

PRESS RELEASE

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(see end of press release for full programme details)

EN BLANC ET NOIR 2022 - Festival International de Piano Robert Turnbull

Lagrasse, France (11220)

Friday, July 8 - Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Artistic Director: Bobby Mitchell

- Six-day piano festival presents international line-up of gifted young pianists

- Concerts under the stars in one of France's most beautiful villages

www.enblancetnoir.com

The international piano festival **En Blanc Et Noir - Festival International de Piano Robert Turnbull (EBEN)**, which takes place annually in **Lagrasse** (Aude) - one of the most beautiful villages in France - this year reaches its 10th birthday with a vibrant programme of concerts celebrating the immense talents of the younger generation of professional musicians drawn from Europe, the Americas and South East Asia.

The 2022 Festival rolls out over six gloriously programmed days from Friday, July 8 - Wednesday, July 13.

En Blanc et Noir was founded in 2013 by the writer, critic and gifted amateur pianist **Robert Turnbull** to support and encourage emerging talents. Robert passed away prematurely in 2018, but his generosity towards young artists, and his vision for the festival knew no bounds. Since 2020 the festival has been under the Artistic Direction of Freiburg-based American pianist and composer **Bobby Mitchell** - a long-time festival favourite with audiences for his electrifying recitals of classical and contemporary piano works.

To celebrate the festival's 10th anniversary Bobby has brought together an impressive roster of 20 artists offering a richly varied feast of 16 concerts. The daily schedule comprises three recitals a day at 12 noon, 6pm and 9.30pm, and all - with the exception of the opening fundraiser concert - are absolutely free!

En Blanc Et Noir takes place in the historic heart of the beautiful abbey town of Lagrasse – some 30 km south of Carcassonne - where the covered 12th century open-air marketplace - the Place de la Halle - provides a dramatic concert venue with fine acoustics. Listening to Bach, Ravel, Scriabin or Piazzolla under the stars offers audiences a magical and completely unique experience.

This year's line-up includes artists from France, Catalunya, Britain, Denmark, Cuba, the USA, Germany and Taiwan – a balance of newcomers and performers returning by popular demand. While the solo piano concert has pride of place, the programme also comprises chamber music, song recitals and jazz – all naturally underpinned by the piano.

Two unusual events bookend the festival: an opening 'Fundraiser' concert in Lagrasse's mediaeval abbey by the virtuosic Scottish accordionist **Ryan Corbett**, whose programme runs the gamut from Scarlatti through Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn. And to close the festival: a foot-stamping finale by Cuban pianist **Rolando Luna** - stalwart of the Buena Vista Social Club and last year's standout artist at Jazz à Marciac - whose genre-bending programme leaps effortlessly between Debussy, John Coltrane, Sacha Distel and The Stranglers.

Seven young solo artists make their debuts at EBEN in 2022. They include the much-garlanded Catalan pianist **Bernat Català Rams** with a programme of Granados, de Falla and Albéniz and the UK/Azeri artist **Gunel Mirzayeva**. Hers is an all-Bach programme, including a piece reflecting her own deeply personal response to Bach which weaves together Western and Eastern musical styles. A torchbearer for contemporary music, US-based South Korean pianist **Eunmi Ko**'s introduces Lagrasse audiences to works by composers from America and Asia, several of which were written expressly for her. Narbonnaise pianist **Stéphanie Elbaz** has been praised for her breathtaking performances, combining technical brilliance, virtuosity, charm and sensitivity. Her Iberian and Latin American-themed programme includes her own piano transcriptions of Piazzolla, Albéniz and Villa Lobos. Another young French pianist, **Virgile Roche**, graduates this summer from the Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris, but is already a familiar soloist at festivals in France and elsewhere in Europe. His EBEN programme embraces works by Prokofiev, Chopin and Mussorgsky.

Two special bursaries have been awarded this year - to the brilliant young Danish pianist **Gustav Piekut**, who receives the inaugural award given in memory of Lagrasse resident and music lover Nelly Andersen. He marks his EBEN debut with a programme devoted to Debussy and Chopin. Germany-based Russian pianist and composer **Mikhaïl Bouzine** is the recipient of the annual Robert Turnbull Piano Foundation Award and his debut solo concert includes classic works by Glinka and Gottschalk as well as contemporary composers Wolfgang Rihm and Maurizio Kagel.

No Lagrasse EBEN festival would be complete without a recital by Artistic Director **Bobby Mitchell**, whose all-Schumann programme opens the week's festivities in the Place de la Halle. Also back by popular demand are piano duo **James Kreiling** and **Janneke Brits** with four-hand arrangements of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and Debussy's tone poem *La Mer*. Kreiling and Brits are now named as Associate Directors of EBEN.

Chamber music and song recitals are this year represented by three late-evening concerts: violin and piano duo **Solveig Maedler** and **Stephanie Gurga** juxtapose Fauré and John Adams while tenor **Léo Vermot Descroches** and Taiwanese pianist **Yun-Ho Chen** present songs by Schumann and Hugo Wolf. Parisian soprano **Faustine de Monès** and Japanese/American pianist **Bretton Brown**'s programme embraces songs by Ravel, Granados, Enescu and Debussy.

Running in parallel with the festival and funded by a further legacy from Robert Turnbull, the daily **Piano Masterclass** gives unique opportunities in performance practice to four talented young students from the region's leading conservatoires - Carcassonne, Perpignan and Toulouse. The programme is led by **François-Michel Rignol**, Professor of Piano at the Conservatoire de Perpignan who introduces the students at a special **Piano Masterclass concert** on the festival's final day.

Introducing his festival programme for 2022, **Bobby Mitchell** said:

"Robert's hope was to create a centre where young pianists could present themselves in the best possible light and to be received with the warmth and attention characteristic of Lagrasse audiences.

"I will always be grateful to Robert Turnbull for founding En Noir Et Blanc ten years ago and for having established one of the most memorable and joyous places that I know to perform and to listen to piano music. For nearly a decade the festival has been the high point of my year, and I hope that audiences share many unforgettable moments in this magical place."

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Full programme details follow/...

En Blanc Et Noir: Place de la Halle, Lagrasse

Friday, July 8 - Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Friday July 8

Fundraiser concert (NB. at Lagrasse Abbey): **Ryan Corbett** (Scotland) - accordion

Programme:

J.S. Bach – Prelude and Fugue in A minor “The Great” BWV 543

D. Scarlatti – Sonata in F, K 107

A. Nagaev – Sonata

P.I. Tchaikovsky – Romance in F minor, Op. 5

F. Angelis – Etude

J. Feld – Konzertstück

D. Heath – Take To The Sky

F. Mendelssohn – Rondo Capriccioso

all other concerts take place in the Place de la Halle, Lagrasse

Saturday July 9

18h: **Bobby Mitchell** (USA/Germany) - piano

Programme:

Robert Schumann – Intermezzi, Op. 4

Robert Schumann – Impromptus, Op. 5

Robert Schumann – Waldszenen, Op. 82

21h30: **Solvejg Maedler** (France) - violin & **Stephanie Gurga** (USA) - piano

Programme:

Gabriel Fauré – Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 108

John Adams – Road Movies

Sunday July 10

12h: **Bernat Català Rams** (Catalonia) - piano

Programme:

E. Granados – Valses Poétiques

M. De Falla – Fantasia Bética

I. Albéniz – Suite Iberia (extracts) - El Puerto – Corpus Christi en Sevilla – Almería – Triana

18h: **Eunmi Ko** (USA) - piano

Programme:

Tyler Kline – Selections from *Orchard*

okra – blood orange – fig – carambola – Buddha’s hand – lychee – star anise – yuzu

John Liberatore – *Nocturne: Stella by Starlight* [written for Eunmi Ko]

Juhi Bansal – *Land of Waking Dreams*

David Liptak – *Hocket* [written for Eunmi Ko]

Ania Vu – *Against Time*

Emily Koh – *saturation temp*

Tyler Kline – *basil eyes*

Sunday July 10

21h30: **Léo Vermot Desroches** (France) - tenor & **Yun-Ho Chen** (Taiwan) - piano

Programme:

Robert Schumann – *Fünf Lieder für eine Singstimme und Klavier op. 40*

Märzveilchen; Muttertraum; Der Soldat; Der Spielmann; Verrathene Liebe

Robert Schumann – *Gedichte von N. Lenau und Requiem*, Op.90

Lied eines Schmiedes; Meine Rose; Kommen und Scheiden; Die Sennin; Einsamkeit; Der schwere Abend; Requiem

Hugo Wolf – An ein Äolsharfe; Im Frühling; Der Feuerreiter; Ganymed; Lied Eines Verliebten; Anakreons Grab; Das verlassene Mägdlein; Begegnung

Monday July 11

12h: **Gustav Piekut** (Denmark) - piano (*Nelly Andersen bursary*)

Programme:

Debussy – 12 Préludes, book II

Chopin – Four Scherzi, Opp. 20, 31, 39, 54

18h: **Virgile Roche** (France) – piano

Programme:

Prokofiev - Visions fugitives, Op. 22

Chopin - Mazurkas op. 24

Mussorgsky - Pictures at an Exhibition

21h30: **Janneke Brits** (S.A.) & **James Kreiling** (UK) piano four hands

Programme:

Scriabin – Sonata No. 9 (James Kreiling, piano)

Stravinsky – Rite of Spring (trans. Stravinsky for piano four-hands)

Scriabin – Sonata No. 10 [Janneke Brits, piano]

Debussy – La Mer (trans. Debussy for piano four-hands)

Tuesday July 12

12h: **Gunel Mirzayeva** (UK/Azeri) - piano

Programme:

JS Bach – Partita no. 6 in e, BWV 830

JS Bach – Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother in B-flat, BWV 992

JS Bach – Italian Concerto in F, BWV 971, with re-composed cadenza, 1st movement

JS Bach/G Mirzayeva – Project Bach-Mugham Parts I, II, III

JS Bach – Italian Concerto in F, BWV 971, 3rd movement

18h: **Mikhaïl Bouzine** (Ru/Germany) - piano (*Robert Turnbull Piano Foundation bursary*)

Programme:

Charles-Valentin Alkan – en rythme molossique (1857)

Wolfgang Rihm – Ländler (1979)

Michaïl Glinka – Nocturne in E-flat major (1828)

Alexander Rabinovitch-Barakovski – Musique triste, parfois tragique (1976)

Dimitri Terzakis – Pensées No. I (1999)

Antonín Dvořák – Doumka, Op.35 (1876)

Mauricio Kagel – an Tasten (1977)

Louis Moreau Gottschalk – la Savane (1846)

21h30: **Faustine de Monès** (France) - soprano & **Bretton Brown** (Japan/USA) - piano

Programme:

Josephine Stephenson – Rosemary Lane

Ravel – Cinq mélodies populaires grecques

Granados – El Majo Discreto, Elegia Eterna, Gracia Mia

Enescu – Aux damoysselles paresseuses d'écrire à leurs amys, Languir me fait

Debussy – Fantoques, Beau Soir, Green, Spleen

Obradors – Canciones Classicas

Wednesday July 13

12h: **Stéphanie Elbaz** (France) - piano

Programme:

Villa Lobos/ Elbaz – Bachianas Brasileiras n 5

Padre Antonio Soler – sonata 84

Padre Antonio Soler – Fandango
Albeniz – Asturias
Gottschalk – Souvenir de Porto Rico
Piazzola/ Elbaz – Libertango
Daniel Mattos – Tango Nocturno
Albeniz/ Elbaz – La vida Breve
Albeniz – Triana
Albeniz – Cordoba
Liszt – Rhapsodie Espagnole

18h: **Piano Masterclass students of François-Michel Rignol**

21h30: **Rolando Luna** (Cuba) - piano

Programme drawn from works by:

Rolando Luna, John Coltraine, Claude Debussy, Sasha Distel, The Stranglers, Chico Buarque and others.

Notes for Editors

En Blanc et Noir – Background

In July 2013, Robert Turnbull, professional journalist, graduate of the San Francisco Music Conservatory and keen amateur pianist, fulfilled a long-cherished dream: to create a piano festival in the village of Lagrasse, some 30 kilometres south-east of Carcassonne in France, giving precious opportunities to several young Europeans launching careers as concert pianists. He called it *Fantaisie de Musique à Lagrasse*.

The town council - or Mairie- helped by setting up a stage large enough for two grand pianos and lent 100 chairs for the six concerts, which mostly took place in the village's ancient covered market. There was minimal lighting and no amplification, yet magic was created - a salon '*en plein air, en pleine lune*', a stone's throw from the Lagrasse Abbey, one of France's most romantic monuments. The catalyst, of course, was the talent of the gifted musicians which radiated long after the final concert.

Riding on the success of this inaugural series, Turnbull and a group of like-minded friends decided to repeat the festival, rechristening it En Blanc Et Noir (EBEN). Robert died in 2018 but his inextinguishable spirit lives on as the festival celebrates its 10th birthday.

EBEN has given a platform to many gifted young pianists in those ten years, and notable invited soloists include, recently, the prodigiously talented **Jonathan Fournel**, who won the first prize in the 2021 Reine Elizabeth Piano Competition.

Read more at: www.enblancetnoir.com

Bobby Mitchell, Artistic Director, En Blanc Et Noir

Bobby Mitchell is an American pianist whose interests are embedded in the here and now of music as performance art, as well as the more standard classical repertory of centuries past. A frequent performer of new and rarely heard works, his interests lie mainly with the contemporary music canon and in combining these works with the standard repertoire in an illuminating fashion. An instrumentalist who is not afraid to cross the traditional boundaries of programming and performance practice, he is active as a solo and collaborative concert pianist on modern and historical instruments and is also experienced in the fields of improvisation, composition and conducting.

He has performed extensively in the Americas, across Europe, Asia, South Africa and the Middle East. Recent highlights include concerto performances with Philippe Herreweghe and the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century.

Bobby has been Artistic Director of **En Blanc Et Noir** since 2020, and has performed annually as a soloist at the festival since 2014.

Lagrasse and EBEN

Classed as one of the "*plus beaux villages de France*", Lagrasse is known for its Abbey founded in the VIIIth century, its medieval streets, its concentration of artists and artisans, and its ability to showcase a variety of cultural events year round such as the annual book festival Le Banquet du Livre, and now, **En Blanc et Noir**. EBEN aims to be a key element in expanding the ongoing cultural profile of Lagrasse.

A popular destination with tourists from all over the world, the village also enjoys a strong sense of community, and the organisers of the festival have been encouraged by the way in which many local people have been eager to participate in EBEN, donating their time and efforts - from moving pianos to housing musicians, translating programmes and facilitating airport transfers.

Aims of the Festival

"Europe has produced scores of gifted pianists eager to perform after many years of training. The festival's objective is to help these dedicated young musicians achieve some of their musical goals in what can be a solitary and frustrating profession. There are already several festivals in France catering specifically to the likes of Pollini and Perahia. Our aim is to explore Europe's vast pool of young or undiscovered talent and offer crucial performance opportunity in a nurturing, appreciative setting."

- **Robert Turnbull**, Festival founder