

# “I Sing the Body Electric”

## Body as Voice from a Musicological, Technological, and Religious Studies Perspective

3 June 2014

University of Hull

School of Social Sciences

Wilberforce East, Lecture Room 32

[communicating-bodies.net/body-electric](http://communicating-bodies.net/body-electric)



Image: Michael Hedwig

Body and being embodied is the fundamental mode of our existence. We rely on body to interact with each other and our environment through body language or sensations. As bodies, we also communicate with our voice – or the lack thereof. Voice extends body, embodies body outside of itself. While voice usually cannot be seen, it must materialize. It requires the material to be heard and through the material it can be felt or cause bodily sensations. Can voice as in/visible and im/material, then, be seen as a symbol for the *conditio humana*? We are bodies, yet strangely we also must become bodies; we are embodied beings yet at the same time ephemeral.

As embodied beings, we use technology to extend the reach of our voice beyond the time and space. This technological extension of the voice can also be seen as a technological extension of body. Technology separates voice from bodily organs and doing so, it replaces body, it takes the body's place. How do we as embodied beings, then, translate the disembodied voice into an embodied imaginary? And how does this translation- and imagination-process work when the original source of voice is technology itself rather than (a) body?

In a religious context, body, voice, and technology are crucial, too. One could argue that religion is intertwined with technologies and techniques of body and voice. “To sing is to pray twice” is an old saying suggesting that singing expresses bodily joy or sorrow, resonates with and emerges out of bodily sensations and experiences. The voice of God is thought of as trembling like thunder and Jesus, the Word of God, becomes body but also has performative qualities: through the Word all things were made. Visions of divine realms are often characterized using technologies that (re)produce voices and sound.

In the research seminar, we will discuss the relationship between body, voice, technology, and religion from an interdisciplinary perspective using approaches from musicological, technology, and religious studies. The aim is to discuss the current state of research, explores further areas of inquiry, and discuss what the imagined relationship between body/voice/technology/religion might tell us about the *conditio humana*.

## Program

**Tuesday, 3 June 2014**

**9.30 - 10.00: Opening, Welcome, Introduction**

Alexander Darius Ornella  
University of Hull

**10.00 - 11.00: The Embodied Voice of God in the Hebrew Bible**

Johanna Stiebert  
University of Leeds

**11.00 -11.30: Coffee break**

**11.30 - 12.30: “This voice has come for your sake” (12:30): Seeing and Hearing in John's Gospel**

Claudia Setzer  
Manhattan College, NYC

**12.30 - 14.00: Lunch break**

**14.00 - 16.30: Voicing the Technological Body. Musicological and Philosophical Reflections.**

A conversation with Stefan Sorgner (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Florian Heesch (University of Siegen)

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**Location:** Wilberforce East, Lecture Room 32 (1st floor)

**Participation:** The research seminar is open to anyone interested, please register your participation online: <http://communicating-bodies.net/registration-bodyelectric/>.

**Campus Map University of Hull:**

<http://tinyurl.com/cdsegzs>

This research seminar is part of a series of seminars of the international and interdisciplinary research project “Commun(ica)ting Bodies” funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF:

<http://communicating-bodies.net>

It is also part of and supported by the seminar series of the School of Social Sciences at the University of Hull.

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