

## **Workshop “Opening the Doors of the Studio”**

**Research Group “Epistemes of Modern Acoustics”**

**MPIWG, Villa Seminar Room**

**November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 10.00-16.30**

What is it that makes a studio a studio? Since their early days in the 1930s, sound recording studios have attracted both popular and scholarly attention (Schmidt Horning, 2013). Recent studies have investigated the institutional and political economies (Born, 1995), the technologies and modes of production (Zagorski-Thomas, 2014; Bates, 2016), and the fetishized narratives of and about music studios (Meintjes, 2003), to mention just some of the major aspects. While drawing on these contributions, this workshop will open up new avenues for the research on sound recording and music studios. Just as historians of science and STS scholars have tended to focus on the internal dynamics of workshops and laboratories, historians of music have mostly considered studios as closed spaces, perhaps as part of an attempt to describe them as “experimental systems.” But such approaches occlude the importance of the myriad circulations of actors, artefacts, knowledge and economic models that have played such a critical role in the history of sound recording and music studios.

The workshop therefore aims to query the notion of studios as “laboratories of arts,” and instead open their doors to the outside, in order to examine their technological, cultural, political, and economic embedment. This gesture raises a series of new questions. First, it highlights the circulations between different studios, and between studios and other spaces—revealing the importance of processes of both standardization and diversification for the functioning of studios and for the musical practices and identities that they foster. This initial set of questions will challenge the boundaries between individuals, institutions, nations, and categories such as “classical” and “popular” music. Further, we will examine the variety of musical economies feeding from the activities of studios. Looking beyond the cases of a few celebrated Western studios, how do histories of low-tech music studios challenge (or not) our ideas on the cultural politics of music making? Finally, we will consider the interplay between sound recording and music studios and collective imaginations. How have studios been portrayed, represented, studied, and curated in pictures, films, interviews, scholarly writing, museums, or archives? In turn, how did such representations of sound recording studios impact on the creative processes of musicians working in these spaces? Being both material and immaterial objects, studios are excellent sites for investigating the many interactions involved in the production of modern musical practices and identities.

## Program

**10.00-10.30:** Welcome coffee

**10.30-10.45:** Introduction: Fanny Gribenski (MPIWG) and João Romão (MPIWG):  
“New perspectives on the history of sound and music studios”

### Panel 1. “Early studio networks”

Chair: João Romão (MPIWG)

**10.45-11.30:** Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux (CNRS/THALIM): “Le théâtre dans les ‘studios d’essai’ radiophoniques de Pierre Schaeffer (septembre-octobre 1942, 1942-1945): entrée(s) et sortie(s)”

**11.30-11.45:** Coffee break

**11.45-12.30:** Fanny Gribenski (MPIWG): “Negotiating Acoustical Standards. The Prewar Concord of Sound Engineers”

**12.30-13.30:** Lunch

### Panel 2. “The politics of postwar studios”

Chair: Fanny Gribenski (MPIWG)

**13.30-14.15:** Martin Brody (Wellesley College): “‘A Dreadful, Limited, Ticklish Machine’: Milton Babbitt and the RCA Mark II Synthesizer”

**14.15-15.00:** Brigid Cohen (New York University): “The Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center: Sounds of the Cold War Acropolis”

**15.00-15.15:** Coffee break

**15.15-16.00:** João Romão (MPIWG), “Dialogic Couplings: outline of an anthropology of the WDR Studio for Electronic Music”

**16.00-16.30:** Discussion and conclusions