



Photo Sabine Chalaguiet

**Mécanique Vivante - The Sirens' Song**

## **MECANIQUE VIVANTE - INVENTIONS, INSTALLATIONS & SHOWS**

To go where the hand of man has never set foot is Mécanique Vivante's motto. For over thirty years, the company has been on an uncompromising quest for innovation. The road has been long and sinuous, rich with encounters and experience - and the desire to never take a well-trodden path is still paramount.

### **FRANZ CLOCHARD - MUSICIAN & INVENTOR**

At a time when traditional circus was in the doldrums, Archaos, the French punk circus, arrived like a breath of foul air and transformed circus for ever. Franz Clochard co-founded Archaos in 1985. Not content to sit back on his famous ascending chainsaw and motorbike, Franz invited jazz and sportsmen into this sensational, metal, ultra-violet universe. *'The Incredible Chainsaw Circus'*, as the British press called it, played to great acclaim in London and Paris.

Alternative circus was born.

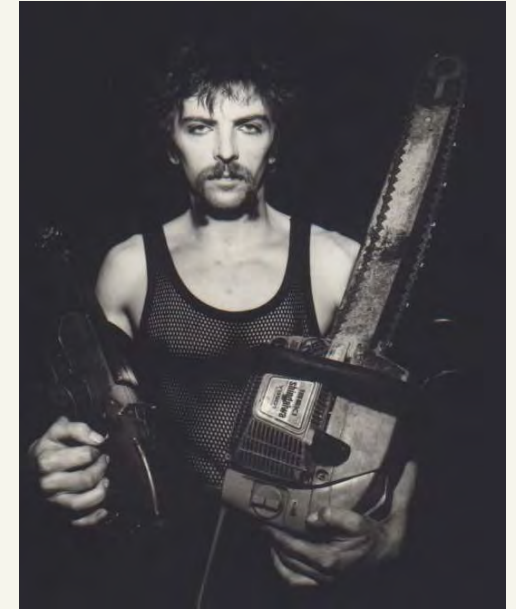


Photo Marie Pierre Vincent

**La Toupie - Created 1991**

Constantly looking to create the inimitable, Franz Clochard founded Mécanique Vivante in 1989 to synthesise his two great passions: music and mechanics. Over the years he has created a hybrid, artistic universe with humour and a certain knack of transmuting everyday objects to new, unfamiliar purposes.

Invention is the star of the show, so welcome to Franz Clochard's mechatronic world where chickens play the piano, chainsaws fly, the cement mixers are orchestral and the Sirens symphonic...



## **MECANIQUE VIVANTE - THE COMPANY**

Nestled in the Cevennes mountains in the south of France, Mécanique Vivante has been at the frontier of artistic invention and technological innovation for over 30 years. Amongst their flagship projects, the Musical Siren, a brand new musical instrument, developed from the air raid siren. Partnered by the French Ministry of Culture, the Regional and County councils, and the EU, the project has culminated in the creation of a seven-piece, polyphonic orchestra of musical Sirens.

The only one of its kind, the Siren Orchestra travels the world, performing in environments that are as varied as they are surprising, bringing its unique soundscape and harmonic texture to new audiences.

*Mécanique Vivante applies its experience, its stagecraft, and its wonderful world of invention to create exceptional, unforgettable events in the public arena.*

## **THE SHOWS**

The evolution of the Siren Orchestra has gone hand-in-hand with set design and the construction of staging devices which allow the company to set up, in perfect autonomy, in industrial, urban and natural landscapes all around the world. Cavalcading through the town mounted on its locomotives, hoisted at the top of boat masts to celebrate major events, installed around the public in parks and gardens for a musical siesta, suspended in concerts halls & theatres, Mécanique Vivante creates site- and event-specific installations with its unique orchestra, its virtuoso soloists and dramatic, theatrical lighting.

Our technological advances mean that the Siren Orchestra is now open to guest composers and collaboration with ensembles, choirs and musicians.



Photo Sabine Chalaguet

## The Sirens' Song: Street Harmonics

Photo Sabine Chalaguiet

At its simplest, *Street Harmonics* proposes a polyphonic parade with the Sirens & locomotives and a live performance of the 'Sirenium' along the way. Depending on the scope of the project, this basic formula can be enriched with more artistic encounters, either along the route or combined on a single stage to create a stunning finale.

Anduze (FR)- August 2020

## *Street Harmonics: the encounters*

Photo Pierre Wendéls



### ***The Bellringer's Arch***

*A serene tableau that marks the end of the parade and the start of the finale. On a rotating platform in the midst of the public, the artist strikes her tubular bells, hailing the Sirens on their locomotives into the public arena.*

Waterford (IRL) - July 2022

### *Virtuoso Tympani*

*In a marked departure from their usual position hidden away at the back of the orchestra, a set of orchestral tympani takes centre stage. Surrounded by the Siren Orchestra, the percussionist performs a spectacular tour de force.*



Photo Pierre Weber

### *Street Harmonics: the encounters*



Photo Picöz

### *The giant-horned Trombones*

*Raised up on platforms on either side of the road or the main stage, two giant-belled trombones duel, turning, spinning and sending a wave of sound and Doppler shift over the public.*

## Street Harmonics: the encounters



### ***The Flight to the foghorn by Chainsaw***

After thirty years, the grand return of the Flying Chainsaw which wowed audiences around the world in the famous punk circus *Archaos* - father of modern alternative circus.

Like a real-life Spiderman, Franz Clochard flies 15 metres into the air on his chainsaw, triggering the foghorn of the famous ocean liner *France*. A staggering performance which will have the whole town buzzing.

This feat cannot better illustrate the creative process at *Mécanique Vivante*: an explosive cocktail of invention and symbolism to thrill & delight.



*The Sirens' Song*  
*Alfresco Recitals*

Photo Sabine Chalaguier

**An open air auditorium**

Relax en transat face au ciel et à proximité immédiate, découvrir Le Chant des Sirènes. Expérimenter les effets physiques de son plein chant acoustique. Les **Concertos** que propose Mécanique Vivante se rapprochent des grandes formes de la symphonie avec des œuvres composées de plusieurs mouvements.

Nîmes (FR) juin



## *The Sirens' Song: Carte Blanche*



Stunning architecture, industrial wastelands, magnificent monuments to bygone glory days, the old port; every town bears the weight of its historical and industrial past. But often the inhabitants don't look up and take note; it's merely part of the humdrum of daily life.

Installed in and around the town, or on parade with artistic encounters at specific sites, Mécanique Vivante encourages the spectator to see their town in a completely new light! Buildings become decor, the old industrial heartland a stage set, the street a theatre full of thrills...

## *The Sirens' Song: Siren Symphony*

Photo Gerald Lucas

**Siren Symphony** is a truly unique experience: an indoor concert of the Siren Orchestra performing a symphonic œuvre. The astonishing mutation of an air raid siren into a melodic, symphonic instrument is the fruit of years of research and development and is a meeting of the electric & the acoustic, the familiar and the unknown; the mecatronic universe of Mécanique Vivante transferred to the stage.

*Franz Clochard*: artistic director - *Benoit Louette*: composer – *Pierre Wendels* : lighting designer

National Theatre, Gap (FR) - October 2017

## *The Sirens' Song: Across the Water*

This show is adapted to river and coastal towns and more generally to any site where a waterfront can become a public arena.

Mécanique Vivante installs its Siren Orchestra on boats available locally: tugs, barges, classic old riggers etc. These water-borne, musical parades make ports-of-call along the way to accompany the artists associated with the project, installed on the shoreline or on boats from the local flotilla.

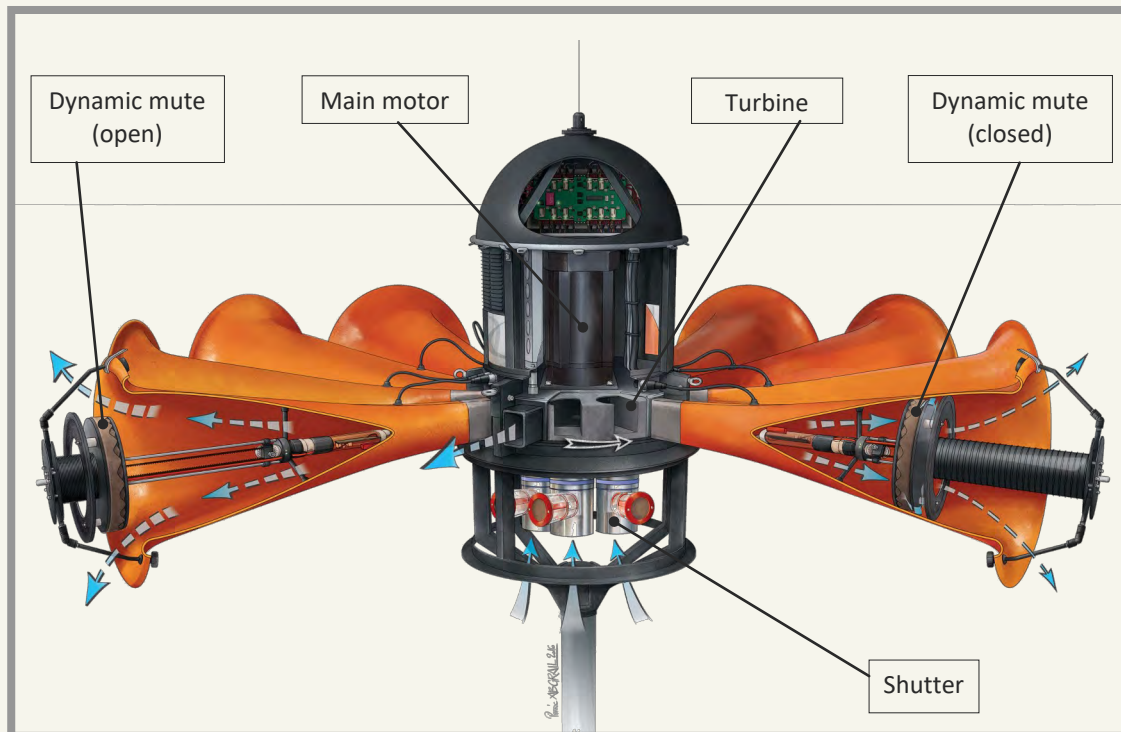


## The Musical Siren – the invention of a new musical instrument

There's a newcomer in the parley of musical instruments, an instrument with a range and timbre to rival the violin: the musical Siren. Incredible to think that the raucous air raid siren can produce such eloquent music; and it took Franz Clochard, artist-inventor, to recognise its potential and astonishing capabilities.

Almost 30 years of artistic and technological research and development have led to the creation of the seven-piece Siren Orchestra: a piccolo, two sopranos, two altos, a tenor and a bass.

The orchestra is 'conducted' by robotics: 71 control systems piloted by 105 processors allow the sirens to interpret the musical score.



### The Origin of the Siren

Invented in 1819 by a French physicist, the siren was originally the instrument of reference for acoustic frequencies.

### How a standard siren works

The siren produces sound by sucking in air as it rotates, which is then fragmented and driven through the horns.

The faster the rotation, the higher and louder the sound.

### How a Clochard musical siren works

In order to make the Siren sing, there are three principals involved:

- 1) precise control of the turbine speed (using the motor) gives full range to the Siren.
- 2) controlling the airflow to the Siren (using the shutters) gives attack, expression and subtlety.
- 3) muting the horns modifies the volume of the sound produced, allowing closer proximity to the audience.

Precise and highly responsive technology regulates turbine speed and controls airflow, keeping the musical Siren in tune and giving it colour and tone.

### Our partners

The Ministry of Culture - DRAC Occitanie – has partnered the research and development of a brand new musical instrument since 2002. Mécanique Vivante is also supported by the Occitanie Regional Council, the Department of the Gard and Alès territorial council.

Given the hybrid and innovative nature of our work, the company has partnerships with universities and industry and has received funding from the EU for the latest generation of musical Sirens.