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## Basque culture comes to Montreal this autumn in the final push of Saison Québec - Pays Basque

- **Between September and December, several festivals will focus on Basque culture as part of the cultural exchange programme organised by the Etxepare Basque Institute.**
- **Malandain Ballet Biarritz will open the Quartiers Danses festival in Montreal, whose Basque Focus section will feature four Basque companies.**
- **The Elbira Zipitria Chair launches at McGill University, focusing on Basque studies from the perspective of social innovation.**

The Saison Quebec - Pays Basque cultural exchange programme organised by the Etxepare Basque Institute will host a wide range of events in its final push. This autumn marks the end of two years of cultural activities: the opening of a new university chair, a Basque film series, a literature festival and various concerts will be held in Quebec from September to December.

Today, the Basque Minister for Culture and Language Policy, Bingen Zupiria, Etxepare Basque Institute Director, Irene Larraza, Etxepare Basque Institute Director for the Promotion and Dissemination of the Basque Language, Garbiñe Iztueta, and Malandain Ballet Biarritz Director, Thierry Malandain, met at San Sebastian's Tabakalera building to announce the full programme of activities and roster of names to take part in the events.

The programme will feature three prominent highlights coming up in September in Montréal: The Quartiers Danses Festival running from 7 to 18 September, the Basque film season organised in conjunction with Cinémathèque Québécoise from 9 to 18 September, and the new Elbira Zipitria Chair in Basque Studies at McGill University will begin on 9 September.

### **Quartiers Danses: focus on Basque creation**

Quartiers Danses, the dance festival held every September in Montreal since 2001, will focus on contemporary Basque creation this year in the Basque Focus section with four Basque companies, nine shows and 15 performances. Malandain Ballet Biarritz will kick the festival off on 8 September at Montreal's main theatre, Théâtre Maisonneuve, with 'La Pastorale'. On 9 and 10 September, the shows 'Nocturnes' and 'Mozart a deux' will be performed at different venues in the city. Lasala, a company directed by Judith Argomaniz, will be another programme highlight, performing their shows 'Fight', 'Alive', and 'IU' on 11, 12 and 13 September. Osa + Mujika, the duo formed by Jaiotz Osa and Xabier Mujika, will take over on the 13th, 14th and 15th with 'Expectations Will Not Kill You' performed in the streets of the city. Finally, the group Proyecto Larrua will present 'Muda' and 'Idi begi' on 15 and 16 September.

La oferta relacionada con la danza, sin embargo, no acabará con estos espectáculos. El 11 de septiembre se proyectará la película 'Dantza' de Telmo Esnal en el Museo de Bellas Artes de Montreal, y del 9 al 23 se podrá ver en el Centre des Musiciens du Monde la exposición 'Soka', organizada por Euskaldunak Québec en colaboración con Etxepare Euskal Institutua y el Instituto Cultural Vasco. El mismo 9 de septiembre tendrá lugar el acto de apertura de la exposición, en el que actuará el grupo de danza Bilaka

The dance-related offerings, however, will not end with these performances. On 11 September, the film 'Dantza', directed by Telmo Esnal, will be screened at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and from 9 to 23 September, the exhibition 'Soka', organised by Euskaldunak Quebec in collaboration with the Etxepare Basque Institute and the

Basque Cultural Institute, will be on display at the Centre des Musiciens du Monde. The exhibition will open on 9 September with a performance by the Bilaka dance group.

### **Elbira Zipitria, new Basque studies chair at McGill University**

Prominent news in academics is a new chair in Basque studies forged from a partnership between the Etxepare Basque Institute and McGill University. The chair is named after Elbira Zipitria, educator, creator of the Basque 'ikastola' system and pioneer and driving force behind teaching in the Basque language. The Chair will focus on Basque culture and cultural innovation.

The opening event on 9 September will be an all-day programme focusing on language, from both a Basque and Quebecois perspective. It will examine the role of cultural innovation strategies in the development of non-hegemonic languages and will be divided into three sections: language teaching, language planning, and language use. In addition to experts from Quebec, three speakers from the Basque Country will take part: Idoia Fernández (University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU) will talk about the contribution of Elbira Zipitria; Miren Azkarate (UPV/EHU) will discuss the challenges of language policy in the Basque language; and Paulo Suberbiola (Soziolinguistika Klusterra) will talk about the contributions of the Basque language initiative Euskaraldia.

The main goal is to bring together key experts in the Basque and Quebecois situation and promote a debate with guests from other fields (not only academics but also associations linked to language, the socio-economic reality, etc.) on the challenges that arise in both sociolinguistic contexts.

### **Basque films at Cinémathèque Québécoise**

After offering a series of contemporary Basque films in September 2021, this time Cinémathèque Québécoise will focus on films dealing with coexistence, peace and multiple perspectives of the Basque conflict. The stories told from different genres (comedy, drama, documentary), through a selection of films dating from the 1980s to the present day: 'La futa de Segovia' (Imanol Uribe, 1981), 'Yoyes' (Elena Taberna,



2000), 'La pelota vasca' (Julio Médem, 2003), 'Asier eta biok' (Aitor Merino, Amaia Merino, 2013), 'Lasa eta Zabala' (Pablo Malo, 2014), 'Negociador' (Borja Cobeaga, 2014), and 'Maixabel' (Iciar Bollaín, 2021).

### **A host of activities before the year ends**

In addition to the September activities, Itxaro Borda will perform at the Trois Rivières international poetry festival on 1 and 2 October; Igor Calonge will enjoy a dance residency at Montreal's 'École de Danse Contemporaine (School of Contemporary Dance)', and Kulunka Teatro will take part in the OFF-Cinars section of the Cinars Montreal performing arts biennial on 8 November.

As for music, Xabi Aburruzaga will give three concerts in Quebec. Oreka TX will perform at M For Montreal indie music festival on 17 November, and the Sigma Project saxophone quartet will give several talks and concerts at the University of Montreal from 23 to 26 October. In addition, singers Mikel Etxekopar and Claudine Arhancet from the French Basque region of Soule will enjoy an internship at the Centre des Musiciens du Monde to experience a blend of traditional Basque music and the indigenous culture of Quebec.

Finally, outside the Saison Québec - Pays Basque programme, but also in Canada, Uxue Alberdi, Miren Amuriza and Danele Sarrigarte will be at the Toronto International Festival of Authors, where they will take part in a round table discussion and talk about 'bertsolaritza', the Basque art of improvisational singing in verse.

### **Saison Québec - Pays Basque**

Focusing on Basque culture, contemporary creation and language, Saison Québec - Pays Basque has brought to Quebec a wide-ranging multidisciplinary programme of activities in 2021 and 2022.

Over the course of two years, almost 90 professionals and academics will have come to Quebec through five creative residencies, four international events related to the performing arts, three literary festivals, two film series, four music tours, two

contemporary art days, an exhibition, an academic seminar, and a new Basque studies chair, all with the aim of raising awareness of Basque culture and creation.

### **Cultural Connections: fostering dialogue between countries**

In 2019, the Etxepare Basque Institute began to focus its attention on regions earmarked as significant for raising the international profile of the Basque Country, in line with the so-called 'Euskadi Basque Country strategy'. This gave rise to Cultural Connections, aimed at integrating the cultural dimension in international relations and promoting interaction in the cultural and academic spheres. The first target was Scotland in 2019, followed by Quebec in 2021 and 2022. The Etxepare Basque Institute has already begun to organise the next project with Flanders in 2023 and 2024.

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