



Brassens in Crespières with his parrot Coco. Photo : Fred Meilla

BRASSENS ou la liberté

**An touring exhibition proposed by the Cité de la musique, Paris
Available starting March 15st, 2011**



**cit  de la musique
PARIS**

**“A few years ago, during a literary discussion,
someone asked me who was the best contemporary poet in France.
I replied without hesitating: Georges Brassens.”**

Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1981)

Following the success in 2010 of the touring exhibition “*Chopin in Paris, the composer’s workshop*”, the Cité de la musique has decided to propose a new exhibition that’s both user-friendly and cost-friendly for host venues.

In 2011, **Georges Brassens** will be honoured at the Cité de la musique, in part through an exhibition presented from March 15th to August 21st.

The lighter touring version of this exhibition will be **available from March 15st, 2011**.

1. Georges Brassens: a French icon – covered by singers all over the world

Brassens isn’t just the quintessential French singer – **he’s the French singer who’s enjoyed the most success outside of France and whose songs have been covered most often by foreign musicians**. Translated into 30 languages and performed by 600 French and foreign singers, Brassens is a star in Italy, is danced to in the slums of Douala, covered in Chile, performed in China...

Foreign records: «Espinàs canta Brassens», 1962 ; Nanni Svampa «Canta Brassens», 1971 ;
Fernande Tichke «Je suis un Smokkeleir», 1971 ; Loquillo Y Trogloditas «La mala reputacion», 1988



Indeed, who hasn’t heard of Brassens?

Who among us hasn’t one day hummed one of his tunes - *Le Gorille*, *Les Amoureux des bancs publics*, *Après de mon arbre* and all the others.

Today, people tend to view him as a gentle patriarch the family sings with around the fireplace, or as a reassuring friend.

It’s time to remember that behind this figure, reminiscent of the good old days in France, there lies an uncommon individual - a man well-versed in literature, a connoisseur of the great French poets; a formidable musician who was mad about swing and who adored Charles Trenet; an anarchist who chose the solitary road instead of joining the collective struggle, without betraying his own convictions; a man who opposed war, the values of “proper society” and the arbitrary nature of the law and the police; a tranquil force, unshakeable in the hurricane of success, who always danced to his own tune.

2. « BRASSENS ou la liberté » exhibition at the Cité de la musique, Paris

How can Brassens be exhibited?

How do we display a personality that was so popular but so deliberately low-key?

The Cité de la musique opted to go beyond the stereotypical images of Brassens and show him in a brand-new, often surprising light.

The Cité de la musique asked cartoonist and writer **Joann Sfar** – creator of *Le Chat du Rabbín* and director of the first feature film ever made on Serge Gainsbourg – along with journalist **Clementine Deroudille** to share their passion for Brassens through numerous unpublished documents, manuscripts and notebooks exceptionally loaned by Brassens' family and friends, as well as sound archives, TV images, photographs, guitars and more.

The curators

Joann Sfar

Cartoonist, screenwriter and film director Joann Sfar studied philosophy and fine arts at the Beaux-Arts de Paris. In 1994, his first comic books were published by the Association Delcourt et Dargaud. Since then, Sfar has contributed to the renewal of the French comic book genre. On his own or with others, he has created over 150 comic books, a few novels, animated films and the feature film *Gainsbourg*.

Clémentine Deroudille

With a degree in art history, Clementine Deroudille joined RFI in 2002.

She also produced “100% français”, a musical programme that promoted French songwriting throughout the world. Devoted to bringing sound archives out of the closet, Clementine Deroudille created the soundtrack of the “Robert Doisneau, Paris en liberté” exhibition presented at the Hôtel de Ville de Paris in 2007, as well as the boxed set *Robert Doisneau, le braconnier de l'éphémère* (Radio France/INA). She currently heads the “La voix au Chapitre” series at the Textuel/INA/France Culture editions, which provides a selection of great radio moments from key figures in the social sciences. She is also the author of the book/album *Jacques Higelin en cavale* (Textuel).



3. The touring version reproduces the original exhibition's main themes.

3.1 - The exhibition

“**BRASSENS ou la liberté**” reaches out to all audiences with a triple approach combining science, learning and fun. Brassens’ die-hard fans will be able to rediscover and share with younger generations their love of the singer’s razor-sharp lyrics and impertinence.

- The exhibition begins by exploring **Brassens’ “intimate” side**: his origins in Sète, his move to Paris, his self-taught literary education, his ascetic work ethic. A very personal world is revealed, quite a visual one, out of which slowly emerges the figure of an unconventional and free-thinking poet who devoted himself to writing and composing.



Brassens and his father in Sète, summer 1942,, Collection Pierre et Françoise Onteniente



Brassens and his friends, summer 1942 • photo : Victor Laville



© Joann Sfar 2011

- The exhibition then turns to the “**public**” Brassens, showing the timid and difficult beginnings of the singer on stage, followed by the customs of era’s great concert halls, the pace and repetition of concert tours, the shock wave of the record album, then public success and Brassens’ influence over a whole generation of young artists. The singer’s family and staunch friendships created a permanent link, a bridge between the two sides of his life, and revealed the singer’s steadfastness as he went from suffering to success.



Brassens in concert , Villa d’Este, 1953. Collection Pierre et Françoise Onteniente



Music-hall, october 1955, collection Claude Richard

- **The last part of the exhibit** is not biographical. It consists of an entertaining, **interactive space** that allows us to consider Brassens from unusual angles, reflecting the curators’ deliberately modern and off-beat approach to their subject. What will posterity decide for Brassens? That question defines this last part of the exhibition, which begins with the extraordinary story of Georges Brassens as invented by Joann Sfar. What has become of Brassens?

3. 2 - Music in the exhibition

The exhibition's sound content is rich and varied, and includes Brassens' songs and spoken word from radio archives, as well as audiovisual archives of himself and his unpublished texts.

A selection of key and unreleased television archives will also be presented, including one of Georges Brassens' first times on television, his unlikely presence in an audience of soldiers for the programme "Apostrophes", his conversation with Jean Ferrat about political commitment. And also Brassens in Favino's workshop, where all of his guitars were made, Brassens in a duet with his idols Charles Trenet and Tino Rossi, and Brassens with the new generation of singers.

Visitors can listen to Brassens' voice in radio interviews: here he proves much more talkative than on television, and is delightfully open about his memories, his relationship to music and his approach to writing. He's funny, sincere and direct. By typing a number, visitors can select, by theme, subjects addressed by Brassens: musical themes (la pompe, fox-trot, jazz), political and social themes (political involvement, the Larzac region, anti-clericalism, etc.) or his lifestyle (the Impasse Florimont, animals, etc.)

These **visual and audio materials** round out the lighter touring version of the exhibition and are **available as a multimedia module**.



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Exhibition publications

- The book of the exhibition : Clémentine Deroudille, Joann Sfar, *Brassens ou la liberté*, Dargaud
- Clémentine Deroudille, *Brassens*, Découvertes Gallimard
- Joann Sfar, *Les partitions de Brassens*. Gallimard jeunesse.
- DVD « *Brassens ou la liberté* » in partnership with the INA, coll. INA/Mémoire vive

4. Technical and financial details for the touring version

The touring exhibition is composed of **a dozen panels plus a multimedia interface** presenting Georges Brassens' career: his childhood in Sète, his discovery of literature and poetry, his period in the Impasse Florimont, and his success in France and throughout the world.

Panels

- photo reproductions with accompanying text
- Intimate friendships and moments from Georges Brassens' career through an imagined life written and illustrated by Joann Sfar



Brassens washing himself, impasse Florimont, 10/28/1953.
Photo : Maurice Jarnoux/Paris Match/Scoop

Multimedia interface

- Reproductions of photographs, documents and drawings by Joann Sfar
- Radio interviews of Georges Brassens
- Brassens' hit songs
- Unreleased songs set to music by Olivier Daviaud, French composer and arranger
- Audiovisual archives (Ina) + Brassens' personal videos

The exhibition **is available in both French and English** and is made for all audiences, die-hard fans and young children alike.

It was **designed to adapt to all exhibition spaces** measuring at least 50 m², with no specific security or conservation requirements

- allow the host institution **great flexibility in the display**

Content can be supplied, upon request, in digital format or as downloadable files.

Digital format includes all of the exhibition materials :

- graphic templates for the panels, to be printed onto equipment adapted to the host venue
- a multimedia interface to be installed onto one or several computers, for visitor consultation

- Reproduction and presentation rights of the works have been negotiated and are included (on-site music broadcasting rights excepted).

- It is possible to **modify one of the two proposed languages** (for an additional cost, available on quotation).

Installing the exhibition

- Print the panels using the graphic templates provided
- Install the multimedia interface onto computers (no specific settings required)
- Set up, according to the equipment available at the venue:
the panels, which measure approximately 120 x100 cm
computer stations that present the multimedia interface (number of stations according to venue)

Host venues must:

- Supply computer equipment: computers and headsets
- Cover panel printing costs
- Submit to the Cité de la musique a merchandising plan and any communications documents before printing
- Declare on-site music broadcasting to copyright collecting agencies
- If a language is modified, cover translation costs as well as graphic and multimedia integration costs, coordinated by the Cité de la musique

5. Rate

THE COST of the exhibition is **1.500 euro excluding taxes** (100 euro per additional venue).

FOR ANY QUESTIONS, please contact:

Clara WAGNER, Deputy Director of Communication and
Head of International Relations

Tel. : +33 (0)1 44 84 47 27 ▪ Fax : +33 (0)1 44 84 45 36
cwagner@cite-musique.fr

Isabelle LAINÉ, Head of Exhibitions Department

Tél. : 01 44 84 45 57 ▪ Fax : 01 44 84 46 01
ilaine@cite-musique.fr