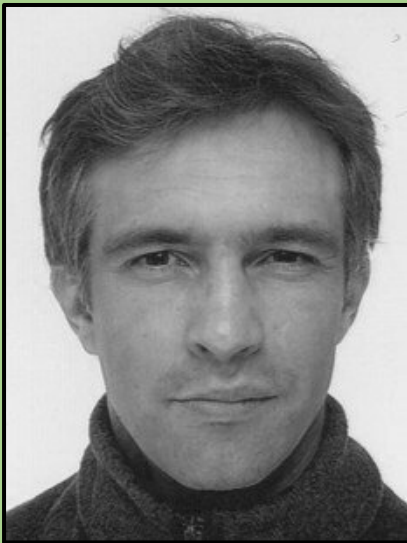




Human Extreme Transformations of Speech for Distance Communication and Musical Surrogacy

Sept. 22nd (Thursday): 10-11am ET

Julien Meyer



Human languages are complex systems that can be encoded and decoded by speakers and listeners with a certain amount of adaptability and flexibility. This makes speech communication resistant to different types of acoustic variations: speakers' voices, dialects or foreign accents, but also typically speech modalities such as shouting, singing, or whispering. Such an adaptation to variations also contributes to historical sound changes in language evolution. 'Modal spoken speech' represents the most common means of expression and the reference for studies on language. However, around the world, at least 70 different rural communities are known for their complementary whistled or drummed speech types. These two modalities represent extreme transformations of spoken words and sentences. They are mostly used for distance communication because whistles and drummed beats propagate well in natural environments. Other extreme transformations of speech consist in verbal arts imitating declamated or sung speech with different types of musical instruments. These special speech forms allow us to revisit human language with original insights.

Dr. Julien Meyer is a CNRS researcher at the GIPSA-lab in Grenoble, France. With global inquiries on whistled, drummed, and other instrumental forms of languages based on first-hand fieldwork, documentation, and study in 15 different language communities, Prof. Meyer developed a unique expertise on natural human telecommunication systems and musical surrogacy encoding human language. He develops methodologies to run production and perception experiments both in the field and in the lab. His research also deals with the music-language edge and the relations between language and natural rural environments.

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