

# JULIEN LABRO

ACCORDIONIST~ BANDONEONIST~ COMPOSER ~ ARRANGER



Deemed “brilliant” by Howard Reich of the Chicago Tribune, Julien Labro has established himself as one of the foremost accordion and bandoneon players in both the classical and jazz worlds. His artistry, virtuosity, and creativity as a musician, composer and arranger have earned him international acclaim and continue to astonish audiences worldwide.

French-born Labro was influenced early on by traditional folk music and the melodic, lyrical quality of the French chanson. However, he spent every last cent of his pocket money collecting CDs by jazz legends like Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, thirsty for the originality, creativity, and the endless possibilities in their musical language.

After graduating from the Marseille Conservatory of Music, Labro began winning international awards, taking first prize in the Coupe Mondiale in 1996 and the Castelfidardo Competitions in 1997. After sweeping first place in the Marcel Azzola, Jo Privat and Medard Ferrero competitions in 1995 and 1998, Labro moved to the United States to further pursue his studies and musical dream. There he embraced other genres of music, ranging from pop and hip hop to electronic/techno and rap, as well as Latin, Indian, Middle Eastern, and other types of world music.

Equipped with advanced degrees in classical music, jazz studies, and composition, Labro draws from both his diverse academic background and eclectic musical taste in his professional life as a performer, arranger, and composer.

As a musician, Labro is constantly evolving artistically. He searches for new themes and untried concepts, transforming and developing his creative ideas into new projects. Piazzolla, a major influence and the reason Labro picked up the bandoneon, is also the title of his recent release on Azica Records with classical guitarist Jason Vieaux and A Far Cry chamber orchestra. It features Labro’s arrangements of the tango master’s Four Seasons. Other upcoming releases include Grammy-award winning vocalist Cassandra Wilson’s *Another Country* (eOne Music) and critically acclaimed Hot Club of Detroit’s *Junction* on Mack Avenue Records.

Labro's compositions on *Junction* reveal his broad musical inspiration, ranging from a piece that honors late pianist George Shearing (“Goodbye Mr. Shearing”) to a Jean Cocteau poem read at Django Reinhardt’s funeral (“Django Mort”). His arrangements on the album, which include Ornette Coleman’s “Lonely Woman” and Parisian standard “La Foule,” highlight Labro's innovative approach to traditional music and his willingness to transcend boundaries in melding different genres, styles, and sounds.

Labro tours with jazz groups such as the Frank Vignola Ensemble, Jazz Wagon, The Oblivion Project, and Hot Club of Detroit. His performance schedule includes jazz venues such as Birdland, Blue Note, Yoshi's, Dazzle, The Green Mill, Nighttown, Sculler's, Chris' Jazz Cafe, Dakota Jazz Club, Jazz Kitchen, and festivals such as Jazz Aspen Snowmass, Detroit Jazz Festival, Blissfest, Jazz Salt Lake City, Soave Guitar Festival (IT), Quebec International Music Festival (CA), the International Finnish Accordion Festival, and the International Las Vegas Accordion Convention, where he was featured with accordion legends Dick Contino and Art Van Damme.

In addition, he has been a guest artist with numerous symphonies and chamber ensembles such as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Pops Orchestra, A Far Cry chamber orchestra, the Cape Cod Symphony, the Grosse Pointe Symphony, the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony, the Saginaw Symphony, the Macomb Symphony, the Bijou Orchestra, the Michigan Pops Orchestra, the Linden String Quartet, the Prairie Ensemble, and the Spektral Quartet.

Recently, Labro has shared the stage or recorded with artists such as Brazilian pianist João Gilberto, Larry Coryell, John & Bucky Pizzarelli, Victor Goines, James Carter, Frank Vignola, Anat Cohen, Howard Alden, Tommy Emmanuel, Joel Frahm, Jason Vieaux, Lebanese oud master Marcel Khalife, and singer Cassandra Wilson.

On a creative level, Labro has been enlisted as an arranger for several professional ensembles, most recently for Ensemble Vivant of Toronto, the conductorless Boston-based chamber orchestra A Far Cry, and Curtis On Tour from the Curtis Institute of Music faculty of Philadelphia.

Labro is married to pianist Jia Li, and they make their home in downtown Toronto. They enjoy cooking, the thriving local film industry, the food and restaurant scene, and traveling around the world.