



Avec une intervention de :

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Professeure invitée de l'EHESS

Sur invitation d'Esteban Buch

Bodies Decontextualised :

Faust, Opera, and Performativity

Abstract :

It has long been claimed that opera can give expression to the uneasy relationship between the body and the voice. Operatic voices seem to exceed the capacity of the bodies that produce them in a way that conveys a sense of mechanisation or limited agency, inviting metaphorical comparisons to marionettes. Yet recent studies of gesture have suggested that bodies are not simply passively inscribed with meaning but that they also mediate the process of inscription. Investigating the implications of this claim for opera, this lecture discusses two recent essays by Judith Butler, in which she draws from Walter Benjamin's account of gesture in Brecht's epic theatre to argue for the performative power of incomplete or decontextualised bodily actions. It then traces this idea to a moment in epic theatre's own prehistory, focusing on Ferruccio Busoni's opera *Doktor Faust*. The lecture makes both a theoretical point and an historical claim: it highlights how bodies and words that are decontextualised can perform a critical function despite not enjoying the usual citational supports necessary for a speech act; and it argues that Busoni's *Doktor Faust* and his theory of opera were a part of the intellectual prehistory to Butler's conceptualisation of bodily performativity.

SÉMINAIRE DU CRAL

Mardi 16 janvier 2024

12h15-14h

Tiphaine Samoyault

directrice d'études, EHESS /
Centre de recherches sur les arts et le langage (CRAL)

Yolaine Escande

Directrice de recherche, CNRS /
Centre de recherches sur les arts et le langage (CRAL)

**Centre de recherches sur les arts et le
langage (CRAL-UMR 8566 CNRS/EHESS)**

| Salle B2-018 | 54, boulevard Raspail | 75006 Paris |

Les prochaines séances du séminaire se tiendront
aux dates suivantes (même horaires, même salle) :

Mardi 13 février 2024, mardi 19 mars 2024,

Mardi 14 mai 2024, mardi 4 juin 2024.