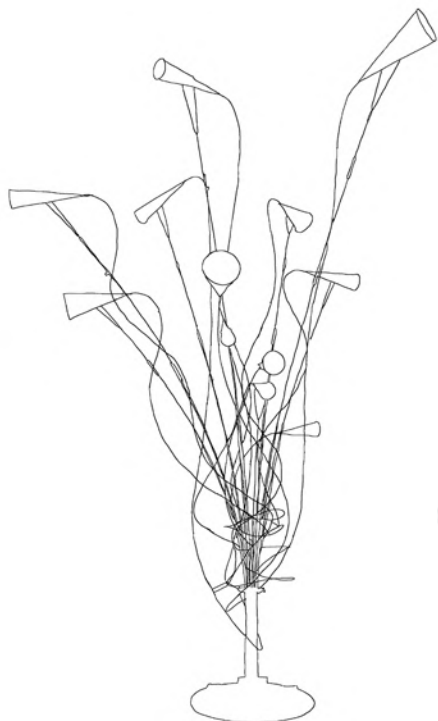


THE KALEIDOPHONES

A sound experience of the landscape

Creation 2016

Michel Risse | Décor Sonore



Villa Mais d'Ici - 77 rue des Cités - 93 300 Aubervilliers (FR)
Tél. : + 33 (0)1 41 61 99 95 - Email : info@decorsonore.org
www.decorsonore.org

« In a way, the world is a huge musical composition that is going on all the time, without a beginning and presumably, without an ending. We can improve it or we can destroy it ; we can add more noises or we can add more beautiful sounds ».

Raymond Murray Schafer



STATEMENT OF INTENT

Between the introduction of aircrafts in warfare and the invention of the Radar, only the human ear could detect enemy planes, with the help of huge stereophonic cornets, resembling giant swivelling hearing aids, which operators – often musicians – were assigned to monitor permanently so as to listen to the sky and thus guide anti-aircraft defence shootings.

It was most likely in one of the many TV documentaries about the “Great War” which I used to watch in my younger years, that I first glimpsed one of these strange devices. Whether it was because of the magnificent giant receivers set on a rotating turret, or the concentrated, expert expression of the modern hero caught in the act of listening – anyway, the vision has haunted my mind ever since, with the power of a mythological image or a primitive scene.

It was the ultimate anti-cannon, anti-war symbol: a device meant to receive sounds instead of firing missiles, without renouncing a shred of military prestige nor the explicit wonder of military technology. I immediately envied, and probably identified with this hero who, thanks to his own ears, could save lives without sacrificing any.

Many years later, these wonderful objects keep fascinating me, and thanks to them, I hope to share my unquenchable thirst for listening to the universe.

Michel Risse



[AN OPEN-AIR INSTALLATION OF ARTWORKS]

On a belvedere, in a park or a square, along a stream, a beach or an avenue, the public comes across a large installation of Kaleidophones. Each piece of this collection, both a giant sculpture and a device of acoustic exploration, is an original work designed together by the composer Michel Risse and a stage-designing artist, in accordance with specific acoustic requirements

Beyond the visual attraction and curiosity aroused by these astonishing “big ears”, anyone yielding to the temptation of wearing the headphones will discover a world full of surprises; while scanning a hitherto banal world of sounds, each movement of the cornets reveals a thousand new details, just like an acoustic kaleidoscope: a kaleidophone.

Freely inspired by the fantastic acoustic locators designed between the two World Wars to track the enemy aircrafts concealed by clouds or darkness, these sound sculptures significantly increase our stereophonic perception and make it more selective. The soundscape can thus be scanned, cut up, framed by the listener, who will become aware of unexpected, poetical, inexplicable details.

Set up in the public space, the Kaleidophones call to mind scientific observation instruments, sound binoculars for close-up listening, bizarre flowers in the shape of shells, old phonograph receivers, cornucopias, satellite dishes, all of which the visitor can freely direct by hand. Pointed at the soundscape, they invite to a different listening of the city, of nature, and of the whole world in-between.



[LISTENING TO THE REAL WORLD]

Perceiving the real world in real time, something we tend to do less and less. All the pictures and sounds we take in nowadays seem to reach us from everywhere and nowhere at the same time, with their infinite possibilities to be stored away and replayed at will, so that we gradually lose our ability to pay attention and care about what and whom surrounds us in the present time. Newsreels, TV shows, video games, videos captured by smartphones and viewed later on the internet, music tracks copied and trotted out endlessly... de-located, pre-recorded, downloadable the real world is slowly fading behind a digitally commanded universe.

This installation offers a large, open-air, free-access exhibition, meant to help us get re-connected to the real-life, present moment. The staging of its giant receivers clearly conveys the idea that a territory best reveals itself by listening to it, and the visitors, in turn, recover their own feeling of belonging, of "being there". Many happenings take place among the installations: guided tours, sound performances, music, secrets confided by the soundscape...

The installation arouses our awareness of the soundscape as a hitherto largely unperceived, badly shared common good, in which we resign ourselves to be purely passive spectators or even victims. While on the contrary, every one of us can become an author and an actor of this common good.

Moreover, this remarkable installation works without any power supply, and is totally interactive: all of its mechanical parts are within the reach of the visitors, who can thus direct their listening as they see fit. The very notion of "progress" is given a new approach: no smartphones, no GPS systems, no digital art, no high technology... no electricity!

Beyond art itself, beyond the aesthetic and acoustic research put into the design of those devices, and even beyond the findings and revelations they bring about, is the essential sensation of the present reality and time, rediscovered and shared.



[FROM LANDSCAPE TO SOUNDSCAPE]

What are the artists for ?

When contemplating the idea of a new creation, I always ask myself, "What's the rush?" Indeed, Berthold Brecht and Kurt Weill have raised the question, acted accordingly as best they could, and in the end proved themselves unable to stop the rise of Nazism: but they did what they had to do. So what is the rush today? If it is not within the artist's means – nor is it his mission – to have a direct and instant influence on the workings of the universe, at any rate he can modify our perception of the world, and suggest new ways to consider it.

The Renaissance painters have inserted nature into their works, staging it in a way which changed society's perception: the "landscape", invisible until then, emerged as a source of beauty, to the extent that people began to conceive gardens so as to make nature look more like their own beloved paintings.

As soon as the 18th century, long before Marcel Duchamp, high society people began to examine nature as "lookers", deeming it "picturesque" and using new optical devices, such as the Claude Glass, or "black mirror" (referring to the French painter Claude Lorrain), or the camera oscura (the "dark room", forerunner of today's cameras).

Of course, painters did not invent the landscape; but they did show us something, something that the community came to enjoy, and on which the very concept of landscape gradually began to build itself.



The origins of soundscape stretch back to the first experiments on sound observation and description. This doesn't mean, of course, that our ancestors were deaf, but their tools for observation and the conditions they lived in did not enable them to single out sounds as objects of study, detached from their natural environment and contexts.

Admittedly, both acoustic, and later psycho-acoustic sciences have made significant progress; but despite the instruments conceived to capture, stock and process it, the sound, constantly elusive shape-shifting, is a very specific object.

Rather unsuited for written descriptions, sounds are remarkably absent from most literary works, except so-called "sacred" texts, where the profusion of loud manifestations of divinities shows how much mankind was immersed in sounds and relying on the spoken word. Again, it was the artists – painters like Luigi Russolo, composers like John Cage, and many other sound-shapers after them – who first implied that our acoustic environment was not just an indecipherable chaos. Does, then, Murray Schafer's recent "acoustic ecology" herald a new Renaissance?



'Phonautograph', graphic inscription of the speech - 1857



Recording session, towards 1890



Edison's 'Megaphon', 1878

[A STORY OF (ACOUSTIC) HORNS, (HEARING) TRUMPETS AND (SOUND) DISHES]

Between the introduction of aircrafts in warfare and the invention of the radar, only the human ear could detect enemy planes, with the help of huge stereophonic cornets, resembling giant swivelling hearing aids, which operators – often musicians – were assigned to monitor permanently so as to listen to the sky and thus guide anti-aircraft defence shootings.

It was most likely in one of the many TV documentaries about the “Great War” which I used to watch in my younger years, that I first glimpsed one of these strange devices. Whether it was because of the magnificent giant receivers set on a rotating turret, or the concentrated, expert expression of the modern hero caught in the act of listening – anyway, the vision has haunted my mind ever since, with the power of a mythological image or a primitive scene.

It was the ultimate anti-cannon, anti-war symbol: a device meant to receive sounds instead of firing missiles, without renouncing a shred of military prestige nor the explicit wonder of military technology. I immediately envied, and probably identified with this hero who, thanks to his own ears, could save lives without sacrificing any.

Many years later, these wonderful objects keep fascinating me, and thanks to them, I hope to share my unquenchable thirst for listening to the universe.



THE COLLECTION

The Semaphore



With the help of the two handles, and thanks to the crafty engineering of the Semaphore, the listener can aim the two acoustic horns horizontally as well as vertically, as lightly and gracefully as possible, thereby following the most furtive movements of the sounds – but also betraying from afar in what direction the listener is pricking his ears!

Scenographer and constructor:
Vincent Brédif

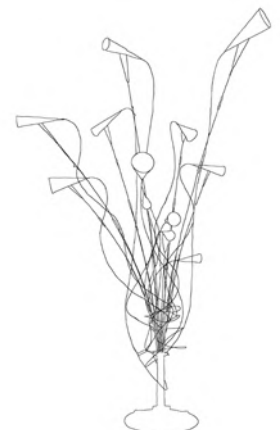


The dodecaphonic Bouquet



Among the rumbles of the world and the never-ceasing agitation of the molecules of the air, some unexpected, furtive details of the soundscape will sometimes consent to be perceived, revealed and sampled by these 12 auricles oriented in all directions: they are then led and harmonised in a flat key through vine-shaped tubes, into one two-eared listening device. It is advisable to listen with closed eyes, so as to better enjoy the resulting acoustic immersion in the surrounding space.

Scenography : Michel Lagarde
Constructor : Eloi Miehe



The great panaphonic Binauricular



It will grant you a 360° total and remarkably precise listening, enabling you to notice the large variety of nuances present in the soundscape, whether you aim it at the sky, the water, the plants... When the weather is calm, your ear will even be able to detect surprising acoustic objects in the distance.

Scenographer and constructor:
Claude Nessi

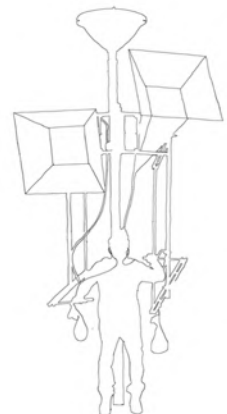


The Reverberophone



Not only does it transform any street-lamp into a listening device, but it also inducts echoes and reverberations into the soundscape... The listener takes place with his back to the pole of the streetlamp, puts carefully the ends of the listening device into his ears, and guides the auricles both horizontally and vertically with the help of the two handles. Sometimes, provided a light breeze allows it, some light, flute-like plumes of sound unravel unpredictable melodies resulting from the harmonics of the note F.

Scenographer and constructor:
Benoît Afnaim

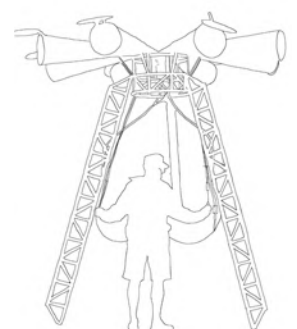


The aeolian Des-orientor



This is exactly what you need to listen to airwaves, aircrafts, and more generally speaking, flying things of any kind. But in spite of its eight receivers scrupulously aligned on the cardinal points of a wind rose, what you hear will never correspond exactly with the real location of the sounds. No need, then, to fear any quarrel between Right and Left parties, nor any North-South disagreement, nor any Eastern-Western conflict, since this device is both des-oxidant (thanks to its anti-corrosion processing) and fully des-orienting.

Scenographer and constructor:
Valentin Monnin / Rue de la Casse

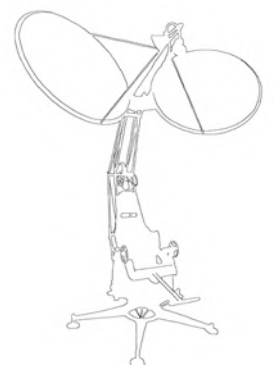


The double parabolic Reflector according to Saint-Mathieu



This is a surgically precise acoustic discriminator, which cuts the soundscape into thin ribbons of space and frequencies. Indeed, only the sounds emitted exactly in the axis of the receivers can reach their focuses; moreover, their small-sized diameters filter out all sounds from deep to high-medium, enabling you thereby to hear insects breathing (in the morning), the spiders weaving (in late season), or the sand of the river flowing (from middle to extra-fine corns, especially late in the evenings).

Scenographer and constructor:
Matthieu Audejean / Ateliers Sud Side

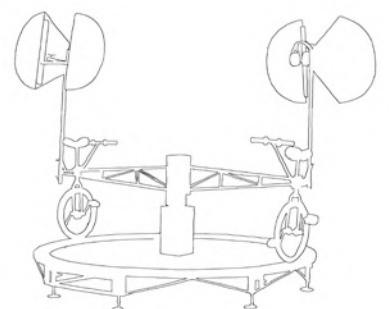


The Lesliecyclophone



Don't trust the innocent look of this apparently childish merry-go-round! The Lesliecyclophone has erupted from the fuming brain of a scenographer more used to the sound of Italian motorbikes screeching along ring roads at breakneck speed, than to those peaceful fairground wooden horses. Hence its half-parabolic, particularly aerodynamic reflectors, inspired by the famous rotary Leslie® loudspeakers inherent to the no less famous Hammond® organs. The Lesliecyclophone thus unravels the soundscape like a carousel, all the while subtly chorusing its tonal characteristics.

Scenographer and constructor:
Philippe Moutte / Ateliers Sud Side



The paraboloid Metamorphone



The parabolic bending sends the sound waves towards a specific point – the focus – on a level with the head of the listener sitting inside the column. Only the waves produced exactly in the field of the parable are amplified to reach the listener, who will perceive them as coming from the right, the left and the centre of his head. The general shape of this device corresponds to its double function: to limit the listener's field of vision to the portion of space from which the sounds seem to be coming, as well as to hide him from anybody's sight. Sheltered from the outside world in their private shell in order to listen to the sounds of the Earth, some people even claim having experienced their own total disappearance, a ravishment akin to what may be felt in a teleportation chamber.

Scenographer and constructor:
Marc Anquetil / Ateliers Sud Side



The hydrophonic Anopheles



As slender as its cousin the Semaphore, the Hydrophonic Anopheles was originally developed for the Festival de l'Oh!, during which its cornet was plunged into the damp silence of the river, occasionally troubled by the deep backwash and great-bell sound of a barge. When the weather was calm and the waters clear, the feeble moaning of a whale-calf would sometimes seem to be heard, carried forth from the estuary by the wonderful celerity of the acoustic waves in a liquid environment.

Scenographer and constructor:
Vincent Brédif

The tritonal Blender



Although it stems from the family of the Saxhorns (together with the bugle, the tuba, etc.), the Tritonal Blender turns all their principles upside down: an intra-auricular earphone has taken the place of the traditional mouthpiece, so that instead of the less than balletic sounds of a marching band, the auricles will guide into your ears a triple portion of the surrounding soundscape.

Moreover, thanks to the combinations of the three valves and all their intermediate positions, different fingerings will tune the soundscape into different modes, filtering frequencies and tube-lengths. This ingenious machinery will make it easy for you to play a number of soundscape scores and tabs (ask for our catalogue).

It rotates by 360°.

Scenographer and constructor:
Yoann Cottet, Compagnie l'Ecarquillée

The portable models



The Kaleidophones are mammoth artefacts imbedded in the city to symbolize the perception of its sounds, thus creating an “installation” in the sense used in modern art: an *ensemble*, a universe in itself, through which the onlooker can walk, live, experience, and here, above all, listen. For this purpose, the installation is prolonged by a set of listening devices which the visitors are to carry both inside it and far beyond, right into the city, thus becoming part of it as characters and actors.

Each device is unique, endowed with its own personality and its distinctive acoustic features. Whether odd or endearing, retro-futurist or barely technological, each of them contains the kaleidophonic universe and conveys the poetic concept of a perpetual, global composition of which we are both the listeners and the authors.

Constructors : Amora Doris / Chloé Bucas / Students of the Lycée Jean Mermoz of Bourges

«THE KALEIDOPHONES» IN THE COMPANY'S ARTISTIC CAREER

For several years, our company's creations have been attempting to escape the time and space of a ritual "performance" implying that something is going to happen in a place agreed upon in advance, between the arrival of the audience and a finale often followed by an applause signalling a separation by mutual consent. Indebted from their very start to the arts of sounds, those forms have evolved towards the staging of contextual acoustic items and situations, then further on to the staging of the very activity of listening. The Kaleidophones have now reached another milestone by staging the listener himself, once more relying on our mutual connivance.

This is why although every **Instrument | Monument** (since 2004) gives the audience a definite appointment in order to listen to a clearly advertised building, all the public preparations are really part of the oncoming performance. Likewise, it is absolutely impossible to spot the precise moment when the performance has begun, which enables the play to include everything the audience has ever heard during the day, nay, during their whole lives...

The Sound Donations (2006) rely entirely on the items-instruments brought by the audience and unfolds itself during a whole half-day in several times and places ("psychoanalysis" of the donors in a little booth, demonstrations and concerts of donated items on a podium, excursions in the surrounding city...).

In the **The Work Sites of the O.R.E.I.** (2009), the time spent *in situ*, previous to the performance and suitably called "residency", is really intended to give way to all kinds of unexpected meetings, intense and fruitful, during which we are not only part of the performance but at the very heart of the story itself.

The mobile quintet of concrete music **Urbaphonix** (2012) has likewise been conceived to improvise while strolling freely in the city and share its sounds with random audiences.

Our more recent interactive installations, based on "**Sharawadji**" patterns (Nuit Blanche of Paris in 2012, La Strada Festival of Graz in 2011) are conceived to avoid all theatrical conventions reminiscent of mass consumerism, since obviously the magic of the "Sharawadji effect" can only operate if the audience cannot anticipate it!

The Kaleidophones have reached the ultimate staging of an audience of watchers-listeners discovering innumerable ways to listen, prick their ears, pay attention, but also to become permeated by sounds, to reconsider their environment as an acoustic milieu, a landscape expecting to be gardened – in short, a habitat. Some moments are to be planned ahead, but even more important will be other, unplanned moments, left free to provide times for real encounters and allow the power of art to change the course of day-to-day existence.

PROJECT TEAM

Artistic direction : Michel Risse

Technical direction : Renaud Biri

With :

Renaud Biri, Yoann Cottet, Cédric Lasne, Julien Pillet, Michel Risse, Sévane Sybesma

Scenography / constructors :

Benoît Afnaim, Cie la Française de Comptages

Marc Anquetil, Ateliers Sud Side

Matthieu Audejean, Ateliers Sud Side

Vincent Brédif

Chloé Bucas & Amora Doris

Christophe Evette & Maurizio Moretti, Cie Les Grandes Personnes

Michel Lagarde & Eloi Miehe

Valentin Monnin, Cie la Rue de la Casse

Philippe Moutte, Ateliers Sud Side

Yoann Cottet

Claude Nessi

Artistic collaborations :

Olivier Comte, Les Souffleurs - Commandos Poétiques

Françoise Guillaumond, Cie La Baleine Cargo

Costumes : Fabienne Desflèches



[COPRODUCTIONS]

Lieux Publics, Centre
National de Création
en Espace Public



Sur le Pont
CNAR en Aquitaine -
Limousin - Poitou-Charentes



CNAR
Le Citron Jaune



Le Festival de l'Oh !



L'Abbaye de Noirlac



[RESIDENCY]

Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional
Aubervilliers - La Courneuve



[INSTITUTIONS]

Ministère de la Culture
et de la Communication
Direction Générale de la Création
Artistique - Aide à la création



Région Ile de France
Aide à la création





Décor Sonore
Villa Mais d'Ici - 77 rue des Cités
93 300 Aubervilliers - France
Tél. : +33 (0)1 41 61 99 95

info@decorsonore.org
www.decorsonore.org

Artistic direction
Michel Risse
+33 (0)6 14 32 91 18
michel.risse@decorsonore.org

Technical direction
Renaud Biri
+33 (0)6 85 83 06 62
technique@decorsonore.org

Administration
Kristele Ajavon
+33 (0)1 41 61 99 95
administration@decorsonore.org

Communication & Diffusion
Camille Cheminet
+33 (0)1 41 61 99 95
communication@decorsonore.org

**Watch our videos online at:
vimeo.com/channels/decorsonore**

Décor Sonore is supported by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication / Regional Direction of Cultural Affairs of Ile-de-France, by the Ile-de-France Region, SACEM, the City of Paris and the City of Aubervilliers.



Licence number : 753142 - Category n° 6