the Rose Festival in Kalâat Megouna, and the Nagham Gnaoua Festival in Marrakech.



ABDELLAH MOUAKIT

Maâlem Abdellah Mouakit, born in Taroudant in 1980, learned Gnaoua music at a very early age, accompanying his father and uncle (great Maâlems of their region) to lilas and moussems. Like many of his fellow musicians, Maâlem Abdellah began as a Kouyou with various maâlems such as Maâlem Abderrezak of Fez, Maâlem Ahmed Mellali and the late Maâlem Lahcen Zitoun. He has participated in several international events like the Strasbourg Festival and national ones like the Agdz Festival, the National Festival of Dakka and Rhythms, as well as the 24th edition of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival in 2023.



ABDELMALEK EL KADIRI

Originally from Essaouira, this young thirty-something maâlem began his career in 2000. He apprenticed with several maâlems, including Maâlem Abdellah Guinea and Maâlem Abderrahman Bako Al-Charif Regragui, among others. He received first prize at the first Young Gnaoua Talents Festival in 2007, and has participated in many concerts in Morocco and abroad (Germany, Spain, France, UAE, UK). Maâlem Abdelmalek El Kadiri and his El Kadiri family belong to the Sufi brotherhood, founded in the 11th century by Sheikh Moulay Abd Al Qadir Al-Jilani.



ABDENBI EL GUEDARI

Maâlem Abdenbi El Guedari was born in Marrakech and now lives in Casablanca. He developed his artistic practice under the advice of Maâlem H'mida Boussou. Now that he has earned the title of maâlem, he directs his own group, Sidi Mimoun, and frequently works in Italy, where he recorded an album. His personal style refers to his origins, and his music evokes Gnaoua tradition with Casablanca and Marrakech regional specificities. Abdenbi El Guedari performs regularly at the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival, where he plays in fusion with major international artists, like French guitarist Titi Robin in 2006. In 2009, he caused a sensation playing with Moroccan DJs Unes and Hak'x. Beloved by audiences, Abdenbi returns often to the Festival main stages and in more intimate lila sessions.



ABDERRAHIM OUGHESSAL

The son of Maâlem Abdelkader Oughessal and descendant of one of the great families of Gnaoua, Abderrahim Benthami Oughessal was born in 1956 in Casablanca. He apprenticed with his father, and went on to make his own contribution to the rich history of Gnaoua music. During his musical career, he has played with Abderrahman Paco and Boussou. Abderrahim Benthami Oughessal is the symbol of a new generation of maâlems, taking up the torch with Hicham Merchane, son of Maâlem Abdelkebir Merchane. He is best known for his mastery of the marsaoui style. Maâlem Abderrahim Oughessal has distinguished himself in fusion concerts, notably with American percussionist Andy Narrel as well as banjo and mandolin player Abdenour Djemai.



ABDESLAM ALIKKANE

Maâlem Abdeslam Alikkane is artistic director of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira, as well as one of its founders. As president of the Yerma Gnaoua Association, Alikane has worked tirelessly for the recognition of Gnaoua and to raise awareness of their art in Morocco and around the world. He specialises in “marsaoui” style, and is well-known for his particular mastery of therapeutic practice. Today he is one of the great messengers of Gnaoua art throughout the world, in the company of his Tyour Gnaoua troupe. He has participated in many international festivals, and has played with both Peter Gabriel and Ray Lema, with whom he recorded the Safi album in 2000. With Tyour Gnaoua, he has performed alongside numerous world music and Jazz artists, such as Jaleel Shaw in 2008 and the famous guitarist Sylvain Luc in 2015. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Festival in 2017, Maâlem Alikkane presented a one-of-a-kind concert with his old friend and artist-in-residence Ray Lema. He recently performed at Brazil’s Rock in Rio festival 2020, as well as Troscan in Las Palmas. During the 24th edition of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, Maâlem Alikkane joined the famous guitarist and composer Torsten de Winkel, legendary Sulaiman Hakim on trumpet, and Zouhair Amkas on drums for a fusion of Moroccan-German-Finnish sounds.



AHMED BAALIL

Maâlem Ahmed Baalil is the leader of the Marrakech-based Baalil troupe, composed primarily by members of his own family. He worked for many years with the great Maâlem Sam (real name Mustapha Aberchich). Ahmed Baalil’s performance - alongside his father Mohammed Baalil - in fusion with a traditionnelle South Korean troupe during the 11th edition of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival was warmly applauded by the audience at Moulay Hassan Square. The Baalil troupe has performed many concerts and tours abroad, notably in Denmark, Switzerland, and France.



AHMED BAQBOU

Like other families, Maâlem Ahmed Baqbou is part of these dynasties that have left their mark on the world of Gnaoua. The Baqbous have dominated the Marrakech scene for many years. His uncle, Boujemâa devoted body and soul to the Tagnaouite practice, sharing that passion with his brother Ayachi, who passed it along like mother’s milk to his Mustapha Baqbou and his brother Ahmed. Ahmed Baqbou has worked with great maâlems such as Ba Ahmed Sassa, El Hachimi Ould Mama, Homan Ould El Ataar, Si Mohamed Ould El Fernatchi, and others. His 2008 performance at the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Festival, during a lila concert in the purest Gnaoua tradition at Zaouia Sidna Bilal, offered a truly memorable experience for all who love music.



ASMAA HAMZAOUÏ & BNAT TIMBOUKTOU

Asmaa Hamzaoui has demonstrated courage, audacity and perseverance in the exclusively masculine world of the Tagnaouite, leading the way for the women of Gnaoua. She has become one of the rare ambassadors of Gnaoua art as the leader of Bnat Timbouktou. She was initiated by her father, the great Maâlem Rachid Hamzaoui, learning early on to play the guembri at celebrations at his side. Within her own group, Asmaa remains loyal to traditions, addressing themes such as suffering, and the collective African memory. She joined the line-up of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival in the summer of 2017. Her participation did not go unnoticed, as female guembri players are rare in Morocco, and in the world. During the 24th edition of the Festival, Asmaa Hamzaoui and Bnat Timbouktou delivered a magnificent performance in fusion with Les Amazones d'Afrique, a group composed entirely of divas from the continent. A fitting example of African sisterhood, with a strong dose of rhythm and flair.



BRAHIM EL BELKANI

Born in 1945 in Marrakech, Maâlem Brahim El Belkani is one of the pioneers of Gnaoua fusion, though he is not himself from a Gnaoua family. He grew up in a family of musicians: his father played Dekka music while his mother followed the Dikr (Sufi chants). He was initiated by the master El Mahjoub. Near the age of 18, he was recognised by his peers and received the title of maâlem, as well as his own master's guembri. Maâlem El Belkani was one of the first to fuse his spiritually-charged notes with legends of Jazz, rock, and world music. This venerable maâlem can indeed take credit for the most impressive accomplishments. His anthology performance with Robert Plant and Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin) in 1993 is a magnificent example of musical empathy, opening the way for many musicians. Maâlem Brahim El Belkani also has played with the amazing Randy Weston and Indian legend Ravi Shankar, as well as leading figures of French song such as Jacques Higelin and Claude Nougaro.



HAMID DKAKI

Ahmed Dkaki was born in Fez. This maâlem was the student of Maâlem Sellam, one of the greatest maâlems of Morocco. Maâlam Dkaki and his group are the worthy representatives of the Gnaoua music of Fez. This style, known as “gharbaoui”, is quite different from the music played in the south or central Morocco. Dkaki has performed abroad (France, Belgium, Canada) and at many moussems in Morocco. The people of Essaouira were able to discover his perfect mastery of gharbaoui during a lila concert in 2005 at the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music. He also participated in the Meknes stop of the first tour organised by the Yerma Gnaoua Association.



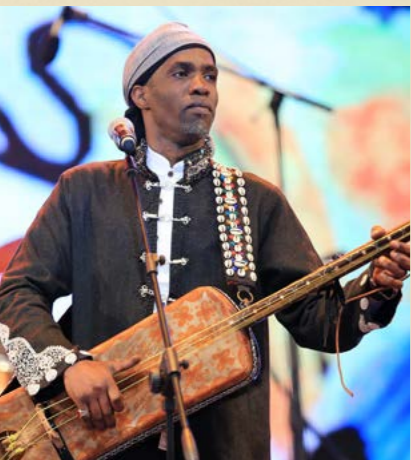
HAMID EL HADRI

Born in Meknes in 1960, Maâlem Hamid El Hadri began his artistic career at the age of 10, playing with great masters including Maâlem Kassem, Maâlem Idriss Ould El Shalha, Maâlem Abdelkader and others. He has participated in many concerts and festivals both inside the country and abroad, notably at the Walili Festival in Ifrane. He also performed at the Meknes show of the Yerma Gnaoua Association's first organised tour.



HAMID EL KASRI

Very popular in Morocco and around the world, Hamid El Kasri is one of the pillars of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival. He is Vice-President of the Yerma Gnaoua Association and also one of the most frequent performers on the Festival stages. His 2004 performance, in fusion with the brilliant late Austrian pianist Joe Zawinul, is etched into the history of the Festival. He has continued these collaborations, notably with Karim Ziad, Hamayun Kahn and Shahin Shahida in 2011. In 2018, he opened the Festival with a fusion alongside the famous Brooklyn-based jam Jazz group, Snarky Puppy. Born in 1961 in Ksar El Kebir in northern Morocco, he began his training at the age of 7 with Maâlems Alouane and Abdelouahed Stitou, though his true passion originated with his grandmother's husband, a former slave from Sudan. With his unique talent he is able to combine Gnaoua rhythms from both northern and southern Morocco. His deep, intense voice makes him one of the leading concert performers in the country. For this edition of the Festival, audiences will meet him again in an exceptional fusion, paired with American-Quebecer-Guadeloupean group, Bokanté.



HASSAN BOUSSOU

Hassan Boussou is the worthy heir to his late father, Maâlem Hmida Boussou. For years he has taken his musical heritage to all corners of the world, either in his traditional group, Boussou Ganga, or with his France-based fusion group, Séwaryé. Maâlem Hassan Boussou is a veteran of the sharpest and most diverse collaborations, with the traditional repertoire that remains his principal source of inspiration, combined with Western sounds and rhythms. Hassan is the most faithful among the faithful, bringing the full generosity of his art to each edition of the Essaouira and World Music Festival. In 2016, he created a fusion with one of the American masters of free Jazz - Jamaaladeen Tacuma - during the 19th edition of the Festival. In March 2017, he received a standing ovation at the Gnaoua Festival Tour concert at the Bataclan in Paris: a 100% Festival fusion with Maâlem Mustapha Baqbou, Hindi Zahra, Mehdi Nassouli, Tony Allen, Karim Ziad, and Titi Robin. For this edition, audiences will meet him once again at the exceptional opening show alongside La Compagnie Dumanlé, Nino de Los Reyes, Sergio Martinez, and Ilé Aiyé.



HOUSSAM GUINEA

Houssam Guinea was born in Marrakech, the son of the great Maâlem Mahmoud Guinea, emblematic figure of Gnaoua music, and heir to a long tradition that goes back to Ba Massoud. Though still very young, Houssam had Gnaoua in his blood, like his uncle Mokhtar and his elder brother Hamza. Open to world rhythms while perfectly mastering Gnaoua tradition, Houssam is gifted with a stunning talent that he owes not only to talent, but even more so to dedication and rigour. In 2012, he played with his father at a concert in Belgium, and the adventure began. He created his own Essaouira-based group in 2014, performing across Morocco as well as in England and the Netherlands.

In 2016, Houssam Guinea performed a tribute concert to his father and to Doudou N'diaye Rose in Essaouira for the Gnaoua Festival, followed by an appearance on Rabat's Mawazine stage for a fusion with Omar Sosa and Mehdi Nassouli. Since then, he continues his Gnaoua maâlem career with great dignity, combining strength and humility, stunning the world with his charismatic style.



ISMAIL RAHIL

Born in Casablanca in 1980, Ismail Rahil grew up in an Issaoua and Gnaoua zaouia where his father, Moqaddem Haj Mustapha Rahil, initiated him into the art of trance when he was just a child. At the age of 14, Rahil played with several local traditional music groups, and eventually mastered the guembri. Ismail began his apprenticeship with the late Maâlem Hmida Boussou, then went on to join Maâlem Abdennabi El Gadari in his troupe, before becoming a maâlem in his own right and with his own troupe, «Oulad Bambra». Since then, Ismail Rahil has continued to tour the world. He performed for a year at Epcot in Disney World, where he shattered all records with over 300 performances. Ismail Rahil's first album, Aicha, proved to be a great hit with world music fans.



MOHAMED BOUMAZZOUGH

Maâlem Mohamed Boumezzough was only twelve years old when he discovered Gnaoua music during the first edition of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira, in 1998. Fascinated by the Gnaoua universe, he began his initiatic journey mastering the qraqebs, dance, and the most secret rituals of the brotherhood. He played with the greatest maâlems from the age of 17, notably with Maâlem Abdellah Guinea and other members of his illustrious family. He also honed his craft with the Soudani clan, and the Baqbou family. Maâlem Mohamed Boumezzough later integrated the Tyour Gnaoua group, led by Maâlem Abdeslam Alikane. His first experience in France-with the Band of Gnawa group-opened the doors to an international career. He received first prize at the Young Talents Festival in Essaouira, and followed up this success with several festivals in Europe and in Morocco. Today Mohamed Boumezzough is considered to be one of the top talents of the new Souiri generation.



MOHAMED KOUYOU

Mohamed Fafy - AKA Maâlem Mohamed Kouyou - was initiated into the Tagnouite arts by his mother, who would take him to lilas and moussems such as Moulay Brahim and Tamesloht. Today he has become one of the most respected members of the brotherhood. After his mother's passing, Maâlem Moulay El Hassan undertook the boy's education, and brought him to Casablanca. Gifted and passionate, he earned the title of maâlem in 1980 in Marrakech. He created his own group and began to perform across Morocco and abroad. The debut of his international career took place in 1984, when he opened the Moroccan Pavilion at Disney World in Florida, where he spent a year in residence followed by tours around the world. For the 24th edition of the Festival, Mohamed Kouyou delivered an explosive opening concert in fusion with the Tambours du Burundi-Amagaba, Jaleel Shaw, and Sanaa Marahati.



MOKHTAR GUINEA

Maâlem Mokhtar Guinea is the worthy heir to the Guinea dynasty; grandson of the late Ba Massaoud, son of that emblematic figure of Gnaoua music, the great Maâlem Boubker, and brother to Mahmoud. He is a major figure on the Gnaoua music scene, and his talent is known well beyond borders. Proud of his origins and well aware of his heritage, young Mokhtar has performed around the entire world with the Guinea family as well as Randy Weston, Bill Laswell, Pharoah Sanders, Carlos Santana and many others. With his group, Gnaoua Soul, Maâlem Mokhtar Guinea brought an innovative style at the edge of Gnaoua spirit to Essaouira. Great Eastern melodies from the Maghreb and vibrations of West African culture. His eponymous album, produced and recorded at studio Planet Essaouira and released in 2020, is composed of twelve songs that draw from Gnaoua tradition in an alliance with sub-Saharan groove and the orientalisng melodies of the Maghreb.



MOULAY EL TAYEB DEHBI

Moulay El Tayeb Dehbi was born in Marrakech in 1979. He was raised in a Gnaoua family, in which has initiated by his father, the maâlem Moulay Abdellatif, and several other Gnaoua masters, including Mohamed Kouyou and Abdelkabar Ben Salloum, Mahjoub Al-Khlamoussi, Zoukari Hassan and Haj Boujamaa. Maâlem Moulay El Tayeb stands out with his perfect mastery of Gnaoua heritage rhythms. This has earned him a spot with many festivals and well-known artists. For the 2018 edition, he performed on the main stage at the Gnaoua and World Music Festival, on Moulay Hassan Square, alongside two other young maâlems from Marrakech.



MUSTAPHA BAQBOU

Born in 1953 in Marrakech, Mustapha Baqbou grew up in a Gnaoua zaouia where his father, Maâlem El Ayachi Baqbou, initiated him into the Tagnaouite arts as a young child. Mustapha Baqbou became an integral participant of the 1970s folk music movement as a member of the famous Jil Jilala group. Time and time again, he has proven his talent in many festivals, renewing his commitment to raising awareness of Gnaoua music both in the traditional sense and in fusion with other musical genres. Known for his exceptional fusions, Maâlem Mustapha Baqbou has performed on many stages, appearing alongside headliners like Marcus Miller, Pat Metheny, Carlos Santana, Louis Bertignac, Eric Legnini, and the French Jazz band Sixun. He has performed on stage in America, Asia, and Europe. Maâlem Mustapha Baqbou is a pioneer in his art, as he is one of the first to create Gnaoua fusions with world music.



SAÏD KOUYOU

Maâlem Saïd Kouyou absorbed Gnaoua culture at his grandmother's knee, in an atmosphere steeped in joy and spirituality. Saïd would often accompany her during spiritual ceremonies or celebrations organised in his native Asilah or elsewhere. At the age of 7, he began to learn to play and sing under the direction of several maâlems, who would make the pilgrimage to the city of Asilah. His artistic and associative career began at the age of 17. In 2008, he founded and directed the Kanawi Association, which still exists today. Kouyou is also one of the first musicians to use solfege rules in Gnaoua music, and entered the Music Conservatory in 2008. Saïd Kouyou has participated in multiple concerts and cultural events in Morocco and abroad.



RACHID LADHASS

Rachid Ladhass (or his actual name, Rachid Fadli) was born in 1969 in Salé. Musician, leader of the Jil Gnaoua Maâlem Mokhtar Guinea, Ladhass learned the Gnaoua arts with great maâlems Maâlems Haj Zitoune Al Mahjoub and Haj Labsir Al Ayachi. He has performed at many festivals in Morocco, such as the Sacred Music Festival in Fez, and abroad, notably in Greece, France, and the UAE.



SAÏD BOULHIMAS

Saïd Boulhimas was born in Mogador. At 8 years of age, he began to attend the instrument workshop of Maâlem Seddik Laarch to learn to turn wood. It was through this contact with musical instruments that he entered the world of Gnaoua. Later, Maâlem Abdellah Guinea took him under his wing and Boulhimas completed his apprenticeship. He is part of this new generation of musicians who combine a deep understanding of traditional Moroccan culture with an ear attuned to rhythms for other places. He caused a sensation at the 2003 edition of the Festival with his exceptional performance with the Jbara et les Mouettes group, as well as his participation in the creation of «Band of Gnawa» in 2007. Loy Ehrlich chose to work with him for his flexibility, creativity, and virtuosity. He was the winner of the 2006 edition of the Young Gnaoua Talents Festival.



SAÏD EL BOURQI

Born in 1956 in Essaouira, Saïd El Bourqi grew up in a family where Gnaoua music was very present. Like his older brother, with whom he shares a passion for this music. As young boys, they participated in rituals and musical rites of the brotherhood. Saïd then became a master of the guembri, travelling to different regions of Morocco to meet with other maâlems. Today he is one of the most respected Gnaoua musicians in Essaouira, and knows the full repertoire of Gnaoua, which he plays in its purest tradition. Saïd El Bourqi has already led multiple tours overseas and has participated many times at the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival. During the 2018 edition, he joined a 7-maâlem tribute concert dedicated to late maâlems of the Essaouira brotherhood, at Zaouia Sidna Bilal.



SAÏD TAHLAOUI

Safi native Maâlem Saïd Tahlaoui was trained by Maâlem Razouk and later crisscrossed Morocco to meet the great Tagnaouite masters throughout the Kingdom. He was trained by, among others, Mahmoud Guinea of Essaouira. Upon his return to Safi, he created his own troupe and performed as much in Morocco as he did internationally.



SEDDIK LAARCH

Festival regular Maâlem Seddik Laarch is a key figure in the Gnaoua galaxy. Thanks to his unmistakable poise, vocal mastery and technique, Seddik Laarch stands among the most appreciated Gnaoua maâlems in the city of tradewinds, and one of the best representatives of the Souiri school. He excels equally well in the creation of the guembri as in its music, passionate about Tagnaouite art and its instruments. Though he lives outside of Morocco, he stood out on the Essaouira Festival stage from its earliest editions. His most recent performance, in 2003, impressed audiences. After multiple performances in Morocco and beyond, he recorded and released his first album in France, in 2003. Since that time, he has participated in many events in Morocco and elsewhere.



TARIQ AIT HMITTI

Tariq Ait Hmitti was born in 1982 in Marrakech and grew up amid a family who embraced the purest Gnaoua traditions. A culture and savoir-faire passed down from father to son. His grandfather and father were known as “M’qedmin Gnaoua”. His artistic path began in 1998, initiated by his father as well as the great Maâlems Mustapha Baqbou and Abdelkbir Merchane. He worked with multiple masters and artists in Morocco and on the international scene. The name of “Hmitti” is a heavy responsibility for the artist, still his heritage does not prevent him from being open to innovation and to other forms of music, through fusions between Gnaoua music and Western rhythms such as electronic music, which he has explored since 2011. Tariq has performed at many festivals and other manifestations in Morocco and in Europe.



YOUNES EL HADIR

Younes El Hadir, born in 1989 in Marrakech, is the son of a well-known Gnaoua maâlem, and has clearly inherited his father’s talent and technical mastery, while adding a healthy dose of fire, innovation, and youth. He began to learn to play the guembri at the age of 8, taking inspiration from maâlems like Ahmed Baqbou, Mohamed Kouyou, and many others. His play is both authentic and modern, and his openness to other musical genres has made Younes one of the most remarkable musicians of the new generation of Gnaoua. Younes has participated many times in various national artistic events such as the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival and others in Marrakech, Tangier, Rabat, and Casablanca. He has also appeared at many international classical and fusion concerts, notably in Dubai, Poland, and France.

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**PROGRAMMATION
QUOTIDIENNE**
”



DAILY PROGRAM

THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2024

OPENING PARADE

6PM – Bab Doukkala

MOULAY HASSAN STAGE

8:30PM – Fusion Maâlem **Hassan Boussou & Maâlem Moulay El Tayeb Dehbi**
with **Compagnie Dumanlé, Nino de Los Reyes, Sergio Martinez & Ilê Aiyêz**
(Morocco/Ivory Coast/Brazil/Spain)

9:30PM – Maâlem **Saïd Kouyou**10:45PM – **Alune Wade** (Senegal)12AM – Fusion Maâlem **Abdelmalek El Kadiri** with **Alune Wade**12:30AM – Maâlem **Abdeslam Alikkane**

DAR SOUIRI

11PM – Maâlem **Hamid Dkaki**12:15AM – Maâlem **Mokhtar Guinea**

BAYT DAKIRA

11PM – Maâlem **Abdellah El Hommadi**12:15AM – Maâlem **Rachid Ladhass**

PROGRAMME GUIDE

FRIDAY 28 JUNE 2024

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

“Morocco, Spain, Portugal: a history that looks to the future”

10AM – 1PM – Hôtel Atlas Essaouira & Spa

TALKING TREE

4 TO 6PM – Institut Français of Essaouira

OFF IN THE CITY

5:30PM – Hmadcha of Essaouira – Place de l’Horloge (Clock Square)

– Issaoua of Essaouira – Place El Khaima

– La Compagnie Dumanlé (Ivory Coast) – La Sqala

BORJ BAB MARRAKECH

7PM – Fusion **Ablaye Cissoko & CordaBa** with **Mehdi Qamoum** (Senegal/Morocco)9PM – Maâlma **Asmaa Hamzaoui & Bnat Timbouktou**

DAILY PROGRAMME GUIDE

FRIDAY 28 JUNE 2024

MOULAY HASSAN STAGE

8PM – Maâlem **Mohamed Boumezzough**

9:30PM – **The Brecker Brothers Band Reunion (USA)**

10:30PM – Fusion Maâlem **Mohamed Kouyou** with **Rhani Krija, Guimba Kouyaté, Jon Grandcamp, Kike Perdomo, Mehdi Chaib & HBS Trumpet (Morocco/Mali/Spain/France)**

11:50PM – **Saint Levant (Palestine)**

BEACH STAGE

8PM – Maâlem **Abdelkebir Kbiber**

9:15PM – Fusion Maâlem **Tariq Aït Hmitti** with **BCUC (Morocco/South Africa)**

10:30PM – Maâlem **Abdelkebir Merchane**

11:50PM – **Issam Kamal & Mazagan**

DAR SOURI

11PM – Maâlem **Abderrahim Oughessal**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Abdenbi El Guedari**

BAYT DAKIRA

11PM – Maâlem **Ahmed Baalil**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Saïd Boulhimas**

ZAOUIA ISSAOUA

11PM – Maâlem **Abdelkader Hadada**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Abdelaziz Soudani**

ZAOUIA SIDNA BLAL

11PM – Maâlem **Seddik Laarch**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Abdelkader Amlil**



DAILY PROGRAMME GUIDE

SATURDAY 29 JUNE 2024

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

“*Morocco, Spain, Portugal: a history that looks to the future*”

10AM – 1PM – **Hôtel Atlas Essaouira & Spa**

TALKING TREE

4 TO 6PM – **Institut Français of Essaouira**

OFF IN THE CITY

5:30PM – **Ahwache of Essaouira –**

Place de l’Horloge (Clock Square)

– **Ganga de Tinghir – Place El Khaima**

– **Ilê Aiyê (Brazil) – La Sqala**

BORJ BAB MARRAKECH

7PM – **Simon Shaheen Quartet (Palestine)**

9PM – Maâlem **Mustapha Baqbou**

MOULAY HASSAN STAGE

8PM – Maâlem **Ismail Rahil**

9:15PM – **Buika (Spain)**

10:30PM – **Bokanté (USA)**

12AM – Maâlem **Hamid El Kasri**

1AM – Fusion Maâlem **Hamid El Kasri** with **Bokanté (Morocco/USA)**

BEACH STAGE

8PM – Maâlem **Younes El Hadir**

9:15PM – **Aïta Mon Amour (Morocco/Tunisia)**

10:30PM – **Mehdi Nassouli**

11:50PM – **Labess (France/Algeria)**

BAYT DAKIRA

11PM – Maâlem **Saïd Tahlaoui**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Hamid El Hadri**

DAR SOURI

11PM – Maâlem **Abdellah Akharaz**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Houssam Gania**

ZAOUIA ISSAOUA

11PM – Maâlem **Brahim El Belkani**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Ahmed Baqbou**

ZAOUIA SIDNA BLAL

11PM – Maâlem **Saïd Bourqi**

12:15AM – Maâlem **Abdelah Mouakit**





27th TO 29th
JUNE 2024
ESSAOUIRA - MOROCCO

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