

Le Chant des Pavillons

Song of the Horns
a work in progress...

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in non dedicated public spaces

www.lafaussecompagnie.fr

projet
stroh

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The Company

La Fausse Compagnie, founded in 2007 by two French musicians, Claire-Noël and Thomas Le Saulnier, is dedicated to the creation of live performances. Claire-No and Thomas, trained in the classical tradition, are also invested in other traditions: ethnic music, jazz, contemporary... Their artistic creations are built from the ground up, on the basis of original musical composition. They branch out to include other disciplines in their shows - theater, dance, as further means of funneling emotions to share with the public.

Thomas has been an actor-musician, as well as a composer, for more than 15 years. He has taken part in several projects of national dimension, including Madani Compagnie and Les Blérots de R.A.V.E.L.

Songs of the Horns, a work in progress...

Through this project, we're attempting to **bring back to life some unusual**, and almost forgotten, **musical instruments** dating from the beginning of the last century. The Stroh-violin, the Stroh-cello and the Stroh-bass replace the usual sound box with a horn, which amplifies the sound transmitted through a vibrating needle attached to a resonator.

When we first came across one of these instruments, we were immediately captivated by this adaptation of a traditional musical instrument, and more yet by its extraordinary sonority. It produces a remarkably percussive, metallic sound (due to its diffusion through the horn), while the strings struck by the bow render it supple and rounded.

It also seemed that resurrecting these instruments for the public would be a way of giving life to an unjustly forgotten stage of our recent musical story.

The public will behold three musician-actors and their bizarre instruments proceeding along a musically and poetically unusual path, choreographed by **Jérôme Bouvet**.

The musical program is being composed by **Thomas Le Saulnier**. It will consist of short pieces for string solo, duet or trio. They will be inspired, in part, by the various cultures we hope to experience in the course of this project – **in particular the cultures of the North**.

Our plan is to leave concert halls specifically designed for music performances, and seek out spaces within the public sphere (train station, street, square, lobby...) congenial to the remarkable directional capacities of these instruments. They will thus transform the sound environment surrounding our everyday life.

The construction of the instruments is nearing completion, as we write; they should be in our hands by November 2012. They incorporate a variety of adaptations, relative to the originals, so as to take full advantage of current materials and state-of-the-art acoustic science. Their appearance has also been enhanced – at least we think so (see the photo, above).

The musical program will not be static. Rather, it will evolve with time and the cultures, people, places we will meet along the way. Periods of composition and rehearsal will therefore be an integral part of the tour.



Setting up the project has brought about numerous contacts with people from a variety of specialties, networks, countries:

the Museums of Music of Paris and of Tokyo for technical information about the Stroh instruments in their collections, and for helpful exchanges regarding the musical heritage they represent

researchers and violin makers from around the globe, notably Finland, the UK., the U.S.A..... interested in these instruments and their use of mechanic amplification

craftspeople and researchers for the construction of the instruments, and the enhancement of their acoustic qualities

and a number of musicians interested in or having played them.

These various contacts and exchanges have fed into and broadened our project, while leading us to an awareness of its long-term significance. The current project should be, for The Song of the Horns, just the "warm-up act".

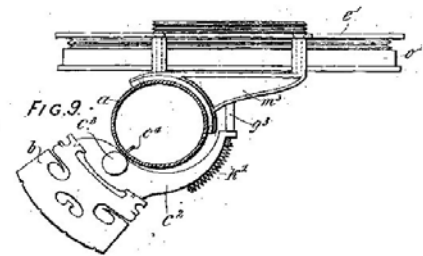
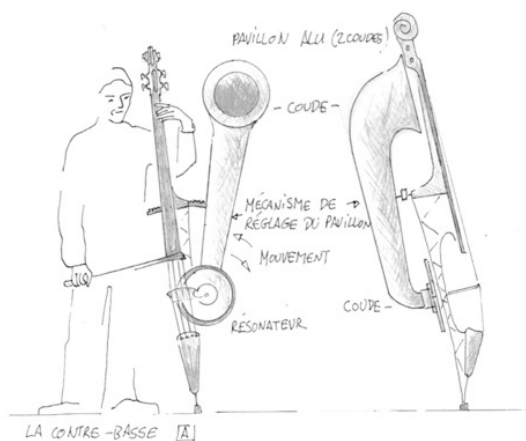


Diagram of the bridge and its rocking lever
Augustus Stroh patent - 1899

The Song of the Horns: further encounters, other cultures

After a number of periods of rehearsal, we will want to bring the show/program to the public. A number of residencies, open to the public, and performances are planned, in France.

In order to enrich our experience, stimulate further musical composition and expand the horizons of the show, we would like to organize residencies outside of France. We are available to share the "Stroh experience" with other artists, in schools, universities, museums...



Drawing by Laurent Cadhilac

International cooperation agreements would facilitate this project. This would include assuming transportation costs and the setting up of events (residencies, workshops, discussions...) in tandem with performances.

So we're reaching out to partners able and willing to help us on our way: a festival in which to perform, a rehearsal space, lodging, an organization to plan meetings with students...



Personnel

Claire-Noël Le Saulnier (http://www.lafaussecompagnie.fr/)	Stroh bass/singing
Thomas Le Saulnier (http://www.lafaussecompagnie.fr/)	Strohcello
Samuel Tailliez	Strohviolin
Jerôme Bouvet (http://www.2rienmerci.com/)	staging
Laurent Cadilhac (http://laurentcadilhac.fr/)	instrument maker (metal)
Alain Pignoux	instrument maker (wood)
Cécile Pelletier (http://www.myspace.com/cecilepelletier)	costumes/designer

Collaborators

National Superior Institute of Engineering, Le Mans, France (ENSIM)
 University Acoustic Laboratory, Le Mans (LAUM)
 Museum of Music, Paris
 University Museum of Music, Tokyo
 Entreprise Bourbon (aluminium metal-working)
 Atelier Duo Champigny (cabinet-making)
 Olavi Linden (Linden Instruments)

- Co-producers -

Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture des cantons de L'Isle Jourdain et d'Availles Limouzine

- Residencies -

MJC 21, Lussac-les-Châteaux, France / Collectif Curry Vavart, Paris, France
 Conservatory of Châtellerauld, France / Château Rouge, Annemasse, France

- With the support of -

The Region of Poitou-Charentes, DRAC Poitou-Charentes, National Center of Street Arts of Poitou-Charentes ADAMI, Regional Assembly, Vienne



Video accessible at: www.lafaussecompagnie.fr
 (click on "Le Chant des Pavillons")

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No surprise: at the starting point of this project, there was the, well, surprising discovery of the horn-violin, or "Stroh-violin" (Augustus Stroh being its inventor). The esthetics of the instrument attracted us immediately, and the richness of its sound further charmed us – a wealth as great as that of a traditional classical instrument, enhanced by its sharper percussive, penetrating quality.

Invented at the very close of the 19th century, this type of instrument enjoyed a few decades of remarkable success. The wooden sound box of the traditional instrument was replaced by a system of acoustic transmission based on the gramophone: a vibrating needle resting on a resonator amplified by a horn. It was employed up to the early 1920s for its directional properties as a studio instrument to record on wax cylinders, and in open-air bands, before microphones had been developed.

But sound technology quickly progressed. The advent of electric recording and amplification sidelined the Stroh instruments, which became mere acoustic oddities. The Stroh-violin survived a few more years in music halls and other folkloric ensembles.

The Stroh technique of amplification was applied to a number of string instruments (cello, bass, guitar, mandolin). Currently, only a few violinists, mostly in Eastern Europe, recognize the advantages of this type of amplification, putting the Stroh-violin on a par with brass instruments.

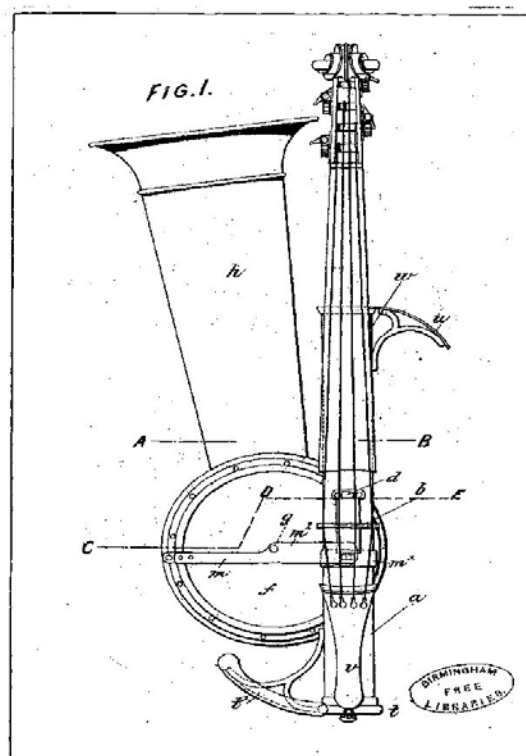


Diagram of a Stroh-violin - Augustus Stroh Patent, 1899

Our discovery eventually led to the project of developing a show for a string trio of Stroh-type instruments. This process has gone and will go through a number of partially overlapping stages, from the design and building of the instruments to musical composition, the rehearsals of the trio to performances in public space.



A few years ago, we were able to purchase a copy of a Stroh-violin of Burmese manufacture. We imagined we were about to break new ground by extending the Stroh concept to the cello and the bass. Further research led us to discover, to our (further) surprise, that these instruments had in fact existed at the beginning of the 20th century.

Indeed, the Musée de la Musique of Paris possessed a vintage Stroh-violin and Stroh-cello. We were able to meet with Thierry Maniguet, and discuss our common interest regarding this type of instrument. These discussions confirmed the rarity of these instruments (the Stroh-bass, in particular). So we gave up on the idea of purchasing them, and decided instead to have them custom manufactured.



Thomas Le Saulnier and the Stroh-cello at the Museum of Music, Paris

To do so, we used the following resources:

- Alison Rabinovici's thesis, dealing with these instruments, and their origins
- a copy of a Stroh-violin, or horn-violin, manufactured in Myanmar (see photo, below)
- audio and visual resources regarding the Stroh-cello (or trombone-cello) in the collections of the Musée de la Musique of Paris
- visual resources relating to the Stroh-bass in the collections of the University Museum of Music of Tokyo
- archival files of the patents and designs submitted by Augustus Stroh in 1899 and 1900

Alain Pignoux (instrument maker) and Laurent Cadilhac (metal sculptor) are manufacturing the three instruments. The prototypes will be completed by late November, 2012.

This project has the technical support of the University Acoustic Laboratory of Le Mans (LAUM) and the National Superior Institute of Engineering of Le Mans (ENSIM). A research project taken on during the Fall semester by students will study and ameliorate the prototypes.



Burmese copy of the Stroh-violin



"Song of the Horns" Stroh-violin under construction



Thomas Le Saulnier is in the process of writing the original music to be performed by the trio.

These pieces are inspired on the one hand by the popular music for which the Stroh instruments were originally used, on the other by more eclectic traditions, derived from his own musical itinerary through a variety of different genres. Needless to say, perhaps, his composing also draws on these instruments' peculiar sonority, as well as their directional acoustic properties.

We would like to enrich both the persona of the performers and the music being performed with elements from and contact with the cultures - material, legendary, musical... - of the North. The search for allusive, buoyant, lively melodies which speak to the senses and envelop the listener is at the heart of this creative process.



A Stroh-cello player

In the performances, there will be no pre-established program of pieces. The set-list will evolve through the relation between the musicians and the audience, our repertory serving as a "music tool-box" allowing us to adapt to the circumstances, and the particular course taken by any given performance. The internal progression of the show will come about, then, through semi-directed improvisation.

The "Song of the Horns" will include vocal singing as well, broadening the trio's range of harmonic and melodic potentials. The use of texts for the vocal portions will be worked out as we move ahead with the performance staging.

A piece may be performed for a single member of the audience, surrounded by the musicians and the focus of the three horns directed at her, as for a larger audience, in a more frontal relation.

We are also looking at exploiting the acoustic properties of the public spaces in which the show will take place (reverberation, echo, ambient noise).

The "STROH" String BASS

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George Evans, maker and retailer of Stroh instruments in London. Advert from the early 20th century for a Stroh-bass.



“One must have music within one to make the world dance” - Nietzsche

Guiding Principles:

“It is by means of a sort of duality, between on the one hand a space of freedom, impulsion and immediacy, and on the other a more structured and choreographed program, that we’ll explore the musical and clown-like language of these three beings, these three musician-objects.

The focus is on getting the audience, through the encounter with these odd Stroh-people, to experience another relation to space and to their own musical sensibility.

A Song of the Horns, tantalizing and sensuous in which everything is play, everything is music.”

Jérôme Bouvet

Through this show, we wish to explore innovative, more direct, intimate ways of relating to the audience.

Our aim is to present a concert-show in public spaces not specifically designed for musical performances (street, lobby, gallery...). We’d like to undo the border that separates the artists from the audience, at times by crossing it, at times by engaging some of the spectators to cross over to our side of this line.

A dramaturgical principle we’ll be exploring is that all beings are animated by an interior music, which the trio will transcribe and give expression to through its horns. We might take the pulse of a spectator, use it as a tempo, and translate it into music emanating from that very person.

This determination, of putting the spectator in a posture of active participation (and not merely of passive audience), will open the way to greater interactivity between performers and audience.

Please note, however, that this will by no means be a systematic feature of the performance.



Double horn of the Stroh-violin manufactured by Laurent Cadilhac

The musicians are also actors: travelers in transit, dressed simply, with as their luggage the instruments brought “on stage” in their cases. By their very presence, or the way they move, look about, focus their attention on some ordinary object, these actor-musicians will evoke curiosity from those around them. Strangers to our ordinary lives, they will draw the spectators into some small part of their voyage and, perhaps, lead them to see and hear differently their life spaces.

We’re looking forward to hearing from you.

