

A sensory, musical and ecological journey

LE CHANT DES TOILES

In Flemish painting from the 15th to the 17th century



CROSS-BORDER PROJECT : FRANCE - WALLONIE - VLAANDEREN

Interreg Project

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Presentation of the proposal

The On Off company is proposing to develop an artistic and cultural project highlighting major works of Flemish painting from the 15th to 17th centuries, by delving into the rich historical and political context of the Flemish region.

The project offers audiences a unique experience: seated in deckchairs and blindfolded, participants are invited to rediscover the paintings of the Flemish masters through listening, imagination and song, enriching their artistic perception.

With the support of art historians and researchers, the company will explore the history of Flanders, past and present. This co-creative work, in collaboration with cultural outreach professionals, aims to share knowledge and enrich the experience of audiences.

'Le Chant des Toiles' aims to create a sensory and emotional bridge between the works and the public, offering an inclusive approach accessible to all. This project stimulates curiosity, enriches knowledge of art history and scenic history, and strengthens the cultural identity of the inhabitants of this cross-border region, inviting them to explore and appreciate their shared heritage from a new and invigorating perspective.

Works considered for this creation

- Pieter Brueghel the Elder, The Parable of the Blind, circa 1568, Museo Nazionale Di Capodimonte, Naples
- Johannes Vermeer, The Girl with a Pearl Earring, 1665, Mauritshuis, The Hague
- Hieronymus Bosh, The Garden of Earthly Delights, circa 1490-1500, Prado Museum, Madrid
- Jan Van Eyck, The Arnolfini couple, 1434, The National Gallery, London
- A work from the collection of the host museum

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Presentation of the Concept: *Le Chant des Toiles*

1. Sensory Immersion in Flemish Art

Le Chant des Toiles is a cultural experience that invites participants to experience art in a deeply intimate and immersive way. By sitting comfortably in deckchairs, blindfolded, spectators are taken on an auditory and sensory journey through time. This approach allows a unique immersion in the world of the Flemish masters, where the sense of sight gives way to those of listening and imagination. The objective is to reveal a hidden layer in each work, by revealing a curious, singular aspect, a detail, a clear interpretation. The objective is to play on both curiosity and create an emotional experience accessible to everyone. Here the beauty of the work will be sung rather than described.

2. Interaction between History, Music and Narration

At the heart of *Le Chant des Toiles*, there is a fusion between narrative art and music, creating a bridge between the past and the present. Each selected work is accompanied by a carefully chosen or created musical piece, which completes and enriches the narrative. The musical compositions span different eras, from traditional songs to contemporary creations, each piece reflecting the essence of the work presented.

3. An evolving and tailor-made project

Each performance is designed to be a learning platform, where participants are encouraged to explore history, culture, and art in an interactive way. The program also aims to include a work from local collections during each performance, strengthening the connection between the cultural heritage of the venue and the overall experience of audiences. Thus, the show will be unique in each museum that hosts the project.



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4. Educational and Cultural Collaboration, Enriched by Post-Show Mediation

The *Le Chant des Toiles* project benefits from the validation of historians and researchers to ensure the historical and cultural accuracy of the content presented during the show. This partnership enriches the programme upstream, but it's during the post-show mediation that the partners' educational role really comes into its own. At the end of each performance, cultural mediation professionals come in to complete the immersive experience, answer questions raised by the show and explore the themes explored in greater depth. This post-show interaction is crucial to satisfying curiosity, enriching understanding of the works, and connecting participants to the rich stories behind the artworks presented.

5. Accompanying booklet

As part of the *Le Chant des Toiles* project, each host museum has the opportunity to create an accompanying booklet to complement the experience of the show. This initiative is designed to allow participating institutions to further personalise the interaction with their audiences by providing additional context and enriching information about the artworks presented and their own collections.

This booklet, if chosen by the museum, will offer details of the history, significance and special features of the works on display. It could also include information on the artists, periods and artistic movements involved, as well as explanations of the narrative and musical choices specific to the show. The aim is to enable spectators to extend their experience by deepening their understanding and appreciation of the works after the show.

The booklet will be written by museum experts, in collaboration with the Compagnie On Off if necessary, to ensure the accuracy and richness of the content. Museums may choose to distribute the booklet at the end of the show or make it available online to widen its accessibility, ensuring that participants can benefit from this educational supplement. This initiative aims not only to increase audience engagement, but also to provide a tangible memory of the experience, reinforcing the emotional and intellectual connection with the works explored.

This proposal remains entirely optional and adaptable according to the preferences and resources of each host museum. It aims to offer an additional tool to strengthen cultural and educational engagement, while respecting the flexibility and autonomy of each institution in the way they value and share their artistic heritage.

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Selection of Works: A Narrative Journey through Flemish Art and Beyond

In *Le Chant des Toiles*, the selected works transcend their visual beauty to become vehicles for storytelling and emotion, each chosen for its unique ability to fuse music and narrative in an immersive experience.

Details of proposed artworks

The Parable of the Blind by Pieter Brueghel the Elder

This painting is chosen for its depiction of perception and guidance, introducing the theme of blindness into the show, both literally and figuratively. It will enable us to give meaning to the blind experience that follows, while illustrating the timelessness of this social portrait and the collective 'anatomy of a fall'.

The Girl with a Pearl by Johannes Vermeer

Although technically outside the Flemish period, this work will be included for the universality of its plot. Inspired by Tracy Chevalier's novel, our interpretation will focus on the young girl's perspective, offering a window on her condition as an anonymous woman in contrast to her fame that has spanned the centuries. To introduce this painting, we will borrow a dialogue from the 1936 film *Rembrandt*, a British biopic directed by Alexander Korda.

The Garden of Delights by Jheronimus Bosch

Selected because of the musical score inscribed on a figure in the central panel, this work will be explored for its ability to reveal sound dimensions unsuspected by the general public. The score will be performed in polyphony, transforming this visual mystery into a captivating aural experience.

The Arnolfini Bride and Groom by Jan Van Eyck

This painting, which celebrates the couple in its most intimate and universal aspects, will be enriched by an imaginative narrative around a score hypothetically dedicated by Giovanni Arnolfini to his beloved Giovana. This melody, familiar in many forms including *My Way* and *Comme d'habitude*, will be sung in Flemish to become *Alleen gaan*, adding an intimate and personal dimension to the depiction of the couple.



Each work chosen for *Le Chant des Toiles* enriches the show through its narrative and emotional potential. Together, they form an artistic body of work that is not to be seen, but experienced, inviting audiences to become deeply curious about pictorial art, music and the human stories they tell.

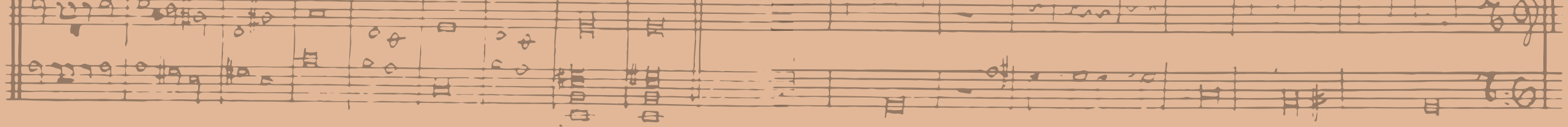
The mystery guest...

In each host museum, a painting from the collection will be carefully selected and introduced into our sung journey, regardless of its period. The deckchairs, set up in the room housing this work, will provide the setting for this unique immersion. *Le Chant des Toiles* is conceived as an artistic work free to travel through time, reflecting the idea that the history of humanity and the arts is a continuous flow that evolves and is nourished through the ages.

Works from the past find an echo in our own times, and we strive to show how they still resonate today. Similarly, more contemporary pieces and those from other geographical regions will be enthusiastically received. History teaches us that the boundaries between times and places are permeable: today's Flanders was once part of the Netherlands, and before that, part of the county of Burgundy. This historical dynamic is an invitation to celebrate the openness of a Europe rich in arts and culture.

This approach not only makes the most of each museum's own works, but also enriches the visitor's experience by offering them an artistic panorama that spans time and space, making each performance a unique opportunity to discover and rediscover art in its many facets.





Musical inspirations across the ages

In creating its repertoire for *Le Chant des Toiles*, the On Off company sails through the twists and turns of time and cultures, in search of melodies that captivate the hearts and souls of its audiences. The choice of music is based on a subtle balance between eras and languages, weaving a varied and moving tapestry of sound. This approach aims to connect the works of yesterday with today's audiences, awakening emotions, surprise, joy and curiosity by rediscovering classics and discovering new ones.

The treasures of popular heritage are explored and enriched by bold, less conventional touches. By moving away from typical musical choices, we invite audiences to take a more personal exploration of music as a universal language of emotion.

Each piece of music selected enriches the show by establishing links between the visual works and the auditory experiences. This fusion illustrates how the history of humanity and the arts is an ongoing process that evolves and feeds off each other, reflecting cultural change and permanence across time.

This approach underlines our commitment to celebrating a cross-border neighbourhood rich in arts and culture, open to a dialogue between past and present. It aims to create a space for cultural encounters where the artistic heritage of diverse regions can be shared and enjoyed in a respectful, borderless environment!

- *Le Vivat said flamand*, a hybrid half-French, half-Latin song traditionally sung during festivities in the north of France, has been chosen as a tribute to the audience and as a welcoming ritual, accompanying the spectators as they make their way to the deckchairs and embark on this sensory journey.



- *Une jeune fillette* (a young girl), a fifteenth-century melody used in Jean Corneau's *Tous les matins du monde* (1991), has been given a new lease of life with lyrics rewritten by us to tell the story of Jan Van Eyck's *The girl with the pearl*. The lyrics are based on the novel by Tracy Chevalier (1999) and the Anglo-Luxembourg film directed by Peter Webber (2023).



- The score hidden in Hieronimus Bosch's *The Garden of Delights* has been reinterpreted by Gavin Bryars, a contemporary British composer. Rearranged for the show by Alexandre Noclain, the lyrics are inspired by Charles Baudelaire's poem *Le Balcon* and enriched by an analysis of a documentary by film-maker Jean Eustache in which psychoanalyst Jean-Noël Picq offers a highly personal commentary on the work.



- *Alleen gaan, Comme d'habitude, My Way*. this timeless global hit, translated and performed in every language, has been chosen for its universal emotional power and unexpected counterpoint. Its Flemish interpretation brings a unique touch to French-speaking audiences and creates a link with Dutch speakers.



- *Goeiemorgen, morgen* (Good morning, day), the song that represented Belgium at Eurovision 1971, resonates as a celebration of Flemish culture and language. The song's lyrics illustrate an atmosphere of renewal and hope, inviting us to see the world in a new light, like a painter with his unique and artistic eye. The use of metaphors such as the world seen as a theatre or a bouncy castle, as opposed to the burnt-out castle in Hieronimus Bosch's painting, underlines the optimism and appreciation of the small joys of everyday life.

Proposed work modules to be co-constructed in order to apply for the Interreg micro-project scheme. These modules must be implemented before the end of 2025.

1. Creation of an immersive singing experience

- Meetings with art history and mediation professionals to validate the content of the *Le Chant des Toiles* show.
- Writing of the show: discovery and selection of works, research into songs, writing of text, staging.
- Translation of the show's content into English.
- Rehearsals of the two language versions of the show.

2. Creating a booklet for the show

- Design of a booklet to provide additional historical information about the show.

3. Post-show mediation

- Development of mediation tools and techniques to extend the audience's experience after the show.

4. Communication tools

- Creation of videos, recordings, brochures and management of social networks to promote the project.

The On Off company sees these stages of the work as opportunities for sharing, dialogue and complementing the knowledge, skills and expertise of each of the partners involved in the creation.

A concept for an immobile audio-chanted tour?

Le Chant des Toiles offers a fusion of tradition and artistic innovation, with the aim of forging deep links through immersive experiences that challenge, connect and stimulate curiosity.

This concept of a guided tour revisited, hopes to create bridges between the arts, communities and cultures. Our ambition is to enrich the cultural landscape with mobile, technically light-weight creations that reflect the values of diversity, innovation and sustainability.

At a time when everyone's life is filtered through screens, this time there's no phone, no Instagram, no TikTok, no selfie and no consort. Just the here and now.

THE COMPANION ON OFF

SHOWS (FOR LIVING BEINGS) - PUBLIC SPACES

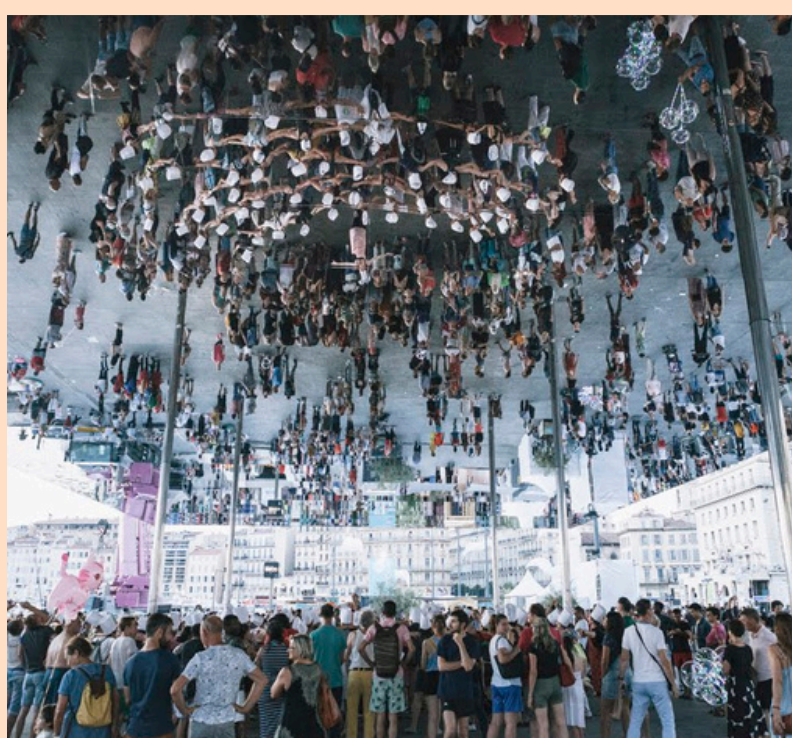
Since Cécile Thircuir founded the Compagnie On Off in 2003, and after 9 productions, the company has sought to create, with simplicity and good humour, situations that reshuffle the cards of the affective, the social, the biological and the cognitive.

We work on what creates the conditions for a relationship with audiences, with the ambition of producing experiences that transform, and leave the imprint of a fragment of shared experience.

Using song, invention and humour as our preferred tools, we seek out original alchemies between popular and learned music, between song and theatre, between poetry and burlesque, between yesterday and today. With virtuosity and kindness, we strive to build bridges between registers, artistic disciplines and audiences.

Drawing freely on recent research into affective neuroscience, On Off develops and offers experiences that transform and leave an imprint of freedom and individual and collective emotions.

In March 2024, *Le Chant de l'Eau* (Song of Water) was invited to perform at the WOMADelaide international festival in Australia, opening the door to productions in English. This experience has strengthened our commitment to taking part in projects that push back boundaries, both geographical and artistic, in the quest for a universal connection within our humanities.



ARTISTIC TEAM

CÉCILE THIRCUIR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
DIRECTOR, ACTRESS,
SINGER



Cécile Thircuir trained in the visual arts at university, and went on to study the performing arts, circus, clowning and theatre. She then trained in opera singing at the Lille Conservatoire, in Brussels and at the Guildhall, School of Drama & Music in London.

She co-created Cie On Off in 2003 and has directed it since 2006.

Over the years, her work has focused on two main areas: exploring the links between art music and popular song, and imagining theatrical experiences that are both universal and unique. Each creation is a step in the process of questioning the place of the individual and the spectator in their own musical, theatrical, civic, emotional and sensory heritage, through classical or innovative artistic forms.

She collaborated with Enrique Vargas in 2004, composed and arranged vocal pieces for the theatre for Christophe Moyer in 2011, worked as a performer with Bérénice Legrand in 2019, singing the title role in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges (The Child and the Spells)* and Offenbach operettas.

She works as a trainer for the French Ministry of Education, and regularly leads audience involvement projects, notably with the Scènes Nationales d'Alençon and Calais.

STEPHANIE PETIT

ACTRESS, SINGER

Stéphanie Petit is a complete artist from Lille, whose talent extends to acting, singing, writing and directing. Trained in clowning, masks and dance, she has explored a wide range of performing arts. Her expertise ranges from street theatre to playwright's theatre, as well as choreographic pieces and mask shows, testifying to her adaptability and passion for theatre in all its forms.

Over the course of her career, Stéphanie has worked with renowned artistic directors and stage directors such as Gilles Defacque, Mohamed El Katib, Philippe Découflé and Claire Dancoisne. She has performed with prestigious theatre companies including DCA, Compagnie Zirlib, Théâtre du Prato, Théâtre de la Licorne, Théâtre de la fiancée, Théâtre Octobre, Compagnie Sens Ascensionnels, and Compagnie de l'Hyperbole à 3 poils.

She also co-writes and directs shows combining humour and song for the Compagnie On Off, with whom she regularly collaborates.



MEDIATOR AND ART HISTORIAN

CAMILLE MARTEL



Camille Martel was chosen for her hybrid expertise in art history and live performance. Her ability to navigate between these two worlds will be particularly relevant to the second part of the show, offering welcome expertise when museums wish to outsource certain functions.

Sensitised to art in all its forms from a very early age, Camille is interested in the encounter between art, local people and territories. After a Master's degree in art history under Jean-Marc Poinot, and a Master's degree in cultural and artistic project management and territorial development, Camille has worked mainly in the field of public relations, designing projects that fuel her thinking about the different forms of dialogue between artistic practice and the public. She also organises artists' residencies and supports young artists.

Press review of Cie On Off - Lille

ARTS  hub

The Sydney Morning Herald
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 3 régions

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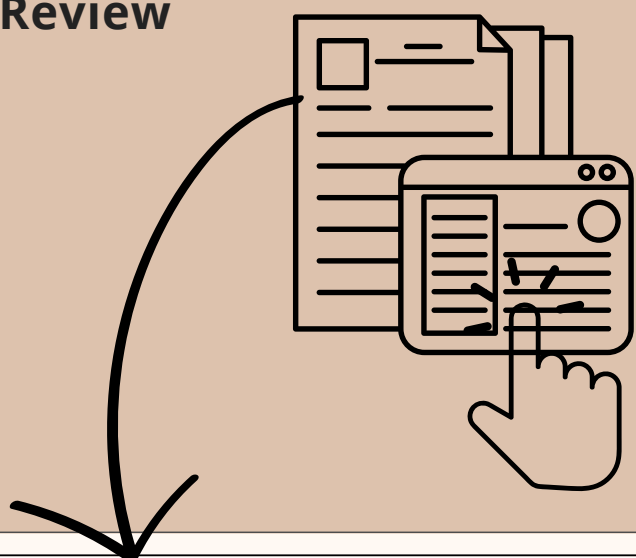
arte



Nord Littoral
Nord Littoral
Le journal de la Côte d'Opale

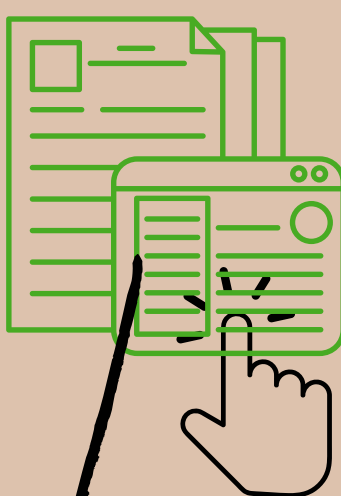
Foreign press

14 mars 2024 : THE Australian Review



Interestingly, as the weekend developed, some of the repeating installations became more well known. In the Adelaide Botanic High gymnasium, **Compagnie On Off** hostess Lucy Martin, has cloned herself to fulfil the essential task of performing "Le Chant De L'eau" on volunteers. Lucy remarked that at the beginning of the weekend no-one wanted to volunteer, whereas now she had too many. The four Lucy Martins (those who could make it to Adelaide) surround the blindfolded volunteers with a texture of sound and gentle touch to vibrate the water energy in a positive way. In a word, hilarious, yet somehow a soothing escape from the oppressive heat outside.

6 mars 2024 : THE Australian Review



is bringing *Le Chant de L'eau*, which features a character called Lucie Martin, a self-described researcher in "vibratory medicine" who adapts French water cures and wellness spas to immerse audiences in a therapeutic experiment. Videos of this work seem to imply participants will be given eye shades and blankets and encouraged to lie back in reclining chairs – which all sounds wonderfully cocoon-like and nurturing. But considering the forecast soaring temperatures for Adelaide this weekend... well, submersion in *Mulji's* water tanks may turn out to be the more enticing proposition.

12 mars 2024 :
The Sydney Morning Herald

The Sydney Morning Herald
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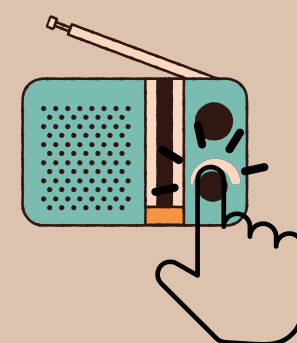


There was a lot to be concerned about in the lead up to this year's WOMADelaide festival.

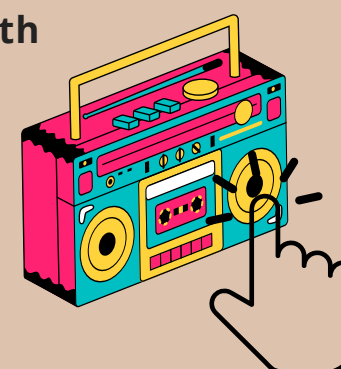
reclined in deck chairs while a philosophical scientist and her three 'clones' – all dressed like 1960s flight attendants – sang above and around us (Compagnie On Off's *Le Chant de L'eau*).

Foreign radios

February 29, 2024: interview in English with Cécile Thircuir - WOMAD special Broadcast - RRR radio



March 4, 2024: interview in French with Cécile Thircuir - WOMAD special Broadcast - SBS Radio Sydney



March 8, 2024: interview in English in ILIVE with Cécile Thircuir - live from WOMADelaide - ABC radio Adelaide



Press national



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