



Urban Mix

Let's go out ! Let's walk together through a great modern capital, with the ear more attentive than the eye, and we will vary the pleasures of our sensibilities by distinguishing among the gurglings of water, air and gas inside metallic pipes, the rumblings and rattlings of engines breathing with obvious animal spirits, the rising and falling of pistons, the stridency of mechanical saws, the loud jumping of trolleys on their rails, the snapping of whips, the whipping of flags. We will have fun imagining our orchestration of department stores' sliding doors, the hubbub of the crowds, the different roars of railroad stations, iron foundries, textile mills, printing houses, power plants and subways.

Luigi Russolo, *The art of noise* (1913)

[Statement of intent]

I've never been able to walk around a city without being drawn to the sounds of its landscape, its architecture, and its urban furnishings; with the irresistible urge to listen to everything, to taste everything, to play with everything, as if I was walking through the window display of a huge music store, and to then share the most beautiful and delicious of my discoveries.

The role of the musician – and more generally the artist – no longer seems to me to be to create works that are inherently beautiful, but objects that awaken us, inform us, and modify the perspectives of our way of listening.

How can we make every listening moment an encounter, rare and priceless? How can we reinvent our relationship to music, if not music itself? How can we be in a constant state of invention and bring to life true moments of public poetry, free from all need for permission, justification, explanation?

Is it still possible, in this day and age, to move people with such simple things as an impromptu concert, an unexpected and spectacular sonic reading of the city?"

Michel Risse

[A mobile quintet of concrete music]

Without a word, all of a sudden, a moving five-person crew enters into the soundscape. These explorers play, live and on-site, with the technology, sounds, objects, and people they encounter.

Sorts of “Street-Jockeys” without turntables or synthesizers, the musicians of Urbaphonix listen to their sonic surroundings and compose using only what is already all around us but what no one listens to: the mechanical sounds of traffic, the hums of heating ducts and air conditioning vents, bodies, conversations, and, especially, urban furnishings, which serve both as the stage and as a limitless source of instruments for this instant theater. In order to create something never heard before, unpredictable, and enchanting, their talent lies in their ability to make us hear what is already there, but what no one noticed, because no one thought to listen.

Disciples of Luigi Russolo, Pierre Schaeffer and Murray Schafer, they faithfully apply John Cage’s advice: “If a sound disturbs you, listen to it!”



[Tuning the city]

Urbaphonix gets its inspiration from its very context, which implies an art form that is fundamentally alive, an experience in constant renewal. No two performances are alike. More than that, each performance can only find meaning and be possible in the specific place where it unfolds.

Each Urbaphonix stroll brings the audience into an instant micro-symphony, a sonic journey punctuated by discoveries great and small, by moving or comic encounters with places and people.

It is a voyage, a visit, a walking concert, made possible by an innovative and entirely free-standing technical system: with no wires or plugs, the high quality sound and mobile broadcasting system makes it possible to capture, reveal, and mix the never before heard sounds of the city. Thus, what was once reserved only to studio manipulation, "in vitro," now opens itself up to the street, "in vivo," capturing and surprising the public in the course of daily life.



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[Meeting the public]

Under constant construction and in a perpetual state of discovery, Urbaphonix slides continuously, without lingering, appears where we least expect it, disappears to lure us towards other spaces, leaving walkers by free to follow it, to make sure they didn't dream it...

No need for a manual or initiation to be able to hear this concrete and living music. Through sound, every urban environment gains an unexpected poetic dimension; the ordinary passer-by comes out of his indifference and becomes a curious spectator, a demanding music connoisseur, an active listener. He comes to realize that he, too, is an actor in the sonic landscape.

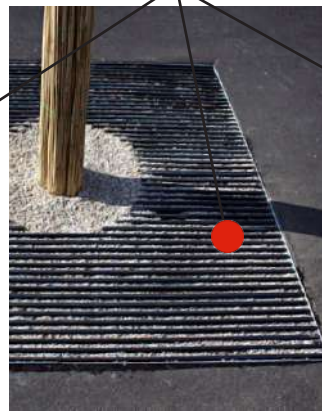


[Urban instrumentarium | materials]

Wooden bars (steps, public benches...) = xylophones



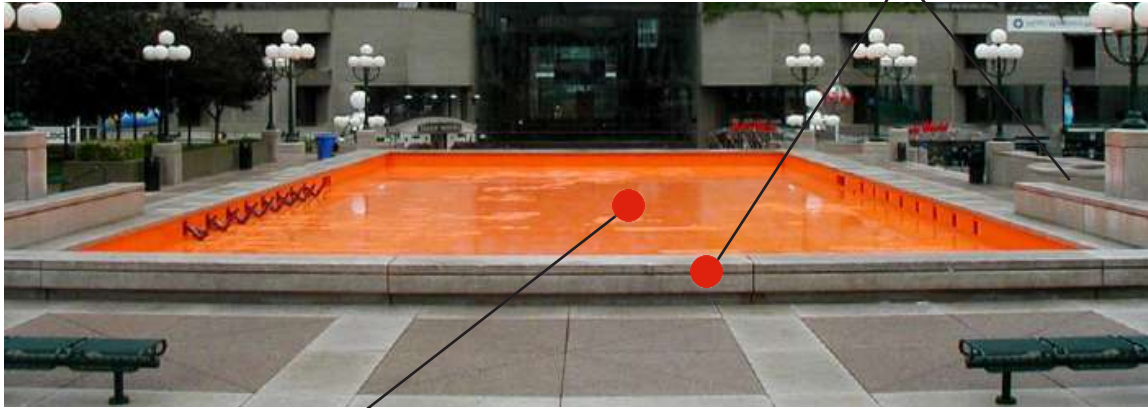
Metal bars (fences, breastworks, railings...) = metallophones keyboard, metallic harps...



*Plastic containers
= bass drums*

[Urban instrumentarium | surfaces]

stone tiles = lithophones



fountains, water ponds = sound drops

*glass surfaces (display windows, shelters...)
= glass membranophones, bowed or rubbed glass organs*



[Team]

Artistic direction : Michel Risse

Artistic team : Damien Boutonnet, Jérôme Bossard, Gonzalo Campo,
Benoît Meurant, Maximilien Neujahr, Gaëlle Salomon

Technical direction : Renaud Biri

Staging collaboration : Martine Rateau

Costumes : Fabienne Desfleches

[The company]

Décor Sonore was founded in 1985 by two composers, Michel Risse and Pierre Sauvageot. They created a unique composition and production tool, aimed at sound creation for open spaces and street arts.

Internationally regarded as one of the most innovating French companies, Décor Sonore offers the public uncommon entertainments combining drama, pyrotechnics, poetry, technology, humour, and, of course, musical creation. Its productions range from very intimate forms to huge events, and talks to every audience.

Besides producing its own works, Décor Sonore developed the Fabrique sonore (« The Sound Factory »), which supports innovative works by other artists and companies, especially in the fields of the street arts and new stages. Its activities include researches in specific sound technology and media, education in sound and music staging, and acoustic ecology.

Décor Sonore is subsidised by the French Ministry of Culture and communication (DRAC Ile de France) and supported by the Region of Ile de France , SACEM, and City of Paris.

[Michel Risse]



Michel Risse is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, author and electro-acoustician. He studied music and percussions at CNSM in Strasbourg and Paris 8 University, but also with many rock, jazz and french alternative bands, as well as different artists : Moondog, Vince Taylor, Angel Parra, Nicolas Frize, Herbe Rouge, le Grand Orchestre Bekummernis. His experience as a percussionist, a multi-instrumentalist and an improviser soon led him to record stage and film soundtracks.

In 1972, he starts composing his first « décors sonores » (sound sceneries) – electroacoustic installations for public places.

In 1985, he founds Décor Sonore of which he is today the artistic director.

[Technical Specification sheet]

Urbaphonix is a technically self-supporting show. The whole equipment can be transported by road, sea or air.

It requires only a 215 sq ft (20m²) ground-floor room for the artists, with power supply to charge the sound system's batteries, close to the place where the performance will happen.

The whole artistic team has to check the show's itinerary for 3 hours before the show (on the show's day or the previous day, depending on the performance times). This rehearsal must be carried in the show's conditions (no other event going on at the same time, no noise annoyance).



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[Partners]

The French Ministry of culture and communication/DGCA

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La Coopérative de rue et de cirque à Paris

Le Parapluie – CNAR, Aurillac

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[Illustration - Cover]

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Videos on:
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