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SCENES



LJUBLJANA AND THE MAGIC OF DISOBEDIENT SOUNDS.

Contrebasse in construction, enchanted parenthesis for Sound (Dis)obedience 2025?

This year again, the Slovenian Sound (Dis)obedience festival, based in Ljubljana and conceived by its organiser Tomai Grom, has established itself as one of the most ambitious and welcoming of unwise, experimental and improvised music fields, and in a word, art and essay music. With programming as coherent as it may be surprising, a glance was taken this year at the music on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, from Lebanon to Palestine. A political choice, but also a crazy desire: that of sharing.

We know about Slovenia as a percussionist land. The small Central European country certainly has the first concert of this 2025 edition, the first concert of this 2025 edition offers us six percussionists installed in a circle, like the public around them, for a hypnotising sound experience under the direction of **Simon Klavar**, percussion teacher in Ljubljana. This consists of six pieces of raw wood, of different sizes, which will serve as an

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idiophone at the calculated rhythm of the musicians, following the score of Michael Gordon. A true work of contemporary music originally commissioned for dance, *Timber* here finds its place for its impressive sound rigor, this ability to produce phantom syncopations in the progressive offset, and in the repetition of the stamps of the strike. It is a galaxy of sounds that welcomes us, with intoxicating persistence, notably through the spatialization of sound. A sense of personalized concert.



Cham Saloum - Franpi Barriaux

The emotion was different for the second concert, which brought together a Middle Eastern trio that was heard too little in Europe; let us bet only if programmers have witnessed the matter, it will be otherwise. **Jazia**, named because it was the first name of the Palestinian grandmother **Salwa Jaradat**. If the music of the trio is inhabited by this singer and her electronic devices that give the music a nicely psychotropic impression, he owes much

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to the eldest idle **Cham Saloum** who sheds light on this concert with a virtuosity always about, without any temptation to excellence. Installed for years in Germany, the young Syrian woman has been working on her instrument with rapid and nervous attacks or rubs her ropes with metal rods as a plectre. To answer precisely, the Lebanese percussionist **Ali Al-Hout** works in particular a large daf with gathered skin that offers incredible tonal possibilities, amplified by an electro-acoustic device. The rest is linked to the moving and deep voice of Salwa Jaradat, who punctuates his songs from Palestinian traditions from the context of these music. Magic.



Daniele Roccato - Franpi Barriaux

The second day is a bass story in all its states. **Tomai Grom**, the director of this festival, is a bassist, and **Sound (dis)obedience** is first of all a story of pleasure, which leads to the invitation of **Daniele Roccato**, a bassist who

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shared the stage with Michele Rabbia and who was heard in the context of contemporary or not written music, with a repertoire ranging from Bach to Gubaidulina. It is one of his own pieces that the bassist plays here, with extreme concentration, to be integral with the strings and the bow. The music is beautiful, solemn but never shrivelled, the instrument vibrates with all its atoms and the bow is a vector of intense emotion and calls for deep listening.



Farida Amadou Aquiles Navarro - Franpi Barriaux

Farida Amadou calls for other sensations with her furiously saturated electric bass. It's raw, it's dru and it's scattering, all the more so because next to it, we're delighted to find **Aquiles Navarro**, the trumpeter of Irreversible Entanglements. The trumpet is also in all its states to look for a breaking point on the horizon. The same applies to marine conques or electronic and acoustic devices to bring the subject to boiling point. Amadou is impressive in rigor and concentration to carry the estocade into the lull of her bass that she strikes or makes mattes with all kinds of objects to hinder the strings. We let ourselves be carried away by the flow carrying all the noise-producing emotions. For its part, Navarro is the incarnate calm; he blows in a marine conch or encloses the bass in an acidic and acerbic electronics that leads to the night, carried away by this saving chaos.



Maurice Louca - Franpi Barriaux

It was through **Tony** Elieh's bass that the evening began, in an atmosphere once again marked by the Mediterranean rim. The Lebanese is with his compatriot, the remarkable guitarist **Maurice Louca**. They are with **Burkhard Beins**, the German percussionist known to Polwechsel. The **Marmalsana** trio has its rhizomes planted in Arabic music, but it is above all the sound that passionate musicians; here too sticks hinder the strings, and the bass is often played flat, like a percussion keyboard. The point is intense, mutual listening to its apogee. One is quickly carried away by Louca's guitar, which is the backbone of a statement where Beins is busy on his snare drum with multiple bowls, balls or a simple guitar string stretched out on a polystyrene base, played by the bow; enough to travel according to sounds, from Berlin to Beirut.



Akchoe Trio, Pisarovic, Buck and Franpi Barriaux

For the last evening, after a workshop, an annual tradition of the festival this year organized by Farida Amadou on the basis of an improvisation directed by graphic indications, it was the voice that predominated in the latter evening. First with a trio already noticed in the past that brought together guitarist **Noel Akchoté** and drummer **Tony Buck** alongside Croatian singer **Vesna Pisarovic**. The latter, which has long been noted for its radical choices and luxurious orchestras, is a vocal phenomenon. After years in pop or sevdah, this Balkan music that could be compared to the Greek rebetiko or the Portuguese fado, shows the whole range of its powerful and yet light-hearted vocal technique. Too demonstrative? Sometimes. While Akchoté plays soberly and effectively, his two colleagues sometimes seem to be in the outcast without this tarnishing the general, generous cohesion, where Pisarovic introduces traces of sevdah into its improvisation.



Thuluth - Franpi Barriaux

It does not seem incongruous that the festival ends with a fireworks

display. The trio **Thuluth** reunited singer **Ute Wasserman** and **Magda Mayas** around Beirut bassist and plastic detector **Raed Yassin**. The pianist is mind-blowing mastery and creativity; her prepared piano goes to fetch deep and moving sounds, never incongruous. She always finds the right sensation in the bowels of her piano with strings or chopsticks, metal pieces or small mechanisms. Wasserman is an outstanding technician: her accessories, whistles to the drum, are used to play with the blast and the microphone. She never predominates, often punctuates, is inspired by the piano in her rubbing as well as in her attacks or playing with Yassin who uses her counterbass as a sound medium lying on the edge and making the bows vibrate metal bowls or a small lyre vibrate. Yassin's truculence makes this trio a joyful moment, ideal to close a rejoicing edition.

We wrote last year that it was arguably one of the best festivals in Europe. In this beautiful corner of Central Europe in the middle of the mountains, this year is confirmed, both in the coherence of programming and in this taste for transmission.

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by Franpi Barriaux // Published on 13 April 2025