

TOUR TOUR 2019  
21-22 AVRIL



29ÈME

FÊTE DE L'ŒUF





## HAPPY EASTER

And it looks as if one will have wonderful weather, time to plant out the garden, renew all the geraniums, to make sure of a super colourful display, to greet all the family and tourists that are preparing to descend on us – perhaps, or perhaps not – given god help us, B for Brexit. There will be Plant Fairs all over, plus events for Easter, featuring eggs hunts, competitions for throwing ovoid eggs, square eggs ! presumably obtained from Square chickens, loads of fun for all the children and adults.



## OPERA DE TOULON - CONCERT « HORIZONS CROISES » -5 APRIL 20H

With violinist Guy Braunstein -Concerto for violin no.1 Chostakovitch, and 1st Symphonie of Brahms, with Orchestre symphonique de L'opéra de Toulon.

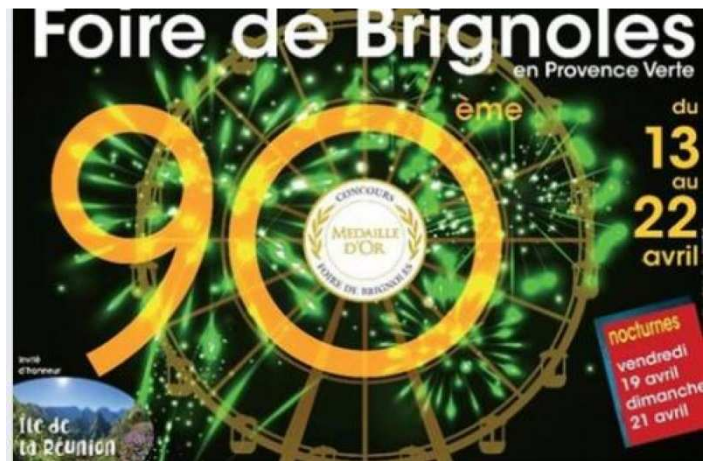
## CONCERT IN AID OF EGLISE ST. LAURENT – FLAYOSC SUNDAY APRIL 7 – 20H30

Under the direction of Dylan Samuel, ensemble vocal performing Celtic music together with the choristes of ensemble vocal  
« Canto Azuria »

## BOOK SWAP – APRIL 17 – LORGUES

The Travelling Book Swap- New Venue-April 17th- 10.00-12.00 + coffee/tea/bics @ €1 only.Plenty of books, dvds.CDs- & all welcome! Chez Shiona & Brian Anderson, 1594 route des Arcs, 83510, Lorgues-0494996463

Any further queries email Mim Kay on [mimi4opp@gmail.com](mailto:mimi4opp@gmail.com) or ring 0494047894.



## AGRICULTURAL FAIR - FOIRE DE BRIGNOLES 13 – 22 APRIL

All the fun of an Agricultural fair from all sorts of tractors and heavy machinery, to horses that pull them, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, olives, wine – horsemanship displays, foods of every sort, one can enjoy several days out at this huge annual event. What the Tahitians have to do with it, I know not, but it could be entertaining. If you want to know more about the Var and France Profonde, this is the place to find it. You might event be inspired to growing your own vegetables, or keeping chickens or ducks. Who knows.



What Tahitians have to do with the Foire I know not, but could be interesting.

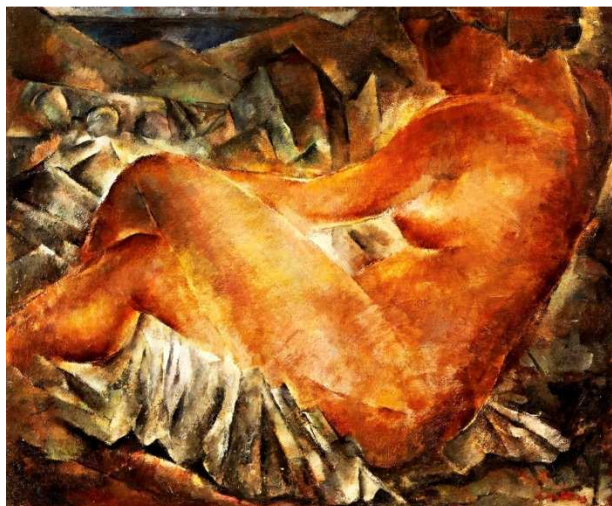
## FOR SALE:

FOR SALE:white metal framed IKEA bunk beds (including mattresses); 1 teakwood coffee table (Maison du Monde). For pictures and prices, contact [jennykendall@ymail.com](mailto:jennykendall@ymail.com).





**CONCERT MOULIN DES ARTS –  
ENTRECASTEAUX**  
**SATURDAY 13 APRIL 20H30**  
Jazz au Moulin with Trio Tcholakian  
Book ticket 04 94 69 58 07



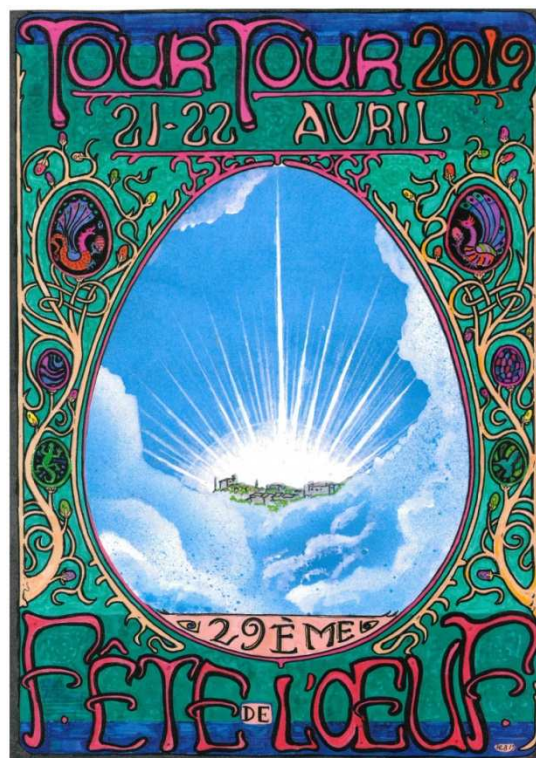
**GALERIE AALDERS – LA GARDE FREINET'**  
**Saturday 20 April Vernissage of Spring**  
**Exhibition 19h – 21h**

Galerie Aalders, 15 Route Nationale, La Garde Freinet  
Tel : 04 94 55 23 47 michaelaalders@mac.com

Celebrate Easter by cruising amongst the art, maybe buying yourself an Easter present to cheer yourself up and forget all the political blues around and about.



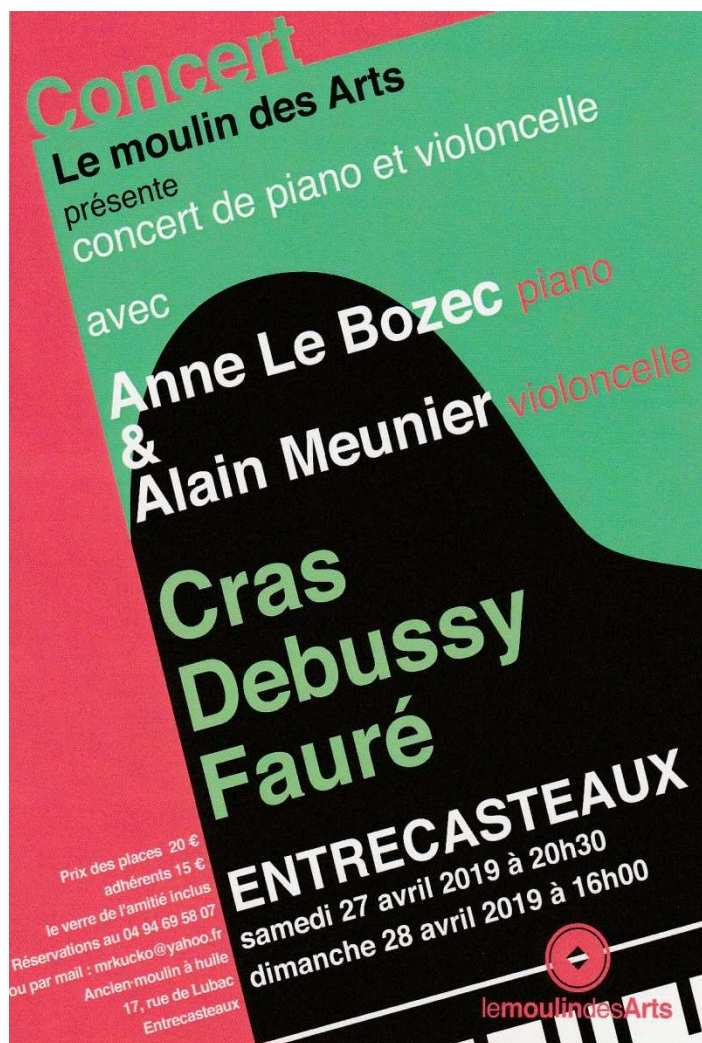
Talking of art there is a spanking new Exhibition opening 1 May at the Hotel Caumont in Aix en Provence – Masterpieces from the Guggenheim, New York – from Manet to Picasso! This show will be a total blockbuster, and must be a real feather in the cap for the Caumont, the queues will be round the bend.



**TOURTOUR EASTER FESTIVITIES – 21  
& 22 APRIL**

Village in the clouds, really goes to town over Easter





**CONCERT MOULIN DES ARTS –  
ENTRECASTEAUX**  
**SATURDAY 27 APRIL – 20H30**  
**SUNDAY 28 APRIL – 16H00**  
 Anne le Bozec, piano with Alain Meunier,  
 cello  
 Book tickets : 04 94 69 58 07



**OPERA DE TOULON –  
MENOTTI'S «Le Téléphone – & Amelia  
Va au Bal » 26 April 20h  
& 28 April 14.h30**



**NEW EXPO – LES CARRIERES – LES  
BAUX – 1 March 2019 – January 2020**  
 An immersion in Van Gogh's finest  
 masterpieces!

As of 1 March 2019 (to January 2020), the Carrières de Lumières will exhibit the work of the genius painter Vincent Van Gogh (1853–1890), who only achieved fame after his death. Spanning the 7,000 m<sup>2</sup> of the Carrières, a visual and musical production retraces the intense life of the tormented artist, who, during the last ten years of his life, painted more than 2,000 pictures, which are now held in collections around the world.

Van Gogh's immense oeuvre—which radically evolved over the years, from the Mangeurs de pommes de terre (The Potato Eaters, 1885) to the Nuit étoilée (Starry Night, 1889), Les Tournesols (Sunflowers, 1888), and La Chambre à coucher (The Bedroom, 1889)—will be projected onto the giant stone walls of the Carrières.



The clouds, suns, and portraits, represented in the artist's unique style, come to life on walls that are more than fifteen metres high, evoking the artist's boundless, chaotic, and poetic interior world. Via a thematic itinerary relating to the various phases of his life—his time spent in Arles, Paris, and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence—visitors will be immersed in his first works and those of his later years, from his sunny landscapes and night scenes, to his portraits and still lifes.

The Dutch painter's expressive and powerful brushstrokes produced works with bold colours and an unrivalled style that highlight a permanent dialogue between light and shadow. The visual and musical experience produced by Culturespaces and created by Gianfranco Iannuzzi, Renato Gatto, and Massimiliano Siccardi, highlights this chromatic richness, as well as the power of the artist's drawings and impasto.





**Plus – DREAMED JAPAN – an Immersive journey**



**ART EXHIBITION - HOTEL CAUMONT –  
AIX EN PROVENCE  
1 May- 29 September  
Masterpieces from the Guggenheim -  
Monet to Picasso**

The Hôtel de Caumont Art Centre will be presenting masterpieces from the Justin K. Thannhauser Collection, bequeathed in 1963 to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York.



For the first time, around fifty major works from this prestigious collection will be presented in Europe in an itinerant exhibition that began in the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum: paintings and sculptures by the masters of Impressionism and post-Impressionism, as well as the major figures of modern art, from

Manet to Picasso, and Degas, Gauguin, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Braque, and Matisse.

Justin K. Thannhauser (1892–1976), a leading figure in the dissemination of European modern art, was the sponsor, friend, and promoter of innovative artists who transformed Western art at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. In his youth, he helped his father, Heinrich Thannhauser, to run the famous Moderne Galerie, which was founded in Munich in 1909. Father and son developed a remarkable programme of exhibitions that featured the work of French Impressionists and post-Impressionists, as well as contemporary German artists. The gallery also held one of the first major retrospectives of Picasso's oeuvre in 1913, and this helped to forge a long and close friendship between Justin Thannhauser and the artist.

In 1941, Justin Thannhauser moved to New York and soon established himself as an art dealer in the United States. As he had no successor, he bequeathed the major works in his collection to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York. They have since become some of the most important works in this major museum, where they are displayed in a gallery that bears the name of their legatee. This bequest considerably enriched the body of works by Cézanne in the New York museum, which until that point only had a single work by the artist: *l'Homme aux bras croisés* (*Man with Crossed Arms*, circa 1889). The collection of works by Cézanne owned by Thannhauser will be displayed at the Hôtel de Caumont, and includes the work *Bibémus* (*Bibémus Quarries*), which will return for the first time to Aix-in-Provence, where it was painted circa 1894–1895.



The exhibition brings together other emblematic works: major paintings by Picasso such as *Le Moulin de la Galette* (1900), an exceptional loan from the Guggenheim Museum, as well as masterpieces by Van Gogh and Manet, which have been restored to their former splendour, thanks to a recent restoration campaign that was conducted specifically for this exhibition. The exhibition also gives visitors a chance to retrace the history of the galleries and the Thannhauser Collection via photographs, inventory books, and other archive documents held in the gallery's collection, which illustrate the relations between the Thannhauser family and the avant-garde artists, collectors, and dealers of the time.



This exhibition must be a real feather in the cap for the Caumont, the insurance costs must be sky high! So enjoy



And of course one can make a visit to this Museum a complete day's outing, housing as it does a very sophisticated collection of 18th c artefacts, pictures, furniture, tapestries, everything that complimented life in that era, plus there is a charming courtyard, gardens, and café cum restaurant serving appetising snacks lunches an immersive experience, total culture.

<http://www.caumont-centredart.com/en>

located just a few steps from the Cours Mirabeau

Open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

3 rue Joseph Cabassol 13100 Aix-en-Provence



## Annonciade Museum – ST. TROPEZ Picasso Exhibition February – 16 June



A unique exhibition has just started at the Annonciade Museum in Str. Tropez, featuring scarves, drawing, and pottery works of Picasso. The collection owes its existence to two private collectors Dominique and Guy Ludovissy, long time St. Tropez residents, some of the works have only recently been acquired. It features numerous works Picasso made at Vallauris, plus others, including works devoted to bullfighting, one, with peace, his favourite subject.



It would be a good idea to visit before the crowds hit St. Tropez. The Annonciade Museum in St. Tropez is one of the treasures of the Riviera, housing as it does a superb collection of post impressionist works by the principally Fauvist (savage) artists of the day – below one of my favourite fauvist works, of St. Tropez harbour!. It is my favourite Museum, which I can visit with pleasure time and time again. It has not staged any new exhibitions for a while, one suspects due to budgetary concerns, not only are they expensive to mount, but the insurance is prohibitive - but its collection is such that every visit yields more pleasure. Musée de l'Annonciade, Place Grammont. St. Tropez Closed Mondays. Entry 6 euros.

## Musée Bonnard – Le Cannet



Another lovely Museum to visit not too far away is the Bonnard Museum in Le Cannet, just up from Cannes, housing as it does a fine collection of Bonnard works.

Pierre Bonnard lived in le Cannet from 1922 to 1947, eventually acquiring the villa Le Bosquet, up on the heights of the town.





## It's That Time Of Year Again

The time when it is safe to book a luncheon table outside. To live the south of France dream, to wiggle your toes in the sand, to look out across rolling countryside without fear of mosquitoes or killer wasps, it is the rebirth of the reason we are down here and so we should take every opportunity to enjoy it. It is also that brief period before Easter and the arrival of the first sun seekers from northern climes bringing joy and parking problems with them.

So here are two ideas which should please and even avoid parking problems.

A week ago some kindly friends invited us out to lunch. Their instructions were quite clear and even she who is not a map reader could follow them easily. Take the road between Le Luc and La Garde Freinet, look for the turning for EALAT, follow that for a few hundred yards and you will find yourself at the entrance to Château Saint Roux, enter, park and walk to the restaurant. I need not have stayed up half the night to memorise this as some other kind friends picked us up and drove us there.

Château Saint Roux is a wine estate with a restaurant, a wine shop which offers coffee for those of a mind, a cheese dairy, a kitchen garden, a tasting cellar and rooms to stay in, perhaps after a really good lunch or merely to wake up in the morning in a beautiful setting surrounded by vines.

The menu, which changes frequently, offers freshly cooked, locally sourced produce, vegetables from their kitchen garden, cheese from the estate and wines from their vineyard (there are other offerings on the wine list as well).

There was a touch of home cooking about the food, perhaps that is the result they want. It was certainly tasty and the servings were plentiful, my notes tell me that at lunch two courses are €28 And three are €32, the wine prices were user friendly and although on the day we were there we ate inside, they are obviously ready for many people to sit outside overlooking a wonderful view.

They are open from Wednesday to Sunday, and indeed on Sundays they offer a very popular brunch which includes a 1/4 bottle of wine and coffee for €40, children under 7 are free and 7-12 are €20.

It is essential to book for the brunch and even a week ahead may not be enough (0498 10 02 61).

If the wiggling of toes in the sand has more appeal, then head for the Bouillabaisse in St Tropez (with parking).

The well known St Tropez beach restaurants are not, of course, in St Tropez but in Ramatuelle, and the burghers of that commune have decided to rid the beach of restaurants, returning the beach to the nature reserve it never was, so heavy moving machines have been at work all winter, knocking down

restaurants and clearing the way for 'more restaurants'. These new arrivals will be paying considerable rents and no doubt passing this on to their clients. The days of the much loved little family run beach restos are gone, a few old favourites like 55 have survived, but many have been removed. It is a little early to speak badly about this scheme, but better early than never.

So if you want to go to a St Tropez restaurant on the beach then Bouillabaisse is a good option.

The beach is very pleasant, the view is better than Pampelonne, the service is friendly and if you want to take children for a swim, then the sea here is shallow for a long way out and consequently warmer.

Last Saturday I started with a *Coquille aux truffles d'été, crème de Compte et jambon blanc*. It was the kind of over thought out food that I tend to avoid, but it was delicious, and I am a sucker for truffles; however if you want a less expensive but just as delicious entrée, then the home made lobster raviolis would get my vote.

Most entrées are €16/18 and main courses are €21/35, the best value wines on their extensive list are the Siouvette blanc et rouge. If you want a sunset experience then the beach bar here will light up your evening.

So Surf or Turf, it is up to you.

Pip, pip



### RIP Robert Turnbull – VVV Music and Opera Critic –

sadly passed away Christmas Day 2018 – at the early age of 61 He was a good friend, kind and extremely generous with his musical knowledge and expertise. He had trained as a classical pianist, but later turned to opera and musical criticism writing - Opera Magazine, Opera Now, Daily Telegraph, Spectator, BBC Music, The New York Times, International Piano and Classical Music.

In 1997, Robert moved to Cambodia and threw himself into the task of helping to rebuild the local performing arts scene, which had been decimated by the Khmer Rouge in the mid-1970s.

Not long after his arrival, Robert began to entertain the idea of mounting a production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. His vision was to introduce Western opera for the first time to Cambodia and feature local musicians and singers in partnership with an international cast and crew. In March 2018 a promotional version of *The Magic Flute* was performed at the Chaktomuk Conference

Hall in Phnom Penh, an event that will long be remembered by those who attended. The event was attended by the Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, Dr. Sackona Phoeurng, who gave an introductory speech expressing her wish to see *The Magic Flute* performed at Angkor Wat, something that Robert had envisioned.

In July 2013 he founded a festival, "En Blanc et Noir", and spent much of his time researching and attending performances throughout Europe to find talented young pianists who deserved more attention. As a result he forged friendships with dozens of young musicians from the former Soviet Union, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Belgium, Hungary, and the UK, many of whom played in France for the first time at his festival.

Robert was a warm, charismatic man who made friends easily. His deep knowledge and love of piano music inspired many pianists to travel to Lagrasse, a small French village near Carcassonne, to play a mixture of warhorses and eclectic repertoire in outdoors concerts. He insisted that the concerts remain free, so that a maximum number of unsuspecting passersby could experience great music, performed live. He set up a Foundation for the Piano Festival, "En Blanc et Noir".

I reprint below one of the last articles he wrote for VAR VILLAGE VOICE, a quirky, cheeky article in which he invited President Macron to his Piano Festival. I doubt he got reply. Readers who admire his initiative just might want to contribute to his Festival, in which case just go to the website

[www.enblancetnoir.com](http://www.enblancetnoir.com)

## DEBUSSY & PRESIDENT MACRON BY ROBERT TURNBULL

2018 is Debussy year and who better to celebrate it than the French President himself. You would think it would be normal for a leader of a country to acknowledge its iconic figures; but then how often - since Edward Heath - has a British politician waxed lyrical about Elgar or Britten. These days they want to come across as cool and laddish in their tastes and drop names like Led Zepelin or Justin Bieber. Macron stepped up and did the right thing.

He was in fact a good a piano student in Amiens and even won a prize there, which is why my team and I invited him to the En Blanc et Noir festival in Lagrasse, Aude, to play on the day we call Piano a Volonte. This the point in the festival when any Tom, Dick or Emmanuel can have a go at playing a posh piano. Of course it's a long shot, but we can but try. Even the letter of refusal we can place in the local bulletin.

"What will you do about security", asked my friend in Paris, to which I answered, "who cares: that's hardly my problem". When I proposed the idea to my board the suggestion went down like the proverbial lead balloon. **I couldn't find a single person who had voted for him.** The foreigners in Lagrasse seem to think they are rather special and might have plumped for him if they could vote, but it seems the locals, fed up with the middle-of-the-road types, were divided between Le Pen and Melanchon. Macron is too well-groomed and Parisian for the Corbieres people. His advisor might consider him coming to Lagrasse a bit of a risk, as there are one or two who would probably pelt him with eggs during a performance of Claire de Lune (which they say he plays quite well).

Returning to Debussy, it's always struck me that there's a kind of snobbish attitude to the composer. While highly intelligent, he

was a bit uncouth and lacked Ravel's cosmopolitan sophistication. Ravel was exacting and precious, adored Chinoiserie and dolls houses, and apparently didn't have much of a sex life, possibly because he was gay. Debussy, on the other hand, was moody and grumpy and racked with insecurities. Constantly struggling with the gossipy and censorious Parisian musical scene, he began and dropped projects like hot cakes and his only completed opera, *Pelleas et Melisande* was a three year nightmare to get on stage.

But as a composer Debussy was unmatched in French music, with the exception of Berlioz. Almost everything he wrote had a streak of originality, his restless inquiring mind propelled him into totally uncharted areas in tonality and pianistic rhetoric. His passion was for Balinese, Russian Spanish music, anything in fact but mainstream German romantic music which he hated, and that included Beethoven, was prodigious. He was also an amazing melodists, something he is not always given credit for. Of all Claude Debussy's piano works, *L'Isle Joyeuse* is my favorite. Overshadowed by the more high profile sets of pieces such as the *Images* and *Preludes* and completely ignored by a surprising number of piano titans, it is nevertheless regarded by critics as one of Debussy's best, the Debussy expert Paul Roberts calls it 'perhaps the most unique and remarkable of all his works and certainly one of the great pieces of piano literature'.

The work's simple title belies a complex genesis. On his many visits to the Louvre, Debussy was fascinated by *L'Embarquement pour Cythere*, Watteau's 1717 rococo masterpiece depicting amorous couples about to depart for the mythical island of Cythera, birthplace of Venus. A painting in the genre the world has come to know as *Fete Galante* Debussy actually likened to a "mini Mozart opera", presumably referring to the *Così fan Tutte*-like quartet of lovers in the foreground rather than the cupids hovering overhead. The painting in turn inspired poems by both Baudelaire and Debussy's favourite poet, Paul Verlaine.

In one sense the *L'Isle Joyeuse* existed in Debussy's heart. This 255 bar piece coincided with the composer's infatuation with wife-to-be Emma Bardac, following the anguish of his first wife's suicide attempt. When Claude and Emma decided to escape, or rather to elope, they chose, appropriately enough, an island to do so. But it wasn't, as you might expect a sunny romantic destinations such as Mallorca or Capri, but rather the Channel island of Jersey, then a place of grim fishing villages and best known today as a place of off-shore bank accounts and fish and chips. It was here, in 1905, in a beach guesthouse with seagulls flying overhead that Debussy put the finishing touches of *L'Isle Joyeuse*.

Debussy died just before the end of WW1. The years before had been very unproductive and he was battling colon cancer and he was depressed by a war he could barely understand. He only managed to finish a few pieces, some of whose proceeds went to the war effort. The song for homeless children over Xmas is a very touching piece that showed another more tender side of the composer. Debussy of course had no truck with politicians but ended up more engaged with the war effort. One of his very last pieces which he signed, significantly, Claude Debussy, musician français was *En Blanc et Noir*, our festival's signature piece which contains a reference to the *Marseillaise*. It's written for two pianos, so if macron does show up to Lagrasse I shall insist we play it together. The bodyguards can turn the pages,





### Douglas Carswell ON BREXIT

A little less than two years ago eight out of ten MPs were elected on manifestos that promised to honour the 2016 EU referendum result. Today it is apparent that most of those same MPs - aided by the Whitehall machinery - are manoeuvring to overturn it. But instead of getting angry about the way our democracy is going, we ought to feel grateful. It is, finally, no longer possible for people to ignore the fact that there is something profoundly wrong with our political system.

Until a couple of years ago, it was only a few political obsessives – like me – who argued that our country was run by a self-serving Europhile Establishment, out of touch with the rest of the country. The antics of MPs have brought this truth into focus and in doing so opened up the possibility of far-reaching reform. Brexit – which started out as a question of home rule – is fast becoming a question of who rules at home. The sight of MPs glibly reneging on manifesto promises, or changing parties without bothering to give local people a say in a by-election, now guarantees that there will be an appetite for reform among the mainstream electorate that was not there previously. One recent poll showed nine in 10 people see the way that these Brexit negotiations have been handled as a “national humiliation”. Another showed that well over half the country now recognises that Parliament is trying to block Brexit. Brexit has exposed the extent to which officials behind closed doors decide public policy with little reference to the public. A future Tory Prime Minister needs to come to office prepared to sack a whole swathe of senior civil servants in the Treasury and the Cabinet Office, who have at best failed to adapt to the referendum result. At worst, some of them seem to have colluded with officials on the EU side in order to stave off real change.

The people need to know that they, not the Establishment whose antics have turned Brexit into a fundamental question of who yields ultimate power in this country, are in charge.



### PRESIDENT LOONY TUNES

Sorry to bash on about Jupiter Macron, but he does seem to be leading France from crisis to crisis, with little signs of relief. Just this past month he rushed into print, in all 29 leading European newspapers, sounding a clarion call for all to unite to the EU Flag, and most particularly his leadership of the same EU ship, leading to “more and more Europe, more unity etc. etc. and less and less free trade.

Aside from the airy fairy bubbles of this dissertation, there was little content, apart from all EU countries finally having a universal minimum wage. You can see that happening! Meantime his efforts to control haulage, cabotage across the continent are being hotly contested, principally by the Eastern European countries.

Why he thinks himself as the newborn leader of the EU – Juncker is shortly retiring – is anyone’s guess, but Merkel is fading into the sidelines, and Jupiter Macron is putting out his stall.

Why he thinks EU leaders should pay attention to him is beyond imagination, considering, as they must do, how little control he has over what is happening in France, since November with constant riots from Yellow Vests, all over France.

As Dutch Prime Minister Rutte remarked to him very snidely at the latest Brexit EU summit ““Booked another Skiing holiday, have you?”” very much to the point



Accordingly, Macron believes the forthcoming EU elections require a mandate for more EU programmes and solidarity. That requires more harmonisation, less competition, more EU-wide trade protectionism and EU-level investment and control over everything from defence and election watchdogs, through to external borders and asylum.

You wouldn’t know it from the letter, but EU-wide unemployment still stands at 6.5pc, and 7.8pc for the eurozone. Germany drags down the overall figure. In France, Italy and



Spain, unemployment rates are as high as 8.8pc, 10.5pc and 14.1pc. The link between populism and economics is oft-overstated, but it doesn't seem crazy to think Italy and France might be less politically tumultuous with more people in work and some semblance of robust economic growth.

Macron, though, has nothing to say on either. "Europe needs to look ahead to create jobs," he claims. His solution? Regulating the digital tech giants more heavily. Really, that is his main policy proposal. The jobs of the future will flow, it is implied, when Google, Amazon and Apple are forced to share their data and algorithms or are hit with penalties for "unfair competition". The same applies to trade. Macron laments Brexit as national retrenchment, but extols EU-wide retrenchment instead. We cannot "suffer in silence", he mightily declares, at the hands of those who do not respect European rules. We should adopt "European preference" for some industries and public procurement, while banning firms or imposing penalties on those who compromise "strategic interests" and "environmental standards, data protection and fair payment of taxes".

#### **As a recent comment article put it:**

"The French still like the idea of international leadership, and Macron has made much play of driving Europe forward along French lines, in a long speech at the Sorbonne a year ago, and most recently in an open letter in 24 languages to the peoples of the EU27 last month, setting out worthy goals (minimum wages, climate action, ECB financial governance, etc, all to be discussed in a gigantic talking shop, sorry, European conference by the end of the year.)

You only needed to listen to the German CDU leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer's rebuke last week to realise that Macron's dream of EU common financial governance is not going to happen any time soon. But with Britain out, France sees itself as the dominant EU power beyond Germany, and Macron wants to mark his territory, in preparation for Angela Merkel's departure. Emmanuel Macron, the ardently Europhile president of France, now poses a greater threat to the future of the European Union than Brexit.

In an opinion piece published in newspapers across Europe at the beginning of the month, the French president set out a vision for the EU's future that will exacerbate deep divisions between the bloc's western and eastern countries.

Mr Macron, as he has done previously, took aim at Brexit and the "lies" of Brexiteers, but his real target is not Britain but the Eastern European nations that joined the EU in 2004.

His call for a "European renaissance" of deeper integration is a declaration of war on the EU's arriviste nations and a call for the creation of an elite group of richer, Western, eurozone countries that would rule Brussels and be dominated in turn by Paris and Berlin.

The threat Brexit posed to the EU has long since been neutralised by a painstakingly-created facade of unity among the EU-27 and the painful process of divorce negotiations.

But Mr Macron has stripped that veil away by calling for a "multi-speed" Europe as he seeks to distract attention from the Yellow Vest protests at home and pressure from the Eurosceptic National Rally by depicting himself as the champion of a new, reformed EU led by and for France.

May's European Parliament elections have already been painted as a battle for the soul of Europe between pro-EU and nationalist forces.

Those battle lines have been enthusiastically embraced by the likes of Hungarian PM Viktor Orban, in the middle of a sustained and controversial poster campaign of Brussels bashing, and Italy's Matteo Salvini.

Mr Macron has poured fuel on that combustible mix and risks a furious fightback from countries who reject his choice of "more Europe" or second class EU membership.

The French president's vision of a "multi-speed Europe" divided into "concentric circles" will be seen in the capitals of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic as little more than a ploy to relegate them to a lower tier of the EU.

The core of richer, western EU member states pressing ahead with closer integration would be hugely influential, not least because its members would contribute the lion's share of the EU budget. In contrast the Eastern European countries are dependent on cash from Brussels.

Orbiting this elite group would be the non-euro nations, including the non-euro western nations such as Denmark, and the poorer, less developed Eastern European countries who may not share all of Brussels' "European values".

Mr Macron suggests Brexit Britain could find its "true place" on a third outer ring of satellite non-EU countries with close relations to Brussels.

The idea of a multi-speed Europe is fiercely resisted by the newer Eastern EU member states, who argue that such an approach would run-roughshod over the idea of a union of equals.

#### **Why the French President should solve his own problems before criticising the UK**

EU decisions are made, in theory, on the basis of consensus among member governments. Great pains are taken to avoid public defeats of individual countries, which does limit the speed and ambition of EU legislation.

Mr Macron would take away this fig-leaf of a national brake. In his vision, some member states would be more equal than others, and France, along with Germany, would be first among equals.

His demand that countries, such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, accept mandatory migrant quotas or be booted out of the Schengen passport-free zone is extremely divisive.

Loss of Schengen would not prevent Poles or Hungarians using their free movement rights but the reimposition of border controls in the EU's cherished Schengen area would send a powerfully symbolic message to countries already in the grip of status anxiety.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, is aware of the risk of division and describes East and West as the "two lungs" of the EU and has called for Bulgaria and Romania to join Schengen and the euro.

It may suit Mr Macron to pose as the saviour of Europe, especially given his domestic troubles, and hope it goes unnoticed that he has actually reined in his more Europhile impulses.

He makes no mention of the tricky and vital issue of eurozone reform, for example, and his call for a eurozone finance minister also appears to have been ditched.

The president may be right when he says the alternative, the status quo, is "a static Europe" condemned to a slow pace of change.

But his call for a European renaissance risks entrenching deep divisions in the bloc and plays into the hands of Eurosceptic parties across Europe ahead of May's elections.



If that leads to the fragmentation of the traditional parties in the European Parliament, it could bring the Brussels machine to a juddering halt with chaotic consequences for the bloc.””



**The extent of the decline of France's ailing industrial sector was laid bare in 2013, with the publication of a report stating over 1000 factories had closed since January 2009.**

In 2012 alone, 266 plants with 10 or more employees closed their doors for good. That figure represented a 42 percent increase in the number of closures, compared to the previous year, according to the report by Paris-based data analyst firm Trendeo.

Naturally, the closures have had an impact on jobs, with Trendeo reporting 24,000 losses last year alone and 120,000 since January 2009.

Explaining the reasons behind the decline, Trendeo's David Cousquer told the Local that the strength of the Euro currency was a hindrance for France.

"The rising value of the Euro against the dollar certainly does not help," he said. "It has risen 10 percent since July 2012 and it adversely affects the competitiveness of enterprises because it makes it more difficult for them to export their goods."

Cousquer also notes that "France is not an island" and "external factors" are also at play, with the country's industry wobbling at a time when Europe is in the grip of a financial crisis.

Although most areas of France's manufacturing industry, including pharmaceuticals, have been hit by job cuts and closures, it is the country's once mighty automobile sector that has taken the biggest hit. Around half of the 24,000 jobs lost in 2012 were in the car-making industry.

And matters are only set to get worse it seems, with PSA Peugeot Citroën intending to cull 8,000 jobs. The restructuring project also includes plans to close down its historic plant to the north of Paris.

The plan to close PSA's Paris plant is currently on hold after a French court decided it wanted to review the proposals, but France's Minister for Industrial Recovery, Arnaud Montebourg told French radio RTL on Tuesday that the closure of the plant was ultimately "unavoidable".

"We have not found any other solution," he said. "We don't know what else we can do."

The French government asked PSA to ensure that the 3,000 workers at the factory be helped to find alternative employment elsewhere in the company.

In a further blow to the automobile industry, Renault revealed [plans to cut 7,500 jobs](#) across France, and tyre firm [Goodyear](#) also announced that it would be closing its plant in Amiens.

Statistics published this week show that France's total public debt is now just a whisker behind its southern neighbour (Italy!), and its spending plans for this year mean it will overtake Italy very soon. France will take its place with the US among the world's biggest debtors.

With France, there is a crucial difference, however. It doesn't have its own currency, and it sells its debt abroad.

At the end of 2018, according to calculations by Bloomberg, France's total public debt came to €2.31 trillion (£2 trillion). That was just €1.4bn below Italy. In 2018, France ran a deficit of €80bn, and President Macron's feeble concessions to the *gilets jaunes* protesters mean it will be even higher this year.

Italy, in contrast, ran a deficit of €37bn last year, even with a "populist" government desperate to spend more. Both countries will owe more at the end of 2019 than they did at the start.

However, France will overtake Italy in its total outstanding by at least €50bn, will have Europe's largest debts and some of the biggest in the world.

There are two big reasons why it might be a worry. First, the French deficit is mostly funded overseas. In total, 56pc of French government debt is held abroad compared with 34pc for Italy. The Italians owe money to themselves, while the French owe it to other people. Next, the French government already has some of the highest taxation in the world.

If that weren't bad enough, the fall out from the Yellow Vests demonstrations exacerbate France's economic decline, already it is estimated the protests have cost over 170 million euros in insurance, plus millions in missing traffic fines, and piage tolls, plus loss to the tourism industry, in Paris and the provinces, added to which is the cost to commercant, retailers all over France, who have lost out on Saturdays, their big shopping days. So President Macron, who is minding the shop. Not him!



## AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

Several years ago I cancelled my Sky Box subscription, disgusted with its high price, and lack of value, it seemed to consist mainly of re-runs etc, and the only interesting programmes started late at night, at 10 pm local time, beyond my bedtime. It all seemed to happen around the same time as BBC and ITV changed satellites, necessitating larger satellite dishes, and pin point accuracy positioning. The whole technological thing, just got very boring and expensive, yes one can record ahead of time, but just more technical challenge.

For a while I was without any sort of TV, and found it very liberating, no more ghastly talking heads, talking rubbish, uttering short nonsensical sound bites. And as for truth in reporting, it just did not seem to exist, replaced by unending cookery shows, ghastly reality epics, or Flog it, downmarket antique shows - what was to miss?

I sort of surfaced around the time of the Top Gear scandal, not that I was a fan of white, mysogonistic, middle aged men bashing cars to bits, but followed this epic to Amazon, where I was in the habit of ordering paper back books. Amazon it appeared had taken on what became The Grand Tour, and as I discovered, offered lots of other rather interesting stuff.

What really got me hooked, when I was ordering some books, I found they had produced a series called "Bosch" from one of my favourite detective story writers Michael Connelly, all of whose novels I had read. Amazon offered a free 30 day trial. I was on.

I galloped through the first five series, with great enjoyment, they stayed true to the novels, just slightly updating Bosch's character from a Viet Name vet turned Detective, to a latter



version, ex Afghanistan. But the core remained the same, Bosch played in steely fashion by Titus Welliver. I went on to discover the BBC's series, The Night Porter, excellent thriller, superbly acted and produced, and several others, the quirky, one off stories The Romanoffs, loosely connected by the Romanoff link. My girl friend in Boston recommended the TV series The Good Wife, starring a brilliant performance from the actress Julianna Margulies, and I happily galloped through all seven series of this epic legal drama of a betrayed wife, also featuring Chris Noth, he of Mr. Big, of Sex & the City. It was a standout series, winning Emmy's all the time.

Recently there has been a spin off, entitled The Good Fight, starring Christine Baranski, who played a supporting role in the Good Wife, Baranski, she of the ski jump nose, also has played a blinder in the two series, and one can only hope for more of that gendre. Plus there is a fantastic series called Damages, as of now paying, but fantastic, starring Glen Close, in another legal drama, and featuring Ted Danson giving the performance of his life as a loathsome business giant who has plundered his company's pension pot – remind you of anyone. Not free, but it might come down in price.

Most of the above were free, and after my trial period I signed up. I try hard to find free films, and free series, but it varies, and also one finds that with Amazon, all of a sudden the price goes down, possibly as a series becomes older, or less popular. I have loved Blue Bloods, having acquired DVDs, an epic devoted to one family of New York cops, plus Chicago PD. Films seem to be chancy, some free, some not, but one finds treasures, Tom Hanks in Sully: Miracle on the Hudson. So no, I don't miss TV, and although I wish Amazon paid its taxes, its Prime Video service is pretty good, so far. Maybe I am way behind the times, and loads of readers are way ahead of me, I hope so. Luckily I have very good wifi, and have no trouble with download speeds, I have linked up laptop computer to my TV via a DHML (I think!) wire and enjoy big screen TV. I am curious about Netflix, but hesitate to dabble my toes in another subscription service (I am paying £7.99 a month, could be cheaper without express delivery) so would be interested to hear from readers as to what they think about Netflix, is it worth it, how much.

And to my delight I just discovered on watching Bosch all over again in the past month, that a new series starts April 19, Hooray! And what I particularly love is that most of the above are available with subtitles, for those like me hard of hearing, great.

## VOTES FOR EXPATS – VOTES FOR LIFE

“Following the consideration of the Overseas Electors Bill (Report Stage) on Friday 22 March 2019, the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP reaffirmed that:

*“The Government is committed to scrapping the 15-year cap preventing British expats from voting in parliamentary elections by 2022.”*

Glyn Davies MP's Overseas Electors Bill was halted recently following debate on numerous tabled amendments, and three urgent questions, which reduced the already limited time allocated to debate Private Members' Bills.”

Considering this was promised in the Conservatives 2015 Manifesto, it is taking a hell of a long time to come to pass.

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## GRAND SLAM CELEBRATIONS IN CARDIFF, MADNESS AT TWICKENHAM AND DAYLIGHT ROBBERY IN ROME

By SIMON EVELEIGH

The 2019 Six Nations came to an end with Wales duly wrapping a Grand Slam, although the ease of their victory over Ireland surprised most people.



The stadium in Cardiff is right in the heart of the city and the whole nation comes alive on 6 Nations weekends. The crowd play their part and silencing them has to be an aim for any visiting side.

The tone for the match against Ireland was set from the kick off when George North hared after the ball and bundled his opposite number into touch. From the resulting line out, Gareth Anscombe chipped in behind the Irish defensive line, Hadleigh Parkes caught the ball and fell over the line and Wales never looked back.

Wales are very difficult to beat, with a superb defence, even if they hardly set the world alight in attack, scoring only 10 tries in their five games (the same number as Italy), but they only conceded 7.

With the result in Cardiff, England were guaranteed to finish second even before they played Scotland at Twickenham.

In odd years England play the three blue teams (France, Italy and Scotland) at home and since the 6 Nations started in 2000, the only one of those to have won at Twickenham is France in 2005. Scotland have not won there since 1983 and when they were 31-0 down after half an hour, memories of their 60-point drubbing two years before will have come flooding back.

There then came one of the craziest turnarounds in international rugby history, with Scotland scoring 38 unanswered points, only for George Ford to score with the last play of the match, leaving the final score 38-38.

Neutrals loved it, but both sides seemed thoroughly deflated at the end, having both given up winning positions.



Earlier in the day the two worst teams in the competition had played out a very drab game, where Italy dominated but failed to turn that pressure into points and paid the penalty. France ended with an undeserved win and finished fourth in the table, the seventh time in the last eight years that they have been in the bottom half of the table.

There are good rugby players in France but on the international stage a game against a once proud nation is now considered as one of the easier fixtures.

There will be a block of friendly World Cup warm-up matches in August, including Wales playing both England and Ireland home and away, with Ireland also taking on England at Twickenham. However, nobody will be revealing their full hand at that stage and the next competitive rugby for the 6 Nations teams will be in Japan at the end of September.

Wales will go in with high hopes, but there are probably two things that need to happen for them to have a realistic chance of going all the way; Alun Wyn Jones must stay fit and they will probably need to add more of an attacking edge to their game if they are going to unsettle The All Blacks, particularly away from the fervour of Cardiff.

England's attacking game functioned pretty well during most of the 6 Nations and their supporters will be hoping that Eddie Jones is right when he says that the mental aberration of the second half against Scotland is fixable.

Only four months ago, Ireland looked as if they would be New Zealand's closest challengers in Japan, but they were blown away in both their opening and closing games and will be very disappointed with their campaign.

<https://www.blevinsfranks.com/events/country/france>

The saying goes that form is temporary, but class is permanent and that needs to be the case if Ireland are to be in the final shake-up. In particular, their half backs, Conor Murray and Jonathan Sexton need game time if they are going to return to the heights of 2018.

The second half at Twickenham showed what Scotland are capable of when they really set their minds to it, although it seems that for the last few years every time we expect great things of them they fail to deliver and they have to sort out their consistency problems.

On the basis of what we saw during February and March, France and Italy are going to Japan to make up the numbers and there is a very real danger that France will fail to make it out of a group that also contains England and Argentina. But who knows with the French!

The Top 14 continued during the 6 Nations, as did Toulon's poor form.

They played three times in March, with the month beginning reasonably well, before normal service was resumed.

Toulon broke their away duck with victory at Perpignan, but followed that up with a home loss to another team who have failed to live up to their pre-season billing, Montpellier, and another away defeat at Lyon.


April starts with Toulon hosting Toulouse at the Stade Vélodrome in Marseille. Toulouse have been Toulon's other fixtures this month are away to Grenoble and at home to Bordeaux.

Whilst it is still mathematically possible for Toulon to finish in the top six, with a fourteen-point gap to make up and only six games to do it, the probability is that in those matches, Toulon will be playing merely for pride and to put a positive gloss on what has been a dreadfully disappointing season.

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