

# Museum of Modern Art

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STRUCTURES FOR SOUND - MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS BY FRANÇOIS AND BERNARD BASCHET will be exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art from October 5 through December 5. Five individual earphones have been installed in the exhibition galleries so that the public can listen to a recording of music composed for the instruments. The exhibition is directed by Ludwig Glaeser, Associate Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design.

The unconventional instruments, developed during the past 12 years by the French sculptor François Baschet and his brother Bernard, a professional sound engineer, have been recognized here and abroad for their aesthetic qualities as "structures," as well as for their unusual sound qualities. They are made of glass rods and various metals, such as iron, steel and aluminum; white plastic balloons, cardboard cones and metal sounding foils are used as amplifiers. The instruments are played by musicians using moistened fingers, rubber mallets or bows, or are plucked like a harp or played like a piano. Their diverse sounds bear resemblance to such varied instruments as African drums, bells, stringed instruments and brasses.

Mr. Glaeser points out, "As a sculptor, François Baschet exploits the acoustical and mechanical requirements, and a comparison of the instruments proves these requirements do not inhibit his creative capacities: the individual components show diversity and originality. In the metal foils of the amplifiers, and in the contrast of their vigorous forms with the grilles of glass or metal rods the relations to certain trends in contemporary sculpture are apparent. Some examples even justify the title 'monument' given to one of the percussion instruments. The technical means François Baschet has chosen are as simple as possible to conform with his favorite idea that everybody should not only play but also build his instrument."

The variety of new sound qualities has attracted composers and musicians, who have often become close collaborators and have enabled the Baschets to try out  
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instruments at an early stage, or to adapt them to ensemble performance and even specific scores. Their music ranges from Baroque to jazz and, apart from records and concerts, their specialty is background music for films, for which they make a special instrument for each occasion.

François Baschet, born in Paris in 1920, discovered the resounding properties of the air-filled balloon during a seven-year trip around the world, when his indispensable guitar proved too cumbersome a piece of luggage, and he replaced the entire guitar body by an inflatable balloon. Upon his return to Paris, he studied sculpture with Auricoste and Yencesse from 1953 to 1955. At the same time, on his own, he studied acoustics. With his brother Bernard who studied engineering at the Ecole Centrale in Paris, he began to search for new sounds with an analysis of all existing instruments. In classifying the components they arrived at four groups: vibrating elements (for example, in the violin, the string), energizing agents (the hair bow), modulating arrangements (the series of differentiated strings) and amplifying devices (the hollow violin body). Then they made a survey of suitable materials not yet employed in instruments. Their subsequent table of elements contained a multitude of hypothetical combinations. In choosing iron or steel rods as vibrating elements they became the first to use the internal wave potential of metals for acoustical purposes. These two elements have yielded so far more than three dozen prototypes.

The composer Jacques Lasry and his wife Yvonne, an organist, met the Baschet brothers in 1954. Since 1957, with the orchestra directed by Lasry and the musicians Jacques Chollet and Daniel Ouzounoff, they have traveled throughout Europe giving concerts. Concert tours of the United States in 1962 and 1963 included a performance at the U. S. Science Exhibit at the Seattle World's Fair.

The catalog published by the Museum in connection with the exhibition consists of a record of music composed for the Baschet instruments, demonstrating their sound qualities, with jacket copy by Mr. Glaeser. It will be on sale at the Museum for \$5.98. The record, produced in 1963 by the Editions de "La Boîte à Musique,"

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Paris, will be distributed by Record and Tape Sales, Inc., New York, next year.

The recorded compositions Pièces Nouvelles, Suite, Sonatine and Spontanéité are by Jacques Lasry; Marche and Valse are by Daniel Ouzounoff. The instruments are two cristals, one tubes graves and a percussion instrument, which are played by Yvonne and Jacques Lasry, Daniel Ouzounoff and Jacques Chollet. The recording which can be heard in the galleries is an excerpt from Spontanéité.

A list of the instruments on view follows:

1. Cristal. 1957. 5 1/4' h. x 5' w. x 3 1/4' d.; metal rods, glass rods, plastic balloons. Played with moistened fingers; sounds like an organ.
2. Tubes graves. 1959. 6 1/2' h. x 6 1/2' w. x 3' d.; metal rods, glass rods, aluminum cylinders. Played with moistened fingers; sounds like a string bass.
3. Trombone de verre. 1958. 5 1/2' h. x 2 3/4' w. x 2' d.; metal rods, glass rods, steel foil. Played with moistened fingers; sounds like a trombone.
4. Harpe ailée. 1963. 5' h. x 2' w. x 2 3/4' d.; metal frame and steel strings, aluminum foils. Played like a harp; sounds like a plucked string instrument.
5. Zanza. 1964. 3' h. x 2' w. x 2' d.; metal rod, steel needles, aluminum cones. Played by plucking the needles; sounds like a harp.
6. Grille à écho. 1958. 8' h. x 4 1/2' w. x 3 1/4' d.; metal rods, plastic balloons and aluminum foils. Played with rubber mallets; sounds like bells.
7. Petit Piano. 1963. 4' h. x 2' w. x 1 3/4' d.; steel rods, aluminum foils. Played like a piano; sounds like a glockenspiel.
8. Piano d'aluminium. 1963. 5 1/2' h. x 3 1/2' w. x 2' d.; aluminum rods, aluminum cones. Played like a piano; sounds like a glockenspiel.
9. Les croix. 1963. 4 3/4' h. x 4' w. x 3 1/2' d.; metal rods in copper tubes, metal bars, aluminum cones. Played with rubber mallets; sounds like a marimba.
10. Percussion sans écho. 1964. 5 1/4' h. x 3' w. x 2' d.; metal rods, metal bars, cardboard cones. Played with rubber mallets; sounds like a marimba.
11. Percussion avec écho. 1964. 5' h. x 3 1/4' w. x 3 1/4' d.; metal rods, metal bars, cardboard cones (high pitch) and metal cylinders (low pitch). Played with rubber mallets; sounds like an African drum.
12. Monument à percussion. 1964. 13 3/4' h. x 16 1/2' w. x 6' d.; metal rods, aluminum foils. Played with rubber mallets or hard bow; sounds like deep bells or several cellos.

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Additional information and photographs available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Linda Goldsmith, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.