

Act V: The twilight of a god

Her devotion to France and her patriotism need no introduction. During the Siege of Paris in 1870-1871, she turned the Odéon Theatre into a hospital and tended to the wounded soldiers herself. Despite her leg amputation, she performed on the front line at the army theatre, getting a warm welcome from the French infantrymen in World War I. She also staged charity performances to raise funds for victims of conflicts and disasters.

Sarah Bernhardt died of uremia on March 28th 1923. The headline of *Bonsoir* newspaper was: "Sarah is dead, long live Sarah!". Although the government decided against a state funeral, hundreds of thousands of people joined the funeral procession from Boulevard Pereire to La Madeleine Church, then past her theatre to her final resting place, Père-Lachaise Cemetery.

Act VI: Sarah after Sarah

The journalist Maurice Feuillet wrote of the auction selling furniture and belongings owned by the tragedian: "They have become vessels of a she whose name will live on in the hearts of men and will be passed down through pious hands in memory of a Frenchwoman, so full of talent, spirit and heart."

She lives on through written work, novels, essays and testimonials alongside countless exhibitions, film adaptations, plays, television shows and comic strips.

Sarah Bernhardt is and always will be a timeless icon in theatre and legend.



Laurel wreath, solid silver, New York, 1913, collection & photo: Pierre-André Hélène.



Sarah Bernhardt in *Théodora* by Victorien Sardou, 1884, collage, pastel and print, Daniel Ladeuille, 2010, Daniel Ladeuille collection, photo: Suzanne Nagy.

Belt in *Cleopatra*, Victorien Sardou, title role, 1890, metal studs, glass beads, stones, circa 1890, lot 47 in the 1923 auction, collection & photo: Pierre-André Hélène.



Final portrait in Belle-Île, oil on canvas, Louise Abbéma, 1921, Musée intercommunal d'Etampes collection, photo Suzanne Nagy.



ALONGSIDE THE EXHIBITION

TOURS

- **Guided tours** (ages 12 and over)
Tues-Sun: 2.30pm (weekend: 2.30pm & 4pm). 1 hr 15. €4 + admission
- **Family tours** (ages 6-12)
School holidays: Weds 4pm & Sun 11am (40 min)
Child: free/Adult: €7
- **Curator talks & Guided tours** (ages 12 and over)
July 12th /July 26th /Oct 25th /Nov 8th /Dec 6th 4pm (1.5 hr) Booking essential. €4 + admission.

TALK

Thursday October 8th, 7pm
"La Vie de Sarah Bernhardt : glamour et aventure au théâtre" by Pierre-André Hélène (**The Life of Sarah Bernhardt: glitz and glamour at the theatre**).
Auditorium (1.5 hr). Free. Courtesy of the Amis du Palais Lumière.

THEATRE

Sarah Bernhardt, toujours ! (Sarah Bernhardt, forever!)
Saturday September 19th, 8pm
Join Sarah Bernhardt in her dressing room before she performs as *Phaedra*. directed by Nicolas Laugero-Lasserre based on Bernhardt's memoirs, *My Double Life*. Performed by Véronique Fourcaud.
Auditorium. €15/Concession: €10/Free for under 16s.
Booking advised: +33 (0)4 50 83 15 90. Supported by the Amis du Palais Lumière

July-August

The 20th anniversary of the Palais Lumière! (family-friendly) Scavenger hunt, interactive frieze, painting contest, prizes.
Further information: +33 (0)4 50 83 15 90
www.ville-evian.fr

CHILDREN & FAMILY WORKSHOPS GROUP AND SCHOOL WORKSHOPS
Available to book

Full activity schedule available at reception and on www.ville-evian.fr

Practical information

Palais Lumière Evian (Quai Charles-Albert Besson).
Tuesday-Sunday and bank holidays: 10am-6pm (Tuesday: 2pm-6pm during term time).
Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
Tel. 33 (0)4 50 83 15 90 / www.ville-evian.fr

Exhibition curator and collector: **Pierre-André Hélène**

Palais Lumière curator: **William Saadé**

Exhibition design: **Julia Dessirier**/Graphic design: **Nicolas Turki Duchesnay**



Admission

- **Full price:** €9
 - **Reduced rate:** €7 (see details of reductions at www.ville-evian.fr)
 - **Free for children under 16**
 - **50% discount on admission** (full or reduced price) on presentation of the "Avantages" card (City of Evian)
 - **30% discount** on exhibition admission prices on presentation of a ticket to the Pierre Gianadda Foundation in Martigny and vice versa
 - **Exhibition catalogue** available from the gift shop: €39 (éditions Sans égal. Atelier Tutti Frutti)
- Tickets:**
- From the exhibition reception desk
 - From ville-evian.tickeasy.com.
 - From CGN points of sale (boats and ticket offices).

«Parisienne», Blue and black silk day dress with bustle, circa 1875, collection & photo: Ollivier Henry.

COMING SOON

To the Palais Lumière

February 6th-May 23rd 2027

«**Visions d'Asie. Henri Cernuschi**, un collectionneur au temps du japonisme» (*Visions of Asia. Henri Cernuschi, a collector in the time of Japonism*) Exhibition by the Musée Cernuschi, Musée des Arts de l'Asie de la Ville de Paris, Paris Musées.

At the Pierre Gianadda Foundation in Martigny

June 26th-November 22nd 2026

Rodin selon Rilke (Rilke on Rodin)
Organized by the Musée Rodin, Paris.

Sarah Bernhardt, dans *Théodora* de Victorien Sardou, tirage photographique au charbon par Fresson d'après la plaque de verre originale de Downey, 40 x 32 cm, 1884

EXHIBITION

SARAH BERNHARDT

THE LIVING LEGEND

The passion of a collector

Palais Lumière Évian
July 4th 2026-January 3rd 2027

Sarah Bernhardt... "the" great French tragedian!

But there was more to this an incredible woman: she was a peerless actor, passionate patriot, sharp businesswoman, tireless globetrotter, media icon, fantastic lover, artist agent, designer, painter, sculptor, model and inspirational muse. A woman who knew how to make an entrance and whose life continues to entrance.

Her ingenuity, golden voice, strong personality, relentless determination, charisma and sheer confidence have gone down in the history of her time

across the globe. A much-admired yet often controversial figure, she managed to create a media image for herself which was so ahead of its time that it still resonates today.

100 years since she passed, Sarah Bernhardt remains one of the greatest actors in history.

The six acts and 300 items in this collection provide an introduction or reintroduction to a one-of-a-kind artist, a pioneer in the art of mastering image and media. Let us explore her inspirational, international yet intrinsically French legacy with the flair and thrill it deserves.

Act I: Childhood, family and début

Sarah Bernhardt was born to a courtesan and raised by a wet nurse in Quimperlé, Brittany, before she was sent to Grandchamp, a convent in Versailles. The convent brought out her strong personality, as she herself admits: "I was a little madam at the convent."

During a family old's future, the Duke of Morny (Napoleon III's half-brother and a regular patron of Bernhardt's mother) suggested she enrol at the Paris Conservatoire. That was the beginning of an incredible career and stardom.



Teenage Sarah Bernhardt, photographier unknown, 1862, Daniel Ladeuille collection, photo Suzanne Nagy.

Act II: On stage

Sarah Bernhardt excelled in the roles of queens, princesses, empresses and saints, showcasing her sense of majesty, love for extravagance and very personal vision of acting for adoring audiences the world over. She was soon nicknamed "the queen of the pose and the princess of the gesture" and praised for her "golden voice", the musicality in her diction reminiscent of the opera and musical storytelling.

On stages across the globe, she played the likes of *Phaedra*, *Ruy Blas*, *Cleopatra*, *La Dame aux Camélias* and *Frou-Frou*. Victorien Sardou wrote the plays *Tosca*, *Gismonda*, *Théodora* and *Fédora* with her in mind. She even played male roles, including *Hamlet*, *Lorenzaccio* and the hugely successful *L'Aiglon*, which Edmond Rostand wrote for her.



◀ Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Étrangère* by Alexandre Dumas Jr, 1876, playing Mrs Clarkson, photograph by Walery, 1876, Pierre-André Hélène collection, photo Suzanne Nagy.

Sarah Bernhardt in *Phaedra* by Racine, title role, 1879, photograph by Rochlitz Studio, signed and dedicated to the American designer Herman Tappe: «À Tappe, un grand artiste» (To Tappe, a great artist), 1914, Collection & photo: Daniel Ladeuille. ▶

Act III: In the city

Sarah Bernhardt was a unique and memorable character. She used her unusual figure to her advantage, setting her own trends that soon caught on. She discovered and supported countless artists: **Alphonse Mucha**, **Louise Abbéma**, **Georges Clairin** and **René Lalique**, the jeweller. Gustave Moreau and **Edward Burne-Jones** saw her as a major source of inspiration for Symbolist and Pre-Raphaelite movements. She became a figure associated with Art Nouveau.

Bernhardt began exploring her own artistic side in 1875, producing paintings and sculptures that are now regarded as outstanding.



Self-portrait, Sarah Bernhardt, patinated plaster, circa 1890, collection & photo Daniel Ladeuille.

Sarah Bernhardt in *Jeanne d'Arc* by Jules Barbier, title role, 1890, poster by Eugène Grasset, 1890, Collection & photo: Pierre-André Hélène.

Sarah Bernhardt at home, photograph by Dornac, 1890, Pierre-André Hélène collection, photo: Suzanne Nagy.



Act IV: The global icon

"The Divine Sarah" toured the world for over thirty years, performing in Europe, America and even Australia. She flew the flag for French theatre and gave the fascinated crowds who flocked to see her an introduction to France and her opulence.

Between 1880 and 1916, she visited the United States nine times, spending months performing in over 75 cities in often unusual settings, with views of Niagara Falls, in the Midwest, in a 4000-seater tent or on a special train. Her incredible adventures inspired a collection of real and embellished stories that helped create a mystique around her.

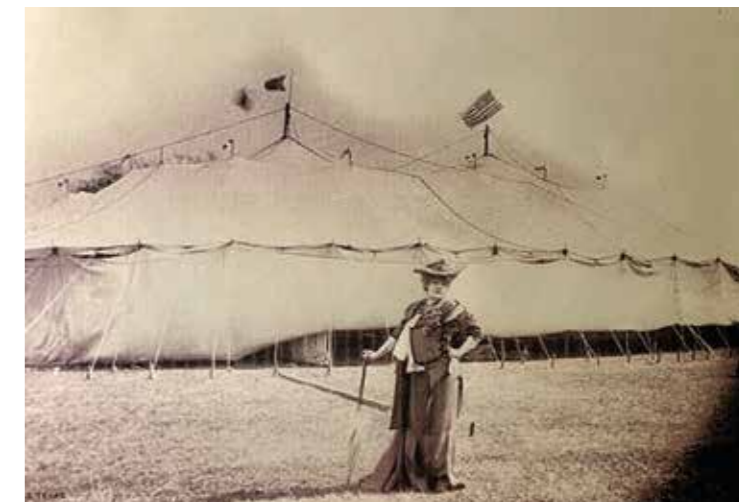
She realised the power of publicity during these same tours. Bernhardt began marketing her brand on a wide scale, becoming one of the first artists to manage her media presence and secure significant commercial success.

Sarah Bernhardt had relationships with powerful artistic, political and high society figures throughout her life, who

helped raise her profile and secure the unique position she had in society at the time. Much has been said about the personal life that help make her so famous and build her brand.



Sarah Bernhardt in the city, signed photograph by W. & D. Downey, 1902, Daniel Ladeuille collection, photo: Suzanne Nagy.



Sarah Bernhardt, photographer unknown, 1906, Pierre-André Hélène collection, photo: Suzanne Nagy.