



**27th TO 29th
JUNE 2024**

**ESSAOUIRA-MOROCCO
FESTIVAL-GNAOUA.NET**



PRESS RELEASE

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**WHEN MUSIC BECOMES FUSION!
THE GNAOUA AND WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL IS KNOWN
FOR ITS INNOVATIVE CREATIONS - THE 25TH EDITION
CONCERTS ARE GUARANTEED TO LIGHT UP THE STAGE!**

With 25 years on the clock, the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira continues to establish its unprecedented reputation on the global music scene.

The reason? This one-of-a-kind festival stands apart by its unique concept of new fusions.

Fusing Gnaoua rhythms with music from around the world is the single idea at the origin of the creation of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira, and from the onset this Festival has confirmed its vocation as an open-air musical laboratory that welcomes the most audacious and improbable experiments, every year, to the great joy of fans and festival-goers in search of brand-new sounds and unique experiences.

This year, in celebration of the Festival's 25th edition, and in addition to the opening concert created especially for the Festival, there will be 5 fusion concerts, featuring talents from South Africa, Spain, the USA, France, Mali, and Senegal who will join the Gnaoua Maâlems, masters of the art of mixing their repertoire with those of world musicians.

We can expect moments of exceptional alchemy!



UNIVERSAL IN THE PLURAL

MAÂLEM MOHAMED KOUYOU, RHANI KRIJA, GUIMBA KOUYATÉ, JON GRANDCAMP, KIKE PERDOMO, MEHDI CHAIB & HBS TRUMPET
MOROCCO, MALI, SPAIN, FRANCE

Following his explosive performance at the opening concert of the Festivals 24th edition, Mohamed Kouyou is ready to repeat his success for this new concert, on the heels of a residency where audacity and rigor go hand in hand. And for good reason! Take two genius percussionists: Moroccan Rhani Krija, who mingles with stars like Sting, Herbie Hancock and Al Di Meola and Frenchman Jon Grandcamp, who finds inspiration in African, soul and funk music; add the ascetic play of trumpet player HBS, the haunting saxophone melodies of Kike Perdomo, and finally the art of the very gifted Malian electric guitarist, Guimba Kouyaté! The result is a dialogue between artistic and cultural flows that listen to each other, exchange and create fusion, to our great joy.



WINDS OF AFRICA

MAÂLEM ABDELMALEK EL KADIRI AND ALUNE WADE – MOROCCO, SENEGAL

The meeting of two exceptional talents. The first, Alune Wade, is an old hand at prestigious collaborations with the likes of Youssou N'dour, Cheick Tidiane Seck, Bobby McFerrin, Joe Zawinul, Aziz Sahmaoui, and Marcus Miller. Senegalese bass virtuoso, composer and singer Alune Wade will par notes with the young Maâlem Abdelmalek El Kadiri, spiritual heir to great Gnaoua masters such as Maâlem Abdallah Guinea, Maâlem Abderrahman Paca, Maâlem Cherif Regragui, and others.



MOROCCO/ SENEGAL, FOREVER AND ALWAYS

ABLAYE CISSOKO AND MEHDI QAMOUM

Probably one of the finest kora players in the world, with a clear, modern musical style, Ablaye Cissoko is part of the new generation of Senegalese artists who represent the meeting between Mandingo tradition and contemporary musical creation. Mehdi Qamoum seeks inspiration from his roots and the wealth of his country's musical heritage: Gnaoua, Houara, Isemgan, Reggada, and Daqqa merrakchiya are pushed toward modernity by his electric guembri. A musical conversation between two very contemporary and authentic artists.



HIGH INTENSITY

MAÂLEM TARIQ AÏT HMITTI AND BCUC

Heir to the “Hmitti” clan, Tariq is part of this new generation of artists trained in Gnaoua tradition but open to innovation and other music forms through fusions of Gnaoua music and other Western rhythms, like electro, which he has explored since 2011. For this 25th edition of the Festival, he will face off with a real musical explosion, the South African group BCUC. Between African, soul, and punk rock sounds, this concert promises rare intensity.



CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

MAÂLEM HAMID EL KASRI AND BOKANTÉ *MOROCCO, USA*

The meeting of Hamid El Kasri and Bokanté seems like an obvious choice. Two artists whose exceptional vocal performances (Hamid and Malika Tirolien), and an atypical instrumentation that explores the rich sounds of Creole and the spiritual depths of Gnaoua music. In 2018, Hamid El Kasri opened the Festival in fusion with the famous Brooklyn-based jam jazz band, Snarky Puppy. The musical director of this group, Michael League, just happens to be the founder of the Bokanté project. A sort of family reunion.

The 25th edition of the Gnaoua and World Music Festival Gnaoua in Essaouira will welcome more than 400 artists for a total of 53 concerts. A wildly abundant and avant-garde program that focuses upon fusion, offering the public a wide variety of music and original sound experiments.

See you in Essaouira - June 27 to 29 to mark the occasion of the first quarter-century of this great celebration of brotherhood, in an atmosphere like no other in this world.

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES



**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 «Africangu»; 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.



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



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.



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.



MEHDI CHAIB

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 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, Placido 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, Züricher Kammerorchester, and many more.



**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.



HAMID EL KASRI

His deep, intense voice makes him one of the leading concert performers in the country. Very popular in Morocco and around the world, artist Hamid El Kasri is one of the pillars of the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival. 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. For this edition of the Festival, audiences will meet him again in an exceptional fusion, paired with American-Quebecer-Guadeloupean group, Bokanté.



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.



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 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.

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