

Session: **Wednesday, 4 December 2013**

Venue: INHA, salle Jullian, 1st Floor, 2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris

The scenic space of the Théâtrophone (1881-1930) and the emergence of a new spectator-listener

(résumé en ligne : <http://www.labex-hesam.eu/fr/63-cap-postdocs>)

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In 1881, during the International Exhibition of Electricity in Paris, Clément Ader presented a system of telephone auditions that allowed visitors to 'listen in' live, from a distance, to musical and theatrical performances occurring simultaneously in the city's theatres. This *théâtrophone* delineated one of the first mediatized binaural listening experiences, in which listeners depended solely on their ears to imagine an artistic event. The Compagnie du Théâtrophone was established in 1889 and would continue transmission well into the 1930s.

The théâtrophone is an important example of early intermedial relationships between theatre and sound media, which radically altered notions of theatrical space and site. Drawing on recent archival work, the paper examines how the théâtrophone created not only a different means of attending a theatrical event, but constructed new sonic environments and listening practices using transduced acoustic components of live performance. Upsetting sensorial hierarchies of traditional theatre-going, this telephone media impacted audience sociability and artistic practice – contributing to a new conceptualization and functionality of sound in theatre.

Biography

Melissa Van Drie is a post-doc researcher in the "Laboratory of Excellence Creation, Arts, Heritage" Project (Sorbonne / Centre Georg Simmel, EHESS) in Paris. Her current project is entitled "The scenic space of the Théâtrophone (1881-1930) and the emergence of a new spectator-listener." She was also member of the "Sonic Skills: Sound and Listening in the Development of Science, Technology and Medicine (1920-now)" Project at Maastricht University (2011-2012). Articles include: Training the Auscultative Ear: Medical Textbooks and Teaching Tapes (1950-2010). *Senses and Society*, 8:2 (2013) 165-192; New Figures of Listening (1878-1910). *Le son du théâtre I: Le passé audible. Théâtre/Public*, 197 (2010) 38-44; her PhD dissertation is entitled *Theater and Sound Technologies (1870-1910). A reinvention of the stage, listening and vision* (defended in 2010 at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3).