Julien Labro, bandoneón and accordion

Hailed as “the next accordion star” and “a triple threat: brilliant technician, poetic melodist, and cunning arranger" by the *Chicago Tribune*, **Julien Labro** is internationally recognized as one of the foremost accordion and bandoneón soloists of his generation. Labro brings uncommon versatility to the concert stage, moving fluidly between classical, jazz, tango, and world music. A performer, composer, and arranger, he is known for concept-driven, presenter-friendly programs that captivate audiences while pushing musical boundaries.

Born in France, Labro began playing the accordion at the age of nine, drawn early to traditional folk music and the lyrical style of French chanson. His artistic voice expanded through a deep engagement with jazz, inspired by its freedom, originality, and expressive possibilities. After graduating from the Marseille Conservatory of Music, he won top prizes in major international competitions, including the Coupe Mondiale and the Castelfidardo competitions, as well as first prizes at the Marcel Azzola, Jo Privat, and Médard Ferrero competitions. He subsequently moved to the United States, where he pursued advanced studies in classical music, jazz, and composition.

Labro has appeared as a guest soloist with leading orchestras worldwide, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, New World Symphony, Hartford Symphony, Pensacola Symphony, Cleveland Pops, Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, and Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, among many others. His chamber and ensemble collaborators include The Knights, A Far Cry, The MET Orchestra Chamber Ensemble, Spektral Quartet, Attaca Quartet, Balourdet Quartet, Arneis Quartet, Ensemble Vivant of Toronto, Curtis On Tour, and Camerata Pacifica. Labro has premiered compositions by internationally acclaimed composers including Bryce Dessner, Du Yun, Avner Dorman, Clarice Assad, Ethan Iverson, and Angélica Negrón. He is also a trusted performer in orchestral and ballet repertoire requiring accordion or bandoneón, with appearances alongside the New York Philharmonic and the New York City Ballet, as well as in collaborations with the Paul Taylor Dance Company.

Since the 2021–22 season, Labro has partnered regularly with the Takács Quartet in a touring program featuring newly commissioned works by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner, commissioned by Music Accord. The collaboration has brought Labro to leading chamber music series across the United States and has helped establish the bandoneón as a central voice within contemporary string quartet repertoire.

A devoted admirer of Astor Piazzolla — whose music inspired him to take up the bandoneón — Labro has become a leading interpreter and re-imaginer of tango repertoire. He recorded the album *Piazzolla* with classical guitarist and Grammy Award winner Jason Vieaux and the conductorless chamber orchestra A Far Cry. His discography also includes collaborations with Grammy Award–winning vocalist Cassandra Wilson (*Another Country*), Hot Club of Detroit (*Junction*), *Infusion* with Jason Vieaux, *American Crow* with the Maria Schneider Orchestra, and *Rise & Grind*

with Finnish jazz guitarist Olli Soikkeli. His long-standing collaboration with Spektral Quartet resulted in the album *From This Point Forward*, a genre-bending recording praised for its craftsmanship and expressive range, featuring guest appearances by alto saxophonist and MacArthur Fellow Miguel Zenón. In 2024, Labro received a Latin Grammy nomination for Best Classical Composition for *Meditation #1*, premiered and recorded with the Takács Quartet.

Recent and upcoming highlights include performances at the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall Citywide, Lincoln Center, Ravinia, Tanglewood, and Big Ears Festival, alongside chamber tours with the Takács Quartet and performances with the Maria Schneider Orchestra. Ongoing and upcoming projects also include a tour of Japan, performances with The Knights, and the opening of the 2026–27 season with Labro's newly arranged version of Astor Piazzolla's *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* with the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Labro has recently composed and premiered a new commissioned concerto, *Vivaldi 23.5*, for accordion and orchestra. Inspired by Earth's 23.5-degree axial tilt — the force that creates the seasons — the work reimagines Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* through a contemporary lens, blending baroque reference points with original material, modern orchestration, and Labro's distinctive harmonic and rhythmic language. He is currently composing a second bandoneón concerto, conceived as a sequel to his first, *El Fueye del Tiburón (The Bellows of the Shark)*, and continues to develop new orchestral, chamber, and interdisciplinary projects.

In addition to his performing career, Labro is deeply committed to music education. He regularly leads master classes, workshops, and residencies at institutions such as Princeton University, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and other universities and conservatories worldwide. In recognition of his artistic contributions and career achievements, Labro received the Wayne State University Arts Achievement Recognition in 2025.

For more information, visit www.julienlabro.com

Acclaim

"A Triple threat: brilliant technician, poetic melodist, and cunning arranger" - *The Chicago Tribune*

"Julien Labro's sensitive bandoneon was a particular highlight." - *The Washington Post*

"An excellent soloist" - *The Boston Globe*

"Labro plays the accordion with the style and verve of a rock musician...adding a modern, innovative touch." - *Winnipeg Free Press*