



ESSAOUIRA
Gnaoua
& World Music Festival

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ESSAOUIRA-MOROCCO
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PRESS RELEASE

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A spotlight on virtuoso instrumentalists and stage phenomena at the 25th edition of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira.

The iconic Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira will celebrate 25 years of an absolutely unique artistic and human adventure this June 27-29, in celebration of its first quarter century. As it has for a quarter century, this celebration will gather musicians from all corners of the world to perform alongside Gnaoua Maâlems. The 2024 vintage will include internationally famous artists as well as rising stars on the music scene. .

Alune Wade (Senegal), Aita Mon Amour (Morocco, Tunisia), BCUC (South Africa), Simon Shaheen Quartet (Palestine), and Ablaye Cissoko & Cordaba (Senegal) all share their love of African and Arab musical heritage, which they each reinterpret and reinvent in their own individual way. With repertoires that embrace every kind of genre : afrobeat, aita, jazz, traditional Arab music, soul, and punk rock, ... will play out across the Festival stages this year.

Alune Wade sets African hearts beating with his impressive bass technique, composition skill and voice, creating music that is often described as nomadic jazz, blending Eastern influences and sounds from the continent. A true musical traveller, performing on stages around the world, **Alune Wade** is on a quest to explore the secrets of Gnaoua trance.

Reinterpreting tradition with today's tools, this is the stated mission of the duo **Aita Mon Amour**, who take us on an enchanted journey through secular rural songs, made popular by chikhates. **Aita Mon Amour** revisits popular, feminist songs that are incredibly modern, echoing their fascination for the genre, and sharing this typically Moroccan art form to a digital-based generation.

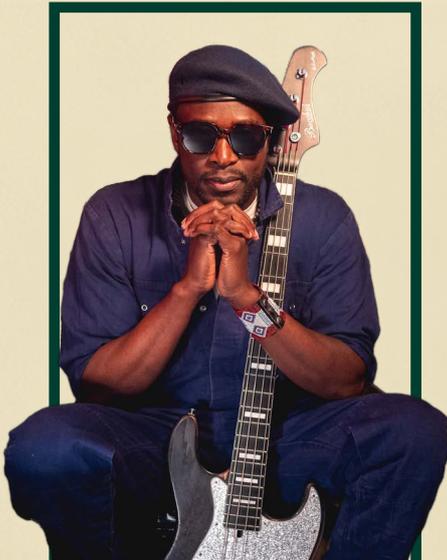
Seeing and hearing **BCUC** in concert is a galvanising, unforgettable experience. The group from Soweto forges powerful energy, blending traditional African music, soul, and punk rock to create a uniquely celebratory trance. Guaranteed to electrify the Festival.

A steadfast and tireless ambassador of traditional Arab music, **Simon Shaheen** is known throughout the world as a virtuoso violinist and exceptional oud player. His brilliant interpretation of Arab music and the combinations he evolves with other traditional music forms invite audiences to discover all the beauty and wonder of Arab culture.

Ablaye Cissoko has multiplied hybrid experiments and musical collaborations for twenty years, and is considered to be one of the great players of the kora, the enchanting instrument from West Africa. As a griot musician, **Ablaye Cissoko** incarnates the intersection between Mandingo tradition and contemporary creation.

Over 400 artists will perform during the **53 concerts** on schedule for the **25th edition of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival**. Over the years, the Festival has evolved into a vital crossroads and musical laboratory that is absolutely unique in the world, thanks to a program that appeals to all audiences, with a focus on audacity and diversity.

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES



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.



Aïta MON AMOUR

Aïta Mon Amour is a duo composed of Widad Mjama and Khalil EPI. This contemporary electronic musical project explores a rich tradition that dates back to the 12th century : Aïta 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 whom she has toured the world and shares a 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. Aïta 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.



**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.



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.



SIMON SHAHEEN QUARTET

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 Haifa’s classical Western music conservatory a year later. Since the

mid-1990-s, 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 Latin American music, forming a perfect alchemy that allows music to cross the borders of genres and geography.

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