

ESSAOUIRA Gnaoua

& World Music Festival
25th TO 27th
JUNE 2026

27th EDITION • ESSAOUIRA / MOROCCO

PRODUCED AND ORGANIZED BY



©GNAOUAFESTIVAL f i d X FESTIVAL-GNAOUA.NET

PRESS RELEASE

AT THE GNAOUA FESTIVAL OF ESSAOUIRA, CREATION BRINGS WORLDS INTO DIALOGUE

Casablanca, May 11, 2026. In Essaouira, creation is born from encounter, but never stops there. For nearly three decades, the Gnaoua and World Music Festival has brought together Gnaoua Maâlems and artists from around the world around a shared artistic ambition: to create dialogue between living traditions and contemporary scenes, and to invent new musical forms. Here, nothing is simply juxtaposed. Everything is conceived, developed, and created together.

At the heart of this approach, fusion concerts play a central role. Prepared upstream and shaped through listening and experimentation, they extend onto the stage a genuine creative process. For its 27th edition, the Festival reaffirms this identity more than ever, bringing together artists from jazz, gospel, African music and contemporary scenes around a common language: that of creation..

Opening concert: a score for multiple voices

The Festival will open with a new creation led by **Mehdi Nassouli**, at the crossroads of two UNESCO-recognized cultural heritages: the Gnaoua art form and the Intore dance tradition, represented by the Rwandan troupe **i Buhoro**.

Two exceptional female voices, Moroccan singer **Sara Moullablad** and Indian vocalist **ganavya** form its beating heart, alongside French musician **Sylvain Barou**.

This opening concert continues a series of encounters dedicated to African cultural heritages inscribed on UNESCO lists, following Côte d'Ivoire in 2024 and Senegal in 2025, with Rwanda in the spotlight this year.

An opening that sets the tone: **here, African traditions meet, evolve and unfold.**

The artistic residency: at the heart of the creative process

A true laboratory for experimentation, the artistic residency brings together Gnaoua musicians and international artists for a shared period of research and creation, shaped by exploration, refinement and the development of a common language.

Each edition builds on the previous ones while opening new horizons. This year, an exceptional creation is led by **Maâlem Hassan Boussou** alongside **Alexandre Herichon**, **Mohamed Derouich**, **Jacques Schwarz-Bart**, **Cheikh Ndoye**, **Karim Ziad** and **Meryem Aassid**, a new collective work to be premiered in Essaouira.

Morocco - Ethiopia: a shared musical memory

The encounter between **Maâlem Mohamed Montari** and **Badume's Band & Selamnesh Zéméné** brings into dialogue two African musical traditions with distinct histories yet deep resonances.

Between Gnaoua rhythms and Ethiopian melodies, this creation explores a shared memory of the continent, carried by attentive listening and freedom of interpretation.

Gnaoua & gospel: a shared fervour

With **The Harlem Spirit of Gospel** by **Anthony Morgan** and **Mehdi Qamoum**, two traditions respond to one another: same roots, same breath, same calling: **to gather, transmit and elevate.**

When gospel voices meet the pulsations of the guembri, a shared fervour emerges.

Brazil - Morocco: rhythms in dialogue

Carlinhos Brown returns to Essaouira alongside **Maâlem Hamid El Kasri** for a creation rooted in shared African heritages and rhythms.

Two major figures, a universal language, and one promise: an intense, festive and unrestrained encounter.

A renewed musical dialogue: Asma Lmnawar joins Richard Bona

Renowned bassist **Richard Bona** and his band will welcome Moroccan diva **Asma Lmnawar** for a special collaboration, extending an artistic dialogue already set in motion.


From June 25 to 27, Essaouira once again becomes that singular place where music is transformed through encounter, and where creation is written collectively.

Press Contact

For more information, please contact :

Karima Hachimi - karima@a3communication.net

A3 Communication - 05 22 27 26 03/04

FESTIVAL-GNAOUA.NET | @GnaouaFestival    

PRODUCED AND ORGANIZED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH



Ye. S.M.A. Gnaoua
ASSOCIATION POUR LA PROMOTION
& LA DIFFUSION DU PATRIMOINE GNAOUE