



## MAJID BEKKAS

Majid Bekkas, oud and guembri virtuoso, guitar professor and singer, has long been a star in his home country Morocco. Over the last few years, he has found his way into the European jazz scene through his collaborations with Archie Shepp, Louis Sclavis, Flavio Boltro or Klaus Doldinger.

Abdelmajid Bekkas was born and still lives in Salé, Morocco. He studied classical guitar and oud at the National Conservatory of Music and Dance in Rabat. In parallel, Majid delved deeper into blues and soul, playing in his own group in the eighties as a guitarist, keyboard player and singer. In the nineties, he created the "Gnaoua Blues Band".

Over the years, the master Ba Houmane, in Salé, initiated him into Gnawa music. Gnawa appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During the conquest of Sudan, Ahmed El Mansour Dahbi set up the first trading and cultural links between Timbuktu and Marrakech. Though a secular music, Gnawa is still understood from Essaouira to Marrakech as a "healer of souls", easily understandable when you listen to the spellbinding sound of Bekkas' voice, guembri and guitar.

Bekkas' musical universe has drawn inspiration from all the paths he has travelled. These include: Jazz, alongside pioneers such as Peter Brötzmann, Sophia Domancich, Louis Sclavis as well as Ramon Lopez, Paul Rogers and Paul Dunmall (his partners in the Sala Quartet); and world music through "Diwan" (Camel Zekri) and "Ya Salam" (Sara Alexander).

Bekkas has been artistic director of the festival "Jazz aux Oudayas" in Rabat since 1996.

For Klaus Doldinger's "Passport to Morocco", Bekkas established the connection with the current scene in Morocco and brought the German saxophonist together with the country's best musicians. His collaboration on the album, which was released in 2006 and received a German Jazz Award, introduced him to an international audience, as did the jubilee tour to celebrate Doldinger's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (it was an extended tour: more than 50 concerts with an audience of almost 100.000).

Bekkas' openness and ability to balance modernism and memory with a rare talent that knows no compromise, frees the music from the mark of time.

### Discography (excerpts):

- "Kalimba", Joachim Kühn, Majid Bekkas, Ramon Lopez (ACT 9456-2), 2007
- "Mogador", 2004
- "Cité invisible" with Beniat Achiary, Ramon Lopez, Ines Bacan and Pedro Soler in 2003.
- "Hommage à Roland Kirk" with Ramon Lopez in 2002
- "African Gnaoua Blues", 2001
- "Soudange", produced in Morocco in 1991