

## History of the Festival

« Le Printemps de Bourges must become for anyone interested in Chanson (songs) a place for creation, expression and confrontation ». Late 1976 Daniel Colling started a new concept with this sentence: a Chanson festival in the heart of a middle-size city and happening during Easter holidays. This sentence is still meaningful for the 30th edition of Printemps de Bourges. You just have to change the too restrictive word Chanson for today-music or popular music and the spirit and organization of the first Printemps de Bourges the way its creator and associates Maurice Frot and Alain Mailland see it would almost be the same.

Ever since Daniel Colling said this sentence 3229 artists and bands performed in Bourges over 29 editions - 3 decades of popular music history: Léo Ferré and Dominique A, NTM and Juliette Gréco, U2 and Cesaria Evora, Jean-Louis Murat and Jacques Higelin, les Têtes Raides and Anne Sylvestre...

### 1977-1982: The setting of a new idea

While TV variety shows and radio consecrated such singers as Dalida, Sardou and Mireille Mathieu, a lot of French Chanson artists struggled to reach their audience. The will to gather the other Chanson motivated the first edition of the festival which took place from the 6th to the 10th of April 1977).

The setting was new: over a 5 day-period, about 40 artists performed and 20 concerts took place at the Maison de la Culture under a capital located place Séraucourt and at the theatre Jacques Coeur. François Béranger, Jacques Higelin, Dick Annegarn, Bernard Lavilliers, Leny Escudero, Henri Tachan, Catherine Ribeiro, Colette Magny, Font and Val, Julos Beaucarne, Jacques Bertin, Mama Béa Tekielski, Joël Favreau, Toto Bissainthe from Haïti, Joan Pau Verdier and Marti were there: All different singing-styles, the black-flag singers and the red-flag singers, those singing their identity and the poets, the new troubadours and those looking for a new form of Chanson, the ones screaming against the old world and those dreaming of the future world, the traditional ones and the crazy ones...

So as not to disorientate the adult audience Le Printemps also invited the Reggiani brothers (Jacques and Serge) as well as Charles Trenet who performed under the big capital which totalled 4,000 seats, right after a group of young artists led by Jacques Higelin had honoured him. The crazy singing man was full of joy to meet an audience mostly composed by young people.

The first edition of le Printemps was a real success: almost 13,000 tickets were sold. But the relationships between the festival and some Berry inhabitants were not so good: The Indians Landing as the audience members with their long hair, backpack and no money on them were called had to deal with inhabitants' protests and shoppers' fears. It took some years before the city agreed with the festival.

From its second edition on, the success of the festival would irresistibly raise: 80 artists, 45 concerts and 25,000 members of the audience over 5 days. 40,000 members of the audience over 7 days in 1979 and 50,000 members of the audience over 9 days in 1981...

Nevertheless, the budget had to be renegotiated each year with la Maison de la Culture. We had to fight for the festival to survive...

### 80es: the festival of new realities

In 1982 Jack Lang became Minister of the Ministry for Culture and it changed the relationships between the government and cultural events: the State started subsidizing le Printemps de Bourges because it was the sole French festival of its kind. The Centre Région and the Cher County also started contributing to the public partnership from 1986 on. In the 80es the whole French music scene from the traditional artists (Léo Ferré, Yves Montand, Francis Cabrel, Serge Gainsbourg, Michel Jonasz, CharElie Couture, Charles Aznavour, William Sheller, Francis Lalanne) to the brand new artists (Indochine, Stephan Eicher, Etienne Daho, Daniel Balavoine, Alain Bashung) performed in Bourges. Le Printemps welcomed as well new-rock international artists: The Cure in 1982, U2 in 1983, Simple Minds in 1984, etc...

Ever since its first edition there have been open stages (that's even the place, where the expression " scène ouverte " was created) at le Printemps. The famous Découvertes first happened in 1986 and were dedicated to let artists from France and sometimes abroad found by Le Printemps units perform. Chanson Plus Bifluorée and Manu Chao's Hot Pants (1986), la Mano Negra (1988), les Têtes Raides (1989), Zebda (1990), Faudel (1996), Madeleine Peyroux, Paris Combo and Lhasa (1997), Bams (1999), Jeanne Cherhal (2001), Nosfell (2004), Anaïs (2005) performed there...

Le Printemps also created new forms of presentation in its line-up: Musiques buissonnières (classical music), Maximômes (shows for kids), a grand cycle of comedy shows (we all remember Pierre Desproges's incredible performances), Hors jeux (street performances), Pêchés de chère (music and gastronomy parties)...

In the 10th edition, in 1986, the audience reached 125,000 members, ten times more than in 1977. And the record was again beaten in 1987 with 133,000 tickets sold out. But in 1989 le Printemps suffered from gigantism and was obliged to file for bankruptcy but without stopping its activity.

### **1990-1998: The post-modern era of the festival**

The new start of le Printemps in 1990 followed the rap irruption with Public Enemy and presented the next year a legendary press conference with NTM and Juliette Gréco. The festival has also been the leading force behind the opening of the French audience to world music for some years (we all remember the biggest concert of le Printemps: 18,000 members in the audience for Johnny Clegg in 1988). During the 90es the festival followed this new path, inviting World Music stars: Khaled, Youssou N'Dour, Salif Keita, Kassav', Rachid Taha, Cheb Mami, Ray Lema, Cesaria Evora, Papa Wemba, Lucky Dube, Manu Dibango, Danyel Waro, Compay Segundo, Yuri Buenaventura, Madredeus, I Muvrini... And under Bourges' biggest capital the French passion for reggae expressed itself from the Wailers in 1997 to Massilia Sound System who participated 5 times to the festival. The festival also had to face the complexity of the musical market by taking the new shape of it: rock or electro various tribes, variety show for a larger audience and electro or rock songs for an audience hard to please: Rita Mitsouko and Eddy Mitchell, Nègresses Vertes and Henri Salvador, Joe Cocker and MC Solaar, Patricia Kaas and Blur, Noir Désir and Worlds Apart... Because of this will to invite many different kind of artists, le Printemps almost ended again in 1998.

But le Printemps has become meanwhile the biggest meeting place for popular music professionals mostly thanks to the international professional convention Tam Tam France. It also imported the Magic Mirrors, capitals made of wood and mirrors from Belgium to

France. The magic Mirrors have been since adopted by hundreds of other French festivals. And thanks to the creation of Le Printemps dans la ville it finally succeeded to make it up with Bourges by structuring the big amount of concerts in bars of the city during the festival.

### **1999-2006: Coming back to the roots**

During the 90es le Printemps exceeded again the 100,000 audience members. With a new team for the line-up Daniel Colling decided from 1999 on to come back to the original basic values of the festival that is to say discovery and boldness. Highly-specialized rock, most creative electro players and new French singers: le Printemps became the place where you can discover the most exciting new artists of their time again from Yann Tiersen to Vincent Delerm, from Dionysos to the Têtes Raides, from Souad Massi to Tiken Jah Fakoly, from Bénabar to Susheela Raman, from Cali to Franz Ferdinand... This is the place where buzz succeed or fail where good performers get renowned where hierarchies are revaluated. During this period in 2000 the Découvertes label in association with la Fnac became Attention Talent Scène, les Découvertes du Printemps de Bourges et de la Fnac. The festival structure is today willingly centred around 50,000 places with over 95% filling rate: rather than counting on big capacities le Printemps wants to insist on the excellence and relevance of its line-up gaining an influence and a legitimacy it never experienced yet.

### **2006-2010 : Printemps without winter**

A new era has begun; it is a serene and bountiful one in spite of a rough climate undermining the French cultural landscape – decreased public funding, economic recession.... In 2006, Printemps went through its 30<sup>th</sup> annual event with noticeable tributes made to Léo Ferré and Serge Gainsbourg. And in a music market currently stricken by the long lasting record crisis, in which not a single trend, colour or star manages, alone, to imprint its brand each season, Printemps de Bourges remains the barometer and the revelation gauge of new glorious stories: Olivia Ruiz, Yael Naim, Thomas Dutronc, The Do, Camille, Moriarty, Emily Loizeau, Gaëtan Roussel... And the festival keeps on synthesizing the trends of the season, with historical moments such as a sublime duo: Juliette Gréco and Abd Al Malik performing Maxime Le Forestier's *Né quelque part* (Born Somewhere) or the creation of the Rock'n'beat Party which brings together DJs and rock stars guitars... That Printemps is no longer acquainted to winter.